

# The Honor of the Dixie Belle

By Frederick Hazlitt Brennan

ILLUSTRATED BY  
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## The Story Thus Far:

TO HUMOR his wife—a distant cousin of Mark Twain—the wealthy Robert Emmet Lacey, Sr., of St. Louis, buys another country place: a rambling brick structure overlooking little Pike County Landing on the Mississippi (the “dear old river” that Mrs. Lacey “simply adores”). There, ensconced with her young son, Bobby, the prissy Mr. Gollomb, Bobby’s tutor, and a number of servitors, Mrs. Lacey proceeds to enjoy the simple life.

Half buried in the mud for many years, near the house, is an old steamboat—the Dixie Belle. In it, surrounded by its faded glories, dwell some interesting people: “Cap’n Dan,” eccentric owner of the vessel, who enjoys the delusion that a near-by railroad owes him huge damages (all imaginary); Lucy Hough, an attractive girl; Mrs. J. E. B. Drumwright, a lady with a questionable past but indomitable pride; and Buttinhead Adams, the Negro cook. Introduced to them by Paw Merrihew (a kindly old fisherman whose favorite fishing hole lies under a rug in the Dixie Belle’s bottom, and who shows Bobby how and where to catch fish when others are going biteless), Bobby is fascinated by them; whenever he can slip away, he goes to the old boat.

The boy’s new friends do not meet with Mrs. Lacey’s approval. But, genuinely touched by their poverty, she makes a noble decision: She, the powerful Mrs. Robert Emmet Lacey, Sr., will “rehabilitate” those “poor, simple souls”—she will save them!

Bobby says “phooey” to the whole idea. Why, Cap’n Dan and his friends have plenty of money; and Paw Merrihew (who, on the authority of none other than Buttinhead Adams, has access to a sunken boat containing tons of gold) is positively rich! But Mrs. Lacey is obdurate—something must be done for those “poor, pitiful victims of circumstance!”

A short time after Mrs. Lacey goes into action, Bobby receives a postcard message from Lucy: “Will you please come down to see us this afternoon? Important.”

Bobby, much excited, goes to the Dixie Belle. Cap’n Dan, Paw, Mrs. Drumwright, Lucy and—busily at work near by—Buttinhead, are all there, awaiting him. All seem terribly solemn. Bobby is kinda scared. “What’s wrong?” he gasps.

## II

LUCY jumped right up and came over and hugged me, saying: “It was sweet of you, Bobby, but it’s all a mistake.”

Paw gave me a sour look. “Ha! A goldanged insult, that’s what it is.”

Mrs. Drumwright said: “We mustn’t judge the *nouveau riche* too harsh, Mistah Merriwethah, an’ I’m suah Bobby’s mothah meant well.”

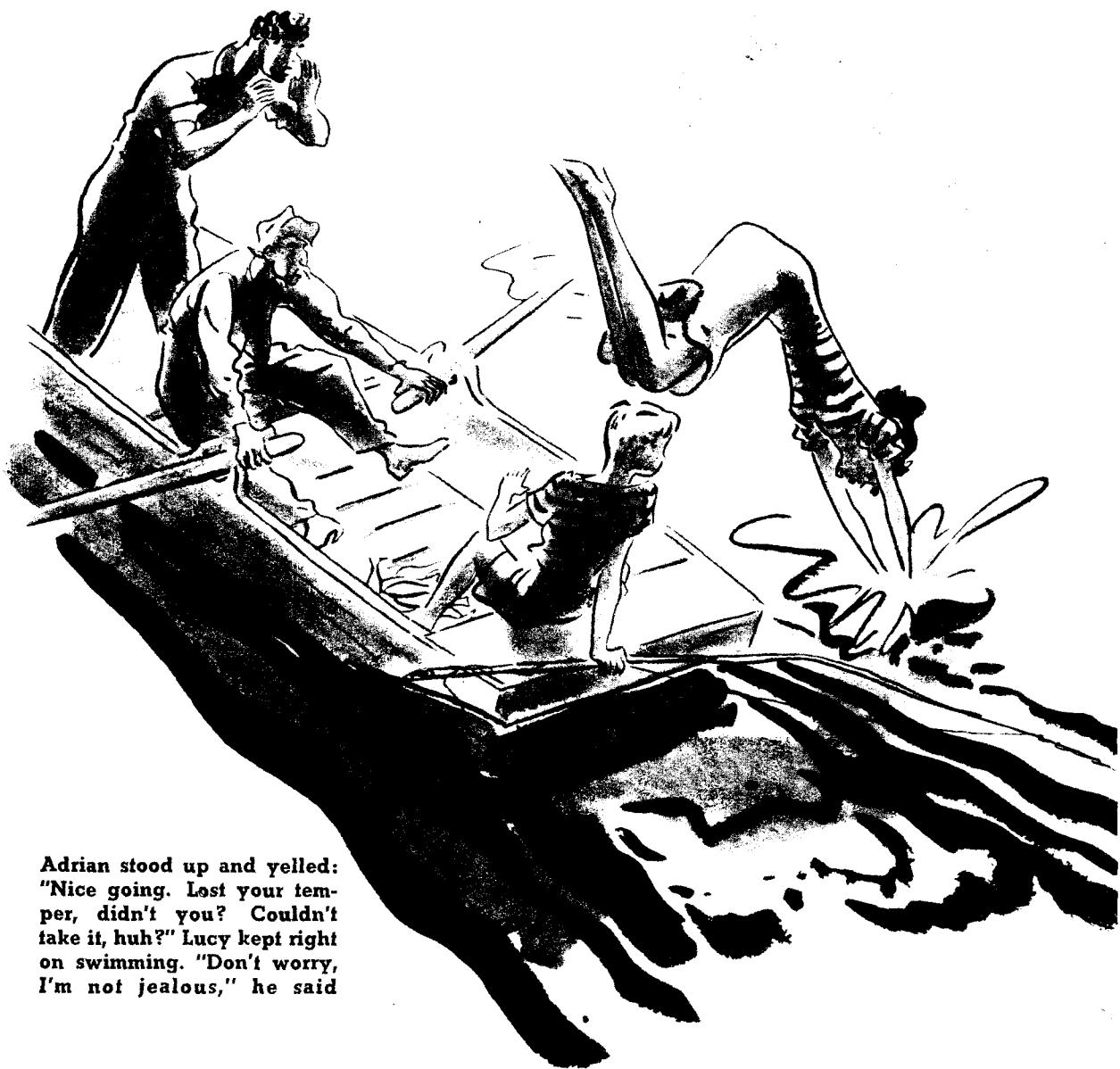
There was a big pile of brand-new clothes on the table and several baskets of food. Cap’n Dan was pawing over this stuff and making notes of it in his big ledger book. He just nodded to me.

“I begged my mother not to,” I said right out. “You can ask Mr. Gollomb. I told my mother you were poor. You can ask Mr. Gollomb.”

Lucy hugged me again and said, “I knew it wasn’t your fault, Bobby,” and told me to sit down in a chair. Then she explained to me just what had happened. My mother had not been satisfied with just giving them food and clothes; oh, no. She had offered to rent a house in Pike County Landing for Cap’n Dan and Mrs. Drumwright and Lucy. She had offered them jobs. She said Lucy could be a maid at our house and Cap’n Dan could be the watchman. She said Paw could be a cabinetmaker and work on the new tap-room that was to look like a steamboat barroom at our house. And Buttinhead could do odd jobs around the place.

“It was very considerate of your mother, Bobby,” Lucy said, “but Cap’n Dan couldn’t leave the Dixie Belle. Mrs. Drumwright’s asthma wouldn’t allow her to live in the Landing on account of the pollen, and I haven’t had any experience as a maid—”

Mrs. Drumwright went “Humph” and said: “No



Adrian stood up and yelled: “Nice going. Lost your temper, didn’t you? Couldn’t take it, huh?” Lucy kept right on swimming. “Don’t worry, I’m not jealous,” he said

ward of mine, Lucy, is goin’ into haousehold suhvice. I declaah. I don’t know what the woman could have been thinkin’ of, upon my soul I don’t!”

Lucy tried to make her hush up but she kept right on talking, saying that Paw ought to take the offer of cabinetmaker work and try earning a respectable living for a while. This got Paw fighting mad and he yelled: “Dang ye, ’ooman, I’m my own man and I been my own man fer eighty-one year!”

“You’ve been a disgustin’ reprobate,” Mrs. Drumwright said.

“I’m a-going to slit your gizzard fer them words, ’ooman!” Paw said.

Paw drew his fish-sticker and said he would not give Mrs. Drumwright time to pray because the Good Lord had abandoned her as a gone gosling forty years ago. Cap’n Dan came to life all of a sudden and said he would call Paw out and horsewhip him. I thought Paw and Cap’n Dan really would have a big fight, but Lucy separated them.

“We’ve all agreed not to take charity work,” Lucy said, “so Paw is just as honorable as you are, Mrs. Drumwright. Now calm down or you’ll get Bobby so mixed up he won’t know what to tell his mother.”

Then Lucy carefully instructed me just what to explain to my mother so as not to hurt my mother’s feelings. I said I would tell her, and all of them got to talking about what they would do with the food and clothes my mother had sent. Mrs. Drumwright said she would send her presents to relatives in reduced circumstances in Louisville, Kentucky. Paw would not have anything to do with his presents. He would not even look at them. Lucy said she knew a lot of poor folks in Shanty Town up to Clarksville who would be glad to have the things. The only one who really wanted to keep his presents was Buttinhead.

My mother had bought Buttinhead a new pair of pants and a sweater and had given him a derby hat that belonged to Travis, my father’s valet. There was a big argument whether Buttinhead could keep even the derby hat.

“Cap’n Minor,” Mrs. Drumwright said, “exert

youah authority ovah this niggah. Is he a family niggah with traditions or can he accept charity f’m nobodies like them Laceys?”

Cap’n Dan called Buttinhead right on the carpet. He sure told Buttinhead off for wanting to take charity. Buttinhead said: “Aw, naw suh, Cap’n suh—I scorns dem, ob course I does.”

Lucy said: “Let him keep the hat. Folks will think it belonged to Cap’n Dan or Paw.”

So everybody finally agreed that Buttinhead could keep the hat. During this excitement another Burlington freight train came by and men threw coal at the Dixie Belle, but Cap’n Dan almost forgot to go and shoot at them. When he finally found the gun the train was out of range. But he went right out and estimated the damage the “Q” had done and wrote it down in his big book.

“The total damages the ‘Q’ owes me from October 21, 1905, to the present instant is exactly a hundred and eighty-nine thousand four hundred and thirty-two dollars and seventy cents. Got it all down here in black and white, sir,” Cap’n Dan said.

NOBODY paid much attention to this because Lucy and Paw were giving me my final instructions.

“Tell your mother we think she is swell and generous and be sure to tell her how grateful we are,” Lucy said.

Paw got mad.

“Don’t ye include me in thet statement, son,” Paw said. “I don’t say nary a goldang thank you. I say foosh an’ thrice foosh an’ I th’ow in a obscene sound fer emphasis.”

“Shame on you, Paw,” Lucy said. Then she made me promise to hurry straight home and tell my mother.

When I finally found my mother, she was out in the new addition giving Hail Columbia to Mr. Prentice, the contractor, and all the carpenters. She was not in a very good humor. I told her everything that Lucy had said to tell her, but not what Paw had said.

My mother did not take it so good.

"Well," she said, "if *that* isn't a new chapter in social welfare! So they'd rather live in filth and poverty, would they? Humph. They're very welcome, I'm sure. I certainly shan't go down there and beg them to accept help, I'm sure." And a lot more talk with big words meaning that my mother was thoroughly disgusted with trying to rehabilitate the Dixie Belle people and would leave them severely alone.

"Hurray!" I said, and ran off to tell Mr. Gollomb that the trouble was over.

Mr. Gollomb was not so happy about it.

"It is all very well for Merrihew and the captain and their generation, Robert," Mr. Gollomb said, "but that girl is worth saving. She has a great deal of primitive charm, a great deal of primitive charm." Mr. Gollomb said he had conducted his own personal investigation and had found out that Lucy had graduated from the Pike County Landing high school with the highest grades of anybody. Furthermore, Mr. Gollomb said he had been informed at the grocery store that Cap'n Dan had a very small pension and wasted most of it in fighting the "Q." Lucy and Cap'n Dan and Mrs. Drumwright and Buttinhead were practically dependent on Paw Merrihew, and Paw did not have anything but a small fish-peddling business.

"Kafooeey on that," I said. "Paw knows where there's a whole steamboat full of gold. And anyway Lucy is going to marry that Adrian Reed guy."

Mr. Gollomb looked goofy. He asked me a lot of questions about Adrian. He did not approve of Adrian at all. Mr. Gollomb was kind of sad and went walking off maybe to study birds and forgot I was supposed to have a history discussion with him.

FOR the next few days I sure had perfect peace. Mr. Gollomb was busy feeling sorry for Lucy, and my mother was busy arguing with Mr. Prentice and the carpenters to get the new addition ready for a big housewarming party she was going to have.

I went to the Dixie Belle every single day. Adrian came back down the river on the towboat and got a day layover while she was loading cargo on her barges. Adrian and Paw and Lucy and I went crappie fishing over to Stumpsucker Slough on the Illinois side.

Big-headed Adrian thought he knew all about crappie fishing. He said he knew just the place to fish for them and you should use angleworms this time of year and still-fish with a bobber. I could tell Paw did not think so, but Paw let Adrian have his way. Adrian gave all the orders and anchored the boat at the mouth of the slough. He and Lucy and I threw our lines in, but Paw did not. Paw went to sleep in the bow of the skiff.

We did not even get a nibble.

"Kafooeey on this. Gee heck," I said, "there aren't any fish here."

"The wind's changed on me," Adrian said.

Adrian pulled up the anchor and we tried two more places. Lucy still stuck up for Adrian and said she had days just like this when the crappie would not bite. She pretended to see lots of crappie in the water but they would not bite.

I woke Paw up.

"This guy is giving us a bum steer, Paw," I said; "we haven't caught a thing."

Adrian said: "They're here but they won't bite. Too much food in the water."

"Is that so?" Paw said, and went back to his nap.

ADRIAN and Lucy did not care about catching fish. They sat in the stern of the skiff and Lucy just listened to Adrian talking big. It made me sick to my stomach just to listen. My mind was on fish. I knew there were a lot of crappie somewhere in that river swimming around waiting for the right bait and intelligent methods of catching them. So I put on a big storm and argued with Adrian and said he didn't know beans about fishing. Adrian got sore and offered to bet me and I bet, and bet that Paw could show us how to catch crappie. Before I was through betting I had bet Adrian my rod and reel and seventy-five cents and my tackle box with seven lures, all against nothing but Paw, and when I realized what I had done I got pretty scared.

"Now, you got to show me how to catch some crappie, Paw," I said.

Paw sat up and looked at Adrian and said: "Tell ye whut I'll do. I'll make ye a sporting propersition. If Bobby here ketches ten crappie in the next hour, you buy Lucy a new ten-dollar dress. If'n Bobby don't, I'll buy her the dress."

"You're on," Adrian said; and he picked up my rod and reel and said: "Hot dog, will I have fun with this!" Making me more scared than ever.

It was truly the most serious crisis in my life up to that time. But Paw said: "Jest rest easy, son, ye made a sound bet." So Paw right away pulled the boat ashore and cut a long elm switch. Then he took the boat downstream and across the mouth of the slough, sighting by rocks and trees on the bank. He got down and put his face close to the water and squinted at the bottom. He sounded with his oar and

**The very first day he got to showing off his butting skill and butted a door and the other side of the door had a big mirror on it. Buttinhead sure wrecked that mirror**

brought up sand, till he came to the place where the sand was just a certain silver color. Then Paw anchored the boat.

"Twelve minutes gone already," Adrian said.

"Rest easy, son," Paw said.

Next, Paw got out a can of white grubworms that he had been hiding in a gunny sack. Also some fine linen line with a thin green leader. He tied the line on the elm switch without any bobber. Then, Paw got out a sack of brown stuff and began throwing pinches of it in the water. He said it was chum but would not tell Lucy or Adrian just what it was made of.

"Sixteen minutes gone already, Paw," Adrian said. "I've got a cinch bet."

Paw handed me the elm switch after testing it for liveliness.

"Th'ow yer line in—right thar!" Paw said, pointing to a still patch of water with ripples swirling around it.

In my sober judgment it was truly the triumph of my career as a fisherman. I caught fourteen crappie fish in twenty-seven minutes by Adrian's wrist watch. Each time I hauled one in, it was good to see old smart-aleck Adrian's face. I mean he really looked sick.

"Well, I got to hand it to you, Paw," Adrian said, "you know your fishing," and he paid Paw ten dollars right then and there for Lucy's dress.

"I've got to hand it to Bobby," Lucy said. "He caught the fish, remember." Lucy is a swell girl.

GOING back home, Lucy and Adrian got to quarreling. It was over Mr. Gollomb. Adrian had found out that Mr. Gollomb was lending Lucy books to read and hanging around the Dixie Belle.

"I sure admire your taste," Adrian said.

"I feel sorry for the poor guy," Lucy said; "he's such an awful big sissy."

"Don't kid me, sister," Adrian said, "you're going in for high sassiety."

"I'm no such a thing," she said.

"A working guy ain't good enough for you," he said.

"That's not so, Adrian," she said.

"Maybe you just want to make me jealous. Fat chance," he said.

"Even if I wanted to, I wouldn't try it with a goof like him," she said.

"Oh, I dunno. He's got dough," Adrian said.

"So you think I'd marry a man for his money, do you?" Lucy said.

"How should I know? All I know is the minute my back is turned working hard to get a start you start running around with Gollomb," he said.

"He only loaned me some books," she said.

Lucy got redheaded mad (Continued on page 39)







Above: Raymond Scott (born Harry Warnow) rehearses a new composition that his brother, Mark Warnow (left), will later conduct

THIS is a mad age. On every hand you hear of a mad hat, mad bull, mad fun, mad money. The madness of the Warnow brothers is something very special. Mark Warnow, one of radio's Big Ten orchestra conductors, has been known to settle himself back in a cab and give the driver his telephone number instead of his address. The other Warnow is Raymond Scott, composer, who, when he is lost in a musical mist, may pick his shoes off the floor, lace them meticulously, set them back under the bed, and proceed to go out the door in his stocking feet. Once, working out an intricate melody in his mind, he stopped at a drug counter, bought a package of mints, broke a lozenge off the roll and solemnly handed it to the clerk, while he tossed the dime into his mouth. This is not an escape from reality; it is merely shutting out the world while they get some work done.

Mark Warnow is probably the only conductor on record to follow his orchestra instead of leading it, as he did once when he discovered he had left his music at home. His brother kept seeing a girl he didn't like, only because her perfume appealed to him; when he found out the name of it, he stopped seeing her and wrote his "Perfume Suite" instead. Mark calls his radio orchestra "The Blue Velvet Orchestra" because his secretary wore a blue velvet blouse that delighted him.

Though Scott is in Hollywood and Mark is in New York, they talk to each other at least twice a week by long-distance phone, three quarters of an hour at a time, while Scott runs off a few bars of his latest opus for Mark to criticize. Raymond's music is their pet enthusi-

asm; Mark keeps a phonograph in his office at the Columbia Broadcasting Company and plays his brother's music full blast when he has nothing else to do—or even when he has. Scott admits his music is revolutionary, admits it with a strange, unaffected modesty, because he is so honestly detached about it. Stravinsky and Paul Whiteman, Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway are inclined to agree with him; Whiteman hopes to do a concert of his music some day soon.

Scott's number, *The Toy Trumpets*, is the climax of Shirley Temple's newest picture; his *War Dance for Wooden Indians* and *Twilight in Turkey* were also movie hits. His titles have a kind of crazy poetry: *Piano and Pistol Duet*, *The Girl with the Light Blue Hair*, *Square Dance for Eight Egyptian Mummies*, *Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals*, and so on—titles that are like strong drink: they make you groggy at first, and when you hear the music everything becomes beautifully clear. Raymond Scott's real name is Harry Warnow. But what's that to a man who calls his musical sextet the Raymond Scott Quintet simply because he likes the sound of it better?

#### The Gentle Art of Listening

Gertrude Stein once wrote a poem, "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," because she liked the sound the words made. The Warnow boys, too, see with their ears. They think with their ears, they judge with their ears. If a thing sounds pretty, it's pretty sound as far as they are concerned. If it doesn't, it's out and no amount of coaxing by movie executives, radio sponsors and phonograph companies can make them change their minds.

Raymond—even his own brother calls him that instead of Harry now—re-

hearses with his quintet as painstakingly and intensively as any classical string quartet might. Their movie contract with Twentieth-Century-Fox makes it possible for them to rehearse five hours a day, five days a week, a strenuous program, but one that has made the boys so sensitive to every mood and direction of their leader that he never writes down a single note for them to play. His retainer is a healthy one, but Darryl Zanuck is satisfied. One smash hit like Shirley Temple's song would justify any fee; besides, Mr. Zanuck has the privilege of sitting in on rehearsals, if he wants to, and listening to the boys go to town with the latest Scott's emulsion of sweet and hot. Brunswick, which sells records of Scott's music, signed him to a contract calling for twelve records a year and it gave him the right to veto any recording he does not consider fit to release. Raymond insisted on that, and surely there was no harm in it! But they had not counted on Scott's standard of perfection. He will make the twelve recordings all right; but so far he has permitted only four double-faced records to be released. Most orchestras recording for companies make two recordings to be on the safe side; Scott's men make half a dozen, a dozen, two dozen, if necessary. If he couldn't work it this way, he would cheerfully turn in his contract. So far, though they fuss and fume, nobody has asked him to. After all, composers whose records sell 250,000 copies don't grow on trees—and they keep on selling without a letup, regardless of season.

Scott's music is a language that has never been spoken before, complex, irresistible, provocative. Written primarily for mechanical recording and the radio, his music in its present form could not exist if there were no radio. If you've had anything to do with a microphone,

you know that the sounds you hear in the room are nothing like the same sounds over a microphone. Raymond got to work harnessing this difference to make a new kind of music. When he composes, he doesn't sit down like the traditional composer and write down little black notes on ruled paper. He composes on the phonograph, working out each passage with his quintet, playing a theme for the clarinetist, for the drummer, for the saxophonist until each can play it back perfectly. Then together the whole group plays while the recording machine gets it down in wax. Before a number is perfect enough to be released, there may be seventy-five recordings. Scott sends the best of these on to Mark to play, who grades them as a teacher might grade an examination paper—B-, 50% complete. When it is an unqualified A, 100% complete, it will be passed on to the public. For sheet-music sales, a specialist is called in to translate the music into black and white. Other composers, too, follow this method. An average composition takes a day to transcribe; Scott's complicated music takes almost a week.

#### Success Story in Outline

Both brothers are short, stocky and dark-haired. Scott was born in New York, twenty-eight years ago. Mark was born in Russia, nine years earlier. Their father was a violinist, the only Russian violinist who never played fiddle for the czar. They came to New York when Mark was six. When he was fifteen, he got his first job in a concert ensemble, playing at the old Waldorf-Astoria. He made his debut as a concert violinist at Town Hall; already he had an enviable musical record, having directed *Apple Blossoms* and an edition of the *Ziegfeld*

(Continued on page 33)