● SERIAL STORY

THE EDGE OF DARKNESS

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BY WILLIAM WOODS

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THE STORY: All Norway is preparing for revolt against its conquerors. Meanwhile Karen, vivacious daughter of Dr. Stensgard, mayor of Trollness, finds herself strangely attracted to Karl Fischer, German trooper, though she knows she should hate him. When Fischer returns to the hotel where the occupation force is quartered, he witnesses the arrival of a man in an SS officer's black uniform.

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MISGIVINGS

CHAPTER VII

IN the captain's office, the air was heavy with cigaret smoke. Maps and papers lay spread under the green-shaded lamp on the desk. The captain himself, in full uniform, and puffing a cigaret between his tight lips, was standing facing the door, hands clenched behind his back, his dark, squat body drawn up to its full height. The officer who had entered took some papers out of his pocket and threw them on the desk. "Those are my credentials," he said. "May I offer my apologies for this surprise visit. My name is Ruck. I am attached to the propaganda ministry in Berlin."

The captain picked up the papers and, to gain time, pretended to examine them. "Of course, Herr Major . . ."

"Sit down. Don't be alarmed." The major smiled stiffly. "We have discovered that we obtain our best results by not announcing our arrival beforehand."

Konig looked up at the man's rugged face, his thick shock of light brown hair, the crease on his forehead where his cap had pressed. He sat down uneasily with the papers still in front of him. Ruck remained standing.

"In Berlin," he said, and again with a half smile, "I have seen the files of all the commands of the central Norwegian coast. They mention you as a student of tactics, a good disciplinarian, an officer worthy of promotion."

Konig could not keep from showing his pleasure. "The Herr Major means . . ." He rose.

"As I have said . . . ," a twist of the mouth, "Berlin is well aware of your . . . virtues as a commander. I will be brief. I have stopped at every station between here and Trondheim." The giant in the black uniform thrust an extended finger under Konig's nose. "On one point there is extreme dissatisfaction, both in the general staff and in Berlin. I have come here to correct it. That is the attitude of the Norwegians toward our troops."

The captain's face darkened. "Especially in view of this Russian affair . . . it excites the population . . . I can hardly be expected, Herr Major . . . I am a soldier . . ."

"Of course." The stranger looked Konig up and down. "But what has been your procedure here? Administration . . . propaganda."

The captain started talking quickly and nervously. He began with the blackouts. He mentioned the strict curfew, the collection of taxes, the precautionary patrols and searches, and ended with the story of the confiscation that morning of all boats in the harbor.

Ruck was gazing out the porch window. When the captain was done, "Very good," he said. "Now I shall want a list of those whom you consider troublemakers in the village."

Konig said that one Gunnar Brogge, a fisherman (who had achieved some notoriety the previous winter by the singlehanded rescue of a crew from the rocks), was undoubtedly the most dangerous. He mentioned that he suspected Gerd Bjarnesen of smuggling out army food.

"I shall want definite information about these people."

"Of course, Herr Major." He felt uncomfortable under Ruck's eyes.

"During the next few days, you will delegate whatever men I need for my investigations."

"At your orders, Herr Major."

"And of course, you will discuss with no one the purpose of my visit here. It is not even necessary that you mention it in your report to headquarters. I shall take care of all such details."

"Naturally, Herr Major."

"But if there is non-co-operation, we shall teach them a lesson they will not soon forget."

There was such a fierce finality to this that even the captain felt a touch of fear. The major returned Konig's salute, wheeled, and strode out into the other room, the captain at his heels.

"I want a room," he said to Gerd Bjarnesen.

Without a word she handed him the register. Konig was standing on the threshold. He looked at his watch, then up at the soldiers, standing rigidly at attention. "Corporal," he thundered suddenly.

The corporal detached himself from the group and saluted smartly.

"Two men to increase the guard at the dock."

"Zu Befehl, Herr Kapitan."

The corporal did an about-face. "Gotz," he snapped. "Krahl."

"March," roared the captain. He stood with his hands on his hips, watching the men go out.

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CORPORAL PAUL HERRMANN, middle-aged, and with a plump spider belly, was pulling on his long winter underwear before going to bed. It was going to be a chilly night, and he was not willing to catch his death at three in the morning. Karl Fischer stood at the window of their small bedroom, looking down into town.

There was something about the beauty of what he saw that reminded him of Gottingen.

"And all this could be ours," he said suddenly aloud. The corporal lowered his eyes and did not answer.

Karl turned away from the window and began pacing up and down, hands behind his back. "Paul," he said after a while, "sometimes I can hardly understand you. You talk . . ."

"Ja, ja, I talk," said the corporal. "I know, and you're a young boy with your ears wet." He scratched his sandy hair and crawled into bed.

"They are beginning to whisper about you. It's not good sense."

"Let them whisper," said the corporal. "I know what I know. Ja, and I know what I talk too." He sat up with the blankets around him. "Do you think I was born yesterday? Thirty years ago I dug the good Bavarian earth . . . before any of you were born. Cows and potatoes we had. And fought in the last war, and lived through the hunger. Got married and became a baker and had a son, and good Germans all of us. And now you tell me I talk. Let them say what they please. What they please," he repeated, and plumped a pillow. "I don't give that." He held out a little finger. "Not that."

"Paul!" Karl went quickly over to the bed. "We are friends," he whispered. "I understand. Believe me, I do. But still you must not talk that way. These are dangerous times."

The corporal grunted and turned toward the wall. Karl stood up, glancing hurriedly over toward the door. He started when he heard the corporal say in a low voice, "I want to marry again and have another child before I am too old."

For a moment it was still. They heard the muffled tread of boots marching up from the road. The guard was being relieved. All over Norway, by the strokes of a thousand clocks, the silent guard was changing.

In the half darkness, Karl lifted his head. "I may be young," he said slowly, "but I too remember how they starved and hated us. Even so I am a little sorry it is they who are now afraid." He turned back and went to the window. Into his mind kept coming the picture of two girls standing with their hands behind their backs in a blue saeter door.

(To Be Continued)

HOLD EVERYTHING!

"I just came in to hear your views!"

Give Electrical Gifts for Christmas

WE STILL HAVE

Radio-Phonograph Combinations

Electric Clocks

Table Cookers

Waffle Irons

Glass Coffee Makers

Vacuum Cleaners

Sewing Machines

UHLIG'S

1026 Main Dial 5512

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

ANSWER: The terms "light" and "heavy" refer to armament, not weight.

NEXT: Building with skeletons.

LEADS U. S. FORCES IN ICELAND

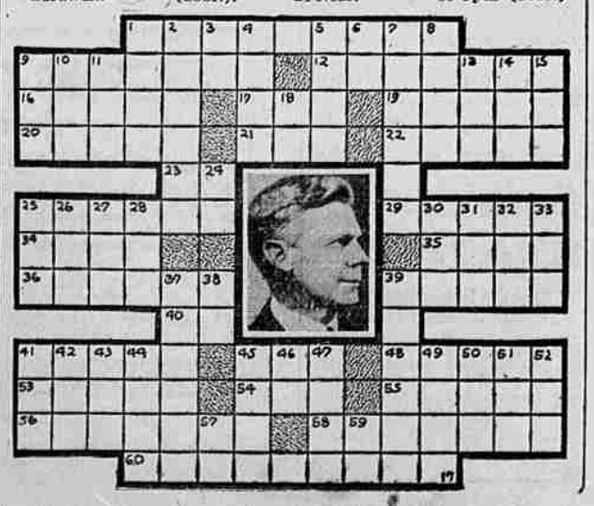
HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured U. S. Army official, Maj.-Gen. Charles H. ——.
9 Disputed.
12 Type of fur (pl.).
16 Inactive.
17 Note in Guido's scale.
19 Incident.
20 Small diamond
21 Nothing.
22 In want.
23 Symbol for radium.
25 Sensation of dryness.
29 Coast.
34 Tranquil.
35 Great Lake.
36 Protozoan.
39 Rosefish.
40 Out of.
41 Siouan Indian.
45 Meadow.
48 Chalk.
53 River in Sarawak.
54 Ventilate.
55 Made of oats.
56 He is stationed in ——.
58 He is in —— of the American forces in Iceland.
60 Wrappers for documents.

VERTICAL

1 Uncovered.
2 Musteline mammals.
3 New England (abbr.).
4 English statesman.
5 River duck.
6 Symbol for erbium.
7 Improves.
8 Exist.
9 Obscure.
10 Compass point.
11 Bengal quince.
13 Born.
14 Termination.
15 Pig pen.
18 Chinese weight.
24 Near.
25 Social occasion
26 Second son of Noah (Bib.).
27 Equal (comb. form).
28 Gypsy gentleman.
30 She.
31 Native metal.
32 Narrow inlet.
33 River in The Netherlands.
37 Beekeeper.
38 Cutting tool.
39 Suit.
41 Kimono sash.
42 Baglike part.
43 Area measure.
44 Gust.
45 Watercourse.
46 East Indies (abbr.).
47 Arched (comb. form).
49 Male sheep (pl.).
50 Greek letter.
51 Two fives.
52 Too.
57 New version (abbr.).
59 Opus (abbr.).

Answer to Previous Puzzle



Out Our Way By J. R. Williams — WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY

Our Boarding House With Major Hoopla

Red Ryder

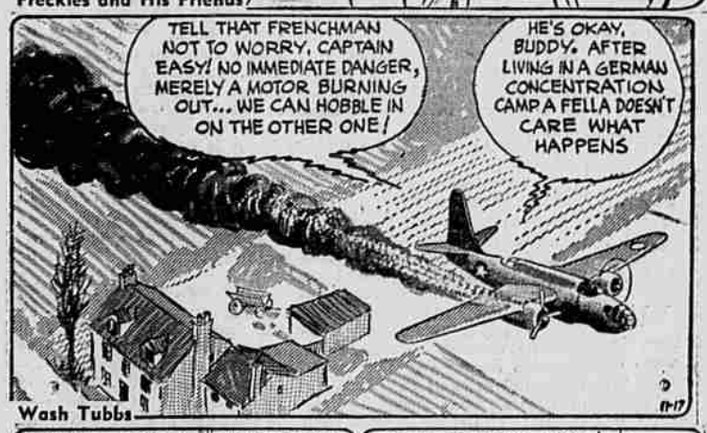
By Fred Harman

Little Orphan Annie

By Harold Gray

Freckles and His Friends?

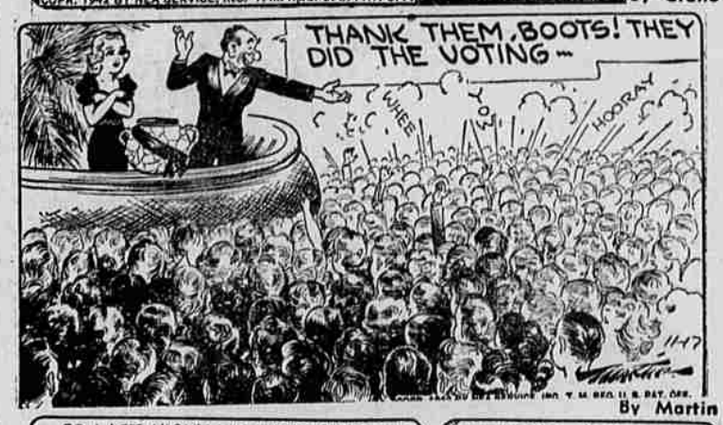
By Blosser



Wash Tubbs

By Crane

Boots and Her Buddies



By Martin

Alley Oop

By V. T. Hamlin