

The Amateur Gentleman

By Jeffrey Farnol

INSTALLMENT FIFTEEN (Continued)

Captured by his honor, Master Horatio—carried off by the Cap'n under your own father's very own nose, sir—or as you might say, cut out under the enemy's guns, my lord!

With which explanation he unfurled the padlock, raised the upper leg-board and set the prisoner free.

"Ah—but it's good to have the use of one's legs again!" exclaimed his lordship, stretching the members in question, "and that," said he, turning to Barnabas with his whimsical smile, "that is another value of the stocks—one never knows how pleasant and useful a pair of legs can be until one has sat with 'em stretched out helplessly at right angles for an hour or two."

Here, the Bosun having stowed back the key and resumed his hat, his lordship reached out and grasped his hand. "So it was Uncle John, was it, Jerry—how very like Uncle John—eh, Jerry?"

"Never was nobody born into this here vale o' sorrow like the Cap'n—no, nor never will be—nobody!" said the Bosun with a solemn nod.

"God bless him, eh, Jerry?"

"Amen to that, my lord."

"You'll let him know I said 'God bless him,' Jerry?"

"I will, my lord, ay, ay, God bless him it is, Master Horatio!"

Now as to his Roman—my father, Jerry, tell him—er—

"Be you still set on squaring away for London, then, sir?"

"As a rock, Jerry, as a rock!"

"Then 'his good-by,' you're wishing me?"

"Yes, 'good-by,' Jerry, remember 'God bless Uncle John,' and—er—tell my father that—ah, what the deuce shall you tell him now?—it should be something a little affecting—wholly dutiful, and above all gently dispirited—hum!"

"Ah, yes—tell him that whether I win or lose the race, whether I break my unworthy neck or no, I shall never forget that I am the Earl of Bamberough's son."

"And as for you, Jerry, why, I shall always think of you as the jolly old sea dog who used to stoop down to let me get his whiskers; they were a trifle blacker in those days. Gad! how I did pull 'em, Jerry, even then I admired your whiskers, didn't I? I swear there isn't such another pair in England. Good-by, Jerry!"

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SAYING which his lordship turned swiftly upon his heel and walked on a pace or two, while Barnabas paused to wring the old seaman's brown hand; then they went on down the hill together.

And the Bosun, sitting upon the empty stocks with his wooden pin sticking straight out before him, sighed as he watched them striding London-wards, the lord's son tall, slender, elegant, a gentleman to his finger tips, and the commoner's son, shaped like a young god, despite his homespun, and between them, as if were linking them together, went the joyous spirit of Youth.

Now whether the Bosun saw of this who shall say, but old eyes see many things. And thus, perhaps, the sigh that escaped the battered old man-o'-war's man's lips was only because of his own vanished youth, his gray head and wooden leg, after all.

"Sir," said his lordship, after they had gone some way in silence, "you are thoughtful, not to say, devilish grave!"

"And you," retorted Barnabas, "have sighed—once, Jerry—why then, to be candid—I detest saying 'Good-by,'—and I have been devoutly wishing for two pair of muffs, for sir, I have taken a prodigious liking to you—but—"

"But?" inquired Barnabas.

SOME time since you mentioned the names of two men—champions both—ornaments of the fancy—great fighters of unblemished reputation.

"You mean me—er—that is, Natty Bell and John Bart?"

"Precisely! You claim to have boxed with them, sir?"

"Every day!" nodded Barnabas.

"With both of them—I understand?"

"With both of them."

"Hum!"

"Sir," said Barnabas, growing suddenly polite, "do you doubt my word?"

"Well," answered his lordship, with his whimsical look, "I'll admit I could have taken it easier had you named only one for surely, sir, you are best of the gods. I congratulate you and, incidentally, my desire for muffs grows apace—you must positively put 'em on with me at the first opportunity."

"Right willingly, sir," said Barnabas.

"But deuce take me!" exclaimed the viscount, "if we are to become friends, which I sincerely hope, we ought at least to know each other's name. Mine, sir, is Bellasis, Horatio Bellasis; I was named Horatio after Lord Nelson, consequently my friends generally call me Tom, Dick, or Harry, for with all due respect to his lordship, Horatio is a very devil of a name, now isn't it? Pray what's yours?"

"Barnabas—Beverley. At your service."

"Barnabas—hum! Yours isn't much better. Read! I think 't is about as bad. Barnabas!—No, I'll call you Bev, on condition that you make mine Dick; what d'ye say, my dear Bev?"

"Agreed, Dick," answered Barnabas, smiling, whereupon they stopped, and having very solemnly shaken hands, went on again, merrier than ever.

"Now what," inquired the viscount, suddenly, "what do you think of marriage, my dear Bev?"

"Marriage?" repeated Barnabas, staring.

"Marriage!" nodded his lordship, airily, "matrimony, Bev—wedlock, my dear fellow?"

"I—indeed I have never had occasion to think of it."

"Fortunate fellow!" sighed his companion.

"Until—this morning!" added Barnabas, as his fingers encountered a small, soft, lacy bundle in his pocket.

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UNFORTUNATELY "fellow!"

Sighed the viscount, shaking his head. "So you are haunted by the grim spectre, are you? Well, that should be an added bond between us. Not that I quarrel with matrimony, mark you, Bev; in the abstract it is a very excellent institution, though—mark me again!—when a man begins to think of marriage it is generally the beginning of the end. Ah, my dear fellow, many a bright and promising career has been blighted—sapped—snapped off—and—er—ruthlessly devoured by the ravenous maw of marriage."

"There was young Euston with a natural gift for boxing, and one of the best whips I ever knew—we raced our coaches to Brighton and back for a thousand a side and he beat me by six yards—a splendid all-round sportsman—ruined by matrimony!"

"But?" inquired Barnabas.

"(To Be Continued.)"

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—By Ahern



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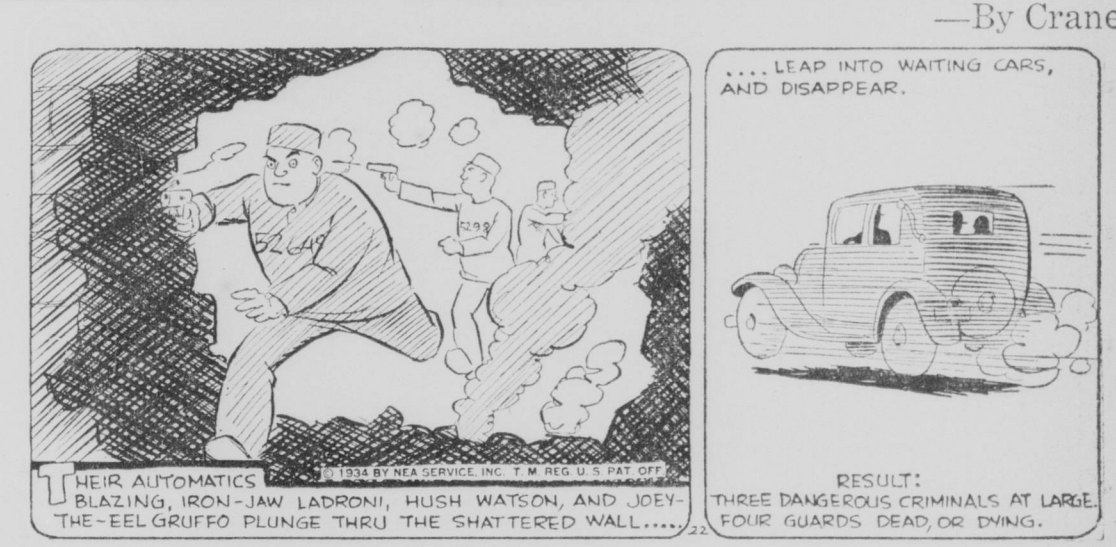
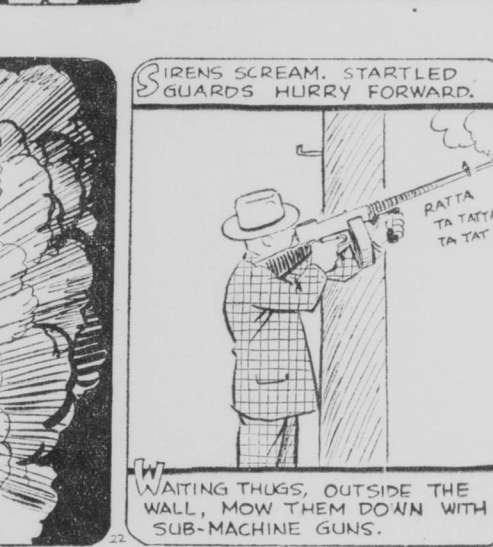


OUT OUR WAY

—By Williams



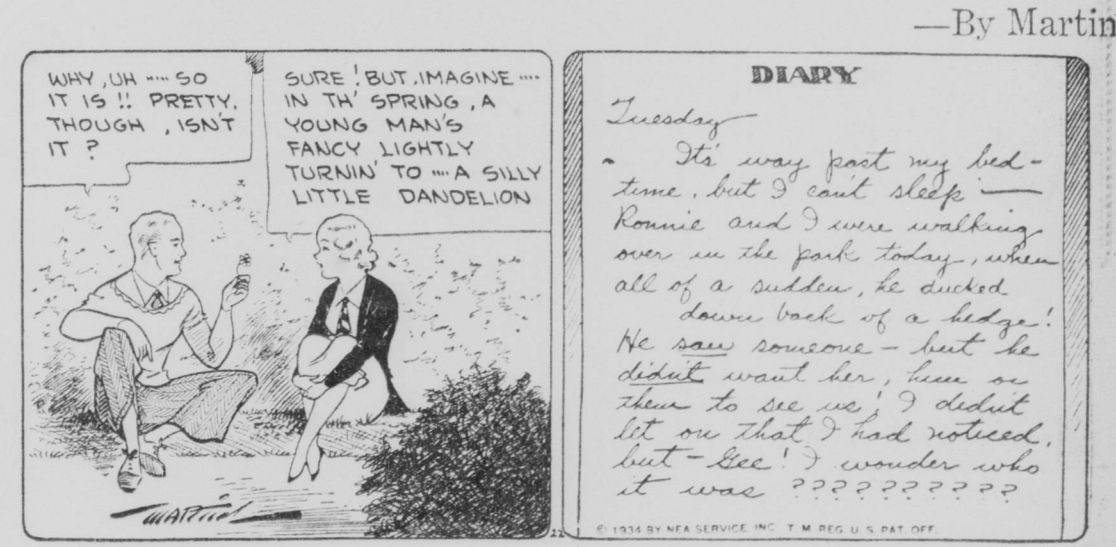
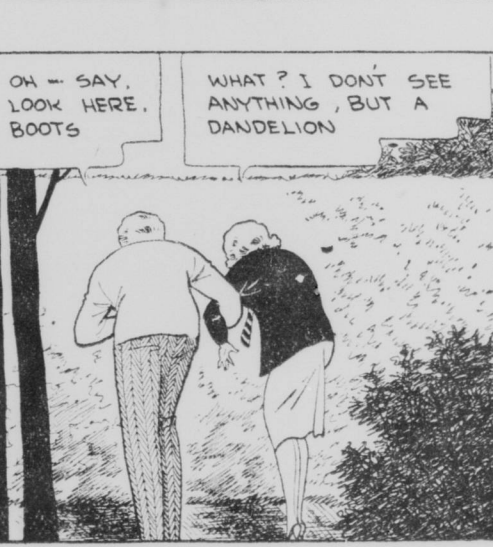
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