

• SERIAL STORY

BANNERS FLYING

BY MARY RAYMOND

CHRISTIE LOSES SOMETHING

CHAPTER IX

THREE things—Tommy's letters to the family, Sandra's job, and the loss of Stephen's were the sparks that touched off the marital explosion.

Tommy's bitterness and his petty jealousy of Bart, smoldering always near the surface, were all too apparent in those brief notes home. He didn't see much of Sandra, he wrote. Girls always went for insignias and stripes, and it didn't matter whether they were worn by single or married men. Girls were funny that way. Sandra had her entertainer's job and gave Bart credit for landing it.

Mrs. Colton said irritably: "I think Tommy has a right to be angry. Why should Bart waste any time with this girl? Bart has a wife, and if I do say so, a lovely one. I think all this is a reflection on you, Christie."

"All this?" Christie's tone was indignant. "I'm not sure what you mean. You know how Tommy is—he makes the hugest mountains out of the tiniest mole hills. I happen to believe Bart loves me. Just because he is polite to Sandra, Tommy sees green."

"I suppose I'm not very modern," Mrs. Colton retorted. "But I don't believe in married men flirting around."

Christie bit back excited words. She was furious with her mother—furious with Bart because she felt humiliated.

"I simply won't let anybody create trouble between us," she told herself. But her heart was heavy as she thought of Sandra, who was in a position to see Bart so often, and who had no scruples about trespassing.

Christie plunged more deeply in war work. . . Red Cross, home defense, victory garden meetings. Jan told her she was running a race with her—to see which one would be the skinny girl in the circus.

"And your eyes—they're not exactly filled with happiness, my dear sister," Jan said. "Wouldn't it be funny if you and I sat down and had a truth game. It might help, but we can't. We're not made that way."

"In the first World War, they always said 'c'est la guerre,'" Christie said slowly. "I guess it's still the war. It is upsetting a lot of people."

"You and Bart certainly picked the wrong time to be married. All you really knew about him was that he was good-looking and could dance."

"Ridiculous!" Christie spoke impatiently. "I had been dating Bart three years."

"Oh, hush," Christie said. Maybe Bart was disappointed in her. Maybe marriage had proved dull and different from what he had expected. Maybe he would have been happier with some girl who was fun instead of a sober somebody who was taking the war seriously.

SHE was sitting in a little park across from the apartment the next Friday afternoon. Stephen found her huddled under Jan's plaid coat—looking dejected and very much like a little girl.

"I'm a pretty good detective," Stephen said, smiling. "It didn't take me a minute to know why I got my job back. There I was—jobs, one day—and the next day called back. Mr. Wainwright told me someone in whom he had great confidence had confidence in me. This somebody told him he was too big and fine to listen to a lot of youthful and intolerant chatter. Funny thing, Christie, if I hadn't been so worried about Mother, I'd have wanted to stay fired."

"Stephen!"

"Yep, there's something I want to do. I appreciate what you did, anyway. I think you are absolutely the most wonderful girl in the world."

His words were soothing to the open wound that was Christie's hurt pride. Stephen was a dear. He thought everything she did was right—wonderful. Bart didn't. "There's a little old blue goose on my shoulder," Christie said. "I can't seem to shake him off."

"That's bad," Stephen studied her sober face thoughtfully. "Too much work and too little play. Bad for Jill as well as Jack. Come on, I'll race you to that old band pavillion. There's nothing better for shaking off a blue goose than a good gallop."

"All right!" Christie got to her feet, laughing.

Stephen quickened his pace and they were suddenly running close together. In the gathering dusk, she failed to see the hole that seemed to open up suddenly in her path. She stumbled and would have fallen, but Stephen caught her, holding her close for a moment.

Christie could hear the pounding of his heart. She drew away, speaking breathlessly. "Thanks, Stephen. I might have had a spill."

"I couldn't bear for you to be hurt," he said in a low tone.

Christie avoided his gaze, and they walked on slowly. She was troubled. She must be more casual in the future. Stephen had sounded—oh, well, romantic was the word.

TOMMY came home the following week-end.

He looked around Christie's small living room with critical eyes. "How does Bart like it?"

"Oh, fine," Christie answered, without animation.

"Not good, not bad—but if it suits you two, I guess it's okay. I thought I was coming in with Bart last Friday, but I didn't stand in with the Powers-That-Be, so I didn't get leave."

"But Bart didn't come home last week-end."

Tommy looked astonished. Then he laughed. "Don't hand me that casual stuff. It was Friday, the 13th. Remember now? Bart and Sandra were driving off and I reminded them what day it was. Bart said it was lucky for him no matter what numerals were tacked on the day, and Sandra said she took her luck where she found it. Remember now? Did you have any bad luck?"

"Yes, I remember," Christie said in a low tone. "Yes, I had some bad luck."

"What, for instance?"

"I lost something," Christie's voice choked.

"She was fighting to be calm, to hold her head high until Tommy was gone. No use to let him know that he had pulled her world down for her in the last few moments."

"You are looking pretty low, Christie. Bart is, too. When I told him so, he threatened to pitch me out. He's a sorehead lately if I ever saw one. Have you had a row?"

"No," Christie whispered. "Please don't talk, Tommy. I can't bear any more."

She closed the door after him. She walked about, emptying the ash tray, moving an ornament on the mantel, stirring the fire.

He had come home that day, but he had not come near her. He had been with Sandra. She could see them together. Sandra looking up at Bart, her dark hair like a cloud about her small face, her red poppy mouth lifted, her big dark eyes laughing at Bart.

"It didn't take her long," Christie thought, wildly. "I'll write him," she decided desperately. "I'll tell him I've found out there's someone else. He'll know what I mean. I'll offer him the freedom, and I'll say I want mine."

(To Be Continued)

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



KINGFISHER PARENTS
TEACH THEIR YOUNG TO BE FISHMEN BY CATCHING FISH...KILLING THEM, AND THEN TOSsing THEM BACK INTO THE WATER FOR THE YOUNG TO PRACTICE ON!

"FITNESAMES"
DR. LIGHTFOOT IS A FOOT DOCTOR IN FORT COLLINS, COLORADO, AND PEACHY LEMON IS A FRUIT DEALER IN MEDFORD, OREGON.

WHEN THE AXIS POWERS GIVE OUT THEY'LL GIVE IN,
Says S. W. PEARSON JR., LOUISVILLE, MISS.

U. S. PETROLEUM CO-ORDINATOR

HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured U. S. official.

10 Crippled.

11 Vase.

12 Genus of cetaceans.

14 Kindled.

15 Against.

16 Dance.

18 Sly glance.

19 Pipe player.

20 Repeat.

22 Frigid.

24 Impolite.

26 Musical drama.

28 Garden shrub.

31 Fear.

32 Devoured.

34 Nourished.

35 Scrap of cloth.

36 Layman.

38 Carpet.

39 Sign.

42 Her.

44 Compass point.

46 South.

48 American.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

CAROLYN WELLS

R. SOLAR CONIC VA

IT ALT HOLDS VA

SIGMA FE FATTER

EROS MERIT

NEB M

SPENT TERRA

ENSE NO FLOAT

MS PLACE BOA SA

S REICH BOOKS R

PUNCH MYSTERY

4 Clear.

5 Let fall.

6 Internal.

7 Bag.

8 Paint.

9 Mathematical ratio.

10 Prevaricate.

13 Turkish title.

14 Insect.

17 Aged.

19 Small area.

20 Standard.

23 Kind of plant.

25 Capers (colloq.).

26 Wise bird.

27 Vegetable.

29 Exit.

30 Is able.

33 Print measure.

34 Foot (abbr.).

37 Figure with equal angles (math.).

40 He is a of the U. S. President's Cabinet.

41 He is also go-ordinator.

43 Edward (abbr.).

45 Belongs to it.

47 Pinch.

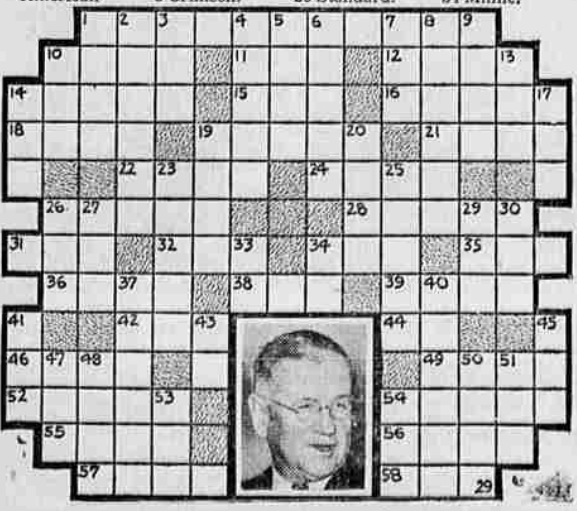
48 Fish.

50 Trial of legal causes.

51 Request.

53 Female sheep.

54 Mimic.



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Freckles and His Friends



Wash Tubbs



Boots and Her Buddies



Alley Oop



Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



By Fred Harman



By Harold Gray



By Blosser



By Crane



By Martin



By V. T. Hamlin