

The Lamp in the Valley

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

W. N. U. Service

Sidney Lander, mining engineer, is engaged to Barbara Trumbull, but apparently has fallen in love with Carol Coburn, Matanuska school teacher. Salaria Bryson, one of her pupils, a big out-door girl, is also in love with him. Carol's father died in Alaska

with an unproven claim which Trumbull is contesting. Lander quits his employ, becomes field manager for the Matanuska Valley project. Sock-Eye Schlupp, an old sourdough, and others, are skeptical of the project's success. Eric (the Red) Ericson

has been stirring discord among the workers. At last, too, a school is put up. Salaria discusses Sidney with Carol. Salaria has no idea Carol is interested in him. Teacher and pupil find a common rival in Barbara.

INSTALLMENT XIV

She said it without enthusiasm. And I, in turn, had my suspicions. She was hungry, not unlike myself, for something beyond the knowledge that comes out of books.

"Love is never wasted," I said, reaching for solid ground in that copybook maxim.

Salaria's glowering eyes studied my face.

"Then why," she demanded, "does a silk-wearer and washed-out she-cat who ain't got the guts 't stick 't his side tie up a real man like Sid Lander? Why should she harpoon him for life and then back-trail 't the States and reckon he's safe among us walrus-eaters?"

I gravely considered that double-barreled question.

"I suppose it's because he's a man of honor," I finally affirmed.

Salaria crossed to the door and looked out at the towering peaks of the Talkeetnas.

"Honor wouldn't cut much ice," she said over her shoulder, "if I was the blubber-eater he was pickin' out. If he wanted a woman around his wickup as much as he wants this cock-eyed colony on the map," she abandonedly proclaimed, "he'd damned soon see my shoe-packs under his bunk rail!"

I kept telling myself, after that talk with Salaria, that there was something dignifying in the job of teaching, in molding the minds of the young, in bringing light into the dark places of the world. I was the lamp in the valley.

But the lamp, plainly, stood in need of some new oil. And full as my days were, I'd a feeling that something important in life was forever slipping around the corner before I could quite catch up with it. Yet all I could do, I argued with myself, was to tighten my belt and carry on. I'd no intention of turning into a grumbler. These two hundred families, I maintained, would eventually do for Alaska what the covered wagons did for the Coast States, seventy long years ago. Or even what the Pilgrim Fathers did for New England.

Yet construction lagged because wrong material had been sent in and the workers wouldn't work. Some of the misfits and trouble-makers had already been sent back to the States, to spread the news of the colony's collapse. Some of the others imposed on the Commissary and wolfed more than their share of the supplies. Some growled in secret and some drew up a daily round-robin of complaints. Others went to Wasilla and got drunk. And the less illiterate of the women-folk deplored the rawness of the country that had betrayed them.

In a city of tents, where privacy was unknown, I saw things and heard things that at first touched me with horror: love-making with all the candor of the kennel, family-fights echoing through thin walls of canvas, the moans of child-birth mixed with the strains of a mouth-organ, a loose woman with a canine cluster of idlers about her, stripped men bathing openly in wash-tubs, mothers in sunny corners combing lice from their children's hair, girls jeered at as they slipped into an unscrupulous outhouse, stained sheets and flimsy underwear flapping on clotheslines, farm-stock surrendering to the biologic urge under one's very nose, profanity and praying side by side, grossness and greediness, empty cans and offal, crying babies and thrumming banjos.

It was all honest and open enough. It was too open, from Betsy Sebeck unbentoning her waist and giving her big breast to a crying baby with a dozen males watching the operation, to the bed-pots which, in a land without plumbing, had to be emptied in the light of day. But that reversion to the primitive, I told Katie, produced both a bluntness of address and a coarseness of fiber. And women, I contended, felt it most.

Katie didn't agree with me. She said modern woman had got a damned sight too refined for this world, that it did her good to get out on the frontier where life could fling her back to first principles.

"We're here," said Katie, "for just one end: to work and reproduce."

"That," I retorted, "leaves us no better than animals."

"Well, that's what we are," Katie affirmed, "only the fripperies make us forget it."

"But surely civilization's brought us something worth keeping," I suggested.

Katie laughed.

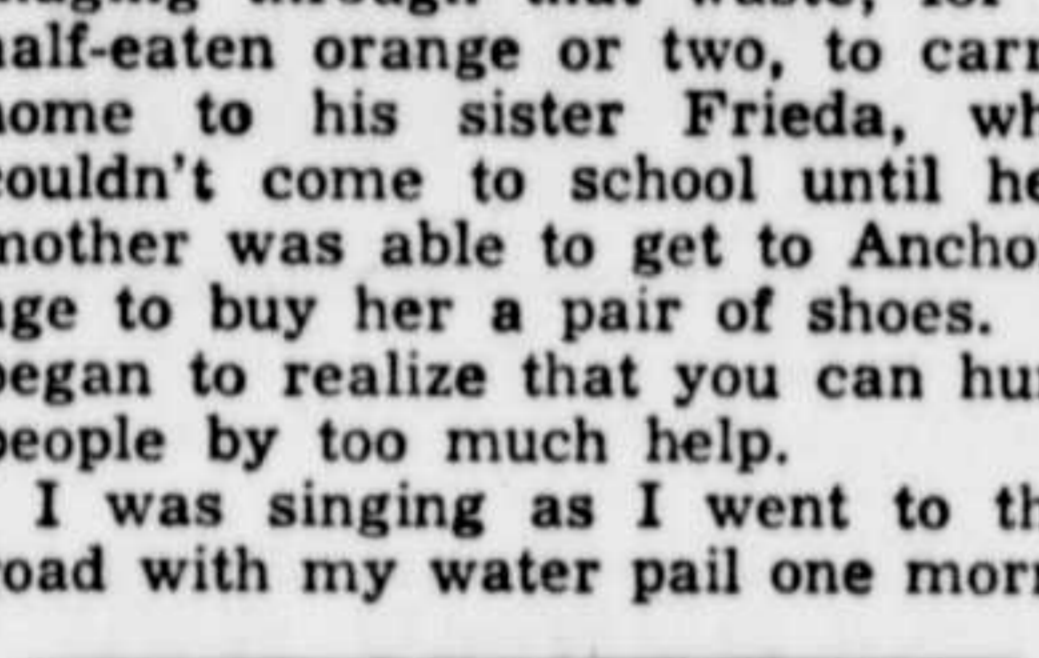
"We're not as civilized as you imagine," she said as she buttoned her mannish-looking leather coat. "You'll find that out when your baby's pulling at your breast."

A touch of unrest, I noticed, extended even to my pupils. They could boast of a big yellow motor bus to carry them to the school door every morning. But only a sprinkling of them came. Compared with the children of the old-timers, the stolid little Scandinavians and Finns and native Alaskans who were inured to hardship, the A R C new-

comers were both harder to manage and more exacting in their demands. They arrived well fed and well clothed, their lunch-boxes stuffed with Commissary food. They were eyed with envy by the native-born children, who probably saw an orange only at Christmas. But these wards of Uncle Sam came carrying two or three oranges, day by day. Sometimes they had grapefruit and chocolate bars and store cake. Since the supply proved unlimited, they liked to have a pitched battle with those comestibles.

After a final overreckless barrage of oranges I had to make it a rule that no Project child was to bring more than one orange into the classroom. It gave me an unpleasant feeling just under the fifth rib to see poor little Olie Eckstrom rummaging through that waste, for a half-eaten orange or two, to carry home to his sister Frieda, who couldn't come to school until her mother was able to get to Anchorage to buy her a pair of shoes. I began to realize that you can hurt people by too much help.

I was singing as I went to the road with my water pail one morn-



"Why avoid me, Moon of my Delight?"

ing. And as I turned I came face to face with Eric the Red.

"Why avoid me, Moon of my Delight?" he said with his habitual and hateful mockery.

"Why shouldn't I?" I asked. I compelled myself to meet his gaze. For along the road I could see the approaching figure of Olie Eckstrom, swinging his tin milk pail as he whistled to the tree tops.

There was something maddening about the cool assurance of Ericson's smile.

"Why should you, sweet lady, when it's written in the stars we're to come together?" His laugh was both brief and unpleasant. "I'm still awaiting that happy hour. And when it arrives I don't intend to be the forgotten man."

I made no response to that. Instead, I turned and called to Olie, who quickened his pace as he caught sight of me. My little Swedish friend was no Goliath, but even his diminutive figure meant an acceptable ally along that lonely road.

Ericson, watching that figure in bibbed overalls, essayed an ironic gesture of farewell and moved on down the road.

"E ban a bad man," Olie announced with quiet conviction.

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

Olie's answer, when he gave his reasons, was in English both broken and bewildering. But in the end it rather took my breath away. For from the slow-tongued Swede boy I gathered that he had been in the habit of collecting building blocks for his sister Frieda, small board ends that could be picked up between the lumber piles along the siding track. The workmen there were apt to treat him roughly and drive him away with a cuff and a kick. So it was natural, the night before, that he should promptly hide away when he heard voices. But he was able to gather the gist of the talk among those transient sore-heads. And their plan, apparently, was to stage a demonstration in front of the Commissary (where a curb had been put on the open-handed distribution of Federal supplies) and while the officials were busy with that riot Ericson and his followers were to start a fire, a purely accidental fire, in the great piles of timber and equipment that lined the railway track.

CHAPTER XVIII

Lander listened, with a quiet enough eye, as I told him what I could of Olie's story.

Instead of venturing any comment on the situation he asked me if John Trumbull had been in touch with me during the last few days. When I informed him to the contrary he

led me over to his truck, saying he'd be glad to drop me at my school door.

"But you can't tell how this will turn out," I argued, "and if it's going to be dangerous I want to be around."

"That's just when I don't want you around," he said. "You've had trouble enough in this valley."

"But it may mean danger for you," I persisted.

Our glances locked, for a moment, and I could see a warmer light well up in his eyes. His brief laugh was both cool and self-confident.

But when we stopped at Palmer and he had a quiet look over the towering supply piles along the siding there his face took on a new seriousness. For hidden under a layer of empty hemp bales, between two piles of pine flooring, he found a five-gallon can of gasoline. The contents of this can he quietly emptied into his truck tank. Then, after a moment's thought, he filled the can with water. Making sure his movements were unobserved, he re-stored the cap to the can and re-stored the can to its hiding place under the hemp bales.

My pupils didn't get the attention they should have had that day. There was many a flicker, before the afternoon wore away, in the lamp of Lander.

I was still in my classroom, after the big yellow bus had carried away the last of the children, when Sock-Eye appeared in the doorway.

"I ain't much of a hand at g'ography," he said as his beaklike eyes blinked up at my wall map, "but I've got a homestead chart here I'm needin' a mess o' help on."

He produced a soiled and rumpled sheet of paper diversified with many pencil-markings and placed it on the desk top in front of me.

"What's this?" I asked, trying in vain to read some meaning into the roughly penciled lines.

"That," said Sock-Eye, "is a map o' Klondike Carum's claim on the Chakitana as I kin best work it out. That's the mine, remember, that ought 't be yours."

"John Trumbull says it shouldn't," I reminded him.

"And Sid Lander says it does," retorted Sock-Eye. "But I ain't goin' into that now, girlie. What I want 't check up on is where them location stakes o' your old pappy ought to stand." His stubby finger pointed to a marking on the map.

"Here's the Chakitana, and it ought 't be about here the Big Squaw comes in. But I can't figger out which side o' that crick the Trumbull outfit is anchored to."

"I'm afraid I can't help you much," I said. "You see, Sock-Eye, I've never been there."

"Then why ain't you there now?" demanded the old feller.

"Because I'm needed here, in the valley," I answered. "And Sidney Lander's supposed to be looking after my claim."

"Yes," snapped Sock-Eye, "fussin' round with these pie-eatin' pikers and waitin' for a bunch of law sharks 't put in the final word. But court rulin' don't git you nowhere, back on the cricks."

I sat looking at Sock-Eye until he shifted a little uneasily under my gaze. I was thinking, as I studied his seamed old face, that he was so misplaced in time that he was pathetic. He impressed me, for all his bristlings of belligerency, as childishly helpless before the newer forces crowding in on his trail. He made me think of a cumbrously armored turtle, overconfident of his safety as he ambles along a motor highway between the flashing wheels of change that could so easily crush him.

"What's right or wrong," I finally observed, "isn't decided by gunpowder."

Sock-Eye's laugh was brief and raucous.

"More'n once, girlie, I've seen it blow a short cut 't the seat o' justice," he said as he patted the worn leather of his gun holster. "And this valley wouldn't be where she is if she could rouse up a leather-slapper or two 't straighten her out."

The desolate old figure took a bite of plug tobacco, chewed vigorously, and spat into the stove front. "Filled with a mess o' women and gas cars that ain't needed here."

"The trouble with you," I suggested, "is that you've lived too long alone."

Sock-Eye looked at me with the kindly scorn of the unmated male.

"Because I never got me a woman?" he demanded.

"If you want to put it that way," I acceded.

Still again Sock-Eye spat adroitly into the stove front.

"I ain't had trade nor truck with 'em for forty odd years," he averred. "And I guess I'll git along without 'em to the last roundup. No, ma'am, I ain't succumbed 't the plumb loco idea a shack ain't a home unless there's a female fussin' round the dough-crock."

"What can you do?" I asked.

Sock-Eye chuckled in his leathery old throat.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

LEAVES from Uncle Sam's Notebook

W. N. U. Service

Favored Breeds of Geese

It is not generally realized that all of the breeds of geese now raised in this country are descendants of the wild gray goose, having been domesticated many centuries ago. Six breeds are now recognized as standard in this country: namely, Toulouse, African, Chinese, Embden (sometimes spelled Emlden), Canada or wild, and Egyptian, the most popular being Toulouse, Embden, African and Chinese.

CARE OF GEESE

Geese are very hardy and are seldom affected by insect pests or by any disease. They can be raised at a profit, in small numbers, on any farm where there is running water and an abundance of good pasture. Grass constitutes the bulk of the food of the average goose and it does not pay, as a rule, to try to raise these fowls unless good grass range is available. Moist pasture land makes the best goose grazing, and, since geese are the closest grazers known, care must be taken not to overstock the land. To prevent over-grazing, with consequent damage to the grass, it is well to use two or more fields in rotation. A natural pond, or an artificial one, where the geese can swim is valuable at any time and is considered essential during the breeding season.

MARKET FOR GEESE

In spite of the fact that in some sections of the United States, notably Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas, Missouri, Illinois and Wisconsin, geese are raised extensively and profitably, it should be noted that the market for geese is not so widespread as that for chickens. The demand and the price paid for geese is best in sections where fattening is conducted on a large scale. In Wisconsin, for instance, a special trade for specially fattened geese has been built up with New York City and other large eastern cities. Nevertheless, the price paid for geese is notably less than that obtained for other kinds of poultry.

HOUSING AND MATING

One notable and attractive feature about geese is that, when mature, they seldom require housing. Their necessities seem to be protection from snow in winter, and shade, for protection from the sun, in summer. In the North, geese raisers usually provide merely a shed, open on the south side. In sections where winters are unusually severe, poultry houses or barns are provided. Coops, barrels, or other dry shelters must be provided for the goslings, the goose houses must be kept clean, and it is necessary to provide plenty of clean straw for the floors in the winter months.

Geese should be selected for size, prolificacy, and vigor, when the mating season comes on, and it should be noted that the medium-sized birds are the best breeders. Since the birds should be mated several months prior to the breeding season, breeding stock should be bought in the fall. Geese have a genuine tendency toward monogamy and matings are not changed from year to year unless, as sometimes happens, a gander fails to mate with a certain goose. If geese that have been once mated are separated it is necessary to place them so far apart that they can not hear each other's voices.

VARIOUS BREEDS

The Toulouse goose is the largest and most popular of the standard breeds. It is a fair layer, grows rapidly and makes a good market bird. The Embden is pure white, slightly smaller than the Toulouse, more active, and tighter-feathered. It is somewhat less prolific than the Toulouse. The African goose may be recognized by the knob on its head. It is of the same size as the Embden, a handsome bird and a good layer. The Chinese goose is smaller than the other standard breeds and of a swanlike appearance. It is an excellent layer and a rapid grower, but is shy and somewhat difficult to handle. The Egyptian is small, brightly colored, long-legged, and adapted only for ornamental purposes. The Canada goose is very wild and can be kept in captivity only by close confinement. The gander is frequently crossed with the Toulouse, African and Embden breeds, producing a goose which, though a mongrel, is highly prized as a market goose. It grows rapidly, has a fine quality of flesh, looks like the wild goose, but is generally much easier to handle.

For further information concerning weights, markings, and so forth of market geese, send five cents to Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., asking for Farmers' Bulletin No. 767.

TRANSPLANTING LARGE TREES

In spite of the apparent difficulties in the way of transplanting full-grown trees, special equipment has been developed whereby trees may be moved which have attained a height of 40 feet or more, together with root-protecting balls of earth weighing many tons.

FAMILY MILK FROM GOATS

A goat will supply sufficient milk for the average family and can be kept where it would be impossible to keep a cow.

GRASSROOTS

WRIGHT A. PATTERSON

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

MAN HOURS LOST MAKES FEARFUL TOTAL

BURIED in the department of labor at Washington are the figures which tell the story of strikes in the United States. For his book, "The Dead Hand of Bureaucracy," Lawrence Sullivan dug up those figures for the years from 1930 to 1939.

The labor department keeps them on the basis of the number of man hours lost and the figures for 1941, when available, will demonstrate how much more we might have accomplished in the matter of preparedness and aid to England had there been no strikes.

In 1930 the number of man hours lost because of strikes was 2,730,368. In 1932 it had increased to 4,462,973, but in 1933, the year of the enactment of the Wagner labor law, it jumped to 16,872,128, with 19,591,949 for 1934. The top year was 1937, with the staggering figure of 28,424,857 man hours lost. That meant one week's work for 710,621 men, or 52 weeks of 40 hours each for 13,663 men—enough time to build approximately two battleships. For 1939, the last year for which I have any figures, the loss was 18,687,739 man hours.

What will it be in 1941? How much will strikes affect our efforts for preparedness and aid to England? It will certainly mean enough hours to have produced hundreds of airplanes or other implements for the defense of the nation.

Strange as it may seem, both William Green and John L. Lewis say the administration of the Wagner act by the National Labor Relations board is responsible for the strike problem.

WITHOUT THE PLAIN FACTS THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY is being sabotaged through the feeding of misinformation, paraded in the guise of facts, to the American people. That is not the act of any one political party, or any one group of political leaders. The policy of all parties is to attempt to support their policies by false interpretations of the acts of the people's government.

American people do not object to any expression of political opinion on the part of political leaders, but they do object when the men they have set up as leaders attempt to support their opinions by false presentations.

People are entitled to the bare, unvarnished facts, and they are not getting that kind of information. Some day the people will discover they have been hoodwinked and when they do, the political leaders who are responsible for the condition will pay the penalty. Before that happens, democracy may be so far gone that it will take generations for its recovery.

Democracy will function only when all people who must carry the responsibility for its functioning are in full possession of the plain facts.

THE DOLLARS SPENT AT HOME WORK FOR US

A CLERK in a market of our town receives a dollar as part of his salary. He spends it with the clothier for a necktie. The clothier's clerk gets it as a part of his salary. He spends it for food at a market. The owner of the market pays it to a carpenter for store repairs. The carpenter pays it to the lumber dealer. The lumber dealer pays it to his truck driver and so on and so on. That dollar spent in our town may pass through many hands, and each person receiving it derives a benefit.

Because of the dollars spent in our town, our merchants and home owners are able to pay taxes. With the taxes they pay, we support our town government, we maintain schools for our children, we pave and maintain our streets. It is the dollars spent at home which make our town a desirable place in which to live.

The dollars spent outside our town do not help in doing any of these things. They do nothing toward maintaining our property values. These are things to think about when we have dollars to spend.

HOW DICTATORS ARE BORN

ON MARCH 23, 1933, the German Reichstag gave Hitler the privilege of making the laws of Germany for four years. That made Hitler a dictator; that marked the real beginning of World War No. 2. When the legislative branch of any country abdicates and passes its functions on to the administrative branch, a dictatorship results. At the end of four years the Reichstag could not take back what it gave away in 1933.

TOO BIG

LOOKING BACK through history we find that Kaiser Wilhelm, Napoleon, Tamerlane, Genghis Khan, Charlemagne, Attila the Hun, Caesar, Alexander and perhaps others, have at one time or another attempted to conquer the world and make it over to their liking. No one of them succeeded. Hitler's effort is destined to meet the same fate. The world is too big for any one man to swallow. Even in lesser affairs, things can become too unwieldy for successful handling.

Things to do



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Lacking in Sense
Immodest words admit of no defense; for want of decency is want of sense.—Wentworth Dillon.

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Fool's Followers

A fool is one whom simpletons believe to be a man of merit.—La Bruyere.

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