

# SERIAL STORY BLACKOUT

BY RUTH AYERS

CHAPTER XVI

Mary had read the form letter. "Is everything all right at the front with the doctor?" Mrs. Simmons asked.

"Oh, yes, quite all right," Mrs. Simmons was listless.

Mrs. Simmons was not entirely satisfied. She pretended to polish the tiles on the hearth as she went on, "I have said many times, I have indeed, that a finer gentleman never lived than Dr. Lenox, American or not."

"That's very kind of you."

"And if I may say so, you're looking much better yourself these days. Not so peaked. Mind, that terrible shipwrecking of the Moravia by the submarine, would be enough to make a body look peaked for the rest of their lives."

When she had gone, Mary Carroll stared at the check. So cold, so impersonal. There had been no letter yet from Gilbert—instead, this reminder that he was doing his duty toward her.

The spirit of independence that had driven her once to fight for a chance to earn her living as a fashion designer—that had made her a perfectly independent young person in Paris—rose again within her.

"I won't take his money," she stammered, half aloud. "I won't. If he'd written — if he'd made some gesture to show he was not acting out of pity for me, I might have accepted it. But not now."

The lodgings were paid for until spring. Some of the money Gilbert had given her before their wedding, still remained. Her needs had been small.

With her disfigured face, Mary Carroll might not be able to find a job—but perhaps she could still earn enough through her drawing so she would not have to touch Gilbert's checks. Resolutely, she went out to buy drawing paper, pencils, and charcoal.

Millions of words had been written about London in wartime. Newspapers and periodicals had been filled with cartoons and drawings of the grim side of London's blackouts and evacuations. In her daily walks, something in Mary Carroll's alert American eyes had seen something else. A lighter, whimsical touch. Fashions had gone military. White helmets, white walking sticks, white gas masks boxes had been designed to show up clearly in the darkened city. Perhaps she could catch some of this lighter vein, some of

this striving to laugh at war in her drawings.

When her first group of sketches was finished Mary was thrilled with anticipation. They were not perfect but she had a feeling they caught an atmosphere and a spirit. She packed them carefully and sent them, a few at a time, to some of the London shops, with notes asking if they might be exhibited.

The response was swift and heartening. Letters began arriving, asking for prices and giving her orders.

Days flew as she worked. Life began to shape anew. When the time came, if ever, she could go back to Vincent without being under a penny of financial obligation to Dr. Lenox. She hadn't yet touched one of his medical corps checks. What hurt most, of course, was that Gilbert hadn't written. She tried to forget it under the rush of creative work.

One day she had a visitor.

There was a knock on her door and opening it, Mary saw Lady Ponce-Townsend.

"How do you do," she managed to stammer. "Come in."

Lady Ponce-Townsend, Mary recalled, was the British dowager who'd outfitted the refugees from the Moravia and who had been so active in war relief work.

Lady Ponce-Townsend smiled a harassed, toothy smile. "My dear, I've just heard of your marriage to Dr. Gilbert Lenox. Congratulations. But why haven't you let me know about your sketches?"

"They're utterly stunning."

"Why, I had no idea you would be interested!"

"Interested!" Lady Ponce-Townsend fairly boomed. "If you have no objections I want to exhibit them in my Mayfair home. You will let me, of course!"

(To Be Continued)



**COMMANDER** — Flights made by Britain's aviators along the western front are under the direction of Air Vice-Marshal Patrick Henry L. Playfair (above), commander of the Royal Air Force in France. He's seen "somewhere at the front."

# FLAPPER FANNY



You've got problems! Try figuring how I can pay December bills in January with my March allowance that I don't get until February."

# SIDE GLANCES



"I wish we could find a maid that doesn't have a yep for fried chicken!"

# Stories in STAMPS



Shown above is the design of the new U. S. stamps of the authors group of the Famous Americans series, to be released in January and February. William A. Roach designed this first group of five in the 35 of the series.

Pictured in the oval is Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist, philosopher and poet. The Emerson 3-cent value will be placed on first-day sale at Boston, Mass., on Feb. 5.

Descendant of a long line of ministers, Emerson began his study for the ministry soon after his graduation from Harvard. He became pastor of a Unitarian church in Boston, resigned after nine years in the ministry for conscientious reasons. After the death of his wife, in 1832, he went to Europe, became the friend of many noted men of letters.

Upon his return to America in 1833, he settled in Concord, Mass., led a quiet life of writing, lecturing and occasionally preaching. He was a close friend of the Alcott family, exerted a great influence upon the literary career of Louisa M. Alcott, who is honored with him in this stamp series.

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# OUR BOARDING HOUSE



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