

BELEP LADY

Adapted by
LEBBEUS MITCHELL
from the
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture

Chapter One

THE \$5,000,000 SUIT

Half dressed for his noonday marriage to Gladys Benton, Warren Haggerty, managing editor of the New York Evening Star, was called back to the office. The paper had pulled a boner and had printed a story about Connie Allenbury, daughter of J. B. Allenbury whom the owner of the Star, Hollis Bane, had fought for twenty years, keeping him out of the United States Senate and from being named Ambassador. The story, cabled by the Star's London representative, had stated that Connie Allenbury had "stolen" another woman's husband at a garden party. Then had come a frantic cable that it was all a mistake — Connie had not even been at the party. It was another woman. Presses were stopped, the papers already sent to newsdealers recalled, but fifty copies of the paper had been sold.

Scarcely had Haggerty finished bowing out Walden, the city editor, and gone to his office for a drink when his fiancée, Gladys Benton, divorced wife of Jerry Simpson, flung open the door and entered in an angry mood, kicking the train of her bridal dress out of the way.

"What are you doing here?" asked Haggerty, startled. "Didn't Ching tell you —"

"Sure, Ching told me, and I told him, and now I'm telling you — I won't stand for it! You can't do this to me! The first time it was a fire that interrupted our wedding, next time the kidnapping. What's the gag this time?"

"It's not a gag. The paper has made a terrible mistake!"

"So has little Gladys! Engaged to a newspaper man —"

"The door opened and Hollis Bane, owner and publisher, entered, stopped at sight of Gladys in her wedding dress and came to my office," he said curtly, and walked out. Gladys grabbed the whiskey bottle and would have started it after the publisher had not Haggerty prevented.

"That's Mr. Bane, owner of the paper. I've got to see him at once. We're facing a big libel suit."

"You're facing a breach of promise suit! If you don't want to marry me just say so."

"We'll get married today. Tell the preacher to wait. I'll come the minute I'm free," promised Haggerty. He called to an office boy to get a cab for Gladys and hurried into Mr. Bane's office.

"This is terrible, Haggerty," said Mr. Bane. "A mistake like this can ruin the paper. Pure libel and slander, our lawyers say. I've got to get on my knees to the man I've fought for twenty years. I kept him out of the Senate, from being named Ambassador. I've just put in a call to London for him."

"Let me talk to him," said Haggerty. "He hates you. I'll take all the blame. You know nothing about it."

When the call from London came, Haggerty put on all his Irish charm, explained that the paper had made a slight mistake — nothing important — but he was calling up to apologize. What he heard on the wire held him silent until he was cut off.

Mr. Bane, who had been listening at an extension, stood up, stunned, unbelieving. "A libel suit for five million! His New York agent must have got one of those fifty copies and cabled him at once. His lawyers will serve the papers tomorrow! It's a chance to strike back and he's striking! The paper will go!"

"That's not going to happen to us!" cried Haggerty. "We've had other big suits. Remember that Ferrill girl . . ."

"But they were after money. There's never been a breath of scandal against Connie Allenbury."

"Not yet there hasn't, but she's a girl and she's human. I'm going to throw a man at her! The best man we ever had on libel, Bill Chandler."

"Yes, Chandler's the man! But you fired him!"

"And I'd do it again. He's a heel — a conceited, double-crossing heel."

But he's the only man in the world to swing this case."

"Get him then," said Mr. Bane. Gladys Benton was not married that day . . .

For two days Haggerty tried to trace Bill Chandler — he'd gone to Chicago, to San Francisco, then to Singapore. Capitals of the world were reached by cable, all in vain. At last, in despair, Haggerty gave instructions to call in the Pinkerton detective agency. An office boy who overheard the conversation then came forward and said that Bill Chandler, who used to work for the Star, was in New York — at the Grand Plaza . . .

Haggerty waited in the lobby of the Grand Plaza until he saw Bill Chandler, clothed in the height of London fashion, go to the desk for his mail. He contrived to give Chandler an artful dig in the back with his elbow, turned to apologize, but Bill spoke without turning around:

"Warren Haggerty! From Brooklyn to Bombay, a stab in the back spells Haggerty!"

up: \$5,000 down plus expenses and \$50,000 on delivery."

Haggerty cried robbery, but he found Bill Chandler adamant and at length reluctantly signed the agreement. Bill had his plans all laid. He would go to London, sail home on the same boat with the Allenburys, have a private detective find Connie Allenbury in his room having a cocktail, and then his wife could bring suit for alienation of affections.

"Only I have no wife," said Bill. "I'll hire some attractive girl to marry me. When the time comes she'll stage a pretty little scene over her erring husband, sue Connie Allenbury for alienation of affections and then sue me for divorce."

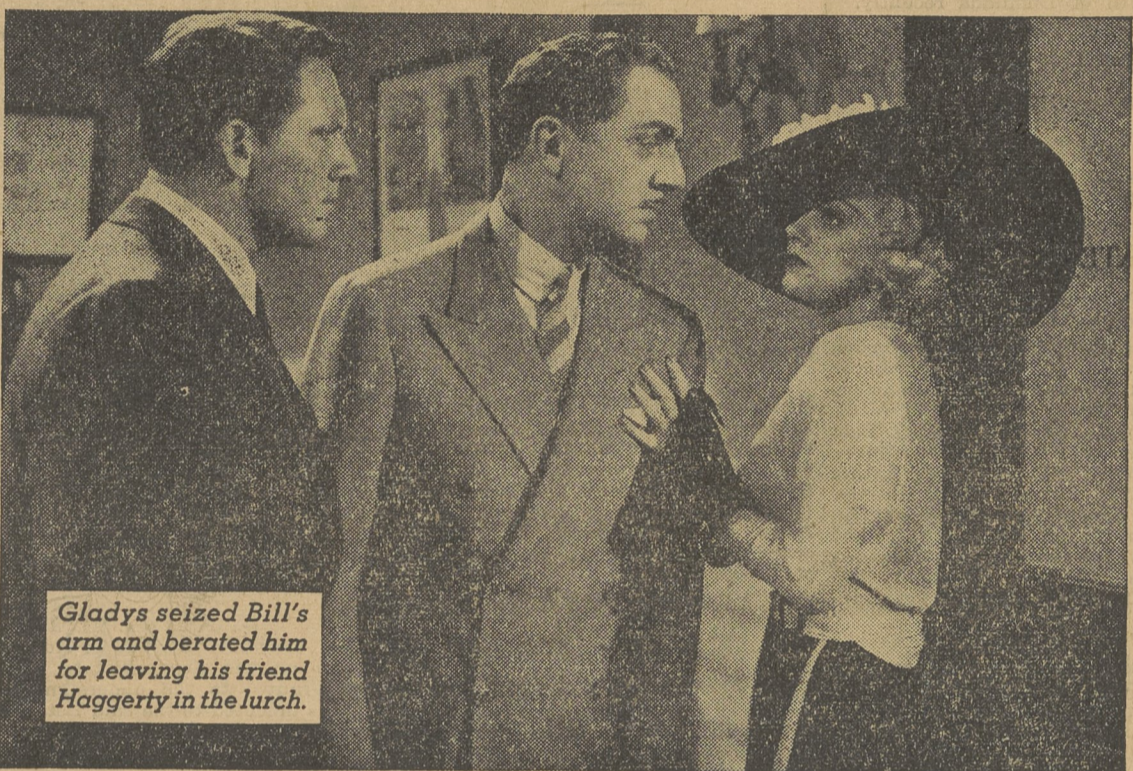
"Duplicate the situation of the story we printed!" exclaimed Haggerty delighted. "Only this time it will be true! But how about the girl to marry you? Know anybody?"

"It's tricky — we've got to get somebody we can trust."

"Listen!" cried Haggerty, an ecsta-

torpedo from the arms of his new bride in the path of duty, with wittiness to the bride's heart break at the separation . . .

Boarding the boat at Southampton on the return to New York, Bill Chandler hired some reporters and photographers to pester Connie Allenbury for a statement on her suit against the Star and to pose for pictures. He then knocked down one of the offending reporters and held the others off until her father rescued her and took her on board. He had counted on Mr. Allenbury's wanting to thank him and was not surprised when the great man's secretary arrived and invited him to join his employer in a cocktail at the grill room bar. While they were still there, Connie Allenbury joined them. She was strikingly beautiful in a pure white dinner gown. She responded indifferently to her father's introduction of Chandler, and explained that she had run away to avoid meeting Mrs. Van Arsdale and her gushing daughter, Babs, fellow passengers on the voyage over but whom they had man-



Gladys seized Bill's arm and berated him for leaving his friend Haggerty in the lurch.

"I never stabbed you in the back, Chandler!" began Haggerty resentfully, then controlled his anger.

"That was two years ago —"

"And we should let bygones be bygones," said Chandler. "Well, good-bye. Nice to have met you."

"By the way, Bill, what are you doing for yourself?"

"Just finished a book, Warren, treating of my foreign adventures, the early hardships of my newspaper days and the rats I met running about. I said rats!" He looked Haggerty straight in the eyes.

"Listen, if you mention me in that book —"

"Sue me for libel," said Bill suavely. "Got a good man on the hush staff?"

"We get along. Bill, you're a darned good newspaper man and maybe I was a little hasty —"

"You mean you want to give me my job back? Start right where I left off — until the next time you have indigestion?"

"It wasn't indigestion."

"All right. You want to talk business. You're in a jam over the Allenbury girl. You ran a hot story and can't find an out. What's she asking?"

"Five million dollars."

Bill whistled. "Who does she think she is? I know all about her: America's international play girl — and she thinks it's worth five million! Well, when I'm through with it, she'd take five cents."

"Done!" cried Haggerty. "You're on the payroll."

"Oh, no more \$125 a week," said Bill airily. "Here's the proposition. I've been expecting you for twenty-four hours and I've got it all drawn

up to elude on their stay in Europe."

"We're in for it," said her father resignedly. "They'll be asking us to dinner."

"They'll have to find us first," said Connie. "I've been ducking them all day." She turned negligently to Bill. "Are you having fun, Mr. —"

"Chandler," Bill supplied the name. "I'm simply in stitches."

"Father, did you cable about my plane, I'm dying to feel the stick in my hands again . . . Do you fly, Mr. —"

"Chandler" supplied Bill. "I crossed with Lindbergh a couple of times, but fishing is my sport." His reference to Mr. Allenbury's favorite sport elicited no response. And Bill had spent hours getting up on the art of angling — from books.

Mrs. Van Arsdale and her blonde, willowy daughter, caught sight of the Allenburys and bore down upon them — typical American social climbers who wanted to make use of the Allenburys. They invited them to have dinner with them. Bill noted Mr. Allenbury's lame excuses, and went quickly nearer, as though just arriving.

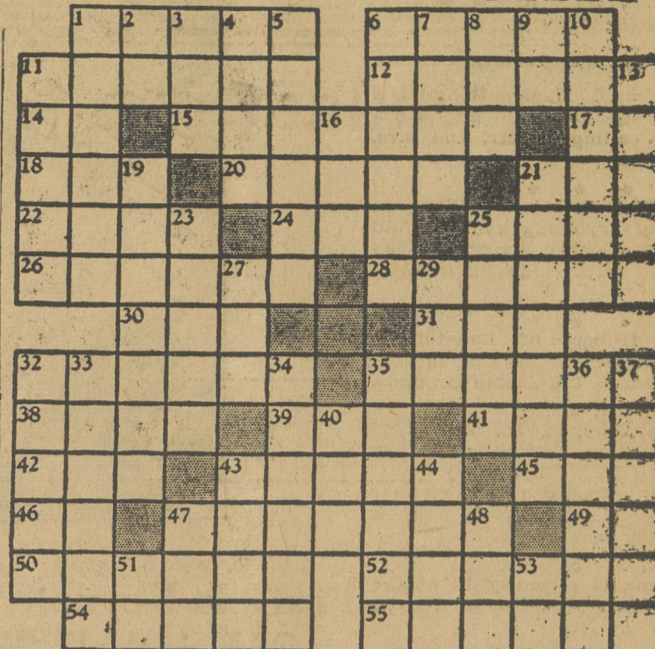
"Sorry, if I'm late. J. G. I had to get a wire off. Shall we go in to dinner now?"

Connie gave him a look, covered her father's puzzlement, excused themselves from the Van Arsdales and took Bill's arm.

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(To be continued.)

CROSS-WORD PUZZLE

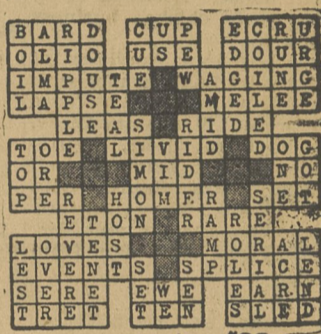


HORIZONTAL

- 1—Caste.
- 6—Spanish title.
- 11—Spree.
- 12—Gloried.
- 14—French article.
- 15—To triumph.
- 17—Note of scale.
- 18—Simpleton.
- 20—To breathe loudly asleep.
- 21—To err.
- 22—Small particle.
- 24—Sheep.
- 25—Calm.
- 26—Singers.
- 28—Firmly.
- 30—Gaming cube.
- 31—Beverage.
- 32—Fuses.
- 35—Looks steadily.
- 38—Missa.
- 39—Curve.
- 41—To get up.
- 42—Skill.
- 43—Coquette.
- 45—Card.
- 46—Musical note.
- 47—Slow.
- 49—Verb of being.
- 50—Attacked with rocks.
- 52—Airships.
- 54—Turns quickly.
- 55—Bristles.

VERTICAL

- 1—To make.
- 2—Look!
- 3—Mountain.
- 4—Knights.
- 5—Sites.
- 6—Saves.
- 7—Am. Indian tribe.
- 8—Nothing.
- 9—Hypothetical force.
- 10—To stock again.
- 11—Pageant platform.
- 13—Pop.
- 16—Pledge.
- 19—Most devoted.
- 21—Asiatic country.
- 22—Defies.
- 25—Pertaining to chess.
- 27—To soak.
- 29—To make lace.
- 32—Boards.
- 33—Desserts.
- 34—Vegetable dishes.
- 35—Rube.
- 36—To flee.
- 37—Appears.
- 40—To froe.
- 43—Unrammed.
- 44—Story.
- 47—African envelope.
- 48—Alight.
- 51—Symbol for otium.
- 53—Mother.



(94)

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OUR PUZZLE CORNER

CAN YOU SOLVE THIS PUZZLE?

1-2 A GARDEN IMPLEMENT

3-4 TO DIVIDE INTO TWO PARTS

5-6 A HOT CONDIMENT

7-8 A GENTLE BLOW

9-10 A COLOR

11-12 MYTHICAL GOD OF SHEPHERDS

13-14 TO ATTEMPT

15-16 PARTICULARS

17-18 FOUND IN EVERY HOUSE

19-20 A LIMB

21-22 TO POSSESS

23-24 A COMPLETE ASSORTMENT

25-26 PLACE FOR COAL

27-28 A CHEESE DELICACY

29-30 QUICK

31-32 A BASEBALL GLOVE

33-34 A YOUNG HORSE

35-36 HEROIC POEM

37-38 PART OF THE VERB HAVE

39-40 PART OF A WHEEL

41-42 A DIRECTOR

43-44 DRIED FRUIT

45-46 A CHUM

47-48 A SAILOR

49-50 MALE SHEEP

51-52 A GIRL'S NAME

53-54 TO MAKE AN ERROR

55-56 A LARGE WESTERN CITY

57-58 TO SUFFOCATE IN WATER

59-60 YONDER

61-62 AN OFFER

63-64 A SMALL PIECE

FIND 10 'F' OBJECTS HERE...

ANSWERS LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE CORNER

- No. 93—DOT—DOG.
- "T" Objects: Tramp, timber, thumb, tobacco, trousers, top, teeth, tree, trunk, twig, tie, type, turtle, tuft, tin, togs.
- "Perfection" words: Peer-to-no-it-ton; pet-ere-fee-tee-reef. Goofygraph; football player kicking baseball-sleeve white on player-one shoe missing-different socks-spikes on shoe-sun running-bench unfinished-man peeping through knothole-trouser legs different-crooked lamp-post-ashcan out on ground-flowers growing out of ashes.

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