

IN THE WAKE OF THE NEWS

By A. B. CHAPIN



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE:

It is 1868 and the Pacific Railroad has reached its newest "farthest west"—Benton, Wyoming, a town described as "roaring," as each new terminus, temporarily, was. Frank Beeson, a young man from Albany, New York, comes here because he is in search of health and Benton is considered "high and dry." Edna Montoyo, a fellow passenger on the train from Omaha, impresses Beeson with the beauty of her blue eyes and the style of her apparel. Equally she astonishes him by taking a "smile" of brandy before breakfast. A brakeman tells Beeson she has "followed her man" to Benton.

Jim, a typical western ruffian whom she knows apparently well insults her and is floored by Frank whose prowess impresses the passengers. Col. Lunderson and "Bill" Brady volunteer to entertain young Beeson.

Frank avoids being caught by any of the numerous gambling games, but is robbed of all his money.

In The Big Tent

There was no trace of the round faced man and a short conversation with the clerk convinced me of the slimness of the chance to recover my property. So I borrowed \$20 from him with my trunk as security until I could hear from home. When I stepped outside twilight had deepened into dusk, the air was almost frosty, and this main street had been made garish by the night-illumination.

All up and down the street coal-oil torches or flambeaus, rudely embossing the heads of the players and onlookers, flared like votive braziers above the open-air gambling games.

The noise of the day had redoubled. To the exclamations, the riotous shouts and whoops, the harangues of the barkers, and now then a revolver shot, there had been added the inciting music of stringed instruments, cymbals, and such—safe in dance measures, some solo, while immediately at hand sounded the shuffling stamp of waltz hoe-down and cotillion.

Night at Benton plainly had begun with a gusto.

It stirred one's blood. It called—it summoned with such a promise of variety, of adventure, of fetsam and jetsam and shuttlecock of chances, that I, a youth with twenty-one dollars and a half at disposal, all his clothes on his back, man's weapon at his belt, and an appointment with a lady as his future, forgetful of his past and courageous in present, strode confidently, even recklessly down, as eager as one to the manners of the country born.

There was no need for me to inquire my way to the trysting place. I saw a large canvas sign—"The Big Tent"—suspended in the full shine of a locomotive reflector. Beneath it the people were streaming into the wide entrance to a great canvas hall.

Once across the threshold, I halted, taken all aback by the hubbub

and the kaleidoscopic spectacle that beat upon my ears and eyes.

The floor, of planked boards, teeming with men, women and children. Along one side there was an ornate bar glittering with cut glass and silver and backed by a large plate mirror that repeated the lights the people, the glasses, decanters and pitchers, and the figures of the white-coated busy bartenders.

To the bidding of orchestra music women and men with hats upon their heads and cigars in their mouths and men together, whirled in couples so that the floor trembled to the boot heels.

Her small warm hand acted as if unreservedly mine, for the movement. About her there was a tingling element of the friendly, even of the intimate.

"You got your outfit I see," she smiled.

"Yes. Am I correct?"

"I am here, madam, in the Big Tent."

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slightly swollen lower lip.

"Shake," he proffered, extending his hand. "No hard feelings here. I'm no Injun. You knocked the red eye out of me.

I shook hands with him. "Hardly knowed you in that new rig," he went on. "Now you're talkin' that's sense. Trail along with me. Let's likker!"

"Another time, sir," I begged off.

"I have an engagement this evening."

"O' course you have. Don't I know th'too? shrdlnaa know that, too? Didn't she tell me to keep my eyes skinned for you,

and to cotton on to you when you come in? We'll find her, after we likker up?"

"She did?"

"Why not? Ain't I a friend of hers? You bet! Finest little woman in Benton. Trail to the trough along with me, pardner, and name your favorite."

"I'd rather not drink," I essayed.

"O course you'll drink!" he said.

"Any gent I ax to drink has got to drink! Name your pizen—make it champagne, if that's your brand. But the drinks are on me."

So will-nilly I was brought to the bar.

"Straight goods and the best you've got," my pilot blared. "None

of your agency whiskey either. What's yours?" he asked of me.

"The same as yours, sir," I bravely replied.

We drank. The stuff may have been pure; at least it was stout and cut fiery way down my un-wanted throat; the one draught infused me with a swagger and a sudden rosy view of life through temporary mist of watering eyes.

We wended a leisurely way among games of infinite variety and had by no means completed the tour when we met My Lady. She detached herself, as if cognizant of our approach, from a little group of four or five, and turned for me with hand outstretched, a gratifying flush upon her spirited face.

"You are here, then?" she greeted.

I made a leg, with my best bow, not omitting to remove hat and cigar, while agreeably conscious of her approving gaze.

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are. Don't be pikers. Let us have a little sport. Stake a dollar. Why you'd toss a dollar down your throat—you'd lay a dollar on a cockroach race."

With a muttered "I'll go you another turn, Mister," Jim planked down a dollar and faced up the queen of hearts.

"The money's yours. You never earned a dollar quicker, I'll wager, friend," the dealer acknowledged, imperturbable.

From behind the dealer a man touched him upon the shoulder. He turned ear; while he inclined farther, they whispered together, and I witnessed an arm steal swiftly forward at my side, and a thumb and finger slightly bend up the extreme corner of the queen.

The hand and arm vanished, when the dealer fronted us again the queen was apparently just as before. Only we who had seen would have marked the bent corner.

The act had been so clever and so adacious that I fairly held my breath. But the gambler resumed his flow of talk, while he fingered the cards as if totally unaware that they had been tampered with.

His audience hesitated, as if fearful of a trick, for the bent corner of the queen, raising this end a little, was plain to us who knew. It was absurdly plain!

Jim, a teamster standing by and I urged by the Lady, put down \$2 each.

"Give me a chance, gentlemen," said the spicler. "I shall not proceed with the play for that pica-yune sum before me. Lou wouldn't bet unless you felt cock-sure of winning. I'll give you one minute, gentlemen, before calling all bets off unless you make the pot worth while."

The threat had effected. Noboy wished to let the marked card get away. That was not human nature. Bets rained upon the table—bank notes, silver half dollars, the rarer dollar coins, and the common greenbacks.

"This is the last round, gentlemen," the spicler reminded. "Are you all in?" "You," he said, direct to me. "Are you in such short circumstances that you have no spunk? Why, the stakes you play would not buy refreshments for the lady."

That was too much! I extracted my twenty-dollar note, and deaf to a quickly breathed "Wait!" from My

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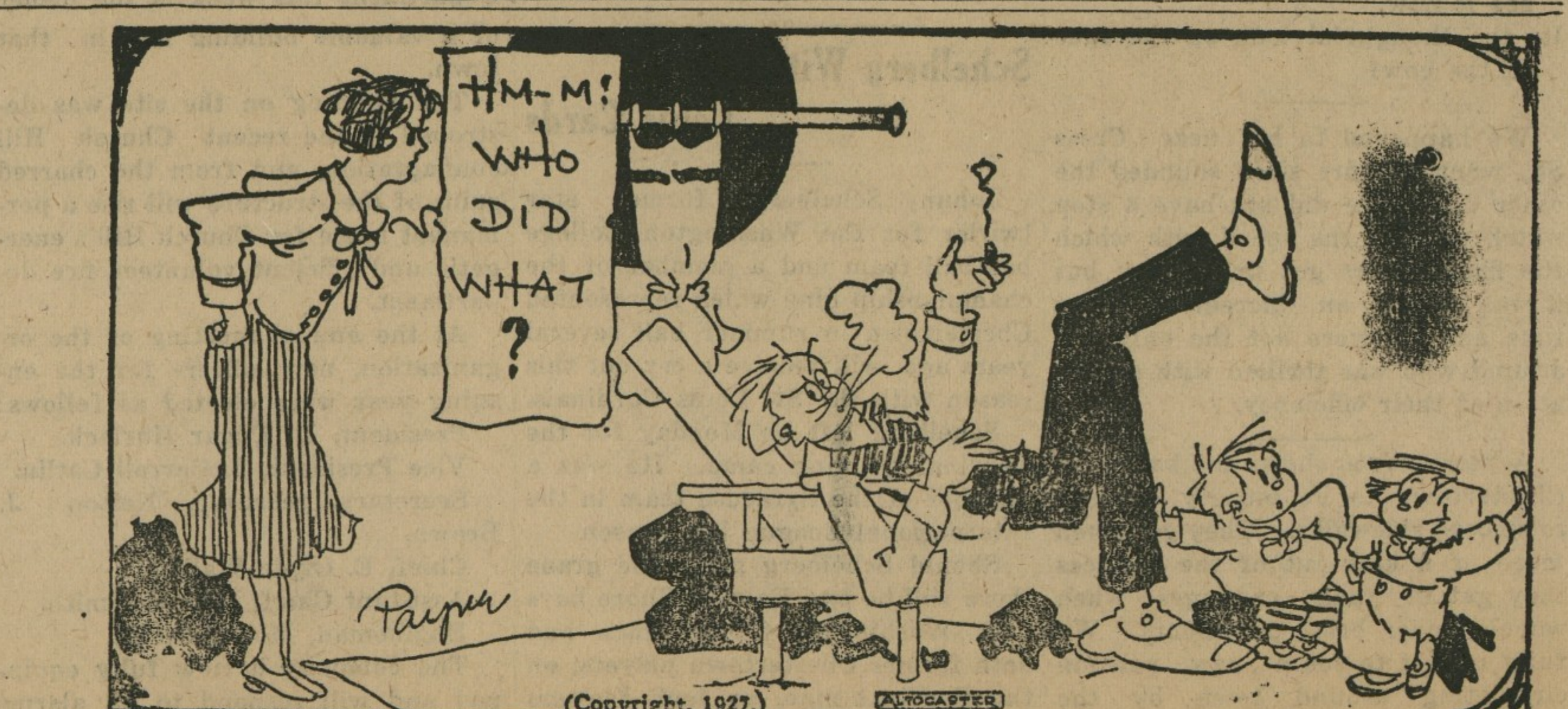
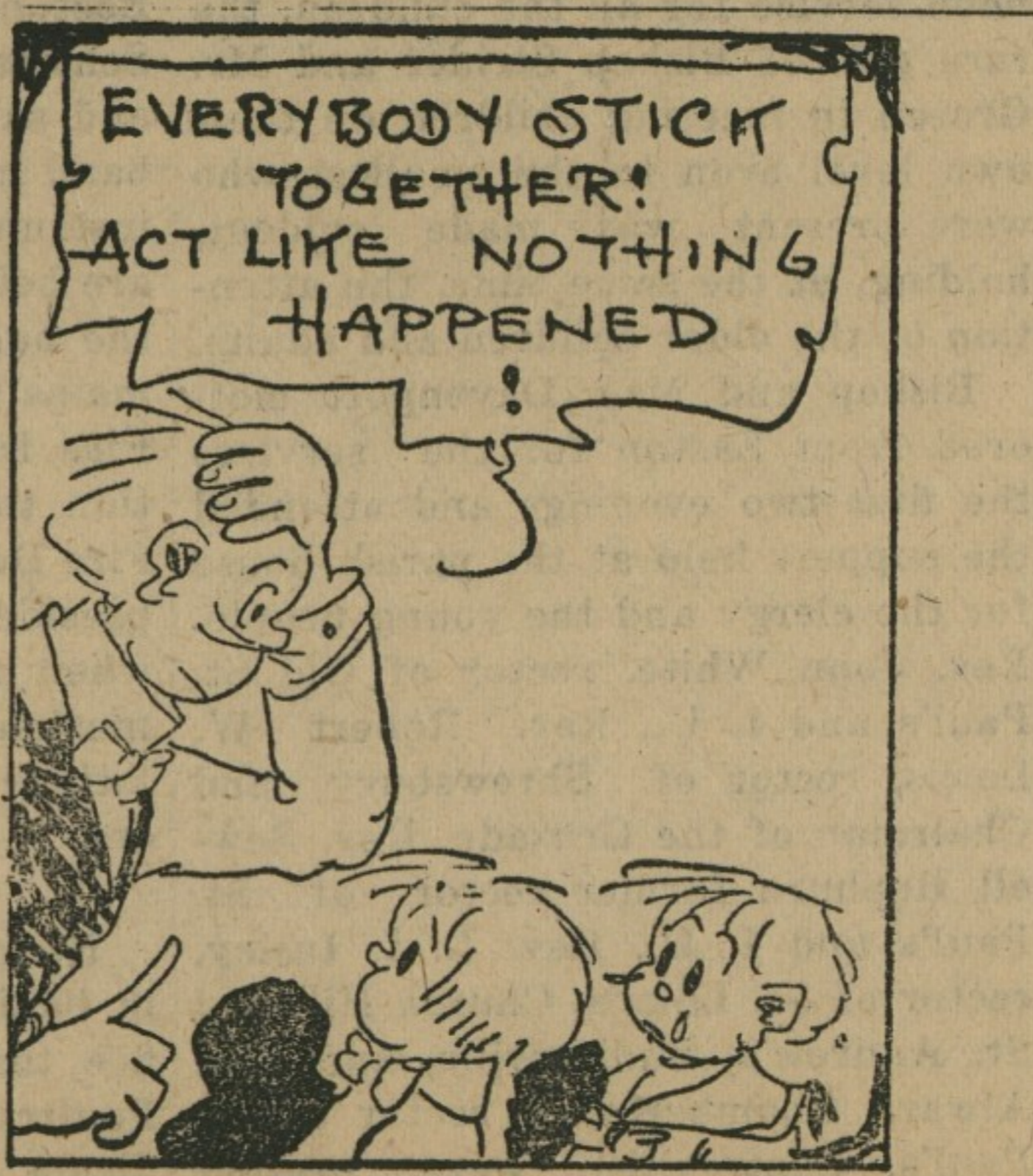
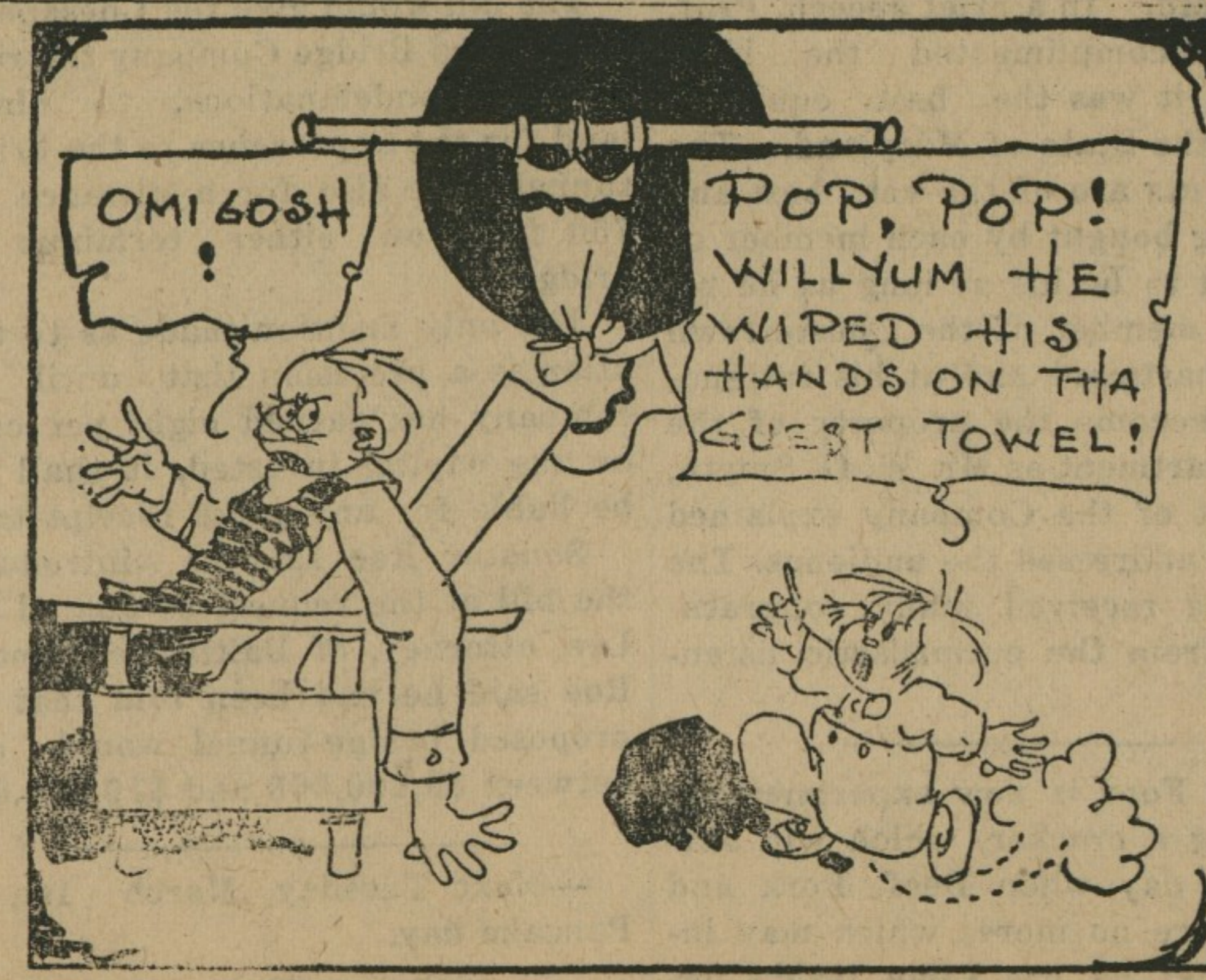
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Adults tickets one way 60 cents; Round trip, good 1 day \$1.00; Round trip good 30 days \$1.10; Children half fare.

THE TOLCHESTER COMPANY Pier 16 Light St., Baltimore.



Advertisement for 'Taking An Encore' shoe repair. It includes a cartoon of a man with a shoe and text: 'Taking An Encore —is the thing we like most in regard to our business. An encore is a "repeat" order—and repeat orders mean satisfied customers. If you'll give us the opportunity to show you how we rebuild shoes—restoring all their shape and style—you too will join the ranks of those who regularly bring their shoes here for first-class repair work. Men's Half Sole, Sewed and Rubber Heel ... \$1.40 Men's Half Sole, Nailed and Rubber Heel ... \$1.40 Men's Whole Sole and Rubber Heel ... \$2.00 Ladies' Half Sole, Sewed and Rubber Heel ... \$1.20 Ladies' Half Sole, Nailed and Rubber Heel ... \$1.10 Ladies' Whole Sole and Rubber Heel ... \$2.20'.

Advertisement for J. Quartararo shoe repair. It includes text: 'J. Quartararo ELECTRIC SHOE REPAIRING AND SHOE SHINE PARLOR 223 High St., Chestertown, Md. —The Enterprise \$1.00 a year.'

Advertisement for Arlington L. Sparks, Chestertown's Best Store. It includes text: 'Arlington L. Sparks Chestertown's Best Store This Store buys the best goods the market affords and we mark them to our customers at the lowest possible price consistent with the quality of the goods. We believe everything you buy from us will please you. If so tell others if not be sure and tell us. We want to make it right FAIR DEALING PROMPT SERVICE AND GOOD GOODS IS OUR MOTTO. Arlington L. Sparks Chestertown MD'.