

New Stories By O. HENRY

A GUARDED SECRET.
It is time to call a halt upon those persistent legends that a woman cannot keep a secret. No baser ingratitude has been shown by man toward the fair sex than the promulgation of this false report. Whenever a woman would be humored man makes use of this antiquated chestnut, which his fellow men feel in duty bound to applaud, the face of the woman takes on a strange, inscrutable, pitying smile that few men ever read.

The truth is that it is only woman who can keep a secret. Only a divine intelligence can understand the marvelous power with which 99 married women out of a hundred successfully hide from the rest of the world the secret that they have bound themselves to something unworthy of the pure and sacrificing love they have given them. She may whisper to her neighbor that Mrs. Jones has turned her old silk dress twice, but if she has in her breast anything affecting those she loves, the gods themselves could not drag it from her.

Weak man looks into the wine cup and behold, he bubbles his innermost thoughts to any gaping bystander; woman can baffle of the weather, and gaze with infantine eyes into the orbs of the wildest diplomat while holding easily in her breast the heaviest secrets of state.

Adam was the original blab; the first tell-tale, and we are not proud of him. With the dreamy, appealing eyes of Eve upon him—the who was created for his comfort and pleasure—even as she stood by his side, loving, and fresh and fair as a spring moon, the wretched cad said: "The woman gave me, and I did eat." This reprehensible act in our distinguished forefather cannot be excused by any gentleman who knows what is due to a lady.

Adam's conduct would have caused his name to be stricken from the list of every decent club in the country. And since that day, woman has stood by man, faithful, true, and ready to give up all for his sake. She hides his puny peccadilloes from the world; she glosses over his wretched misdemeanors, and she keeps silent when a word would pierce his inflated greatness, and leave him a shriveled and shrunken rag.

And man says that woman cannot keep a secret!

Let him be thankful that she can or his littleness would be proclaimed from the housetops.

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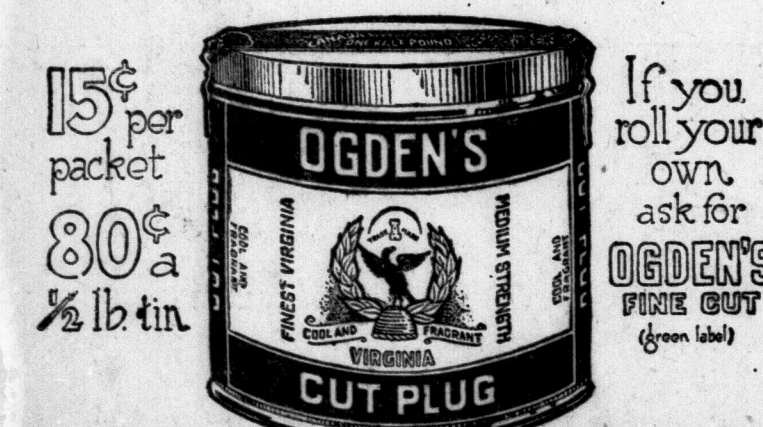
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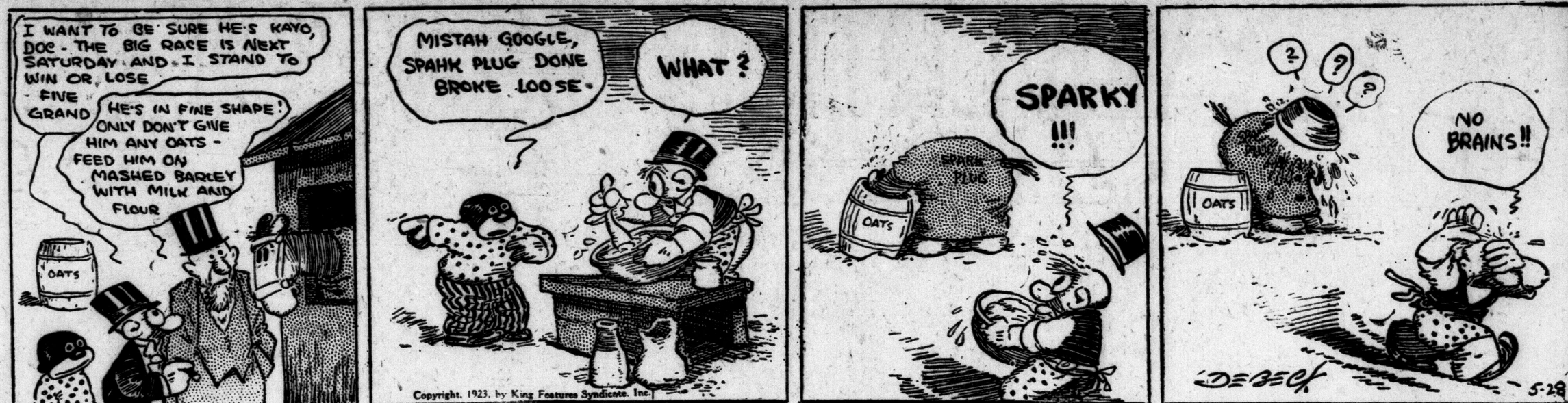


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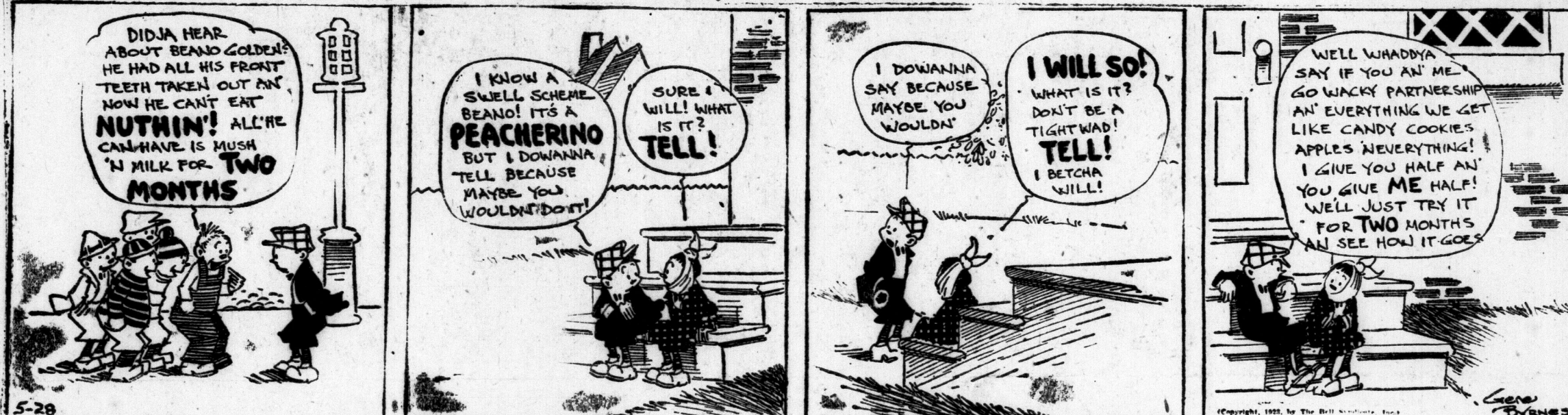
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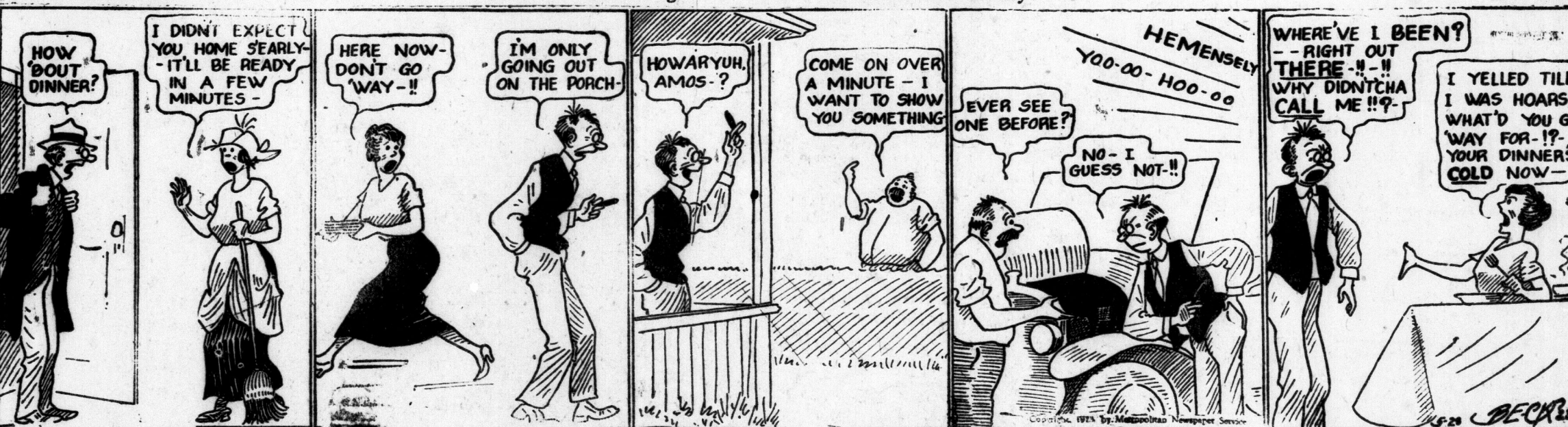
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