



Reading for Women and all the Family



BIG TIMBER

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

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(Continued.)

CHAPTER XI. The Crisis.

It dawned upon Stella Fyfe in the fullness of the season, when the first cool October days were upon them, and the lake shores flamed again with the red and yellow and amber of autumn, that she had been playing with fire and that fire burns.

This did not filter into her consciousness by degrees. She had steeled herself to seeing him pass away with the rest of the summer folk, to take himself out of her life. She admitted that there would be a gap. But that had to be. No word other than friendly ones would ever pass between them. He would go away, and she would go on as before. That was all. She was scarcely aware how far they had traveled along that road whereon travelers converse by glance of eye, by subtle intuitions, eloquent silences. Monohan himself delivered the shock that awakened her to despairing clearness of vision.

He had come to bring her a book, he and Linda Abbey and Charlie

Bringing Up Father

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By McManus



together, a commonplace enough little courtesy. And it happened that this day Fyfe had taken his rifle and vanished into the woods immediately after luncheon. Between Linda Abbey and Charlie Benton matters had so far progressed that it was now the most natural thing for them to seek a corner or poke along the beach together, oblivious to all but themselves. This afternoon they chatted awhile with Stella and then gradually detached themselves until Monohan, glancing through the window, pointed them out to his hostess. They were seated on a log at the edge of the lawn, a stone's throw from the house.

"They're getting on," he said. "Lucky beggars. It's all plain sailing for them."

There was a note of infinite regret in his voice, a sadness that stabbed Stella Fyfe like a lance. She did not dare look at him. Something rose chokingly in her throat. She felt and fought against a slow welling of tears to her eyes. Before she

sensed that she was betraying her hands fast between his own, gripping them with a fierce, insistent pressure, speaking in a passionate undertone.

"Why should we have to beat our heads against a stone wall like this?" he was saying wildly. "Why couldn't we have met and loved and been happy, as we could have been? It was fated to happen. I felt it that day I dragged you out of the lake. It's been growing on me ever since. I've struggled against it, and it's no use. It's something stronger than I am. I love you, Stella, and it maddens me to see you chafing in your chains. Oh, my dear, why couldn't it have been different?"

"You mustn't talk like that," she protested weakly. "You mustn't. It isn't right."

"I suppose it's right for you to live with a man you don't love when your heart's crying out against it?" he broke out. "My God, do you think I can't see? I don't have to see

things; I can feel them. I know you're the kind of woman who goes through it—for her conceptions of right and wrong. I honor you for that, dear. But, oh, the pity of it! Why should it have to be? Life could have held so much that is fine and true for you and me together. For you do care, don't you?"

"What difference does that make?" she whispered. "What difference can it make? Oh, you mustn't tell me these things! I mustn't listen. I mustn't."

"But they're terribly, tragically true," Monohan returned. "Look at me, Stella. Don't turn your face away, dear. I wouldn't do anything that might hang the least shadow on you. I know the pitiful hopelessness of it. You're fettered, and there's no apparent loophole to freedom. I know it's best for me to keep this locked tight in my heart, as something precious and sorrowful. I never meant to tell you, but the flesh isn't always equal to the task the spirit imposes."

"Whether I care or not isn't the question," she said. "I know what I have to do. I married without love, with my eyes wide open, and I have to pay the price. So you must never talk to me of love. You mustn't even see me if it can be avoided. It's better that way. We can't make over our lives to suit ourselves—at least I can't. I must play the game according to the only rules I know."

"Oh, I know," he said haltingly. "I know it's not to be that way. I have to go my road and leave you to yours. Oh, the blank hopelessness of it, the useless misery of it. We're made for each other, and we have to grin and say goodby, go along our separate ways trying to smile. What a devilish state of affairs! But I love you, dear, and no matter—I ah—"

His voice flattened out. His hands released hers. He straightened quickly. Stella turned her head. Jack Fyfe stood in the doorway. His face was fixed in its habitual mask. He was biting the end of a cigar. He struck a match and put it to the cigar end with steady fingers as he walked slowly across the big room.

"I hear the kid peeping," he said to Stella quite casually, "and I noticed Martha outside as I came in. Better go see what's up with him." (To be continued.)

"THEIR MARRIED LIFE"

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"Well, they're having a sale, Helen. I'm going right down to see what I can do, we need a couple of rugs badly."

This remark from Frances surprised Helen so much that she stared in amazement.

"O, you're surprised that I bother about a sale," Frances laughed. "Well, you see this place is different. It never has sales unless the things are really worth while, and these rugs are simply wonderful for the money. Come on and see for yourself."

"All right, I will," Helen agreed and was off with Frances a few minutes later.

Down at the little shop, filled with fascinating things, Helen went into raptures over the rugs. They were of a foreign weave so cleverly done that an expert could not have distinguished them from real wool. Helen stood back while Frances looked at several designs and finally selected two lovely things in shades of rose and amber.

"The rose one will be lovely in my bedroom," Frances said delightedly. "I have been wanting a decent rug for ages and this large blue and yellow one will look great in the studio. Look, Helen, here's a ducky one. Why don't you get it? It would look great in your foyer hall."

Helen hesitated. The rug was certainly just what she needed, and it was cheap. But, nevertheless, it would be impossible for her to spend twelve dollars for a rug out of her housekeeping allowance. She would have to speak to Warren about it, and he would be sure to think of some objection. She envied Frances her independence and ability to spend her own money.

"I'll have to ask Warren," Helen said.

"But they might not have it if you wait. These rugs go so quickly and this goes so beautifully with all your things."

"I know it does, but I'll have to ask Warren anyway, Frances. He would be furious if I bought a rug without speaking to him about it." Helen did not add that he probably would think her crazy for suggesting such a thing, but she thought so nevertheless.

Warren no sooner got into the house that evening than Helen spoke about the matter of the rug.

"It's a beauty, dear, and only twelve dollars. You just ought to see the place. I don't see how they can afford to sell things so cheap. Frances bought two."

"You don't say," Warren returned with unusual interest. "Where did you want to put it?"

"Out in the hall, dear," Helen said eagerly. "Of course, we don't really need a rug there, but a rug this size is always handy, and it would look so attractive there."

"All right, go ahead; I'll write you a check for it after dinner. It must be all right or you wouldn't have so many nice things to say about it."

Helen hugged Warren enthusiastically and thanked him. Then she left him to his paper and wondered to herself what had made him so willing to grant a request for something that they didn't actually need. Generally, when she bought even the necessities, he growled about extra expenditure, and here he was offering to write her out a check for a rug that, after all, they could do just as well without.

Helen pondered this fact all through dinner, and the more she thought about it the less desirable the rug seemed. After all, the little foyer looked more attractive without anything in it. Helen wondered if a rug would not make it look much smaller. By the time dinner was over she found herself dreading the moment when Warren would draw out his checkbook, and she wondered just how she would explain the fact that they didn't want the rug after all.

The truth of the matter was that Helen had wanted the rug more because she had thought it impossible to obtain than because she really thought it a necessity. Warren's genial manner and ready wish to accede to her request had taken all the joy of conquest away, and as the rug was, after all, a luxury, Helen thought of a dozen ways that she might better spend that twelve dollars.

"Well," said Warren as they rose from the table, "I'd better write you that check before I forget it."

Helen winced.

"O, Warren," she began tentatively. "What is it? Something more you need? I can let you have a little more if you like."

"Oh, no, dear, I have plenty, but I've been thinking it over, and we don't really need that rug."

"What if we don't? It's a bargain, and we might as well have it."

"I know, dear, but something might come up that we need more than we do that, and after all, twelve dollars is a lot of money. Let's not get the rug."

Kaiser Fears Reprisals For His London Air Raids

By Associated Press

Amsterdam, Oct. 3.—The German military authorities have issued orders that all lights in the Governmental district of Dusseldorf and a great portion of Westphalia must be darkened at night, according to the General Anzeiger of Essen. Similar precautions against air raids are being taken at other places in Western Germany.

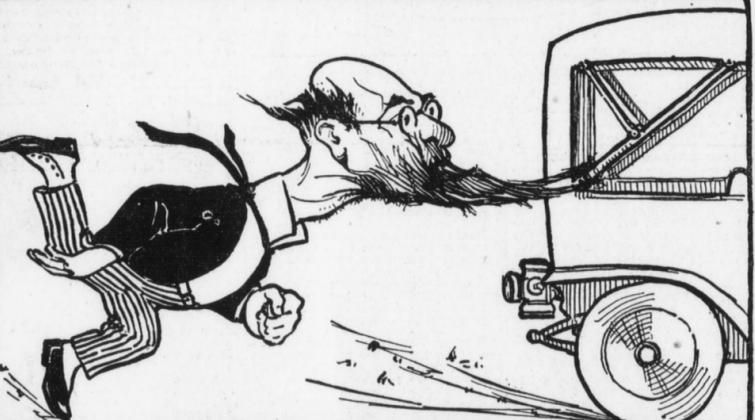
All Men at Camp Hancock Must Wear Two Tags

By Associated Press

Augusta, Ga., Oct. 3.—Officers of the Twenty-eighth division must sleep hereafter in their prescribed quarters in camp. Orders to this effect, which have been expected for several days, were issued yesterday.

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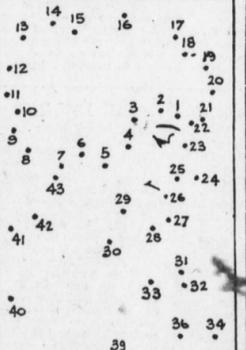
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A Letter From Washington

The Food Administrator Writes Us:

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Mix thoroughly dry ingredients; add milk and melted shortening; beat well; pour into well greased pan and bake in hot oven about 25 minutes.

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