

● SERIAL STORY

CARIBBEAN CRISIS

BY EATON K. GOLDTHWAITE

COPYRIGHT, 1942, NEA SERVICE, INC.

THE STORY—Bill Talcott is about to return to New York after six years on a Dutch West Indian island as branch manager for an American chemical firm, to face charges of his having been framed by a villainous auditor who accuses him of charges that he is being framed by someone higher up. The auditor remains in charge of the plant while Bill prepares to depart with Halsey, who was to have been his successor; MacDowell, a private detective; June Paterson, cousin of Bill's former roommate, and two refugees, Marsha Swenson and Prof. Constance, who have been landed on the island by a villainous smuggler named Jackson McDowell, though hired by the auditor, urges Bill to refuse extradition. But Bill prefers to go back and face the boss.

BILL BRACES UP

HE saw her again, later in the morning, talking in low, earnest tones to Halsey and he presumed it was about MacDowell. How much of their conversation she had overheard he could not tell; he hoped it wasn't too much. He was doubly glad he had informed Halsey he was ready to return to New York. In that way, MacDowell wouldn't be hurt.

Dark-eyed, dark-haired Marsha Swenson stayed close to the terrace, alternately reading and napping. The tension seemed to have missed her completely, or if she realized it she was too well bred to give a sign. There had been little opportunity to talk with her; Halsey had acted as spokesman and apparently she accepted the prima facie evidence that either Halsey or Struthers were in charge.

There was packing to do. In such a way does man shut the door of the past and enter the high road of the future. Strange, how little he had gathered about him in six years. Bits of coral, books, pipes; articles of clothing that soon would be useless; a riding crop made of a shark's spine; a voodoo mask. In the way of private possessions there wasn't much. Not much, even, of memories. A hurricane, a few sunsets, a few green, lazy swims in the jade green sea. A respectable bank account in Saint Thomas; "I suppose they'll attach that, if they haven't already," he told himself bitterly.

HALSEY came in when Talcott was snapping the lock of his trunk. Halsey's manner was businesslike and brusque and eye-avoiding. "The supply boat arrives at noon?" he asked stiffly.

"Usually."

"Do you think they can accommodate us?"

"I'll be very much surprised if they can't."

Halsey nodded and went out. That was Halsey; he represented business, and while he might be secretly sorry for Bill Talcott, there was nothing he could do about it. Halsey represented Old Man Winters, and if the Old Man told him that Saint Peter was short in his accounts, he would hammer at the pearly gates until he got an accounting.

Well, Halsey hadn't asked any advice. He'd merely asked for and received a definite answer. This was his one day of management. Let him for this day make his own decisions. And then let him unmake them when he got a look at the supply boat.

Talcoth had gone to the terrace when Struthers showed up, looking for Halsey. Struthers was carrying a bulky envelope whose purpose was too plain to be ignored; his previous evidence, manufactured out of full fabric, "Halsey went off with Miss Paterson," Bill Talcoth said in neither civility nor disrespect.

Struthers scowled, hesitated. "I understand MacDowell was attempting some advice," he said.

"I thought it was customary for an officer of the law to inform the prisoner of his rights," Talcoth retorted.

Struthers made no answer, and turning, marched away.

Marsha Swenson had been dozing in a chair and the auditor's arrival had awakened her. Her puzzled eyes turned to Bill Talcoth. "Prisoner?" she asked in her husky, disturbing voice. "Who is the prisoner? This I do not understand!"

"I'm the lucky guy," he answered cheerfully. "And I don't understand it either, which makes me even."

"Ah, a poetical prisoner," she said with understanding which showed that she didn't understand at all.

Bill Talcoth let it go at that. He didn't much care what sort of prisoner this charming, dark-eyed girl thought him to be; having come from a country where they routed you out of bed and poured you into a concentration camp because of the way you parted your hair, it probably seemed normal enough to her. He had gone far past worrying what people thought. His flippancy was covering a hurt, a deeper wound than he cared to admit. For Struthers' words showed that June Paterson was carrying tales.

THE supply boat came in at a little before one, and Bill Talcoth, standing at the side of a mound of baggage, chuckled inwardly. Not many had come down to see them off; just Sebastian and black Tomas and the houseboy Sam. The rest were looting in comfortable shade far from the sweltering pier. There had been no announcements of his going; it was better that way. It was only because Sam had told Sebastian and the foreman, in his turn, had related the news to Tomas that even they were there. They were keeping their eyes studiously downcast, and there was some kind of present concealed beneath Sebastian's bandaged arm. Fervently Bill Talcoth wished it was over. Halsey's dismay was ludicrous. "Is this the boat?" he demanded as the scummy, square-sailed sloop came alongside.

"This is it," Talcoth nodded.

June Paterson's nose sought an even higher altitude. "I'm certainly not going to ride in that!" she announced as she inspected the assortment of cattle, goats, chickens and piles of fruit on its deck. "Good heavens!"

"Oh, they can find room," Talcoth murmured. "It's amazing what these fellows can do."

She turned her head to stare at him. "Perhaps you don't mind riding with pigs," she said icily. "But I most certainly do."

Halsey came over. "This isn't funny!" he snapped. "I might have suspected. This is an awful turn of affairs. The mailboat won't be back in time. And this is out of the question!"

The black captain, to whom cargo was cargo and passengers were passengers regardless of the number of legs they had, put in an ear. "What de matter dis boat, baas?" he demanded.

"You certainly don't expect two ladies to ride in that mess, do you?" Halsey glared.

"Day ride in de mess or dey don't ride," the captain announced flatly. "Dis boat don't get unloaded till Turtula dock, Saint Thomas!"

June Paterson tap-tapped around the baggage, came face to face with Bill Talcoth, thrust out a belligerent chin, said, "I've a sneaking suspicion you're at the bottom of this. If it's a sample of the Talcoth humor, I'm not having any!"

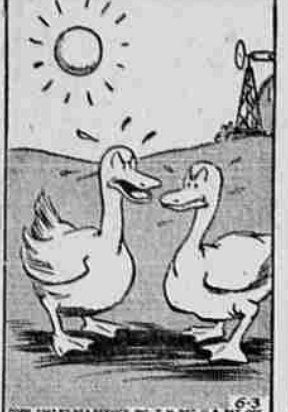
The smile stayed on Bill Talcoth's lips but the mirth was gone from his eyes. "I rather thought you couldn't take it. Matter of fact, I don't see why Halsey doesn't use the company launch. I usually do."

The mounting red in Halsey's face was reward enough, and suddenly Bill Talcoth felt like himself again. He'd been kicked around just a little too long; abruptly he stiffened and tersely said, "Sebastian, get the launch ready. You're taking us. Tomas, you're the boss of the men until Sebastian comes back. And if buckra Struthers

tries to start anything, slap him down!"

(To Be Continued)

HOLD EVERYTHING!



"Nice weather for humans!"

★

Fluorescent Lamps

and

Starters Available!

Also All Shapes and Sizes G. E. Mazda Lamps

★

UHLIG'S

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



THE GREAT RUBBER PLANTATIONS OF THE DUTCH EAST INDIES, NOW IN JAPANESE HANDS, GREW FROM SEEDS SHUGGLED OUT OF THE AMAZON IN 1876.



TRUE BUFFALOES DON'T HAVE HUMPED BACKS

NEXT: Was George Washington a perfect physical specimen?

MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

HORIZONTAL									
1 Pictured popular musical instrument.	2 Move rapidly.	3 Teacher.	4 Asiatic goat antelope.	5 Either.	6 Plateau.	7 Border.	8 Greek letter.	9 Marry.	10 Communication.
11 Vegetable.	12 Beloved.	13 Trained animal.	14 Stains.	15 Begin.	16 Symbol for phenyl.	17 East India (abbr.).	18 Market.	19 Goodman plays one.	20 Partner.
21 Ocean.	22 It is played with a—	23 Solid food.	24 24 hours.	25 Through.	26 Answer.	27 Holy man.	28 Her.	29 Golf peg.	30 Slight.
31 Malt beverage.	32 Dialect.	33 Snare.	34 Gape.	35 — Show also plays one	36 Circular.	37 Painful.	38 It is a — instrument.	39 Insect.	40 Tardy.
41 Unite closely.	42 Billiard stick.	43 Chest bone.	44 British Columbia (abbr.).	45 3.1416.					

