

# A SUITOR TOO MANY

MILDRED BARBOUR

LILA LATHAM becomes the bride of HERBERT WARE, but the picture of an old sweetheart, CAPTAIN JACK FARQUHAR, lurks in her mind. She confides her plight to her friend, DOUGLAS CAINE, an artist.

While in France during the war, Lila had promised Jack that she would become his bride when his regiment came back from the front. Jack is reported dead, and later his insurance is forwarded to Lila. Unable to believe the news, she writes to him, and he writes her back. During the war, Lila had married Herbert Ware, but she never loved him. She had married him because he was a soldier, and she was a soldier's girl.

CHAPTER XXIV  
The Story of the Missing Years.

LILA stared, wide-eyed and breathless, at Jack Farquhar, as he leaned across the luncheon table, urging her to marry him that afternoon.

"We've waited so long, Lila. Five years are gone from our life together. Don't let us lose another moment."

Lila's thoughts had stamped. She had, at least, believed that she would have time to grieve and adjust the situation between them. She had never dreamed that Jack would be so impetuous.

"Jack, are you sure you still care for me?" she faltered, to gain time.

His eyes answered her, and his hands that clasped hers across the table.

"Five years is a long time," went on Lila rather weakly. "I must have changed quite a lot in—appearance."

"You are more beautiful than ever," he told her. "I had forgotten that you were so lovely."

"Oh, dear!" thought Lila. "This is terrible! I have no right to listen. It's disloyal to Herbert to allow Jack to say such things."

Aloud, she said: "But you, Jack, you have been through so much. How can you be sure that you still care for me? You must have known a great deal of suffering. Won't you tell me all that has happened to you?"

He nodded slowly.

"Yes, though I rather hoped we'd take that up later. There were so many other things I wanted to say to you."

"Oh, but do tell me now," urged Lila, thankful for a respite.

"You mean that you want to know how I came to be alive, after having been given up for lost? Well, I'll give you a brief idea; the details can wait until we're married and have long evenings to spend together. Isn't that so?" He smiled at her whimsically.

LILA said vaguely: "You would like that, Jack?"

"Would it?" he breathed softly. Then, with a sigh, he went on: "I'll tell you how I came to return, and after that, we'll have done with the past and talk about the glorious future, eh, Lila?"

His gray eyes were very tender; hers fell before his ardent glance. He made his story brief, alighting on the hardship and suffering, as she had always known him to do. Three days after he had entered the trenches, three days after the night when they had made their pledge—he had been seriously wounded in a charge that had carried him far into enemy territory.

When he had regained consciousness, he was a German prisoner. His uniform and his identification tags were gone. Some German spy was profiting.

Wounded though he was, he managed to escape, making for his own lines, though he had no knowledge of where they might be. He thought that two days and nights must have passed. And then the enemy descended again and he was brought back to the prison camp.

Now he was too weak to attempt to escape. He became desperately

understand his bowling her over."

When they were seated again, before tea which had become much too strong and required the bringing of a new pot of hot water, Tony returned determinedly to the subject of Crystal. No dog-in-the-manger.

"Crystal admires your mind so much," she began with careful casualness. "She's awfully clever herself, really. But do you seriously think of dramatizing Cherry's story?"

"Yes. I'm going to get a play on Broadway if it takes me till I'm 80," Harry Blaine answered. "And at the rate I'm going I'll be at least 79. If you'd really like me to, I'll talk the thing over with Crystal."

"You do like her, don't you, Harry?" Tony persisted hopefully.

"She's awfully sweet and sound and—pathetic underneath. Or, at least, she was pathetic until recently." She wondered how much of Crystal's romance with "Pablo Valencio"—about which Tony was naively credulous—she dared reveal to Harry Blaine.

"I know—some foreign chap that's got her cuckoo," Harry decided the question inelegantly. "That's one reason I haven't been dating her up more."

"Don't want to butt in. Besides she raves so—in a mysterious sort of way—about this 'Pablo' bird that it makes me deuced uncomfortable."

"Harry, I'm worried about Crystal and this Pablo of hers. I don't think he means our Nell any good. I know he hasn't asked her to marry him."

"I'd like for you to stand by as a nice, sane, wholesome American foil for this poetic Spanish chap of hers. Between us, maybe we can keep her from doing something she'll everlastingly regret. Will you, Harry?"

"I don't want to butt in. Besides she raves so—in a mysterious sort of way—about this 'Pablo' bird that it makes me deuced uncomfortable."

"Harry, I'm worried about Crystal and this Pablo of hers. I don't think he means our Nell any good. I know he hasn't asked her to marry him."

"I'd like for you to stand by as a nice, sane, wholesome American foil for this poetic Spanish chap of hers. Between us, maybe we can keep her from doing something she'll everlastingly regret. Will you, Harry?"

"I don't want to butt in. Besides she raves so—in a mysterious sort of way—about this 'Pablo' bird that it makes me deuced uncomfortable."

"Harry, I'm worried about Crystal and this Pablo of hers. I don't think he means our Nell any good. I know he hasn't asked her to marry him."

"I'd like for you to stand by as a nice, sane, wholesome American foil for this poetic Spanish chap of hers. Between us, maybe we can keep her from doing something she'll everlastingly regret. Will you, Harry?"

"I don't want to butt in. Besides she raves so—in a mysterious sort of way—about this 'Pablo' bird that it makes me deuced uncomfortable."

"Harry, I'm worried about Crystal and this Pablo of hers. I don't think he means our Nell any good. I know he hasn't asked her to marry him."

"I'd like for you to stand by as a nice, sane, wholesome American foil for this poetic Spanish chap of hers. Between us, maybe we can keep her from doing something she'll everlastingly regret. Will you, Harry?"

## OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



## BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



## FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



## WASHINGTON TUBBS II



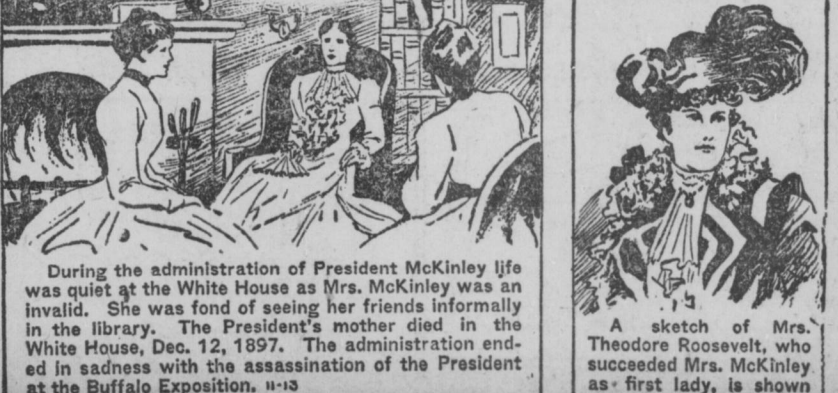
## SALESMAN SAM



## MON'N POP



## THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE



## OUT OUR WAY

By Williams



## THE NON-INDIVIDUALISTS



## By Blosser



## By Crane



## By Snail



## By Cowan



## SKETCHES BY BESSEY. SYNOPSIS BY BRAUCHER

