

Conscript's Wife

By BETTY WALLACE

YESTERDAY—Bill seems almost glad to get away from the drab routine of the store. And before Martha realizes it, the day for Bill's leaving has arrived. Paul goes to the train with them. As Bill swings aboard he tells Paul to look out for Martha. The train leaves. Martha faces Paul. "I'm a conscript's wife now."

CHAPTER THREE

MARTHA MARSHALL stood on the platform, watching with tear-blurred eyes the lights of the train grow dimmer and dimmer in the distance. She scarcely noticed when the crowd of people began pushing toward the stairs. One behind her said wearily, "Well, that's over."

For Martha, it wasn't over. It was just beginning. She thought of the empty apartment—the memories and the throat tightened.

Paul touched her arm. "You didn't eat dinner," he said. "Do you want to stop somewhere and have something now?"

"I couldn't. Paul."

Out in the car, Butch was whining, his nose pressed against the glass. He bounded out as Martha opened the door. He licked her hand. Then he looked behind her. His head cocked to one side, inquiringly. He seemed to be asking, "Where's Bill?"

"He's gone, boy," murmured Martha. "Gone for a long time. There's just you and me, now."

"Well," Paul said gently. "There's me, too. Remember, I promised Bill I'd look after you."

Martha didn't answer. She patted the dog's head and remembered the far-away day she and Bill had first seen him. He'd been a scrawny little pup in the arms of a weeping small boy.

"The father don't want him," the boy said, huddled up on the curbstone. He had looked at them with tragic brown eyes. "I just can't take him to the pound. They'll g-g-gas him."

The puppy had pathetic bowed legs and a funny, wrinkled little muzzle. Martha had reached for him and the little boy asked eagerly, "Do you want him, Missus? Do you, He's a good dog. He don't eat much. Honest, he don't."

Bill coughed. "I'll give you a dollar for him."

"Gee, Mister!"
For nights afterward Martha had had to get up to feed the crying little puppy. He had to be housebroken, and there was the problem of what to do about him while they worked.

Bill cursed himself for every having bought the animal. Yet he was the one who said, "It's tough on you, coming home from the office and straightening the dump, anyway. Let's get a woman to help—she could fix our dinner, too—and then she'd be here to let the pup out during the day."

"Martha," said Paul, touching her arm. "Martha, what is it?"

She shook the memories from her. She mustn't go off into dreams like this. There was so much to remember—but she had to keep going, had to bear up. After all, she thought, trying to whip herself into being sensible, she had been alone before she married Bill.

Butch scrambled back into the car. Martha got wearily in behind him. Paul didn't ask if she wanted him to drive. He simply held out his hand for the key.

They were almost home when Martha said, "Wait, Paul. I—I guess I am hungry, after all." She couldn't face the empty apartment. Not just yet.

"You must have been hungry," said Paul, in a restaurant a few minutes later, as she lifted a roll to her lips and put it back without tasting it. "Now, listen, Martha. You've got to be reasonable. He's not going off to do or die—nobody's going to take potshots at him. It's just training."

"I know," she smiled wanly. "I know."

"Well, for Pete's sake, buck up."

"I'll try."

He finished with his fork. "I promised Bill I'd take care of you."

There was a wry little smile around his mouth. "I'm not going to let you mope. Why you won't even have time to miss the guy. Because you and I are going to be very gay. Very patriotic, see? The chin up, the spirit fearless, and body parked in a movie every night."

But she couldn't summon even a smile, so he took her home. After he had said goodnight, Martha threw herself on her bed. The tears which had been dammed up so long came freely then. She cried with her face in the pillow where Bill's head had lain, every night. She cried with her fists balled up and Butch worried and restless on the floor under her bed. After a while, he crawled up and licked her comfortingly.

"Oh, Butch," she wailed. "Butch, how are we going to get through a whole year without him?"

Butch jumped up on the bed and did his doggy best to assure her that it could be done.

Next morning, in the office, she was ashamed of having been such a fool. She greeted Paul with a cheerful smile. "The flood is over," she said. "From now on, it's stout heart, iron control and bring on the gaiety."

Paul grinned. He wasn't handsome, he had none of Bill's good looks or the boyish charm. But when he smiled, like this, his plain, bony face became oddly charming.

"You call up Suzanne right away! The first thing to do is drive the blues out of the apartment with a steaming dinner, radio music and loud talk."

SO AT 5 O'CLOCK Suzanne drove up to the plant in her smart gray coupe. Martha and Paul squeezed in. They stopped at a supermarket and bought quantities of food. In the kitchen, Martha donned an apron and Paul, apronning the only one available, began supervising production. He was sarcastic about the way Suzanne set the table, took over the task himself.

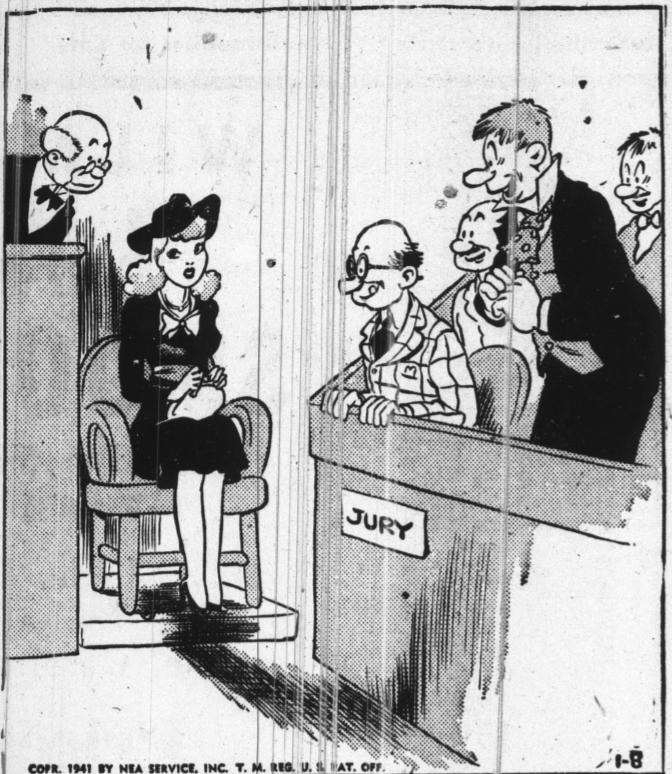
"It's simple, not your line, Sue."

"Oh, isn't it? I'm very domestic, underneath."

"You make the coffee, Sue. Any one can make coffee. Just measure it right, add—"

Martha moved in between them, laughing, ordered Paul into

HOLD EVERYTHING



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"How can we tell if a kiss is worth \$5000? Could we—er—have a demonstration?"

FUNNY BUSINESS



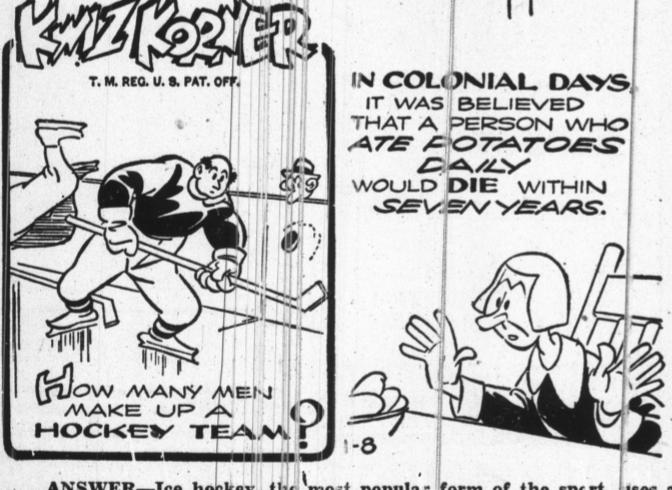
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"Private Carstairs, your shoelace is untied!"

THIS CURIOUS WORLD



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ANSWER—Ice hockey, the most popular form of the sport, uses a six-man team. Field hockey uses 11 men.

Beer Barrel Polka' Is No. 1 On British War Hit Parade

LONDON, Jan. 8 (U. P.)—Biggest song hit of this war is the "Beer Barrel Polka."

Canadian soldiers sang it when they debarked in England. Australian and New Zealand soldiers sang it when they filed down the gangplank in the Middle East.

English soldiers sang it as they trudged through the mud of France. And shelter-dwellers in London sing it while the bombs whistled down about them.

So far it has sold nearly a million copies—and it's still a good seller.

Running a close second on England's "hit parade" is the American best-seller, "South of the Border," which, incidentally, was written by England's best known song-writing team, Jimmy Kennedy and Michael Carr. That, too, has sold nearly a half million copies.

Third place probably goes to "Wish Me Luck as You Walk Me Home," which George Fields, the English comedienne now in the United States, sang her way into the hearts of the British Army.

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THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES

OUR BOARDING HOUSE



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"DOES JAKE CATCH ON QUICKLY? AND DOES SHE UNDERSTAND HIM? LIKE A SPITFIRE UNDERSTANDS A MESSERSCHMITT."

TO PUT IT PLAINLY NO PAY, NO PANCAKES."

LIL' ABNER

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THE OFFICES OF AN INSURANCE BROKERAGE:

"BLT-(SOB!)-IT'S NOT EVEN THEMSELVES THESE DEAR OLD PEOPLE ARE THINKING OF, IN CASE OF THEIR DEATHS—THEY WANT THE FRIENDLESS, CONVICT, NOW SERVING SENTENCE!!"

"SUCH DEVOTION IS TRULY TOUCHING, CHARLIE."

"SUCH GENEROSITY!"

"BLT-(SOB!)-IT'S NOT EVEN THEMSELVES THESE DEAR OLD PEOPLE ARE THINKING OF, IN CASE OF THEIR DEATHS—THEY WANT THE FRIENDLESS, CONVICT, NOW SERVING SENTENCE!!"

"YES, DEAR MR. AND MRS. YOKUM-(SOB!)-YES!"

"IF ALL THE OLD FOLKS IN THE WORLD BUMPS OFF LUCIFER AND PANSY YOKUM—PANSY YOKUM!!"

"NOW WE STEAL PROFESSOR'S MAP COME NOW, BUT ME HOLDUM OFF!"

"GAMBLER FELLAS WHO STEAL PROFESSOR'S MAP COME NOW, BUT ME HOLDUM OFF!"

RED RYDER

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"HOLD ON, PROFESSOR! I'LL GET YOU OUT!"

"I TRY BUT I'M AFRAID MY LEFT ARM IS BROKEN!"

"ME FETCHUM ALL ROPE WE GOTUM!"

"THAT'LL DO, LITTLE BEAVER, BUT--"

"I'LL HAVE TO CLIMB DOWN TH' WELL!"

NANCY

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"FLOY FLOY—I'LL SHOW YOU SOME REAL ICE SKATING!"

"I'LL BET YOU'RE AN EXCELLENT SKATER, SLUGGO!"

"NOW DAT'S CALLED A FIGGER EIGHT... I'LL TEACH YA HOW TO DO IT SOME TIME!"

WASHINGTON TUBBS II

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"COMRADE NIKOLAS, YOU WILL BRING ME ONE BAG OF CEMENT AND SOME WATER."

"THANK YOU, COMRADE. AND NOW SOME BRICKS, IF YOU PLEASE. ONCE I WAS AN APPRENTICE MASON, AND OCCASIONALLY I LIKE TO PLY MY TRADE."

"NOW THIS CLOSET... BUT NOT ABOUT THE SWEET, MY CHAP! OUR CHARMING GUEST WILL BE PLACED IN THE CLOSET WITH THE JAMS AND JELLIES!"

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

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"WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT, JINNY?"

"AH WAS JUST THINKING HOW WONDAHFUL IT FO' A MAN TO DEDICATE HIMSELF TO HIS COUNTRY!"

"DODO BYRD MUSTA MADE QUITE AN IMPRESSION!"

"AHM THINKING OF ALL MEN WHO VOLUNTEER--NOT JUST ONE MAN! THEY ALL HAVE AIN RESPECT AND ADMIRATION!"

"I GUESS WOMEN DO HAD TO RISK THEIR WELFARE FO' SOMETHING HE HOLDS DEAR, AH JUST HAVE TO ADMIRE HIM!"

"WHEN A MAN IS WILLIN' TO RISK HIS LIFE FOR THAT SORTA THING!"

"BOY! THAT'S ALL THE EX-CLOUDS NEED TO START RISKING MY PERSONAL WELFARE!"

By Crane

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

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"AWAKE, HANDSOME?"

"OH-HHO HUH! HOW I SLEPT? SIXTEEN HOURS!! GREAT SCOTT..."

"TAKIN' IT EASY NOW! HERE IS SOME HOT BROTH FOR YOU..."

"THANKS! Y'KNOW, WITH A LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT, I COULD GROW TO LIKE YOU!"

"SWELL! HOW'S THIS?"

"NOT BAD! NOT BAD! SAY... IS GOSH BACK? IS HE OKAY?"

ABIE AN' SLATS

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"IT'S WORTH TEN MILLION TO ME TO GET THIS OLD BUM TO TAKE A BATH--BUT I MUST GO ABOUT IT SWAKEY-SWAKEY! MUST NEVER SUSPECT--ER-DINNER WON'T BE READY FOR HALF AN HOUR--"

"H-HALF AN HOUR?"

"HOW COULD YOU SPEND YOUR TIME MORE PLEASANTLY THAN BY TAKING A NICE HOT BATH?"

"BY NOT TAKIN' A NICE HOT BATH?"

B-BUT--

"LOOK, PAL—WE MIGHT AS WELL UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER-- THEM WHICH KNOWS ME INTERNALLY CALLS ME BATHLESS GROGGINS!"

By Raeburn Van Buren

AN--I DON'T RESENT IT--SEE? IN FACT--I'M PROUD OF IT!! BECAUSE I DESERVES IT!! GET IT?

YES--"GET IT!!" "THIS IS NO TIME, THERE IS TOO MUCH AT STAKE, I MUST USE FORCE--"

By Williams