The Lady of the Night Wind

By VARICK VANARDY

Author of "The Two-Faced Man," "Alias the Night Wind," etc

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THIS STARTS THE STORY

A week-end house party is being held at the country home of Katherine and Bingham Harvard. Among the guests is one Conrad Belknap. Katherine discovers him cheating at cards. Convinced that he is concealing his real identity and that he is there for some ulterior purpose, Katherine determines to ferret out the mystery. She has formerly had experience as a police headquarters detective and has been known as Lady Kate of the police. She intercepts a telephone call of Belknap's to a woman confederate whom he calls Berta and, in turn, calls up the woman and learns her full name and address. Realizing that he is suspected by Katherine, Belknap threatens to expose the fact that Katherine's brother, Roderick Maxwilton, who is believed by his parents to be dead, faces a term in prison. Bingham Harvard, who once bore the title of the Night Wind, becomes suspicious of Belknap and of Katherine's attitude toward him. Belknap's confederate, Berta, or Roberta, arrives on the scene under the name of Senorita Cervantez, a pianist, who is to entertain the guests. She pretends to be dumb and writes her words on a pad of paper. Her action mystifies Belknap. Harvard attacks Belknap one night after he has received notes from both Katherine and Roberta from a balcony of the house. Belknap does not recognize his assailant. Shots are fired at supposed burglars by Madame Savage, a guest.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

A Key to the Mystery

THE impromptu gathering dispersed, the startled guests departed to their several rooms after Harvard had poohpoohed any idea of a search of the grounds of Myquest that night.

He followed his wife into her room and closed the door, and was at the point of passing on, through it, to his own, without comment upon the excitement that had just passed, and its cause, when she stopped him.

"Bingham," she said.

How she wished, in that instant, that she had told him all about her brother Roderick long, long ago; for there was not, nor had there been, anything about the circumstances of Roderick's past, or in connection with his supposed death and burial, which Katherine had been to hide from her husband. She had not told him, because it had always seemed so unnecessary to recall the dark and heart-rending chapter in her life, or to harass Bingham by a recital of it.

Above all things else in Katherine's mind was the dread that her father and mother might discover that their son did not lie buried in that grave in Kentucky that was marked with his name; that the dead still lived; that Roderick Maxwilton had not expiated his misdeeds with his life—and any violence on Bingham's part toward Belknap must inevitably lead to such an exposure.

So, in that interval of a second, while Bing returned to her and she clung to him, with her head on his breast, the impulse to tell him everything passed.

Harvard waited for her to speak, but when she remained silent he asked:

"What is it, dear? Is something troubling you?"

"N-no," she replied.

"Are you quite sure about that, Katherine?"

"Of course. I am only—babyish."

"That is not like you."

"N-no. But, then, we are not always immune from nervous shocks, are we, Bingham?"

He did not reply to the question. Instead, he asked one, with a glance as he did so, toward her bed that had not been occupied.

"Why had you not gone to bed, Katherine?"

"I had callers, as I told you," she replied. "The senorita, and Betty."

"What errands did they have, at such an hour, to bring them——"

Katherine brightened, and lifted her head as she interrupted him.

"That reminds me," she said, speaking rapidly—for she did not wish to be questioned too closely about the things that had happened after she had said good night to her husband. "The senorita must have seen or heard the same burglars that disturbed Mme. Savage. She was badly frightened when she came in. She had seen somebody prowling about outside of the house—a man, or some men, under the trees, I think."

"Was that what you wished to tell me about when you called me back just now?" Bing asked her, and when she hesitated for a reply, he added: "There was something that you wanted to tell to me, wasn't there, Katherine?"

"There is something that I want to ask you, dear," she answered, evading his question, and believing that he did not notice that she did so, although he was aware of it, and disturbingly so.

"Yes?" he replied, noncommittally.

"Do you think that it would be possible"—(the idea had just occurred to her as a possible solution of her difficulties)—"for us to go away somewhere, very early in the week—just for a short trip—somewhere—anywhere at all?" Being well into the subject, she warmed to it, and went on rapidly: "The guests need not hinder us, you know, if you can get away from the bank. And I don't care to stay long, anywhere. I would so much like to go away alone with you for a short trip, somewhere, Bingham."

Harvard smiled a bit grimly, although Katherine did not notice that.

"That sounds," he said, "very much as if there is somebody here—a man or a woman, or both—that you would like to be rid of." He hesitated just an instant, and added: "Is there such a person?"

"Why—er—perhaps, dear. I had not thought about it in just that way, but——"

"Have you forgotten, sweetheart, that you have one guest here who cannot very well be gotten rid of for another whole week without giving offense? Mme. Savage makes her dates for months ahead and is as exact about them as a railway schedule. Don't you remember that it is only a short time since you told her that we would remain at Myquest all summer, and that you asked her down here for as long a stay as she could make—and she told you the date when she would come—which she kept—and the date, twelve days later, when she would leave us, which she means to keep to the letter? You can't send her away, Katherine. She'd be lost. It would upset her entire system to interfere with her timetable of dates."

Katherine nodded without replying.

"Besides," Harvard went on, "your week-end entertainment that began nine days ago has developed into a house party. Demming and Sears, Cora Crane and Di Loring mean to stay on as long as you will keep them; and—well, there's Belknap, too. He seems to like it so well here that I shouldn't wonder if he decided to stay all summer. No, Katherine, I don't think that we can pitch them all into the highway and go away; but, if you like, you can give notice that we will close the house a week hence."

He was watching her closely while he talked, although his tone was a bantering, rather than a decided one.

He saw that she sighed again, resignedly, and that she was vastly more disappointed than she wished him to know. He was more than ever convinced that she was keeping something from him that she wanted to tell, and which, for some inexplicable reason, she withheld.

"Who is it that you wish to be rid of?" he asked abruptly. "Belknap?"

Instantly she was on guard.

Her husband's question might have been purely accidental, or there might have been a purpose behind it. She did not wait to inquire of her own mind, but replied instantly.

"Did you notice, Bingham," she asked, "that Mr. Belknap was the only one of our entire guest list who did not appear when Mme. Savage alarmed the whole house?"

"Yes," he replied, coolly. "I did notice it, but I know why he did not."

"You did?" Katherine almost cried out in her sudden alarm. "Why—what——"

Harvard replied to his wife's unfinished question smilingly.

"He, too, like the senorita, discovered prowlers in the grounds around Myquest, but with the difference that he actually encountered one of them and had been very badly handled when he returned to the veranda where I waited him, you'll remember. He had lost his watch, his stickpin and some money—and an important message or letter, which he went back to search for at the spot where he was attacked."

Katherine, in her amazement, gasped, and Harvard misunderstood the reason for it.

"Do you mean that he was robbed—actually robbed—in our grounds?" she demanded.

"Yes; perhaps by the same prowler, or prowlers, that the senorita saw, and that Mme. Savage shot at. However, you have not replied to my question."

"What was it, Bingham?"

"You would not want to go away, just now, unless there were some persons here whom you prefer to be rid of. I asked you if that person is Mr. Conrad Belknap?"

"Oh. Why, yes; I suppose so, when all is said. He is a stranger to us, isn't he? One can't say that he really belongs, you know. But, dear, the truth is, that I would like to be rid of all of them—every last one of them."

They had remained standing while they talked. Now, Harvard reached out and put his arms around Katherine, and drew her close to him, kissing her brow, and inhaling the fragrance of her hair. Then, holding her so, he asked:

"Has something happened to annoy you, Katherine? Has any person annoyed you, by word or deed? If anything of that kind has occurred I want you to tell me."

"No, no, no, no!" she exclaimed, so vehemently that he suspected she was not entirely truthful. Then she broke away from him and laughed. "How silly we are, just because of a burglar scare," she said. "Do go to bed, Bingham. Do you know what time it is?"

"I wonder," Harvard remarked tentatively, as he turned toward the door to his own part of the suite, and while his back was toward Katherine, "if you, also, saw a prowler under your window, tonight? I wonder if that is what you want to tell me, and are afraid to tell—lest I should go outside and get hurt, or—hurt somebody else?"

Then, before she could reply, he wheeled and faced her—for his own words had provided the key to the mystery that perplexed him so sorely.

"What has Belknap done to you, or what is he trying to do? Tell me!" he demanded.

An Appalling Situation

THERE was a crucial instant for Katherine Harvard when her husband put the abrupt question which was a demand rather than an interrogation.

It was one of those vital instants when one has only a flash of time in which to determine a course which must be adhered to indefinitely—in which a thousand queries and replies pass into and out of one's mind with the rapidity of thought which can span the distance between earth and sun within one ten-millionth of a second.

Katherine realized in that instant—when there was no perceptible pause at all—that she had to choose between a deliberate deception and a complete revelation of all of the facts. Merely a part of the truth, with something withheld, would not suffice for Bingham Harvard, once called the Night Wind by the men who had hunted him.

Katherine fled to him—and hated herself for doing so the instant when it had been done; yet, had she been given an hour or a day to think it over, she must have arrived at the same decision—for the dread of what Bing might do filled her with terror.

"What has Belknap done to you, or what is he trying to do? Tell me!" was the demand that he made upon her; and her reply was ready as soon as the last two words were pronounced.

"Mr. Belknap?" she questioned instantly—and Katherine was a perfect actress in such emergencies.

The pronouncement of Belknap's name interrogatively, was made with such perfect simulation of astounded surprise that it was quite enough without further remark. It was so adroitly done that it disarmed Harvard; and she added: "What has he done, or tried to do—to me? Why, what could he do—what could anybody do—what could any person try to do to Bingham Harvard's wife—or dare to try to do, that might affront her?"

Harvard sighed, unconsciously, and with an inward sense of relief.

"Then, dear, answer your own question—the one that you have just asked," he said. "What has anybody done, or tried to do, that is not to your liking?"

"Nothing," she replied.

Thus Katherine uttered the first lie—why soften it by substituting the word untruth?—that she had ever told to her husband.

When the door had closed and he was gone, Katherine moved about the room in her final preparations for bed, methodically; automatically is perhaps a better word.

She turned down the bed-clothing, snapped off the lights, returned to her bed, got into it, pulled the covers over her, snuggled into her pillows, and closed her eyes.

But she was another Katherine; she was not the same personality that she has been a little, just a very little while before.

She had told her husband a lie.

Sleepless, although motionless and with closed eyes—for she was trying to sleep—the events of the night since she came to her room from the veranda passed in review before her. She mentally visualized everything chronologically.

Again, in retrospect, she put on her negligee, snapped off her lights, and stepped from her window to the little balcony to enjoy the night air.

Again Belknap made his appearance beneath her window, and dared to address her intimately, by her given name, and by another one which only an extremely favored few were permitted to use; again the senorita—Roberta—came to her room, frightened, or pretending to be frightened, by burglars.

Katherine had not believed, then, nor did she believe while she thought it over, in the genuineness of that fright. She had thought then, as she still thought, that it had been simulated. But why—for what purpose?

In the light of what had happened afterward—with the appearance of real burglars and the attempted entrance to the room of Mme. Savage; with the absence of Belknap from the scene that followed, and with the senorita's too-reluctant reappearance, hovering at the edge of the partly clad group of startled guests—there could be only one answer to those two questions.

Katherine opened her eyes wide, and sat up in bed, startled into sudden revelation when that answer occurred to her; and she whispered it breathlessly, in a hushed whisper.

"That attempt at burglary upon Mme. Savage was real; it was genuine. Belknap knows who those burglars were, and was expecting them. He went from the veranda into the paths among the shrubbery and trees to meet them. They saw him under my window, and they quarreled; perhaps that accounts for his bruises. Roberta is Belknap's accomplice—she knows why he is at Myquest—what he intends to do—and she came to my room to warn me by the only method she dared to use."

Instantly, when she arrived at that solution of the mysteries of the night, Katherine sprang out of bed, seized her discarded negligee, and without switching on the lights, thrust her feet into her bed-slippers and ran—literally ran—to the door.

She opened it softly, passed to the outside, closed it noiselessly, and glided like a ghost in pink to the senorita's door.

She hesitated there for an instant, listening. Then she tapped softly upon it, and waited.

There was no answer, even when she tapped a second time, more loudly, so she grasped the knob, turned it, discovered that the door was not locked, and entered the room.

Senorita Cervantez was not there. The bed had not been disturbed.

Katherine had gone to the senorita's room impulsively, without second thought regarding the wisdom of the act, but with the settled determination to "have it out" with the woman accomplice of Conrad Belknap—with the beautiful pianiste who pretended to be voiceless, who was at once so beautiful and so double-faced, so lovable and yet so deceitful.

If Katherine had needed any added conviction of Roberta's connection with Belknap and his aims, she found it in the senorita's absence from her room—and it was equally plain that only one reason could have taken her from it at that time; she had gone from it to seek her master—to find Belknap.

"Shall I follow? Shall I seek them?" Katherine asked herself mentally; and shook her head slowly in a negative.

"I will wait," she told herself voicelessly; and she sought a chair in the darkened room, for none of the lights was turned on, and only a dim glow shone into it from the starlight without.

She found one, a big chair upholstered in leather with a high and solid back, and she moved it a trifle so that her presence in its depths could not be seen from the doorway by a person entering the room.

Then she hid herself in it and waited.

During many minutes she sat with her eyes wide open, staring slantingwise through the open window where the filmy lace draperies swelled and subsided and swelled again in the zepherlike night breeze.

When they bulged into the room, pressed apart momentarily by the drafts of air, she could see—between the iron spindles of the balcony-rail—the same big balsam tree out of the shadow of which Belknap had made his sudden appearance when he had startled her so greatly, earlier in the night—and she fell again into going over the details of the evening and night, bit by bit, item by item.

Thus the sleep that would not be wooed when she had gone to bed crept stealthily and silently upon her in the chair beside the open window, and, without realizing it, she drowsed and drifted into obscurity.

The clicking of a latch startled her into wakefulness. A sharper draft of air bulged the draperies into the room.

Katherine was aware that the door opened, and was closed again, although she heard no further sound; but she was certain that the senorita had returned and was standing somewhere between her and the closed door, unconscious of her presence, unwise to the fact that she was not alone.

It was Katherine's impulse to speak, but she did not. She sat very still and waited, wishing fervently that she could see; she was, at the moment, sorry that she had so placed the chair that her own vision of the interior of the room was minimized to next to nothing.

She could hear stealthy footfalls, presently, as the person behind her crossed the floor.

Absolute silence followed, and continued so long a time that Katherine found it difficult to restrain her impulse to move ever so little so that she might turn her head enough to discover what was going on; yet she feared to do so, knowing that the slightest of sounds would betray her presence in the chair.

Then she remembered that she was clad only in her night dress and the filmy negligee that covered it; and therefore there was nothing about her apparel that would rustle if she moved; the soft material of her wrapper would slip noiselessly over the leather covering of the chair.

After another moment a single light was switched on behind her, and by the dim glow of it Katherine knew it to be the green-shaded desk-light in a far corner of the room; but the silence remained unbroken.

Katherine could bear it no longer—and, anyway, since she had gone to that room for the express purpose of having an understanding with the senorita, why delay? So she moved ever so little, and turned her head, and fortunately, made not a sound in doing so.

What she discovered terrified her.

For the first time in her life that she could recall she was actually afraid—really scared—panic-stricken.

The person who had entered the room, who had so silently crossed it, who was, in fact, at that very instant moving slowly across the floor toward the very chair upon which she was seated, was not the senorita.

It was a man; and the man was Conrad Belknap.

Katherine saw with that quick capacity for comprehension which one experiences in vital moments, that he held in one hand an opened envelope and an unfolded sheet of note-paper that he had evidently taken from it—a letter, apparently, that he had been reading by the aid of the desk-light; a fact which would account for that enduring silence of his after he had entered the room and crossed it to the desk.

It was, without a doubt, a letter of the senorita's that she had left upon her desk. Katherine saw that the envelope had been sealed with wax, and had been ruthlessly broken open.

The green shade over the desk-light was thick and heavy, and there was not sufficient illumination for Katherine to see the man's face plainly, yet she did discern enough to know that he was in a rage—a silent, impotent, helpless rage, about something that was, for the moment, beyond his control.

She had no time in which to determine what to do; there was nothing that she could do.

Belknap had not seen her; she knew that. He was not aware of her presence in the room, but he was approaching her swiftly, silently, implacably; evidently seeking the chair as she had sought it earlier, and she knew that in just another instant she would have to rise in her place and confront him.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

DAILY NOVELETTE "DOWN THE LONG, LONG ROAD"

By Margaret Brown

FROM her hilltop home Ann could see far out over Dorchester bay. Between the bay and her kitchen window lay miles of dingy roofs, but beyond the roofs and beyond the bay Ann's thoughts had made their way to a trim white cottage by the sea where "Babe," her younger and prettier sister, was spending the week-end with their former neighbors, the Stewart girls.

Gilbert Stewart, their brother, had returned from France—a captain and decorated—and the girls, she was sure, were having a glorious time. A sense of loneliness, of being left out of everything, stole in upon her, and her straight, black eyebrows puckered into a frown.

Ann's troubles dated back to the first day of January, now it was late summer, when the Ruggleses' housemaid had taken her departure. This maid had lived with the family for ten years—ever since Mrs. Ruggles's death. But the lure of higher wages and "no washing" had been too strong, so she left; and Ann's father could not afford to replace her. The war had, he confessed, "punched his business full of holes." And now the hot weather had come with a vengeance and Ann Ruggles baked and brewed and swept and sweltered to keep her father and Babe in their accustomed comfort.

Once, soon after the housemaid had gone, Babe had volunteered to help Ann with the housework. She would, she informed her, dust the living-room every morning. But then she remembered, perhaps she had never forgotten it, that Gilbert Stewart had told her that she had the most beautiful hands that he had ever seen. It would be unwise to mar the beauty of her hands, she had reasoned, and Ann's hands were red and rough anyway, so the dusting, like the sweeping and the cooking, was left for Ann.

Ann was still whipping the cream and bravely singing about a "long, long road awinding" when a clamor of girls' voices sounded at the front door. A moment later Babe, followed by Mary Stewart, flounced into the kitchen.

"Ann, oh, Ann," Babe was breathless, "we are going for a—a moonlight ride tonight—down the shore road and—and Gilbert says there is—is room enough for you—we—Gilbert is outside in the car—he—he wants to know—"

"Do, please come, Ann," Mary Stewart interrupted, "Gilbert says that we ought to be ashamed——"

"Thank you, Mary," Ann broke in, "but how can I leave on Saturday afternoon? I have beans and bread in the oven, and I promised father that we would have a shortcake tonight, and—and there is no one to take my place."

"That's just what I told Gilbert," Babe had assumed an injured tone, "I told him that you would not come."

Ann Ruggles did not reply. She had begun to spread the cream over the shortcake. The two girls watched her in silence.

Then Mary Stewart left the kitchen and in a few minutes she returned with a tall, young soldier in her wake.

"I have brought 'General,'" Mary Stewart began, "and his orders must be obeyed."

Gilbert Stewart, erect, smiling and tanned the color of his khaki, stood in the kitchen doorway.

"Yes, you've got to come, Ann. Mary has volunteered to—to attend to things while we—while you're gone." 'General' stammered, "when I bring you back I'll take Babe and Mary."

Ann was delighted, but before going she insisted that they all have shortcake and tea.

Babe, with Mary Stewart's assistance, managed to get supper on the table when her father came home, and when the dishes were cleared away Mr. Ruggles took his pipe and sat on the shaded porch; and Babe and Mary, with the aid of an electric fan and a phonograph, found comfort in the living room.

It was almost 9 o'clock when the big car glided up to the door. Babe, who had been impatiently watching for it since 7 o'clock, gave a sigh of relief.

She had heard Ann go upstairs. Gilbert stopped on the porch with her father. She could hear their voices and wondered why Ann had not come into the living room.

"Let's go up and see how Ann enjoyed her ride," she said to Mary Stewart as they arranged their hats.

Ann Ruggles had not turned on the light, and the three girls sat in the warm dusk and chatted. After a while Babe, anxious to be with Gilbert, went downstairs.

Her father and Gilbert Stewart were still talking. She was about to step out on the porch when something—something quite unusual in her father's voice halted her. She had not caught the words; for a few tense, silent moments she waited, and then Gilbert Stewart spoke:

"I—I know that, Mr. Ruggles. Your loss will be hard to bear—hard for a while for you and for Babe, and—and—why, you're a young man yourself, Mr. Ruggles—not more than fifty—and there is, I'm sure there is, some nice woman who—who would be glad to—to—well, to take care of you and—and Babe. Ann——"

Babe Ruggles waited to hear no more. Slowly she removed her hat, and somehow she found her way upstairs.

The next complete novelette "Her Mission."

DREAMLAND ADVENTURES--By Daddy

"THE MERMAID IS KIDNAPPED"

(When the mermaid says she cannot wed the Prince of Dollars the animals carry them to Lovers' Knoll, where they come under the spell of the wedding moon. There Blacksmith Joe interrupts them and reminds the mermaid that she is betrothed to him.)

Up in the Pine Tree

BLACKSMITH Joe was very angry when he shouted to Anita, the mermaid, that she must wed him instead of the Prince of Dollars. He started to climb down out of the pine tree in which he had taken refuge from the animals, but he chanced to glance below, and then he stopped very suddenly. Four pairs of shining eyes were glaring up at him from the gloom. They were the eyes of Lonesome Bear, Balky Sam, Billy Goat and Johnny Bull, and all the animals were just aching to have Blacksmith Joe drop among them.

The Prince of Dollars held the hand of the mermaid when she tried to draw away and spoke to her very gently.

"Do you love Blacksmith Joe and want to marry him?" he asked.

"No, no! My cruel uncle forced me to give my promise," answered Anita.

"You hear what Anita says," cried the prince to Blacksmith Joe. "She does not want to marry you. If you are a noble fellow you will free her from her promise."

"What she has promised she has promised," growled Blacksmith Joe. "I'll hold her to her word."

"You see what kind of a chap he is," said the prince to Anita. "You don't want to marry a fellow like that."

"Hoo! Hoo! I'm after you!" screeched Judge Owl

"I don't want to," sighed the mermaid sadly, "but I have given my word and if he holds me to my promise I must keep it."

"You just bet I'll hold you to your promise," shouted Blacksmith Joe rudely. "We'll get married as soon as I get down out of this tree."

"Ah, ha! I have an idea," cried Billy, and he began to laugh. He whispered his idea into the ear of Judge Owl, and Judge Owl chuckled, passing the funny idea on to Blue Jay, and Blue Jay passed it on to Reddy Woodpecker, and soon every bird knew all about it.

"Hee-haw! Hee-haw! What fun!" brayed Balky Sam, when Billy told the animals.

The birds flew up into the pine tree, while Billy climbed into a neighboring oak, taking care that Joe did not s[illegible] him. He had with him his copy of t[illegible] Birdland Gossip, which he made in[illegible] a megaphone.

"Hoo! Hoo! I'm after you!" su[illegible]denly screeched Judge Owl, givi[illegible] Blacksmith Joe's long hair a hard je[illegible]

"Cree! Cree! A nip for me!" shrieked Blue Jay, snatching a bite at Joe[illegible] ear.

And then General Swallow, Redd[illegible] Woodpecker, and all the birds went aft[illegible] Blacksmith Joe like a flock of sparrow[illegible] after a piece of bread, pecking him[illegible] biting him, and pulling his hair.

"Ow-ow! Leave me alone," waile[illegible] Joe. Then a loud voice boomed out fro[illegible] the gloom of the other tree.

"We are furies guarding Anita, th[illegible] charming mermaid. Until you set he[illegible] free, we'll follow thee, where e'er y[illegible] flee." And again the birds went afte[illegible] Blacksmith Joe.

"Get away!" he yelled. "I'll sho[illegible] you all!" But the birds only went aft[illegible] him the harder. Joe began to cli[illegible] down the tree, when Johnny Bull ma[illegible] a great leap upward and caught hi[illegible] by the seat of the trousers.

"Ow-ow!" yelled Joe, and he climb[illegible]ed back as fast as he could, shakin[illegible] Johnny Bull free, but losing a patch [illegible] trousers as he did so.

"We'll follow thee, till you set Anit[illegible] free," boomed Billy's voice through t[illegible] megaphone as the birds attacked agai[illegible]

"I'll set her free. I give her bac[illegible] her promise. Now let me be," shoute[illegible] Blacksmith Joe.

(Tomorrow comes the end of the story.)

BRUNO DUKE, Solver of Business Problems

By HAROLD WHITEHEAD, Author of "The Business Career of Peter Flint," etc.

(Copyright)

Purvis Gets Worried

WHEN the elevator with our precious load of jewels stopped at the twelfth floor of the Karmel building, Bruno Duke picked up one of the grips and walked along the corridor until he came to room 1248.

The office was in darkness, but Duke boldly knocked on the door. No sound answered his peremptory summons. Again he knocked, this time a little louder and longer. After a slight delay we heard some one moving on tiptoe inside the dark office, then again—silence.

Instead of knocking again Duke rattled the knob and called out:

"Open the door, Purvis, it is I, Bruno Duke."

A light was instantly turned on and the door opened. Purvis looked anything but pleased to see Duke. He was in his shirt sleeves, his vest was open and his collar missing. His usual jovial manner was missing and in place of the ruddy complexion was a pale face, with eyes surrounded with dark circles. To even a casual observer Purvis was ill with anxiety.

Duke with his bag of jewels had passed beyond the open flap of the big counter in the outer office into Purvis's own room. I followed carrying another bag. We had deposited them on the floor before Purvis noticed me. He first looked apathetically at me, then as recognition followed he looked puzzled, surprised and suspicious. Finally he blurted out:

"Say, ain't you that fellow Smith who wanted me to help him?"

"Yes, I'm the man."

"What the h—— are you doing here with Duke—are you——"

"Let me explain," Duke interposed calmly. "Smith answered an ad of mine and I learned all about him. I'm helping him on condition he helps me."

"But he ain't got any toy factory. I looked him up. He's——there's something fishy about him, Duke—why, why only today Staatburg——" He bit his lip in vexation at his slip.

"What about Staatburg?" Duke quickly inquired.

"Er—I asked him if he ever heard of a toymaker in Brooklyn named Smith, and he said 'There wasn't such a man.'"

"You see there is, though, don't you?" Duke smiled as he spoke, then he went on: "But I've a few more grips to bring in yet."

We soon had all our bags stacked up in Purvis's inner office, while he looked on in worried curiosity. Finally he blurted:

"What are all these bags here for, anyhow?"

"I want you to take care of them for tonight—the stuff can stay here this night and everything's all right." Purvis jumped at these words—the same words that Staatburg had used only a few hours before.

"What are they, anyhow," Purvis asked uncomfortably.

"These bags, Purvis, are full of jewels and lathes. Mr. Smith" (he smiled at me as he spoke) "and I had taken them out of the plant of the Meter Jewel Company. I think we brought enough to clear up your account for you?"

"Good God, man, what did you do that for?" Purvis had jumped up and was excitedly pacing the office. "My God, Staatburg will think I've tricked him. If he comes here and sees it he'll swear I did it purposely. D—— it, Duke, I won't have this here tonight."

"Why not? Staatburg's nothing to you except a debtor who tried to deceive you. Why should you care what he thinks?"

Purvis was nervously rubbing his hand, his breath coming in gasps. Never have I seen a man so thoroughly scared as he was, but Duke apparently never noticed his perturbation.

"You're all right, Purvis. Tomorrow we'll get things straightened out. Now, if you don't mind, I'll just wash my hands before we leave."

Purvis nodded abstractedly and muttered to himself:

"Good God, why did I ever get started on it * * * He'll murder me—I wish I were dead—I wish Staatburg were dead——"

Duke re-entered the room and closed the toilet room door after him. As he did so I noticed him slip the key of the door into his pocket.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

TODAY'S BUSINESS QUESTION

What is a "judgment note"? Answer will appear tomorrow.

ANSWER TO YESTERDAY'S BUSINESS QUESTION

"Lien" is a hold or claim on property to secure a debt.

THE READER'S VIEWPOINT

Letters to the Editor on Current Topics

Senator Lodge Beatified

To the Editor of the Evening Public Ledger:

Sir:—As a reader of your valuable paper I am at a loss to understand its efforts to place the senators who are opposing the acceptance of the league of nations in a false light before the people of the country.

The senators (to be brief) oppose this document because in effect it reduces our Declaration of Independence to a scrap of paper; because it nullifies the powers given under the Constitution to Congress; because it would create a super-President of the United States; because it is a radical departure from those sound principles upon which rest the foundations of our sovereignty and, again, because it is possible, in the light of the ambiguity of its text, to permit a lot of nonprogressive and pigmy nations to hamstring the giant of civilization and advancement.

If it is such an all-important document, why does not the President turn on the light and furnish the Senate the information it desires? Why (if he is sincere) does he insist it shall be jointly acted upon with the treaty? Is it too weak to stand alone? What guarantee, in lieu of the sacrifices it would entail upon self-government, have we that it will prevent future wars? I believe that the President himself would repudiate it if he thought that he would not be the representative of our country in its councils.

This office creates a perpetual supervision of one man over the constitutional powers vested in the President and the Congress of the United States, in other words, creates a dictatorship.

In view of the secrecy in which it was conceived and the free use of the phrase "incompatible with this or that, etc.," it looks as if the President has already bargained with the other members of the peace council that he should have their support in making him the member of the league council from America. The people of this country have a right to know what was done at Versailles, "incompatible" or not.

I cannot see how any real American can ridicule the patriotism and zeal of such senators as Mr. Lodge and others when every intelligent man knows that they would willingly ratify the treaty of peace, bad as it is, provided the President place his patriotism above his politics and stand by the people in this vital crisis as loyally and sincerely as they stood by him, irrespective of party, politics or personal welfare.

Your editorial says Senator Lodge was in favor of war with Germany and you call that stand a desire to meddle in European affairs. This is unfair to Mr. Lodge as there is a vast difference in urging the country to defend itself against a nation that made war against us for two years after agreeing to give the support of the country to one or two foreign nations engaged in a dispute that in no way concerns us. In the one case it is self-defense, in the other case it is meddling. Did Washington "meddle" in England's affairs?

AMERICAN.

Philadelphia, August 13.

A Prayer for President and People

Lord of all wisdom and goodness, whose blessing is forever upon all who come to Thee aright and who turned no one away unsatisfied who looks to Thee for salvation, we pray for Thy servant, the President of the United States. Thy wisdom Thou givest liberally to the open-minded, the sincere and faithful, the obedient and humble of heart. Grant to him in the great crises of our day the consciousness of Thy inflowing spirit, guiding and directing him to wise decisions and righteous acts for the welfare of the people and the triumph of justice.

And to us also, fellow servants with him in the work of establishing a righteous state, grant us with him the inner calm and poise, the unswerving devotion to justice and good will that saves us from hasty, unfair and blinded partisan thought, speech and deed.

Help us to hold up his hands and give Thou to him the assurance of Thy guiding presence and the loyal sympathy of the people, that together led of Thee, through him and us, Thy will may be done in the institution of a greater actual freedom than we have thus far achieved, that the burdens of life be lifted from the many and that as a people, delivered alike from the deceitfulness of riches and the corroding cares of the world, Thy emancipated children may grow into the spiritual grace and beauty which is their heritage from Thee. Amen.

C. T. S.

Philadelphia, Pa., August 8.

Farming Isn't Soldiering

One day after the Civil War a man who was riding through the farming districts in the Middle West stopped by the wayside to talk with a farmer. Several men were working in the field and the traveler was interested to learn that most of them had been soldiers in the war, and that among them were some who had been officers.

"That man over there," said the farmer, "happens to have been a private, but the man next to him was a corporal; that chap over there was a major, and over in the next field is a man who was a colonel."

"Indeed," said the traveler; "what kind of workmmen are they?"

"Well," said the farmer, "the private is a first-class man, and the corporal is a pretty good worker."

"How about the major?"

"He's about so-so."

"But the colonel?" persisted the traveler.

"Well," said the farmer, "I ain't a-goin' to say a word against any man that fit in the war to save the union, but I notify you right here and now that I ain't goin' to hire no brigadier generals!"—Boston Evening Transcript.

Where the Crops Go

Cigars are to cost more owing to a shortage of expert makers and consequent high wages. At their present price some cigars suggest that the expert has been making hay while the sun shone.—London Opinion.

DOROTHY DARNIT—Papa Would Like to Have Been a Whole Battalion

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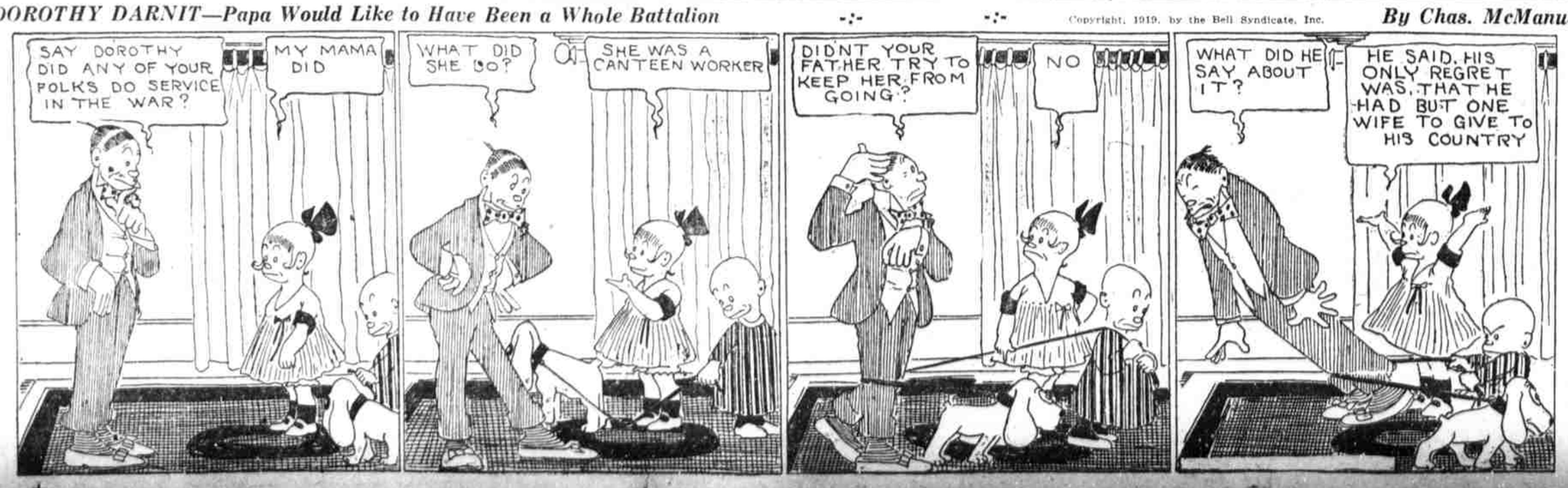
By Chas. McManus