

The Twerp Turns

By WILLIAM J. MURDOCH
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LUCIUS STEEMS stretched his frail spindly frame on the porch swing and sighed heavily. He was tired of being picked on. His wife, his employer — oh, especially his employer! — his fellow workers, bus drivers — they all dished it out to him. Lucius knew why, too. He was a weak-kneed sissy—and looked and acted it.

He didn't even have enough gumption to order his youngest, Johnny, and that Rodney kid from down the street to take their argument elsewhere. They were around the side of the house, noisily squabbling, ably abetted by their yelping dogs. Lucius wanted a little peace and quiet before returning to the office for the afternoon.

Mr. Ralston had called him down in front of the whole office again that morning simply because he had posted the right sums in the wrong ledger. Mr. Ralston had a peculiar way of bawling out people. He smiled and uttered wisecracks—but he wasn't kidding.

"Steems, you funny-looking little twerp," Mr. Ralston said, banging the ledger down on Lucius's desk. "I ought to make you eat this!" And after Mr. Ralston had wisecracked Lucius into red-faced humiliation, the big, bluff owner of Ralston's Pickle Works stalked away and left his billing clerk to writhe under the smirks and winks of the other employees.

Slowly Lucius rocked the swing, blinking his watery blue eyes. If he were only half a man—he sighed again, and dozed off.

"What a laugh!" The sharp words made Lucius's eyes pop open. It was that Rodney kid. "That funny-looking little shrimp couldn't lick a flea!"

"Say that again!" That was Johnny, and the vigor with which the youngster snapped out the challenge made Lucius's heart bump. Could—could it be that he had a champion after all? "You just say that again and I'll show you who can lick who!"

"I said he's a funny-looking little shrimp and can't lick a—ow!"

The brawl was on, and Lucius peered over the swing in time to see Johnny pursuing the Rodney kid down the street, both bellowing at the top of their lungs. Lucius bounded to his feet. By George, this was just what he needed—a champion, someone to back him up! He'd had no idea little Johnny would take up so fiercely for him. That put the old starch in the backbone, all right.

Lucius felt like a new man—a whole one. He paraded across the porch, jerked the screen door open and snatched his old felt hat from the hook. "Doris!" he cried in a sort of scratched roar. "Doris, I'll be home at five-thirty and I want supper on the table." He had read that in a book once, and it sounded swell. "Hear me? Five-thirty!"

Mrs. Steems thrust her head around the living room doorway in amazement. "Are you talking to—"

"To you," Lucius said, suddenly so angry that he trembled. He had to justify Johnny's faith. "I'm tired of being treated like a hired man. Five-thirty—and don't forget it!"

Lucius tingled with triumph. But what if he were still asleep in the swing? He pinched himself and it hurt—and he was glad. His confidence swelled as he rode downtown, and by the time he reached the office he was nearly bursting with the new spirit he had found through Johnny.

He went directly to Mr. Ralston's office. "Mr. Ralston," he said politely but positively, "you've got to stop insulting me before the whole office. I make mistakes—everyone here does. But I work hard, too, and not everyone here does that. If you don't like my work, get rid of me. But," and here Lucius shook his finger at ogle-eyed Mr. Ralston, "I won't take any more insults from anyone."

He stood back, waiting for his employer to say something — and Lucius really didn't give two whoopies what it was. But it was good. "Steems," Mr. Ralston said finally, "it's about time you showed some spirit. I deserved that calling down — and I'll raise you 25 bucks a month just to show you there's no hard feeling."

"Yes, sir," Lucius went back to his desk. But, before he sat down, he elaborated on his little speech to his fellow workers. And no one talked back or even smirked.

It was a wonderful day, the happiest for Lucius in a long, long time. And he knew he owed it all to his Johnny. So perhaps it is just as well he never learned of the conversation between his wife and Johnny after he came home that afternoon. Never demonstrative in his affection, he simply patted the boy on the head, noted that supper was on the table and went upstairs to wash.

"Johnny," Mrs. Steems whispered anxiously, "Johnny, what's happened to your father all of a sudden? Do you know what's got into him?"

"Huh? Dad? Shucks, he seems the same to me," Johnny said lightly. "He's O. K., isn't he? Say, Ma," he added indignantly, "you know what the Rodney kid said to me today? He said my dog was a funny-looking little shrimp that couldn't lick a flea. Boy, did I paste him!"



CROSS TOWN

By Roland Coe



BOBBY SOX

By Marty Links



BOBBY SOX

By Marty Links

NANCY

By Ernie Bushmiller

NANCY

By Ernie Bushmiller

NANCY

By Ernie Bushmiller

NANCY

By Ernie Bushmiller

MUTT AND JEFF

By Bud Fisher

MUTT AND JEFF

By Bud Fisher

MUTT AND JEFF

By Bud Fisher

MUTT AND JEFF

By Bud Fisher

LITTLE REGGIE

By Margarita

LITTLE REGGIE

By Margarita

LITTLE REGGIE

By Margarita

LITTLE REGGIE

By Margarita

JITTER

By Arthur Pointer

JITTER

By Arthur Pointer

JITTER

By Arthur Pointer

JITTER

By Arthur Pointer

REG'LAR FELLERS

By Gene Byrnes

REG'LAR FELLERS

By Gene Byrnes

REG'LAR FELLERS

By Gene Byrnes

REG'LAR FELLERS

By Gene Byrnes

VIRGIL

By Len Kleis

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VIRGIL

By Len Kleis

SILENT SAM

By Jeff Hayes

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By Jeff Hayes

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The Home Town Reporter
in WASHINGTON
By Walter Sheod
WNU Correspondent

New 'Surplus' Law Gives Veterans Better Chance

DESPITE the fact that congress has granted veterans of World War II a No. 1 priority on purchase of surplus war property, these veterans are in for another disappointment. Much propaganda has gone out over this latest fiasco on disposal of war property to veterans, but Gen. Edmund B. Gregory, administrator of War Assets administration, frankly states that only a limited number of specified items have been set aside for exclusive purchase by veterans. "All of these items," he says, "are in extremely short supply and it follows that there simply will not be enough to meet veterans' demands."

And that's the fly in the ointment, for the impression prevails that under the new law the veterans will get about anything and everything in surplus and there won't be much left for the general buyer. That simply is not true.

All the new law does is to put the veteran in a little better buying position, and it is highly probable that there will be no marked effect on surplus disposal as now conducted.

The limited list is supposed to include certain types of automotive vehicles, tractors, construction, mining and excavating machinery, agricultural machinery, medical, surgical and dental apparatus and typewriters. The priority does not apply to land or buildings.

If past experience is to be any criterion, there will be from ten to a hundred requests for every item offered the veterans under the new priority, because there is not a sufficient supply available and likely there never will be.

Goods Will Be Allotted

Veterans likely will be limited to a single unit of purchase. For instance, a veteran likely will be permitted to buy only one typewriter, but if he wants to buy a tractor too, his certificate may be modified to permit this, provided there is a tractor available. But apparently if he is in business he couldn't buy a dozen tractors or a dozen typewriters.

General Gregory says that there will be no system of government retail outlets selling surplus direct to veterans, and congress has made it clear it intended no such enterprise. So if you are a veteran and make application to buy a truck, here's what will happen. Say there are 30 trucks available. The regional office has 100 certificates of application and 10 personal use certificates on file or a proportion of 1 to 10. Notification will be sent to the three applicants for personal use whose certificates bear the oldest dates, and the 27 applicants for non-personal use whose certificates bear the oldest dates. So 70 veterans will be disappointed. As more trucks become available, however, the veteran who is unable to exercise his priority on a personal use certificate will be notified a second and third time and then his certificate will be placed in an inactive file.

There has also come to the attention of the WAA some instances of veterans being used in connection with black market purchases of surplus property. Every effort will be made to ferret out these operations where a veteran, either in collusion or unknowingly, uses his priority to purchase goods intended for sale in the black market.

Many Items Not Wanted

How widespread this practice is, of course, is not known at this time, but veterans themselves are urged to help in ferreting out instances of such illegal procedures, since such purchases deprive deserving veterans of those consumer goods intended for them alone. Some of these attempts to force surplus property into black market have been discovered through the type of goods purchased. For instance, experience has indicated to officials there are only a few types of goods in which a veteran is actually interested, even in the consumer category, and when priorities are asked for goods outside this class, officials are likely to make an investigation of the transaction.

Great quantities of surplus goods exist and will continue to go on sale in which the veterans have shown little interest. For instance, the WAA office of capital and producers goods disposal have no veterans' problems, and neither has the maritime commission, in its disposal of marine property.

At any rate, the effect of the new law will cause no flood of surplus to the veteran. There has never been enough to go around, and the new No. 1 priorities do not produce any more surplus goods.

Portlight
of
GRANTLAND
RICE

IT WILL be interesting to note what will happen when baseball returns to a more normal way of life. We took up this somewhat twisted matter with Bill Dickey, the Yankees' new manager.

"This has been one of the strangest seasons I've ever run across," the loose-jointed "Arkansas Traveler" said. "Suppose, for example, we had known back in Florida during our training season that the Yankees were going to get good pitching. That was supposed to be our weakest spot because so many of our men were troubled with bad arms. We would have been picked as one of the surest things of the year, rated well in front."

"But suppose we had known that after six weeks of play our team batting would be around .240 with such fine hitters as Joe DiMaggio and most of the others hitting below .200. Then, we would have been picked far down the list. Hard hitting has been the Yankees' main factor in winning ball games, but as a team we haven't been hitting a half lick."

"You don't think this hitting weakness will last?" we asked.

"I certainly don't," Bill said. "No pitchers are going to keep such hard hitters as DiMaggio, Keller—who has been our best—Stirnweis, Etten, Lindell, Henrich, Gordon and the others bottled up much longer. Those fellows can hit. They are naturals. I happen to know that Joe DiMaggio was banking on this season being his best year. I've never seen any one work harder, or try harder or train harder. His fielding and his home-run hitting have been exceptional. I don't believe this slump in hitting can last."

"We may have more trouble with our pitching, with so many really good pitchers bothered with bad arms or backs, but we are due to get much better hitting—and we'll have to get it if we are to win again. We can't win the pennant the way we're going now."

Dickey and the Red Sox

We asked Manager Dickey what he thought of the Red Sox and the chance the Yankees and other American League clubs had of closing the gap.

"I'll tell you exactly what I think of the Red Sox," Bill said. "I never like to underestimate an opponent. In my opinion, they have a first-class manager in Joe Cronin, who failed in the past because the winning material wasn't there. Cronin isn't going to lose any pennant for his club. Joe will do his share."

"The Red Sox have the strongest team they ever have shown. They have a fine infield and a strong outfield. They have had the hitting and the pitching—and I honestly think that so far they have out-hustled the rest of us."

"In Pesky and Doerr, the Red Sox have a great mid-infield combination, both on offense and defense. Pesky today is a greatly improved ballplayer. He means a lot to that club. Cronin certainly has a much stronger pitching staff than anyone looked for last March—Hughson, Harris, Ferriss and Dobson are about as good as any manager could ask for."

"This doesn't mean," Dickey said with a grin, "that I am picking the Red Sox to win the pennant. I think we can catch them, but I know we can't wait too long. They are too good to be given any big lead, and I believe the Yankees are just beginning to realize this. They have been strong on both offense and defense and they've fine spirit."

"What about the rest of the league so far?" we asked.

"You can't overlook Washington," he said. "This is a good, steady, consistent club all along the line. You also will see Detroit get much better pitching than the Tigers have known thus far. Their pitching has been like the Yankees' hitting—too far below normal to remain that way. When their pitching gets as hot as it can get, and they begin to hit nearer their stride, you'll see a big change."

Dickey, who has the full support of Larry MacPhail, and who has enjoyed so many years of training under Joe McCarthy—the manager Bill ranks far above all others in baseball—is giving everything he has to the job of making good. With a cool head and a stout heart with which to work, he doesn't expect to pick up all the needed managerial details in a few days or in a few weeks.

Bill has the complete affection and respect of his players, and it is my opinion that he will make few mistakes in directing up to the hilt the material he has at hand. Like other great catcher-managers—Bill Carrigan and Mickey Cochrane, for example—he has been in the best spot to know what is going on, especially in the direction of a pitching staff that still is uncertain.

No one knows better than Larry MacPhail and Bill Dickey that the Yankees need one or two more ballplayers to carry anything like an even chance to overtake Boston.



Bill Dickey