

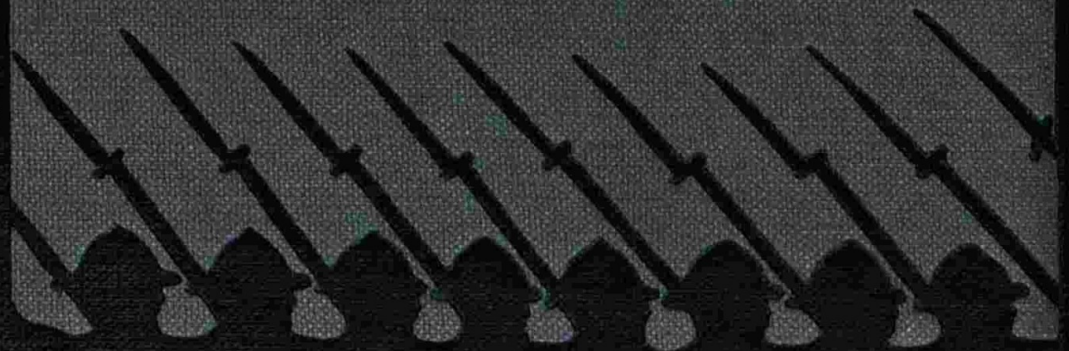
The GIRL HE
LEFT BEHIND

By HELEN BEECHER LONG



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behind**

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**“I leave you, Miss Clayton, to keep things straight
here!”**

(See Page [138](#))

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BY
HELEN BEECHER LONG

Author of
The "Janice Day" Books

ILLUSTRATED BY
R. EMMETT OWEN

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ILLUSTRATIONS

“I leave you, Miss Clayton, to keep things straight here!” (See [Page 138](#)) [Frontispiece](#)

FACING

PAGE

He did fire—futilely, perhaps—as the great car circled clumsily above the spot (See [Page 201](#)) [200](#)

“I nominate her as assistant manager, to hold the job till Frank Barton comes back!” (See [Page 227](#)) [227](#)

“You have been in my thoughts continually—the girl I left behind” (See [Page 268](#)) [268](#)

THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND

CHAPTER I

“SO PERFECTLY CAPABLE”

ETHEL CLAYTON gathered the several letters with their accompanying checks in a neat sheaf and rose from her desk, which was placed nearest the door of the manager's office. With the papers in her left hand she went to the door on which was stenciled “Mr. Barton” and opened it without waiting for a reply to her knock. She knew only Jim Mayberry was in the room with the manager of the Hapwood-Diller Company.

As she pushed the door inward she heard Frank Barton saying:

“I am puzzled what answer to make them, Jim.”

The manager was at his desk. Mayberry, leaning back in his chair, nodded understandingly and in agreement. The general manager was not in the habit of taking the superintendent of the factory into his confidence in particular instances and Mayberry was alive to that fact. He listened. Listening, and keeping one's mouth shut, never hurt a man yet.

The girl at the door of the office waited, too. Her business with the manager was important, if not imperative.

“The Bogata people have been good customers of ours in the past,” went on Barton, reflectively. “But I have inside information that their credit is wabby. It is strained, just as ours has been. If we tied up twenty to thirty thousand dollars in their particular line of goods, and then had the goods left on our hands, it might be fatal to the Hapwood-Diller Company, even now.

“The expansion of mercantile values and the increase in profits have not struck our kind of production, as you very well know, Jim. Our stock is not listed among the ‘war brides.’ Rather it might better be termed a ‘war widow.’ The company has had a hard pull, Jim. We can’t afford to take many chances.”

Again the superintendent sat tight and merely nodded. The declining sun delivered slanting rays in through the high windows of the general manager’s office. The two men—neither of whom had arrived at thirty years—sat with preternaturally grave faces, one ruminating upon the event that had unexpectedly arisen in the affairs of the concern they had both worked for since boyhood; the other possibly giving much more thought to his own personal matters.

For Jim Mayberry, without being in the least neglectful of his duties as superintendent of the factory, was a person given much to the contemplation of what he called “the prime law of nature: Looking out for Number One.” He did, however, suggest:

“Those Bogata people have been all right folks, Frank. The factory’s made money on their orders.”

“That’s just it,” the manager returned briskly, but with a gesture that betrayed his indecision.

He was a tall, black-haired, virile fellow, clean shaven, good color in his cheeks, and impeccably dressed. Mayberry, in contrast, had light hair which already he plastered across his crown to hide an incipient bald spot. He wore a small blond moustache and had numerous wrinkles about his eyes.

“Just the same it is not safe, I firmly believe, to accept the order. But a brusque refusal might do the Hapwood-Diller Company untold harm at some future