

CARIBBEAN CRISIS

BY EATON K. GOLDTHWAITE

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THE STORY—Four visitors arrive at a Dutch West India house to complicate the life of Bill Talcott, who is finishing six years there as branch manager for an American chemical firm. They are Halsey, Bill's successor; an auditor, who immediately accuses Bill of a large shortage in his accounts; MacDowell, a detective brought to take Bill back to the States if any irregularity were found; and June Paterson, beautiful cousin of Bill's former roommate. At dawn two more visitors arrive, deposited by an smuggling skipper after a fight in which MacDowell is wounded and Halsey rous the skipper.

EVE OF DEPARTURE

CHAPTER IX

INEXPLICABLE as Bill Talcott's actions might have seemed to June Paterson, they were the direct and simple result of a combination of circumstances which, in the space of half a day, had changed the course of his life. For link by link about him was being woven a chain. Twist and struggle as he might, the things only bit deep into his flesh, throttled his spirit, threatened not alone his freedom of movement but his mental balance as well.

It is true that in questioning Halsey's orders and resenting his presence he had acted with ill grace, scarcely in the manner of one upon whom responsibility had rested for six long years. But therein, where lay his greatest strength, was also his greatest weakness. Believe as he might that he wanted to be clear of Abas Island, wanted to put behind him its small and filthy and oppressive heat, one uncompromising fact remained.

For six however long and lonely years he might have been, Bill Talcott had been monarch of a tiny kingdom. His subjects were a half-thousand natives; his chancellor Sebastian. That he had ruled fairly and justly, that he had acquitted his responsibility with honor and measurable success was no longer a matter of moment. He was being deposed, kicked out; it was not an abdication. For him there were no banquets, no poet laureate to sing his virtues. He was being forced out under suspicion. Manufactured out of whole cloth though they might be, the circumstances were sufficient to ruin him.

Halsey was no coward and he was no fool. He had shown that clearly enough in handling the refugee smuggler. He had done so well that already black Tomas and Sebastian were looking upon him as a kind of super being; even June Paterson's eyes became starry as she inspected the rangy, lantern-jawed new manager. What were Halsey's private thoughts about the guilt or innocence of Bill Talcott? Halsey was a Federal Chemical man. His life was routine, his blood was business. To him Plant Number Six was just a job. Bill Talcott was just a plant manager being relieved.

Bill Talcott knew, as surely as he knew that there were sharks in Anegada Passage, that loss of his head would bring the end. His personal feelings must not control him; whatever cause he might have to suspect Halsey of intrigue, however much he might resent the new man's calm efficiency in supplanting him, he must fight to keep his mind clear so that his powers of observation would not be dulled. For Talcott had come to realize that only by ceaseless watchfulness could he survive.

BILL TALCOTT suddenly chuckled. No matter how badly off he might be, he was in better shape than MacDowell. "Welcome to Abas," he chuckled aloud, and June Paterson, turning at his words, stared coldly.

Over a hastily assembled breakfast, the newest arrivals relaxed somewhat. First audience by any right belonged to the woman, and after having reiterated that she was Martha Swenson, she told of her escape from Norway.

"Through Sweden, where I have friends, I went to Murnansk," Martha Swenson said in her throaty, disturbing voice with its trace of accent. "From Murnansk to Moscow and then along the route to Vladivostok. I rode the Trans-Siberian railway to Tokyo. I sold my camera in Tokyo, it was a good camera and I got a good price. With part of the money I took passage on a freighter to the Panama Canal. It was in Colon that the Captain Jackson offered to take me to Puerto Rico where I could get a boat to New York because I have people there."

As her voice died silence came out of the rocky barrenness of the island and settled on the terrace. It was as if the lesser beings in their fight for existence recognized and paid silent tribute to one of their number.

June Paterson sharply in-drawn breath broke the spell. "You poor dear! You must forget all that now. If you like you may travel home with me. I'll be leaving Saint Thomas Monday on the 'Blue Petrel' and I'm sure arrangements can be made."

PROFESSOR CONSTANTINE had surrounded himself with an imposing array of bottles, and already a strange assortment of pills of various colors and shapes had been chased down his throat with several glasses of water. "It's an outrage!" the odd man in the too-large clothing muttered. "That Jackson—What he did to me—I'm not well—I was in Martinique, gathering anthropological data for my studies. You know, the Martiniquan is most interesting. Different background completely—came from a different section of Africa. These island blacks, you know, are all de-

scended from slaves. Still practice voodoo—Where was I?"

"You were in Martinique," Bill Talcott said drily. The professor held the bow of his glasses, peering through the lenses at Bill Talcott as if inspecting a new and interesting specimen. "Um—Of course," he murmured. "This man Jackson brought in some flour from Panama, and said he was going to Puerto Rico. Since it's—ah—rather difficult at the present time to get around the islands I accepted his offer of transportation. But I certainly didn't expect to be dumped at dawn in the midst of a lot of shooting! Is this town Fajardo?"

"Scarcely. You're still a good hundred and fifty miles from Puerto Rico. This is Abas Island. We'll see that you get to Saint Thomas. Under the circumstances it will be impossible for you to remain here."

"Abas! I don't want to remain here. There's no anthropology here. Whatever natives you have are imports from the other islands. That huge man on the pier, for example—probably an Amina. Interesting type but unreliable." And the Professor lapsed to grumblings. "Can't say as I blame you," June Paterson put in tartly. "I'm not any too fond of this place myself."

Halsey handed her a cigaret. "I understand there's a supply boat due tomorrow," he said. "We'll see that you're safely delivered. We've all been— He broke off, turned to look at Struthers who was rapidly approaching along the path. The auditor appeared not to have slept. His eyes were bloodshot and sweat poured from his puffed face. Straight on he came.

avoiding Bill Talcott, to stop by Halsey's chair. "If you can beg leave of your guests I'd like to complete our business," he said, and pausing, added in a significant tone, "before you return to New York."

(To Be Continued)

Hold Everything!



"Is this what they mean by the Marines being amphibious?"

FRIENDLY CREDIT

ON ALL PURCHASES OF MEN'S WEAR

- No Interest
- No Carrying Charge
- No Red Tape

OREGON WOOLEN STORE

8TH AND MAIN

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ANSWER: Parade rest.

NEXT: Should the flag come down at sunset?

CIVILIAN DEFENSE UNIT

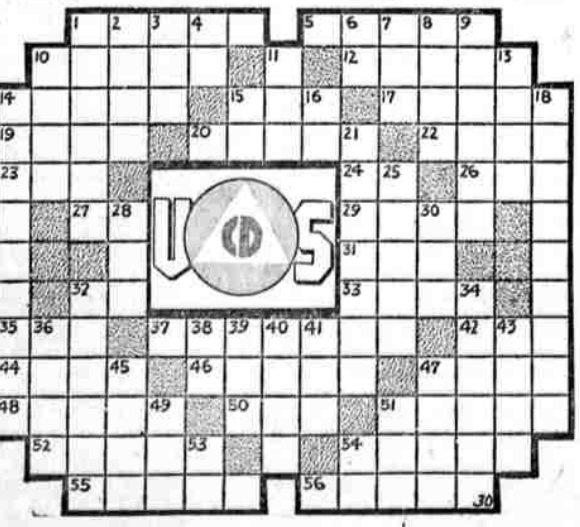
HORIZONTAL
1,5 Pictured in insignia of U. S. Civilian Defense

- 12 Molding.
- 14 Type of cat.
- 15 Not cold.
- 17 Sea skeleton.
- 19 Eye part.
- 20 Weird.
- 22 Hawaiian goddess.
- 23 Moving truck.
- 24 Master of ceremonies (abbr.).
- 26 Dry.
- 27 Proceed.
- 29 Fruit decay.
- 31 Household god.
- 32 Street (abbr.).
- 33 Domestic slave.
- 35 Inquire.
- 37 Orders.
- 42 Also.
- 44 Orderly.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H | A | R | O | L | D | S | T | A | R | K |
| E | M | L | A | T | E | A | T | I | O | M |
| R | A | P | I | S | T | A | R | P | R | O |
| E | T | O | N | O | D | O | R | I | M | I |
| E | R | A | S | I | S | O | E | L | F | |
| E | S | P | H | I | T | A | D | M | I | R |
| M | S | E | D | I | T | I | N | A | | |
| U | T | E | R | R | S | | S | T | A | R |
| S | I | L | O | L | I | T | I | | | |
| R | E | D | S | I | P | O | L | E | S | C |
| F | A | T | O | A | R | A | D | M | I | R |
| S | E | W | E | R | S | | S | E | A | N |

- 15 Him.
- 16 Symbol for titanium.
- 18 Heat-resistant stone.
- 21 Their identifying — are worn on their sleeves.
- 25 Strip.
- 28 Refuse.
- 30 Sea eagle.
- 32 Water strider.
- 34 Moral principles.
- 36 Gunlock catch.
- 38 Exclamation.
- 39 Female saint (abbr.).
- 40 Implement (abbr.).
- 41 Even (poet).
- 43 Lubricants.
- 45 Story.
- 47 Clip off suddenly.
- 10 Variable star.
- 11 Drone bee.
- 13 Auction.
- 14 It includes 53 101 (Roman).
- 54 Music note.



Out Our Way By J. R. Williams BORN THIRTY YEARS TOO SOON 5-30



Red Ryder



Little Orphan Annie



Boots and Isor Buddies 5-30



Wash Lubbs 5-30



Freckles and His Friends



Ailey Oop 5-30



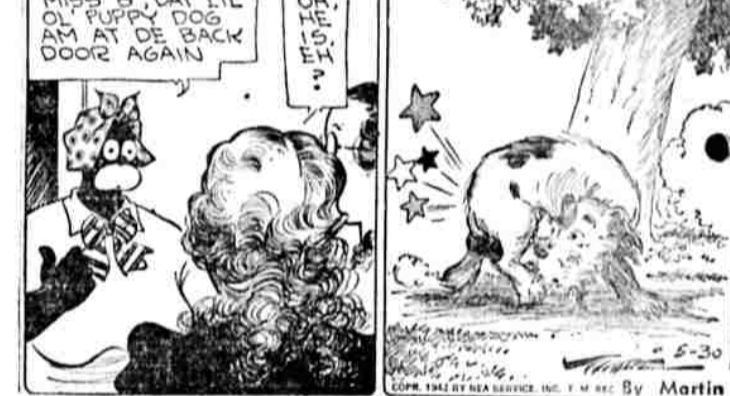
Our Boarding House With Major Hoople LEANDER THE PATRIOT 5-30



By Fred Harmon



By Harold Gray



By Martin



By Crane



By Blosser



By V. T. Hamlin