

SERIAL STORY

CONSCRIPT'S WIFE

BY BETTY WALLACE

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YESTERDAY, Suzanne believes that Paul still loves Martha, begs Martha to quit seeing him. The foursome, with Bill and Martha, was just to give Paul a chance to be with his wife. Martha angrily denies any hint of an affair with Paul and Suzanne agrees Martha is innocent. As she leaves, however, she threatens to tell Bill if Martha goes on seeing Paul.

IF BILL KNEW

CHAPTER VII

FOR a long moment, after Suzanne's last words left her lips, they didn't quite sink in. The small girl with the red hair, huddled on the sofa, didn't quite understand the enormity of what she had heard until Suzanne was reaching for the doorknob.

"Wait a minute, Suzanne!" She ran to her. "What do you mean, someone might tell Bill? Oh, you couldn't—you wouldn't dare—go to him with a lie like that!"

"Lie? I wouldn't lie. There's no need. It's true that Paul's in love with you, and that you've been seeing him every night, even after I refused to come along and play chaperone."

Martha's mouth was dry, a little pulse hammered in her throat. "But I didn't mean anything—it was innocent—and Bill trusts Paul. You can't do that! You can't come into our lives and—"

"I didn't say I would," Suzanne told her evenly. "I merely said that it wouldn't be very nice if someone did."

Then, as if Martha's shock and misery had gotten through to her, she leaned impulsively over her. "Look, darling, I know you. And I know Paul. He's held himself in leash, he's suffered but he hasn't made love to you. The only thing I'm asking is that you look the facts in the face. Quit seeing him."

Once more her voice vibrated with passion. "Give me a chance to get him back!"

When the door closed behind Suzanne, she left ruin behind. The world of simple friendship, of trusting and uncomplicated companionship which had sprung up between Martha and Paul, since that day she told him, "I'm going to marry Bill. But can't we be friends?" was wrecked forever.

Never again could she be so casually cool with him. Never again could she laugh and talk and dance with him and remain blind to the truth she had not seen before—that he loved her. Loved her enough to torture himself endlessly by seeing her with Bill, by visiting in the apartment where she lived as Bill's wife.

Unwilling pity shook her. Poor Paul. He had had a raw deal from her, right from the start. But her heart said it wasn't her fault that Bill Marshall's blue eyes had stirred depths in her she herself had never dreamed were there. It wasn't her fault that the camaraderie, the serene content she had accepted as love with Paul, had turned out not to be love at all.

Not after she tasted the heady wine, the magic ecstasy of the touch of Bill's hand, the sound of his voice, the feel of his lips on hers.

Could it be that for Paul there was magic and wonder only with her? Oh, he shouldn't have gone on clinging to the ghost of something that was dead! He should have turned to Suzanne.

But Martha knew, achingly, that love isn't like that. All the counsels of common sense, all the old teachings she had been taught at home of love, honor and duty, had directed that—even though Bill's blue eyes had awakened something to singing life inside her, that first time—still she had no right to go on seeing him. Had no right to let him kiss her while Paul's ring was on her finger.

Practical considerations would have directed that Paul, with money of his own and a fine position, was the better man to marry. He could have bought her so much that she and Bill had gone without. There would have been no small apartment, but a big house. No job to wake up to each morning. No dilapidated Peg, but a good car, a new car.

And yet, she hadn't even given these things a single thought. Her whole heart was Bill's—simply, forever and beyond denial.

Once she had heard somewhere that it didn't matter whether or not you were wildly in love with the person you married at the time you married him. "After 10 years," someone had said, "you love him anyway. The things you two have gone through together cement you closer than any fleeting passion."

Perhaps it was true. But she had never thought of standing at an altar with Paul, saying those solemn vows, merely because she had promised.

Was that why Paul couldn't turn to Suzanne? Because the thing called love held him as unrelentingly in its grip as it had held her?

Suzanne had accomplished what she set out to do! "Give me a chance to get him back," she had cried.

"Oh, Bill," Martha wept stormily, "Bill, why did they ever draft you? You never should have gone away from me. Never."

Through the long morning, she couldn't seem to stop looking at him. With that awful fascination, that suddenly clear and penetrating gaze. As if she had never seen him before, exactly as he was.

He had discarded his coat. In shirt-sleeves, he worked at the board in his office, the door open. His shoulders were broad, his tanned, bony face absorbed. Once he picked up his slide rule, drew it out of its worn case, slipped the little transparent panel carefully down an inch or two, and frowned as he made a calculation.

She began to wonder, as he worked on, oblivious, how Paul could have stood these months in the office with her after she married Bill. He had always been just the same—casual, normal, businesslike. How could he have such control of himself that, although Suzanne said his eyes gave him away, when they were together, here in the office they never did?

OR did they? She swung around in her chair, her eyes on the back of the thin file clerk. What was it the girl had said, several weeks ago? Something about Mr. Elliott keeping Mrs. Marshall from getting too lonely.

Her head ached dully, by lunch-time. Her fingers had been slow and faltering on the typewriter keys all morning. Lunch did not revive her. There still echoed in her mind the sound of Suzanne's voice. The sickening realization that those awful things she had said were true settled more and more heavily in Martha's heart.

"I'll never again act natural with Paul," she thought. "I won't be able to be gay and offhand and the way I've always been."

There was more to it than that, too. "I'll have to stop seeing him. I can't tell him why straight out. Yet I mustn't let him come to the apartment any more. How can I make him understand that our friendship is over?"

(To Be Continued)

Heads Britain's Home Fleet



One of the most important jobs in British empire defense is now in the hands of Admiral J. C. Tovey, C. B., D. S. O. He's new Commander-in-Chief of the British Home Fleet.

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

IF YOU AVERAGED 20 MILES PER GALLON, YOU COULD MAKE 2,444 ROUND TRIPS TO THE SUN ON THE GASOLINE THAT WAS CONSUMED IN THE U.S. DURING 1940.

THE LARGEST HUMAN BRAIN ON RECORD BELONGED TO AN IMBECILE!

HOW CAN A BASEBALL TEAM WIN A GAME IN WHICH IT DOES NOT EARN A RUN?

ANSWER: Runs scored as a result of errors and walks are classed as "unearned," but they count just the same.

IMPORTANT SCIENTIST

HORIZONTAL

1. 6 Man who propounded the law of gravitation.

10 Opera air.

11 Old measure.

12 Trudges.

13 Soul.

16 Shoe.

17 To make lace.

18 Northeast (abbr.).

19 Structural unit.

20 Morindin dye.

21 Half an em.

22 Sun.

23 Having a reflecting surface.

28 Sky color.

29 Death notice.

31 Verbal.

32 Tumbler.

33 Tree fluid.

34 Shrewd.

35 Ducklike bird.

36 Upon.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

SARAH BERNHARDT

ARENOSE EARLIER

BAD INNER AMAL

TOD STEELED END

OR LIEF SOW SI

URED IDE

ROUGE TUM

E BAR SOB

DR TEAL

IDEALIST

EGO LACATAN FIR

LONE TENET MESA

FRANCE GREATEST

37 Not speaking.

38 Flat-bottomed boat.

39 Grief.

40 Observes.

41 Sneer.

42 Diamond cutter's cup.

43 Hidden supply.

45 Valley.

46 Corresponding.

47 Ascetic.

48 Fodder vat.

49 Moderates.

50 He was a famous English

15 He invented a — or sky instrument (pl.).

20 Ready.

22 Bed lath.

23 To drink slowly.

24 Cloaks.

25 To impel.

26 To deposit.

27 Dye.

28 Ink stain.

30 Curse.

32 Prepared lettuce.

33 A solid.

37 Worth.

38 Aviator.

39 Females.

40 Ancient tale.

41 Festival.

42 Ana.

43 Uncle.

44 Not bright.

46 Monkey.

48 Compass point (abbr.).

49 Before Christ (abbr.).

50 His — or theories are found in his book, "Principia."

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. WILLIAMS



RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



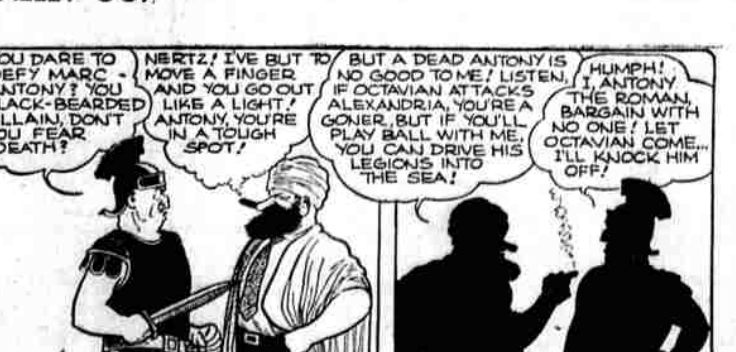
WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



ALLEY OOP



OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE



BY FRED HARMAN



BY HAROLD GRAY



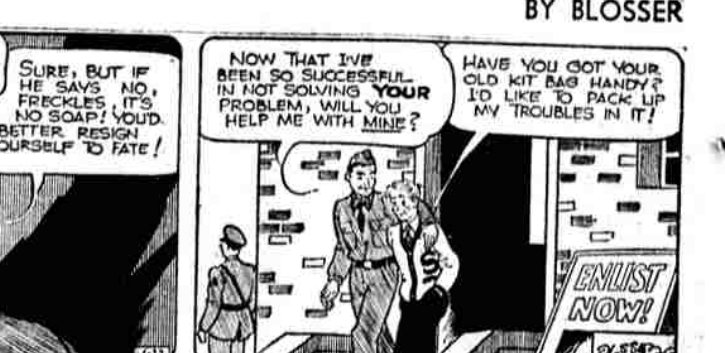
BY MARTIN



BY CRANE



BY BLOSSER



BY V. T. HAMLIN

