

# and be my Love

By PEGGY DERN

W.N.U. RELEASE

THE STORY THUS FAR: Martha continued the story of how she had awakened to find Letty standing over her bed with the knife in hand. She and Tom had taken the knife away from Letty, and Martha had gone to the graveyard to bury it while Tom watched over his sick wife. "I hid it—where you found it." A little later Letty suffered a hemorrhage. "She died early this morning," Bob Reynolds pressed her further. "I did it!" Martha screamed. "I killed her. I hated her. She spread stories about Tom and Miss MacTavish." Martha then went into detail of how she went to Alicia's house and waited for her chance, waited until Jim MacTavish left Alicia and then committed the murder.

## CHAPTER XVI

"There's a short cut through the woods, and it isn't far. I got my sister to bed and to sleep. As I've already told you, Tom was out of the house. I found Mrs. Stevenson was not alone. I waited—"

"She wasn't alone?" Bob jerked her up sharply.

Miss Martha shook her head. "Mr. MacTavish was with her," she said, and now Megan held her breath and her teeth were clenched. "He left a few minutes after I got there. They had been quarreling. I could only hear a word or two, but I could tell, just looking in at the window, that Mr. MacTavish was very angry and that Mrs. Stevenson was laughing at him."

Megan could see the picture as though she herself had stood outside that window, and it made her shudder. Yet here was the thing that had worried her father—an alibi. She drew a breath of sharp relief.

"I waited until he had gone," Miss Martha went on wearily. "Then I knocked and she opened the door. She was surprised to see me, and not very—pleasant. I tried to tell her why I had come, but she only laughed. She said that there must be a lot of truth in the stories about Tom and Miss MacTavish or he and I would not have been so alarmed—and she added that she knew that Letty was—out of her mind—and that she was a menace to the neighborhood. She said she intended to start a movement to have her—committed—" Her voice broke, and after a superhuman effort at control, she said thinly, "And so—I killed her."

It was once more Bob who broke the tense, breathless pause. He still sat on the corner of the desk, and he scrubbed out the glowing tip of his cigarette as he spoke, his eyes on the crushed cigarette in the old glass ashtray, his voice very quiet and gentle. "The truth is, Miss Evans, that you spoke to Mrs. Stevenson, and she answered you about as you have said. You did not kill her—but when you turned to leave the house, you were astounded to see your sister in the doorway behind you, and realized that she had followed you. And it was, in reality, your sister, not you, who killed Mrs. Stevenson."

Bob sighed. He ran his hands through his hair and stood up, white and tired, haggard almost, as though the long scene had been almost as much of an ordeal for him as for the broken, suddenly old woman before them.

"But how could you possibly know—" Megan demanded of Bob.

It was late in the afternoon of an extremely hectic day after all the loose ends and the final details of the tragic story had been cleared up. Miss Martha and Tom had departed on their sad errand of "taking Letty home" to lay beside the little son who had never lived.

Megan had asked Bob and Laurence to stay for supper and they had accepted gratefully. And now they were in the living room, with Jim listening and looking on, withdrawn and pale, but genial and pleasant when spoken to.

"I didn't know, of course," Bob answered frankly. "It was just that—well, call it a hunch, what you will. Only I kept hearing something in Miss Martha's words that didn't quite ring true. What she was saying would be completely sincere and convincing. Then something would creep into the story, nothing I could set my finger on, but it was there and I could sense it. Especially that very elaborate ruse of hiding the knife. If it had really been a knife out of the kitchen of her own home, she might have hidden it very carefully about the house. But to get herself up like a particularly terrifying ghost and go sneaking into the night to hide it in the one place she felt sure would never be found—well, that had me puzzled."

"I thought of that, too, of course," Laurence contributed.

"Then when she began to talk about going to Mrs. Stevenson's—remember she mentioned the short cut through the woods? Yet she had been at some pains to assure us that her sister's strength was not sufficient for her to walk to the Stevenson place. But if there was a short cut through the woods, and if her sister, in one of her periods of lucidity, had followed her and overheard her quarrel with the Stevenson woman, and the sister had been frightened, excited, as she most certainly would have been—do you see? The pattern is the sister doing the deed—not Miss Martha. I saw it suddenly, and—well, you know what happened."

Megan slipped away to offer her services to Annie in finishing up supper, but Annie said, "No'm, honey, I's got eve'ything undeh control—y'all go out and git yo'self a li'l bits o' fresh air, 'fo' supper."

And gratefully, Megan obeyed her. It was already dusk, though not yet dark enough to obscure the vision. She crossed the backyard to a big old rough bench beneath a live oak tree and sat down, her head back, breathing deep of the crisp night air.

The night was very still, save for the faint shouts of children playing somewhere along the highway; behind her in the barn she heard the rustling of the cows as they settled themselves down for the night. The whole scene was quiet and calm and peaceful. So peaceful that it was hard to believe the horror and tragedy and terror that had gripped the place so short a time before.

She couldn't bear to think of Tom any more. She wouldn't let herself,



The glimmer of her light-colored frock through the dusk led him to her.

and she was glad when she saw Laurence coming towards her across the dusky dooryard.

The glimmer of her light-colored frock through the dusk led him to her. He called her name uncertainly, and when she answered him he came on to her, something dark in his hands.

"Your scarf," he said. "Annie felt you might catch cold out here—she said supper would be ready in ten or fifteen minutes."

Megan started to rise, but he put his hand on her shoulder and pressed her back on the bench.

Megan relaxed a little. He lit a cigarette and they sat for a little companionably in silence.

"It's all like a terrible dream," she said huskily, and Laurence nodded.

"But you've waked up now, Megan, and sensible people don't brood over bad dreams or let them affect their future lives!" he reminded her almost sternly. "There is one thing out of the bad dream that you can remember, though—Fallon is free. After a decent interval of time—"

She shivered and said impulsively, "I don't feel I could ever bear to—see him again."

Laurence turned on her sharply, angrily.

"Now you're talking like a fool!" he told her violently. "Just because a man has gone through hell—and a hell that was no fault of his own—no woman with a decent instinct to her name can throw him aside!"

Megan caught her breath and looked at him in surprise.

"I didn't mean that—after all, aren't you taking rather a lot for granted?" she protested heatedly. "Tom Fallon and I were—friends—"

"Tom Fallon was—and is—in love with you, and you know it," Laurence told her bluntly. "Even if I hadn't known it, the way he looked at you when he said good-by—and besides, have you forgotten that you told me yourself you were in love with him?"

"I—I guess I am," she admitted humbly.

"You guess you are!" Laurence was caustic.

"Well, what I meant was—I'm all mixed up and confused—it's been so horrible—" she stammered faintly.

"That's understandable—" Laurence conceded grudgingly. "But after a while, you'll pull yourself together and be able to see clearly—and in a year or so—"

Annie's voice from the kitchen door, that spilled an oblong of golden-amber light into the backyard, was the most welcome sound Megan had ever heard in all her life, and she rose so swiftly that Laurence's mouth tightened a little and his eyes

were cold and hard as he followed her across the yard to the kitchen and into the dining room.

Healthily tired at the end of the day, sleeping soundly at night, Megan discovered, as week followed week, that the memory of those dark, evil days when Alicia Stevenson's malicious tongue had wagged so freely, was growing fainter.

And she realized that Pleasant Grove, as a community, was also recovering from the darkness when Alicia's tongue had set old friends to eyeing each other with more or less veiled suspicion. Other farm families were finding release from dark memories in the ever new, yet age-old miracle of the dark earth, the tiny seeds, the new, tender green sprouts that meant life and hope and the future.

She was touched and grateful to Jim for his honest, if bungling attempts to help her. She tried not to let him know that his hands were clumsy with the delicate, fragile plants that he tried to pack. She knew he was bored, and that he resented the hard, back-breaking labor that it takes to run a farm effectively.

He came back from Meadersville late one afternoon, his eyes shining with excitement, obviously with news that he considered of great importance.

It was already dusk, and the darkness had driven Megan in from the fields. She had shed her earth-stained dungarees, had a shower and was dressed for supper, busy in the kitchen helping Annie with the last duties of getting the meal on the table, when Jim came hurrying in.

"The most marvelous thing has happened, Meggie—I've been offered a splendid opportunity!"

"Tell me," said Megan, eager and interested, loving him for the understanding she had acquired of him since his moment of self-revelation after Alicia's death.

"Well, you know the county newspaper in Meadersville? The Sentinel?" demanded Jim, as eager and excited as a boy. "Dick Morgan publishes it. Well, Dick's been drafted and, he wants me to take over until he comes back!"

He beamed at her happily and Megan said quickly, "It is wonderful, Dad—but—well, you've never had any newspaper experience—do you think—"

Jim looked a little sulky.

"Oh, I know that, but after all, Dick feels that I have other qualifications," he pointed out. "And Mrs. Morgan will stay on as business manager and write the woman's page and all that. What I'll have to do is write the editorials, and what news I can pick up. Mostly, right now, it comes from a wire service, because about the only two things people are interested in are the war and politics. And there's a fellow in Washington who acts as correspondent for a lot of county newspapers, Dick's paper among them. And Dick's got three weeks before he reports for induction and he feels that in that length of time he can get me settled in, help me to learn the ropes and all that. Of course, the salary is really laughable—but I get a share of the profits and all that."

"It is wonderful, Dad, and of course you can do it!" Megan assured him, sincerely. "I'm terribly proud of you."

Jim looked at her oddly and then he asked, almost curiously: "Are you, Megan? Funny—I can't remember when anybody ever said they were proud of me."

Megan felt a little quick mist of tears in her eyes, but she knew this was no time for the display of pity that she felt for his humility—his tacit admission that he had always hungered for appreciation, even while he had admitted to himself that he deserved no such appreciation.

"But of course I'm proud of you, Dad—now you'll get to make use of all that study and research you have done these last few years!" she told him happily. "I'll bet there isn't another man in the whole county who has read as much, or studied as much, of current events as you have."

Then he said hesitantly, "Of course, Meggie, I know I promised to help you with the farm this year—but I hate to turn down a chance like this. A chance to—well, to be somebody important, and to have people listen to my views."

"Now don't you worry about the farm, or me," Megan assured him firmly.

Jim beamed at her happily, obviously relieved. He would ride to and from Meadersville each day with three men from Pleasant Grove who "commuted" to Meadersville offices. The paper came off the press every Friday. It might be necessary for him to stay over in town Thursday night, but the hotel wasn't bad and he could stay there. He had his plans made.

Megan, listening to him while she did the mending that always occupied her sizable work basket, thought that he seemed younger and more vividly alive than he had been in a long time, and was deeply and selfishly glad that he had found a job that he felt was worthy of his ability.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D. Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

### Lesson for October 27

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#### PAUL'S WIDENING FIELD OF SERVICE

LESSON TEXT—Acts 13:1-5, 13, 14, 44-46, 48, 49; 14:26, 27. MEMORY SELECTION—But when it pleased God . . . to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.—Galatians 1:15, 16.

God uses men to accomplish his high and holy purpose of preaching the gospel in all the world. They must, however, be men who have been called by the Holy Spirit, prepared and sent out by him. They must be willing to labor and to sacrifice without limit for his glory.

Paul was such a man, and as we study the widening sphere of his service and influence, we catch a vision of what missions should mean in the church.

I. A Missionary Call (Acts 13:1-4). Much discussed among earnest Christians is the question of what constitutes a missionary call.

The need must be brought home to the individual believer's heart by the Holy Spirit, and he must give a conviction that one is to go out to meet that need.

Note that the call came through a live, active and well-equipped church in Antioch, a city of Syria. It was a cosmopolitan church—read the names of those who served there. They were of many nationalities and of various occupations and social positions. In the midst of that group were two exceptionally able preachers, Barnabas and Paul. They all loved the Lord and served him.

To such a church the Holy Spirit can speak, be heard and obeyed. Notice that they gave of their best, at the direction of the Spirit, not withholding it for themselves (cf. II Sam. 24:24). Good wants our best.

Sent forth by the Holy Spirit these men went promptly and willingly. Why should the Lord have to plead, and prod, and wait for his people to obey him?

II. A Missionary Conquest (Acts 13:4, 5, 13, 14, 44-46, 48, 49).

To trace this first missionary journey it is well to look at the map illustrating the Acts and epistles at the back of most Bibles.

It will appear at once that it was not an easy itinerary these men undertook. It involved travel by sea, through difficult country, and often among hostile and hateful peoples.

God does not call his servants to an air-conditioned arm-chair evangelism. His Word must go out where it has never been heard, and that means pioneering among the most backward of peoples, the neediest of this earth. It means working in rescue missions, in thankless and difficult pastorates; yes, anywhere the Divine Executive, the Holy Spirit, may direct.

Paul met both popularity and persecution, and that not far apart. After the experience of acceptance and rejection on the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:7, 8), Barnabas and Paul went to Antioch in Pisidia (a different city than Antioch in Syria; see map). Here they were invited to preach in the synagogue and Paul was blessed in the presentation of a powerful gospel message. Read it in Acts 13:16-41. It met with such a response that the people "besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (v. 42). So great was the popularity of Paul's message that the whole city came the next Sabbath "to hear the Word of God." What a wonderful sight that must have been.

But wait—there is something else here beside popularity, and its name is jealousy (v. 45). It caused the Jews to blaspheme as they contradicted Paul's preaching.

Jealousy always makes a fool out of the one who yields to it. Yet this green-eyed monster is permitted to go right on hindering the work of God. The result in this case was that Paul turned from the Jews to their great joy and delight. This is a great turning point in the history of the church.

Now the preachers turn homeward to Antioch in Syria, and there they had

III. A Missionary Conference (Acts 14:26, 27).

Nothing stimulates missionary giving, and praying, and going in a local church like a live missionary conference, where those who have been on the field come back and tell what the Lord has done as they went out to serve him.

It is good to know that what the Lord led men out to do has been fulfilled. That completes the circle of divine guidance and blessing, and strongly encourages us to go again—and others to go for the first time—to do missionary work for God.

The church which does not have such an annual missionary conference misses a blessing and an opportunity for enlarged vision and service. No pastor or church can afford to miss such an open door for the working of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Home Town Reporter  
in WASHINGTON  
By Walter Sheod  
WNU Correspondent

WNU Washington Bureau  
1616 Eye St., N. W.

### Business Now Served by County Agent System

ONE OF the so-called visionary ideas of Henry Wallace which has just come into practical fruition since he was fired from the post of secretary of commerce and succeeded by W. Averell Harriman is being hailed by small business men as one of the most helpful ever conceived by the department as an aid to small business.

Back in the days when he was secretary of agriculture, Wallace liked the idea of the county agent system. When he became boss of the department of commerce, he "dreamed-up" the idea of adapting the system to business by establishment of a business "county agent" in every county of the nation. If county agents were helpful to farmers as business men, then why wouldn't county agents for small business men be helpful to the little business men of the nation, he argued. And he set about to establish just that.

Announcement has lately been made that 33 of the 50 new field offices, planned as a part of Wallace's expanding service for small business at the grassroots, are in operation. The erstwhile secretary, who himself comes within the category of small business men, saw that the huge department of commerce with its tremendous resources for research and technical information was of substantial aid to big business. The machinery, however, was not set up for getting this information down to the small towns and rural sections and into the hands of the small business men of the country. His idea of business county agents was the answer. Now from the office of small business, directly through the new field offices or "county agents," the small business man will get what help he wants on management problems, marketing prospects, questions involving surplus materials, priorities and government contracts, basic facts on trade associations, construction and up-to-date data on the business population, life expectancy of certain enterprises and causes of business failures.

Provide Valuable Data Under the Wallace plan these field offices were expected to work closely with the local individual business man and also with local chambers of commerce and other trade organizations in an effort to be a real help to the local communities and to bring to small business all the data, information and research on business and industrial subjects too expensive for the small business man to obtain for himself.

What will happen to this new program under the regime of Harriman, who always has been identified with big business with a capital "B," is not known. The chances are it will continue to function. At any rate, Harriman was hailed with delight by the big business interests, as one of their own and "as a man of proven attainments with unquestioned devotion to American ideals."

Harriman is known as essentially a conservative with the viewpoint of a "chairman of the board," as a synthetic New Dealer, having contributed, it is said, equally to the Roosevelt and Willkie campaign funds. His mentor during the Roosevelt administration was the late Harry Hopkins. One of the old-time reporters here in Washington whose acquaintance with Harriman runs back over the years, declared:

"Main trouble with Harriman is that his zest is short-lived. He often shifts from one enthusiasm to another and he seldom stays put. He will need a good stable under-secretary to carry the heavy chores."

How About Railroad Case? There is considerable speculation here, too, over what is likely to happen to the government's suit against the group of western railroads charging conspiracy to violate the anti-trust laws, which will likely go to trial in Lincoln, Neb., some time this winter. Harriman, now a cabinet member, is a director and chairman of the board of the Union Pacific railroad, one of the defendants in the case. Until recently he was chairman of committee of directors of all the railroads, to which were referred rate cases and other problems for final settlement.

The government's suit grows out of the so-called agreement between the western railroads to fix and settle their own rates and other problems without first going before the Interstate Commerce commission for permission.

In 1943, in testimony before the Wheeler committee taking evidence on the bill to legalize the rate bureau practices, Harriman sent a statement to be read into the record to the effect that if these agreements constituted conspiracy, then what the railroads need is bigger and better conspiracy.

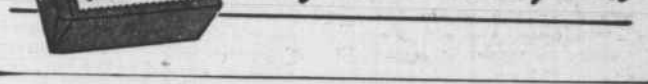
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