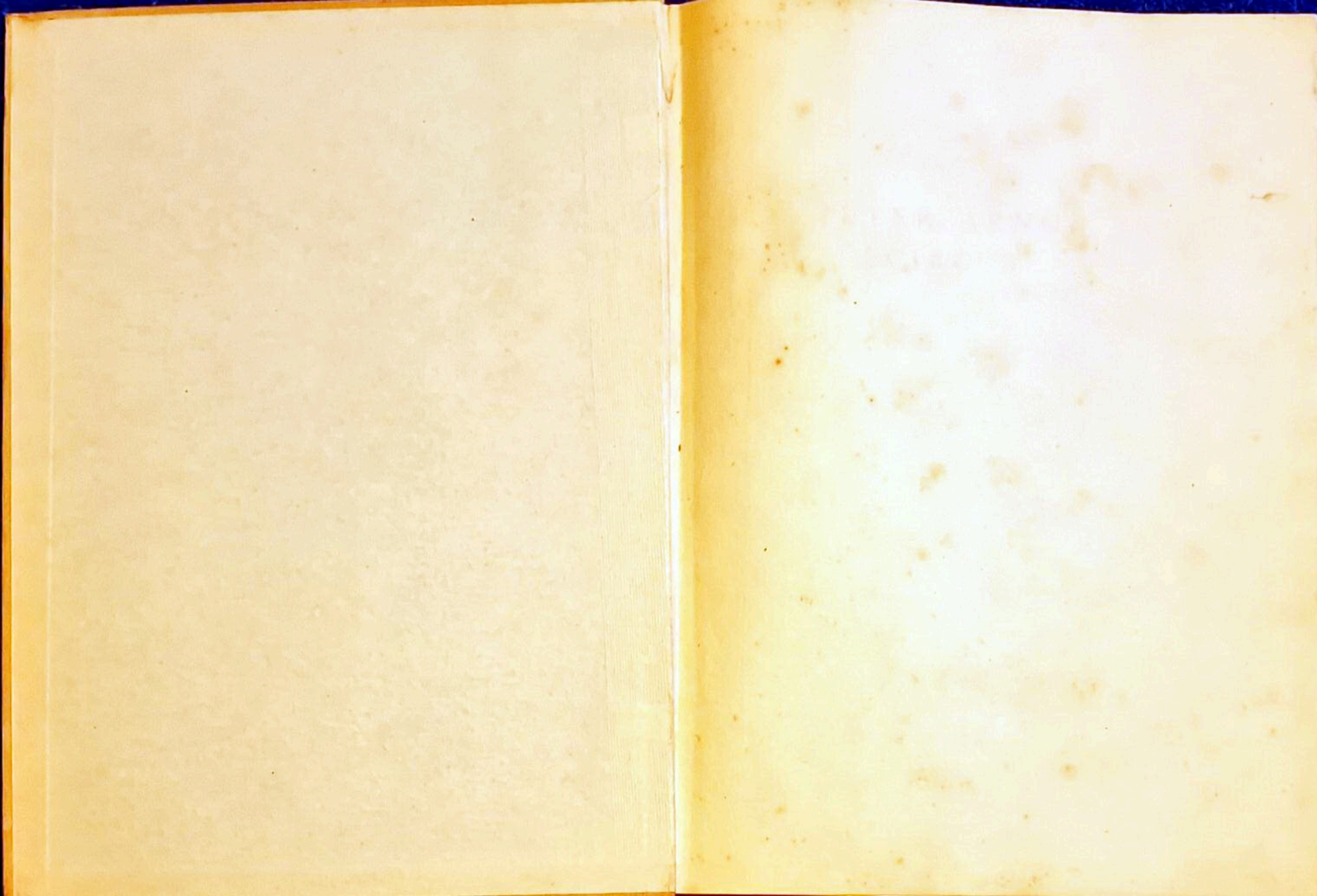
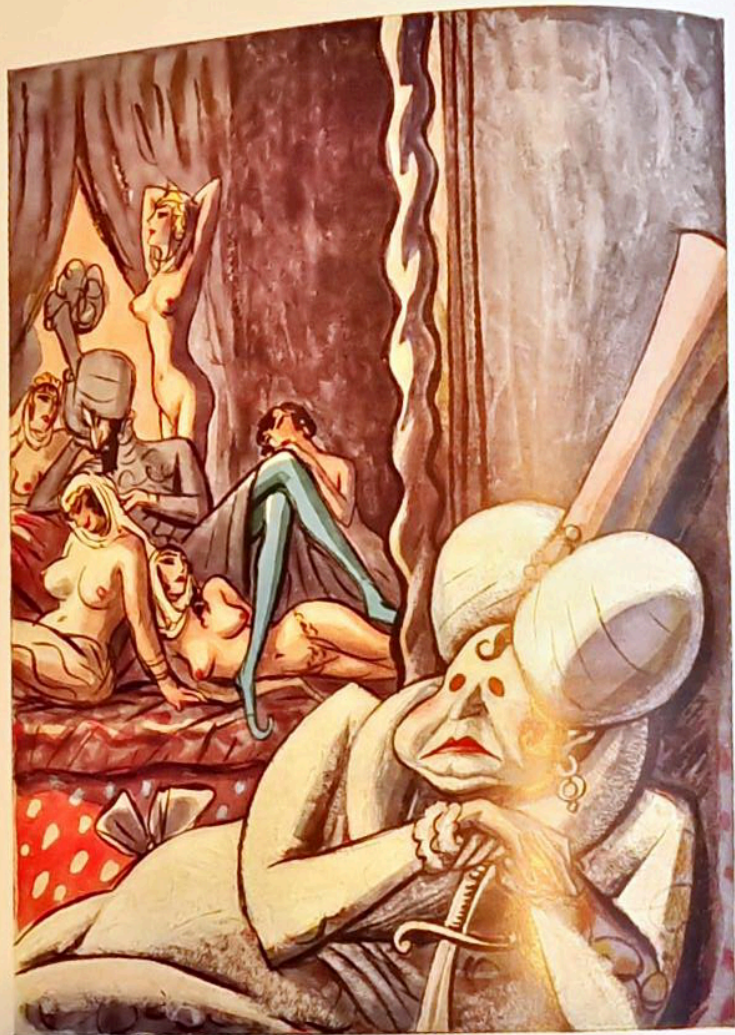


Peter
Armo's
CIRCUS





"I never should have let them talk me into this."

PETER ARNO'S CIRCUS

WITH AN
INTRODUCTION BY
J. B. PRIESTLEY

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THE BORED LADY: "Oh, dear Heaven! Hand it here and I'll kiss it!"

INTRODUCTION BY

J. B. PRIESTLEY

AT LEAST once a week, I suppose, I catch sight of some droll bit of reality and say to myself "There's a Peter Arno." It is difficult to spend much time in large cities and not to find the world going all Arno-ish. In luxurious hotels, expensive restaurants, big liners, Arno figures are always popping up. Bond Street and Berkeley Square never fail to offer some Arno situations. This is a tribute to his astonishing success as a pictorial humorist and satirist, and also shows that he is a genuine artist of power, for he compels us to use his eyes, imposes his own vision of things upon our minds. I do not pretend to be an authority upon pictorial satire, but I cannot believe that any other young black-and-white artist of our time has been as successful as this spruce and still youthful American. The only man we could set up against him here is David Low, who, if he had chosen to work in this field of social satire, could easily have done for London what Peter Arno has done for New York. (And I hope that America is given the chance of appreciating Low's brilliant and incisive work.) But comparisons and contrasts will not help us much.

Honesty pays even in introductions of this kind, so I propose to admit at once that Peter Arno has his limitations and to declare what seem to me his chief weaknesses. I think he spends too much of his time satirising a kind of life—that of the infantile rich—that is obviously idiotic anyhow, and tends to parody itself. I should like to see him sharpening his pencil for an attack upon a kind of life and set of people that the public takes far more seriously, the real solemn big-wigs. One

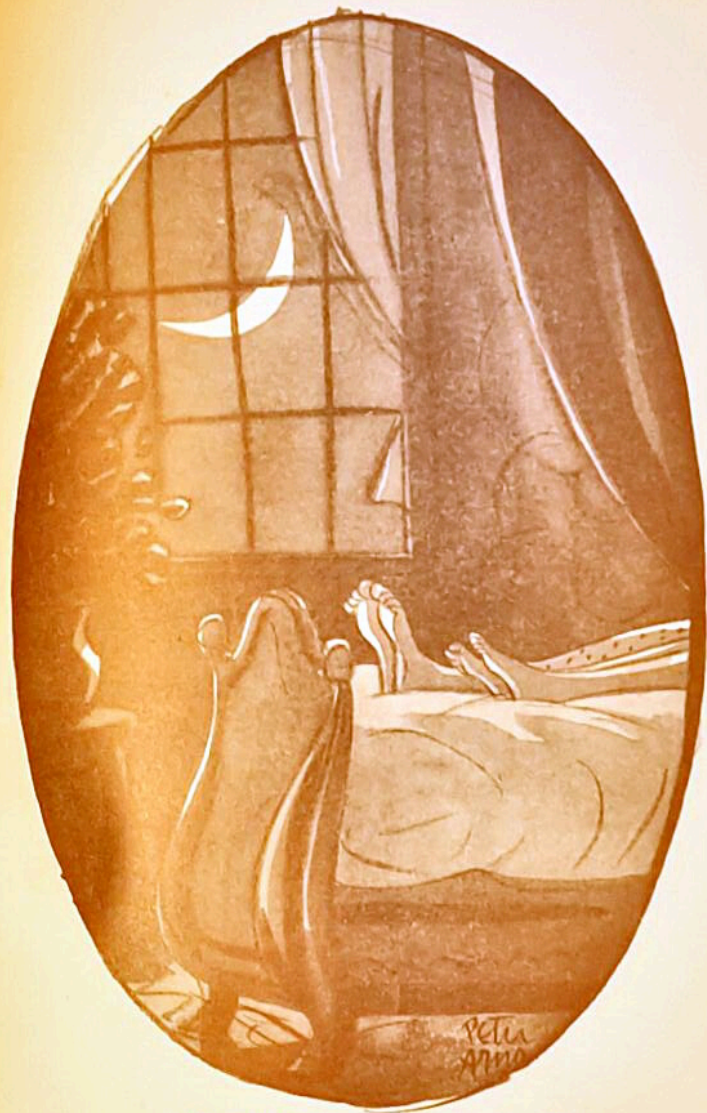
could put it another way: too many of his drawings are concerned with life after eleven at night—the drunken party, the silly night club, and so forth; whereas I should like to see more of them dealing with events of the morning and afternoon, events in business and politics, Washington and Wall Street instead of Broadway and Fifth Avenue. To this Mr. Arno could very reasonably reply that I must take him for what he is, a social satirist. My only retort would be that he carries such magnificent guns that I sometimes long to see him after heavier game. Within the scope he has set himself, he has very few limitations, probably none at all in the sight of his fellow-countrymen. I can only hint that now and again he seems to be merely enjoying a freedom from puritanical repressions and inhibitions, celebrating a happy release, rather than being genuinely funny on some sexual theme. There are occasional drawings of his that appear to be meant for a public that is newly and thrillingly aware of its sexual tolerance, and not for persons who have had a fully adult attitude of mind for some time about such matters.

For the rest, one can but praise. What raises Peter Arno far above the general level of humorous black-and-white artists is the combination in his work of pungently witty and satirical ideas and fine comic draughtsmanship. His outlook is cynical, disillusioned, sardonic, like that of most New York wits. On the other hand, his actual drawing is genuinely humorous, full of pictorial high spirits, rich with laughter. The result is a most excellent bitter-sweet flavour, which we recognise at once to be his. It is this perhaps that makes him one of the representative young men of our time, which has produced an odd generation, at once disillusioned and lively, determined to go everywhere and see everything and yet not be taken in. We may not admire the peculiar outlook of this generation (I don't much myself), but when its destructive activities take on such a charming and witty shape, as they do in these drawings, we must be grateful. I think it quite possible that within the next twenty years there may be such profound changes in our social

life that the subject-matter of these drawings will then appear fantastically remote, and some of these comic figures will be as extinct as the dodo. By that time all the sting will be gone, though the humorous quality of the drawings themselves will remain and no doubt will be highly appreciated. But in the meantime, here in this book is a part of our world seen through the eyes of a young man of comic genius.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P. Arno', written in a cursive, flowing style. The signature is positioned on the right page of the book, below the main text.

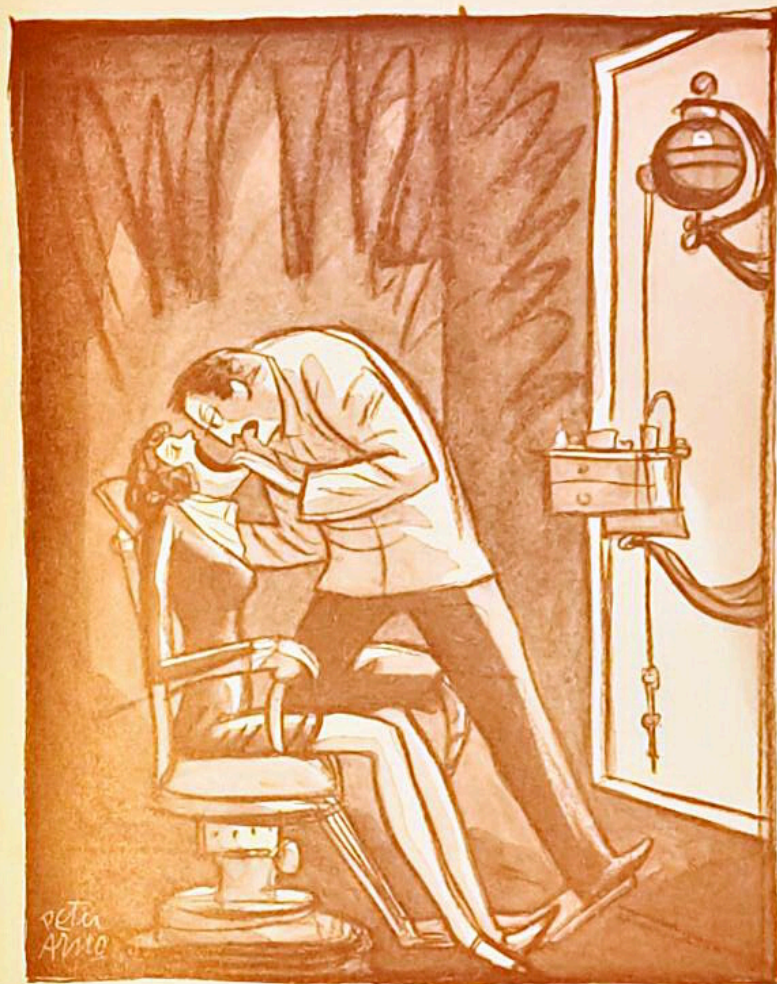
PETER ARNO'S
CIRCUS



"Haf you had any previous experiance in pictures?"



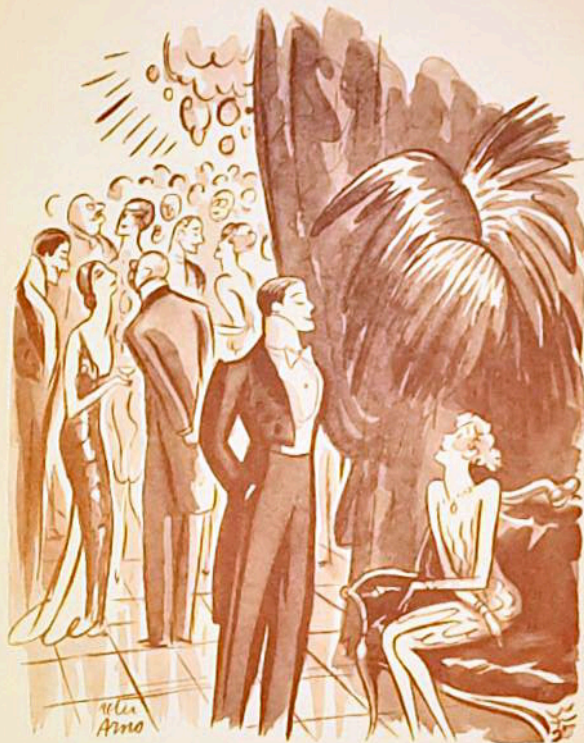
"Mercy, Herbert, don't put that on! You don't know who's been wearing it!"



"You're married, aren't you?"



"How much are your chestnuts?"



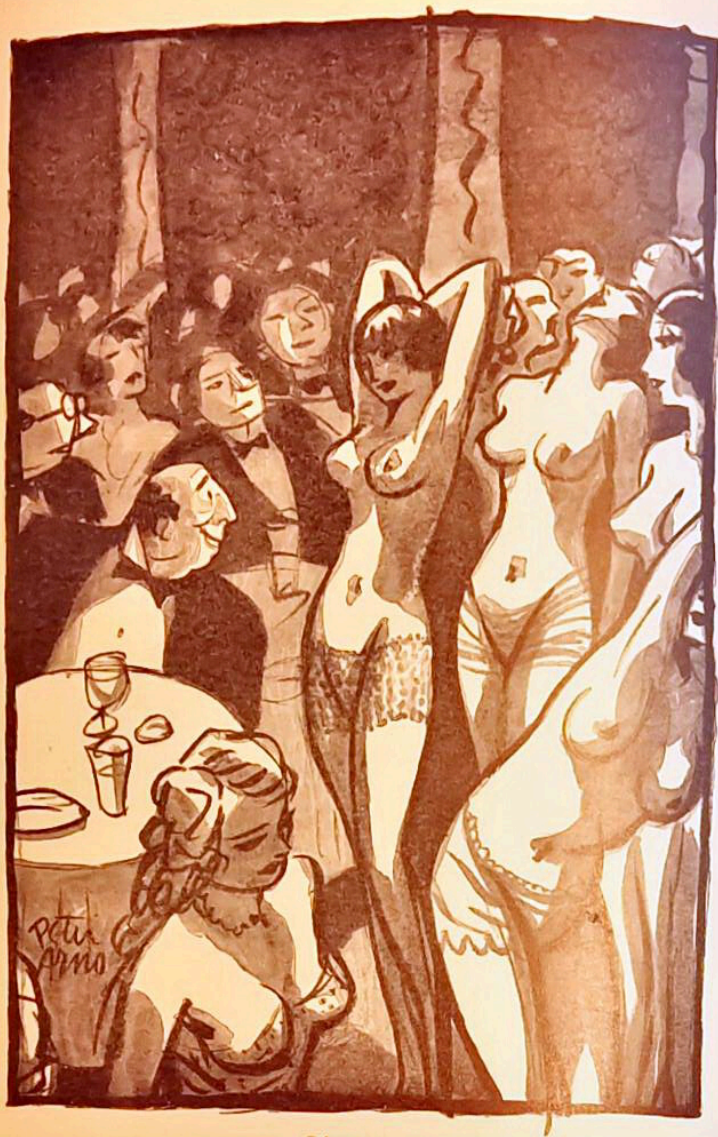
"You do give such perfect parties, Alice. Is there anyone here you'd like to meet?"



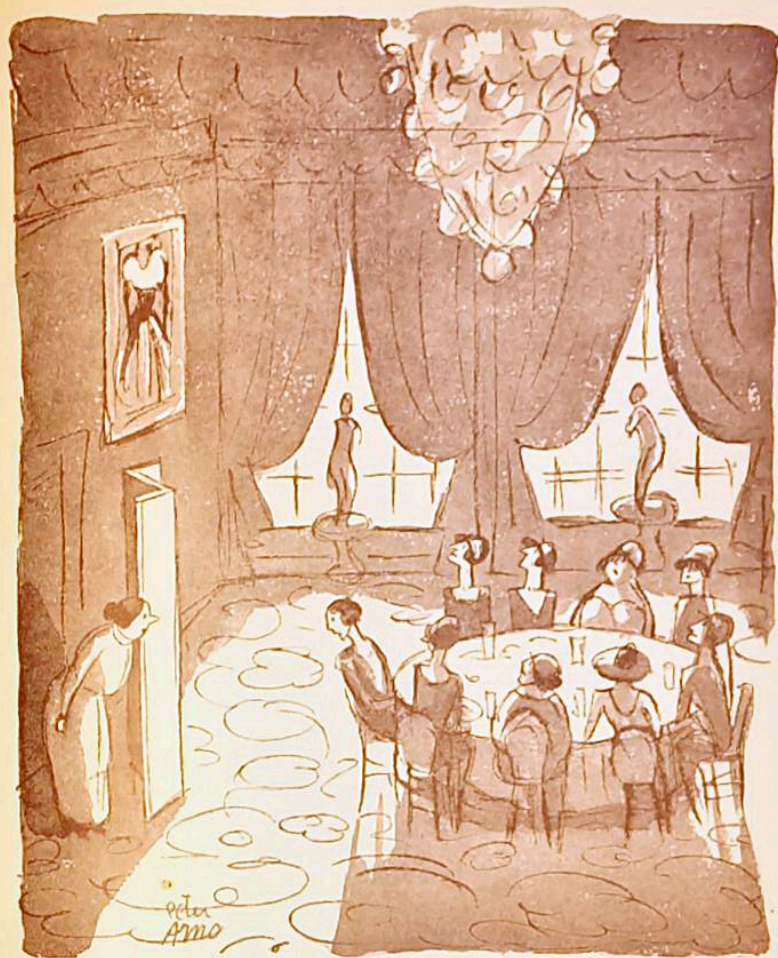
"C'mon, Ambassador—let's get fried!"



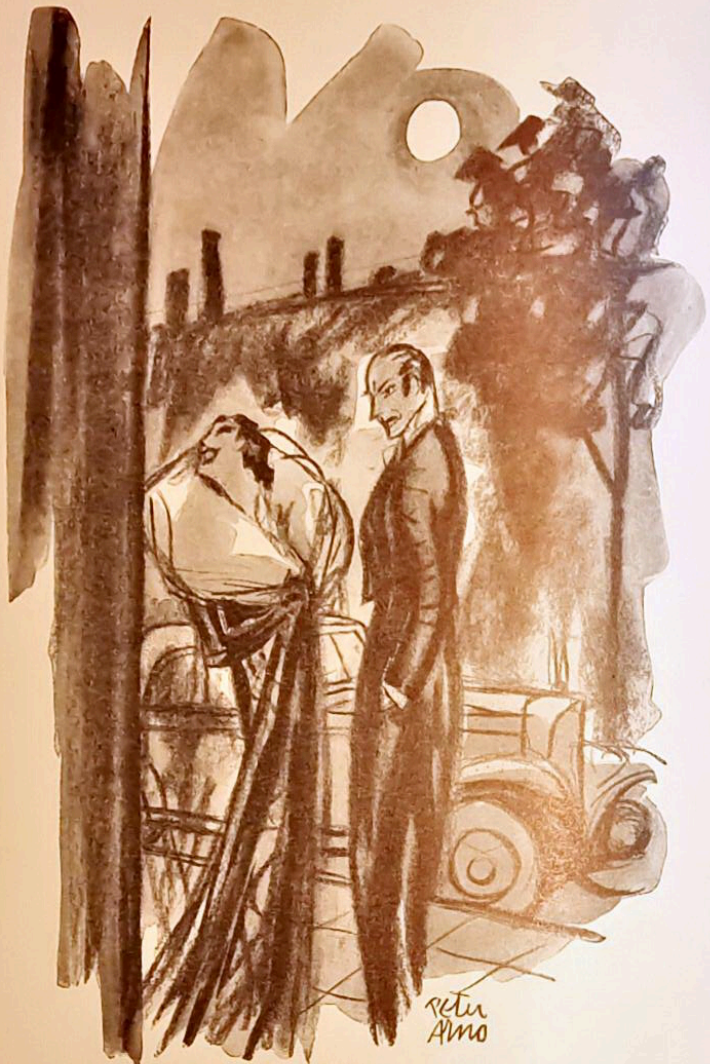
"Now, 'Chopsticks.'"



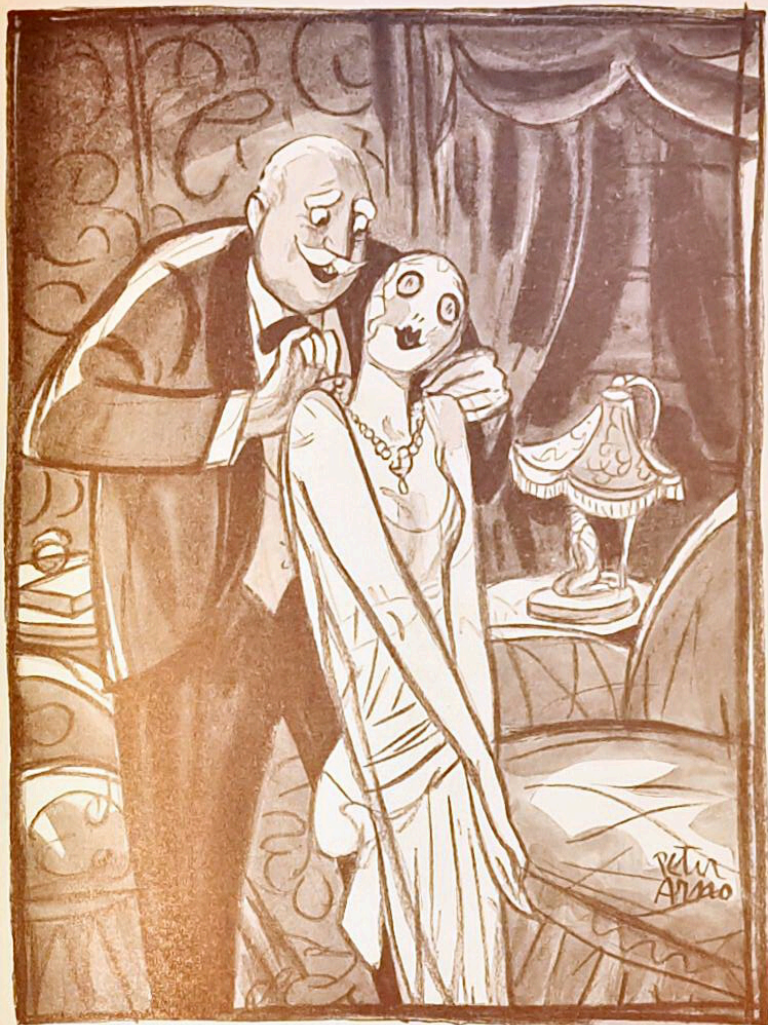
Cabaret



"Say, Mrs. Van Sant, the exterminator's here."



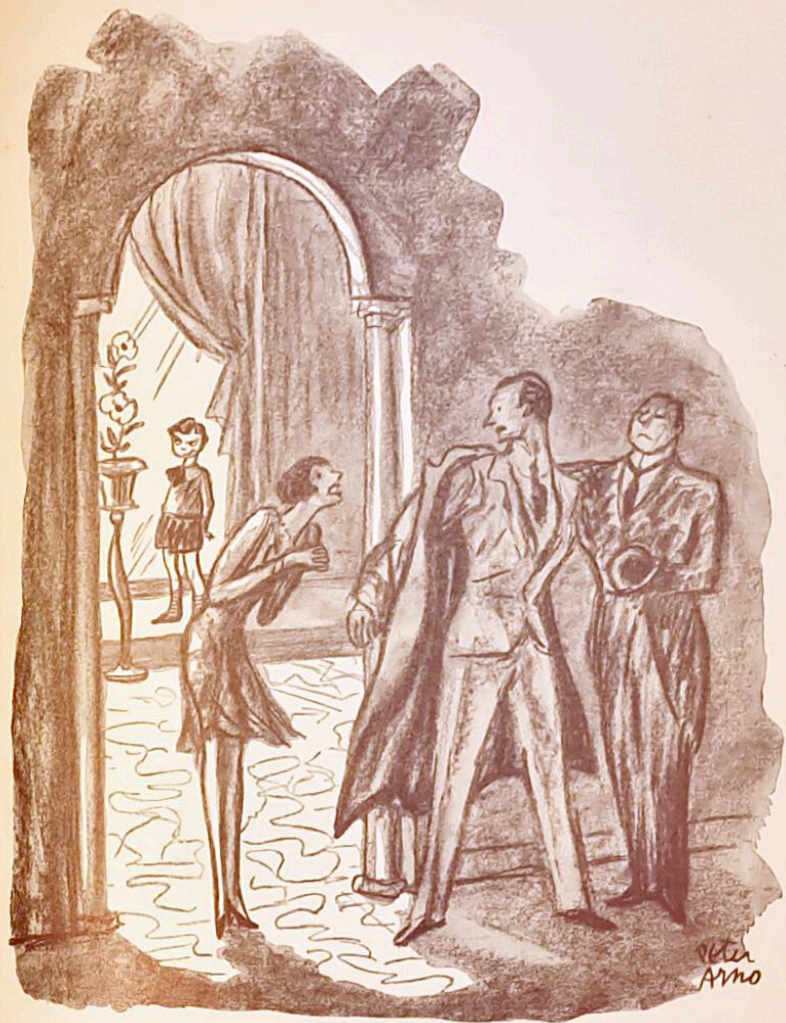
Lovers Quarrel.



"Did you really think I was going to eat you, little girl?"



The hero of "Love's Mistake" sees his mother off on the Century.



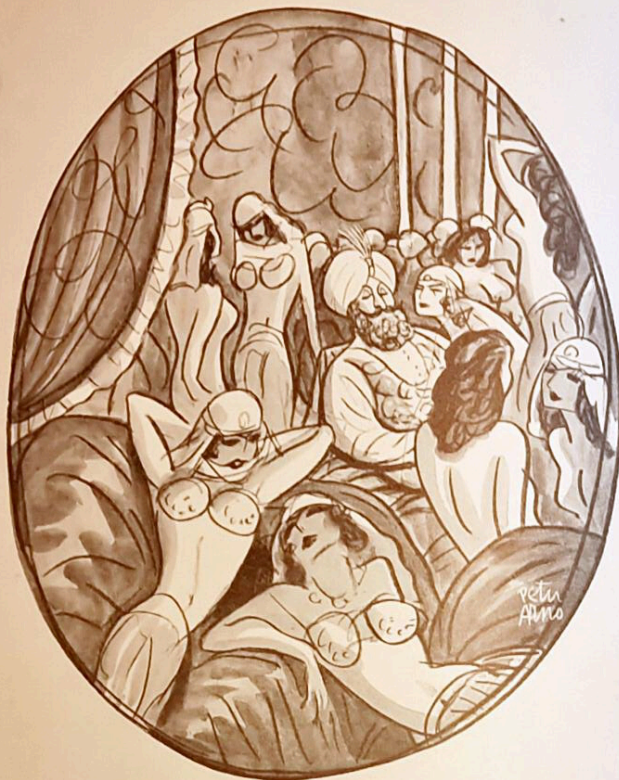
"It's done, Frank—Junior's all told."
"Told what?"
"You know—all about the flowers."



"Maybe we should have waited for that guide."



"Oh by the way, Mr. Milton—meet Miss La Vere"



Harem.



"Why Auntie—what big eyes you have!"



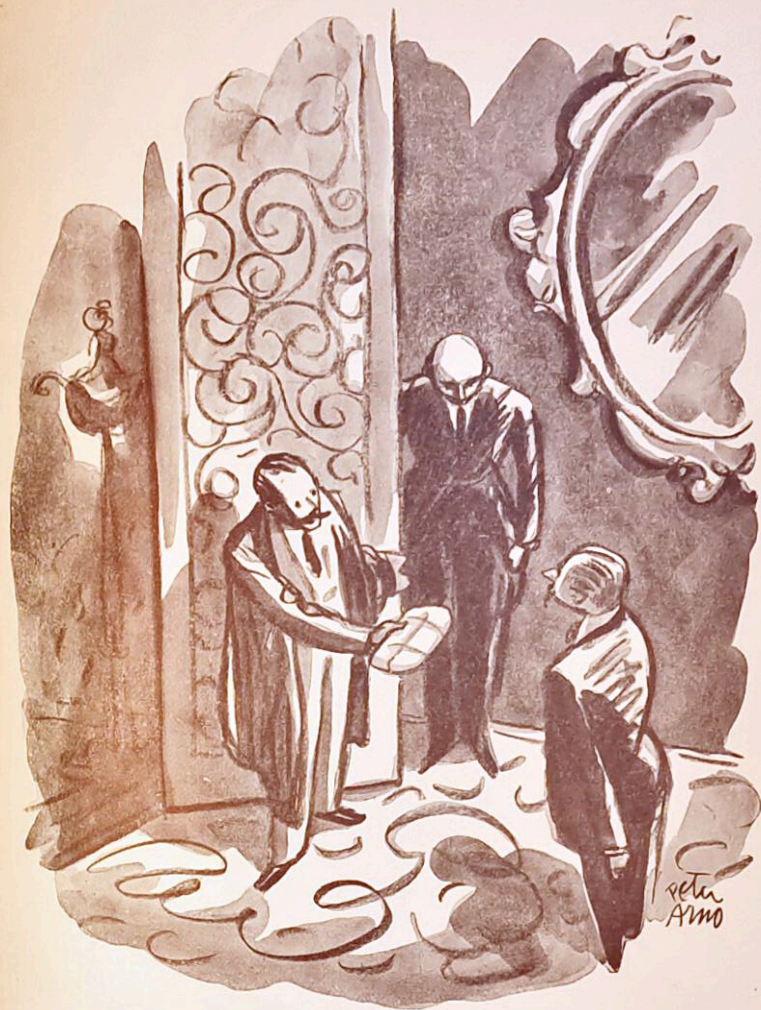
The beach—Cannes.



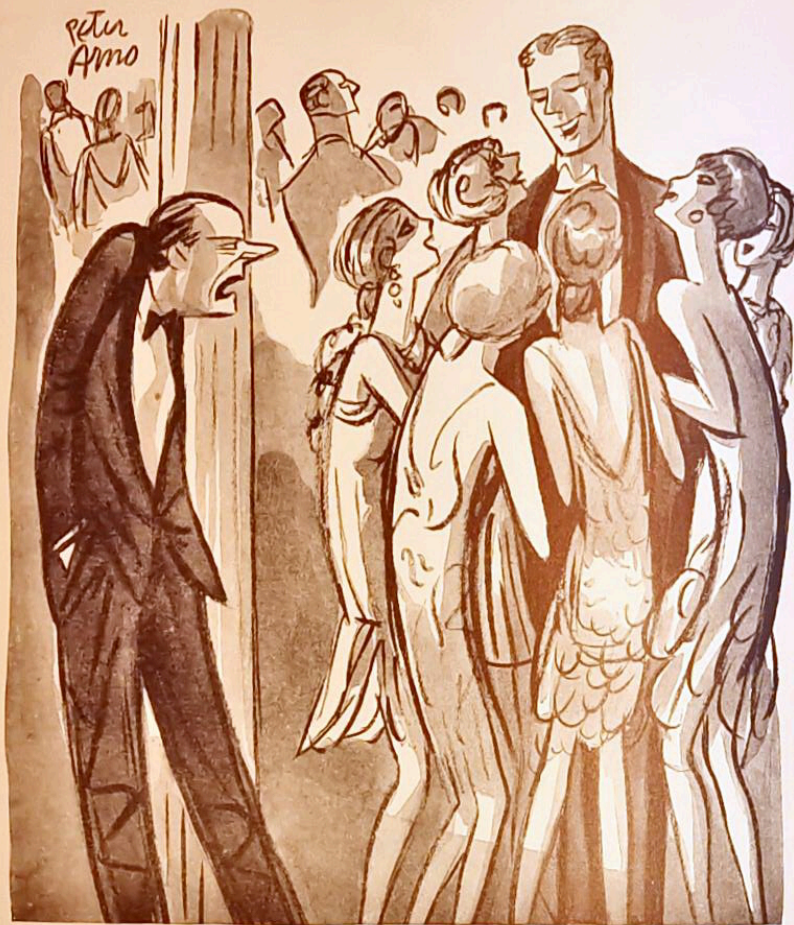
Celery



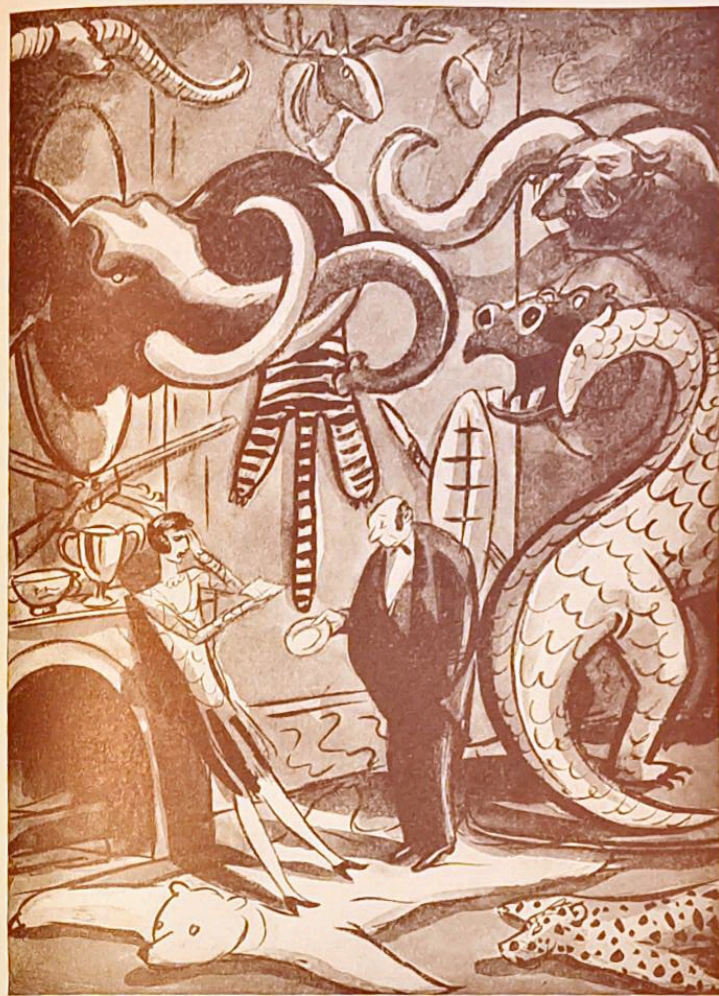
"I'm sorry the mater's out, Mrs. Titus. Shall I tell her you barged in?"



"Good evening, Mr. Foolum — I just dropped in to return Mrs. Foolum's pajamas."



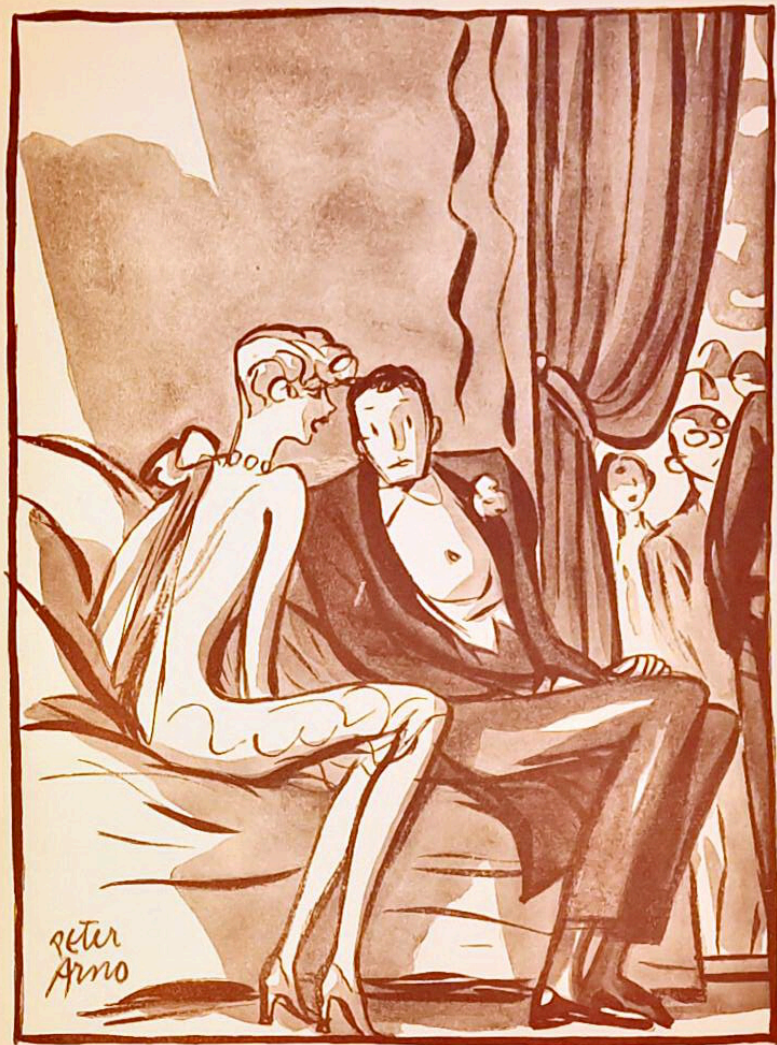
"Yeast Eater!"



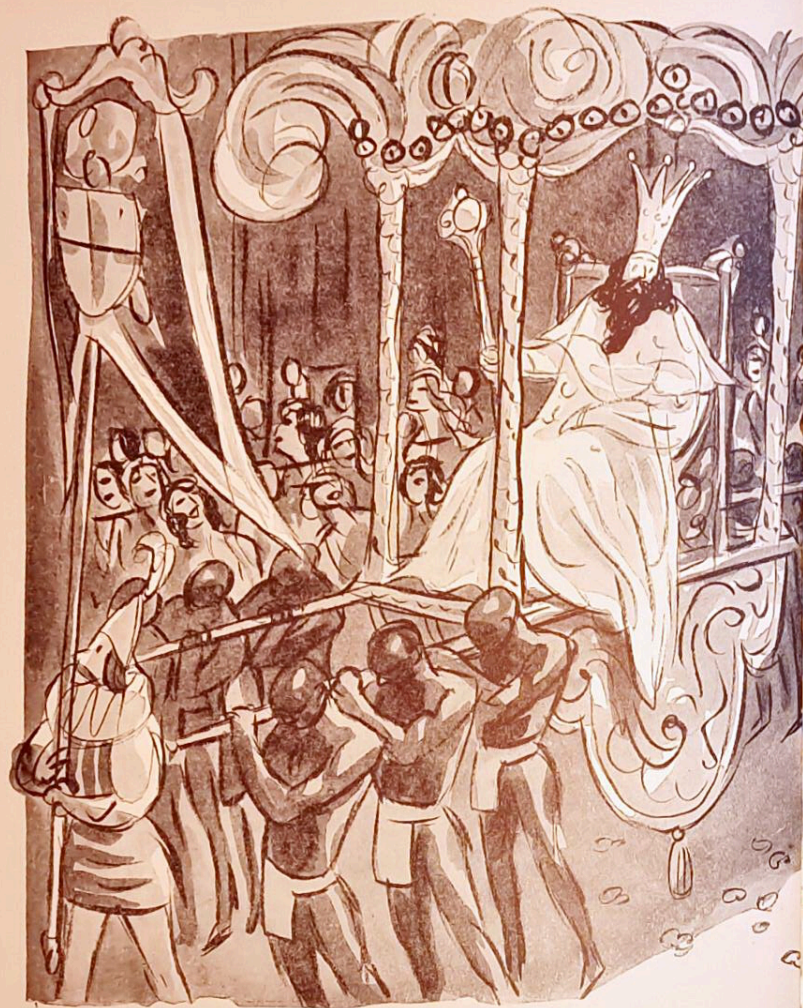
QX13 VIA RADIO REYKJAVIK ICELAND 23 COLLECT
HELEN HACKBUT 4 EAST 60TH STREET NY
DEAR HELEN JUST BAGGED WHALE LOVE HENRY



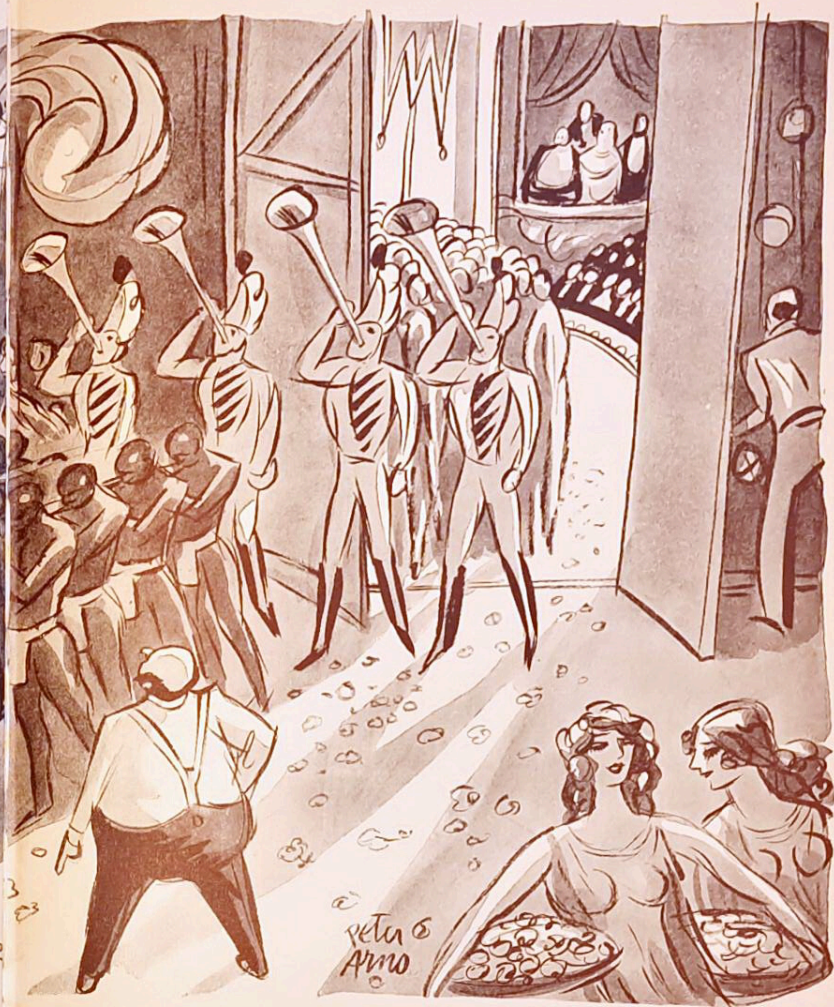
"Ah, Major—How's your wooden leg?"



"You're very wistful tonight."
"Wistful hell! I'm cockeyed!"



"Hey, Schmaltz! Yer old



lady wants y' on the phone."

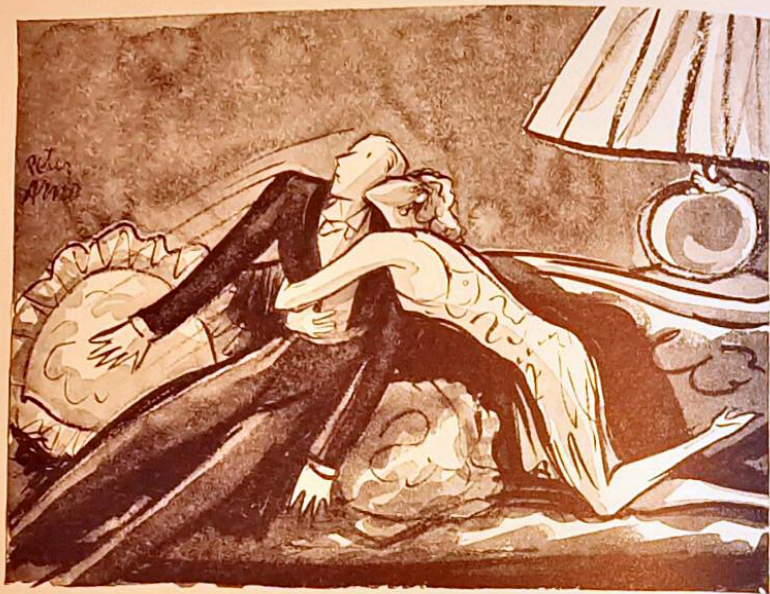
Peter
Arno



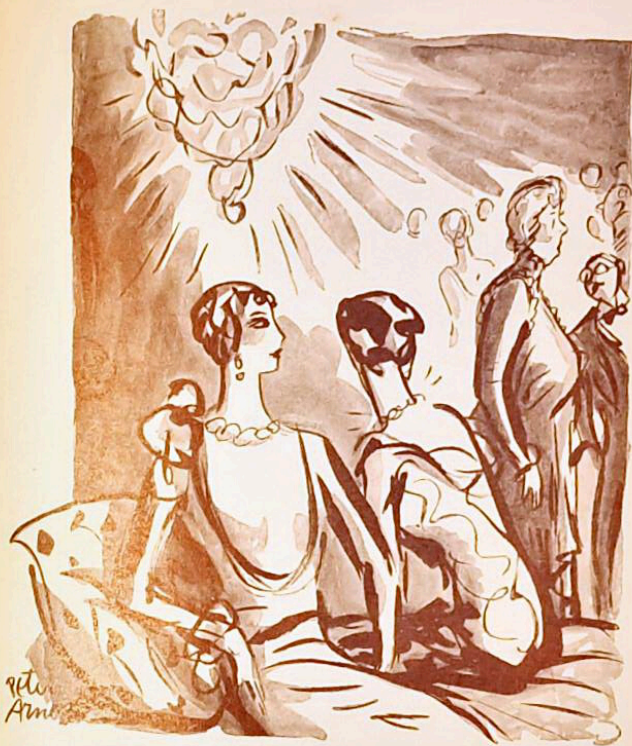
"She was wearing that dress the night we got engaged."



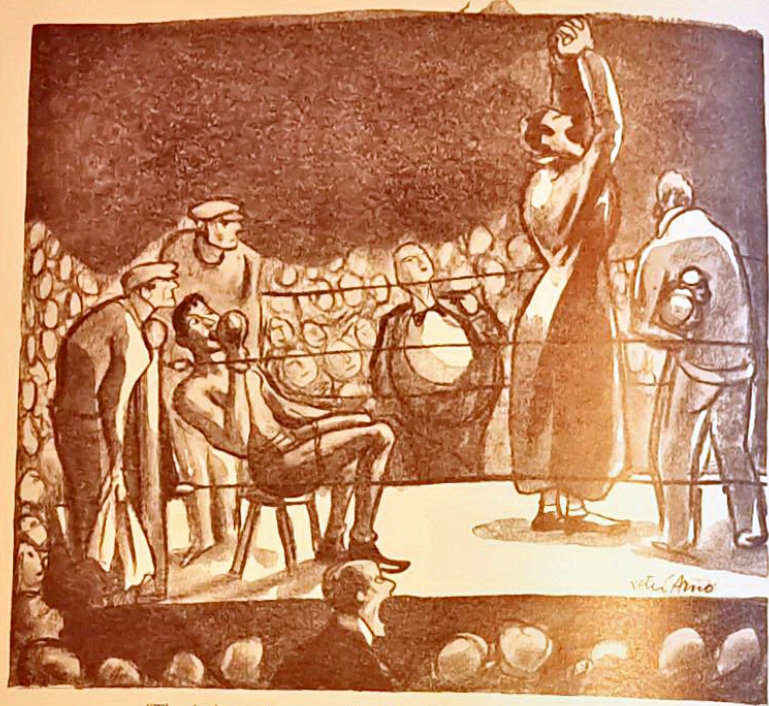
"By God, Suh—Ah won't fohget this insult!"



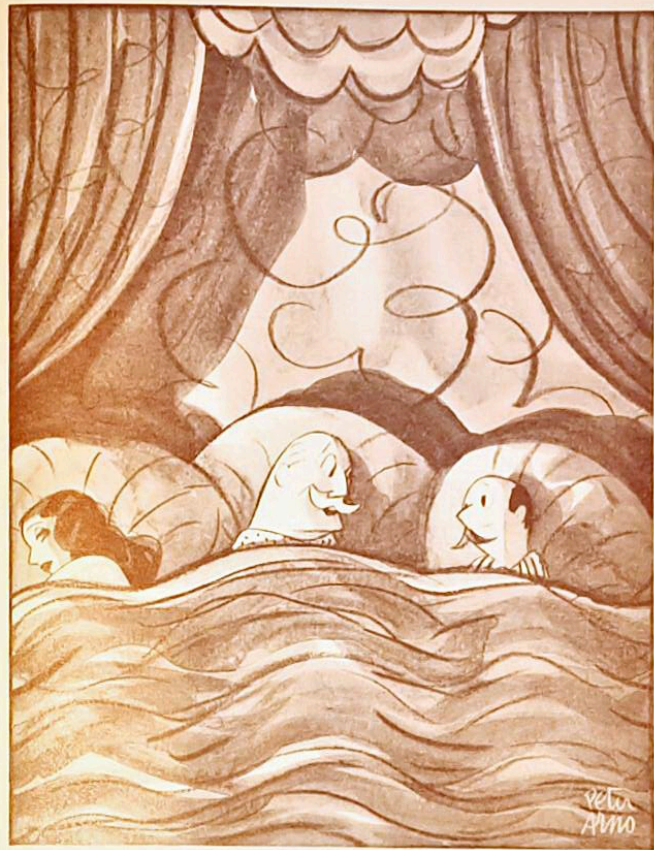
"Oh, Hortense, do you think you could ever learn to love me?"



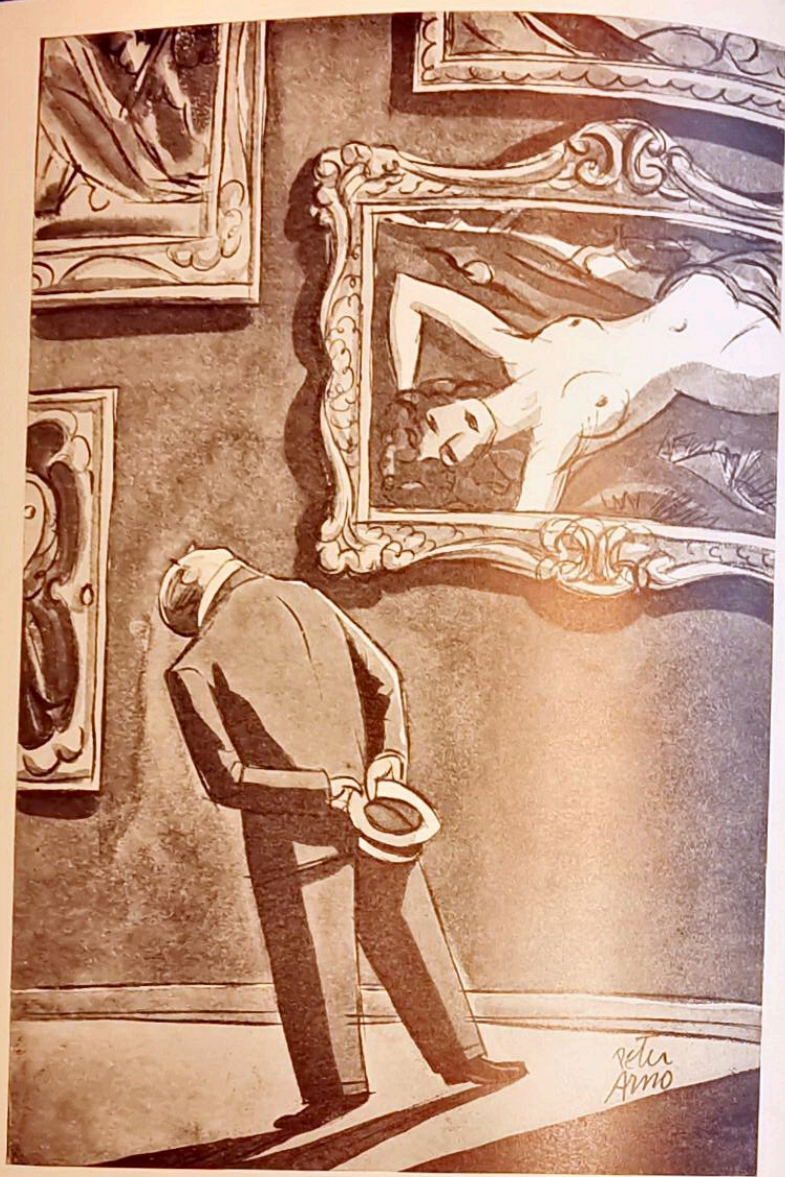
"She? Oh you know the kind—she probably feeds pigeons."



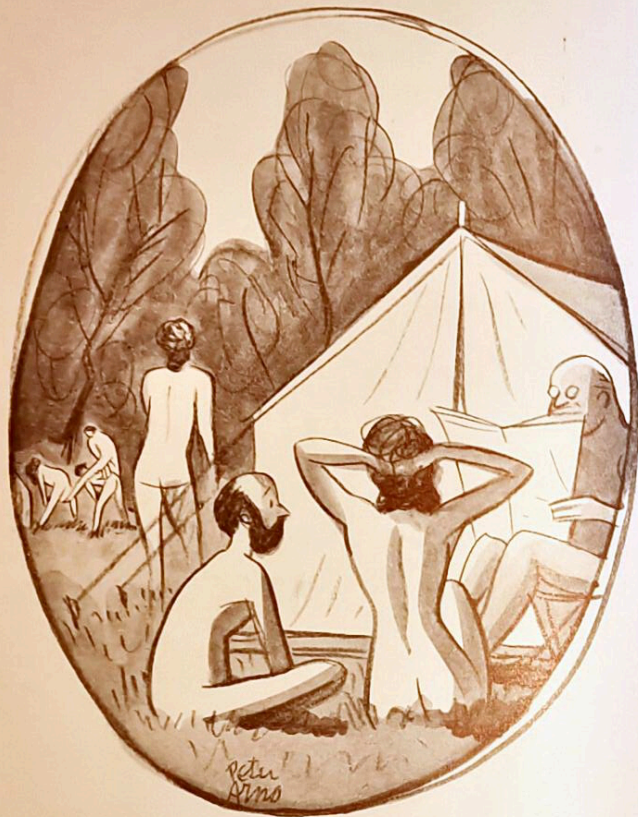
"There's that cerise wrap again. I don't believe he has another rag to his name."



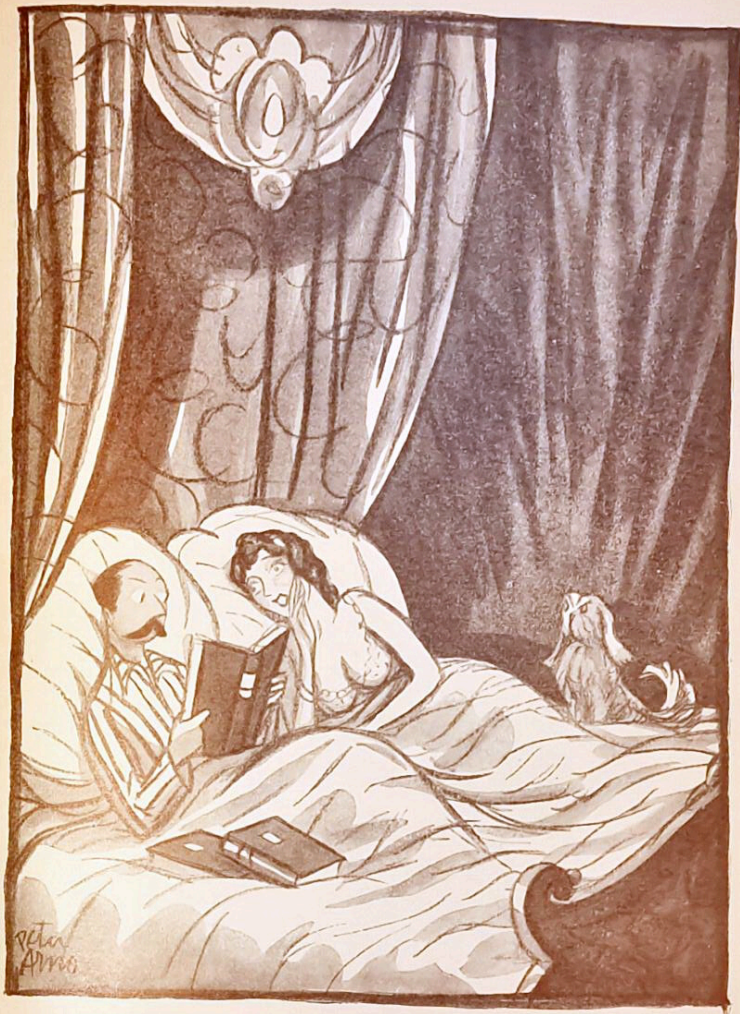
"Awfully nice of you to ask me to stay."



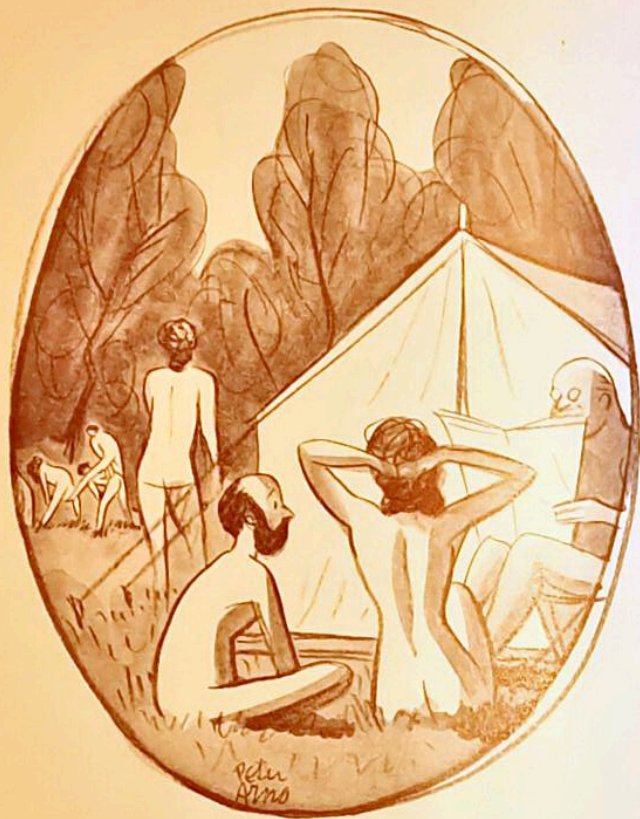
"You're so kind to me,
and I'm so tired of it all!"



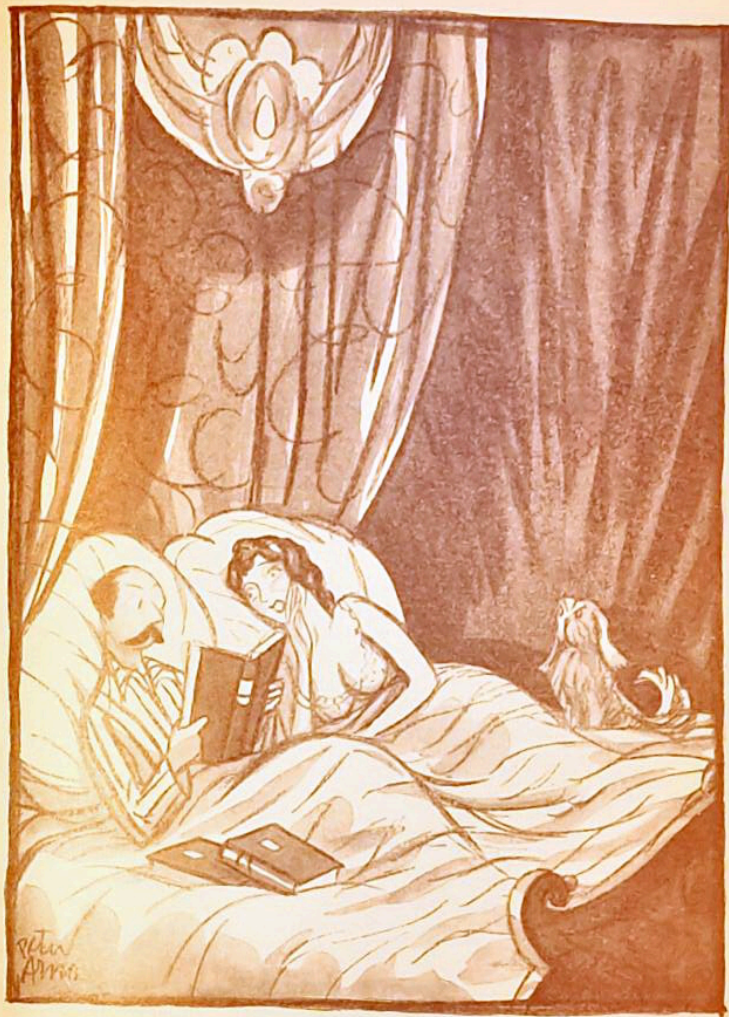
"Do I wear a black tie to the Throckmorton's to-night?"



"Darling, I'm going to have a B-A-B-Y."



"Do I wear a black tie to the Throckmorton's to-night?"



"Darling, I'm going to have a B-A-B-Y."



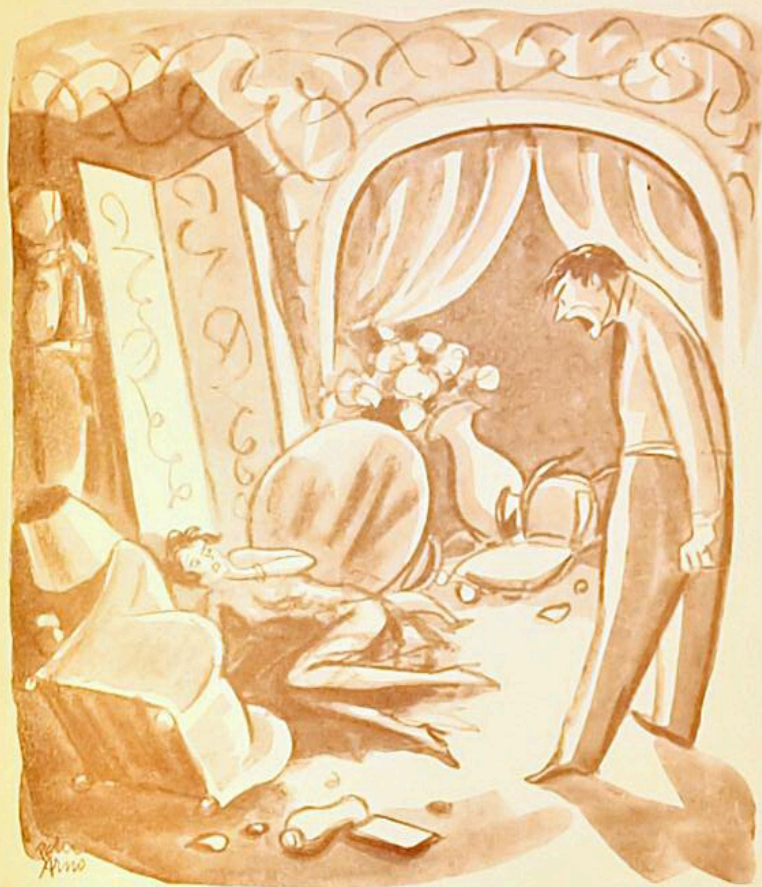
"Come now! Don't be a prima donna!"



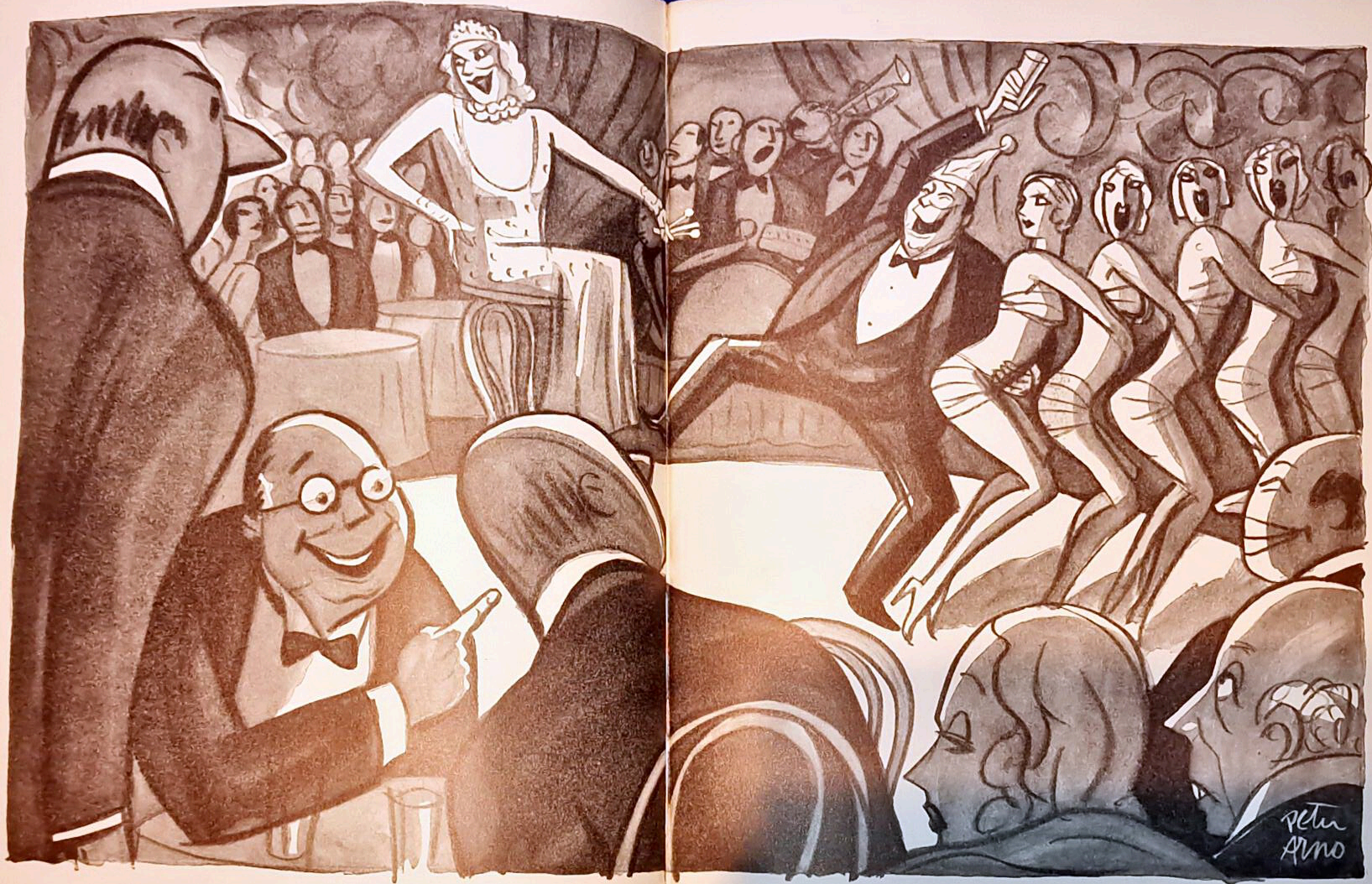
Is there any place here I can get at my purse?



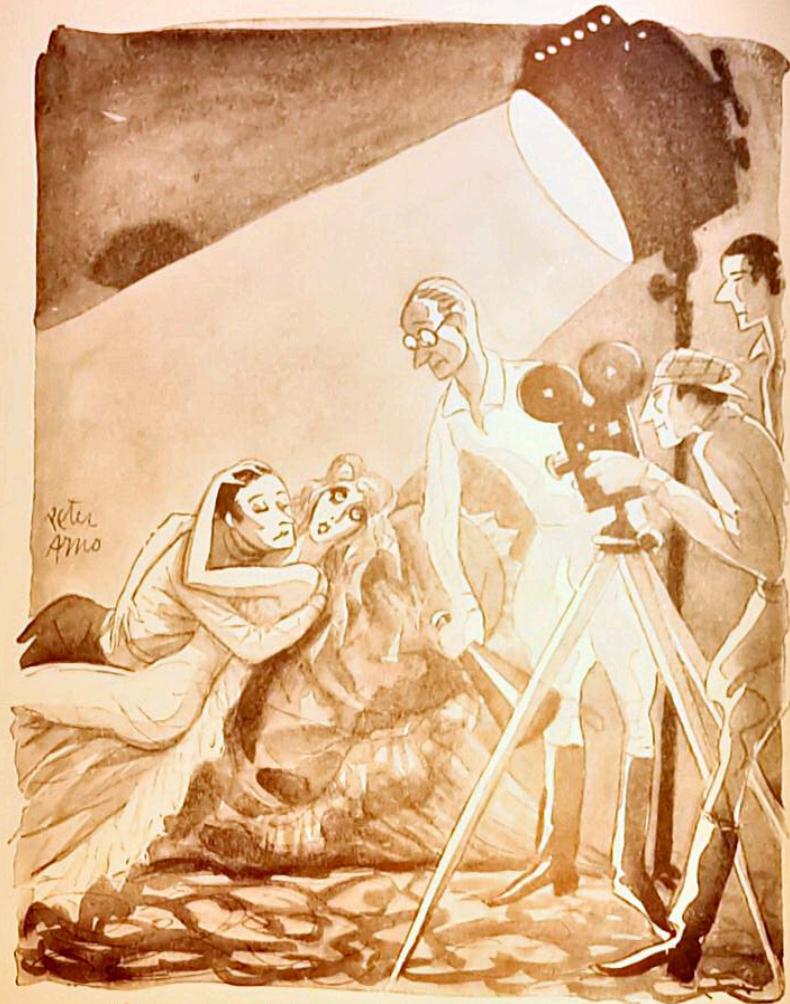
"What! No Perrier?"



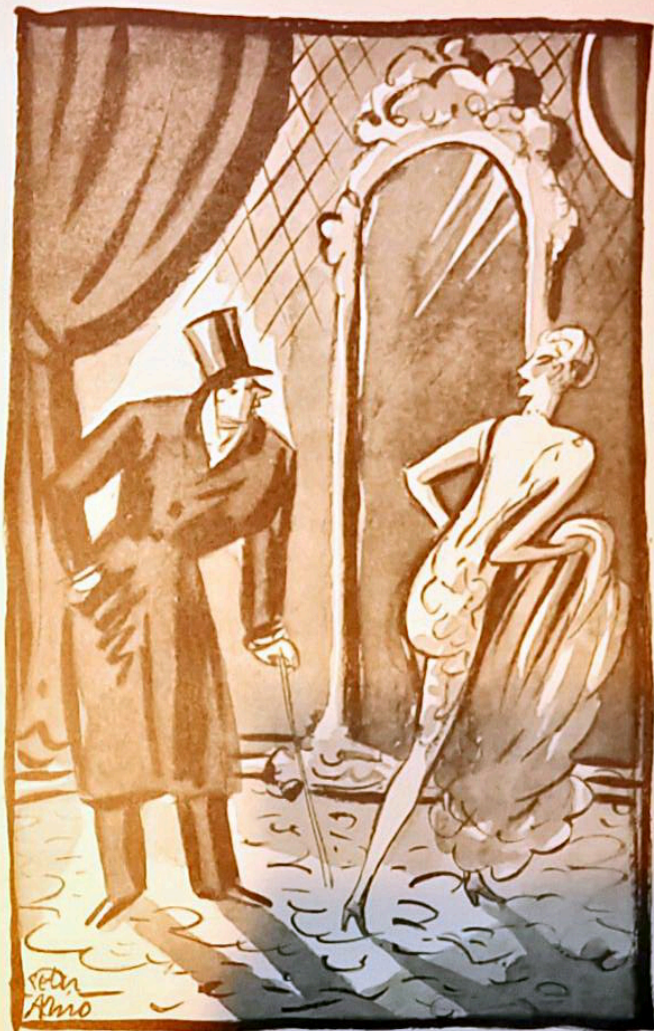
"What the hell d'yah mean, I'm disagreeable?"



J. G.'s a card all right when he gets to New York.



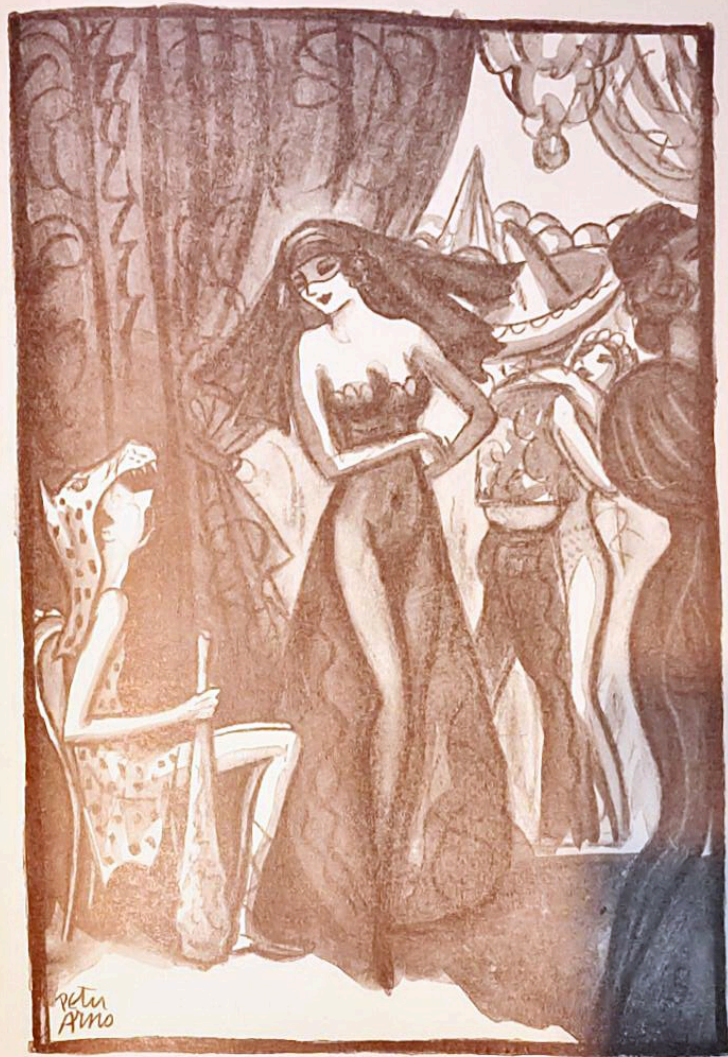
"One moment, please, Mr. DeGriff, what is my mental attitude in this scene?"



"The specialist said I won't live a year if I don't go on the wagon at once."
"You will not—with those dreadful Parkers coming to dinner to-night!"



Ziegfeld Frail



"Please, Mr. Winney, don't be a gorilla."

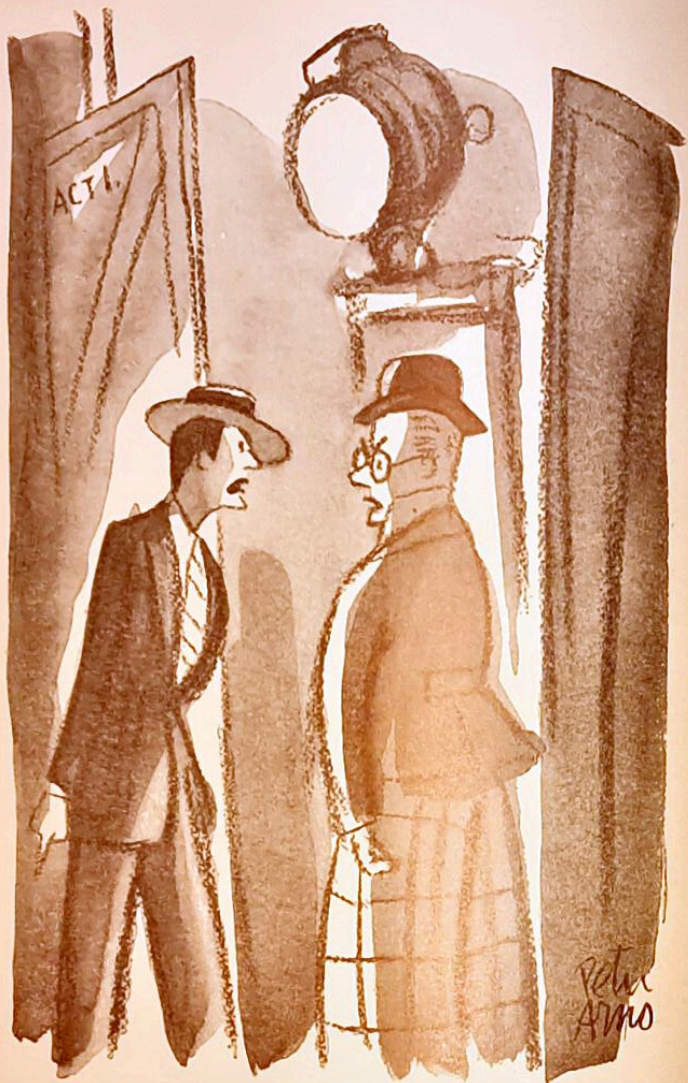


"Ah, Mrs. Witherspoon? I represent —"

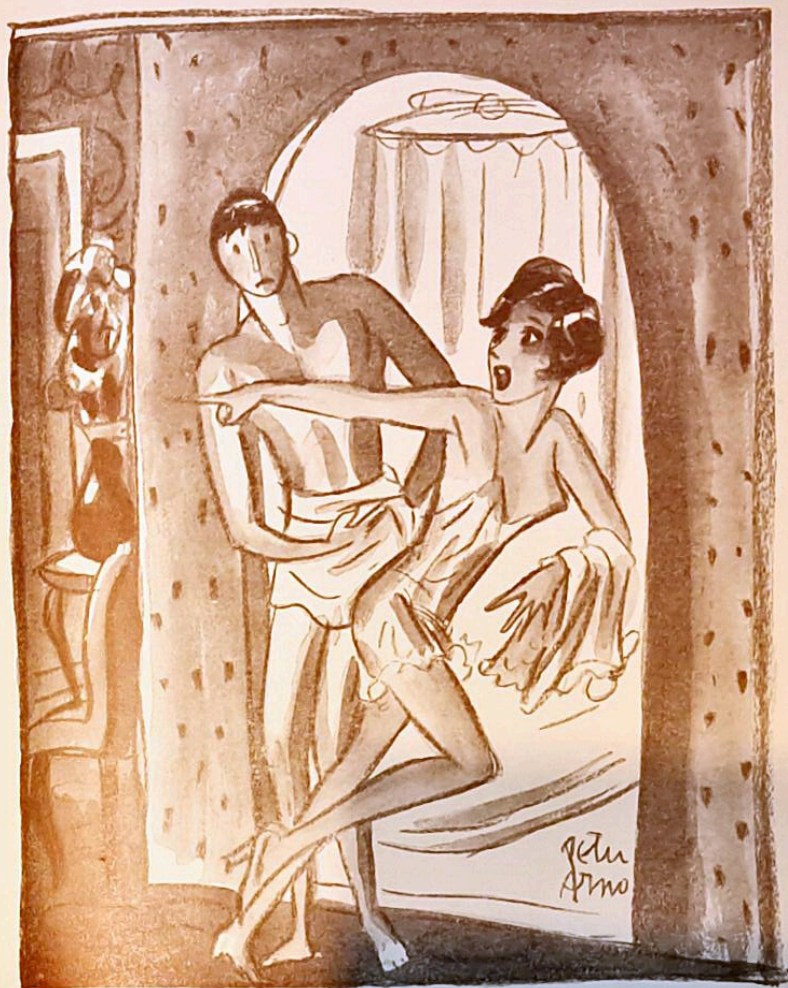


"Why, Arthur, you're asleep!"

"B-z-z-z, move over on your own side."



"Hey, what's the idea of stealing my gag?"
"Well, I warned you to stop running around with my wife, didn't I?"



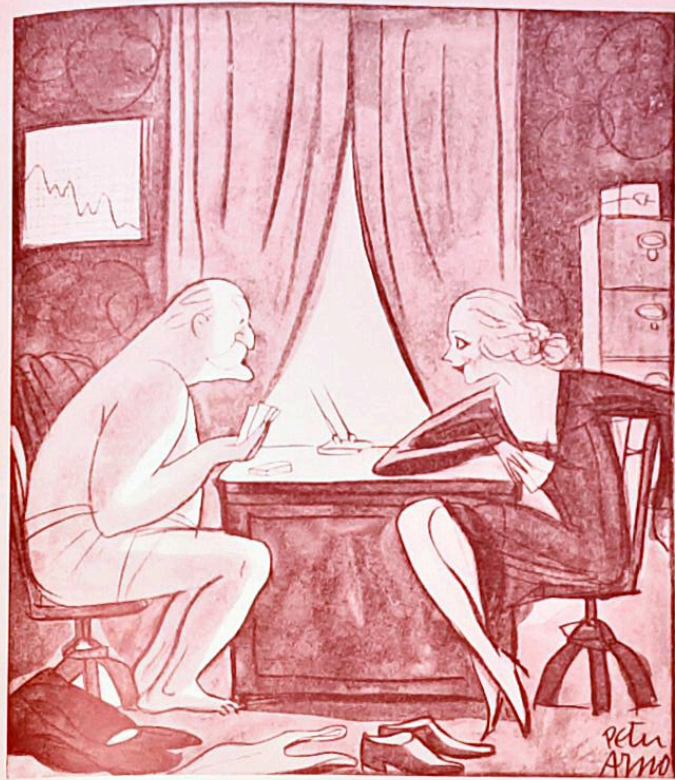
"Oh Lord, there they are now! You entertain them while I get dressed!"



"Listen Charlie, what you need is a wife."



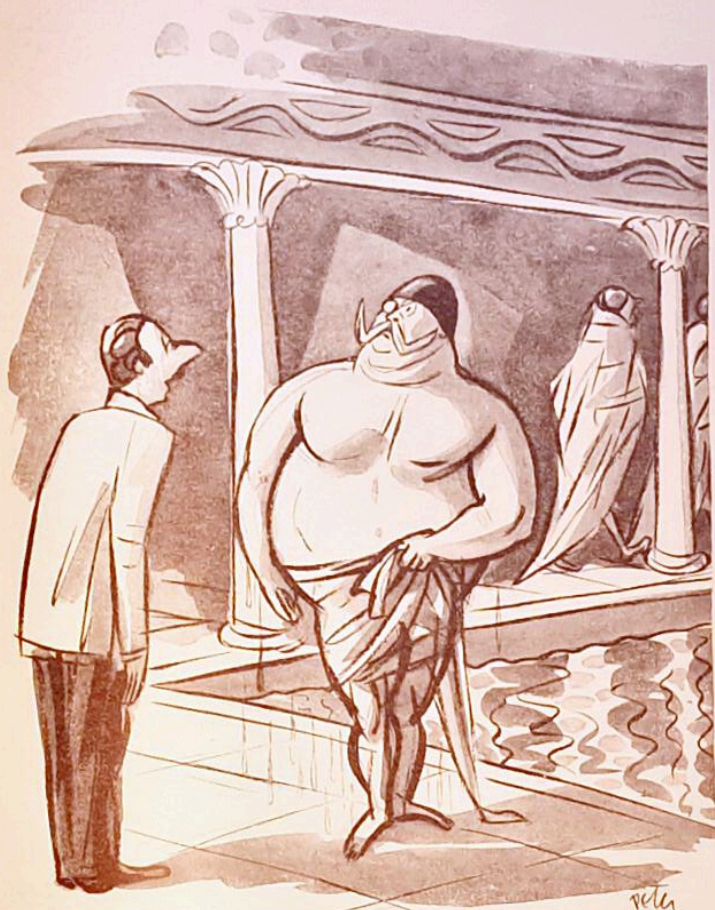
"Isn't that that friend of Father's?"



"This isn't fair, Miss Hickey! You should have told me you understood poker."



"Why, Vicar, y'know, I thought of asking you to my party, an' then I thought 'Oh what the hell!'"



"Say, Ambassador—you're wanted on the phone."

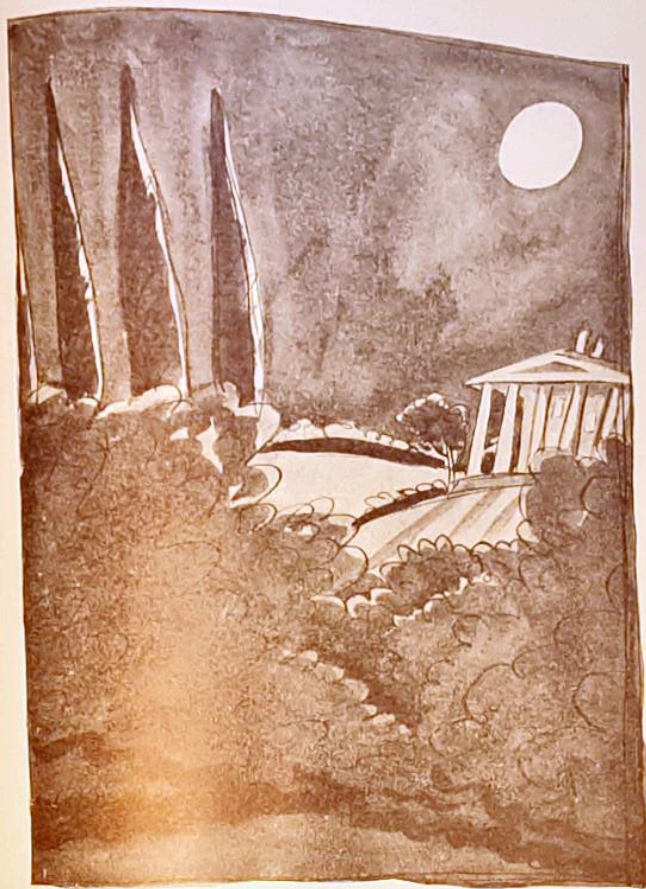


"Good evening, Mr. Dilly—I've been trying to interest your wife in our new accident policy."

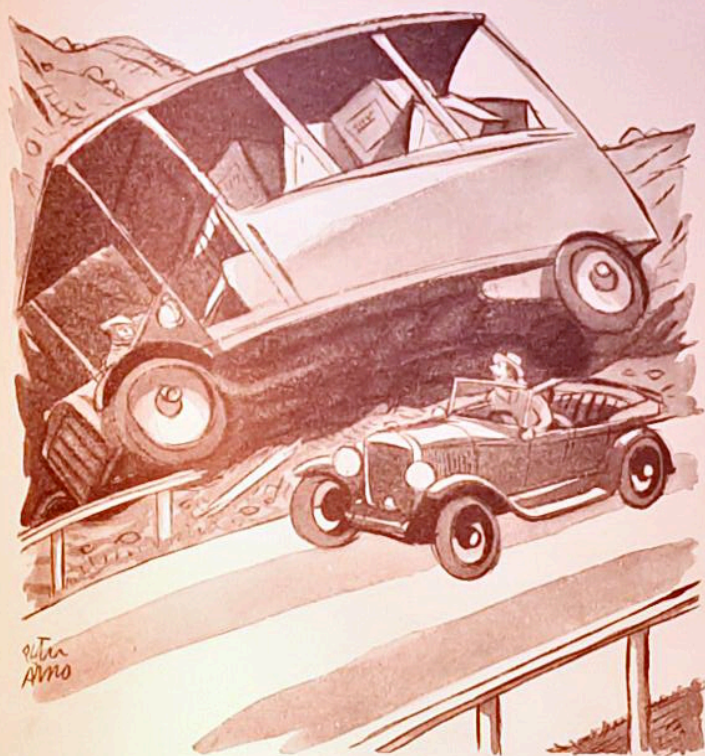




"Charmed."



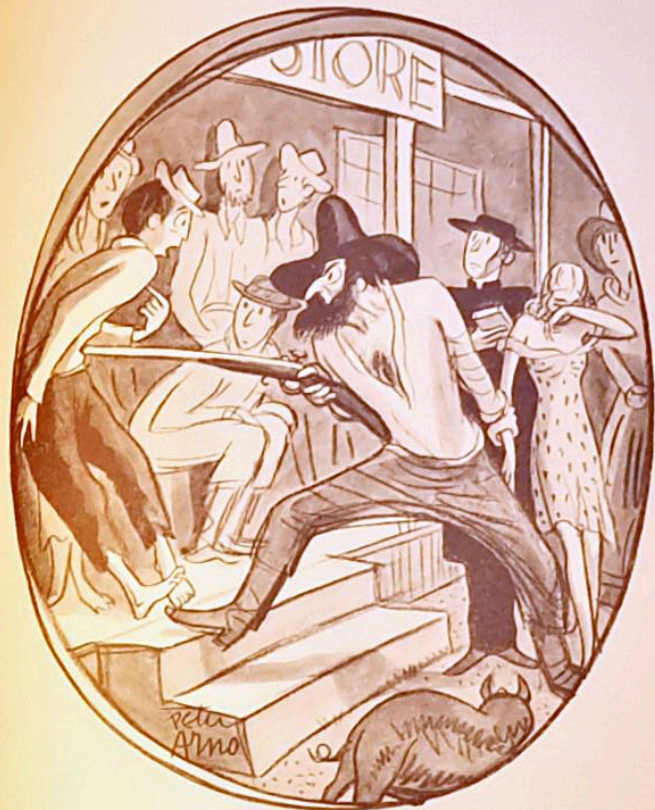
"I admire your attitude, Miss Mooney!"



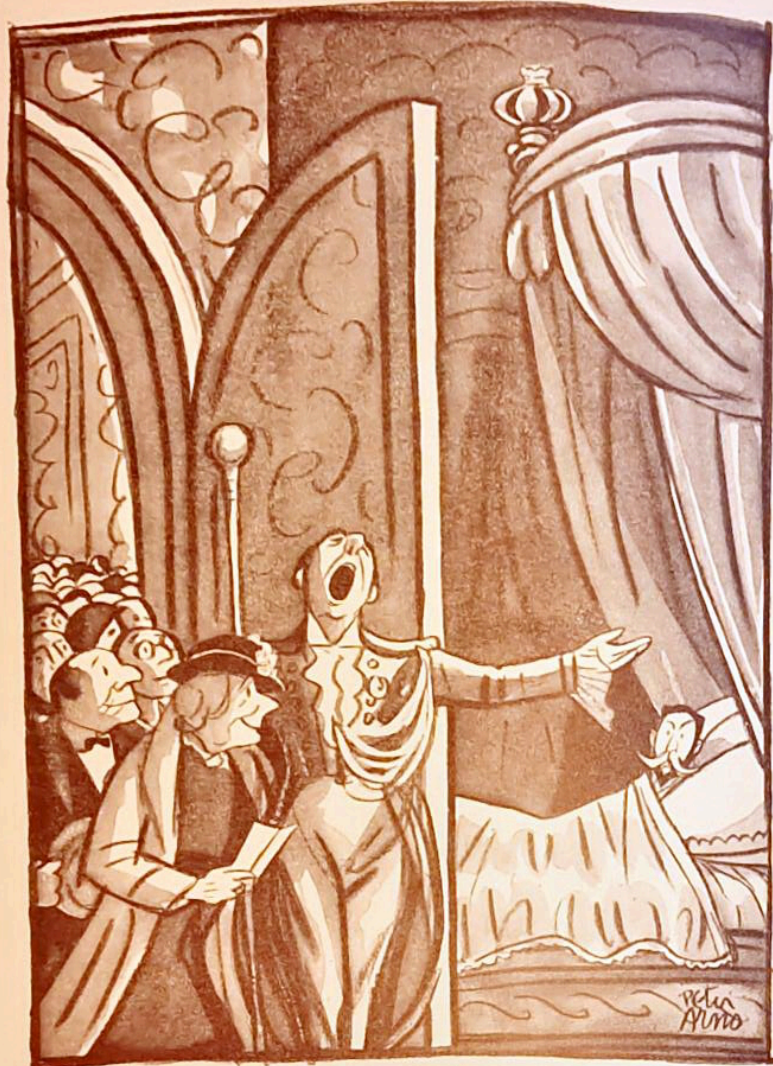
"Tip over?"



"My shoulders are terribly sunburnt."
"That's nothing—you ought to see my legs!"



"Who? Me?"



And this is the Imperial Suite, occupied only on special occasions.



"Do come in again soon. We love to see the old faces."



Peter
Arno