

Inform Mr. Sweeney



by Samuel G. Camp

OF course it's old stuff now—that story about the rube who was looking 'em over at the zoo; and how, when he lamped the duck-footed Bazooka or something, he chirps: "There ain't no such animal!"

Old stuff. It wouldn't get you a laugh in Mugg's Corners, Missouri, nowadays. But like a lot of other gags, and cold-storage eggs—it was good once.

And the reason why it was good was because, among other things, there was an idea behind it. Some people are so darned opinionated that they will refuse to recognize a certain fact, say, even after it has come up to the plate bigger than a barn door and beaned them between the eyes for a count of ten.

When a fellow gets that way there isn't much you can do for him—he's hopeless. And if it happens that a lot depends on your making one of these stand-patters see something that he refuses to see—well, you're hopeless, too. You can take that from me.

So it was a lucky thing for me that Jim

Riordan wasn't that way. To be sure Jim took a lot of showing, or rather, he wouldn't stand for any showing at all, which is worse yet. But when finally a certain fact loomed up in front of Jim about the size of the R-34—Jim saw it.

And so, having reached the end of the story, maybe it would be a good plan to begin it.

My home town is a little place up in Massachusetts—in the Berkshires. If I told you the name of the place it wouldn't make any difference. You never heard of it. You never *will* hear of it.

There are three places where you can find the name of the place in print; and if you live to be three thousand years old you will never find in that way anywhere else. These places are as follows: on the map, if it happens to be the kind of map that clutters itself all up with little things like that; in the local newspaper, published every Thursday or Friday without fail; and in the Annual Baseball Guide—because I was born there. You understand I'm not trying to pull any ballyhoo stuff for myself. I'm just telling

you.

So when the bunch got in on the world's series dough that fall, and so everything was Jake with me until next spring—I had plenty to live on over the winter, and being a single man and all, I wasn't doing any worrying about that old rainy day that is always taking the joy out of married life, if there is any—well, seeing things shaped up like that, I sort of did a little thinking. I'll give you one guess as to what I was thinking about.

Right. And I made up my mind that maybe one winter in a regular place wouldn't do me any harm.

You see, I'm a small-town fellow, and—well, of course a ball-player travels round a lot, but you don't really see much. Most of the time you are either going some place or else going away from it; and what with all the time worrying about why you aren't getting that old base-hit, or why your fast one isn't breaking right, or something—what with all that and that, and generally being in a hurry, you look at a lot of things without really seeing 'em. If you get what I'm driving at.

So I thought a few months in an honest-to-goodness big town might do me a little good. I'd mingle with the bunch, and go to places, and all that; and—well, you see what I mean. And no doubt it would be a sort of education, in a way.

But don't get me wrong: I wasn't thinking of hitting any of those old high places. I was too old a bird for that. There's nothing in it. I signed up at a boarding-house that was advertised as highly respectable, and was: and I even went and got me a job because I couldn't quite see five months of steady loafing. It would get to be monotonous.

I'll admit that it was a cinch job: easy work, short hours, and—it paid enough to keep me in cigarette money, anyway, that's

the way it is. If I had been down on my uppers and really needed that job the worst way—do you see me getting it? I'll say you don't.

Well, things went along for a couple of months or so without anything much happening. In the mean time I had got pretty well acquainted with a fellow by the name of Johnny Harris that worked where I did. Of course Johnny had his faults—I'm coming to one of 'em—like all of us; but taking him all round he was a pretty fair sort of soul.

As to that fault of Johnny's, they say everybody goes crazy in a different way, and Johnny—he was cracked wide open on the subject of dancing. Outside of that Johnny was a good deal the same as anybody else.

Every morning Johnny woke up with one of those crazy jazz things running through his head, and all day long he stepped round in time to it. It was a good thing for Johnny that he wasn't stuck on slow waltzes. If he had been he'd have lost his job. He wouldn't ever have got anywhere—and Johnny had considerable running round to do. Anyway, Johnny Harris would shadow-dance like that, as you might say, all day; and then, come night, every night, he would go to a real dance—and he never missed a single number, take it from Johnny.

It strikes me that Johnny Harris picked out a mighty poor way to go crazy. If it was me I'd pick something that called for a little less exertion.

Well, one day Johnny asked me to come on and be a sport and go to a dance with him. He said he had a couple of tickets for the annual masquerade ball of some fraternal order or other—the B. V. D.'s or something—and believe him, it was going to be a swell affair, and the best jazz band in town, bar none.

Some music! According to Johnny, this was going to be one of the greatest little

occasions ever, and anybody would certainly be a sap to miss it. And here I could have a ticket merely for the asking—why, I didn't have to ask for it, he was offering it to me. And take it from him, it was no cinch to get them—these tickets; the only way he got his was because he happened to stand in with the management.

"Where did you get the idea that I was one of these society butterflies?" I asked him.

"What do you mean?" asked Johnny. "Do you mean you haven't ever learned how to dance?"

"Oh," I said, "I can hoof it a little; though, at that, I guess I'm a good deal of a busher at it. Anyway, I haven't ever heard of any scouts for the Russian Ballet hanging round and looking me over. But what I mean is, I'm not so strong for it—this dance stuff.

"I'd rather go to a good show any time; or maybe a fight or something. But this bunch of Miss Nancys—these tough birds that make a regular business of stepping round in these cabarets and everywhere—they give me a pain. Mind you, I'm not saying anything against you. You're different. You're one of these jazz-nuts, anyway, and that lets you out. But—"

"Thanks," said Johnny. "Never mind me. But what do you say—take it or leave it. And don't forget: it's going to be some little time!"

I thought it over.

"I'll take a chance," I said finally.

And I was certainly taking one—a big one—though I didn't know it.

Well, Johnny and I went to the party. You remember it was one of those masquerade affairs. Johnny went dressed as a clown. I wore a dress-suit. It was my first dress-suit, and this was the first time I had ever worn it. So I went feeling the way Johnny looked.

Of course I wore a mask, and that helped some. It helped quite a lot. If every fellow could wear a mask the first time he busts right out into public in a dress-suit maybe these soup-and-fish things would get to be more popular. Anyway, I was glad I had that mask on.

No doubt it was some considerable ball; but I won't attempt to describe it. It wasn't a whole lot different from the Grand Annual Masquerade Ball of Lodge No. 34. F. and A. M., that they have every Christmas week up there in the old home town, only bigger—bigger all round. I hadn't been inside the place three minutes when I lost Johnny—or Johnny lost me—and then—well, there I was.

Of course these masquerade dances are sort of free-for-alls, and I might have grabbed off most anybody and danced with her, but somehow I didn't have the nerve. It never makes any difference to me whether there's three on and the batter has me in a hole or not: I'm there with the old confedience just the same. But just the minute I hit into one of these society plays—right off the bat I begin wishing they'd take me out.

I'll admit it. I feel like a cat in a strange garret, or Kaiser Bill in Holland. I don't feel at home, and I want to go away from there.

So that's the way I felt then, and I guess if I hadn't happened to notice an empty seat on the side-lines I'd have beat it for the clubhouse without losing a man or a minute—the way that German general retreated. But I spotted that seat and did a hook-slide into it—and then I sat there.

I sat there and sat there; and I kept right on sitting there. I guess I must have sat there for most two hours. The place kept getting hotter and hotter, and that dress-suit kept getting more uncomfortable all the time. Say, what I wouldn't have given for a good

cold shower! And this was Johnny Harris's idea of a good time!

Not for me! After working at it for about half an hour, I had finally got up my nerve and was going to make a break for liberty or death, when a young lady sat down beside me. So then, of course, that settled it. I would have to wait a while before pulling that exit I had in mind.

If I got up and walked off now she would think I was trying to insult her, or that maybe I was insulted or fussed or some-thing—though of course I wasn't either one of those things. So I would have to stick until she went away, or for a while, anyhow. I was pretty sore.

But pretty soon I sort of snatched a kind of sidewise look at her, and then. I began to get over it—feeling sore. There didn't seem to be any particular reason for it—for feeling that way. On the contrary, there seemed to be quite a number of reasons for feeling just the opposite. No, maybe you might feel sort of put out if she was sitting beside somebody else, but not if she was sitting beside you. No doubt you set the idea.

Of course she was wearing a mask: but it was only a little thing, not much bigger than a postage-stamp, and it simply made her look all the prettier. And—but I guess I've said it: though it's a sort of feeble word—pretty. It doesn't begin to describe her—and maybe it will be just as well if I don't, because I couldn't finish the job anyway, not and came anywhere near doing it justice. So I'll merely say that she began where most of our very best-lookers leave off, and let it go at that.

She was dressed as a shepherdess, or a gipsy, or something. I don't seem to exactly recollect exactly what. Probably I didn't notice. I was mostly interested in the general effect. Anyway, she hadn't been sitting beside me for more than a minute, and I had

only stolen a couple of more looks at her, when I began to feel it coming over me—that feeling. There were different sorts of symptoms; but—well, all of a sudden something seemed to tell me that I had a new object in life.

Something told me that, and I believed it. I knew it, I could swear to it. And I hadn't had a word to say about it, either. It was all arranged for me—when I wasn't looking. It was a mighty curious sort of feeling, and if you ever have one like it let me give you a little piece of advice: start saving up your money.

Anyway, I knew that I had to get acquainted with this young lady right away—there wasn't any help for it. I simply had to do it; there wasn't any getting around it. So I took my foot in my hand, and said "It's warm, isn't it?"

"Yes, isn't it?" she said.

"Some hot!" I said.

She didn't say anything.

"Nice little dance, isn't it?" I said.

"Yes, isn't it?" she said.

"Some dance!" I said.

She didn't say anything.

"Great music, isn't it?" I said.

"Yes, isn't it?" she said.

"Some music!" I said.

She didn't say anything.

"Listen," I said. "I suppose I've got a nerve, but do you think you could dance this one with me?"

"I'll try," she said.

We got up and started in—or off. But we didn't get very far. We stopped. After a couple of couples had bumped into us, I said; "I guess I must be a little out of practice or something—that was pretty fierce, wasn't it? But never mind: a bad beginning makes a good ending. What was my trouble, anyway? What was I doing?"

"I think you were trying to dance a one-

step,” she said, “and the orchestra is playing a fox-trot.”

“Oh,” I said, “is there an orchestra? I had forgotten all about it”

Believe me it was the truth and I guess she knew what I meant.

After that I guess I must have done pretty fair stepping, considering: anyway, we danced four or five dances and sat out two or three more. In the mean time it had come time to unmask; and—I take back what I said about that mask simply making her look all the prettier.

You see, when I said that, I hadn’t seen her with it off. I tried to find out what her name was, and so forth, but there was nothing doing; she kept stalling me off. So I didn’t tell her who I was, or anything; two could play at that game. But just the same, I made up my mind that before we said good-night there was going to be a show-down. Anything else was out of the question.

But I was still in the dark about her, and I was just on the point of telling her who I was and all about me, and see if that wouldn’t make a difference, when she said that she guessed I would have to excuse her, now, because it was getting late, and she had promised to be home before twelve-thirty; and if she wasn’t, there would be trouble in the family.

I felt myself slipping; but there was still a chance. I asked her if she had come with any one; and she said yes—but they were going to stay till the finish. Three cheers for them, I said to myself.

Seeing that was the case, I asked her if I couldn’t take her home. I had an idea she would sort of hesitate at that; but she didn’t—not for a single instant. She said I could. And somehow, the way she said it, so quick like, without stopping to figure on whether it was the proper thing or not; and not only that, but a way she had of looking at

me now and then—well, I wondered.

I wondered if she had something on me. I had already wondered that same thing two or three times before.

But anyway, she said it was only a little ways to where she lived, and so we walked. I would have been better suited if she had lived farther away—we got there in almost no time. She still had me guessing, except now, of course, I had the address, and the rest would be easy. Still, it began to look as if this was the end of a perfect day. But then she sprang it.

“Won’t you come in?” she invited me. Would I? I’ll say I would!

Off the hall there was a lighted room. We went in. There was a man sitting beside a table, reading. He had his back turned toward us.

“I’ve brought a friend of yours in to see you. dad.” she said. “Mr. Reynolds—Mr. ‘Bud’ Reynolds.”

So she had known who I was all along! Well, after all, there wasn’t anything so very surprising about that; because, of course, when a fellow is playing in the big leagues a lot of people get to know him by sight. But who was this dad of hers that was supposed to be a friend of mine?

I didn’t have to wait long for the answer.

The book dad had been reading went sailing through the air across the room and landed up against something that must have been perishable, because I heard the crash. And dad came out of his chair all standing, as if a gun or something had gone off underneath him.

He turned. And—it was Jim Riordan!

Just for a second he stood there, with his face getting all sort of swelled up, and first red and then purple; and then, with a bellow like a wild buffalo or something going into action, he came for me.

I went away from there!

It was the only thing to do.

You see—well, I guess the fact of the matter is that I didn't begin at the beginning of the story after all, though I certainly meant to. I can see now that I ought to have begun with that game between the Metropolitans and the Pink Sox; the fifth game of a series that was played in August, the preceding season; the one that wound up with a riot.

I suppose the story really begins with the riot; but, cutting it short, what led up to it was this: when the Pink Sox came to town for that series we were tied with them for first place. And when we hooked up for the last game of the series it was still even—Stephen—we had split the first four games fifty-fifty.

I was in there working for the Metropolitans that day; and when I say that I had everything, I'm only telling the truth. And, considering that I had already won three straight games—had been returned a winner every time I had pitched against the Pink Sox that season—it was a safe bet that I could repeat. Anyway, that's the way the home fans looked at it; and they backed their opinion to the limit.

Now get this: Jim Riordan and Charley Olds were the umps. But you can forget Olds; he didn't figure. It was Jim Riordan that spilled the beans.

Mind you, I don't say that Jim didn't call 'em the way he saw 'em. No doubt he did. He wouldn't do anything else, because any way you take him, Jim Riordan is one of the squarest shooters on the old foot-stool. I don't say that Jim wasn't all perfectly honest in his decisions.

But what I do say is this: if there is any umpire in the big leagues that deserves the Croix de Robbery, Jim Riordan ought to have it for his work that day. He must have let some kid have his eyes to play marbles

with and hung up his brains in the clubhouse along with his coat. If there was a chance to go wrong he took it; and if there wasn't a chance—he made one. Talk about seeing things straight! He couldn't see the difference between a foot-rule and a corkscrew.

And we hadn't gone three innings when I slammed the ball down in the dirt and told him so. Then I started in to tell him some more things that I thought it would do him good to hear about himself. But I hadn't got very far with it when he cut in and told me where I could get off. So I picked up the ball again and tended to business.

It was about here that the fans began riding Jim in earnest. But it didn't make any difference to Jim or with his decisions; he kept turning 'em in—one hundred per cent wrong. Anyhow, he was consistent.

Never mind the details. The upshot of it was, Jim Riordan—not the Pink Sox—beat us to the tune of six to one. And no sooner was the last man out than they went for him. The fans. Before you could say Jack Robinson, Jim was surrounded. And not a man in the mob was there to shake Jim by the hand and tell him how glad they were to see him, and how were all the folks. Nothing like that. They were there to murder him—or the next thing to it.

So some of us waded in to see what we could do, I grabbed up a bat before I started over the top, and so I managed to work through the mob at a pretty fair rate of speed, until somebody took the bat away from me. After that the going was slower. But I finally managed to work through until I was right next to Jim.

Jim was doing all right for himself. So far he didn't appear to be much damaged. But things were certainly moving fast in that locality just about then.

If they hadn't been moving fast—well, it

wouldn't have happened. How it happened I have never been able to tell, not to this day. But here's what came off: Riordan was facing me. There was one fellow between us. He was just starting to pull one from the ground; he was going to knock Jim for a row—or try to, anyway. So I let go at him—and hung a beauty on Jim Riordan's left eyebrow!

I say I've never been able to tell how it happened, but here's my guess: you've seen the same thing pulled pretty nearly every time you've seen one of these slapstick movie comedies. Let's make it unanimous and say every time. There's three comedians, the first one swings at the second one, the second one ducks it, and the third one gets it. Then reverse, and so on.

That fellow that stood between Jim and me didn't see me: but somebody must have yelled at him; he ducked, and—*bam!* I got Jim—and believe me, it wasn't any little love-pat.

Now, maybe that stuff is funny in the movies, but—well, put yourself in my place. Considering the way things were between Jim and me, I had a nice, easy little job explaining to Jim that when I biffed him on the brow I was trying to do him a service, didn't I? I'll say I did.

But I tackled it. Jim came through without many serious injuries after all; and that night I met him in the hotel and started in to square myself. He heard me through. And then he came back at me with this:

"Tell it to Sweeney! Do I look like a sucker? Trying to help me, eh? Well, believe me, you took a funny way of going at it! Look! There's the place where you helped me—I'm wearing it yet. A little more of that kind of help and I'd have gone to a hospital.

"So you're trying to square yourself, are you? Afraid I'll give you the worst of it, huh? Don't let that worry you—I'm not your

kind. You'll get all that's coming to you, and that's all you'll get.

"Trying to help me! You acted like it. Tell it to Sweeney—d'ye get me? Tell it to Sweeney! And do it now. You've got one second to move along—before I bean you!"

Well, Jim was a good deal older man than me, and so of course I didn't want to hurt him; and this hotel was a perfectly respectable place, and so I didn't want to start anything; and so—well, I sort of drifted away from Jim. I could see it wasn't any use, anyway.

And I'll give Jim credit; during the rest of the season I got all that was coming to me from him—just as he said I would—and maybe a little bit more. I mean that in trying not to let any personal affairs come between him and his duty, Jim actually gave me something a little better than an even break. But that was Jim Riordan, all over; a white man and a square-shooter. I'll say so.

But off the field—it was different. There were several times when Jim and I would have staged a first-class two-man brawl if there hadn't been somebody handy by to step in between us.

Those were the times when I had started in, once more, to try and tell Jim how it happened. But it wasn't a particle of use. First off he'd tell me again to tell this fellow Sweeney about it; and then—but never mind. Anyway, Jim certainly had it in for yours sincerely.

And so now no doubt you understand why dad got the way he did when Louise—that was her name, and she was Jim Riordan's daughter—informed him that his "friend," Mr. Bud Reynolds, had dropped in for a little call. All in all, it must have been quite a surprise to Jim—the same as it was to me.

Now they say that everything comes to a good waiter; and maybe there's something in

it. Anyway, on the afternoon of the day following Louise's little surprise party for Jim and me, I hadn't been holding down a certain street-corner, not far from where Jim Riordan lived, for more than a couple of hours or so, when along came Louise. She looked me right in the eye, and walked on without paying any more attention to me than as if I was the corner lamp-post or something.

Well, I wasn't surprised at that. I had figured that maybe something of the sort might happen. Of course Jim had told her his side of the story. What surprised me was that I had the nerve to chase after her and insist on her listening to my side of the argument.

If anybody had told me twenty-four hours before that I would have the brass to chase up a young lady on the street that had just handed me the ice—or even if she hadn't—I would have thought that he was crazy. But I'll tell the world it makes a big difference—when your number's called.

So that's what I did; and I made good. I had to. After a while she believed me. As for the rest, she had seen me at the ballparks any number of times; and at the dance the night before, she had been pretty sure as to who I was even before we unmasked.

Jim Riordan was always pretty close-mouthed about his business affairs, and so she hadn't heard about the trouble between Jim and me. And she knew that as umpires go, Jim was a good deal more popular with the players than the average. And probably that's all that needs any explanation, except I might say that up to the time Louise pulled that little joke I didn't know that Jim Riordan lived in this man's town or where; and I certainly didn't know that he had a daughter.

Somehow a fellow never seems to think of a baseball umpire as being human, and maybe having a wife and kids and all that

sort of stuff, anyhow.

Well, anyway, that was the situation. And now, if this was one of those regular five-reelers, I would start in and stall for a ample of thousand feet, showing Louise's and my troubles with the heavy father—of course that's what these stage folks would call Jim—and all that. But I'm not going to do anything of the sort. I'm going to cut out all that stuff and crash right into the final spool, with just a word or so to sort of connect things up.

After that first—or second—time, Louise and I saw each other pretty frequently—when Jim wasn't looking. I'm not saying that I was stuck on this gumshoe business, but there didn't seem to be any way out of it; and so what else could we do?

Of course we had to see each other. A month—six weeks—passed, and things were still just the same. I lay awake nights and stayed awake days trying to dope out some way of squaring myself with Jim Riordan. Nothing doing. And get this. I would never hear that old wedding march, the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and know that it was meant for me, until Jim was squared. I got that straight from Louise—and she meant it.

It was a deadlock.

Then:

One night I took Louise to a show, and afterwards we went to a restaurant for a bite to eat. The name of the place was Delgado's.

The waiter had brought our things and gone away again, when I happened to glance across the room, and—

"Look who's here!" I said to Louise, and showed her which way to look.

"Dad!" she gasped.

"Right—the very first time," I said.

It looked like we were up against it. Jim was supposed to be out of town, and Louise had put up some sort of an excuse to her mother, and—but what's the use of going

into all that? Anyway, there we were—and there was Jim! And he wasn't sitting very far from us, either. He must have come back unexpectedly—unexpectedly is right—on a late train, and dropped in there for a bite or two before going home.

“What shall we do?” asked Louise.

There was just one chance. If we didn't move, and Jim didn't get too curious about his neighbors, we might get away with it yet, because our table was partly concealed from Jim by one of a row of columns that ran down the center of the room. So I said:

“Sit tight—and keep your nerve.”

We hunched in back of that pillar the best way we could, and sat tight. Neither of us ate anything. I had felt pretty hungry when we came in, but now I seemed to have lost my appetite somehow.

But Jim didn't appear to be troubled that way at all. Did I say that Jim had probably dropped in for a bite or two before going home? I take it back. After a while it began to look as if he had dropped in for a meal or two, and probably two.

But everything comes to an end, and finally, when Louise looked as if she was going to keel over in a faint or something the very next minute, and there have been times when I've felt a lot better myself in some ways because if Jim ever did tumble to us, believe me, there would certainly be some scandalous doings. Finally the waiter brought Jim's check, and he paid it. And then he got up and started to leave—and stopped.

I looked for the reason—and saw six of 'em. One in every exit. Cops! The place was pinched! It was a raid.

It was nothing else; but I want to say right here that that doesn't mean that the place wasn't a decent enough place. It was. But it was like this: somebody had been riding the mayor, or the police

commissioner, or somebody, and they had started in to clean things up, and they were doing it—regardless.

But of course, right then, all this was beside the question. The real question seemed to be—what next?

Well, of course there were all sorts of possibilities, mostly unpleasant; but I didn't have the time then, and I won't take it now, to go into 'em. Here's what happened: as a general thing these raids are pulled off without a whole lot of fuss. The cops separate the sheep from the goats, and the sheep are turned loose, and the goats take a ride on the city, and that's all there is to it. But this one turned out different.

Somebody started something right off the bat, and in an instant the place was in an uproar. In the next instant it was a riot. Men were fighting, women screaming, and crockery being smashed all over the place.

All in all, if you ask me, there is no better place to stage a riot than in a restaurant. A restaurant sort of lends itself to the occasion, so to say. Anyway, this one did. As riots go, it was a larb!

And maybe it would give us the chance we were looking for. I grabbed Louise, started to make a break for an exit, and—ran spang into a bluecoat! He gripped me by the shoulder and said:

“Hello, Bud, what's your hurry?”

It was Dick Byrnes, an old pal of mine; a fellow I knew well; a rabid baseball fan. And if a feller ever needed a friend this was one of the times. So I was going to put it up to Dick to get us out of there. when—

“Bud! Look out!” sang Louise.

I don't know what made me do it—maybe it was instinct—but I ducked down and away, and—zowie! Jim Riordan connected with Byrnes in the same place and in the very same manner that I landed on Jim that day after the ball game!

Now anybody will tell you that any time you hit a cop in the eye you have done something. Anyhow, it brought Jim to reason, and before Byrnes could start in using the wood on him, Jim began coming across with his alibi. Byrnes, hanging on to his eye with one hand and his club with the other, listened for a moment, and then he cut in:

“Ah, tell it to Sweeney! Say, what d’ye thing I am, a sucker? You didn’t go to hit me at all! Aiming to hit somebody else!

“And believe me, I’m wise to you! You’re Riordan, the ump—and many’s the time I’ve ached for a chance to lay my mitts on you! Come along with me!”

“Listen, Dick,” I said. “Just a minute.” And I came through with the whole story, in

a hurry. “And so you see,” I wound up, “it was me he was looking for. Can’t you get us out of this?”

It came hard; but it came. “All right,” growled Byrnes, “I’ll get you out of it.”

And he did.

After we had gone a little ways—Jim was pretty subdued, and didn’t seem to notice that I was there—Louise asked, very innocent: “Dad, what under the sun possessed you—to hit a cop?”

Jim started in—trying to explain.

“Tell it to Sweeney!” I kidded him.

“I did!” said Jim.

“How many times?” I asked him. “Would you admit that a thing like that could happen, say, twice?”

“Say,” said Jim, “shall I apologize?”