



Reading for Women and all the Family



"When a Girl Marries"

By ANN LISIE

A New, Romantic Serial Dealing with the Absorbing Problems of a Girl Wife

CHAPTER LXVI.

"A slacker!" I gasped. "Oh, Neal, Neal—you've broken Father Andrew's heart!"

"I guess I have," said Neal—between his teeth. "That's why he doesn't write. He thinks you're in it, too. He thinks you've helped me—keep out of this war."

I tried to find some words of comfort.

"You—always hated blood—and disfigurement. From a child you hated scars—and maiming. You can't help it, poor lad. Father mustn't blame you. But, Neal, Neal, darling, you will fight yourself—won't you? You'll go home and take whatever punishment there is, and then afterwards you'll try to do your part?"

I slipped my arm through my poor young brother's and told my hands across it. Then I turned to face my soldier-husband, whose greatest tragedy was that he could no longer fight. I wanted my eyes to send him a message pleading that he be gentle in his judgment of this lad of mine whose tragedy was

that he feared to fight. But Jim's eyes were tender—smiling—and it almost seemed they were triumphant.

"Good stock!" he said quietly. "I knew you'd stand by the boy—and still urge him to do the right thing. Well, lad, are you ready to do the right thing? It's simple enough, after all. You've only to go down to the local draft board and report. They'll take care of the situation for you. And when you're called in your district they'll know where to lay hands on you."

"My chops!" I cried—for I could smell them burning, and the fumes from the oven could be made to account for the wateriness of my eyes.

"Never mind, I won't eat much," muttered Neal gloomily, dragging himself back to the actualities and necessities of life, and starting to help me carry in the dinner.

Jim laughed—and on his laughter there was a friendliness and comfort.

"You can eat and be at peace with yourself, lad," he cried, "for you're not a slacker at all."

"What do you mean?" cried Neal, wheeling to face Jim. "Don't make fun of me."

"I mean just that—you're not a slacker. Don't you realize, boy, that you never ran away from the draft at all? You merely ran away from yourself—and the slow agony of waiting for them to call your class—the expert bank accountants. But in your heart of hearts you'd been trying to cheat the draft would you have come straight to your sister? Would you have given your address to your father?"

But now Neal turned on Jim in new terror.

"Have I made them a party to it?" Are they going to get into trouble for harboring me?"

"No, lad—of course not! Weren't you living here openly? Didn't you ever deny your age or name or your home address?" All our friends know who you are and where you come from. And, I'll wager you were watching to see if your number slacker doesn't go where he's so easy to find. Come on—everyone take a dish, and we'll go in and try to give our soldier boy an appetite."

Neal didn't answer that until we were seated at the table. Then, his lips twisting with scorn and dis-

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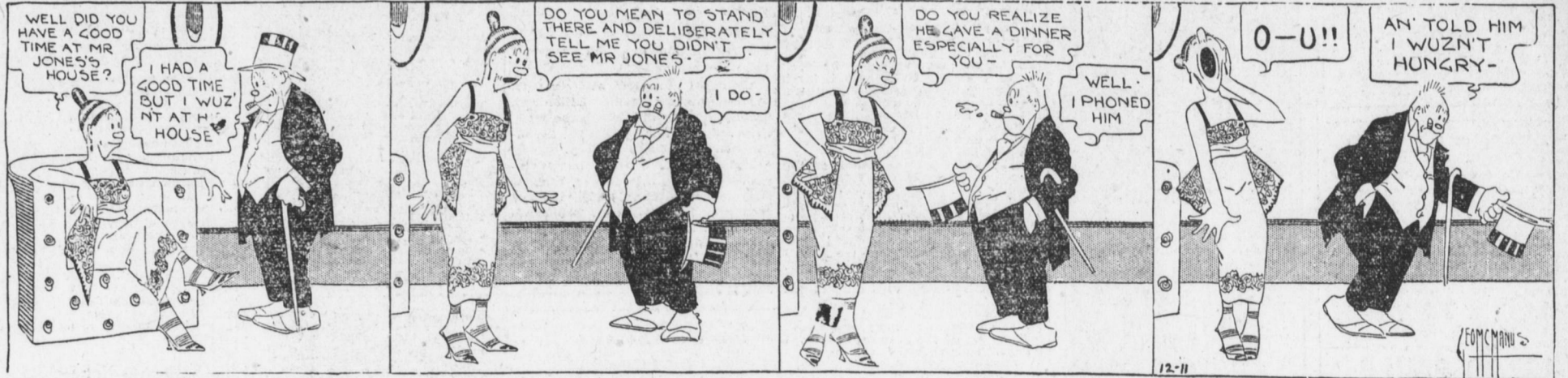
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By McManus



THE HEART BREAKER

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he concluded his confession with words that startled her.

"You called me soldier boy, Jim. Fine soldier I am! Now listen to me—you asked if I was watching to see if my number got called. You bet I was. And what do you think I was going to do if it did? I was going to light out—where they couldn't find me. That's the kind of rotten American I am."

"Quit that, Neal!" Jim's voice commanded. "You're hysterical now. You want to lash yourself with your own scorn. You would never have done a dirty trick like that. Now, why don't you prove it to yourself by not waiting until you're called?"

"You mean—volunteer?"

"I mean ask for immediate induction."

"Now? Right away?" asked Neal. I could see him shrink.

"At once," replied Jim in a matter-of-fact voice. "Not to prove anything to Anne and me, for you know that you have never been a slacker in your soul—but to prove to yourself that you aren't hiding behind even your chance of delayed call. To prove to yourself that you're a man!"

With that whiteness starting and dancing before my eyes, I got up to answer the summons of the telephone a moment later. It was Evvy—asking for Neal.

"He cannot come to the 'phone," said firmly. "This is his sister. Please relay the message."

"Curly's answer came: 'You might remind him that gentlemen keep their dinner engagements.'"

Evidently that concluded the conversation, so I put the receiver back on its hook—and turned to Neal.

"Was that Evelyn Mason?" he cried before I could speak.

"Yes," I said dully.

Then, before our astonished eyes, Neal rushed to the 'phone and called Evvy. Actually, I'm ashamed to think, he could turn to her.

"Miss Mason?" he asked after a moment of waiting. "Evelyn—this is Neal. I'm ashamed to think of death—but I clean forgot. We've had sickness in the family. I hope I haven't put you out. I'll do anything in my power to make up. No I can't come over to-night. I've got the biggest job of my life on. Sorry, I'll explain another time."

Slowly he crossed the room—Evelyn and his offense of her forgotten. He came to the table and stood in silence for a moment—his fingers tracing idle patterns with a fork he had picked up.

Then he coughed—thrust his head forward aggressively, and turned to Jim, but even as he turned his face to my husband, he took a little step that brought him close to me and laid his hand timidly on my sleeve.

"Jim," he said, "about jumping in before they call me, I've got a head for figures, and I hear there's a lot of need for heavy artillery. Is there any one in Washington you'd give me a letter to? I'd like to go over to-morrow and ask for my induction papers. If you'd be willing to vouch for me—you see, what really stopped me from being a slacker is living with a real soldier—like you!"

Jim got to his feet and his voice was as reverent as a prayer.

"God bless you, lad! I knew you were a real man. The artillery is a wonderful service—and they are taking them across pretty fast."

His eyes asked a question. Neal answered it.

"I know. I thought I could get ready pretty quickly there, because it comes so natural for me to figure."

I caught his hand to my lips and as I held it there I could feel my tears trickling down to moisten it. My little brother was a man—and a soldier. It was mine to give him to my country. But it was Jim who had done the big thing.

He had given Neal the courage that made him a man.

(To be Continued.)

CHAPTER XIII.

Later as Horace was chatting with her hostess, Mildred came up to her and after talking for a minute addressed her sister, in a low voice. "Let me see your card," she demanded.

When she had scanned it, she laughed teasingly.

"What's the matter?" Honora queried.

"Oh, nothing." Then as Mrs. Denton turned away to greet a new arrival, Mildred explained.

"I was only amused," she said, "to see that you yourself had done the very thing that you reproved me for doing. You have let Arthur write his name as often as he wishes—which was just what I had told him he might do with me—and you were shocked at the idea."

"The cases are entirely different," Honora protested. "I did not tell the same thing to two men—nor to one man, for that matter. When Arthur found that Tom Chandler had gotten ahead of him, he asked for some dances with me. So, with a whimsical smile, 'I was not first choice after all.'"

"Mildred put her arm affectionately. "If he had not wanted to dance with you so many times, he would not have asked you to let him do so," she commented.

"The child meant the words kindly. Honora reflected later as she and Arthur danced together. Yet her sympathy had awakened a train of unpleasant thoughts.

"Nobody likes to be pitied—least of all a proud girl or woman. Honora felt that Mildred was a little sorry for her, and that, and I have had so many rude awakenings from what I suppose were foolish dreams, that it is mighty pleasant to find one person just what I would have her to be."

The orchestra in the hall began to play a waltz and Arthur got up.

"I asked Mrs. Denton for this dance," he said. "I am sorry—but she is my hostess, so I must be prompt."

"Go at once," the girl commanded. "I am engaged for this dance, anyway—with Tom Chandler."

"If I meet him I will tell him where you are," Arthur said.

When he had left her she arose and walked to the library doors opening into the conservatory. She was wondering where her partner was.

"She was not to be in doubt for long. As her eyes became accustomed to the dim light of the fragrant interior, she discerned Tom Chandler, and Mildred standing at the far end of the aisle of plants.

As she looked the man bent and kissed the girl.

A moment later Tom Chandler appeared in the library where Honora stood waiting.

"Oh, here you are," he exclaimed, seizing her arm. "Bruce told me where to find you."

"Yes, I am here," Honora said, lazily.

As they reached the dance room and Tom passed his arm about her for the waltz, Honora shivered slightly.

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Yanks May Return in British Transport Ships

Washington, Dec. 11.—British ships may yet be used in the return of American troops from France, if the arrangements being made by Edward N. Hurley, chairman of the shipping board, who now is in England, prove successful. Direct evidence that the American Government is still exerting every effort to obtain British transports was conveyed to Washington to-day in a cable message from Mr. Hurley, which said:

"An making progress for plans for beginning return movement of our troops. Have had numerous conferences with Lord Reading and Sir Joseph Macleay, British Minister of Shipping."

WAR BOARD TAKEN OVER

Washington, Dec. 11.—By direction of President Wilson the conservation division of the War Industries Board is to become a permanent part of the machinery of the Department of Commerce.

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Christmas "Don'ts"

The following "don'ts" for householders have been issued by Fire Chief Kindler as a precautionary measure against Christmas fires:

Don't decorate your Christmas tree with paper, cotton or inflammable material. Use metallic tinsel and other noninflammable decorations only, and set the tree securely so that the children in reaching for things cannot tip it over.

Don't use cotton to represent snow. If you must have snow, use powdered mica or asbestos fibre.

Don't permit the children to light or relight the candles while parents are not present. They frequently set fire to their clothing instead. Electrical illumination is safer.

Don't leave matches within reach of children at holiday time. Candles are meant to be lighted and if the children can get matches they will experiment with them. They imitate their elders.

Don't allow trees to remain inside buildings after the holidays. The tree itself ignites readily when the needles become dry. A large number of fires usually occur in January from this cause.

Don't light candles on Christmas trees and then leave the house, for should anything about the tree ignite the flames could not be extinguished.

Don't fail to take any other precaution to prevent fire.

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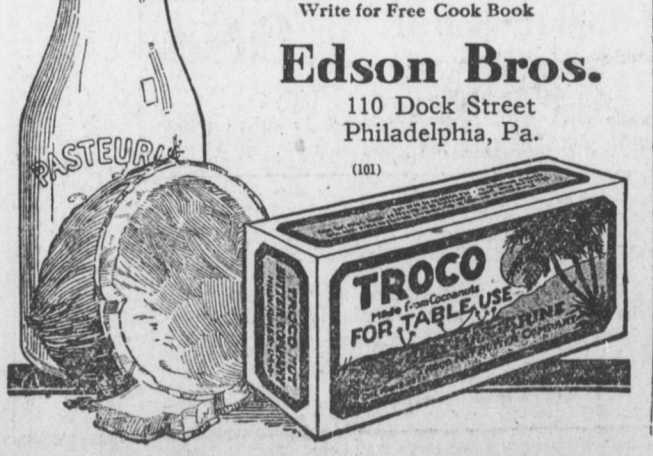
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