

BRIGHT STAR

By Mary Schumann

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CHAPTER VI—Continued

Hugh stood still. He was conscious of something different in Joan. An unwilling response tingled through him. "Shall I crack the ice now?" he asked calmly.

Sunday Joan was standing close beside him, dangerously close. "Hugh."

He laughed nervously. "What's got into you, Jonny?" He kissed her lightly on the cheek; his arm went around her with a little squeeze. Then he pushed her away.

She came back with the swift light movement of a bird. Her smoky eyes burned with tenderness. "Would I be so hard to love?"

"Of course not."

"Then why—?"

"Lots of reasons, Jonny. You know them as well as I do. Be a good girl—step back to the table. Dish out the crackers—do something."

She stood still and very close to him. She said in a small distinct voice, "There are no good reasons."

He stared at her. A hollow something beat in his brain like the blow of a mallet. One . . . two . . . three . . . crack. One . . . two . . . three . . . He wet his lips and was suddenly conscious of the taste of brass in his mouth.

"Explain."

"Don't you know?"

He turned his heavy gaze on her. "I don't know—!" He paused stupidly.

She went to the kitchen cupboard, and with trembling hands began to set out some glasses.

He followed her, seized her arm. "What do you mean? You'll have to tell me."

She fell back from him. "No, I won't tell you."

His eyes held hers and in their shining fearful depths, he read the destroying truth.

He pushed open the swinging door to the hall. The soft chenille rug gave no sound of his footsteps. He felt as if he were a soldier going to meet a destined bullet. The lights were dim in the living-room; the card table was vacated. He stood in the door for a moment, then went back very quietly.

He leaned up against the wall of the kitchen. His face was swept with agony.

It burned like acid, and it froze like ice. He had seen it with his own eyes. If someone had told him, he would have explained it away to meet the desirous need of his soul to believe in her. But he had seen it—Dorrie and Cun were lovers.

Joan looked at him compassionately. "Poor Hugh," she murmured.

It came upon him in black waves that this knowledge was the thing he had been fleeing from. He had turned his face away; denied the possibility to his soul. A secret voice had whispered that her coldness had a reason . . . He had refused to listen.

Finally he said in a croaking, foggy voice, "You knew it that night at Freeland Farms."

"When I cried? Yes. I was so sorry for you both. I hoped when he was working, things would be different—"

"How long?"

"I don't know. It must have started early last winter—January, perhaps. I wasn't sure who it was until that week—the day or two before Freeland. But I thought you must know by this time . . . they're so very . . . they don't care any more."

She had known about it, yet had been able to entertain them—at Cun's insistence, probably—come to their house, act a part . . . "living for the day." Her courage was beyond him. He took out his handkerchief to wipe his dripping forehead. His hand trembled. He slumped into a kitchen chair. A groan escaped him.

Joan poured something in a glass. "Here, drink this. It will do you good. You're so white."

He lifted it to his lips and the odor of the liquor sent a violent and uncontrollable nausea shuddering through him. He rose and plunged toward the back door. "Sick, Joan . . . sick . . . going out."

In a few minutes she heard his car drive away.

CHAPTER VII

Hugh fumbled through the fog of the street and climbed into his car. He drove automatically, stopped at through streets, shifted gears, rolled into his own driveway and garage. He shut off the engine, sat humped over the wheel, his head on his arms. If death would come now . . . suddenly . . . end this chaotic desolation! The agony was more terrific than any physical pain.

He went into the house, dragged two suitcases from a closet. He reeled as he deposited them on the bedroom floor. He sat down on the bed, shaking with weakness. Presently he got up, opened a drawer of the chiffonier, lifted a pile of shirts.

A car stopped in front of the house; he heard light footsteps on

the porch. Dorrie came running up the stairs.

Her hair was blown a little; her blue scarf trailed over one shoulder. "I must say that was a queer thing to do—go off without saying a word," she said, angry excitement in her eyes. "What was the matter?" Her voice had a raw edge, unlike her usual tone.

When he did not answer, she went to the dresser and picked up a comb, ran it through her hair. "Even if you were sick—Joan said you were—why did you go off with the car? How do you suppose I felt before Joan?"

She was thinking he was the same person as before dinner—going to carry it off as if she were the offended one. Now—even now. That was what she had been doing right along, making him feel at fault, because she was so horribly at fault herself. He was beginning to understand. Everything that had puzzled him . . . And the understanding poisoned his soul.

She must have seen his white face in the mirror for she turned suddenly. She saw the suitcases, the open drawers, the expression on his face. Arrested, she scarcely breathed as she stared at him. Comprehension blanched her face. "What—does this mean?"

When he did not speak, she said in quivering low voice, "Hugh?"

She caught the dresser behind her with both hands. Her tone curled and lashed. Presently she said, "You were spying on us!"

He gave a laugh that was like a sob. "Do you call it that?"

"Well, now you know, what of it?" she flung out. "What of it? . . . Am I any worse than a hundred women you can name?"

A hundred women. She was implying there was no such thing as virtue—fidelity. All their friends in the same treacherous business. Filmy defense.

"And you—what about you?" She was smiling scornfully. "You can't make me believe you're as lily white as you're painted! . . . What about that stenographer you've had so long? . . . And you and Joan getting clubby? . . . And that Ellen Pendleton whom you kiss each time you see her at your mother's? And—"

"You're lying, and you know it."

She looked sullen. She began again, heaping blame upon him. "Even if you haven't met anyone you care for, I should think you'd be understanding and sorry for me if I have! . . . Do you think we could help it? Don't you suppose we struggled against it? Tried not to see each other, hoping we'd get over it? . . . And didn't I try to make you leave this town? But you wouldn't go!"

"So you care for him," Hugh repeated dully.

Her long green eyes looked at him with cruelty and contempt. She threw back her head with a little gesture, and the words came out with a passionate ringing stress: "Care for him? . . . I love him—love him!"

A sword ran through him . . . two swords—with the agonizing knife thrust of her repeated words. She loved Cun—not him. Love. The word was hideous.

He put his arm weakly across his eyes. "Please—no more—just now."

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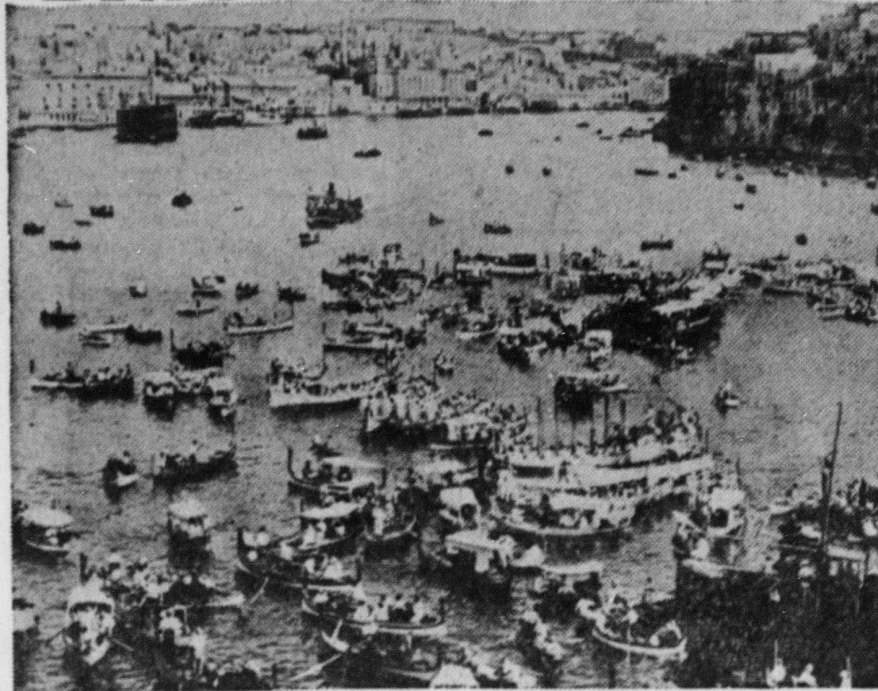
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BRITAIN'S MALTA



View of the Crowded Harbor of Malta.

Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

ONLY seventeen and a half miles long and nowhere more than nine miles wide, Malta, important island in Britain's lifeline to the East, is the principal island of one of the smallest archipelagos in the world. It survives from those remote days when continents were differently shaped and the Mediterranean was a series of lakes, divided by land bridges that connected Europe with Africa.

Of one of these bridges the Maltese archipelago is today the sole existing pier, the one fragment extant of a causeway along which prehistoric pachyderms and ruminants groped their puzzled way to the African warmth when driven from Europe by its increasing glaciation.

Some of these mighty beasts lingered too long on the Maltese pier, and the cave of Ghar Dalam, near the southern extremity of the island, is full of their bones, converted in the course of ages into perfectly preserved fossils.

Together with the other inhabited islands of the group, Gozo, population 23,796, and Comino, population 41, and including the naval, military, and air force establishments, Malta has some 258,400 souls—that is to say, more than 2,000 to the square mile. Thus it is one of the most densely settled geographical units.

In Strategic Position.

Why has this rocky little excrescence from the bed of the Mediterranean played a major part in history? Why does it play a part in the life of the modern world at such variance with its topographical dimensions?

The answer lies, first, in its all-important strategic position between Sicily and North Africa, and, secondly, in its possession of some of the finest harbors in the world.

The tongue of rock on which La Valette built his capital is in shape not unlike Manhattan island, with the Grand harbor, where the battleships are berthed, corresponding to the Hudson, and Marsamuscetto harbor, the anchorage of destroyers and smaller craft, to the East river.

But there is the difference that, both from the Grand harbor and Marsamuscetto, there branch several subsidiary creeks, providing secure and ideal anchorages, in the past for the galleys of the knights and their predecessors, at the present day for the Mediterranean fleet of Great Britain.

All around Grand harbor rise, bold and stiff perfect, the Knights' magnificent fortifications, intended to insure that never again should Malta and the order have to endure at the hands of the Moslems, to whom the Hospitalers were an ever-present menace, another such siege as that of 1565.

Then, after a desperate struggle of nearly half a year, the Knights and the local population were just able, by superhuman efforts, to repel the flower of the army of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.

If Malta's quarter of a million population is large, measured by the area on which it has to live, it is small for a separate nation. For the Maltese are a nation unto themselves, with their own language, their own traditions, their own physical characteristics, and a history that is perhaps one of the longest to which any people can lay claim.

Very Ancient Civilization.

In Malta and Gozo the art of building in remote Stone age days reached a development of skill and refinement unknown in other centers of civilization when the "tempestuous wind called Euroclydon," that still whistles across it during the winter months under its modern name of gregale, the "Greek wind," drove St. Paul to its shores. Thereafter, the Roman chief of the island, Publius, became its first bishop.

During the many centuries of their recorded history the Maltese have had many rulers: the Phoenicians and their offspring, the Carthaginians, then Romans, Arabs, Normans, Aragonese and Castilians, then for two and a half centuries the international Order of St. John of Jerusalem (we also know them as the Hospitalers, and as the Knights of Rhodes and Knights of Malta) and finally, after a brief French occupation, the British.

Despite so cosmopolitan a history, the Maltese have clung tenaciously to their ancient Semitic

tongue, which is recognized by experts to be of Phoenician structure, and, to all intents and purposes, the language of Dido and Hannibal.

Neolithic Sanctuaries.

Naturally, the old Maltese language has borrowed, in the course of ages, words from other languages, but it has always fitted them into its own Semitic framework. The Maltese who emigrated to Asia and to the north coast of Africa have no difficulty in making themselves understood by their Arabic-speaking neighbors, especially in Palestine and Morocco.

A paleontologist may wander about the cave of Ghar Dalam and study the remains of the elephants and hippopotamuses which left their bones there when the world was yet young. Advancing from these and from the Neanderthal man, of whom possible traces have been found in Malta, many thousands of years into the Stone age, he will find in Malta and Gozo a series of neolithic sanctuaries—Tarshin, the Hypogeum at Hal Safini, Hagiar Kim, M'najdra, Il Gigantia, to mention only the most important—unequaled elsewhere.

Other survivals of a different sort are the cart tracks which traverse many of the barren rocky surfaces of the island, the tram lines of prehistoric man. The width of the tracks of the two-wheeled carts which, with their gaily caparisoned little ponies or donkeys, are the traditional vehicle of the Maltese farmer today, correspond almost exactly with those of his ancient predecessor.

On the small, uninhabited islet of Filfla, now used only as a target for naval gun practice, survives a lizard of dark green spotted with red, which occurs nowhere else except in this group.

The museum in Valletta has an admirable collection of the artistic products of the Stone and Bronze ages. Among them are the astonishing fat deities characteristic of Maltese neolithic sculpture.

If one wishes to see how the distant forbears of the present population cultivated their land, one has only to watch the Maltese farmer of today plowing his field; and a student will note the eyes of Osiris still painted on the bows of Malta's sturdy little schooners.

In Malta, during mid-Lent, are the carnival festivities common to other Mediterranean places, with features of more special interest. One of these is the Parata dance in the palace square, which takes its symbolism from the capture of a Maltese bride by a Moslem corsair.

The Imnaria Races.

At the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, June 29, are the densely thronged Imnaria races. These races for horses and donkeys are of unknown but undoubtedly great age. The course is a piece of straight, hard road leading uphill to the big square in front of Notabile, where from his great stone box the grand master in former days handed down, and now the governor of Malta hands down, the banners of victory to the winning competitors.

Spectators, including leading families of the island, watch the proceedings from two smaller but similar boxes flanking that of the governor.

The name Imnaria is a corruption of luminaria, illumination, for it was the custom on that day to illuminate the churches of Notabile and adjacent Rabat in honor of the two saints. A more picturesque, if less trustworthy, tradition derives Imnaria from Hymen, the god of marriage, it being supposed that the young men of the island were wont in former times to choose their wives from among the maidens coming to watch the contest.

The banners still given as prizes are long and narrow pieces of brocade of different colors. The fortunate winners take them back to their village to be used as altar cloths of the parish churches for the ensuing year.

Visitors are always interested in the faldetta (more properly called ghonnella) of the Maltese women. This headdress does not owe its existence, as some allege, to the excessive gallantry of Bonaparte's troops, but is of much more ancient origin. It is a voluminous hood of rich silk, stiffened inside the top edge by a piece of cardboard about a yard long, black everywhere save in the villages of Zabbar and Zejtun, where it is blue. One end rests on the head while the other



SECOND BEST

A Philadelphia firm advertising for a salesman received a reply from a man who said that he was the greatest salesman in the world. They engaged him and gave him three lines of goods to sell anywhere in the West. They expected him to do great things.

After he had been away a week and they had received no orders, they were surprised to get a telegram saying: "I am not the world's greatest salesman. I am the second best. The greatest salesman was the man who loaded you up with these goods."

TAX ADDED



"How much do you usually get for marrying people?"
"Five dollars."
"Anything off for cash?"

Wasted Energy

A gentleman feeling a bit fed up with life decided to commit suicide by hanging himself. A friend came into the room and discovered him standing with a rope round his waist, and he inquired what he was trying to do. The gentleman told him he was taking his own life.

"But," said his friend, "why have you the rope round your waist?"
"Well," said the man, "when I tied it round my neck it was choking me."

Knew Her Habits

Customer—I want a pair of gloves for my wife.
Saleswoman—Yes, sir. What color?
Customer—Doesn't matter.
Saleswoman—What size?
Customer—Doesn't matter. She'll be certain to change them in any case!

Assurance

Officer—But how can you prove that you are the person to whom this letter is directed?
Man (pulling photograph of himself out of his pocket)—Now, is this me or is it not?
Official—Quite so, sir. Here is your letter.

Whiskers

Ernie—My uncle can play the piano by ear.
Gurney—That's nothing. My uncle fiddles with his whiskers.—Columbia Jester.

Obliging

Lawyer—Get my broker, Miss Jones.
"Yes, sir; stock or pawn?" —Everybody's Weekly.

NEW HIS STUFF



"I shuddered when Jim proposed."
"Was he so awkward?"
"Oh, no; he did it so well."

He Missed It

Mother—There were two apples in the cupboard this morning; now there is only one. How can you account for that?
Son—It was dark in the cupboard and I did not notice the other.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Obliging Child

Grandma—Would you like to go to the fair and ride in the roundabout, dear?
Modern Child—I don't really mind if it will amuse you.

They Don't Speak Now

"How did you like the sample of my marrow jam I sent you?"
"Was that marrow jam? O, my dear, I'm so sorry! My husband's using it for sticking stamps in his album!"—Indianapolis News.

No Cure

"How can I cure myself," asked the patient of the quack, "of sleeping with my mouth open?"
"The trouble is incurable. Your skin's too tight; so when you shut your eyes, your mouth opens."

Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

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- By what country were doubloons coined?
- In politics, what is a referendum?
- Who was father of Mary Queen of Scots?
- What was a covette?
- What are the two chief islands of New Zealand called?
- What is the atlas bone?
- What is an Eurasian?
- Who was Pluto's wife?
- What president of the U. S. had Rutherford for his first name?
- What is a collect?
- What is a foot pound?
- Who won the Battle of the Pyramids?

Answers

- Spain.
- The reference of some question to a vote of the people.
- James V of Scotland.
- A wooden war vessel.
- North Island and South Island.
- The top-most bone of the spine.
- One of mixed European and Asiatic blood.
- Persephone (or Proserpine).
- Hayes.
- A short prayer.
- The work required to raise a pound-weight one foot.
- The French under Napoleon.

Household Questions

Add chopped pickles, pimientos and olives to regular cabbage salad and you will concoct a tasty relish suitable to serve with fish, fowl or meat.

A little salt added to an egg before beating makes it light and easier to beat.

Moisten the pastry bag with cold water before adding cake or frosting mixture and the bag will be more easily cleaned and there will be less waste of the product.

A cracked egg can be boiled if the shell is first rubbed with lemon juice. The acid coagulates the albumin and prevents it from cooking out of the crack.

Parchment shades, if they are shellacked and varnished, may be washed with white soap and water. A little furniture polish applied after washing helps to brighten them.

When making pastry, roll in one direction only if you want it to be light. Rolling first in one direction and then in another is almost sure to make it tough.

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A Three Days' Cough Is Your Danger Signal

No matter how many medicines you have tried for your cough, chest cold or bronchial irritation, you can get relief now with Creomulsion. Serious trouble may be brewing and you cannot afford to take a chance with anything less than Creomulsion, which goes right to the seat of the trouble to aid nature to soothe and heal the inflamed membranes as the germ-laden phlegm is loosened and expelled. Even if other remedies have failed, don't be discouraged, your druggist is authorized to guarantee Creomulsion and to refund your money if you are not satisfied with results from the very first bottle. Get Creomulsion right now. (Adv.)

Suspicion Wrecks

Suspicion overturns what confidence builds.

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The refreshing relief so many folks say they get by taking Black-Draught for constipation makes them enthusiastic about this famous purely vegetable laxative. Black-Draught puts the digestive tract in better condition to act regularly, every day, without your continually having to take medicine to move the bowels. Next time, be sure to try

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"Quotations"

It's a mighty good thing for the whole world to keep your word.—Franklin D. Roosevelt.
Politeness is not one of the things inculcated by the American educational system.—H. L. Mencken.
It takes centuries to win a little freedom and a very few minutes to destroy it.—Sir Ernest J. P. Benn.
Broadcasting the culture of other nations helps us to understand their thoughts.—Guglielmo Marconi.
I attribute my long life to having been extremely considerate of my stomach.—Daniel Frohman.
It was not Germany which lost the last war; it was Europe. Another war would destroy us.—Benito Mussolini.