By Thornton W. Burgess

A DREADFUL THING HAPPENS

'Tis easier, as has been said,
To see behind than see ahead.
—Old Mother Nature.

Blacky the Crow and the flock of which he was the head were known as the black gang. While Blacky was the leader, he didn't always lead. He wasn't leading now. He and Mrs. Blacky actually were hanging back. The rest of the gang were working themselves up to such a pitch of excitement that presently they would dare each other to attack an Owl they had discovered in a pine tree in the midst of a clump of other pine trees. Such a racket as they were making! Some of them were sitting in other trees cawing at the tops of their voices. Others were flying around and above that clump. They, too, were cawing at the tops of their voices. Meanwhile, that big Owl sat without moving.

"Come on!" said Mrs. Blacky. "Let's join in the fun."

"Wait, my dear! Wait!" said Blacky.

"Why should we wait?" asked Mrs. Blacky.

"My dear," said Blacky, "there's something wrong about that Owl."

Mrs. Blacky stared over at the Owl. It looked to her as if it might be Hooty, who with Mrs. Hooty, had taken possession of the nest that Blacky and Mrs. Blacky had built the year before, and had planned to use this year. "I don't see anything wrong about him," said she.

"I've never seen Hooty nor any other Owl sit for so long without turning his head as that fellow has. He hasn't turned it once. You know as well as I do that when the gang is around an Owl the Owl keeps turning his head so as to watch behind as well as in front. That fellow hasn't looked behind him once. He hasn't moved his eyes once, and there's something else—" Blacky paused.

"What else?" asked Mrs. Blacky.

"That fellow hasn't snapped his bill once. No, sir, that fellow hasn't snapped his bill once. I've been watching. I never have yet seen an Owl that didn't snap his bill when the gang is around him," said Blacky.

Just then one of the boldest of the gang darted down so close to that Owl that he almost brushed against him. The Owl didn't move. He didn't snap his bill. He just didn't pay any attention to that Crow.

"See that!" exclaimed Blacky to Mrs. Blacky. "I tell you something's wrong with that Owl."

Several of the Crows became bolder now. They circled. They flew back and forth nearer to that clump of trees. Another of the gang, to show how brave he was, flew in from behind, and pulled a feather from the Owl's head. Even then the big bird did not turn his head. Emboldened by the daring of this Crow, several dashed in together.

He didn't snap his bill, he just didn't pay any attention to that Crow.

Then it happened. "Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!" roared two guns, and four of those Crows fell to the ground. With wild screams, all the other Crows were in the air, flying as hard as they could fly to get away. Twice, the guns roared again, and another Crow fell. Now the voices were still. Not one of those Crows had any breath to waste. They needed all they had for flying. How those black wings did beat the air!

None of the gang looked behind. If they had, they would have seen two hunters step out from their hiding place to pick up the Crows that had been shot. Meanwhile, that Owl still sat overhead in the pine tree. He didn't move. He didn't try to fly away. He didn't turn his head. He didn't snap his bill. It wasn't a live Owl at all, just a stuffed one that the hunters had fastened up in that tree. It is what is called a decoy.

After the decoy had been fastened up in the tree, the hunters had hidden down below; and then one of them had imitated the call of a crow. It had been good enough to fool all those Crows but Blacky.

"I told you, my dear, that there was something wrong with that call, and that Owl," said Blacky to Mrs. Blacky as they flew back to the new nest they were building.

"Fun, wasn't it!" said one hunter to the other, as they looked at five dead Crows, who had never harmed them in the least, and for which they had no use now.

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Contract Bridge

By Josephine Clubertson

TABLE TALK

A bridge player handicaps himself enormously if he uses common bridge terms without being fully aware of their meaning. One hears on all sides glib references to "limit bids" or "game shutouts," or "sign-offs," along with other phrases, and there is the soundest reason that the true meaning and application of such terms are twisted or often reversed. Consider, for example, the all-to-common "philosophy" of the player who was North in this hand:

South dealer
North-South vulnerable.

	♠ A J 9 6 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ K J 4 2 ♣ 7 6	
♠ K 7 2 ♥ 9 3 2 ♦ Q 9 3 ♣ K Q 10 3	N W E S	♠ Q 8 5 4 ♥ J ♦ A 10 7 6 ♣ J 8 4 2
	♠ 10 3 ♥ A K 10 7 6 4 ♦ 8 5 ♣ A 9 5	

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

West opened the club king. Declarer won and returned the spade ten. When West played low, dummy did likewise, and East won with the queen. The club return was taken by West, who now shifted to a low diamond, but South made the winning guess of the jack from dummy and so ended up with two overtricks.

It is true that a four-heart contract might have met defeat against less favorable breaks, but the fact remains that North was something less than enterprising when he passed to two hearts. Discussing the result with South, North said, "How could I bid again, with only about two tricks, when you signed off with two hearts?"

There are too many contract players who have the same notion North had. Let's analyze:

Everyone knows that the opener must not jump his rebid unless he holds a powerful hand, with either a long, strong suit of his own, or good support for partner's suit, or another suit of his own in a very good hand. South's holding did not conform to any of these requirements, so he could do nothing but bid two hearts over one spade. To treat this as an intended sign-off, however, is to claim that a hand is either very big or very bad, when the obvious fact is that there are millions of in-between holdings. Thus, the non-jump rebid of a suit cannot be treated as a sign-off, and in this particular case North had far too good a hand to accept a two-heart contract.

King Of The Royal Mounted

By Zane Grey

Rip Kirby

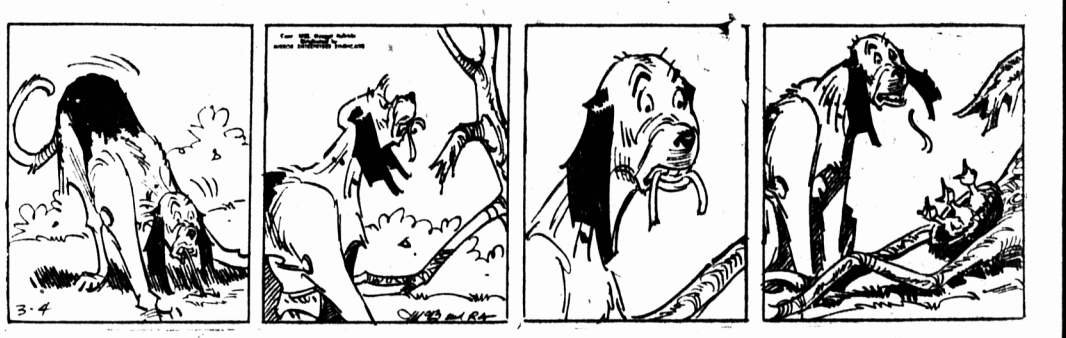
By Alex Raymond

Joe Palooka

By Ham Fisher

Napoleon and Uncle Elby

By Clifford McBride

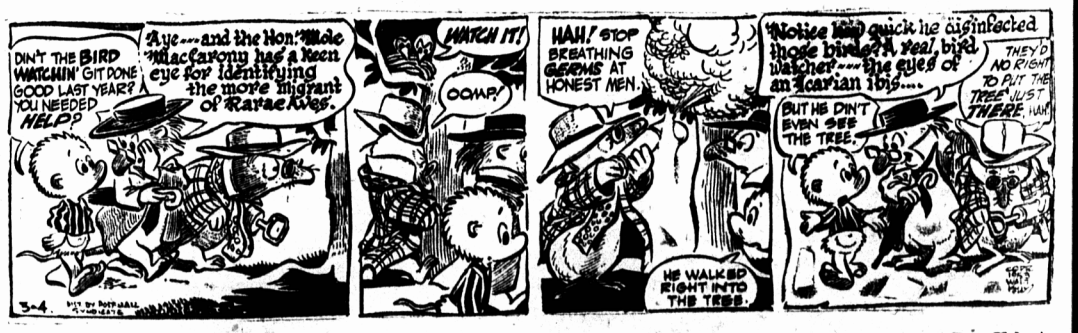


Li'l Abner

By Al Capp

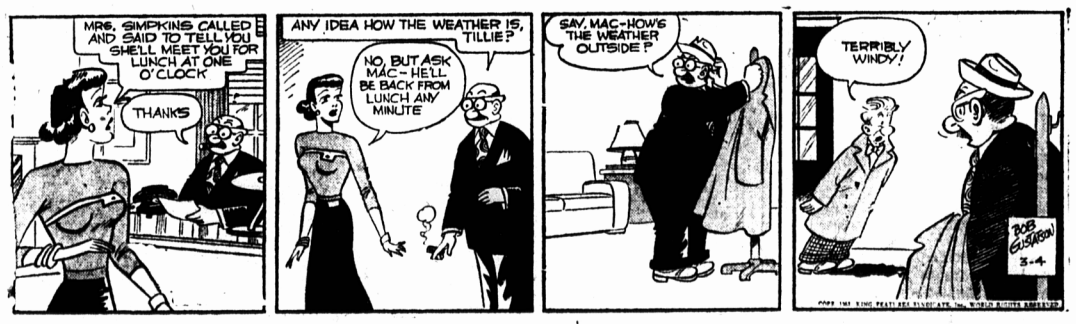
Pogo

By Walt Kelly



Tilly The Toiler

By Bob Gustafson



Tippy and "Cap" Stubs

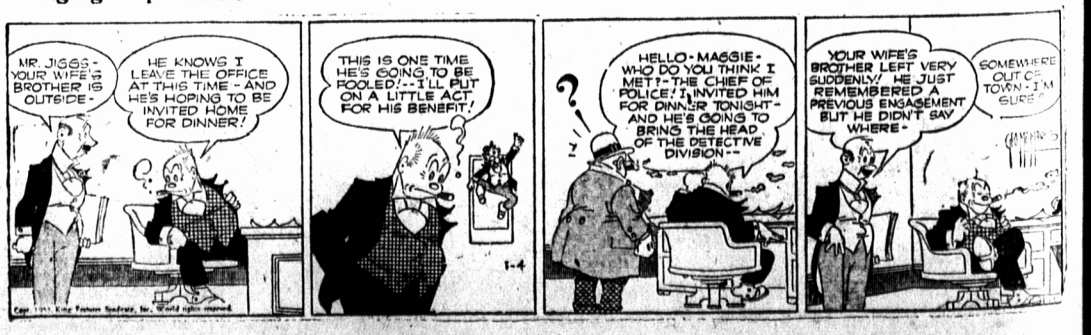
By Edwina

Dotty Dripple

By Ruford

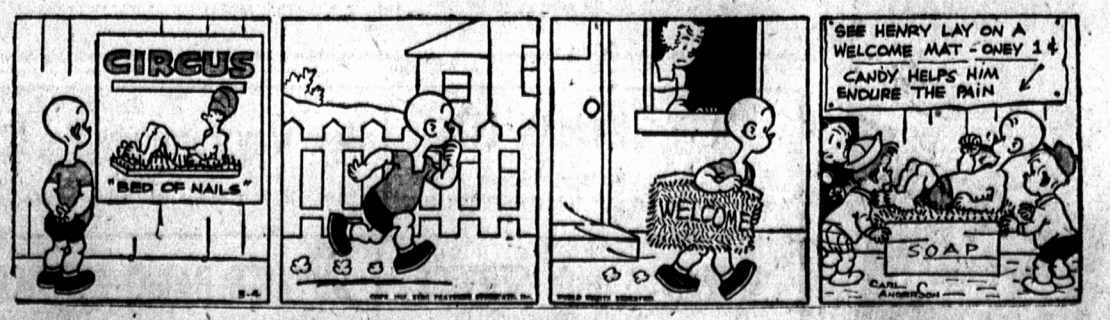
Bringing Up Father

By George McManus



Henry

By Carl Anderson



PENNY

By Harry Haenigsen