

FIRST LOVIES

by FELIX RIESENBERG

FIRST INSTALLMENT

Warm mist, filled with vague forms, hung above the lower stretches of the Hudson.

A boy, his arms folded, leaned on the cabin trunk of a barge, the Cavalier, of Haverstraw.

"Gee——!" The boy kept repeating the one word—"Gee!"

His arms, bare to above the elbows, were capable arms, browned by the sun. His doubled fists were hard and his face was freckled.

The barge carried way with her, as the water slapped her low side, for the Cavalier was at the stern end of a tow. Far ahead a tug, a little wooden puffer, exhausted white vapor in her struggle with the river. The last two, whipping about as the course was changed to avoid the ferries, seemed the tail end of a gigantic kite, sometimes in view and sometimes lost to sight.

A large black double-decker washed by, her paddles drumming an energetic tattoo on the sluggish river, her sharp stem carving and curling the water into an open greenish scar, her bows throwing off brave, white whiskers of seething foam. Rows of lighted cabin windows marched by him, square ports exuding radiance and offering glimpses of a strange interior region of flashing light and congested, breathing crowds.

A thought occurred to the boy—how he wanted to know those people. "Their names must all be different."

Pigeon Gets Home Six Months Late

Waterloo, N. Y.—First honors for last place ought to go to Sally, a racing pigeon, owned by Geo. G. Hahn. Sally was released at Warren, Pa., last October.

It took her six months to get home. Hahn suggested that she might have gone South for the winter.

THE EASIER WAY
Burglar: "Let's see how much we get on that job."
Mate: "I want to get back to bed. Let's wait for the papers."

Subscribe to The Watchman.

QUICKER, BETTER RELIEF from use of Black-Draught

"I have taken Black-Draught, off and on when needed, for twenty-five years, for it is easy to take," writes Mr. George T. Wharton, of Petersburg, Va. "I take it for constipation and when I have that dull, tired feeling. I take it for colds and other complaints where a good laxative is needed, and I believe it gives me quicker and better relief than any other medicine—I know. It certainly has been a help to me."

P. S.—If you have CHILDREN, give them the new, pleasant-tasting SYRUP of Theodor's Black-Draught.

But is there so many names?" He spoke aloud, to himself, as he often did. "They must be more'n a hundred—I guess."

The boy was nearly sixteen. Still the great gilt letters on the sides of ferry boats were unfathomable to him. He searched his mind for a meaning—W-h-e-e-l-i-n-g. His eyes traced the similarity of form.

Down in the little cabin of the Cavalier, the boy, John Breen, often lay in his bunk, behind the dresser, listening to Mother Breen reading aloud, or half aloud, her lips moving, "Speaking out of the paper." Captain Breen, who held all book learning in contempt, listened on such occasions, and smoked his pipe, shifting his short legs about in uneasy fashion, his eyes peering from under shaggy eyebrows. "Mother kin read!" Johnny Breen always said this to himself whenever he thought of reading.

Johnny Breen had been around the city many times, but each succeeding trip around the Battery found him gazing in growing fascination toward the piles of buildings banked upon the shore. He noted and remembered many things about the city. The sharp metallic clang of fire engines, the clatter of horses, iron-shod hoofs on Belgian blocks; the harsh rattle of elevated trains—how fast they went! Would he ever ride in one?

Captain Breen was a dogmatic man, close on sixty, a squat, incapable man, seeing but a short distance through a veil of red. Harriet Breen, the woman who married him, managed him. Sixteen years before, when the barge was new, he accepted a responsibility. The owners preferred a married man. Harriet came on board the Cavalier. She was an upstate girl. Breen rubbed his eyes, but he was ready to accept anything, even a wife, for she demanded her papers. Four months later Breen became the father of a son. He accepted this gift without undue complaint. If he drank to excess, Mrs. Breen was not the one to complain. The detachment, and strangeness of the broad river suited Harriet Breen. She sang to her baby boy. A calm insensibility possessed her. She was still a handsome woman, twenty years younger than the captain, when the Cavalier rounded the Battery on that misty evening in spring.

The years go fast on the river. John Breen became a strong and capable barge hand, an expert swimmer, a great help and comfort to his mother. Suddenly he had grown, grown almost over night, bursting out of his clothing. The fact that his laugh and a certain trick of pawing through his hair reminded her of another wild impetuous boy caused Harriet Breen to flush. John's father had been only a few years older, when she came to the Cavalier.

"We got to put Johnny to school," Mrs. Breen remarked to Captain Breen, busy at the small coal stove, turning a pan of biscuits with the hem of her apron.

"All right, Mother, we'll send him, when we lay up this year." He began filling his pipe. "It's getting mighty

thick."
"Where we now?"
"Turned up of the East River. Them's the Fulton Ferry bells. I'll call John—"

Johnny, his eyes drawn into the deepening blur of the warm enveloping night, hearing strange sounds, thinking huge thoughts, heard the talk below, coming up out of the square of light. How he loved his mother! He was going to school—perhaps to school in the city—the monumental city shrouded in the fog.

Suddenly there was a crash! In the Morning Advertiser of Saturday, May 12th, 1900, fourth page, column six, near the bottom of the page, smothered on one side by a reading notice for Peruna, was a scant news item:

THREE DROWN ON BARGE
The brick barge Cavalier of Haverstraw, McGurtney Brother Brick Company, collided with an unknown craft in the East River just south of Brooklyn Bridge during the heavy fog last night and sank. Captain Breen, wife, and son are missing.

At the point where Manhattan shoves an elbow into the river and the Brooklyn Bridge swings high above the shipping, we must take up the story of Johnny Breen. His dreaming kept him on deck. The conversation below, the warm mystery above the river moaning and whispering, held him in a spell. Then a terrific blast was followed instantly by a crash of rending wood, the snarl of rushing water, the panic cry of Mother Breen—"Johnny!" It was the last word he heard; he was tossed over the side by the sudden impact and sank beneath the surface. The weight of water drummed in his ears as he went down.

He struck out boldly. He gained the line of piers, his hands slipped from the slimy cluster piles, he washed upstream, swimming bravely. At the next pierhead he made a desperate effort, lifted himself on a cleat roughly nailed to the piling. It was the bottom of one of those rude ladders sometimes found on pier ends; devices nailed by the river rats—the thieves. Johnny Breen dragged his aching body above the water, climbed to the stringpiece and rolled exhausted in the mud.

For a time Johnny Breen lay there stunned. His muscles were sore, his head throbbled, he was sick, nauseated, from vile water he had swallowed. The world spun about him in a maelstrom of disaster. He stood, then walked unsteadily in the dark. He saw the dim shadow of a covered van. It offered shelter, he climbed in. He sank between two bales, the sounds of the river were stilled. The water was blotted from his clothing, a warm glow crept over him; strong arms seemed to enfold him. The terror and turmoil of the night melted away.

THE GHETTO
Johnny was awakened by the movement of the wagon.

"Mama!" he cried with a start of terror. The horror of the night burst upon him anew. A torturing thirst closed his throat. His torn shirt was streaked with mud and grease. His

hair was matted with dried slime. His eye-lids stuck together, his swollen lips were dry and hot and his pants were hanging by half their buttons. His bare feet and legs were bruised and caked with dry mud and manure. He began to cry, tears forcing through the sticky eyelashes, streaking down his pitiful face. He had the aspect of a forlorn waif, only his bare body was brown and muscular, but his mouth curled down and utter sorrow claimed him.

His bed, among the bales of waste paper, was jerking and swaying, and, as he cried, a canvas flap was lifted. An evil face glared into the van.

"What the hell!" A thick and unfriendly voice shouted at him. The face had a wicked mouth, edged with broken teeth, brown and green. Johnny saw a monster, a dragon, glaring and cursing him. "Git tha hell out of there! Git out, ya crummy rat!"

Johnny, still crying, sat up amid the bales. His head bumped the ribs of the van. He rubbed dirt into his eyes and smeared the dried filth on his face wet with tears. He was a dismal sight.

"Out ya git!" The driver reached for his whip; Johnny slipped back over the load of paper. "Out an' ta hell wit ya!" The team, fresh, full of fear, sensing the whip, started on a gallop with the heavy load. The wagon reeled toward the curb and Johnny, sliding from the bales of paper, dropped to the tailboard out under the end flap. He let go and fell to the gutter, stuned by his impact with the cobblestones.

The street was on a fringe of tenements, where the Ghetto touches the wharves. It was a fearsome neighborhood. High houses loomed over him, strange smells and noises confounded him as he slowly rose to his feet, tending in the midst of a curious crowd of half-grown children who suddenly materialized, as if sprung from the stones. It was an eager Saturday morning crowd of waterfront boys—a gang.

"Hully chee, lookit dat bum! What in 'ell's bitin' 'im? He's lousy. Whew—what a stink!"

RESOLUTIONS

WHEREAS, the resignation of Mr. E. J. Coltrane as Superintendent of the Salisbury City Schools has been regretfully accepted by the City Board of Education,

AND WHEREAS, this Board desires to place on record its appreciation and high regard for the notable services rendered by Mr. Coltrane as Secretary to the Board, as Superintendent of the City Schools and as useful citizen of Salisbury and of the State,

AND WHEREAS, this Board commends Mr. Coltrane's splendid leadership and declares him an educator of vision, efficient and practical.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this Board express to Mr. Coltrane its gratitude for his untiring efforts in maintaining and developing a conservatively progressive educational program, regrets at the loss of his valuable services, and best wishes for happiness and success in his new field of educational work.

RESOLVED FURTHER, that a copy of this resolution be given Mr. Coltrane, that copies be given the press and that this resolution be incorporated in the official proceedings of this Board.

MRS. B. V. HEDRICK,
ED. L. HEILIG,
W. O. RYBURN,
C. S. MORRIS,
Committee.



Max Schmeling, German defending champion and Jack Sharkey, American challenger, have at least one distinction for their world championship battle at New York, that of having drawn the smallest world title "gate" receipts—since Dempsey and Gibbons at Shelby, Mont., 1923.

The crowd rubbed near Johnny. He turned as they milled about. He backed to the center of the street and stood defiant, legs apart, his trousers torn and half down, covered with dirt, his shirt ragged and streaked, his matted yellow hair over his eyes. Hostile boys closed in and surrounded him.

"Doity. Where ja come, outto de ewer? Hey stinkey! Soak 'im! Lemme at 'im!"

Several bigger boys, tough, daring with the heartless ethics of the pack, kicked and cuffed as Johnny turned in torment. Idle men in shallow derbys, men in black coats, and bearded men such as John had never seen, paused to watch the boys.

"De Grogan Geng is out! Oy, what a business, de Grogan Geng!" The tough boys were really the Grogan Gang, or part of them. A boy taller than the rest, wearing a dented derby, came close to Johnny and spat in his face. A hard dirty brown fist shot out with desperate force. The tall boy howled, his derby rolling at his feet in the gutter. The blow was utterly unexpected. It caught him in the stomach, and he doubled up. The crowd backed and then came at Johnny.

"He hit 'im below de belt. He fouled 'im." The crowd looked ugly, and missiles gathered from the gutter began to fly. "Kill 'im!" Suddenly there was a hush. Down by the river a blue coat moved toward them. "Cheeze it, de cops! Cheeze it, beat it! Cops!"

The crowd began to run, Johnny Breen at their head, having dashed through the circle of boys under a rain of tin cans and refuse.

By a supreme effort he distanced the mob and the rogans, long lost in the rear and off for other excitements, but the wave continued. Johnny, running into newer and stranger crowds, suddenly was greeted by a terrific crash of noise as he dodged under the shadow of a cross street. The maw of the city seemed about to grasp and grind him, body and soul. In a final effort to escape annihilation, he closed his eyes and plunged headlong into a hole; a human rat seeking oblivion. He jumped into an open basement doorway—an elevated train thundered overhead and behind him.

For a long while he lay in the hole, his head doubled under his arms, in a dark, damp corner among rubbish. All was dark; many trains passed by, and he began to regain his breath and sense. At last he determined to crawl toward the light, when the trap door to the walk flopped down. He heard the snap of a padlock.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Constance Bennett At Capitol Theatre Monday and Tues.

Fold up your fan magazine. Never mind about the radio chatter's "inside stuff." Put away that dime novel purporting to be the confessions of a California cook. Discard that actress maid's recollections.

If you want the truth about Hollywood, it will be at the Capitol Theatre Monday and Tuesday in the shape of RKO Pathe's "What Price Hollywood."

Constance Bennett is starred in this farcical and keenly penetrating picture of the movie capitol, and again proves she is a talented comedienne as she is a dramatic actress.

THE LONG PRAYER

Umptediddy—The gunman ordered me to get on my knees and pray before he killed me.

Pastor—So you were saved by prayer, my son?

Umptediddy—Yes, Reverend, I said the long one you make on Sunday mornings, and he fell asleep.

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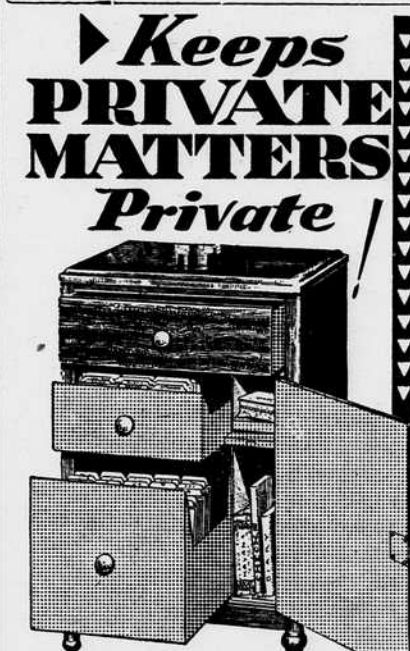
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