The Lamp in the Valley

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

W. N. U. Service

THE STORY SO FAR

Carol Coburn, Alaska-born daughter of a "bush rat" who died with an unestablished mining claim, returns North to teach Indian school. Aboard ship, she is annoyed by Eric (the Red) Ericson and is rescued by Sidney Lander, young mining engineer. Lander, working for the Trumbull company, which is fighting Coburn's claim, is engaged to Trumbull's daughter.

Lander breaks with Trumbull. But the engagement to Barbara Trumbull stays.

Christmas day, a fire breaks out at the school when the children are playing round the Christmas tree. The school burns down. Carol proves the heroine, saving the children. The doctor orders her to bed.

The fire left Carol without clothes and without definite plans.

INSTALLMENT VI

But I refused to stay put. There was too much to be done. I didn't want to seem a slacker when everybody was so busy. And in looking after the others I could pretty well forget the pain of my own flame-blistered face.

Where the rambling old schoolhouse had been was a stretch of smoldering ashes with the skeleton-like iron bed frames and a stove or two standing there as melancholy as tombstones. And everything I owned lay consumed in those ashes. All I had left were the few scorched clothes that hung about my tired bones.

But I hadn't time to feel sorry for myself. A special train, I was told, was already on its way from Anchorage, to pick up our homeless school waifs and carry them on to the Indian orphanage at Fairbanks. From the pile of emergency clothing Katie commandeered for me an oversized pair of corduroy trousers, a patched plaid Mackinaw, and a caribou parka that had seen better days. To these Doctor Ruddock (who'd given up his little wooden-fronted office as sleeping-quarters for Katie and me) added socks and pacs and an old bearskin cap that made me look like a lady-huzzar in a busby.

"What are we going to do?" I asked the ever-hurrying Doctor Ruddock when he dropped in, next day, to anoint my scorched epidermis with ambersine.

"Toklutna's off the map," he proclaimed. "Katie will stay on here, probably until the breakup, to look after the old folks."

"Then where do I fit in?" I questioned with a sudden feeling of homelessness.

"You fit in very neatly," he said as he listened to my heart action. "I'd the Commissioner on the wire this morning and he agrees with me that this country owes you a berth. So you get the school job at Matanuska."

It took some time for this to sink in.

"When?" I asked.

"As soon as you get sense enough to take care of yourself," he said with a barricading sort of curtness. "I told you to rest up, after your fire shock, and you didn't do it. So roll up in that bunk and stay there until you get a release from me."

He stopped in the doorway, with his dog-eared old medicine case in his hand, as I none too willingly shook out the blankets of my floor bunk.

"And there's a long-legged engineer waiting outside to see you," he added as he watched me dutifully crawl into my bunk. "But ten minutes is his limit, remember."

I had my second shock to digest. For the waiting visitor was Sidney Lander.

He stood very tall in that small office-surgery. And my appearance must have startled him a little, since he stared down at me, for a full half-minute, without speaking.

"Are you all right?" he finally asked. I had to laugh a little at his solemnity.

"Just a little scorched around the edges," I said with an effort at levity. But my heart was beating a trifle faster than it should have been.

"I flew over, as soon as I heard," he rather clumsily explained. He looked out the window and then back at me. "That was good work, saving those children."

"But I lost my eyebrows," I reminded him.

Lander walked to the window and back.

"We've at least saved those citizenship papers," he announced. I've shown them to John Trumbull," he explained, "and Trumbull claims they're not backed up by the records. That led to an argument that ended in a split-up. The Chakitana Development Company has lost its field engineer."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

His laugh was curt.

"I was tying up with the Happy Day outfit," he explained. "But Trumbull's just trumped my ace by buying up the Happy Day."

"Does that mean you're going outside?" I asked, trying to make the question a casual one.

"Not on your life," was his prompt reply. "We've got to wait until the records show who's right in this."

"But that's my problem," I objected.

"I happen to have made it mine," he retorted with an unexpected light of battle in his eyes.

CHAPTER VII

I began to understand the meaning of what they call "the deep cold" before I set out for Matanuska. For the snows of midwinter soon buried the ruins of our lost school. The storms along Alaska's one stretch of railway also brought slides and broken snowsheds enough to block the line and keep trains from moving for over a week.

That cloud had the silver lining of giving me a chance to make over my nondescript wardrobe, to which big-hearted Katie added a sweater of Scotch wool and a pair of wolf-skin gauntlets, a trifle over-sized. She was, I think, genuinely sorry to see me go.

So when traffic moved again and I mounted my day coach I found it crowded to the doors with leather-faced old sourdoughs and cud-chewing trappers and Mackinaw-clad loggers, along with a homesteader's wife who carried an undersized pig in a slatted crate.

I wasn't sorry when the conductor, pushing his way through that overcrowded day coach, blinked down at my still heat-blistered face and said: "Next stop Matanuska, lady."

"Could you tell me," I asked one of the men at the station, "where I'd find Mr. Bryson, Mr. Sam Bryson?"

His face, when he peered up at me, impressed me as both sour and sardonic.

"I'm Sam Bryson," he said.

"The school superintendent for this district?" I persisted.

"I be," he retorted, plainly resenting my incredulous stare. "And ain't it fit and proper, seein' I happen to own that doggoned schoolhouse over there?"

I meekly acknowledged that it was. And with equal meekness I

"Next stop Matanuska, lady."

told him that I was the new teacher sent on from Toklutna.

"But you wasn't to turn up here till Easter," he said testily. "We ain't got nothin' ready for you."

I showed him the Territorial Commissioner's letter, which he held close to his seamed old face, his lips moving as he labored through the undisputable message therein contained.

"Well, you should've got off at Wasilla," he complained, "where you could've found lodgin' until things was ready."

"But I'm here," I said with a smile that was entirely forced. And as he pushed back his wolfskin cap and stood scratching an attenuated forelock I quietly inquired: "Just where is my school?"

He studied me with a lack-luster eye.

"You ain't got no school," he proclaimed.

"But I was sent here to teach," I contended, trying to keep my temper.

"Sure you was sent here to teach," acknowledged the old-timer. "But it ain't our fault we wasn't rigged out with a noo schoolhouse this winter. Gover'ment's so danged busy with a heap o' highfalutin' plans for this valley it ain't got time to look after our needs. Spends a half-million on that noo Injin school at Juneau and lets us hillbillies scramble for our book-larnin' as best we can!"

"Then what am I to do?" I asked, feeling more interested in my own immediate future than in the mistakes of governmental expenditure.

"I guess you'll just have to siwash it," he said, "the same as us old-timers did when we hit this valley."

"Just how will I siwash it?" I demanded.

"By froggin' through as best you can, the same as our circuit-ridin' sky-pilot does, without a meetin'-place. We was figgerin' on you circulatin' round the valley homesteads and ladlin' out the book-larnin' where it was most needed. Instead o' them comin' to you, you'll have to go to them."

"Why can't that old schoolhouse be used?"

"She needs a noo roof and noo floor sills," was the listless answer. "And I'm danged if I'm goin' to dig down for 'em."

"Are you trying to tell me," I quavered, "that I'll have to go from farm to farm, like a mail carrier, and give my lessons in a kitchen?"

"You've guessed it," he wearily acceded. "Only you'll be plumb lucky to be stretchin' your legs out in a warm kitchen. I've got a girl over home right now, rarin' to git polished up a spell on her readin' and writin'. And if you ain't willin' to do your teachin' on the wing thataway, until this valley gits a real schoolhouse rastled together, I guess, lady, you're mushin' up the wrong trail."

There was no mistaking the finality of that statement.

"But where am I to live?" I asked as I stared at the snow that stood so white between the gloomy green of the sprucelands.

"We was figgerin'," he explained, "on settin' you up in the old Jansen shack. That's just over the hill there behind that tangle o' spruce. But you'd sure have some tidyin' up to do afore you got set there." He looked with a frown of disapproval at my sprawl of luggage. "'Bout the best thing for you to do, lady, is to leg it over to the Eckstrom farm and see if they'd take you in for a day or two."

I had, however, no desire to go wandering about that snowy world asking strangers to take me in. I wanted my own roof over my head. And I so informed the morose Mr. Bryson.

Just then I became conscious of a strange figure making its way down the opposing hillside.

It was a man carrying the carcass of a deer, a ragged and shambling man with a rifle and a tined head above his stooping shoulders. It was Sock-Eye Schlupp.

"I'll be hornswizzled if it ain't Klondike Coburn's gal," he said. "What're you doin' back in these parts?"

I told him why I was there.

"Where you goin' to bunk?" he demanded.

"They tell me I'm to live in the Jansen shack," I explained.

"They're plumb locoed," said Sock-Eye. "You sure can't den up in that pigsty."

"I'm north born," I reminded him.

"Mebbe you are," he retorted. "But this is a plumb lonesome valley for a chalk-wrangler t' take root in. I reckon you'd better come along t' my wickyup until things is ready for you."

That, I told him, would be out of the question.

"I s'pose you know young Lander's swingin' in with me?" he said with the air of an angler adjusting a gaudier fly.

That, I knew, made it more than ever impossible. "And if that Jansen shack's not ready, I'll have to make it ready."

"Quite a fighter, ain't you?" he observed.

After a moment's silence, he added: "I'll give you a hand over t' that lordly abode o' yours."

He left me standing there, to return, a few minutes later, with a hand sleigh borrowed from the station agent. On this, with altogether unexpected dispatch, he piled my belongings. Over them he draped the deer carcass, thonging the load together with a strand of buckskin.

"Let's mush," he said.

I took a hand at the towing line, and, side by side, we made our way along the trodden snow, as crisp as charcoal under our feet. The valley seemed strangely silent. But I felt less alone in the world with that morose old figure beside me.

"Why is Lander swinging in with you?" I asked.

"Seein' this valley ain't bristlin' with hotels," answered Sock-Eye, "he deemed my wickyup good enough for a college dood until they could build him up-to-date livin' quarters at the Happy Day."

"But I thought outsiders bought up the Happy Day," I ventured.

Sock-Eye stopped to gnaw a corner from his chewing plug.

"They sure did," he admitted. "And left young Lander out on the limb. But, as far as I kin make out, that hombre ain't no squealer. And I reckon Big John Trumbull'll find him as full o' fight as a bunch o' matin' copperheads."

We went on until we came to a solitary small figure standing knee-deep in the roadside snow. It proved to be a Swede boy in an incredibly ragged Mackinaw, with a blue woolen scarf wrapped around his waist as high as his armpits. His eyes, I noticed as Sock-Eye asked him about a short cut to the Jansen shack, were even bluer than his encircling sash.

"But ol' Yansen ban dead," he announced. "He ban dead of the flu over three months ago."

"Which same makes room for you, little cheeckako," snorted my grim-eyed trail breaker.

But I stopped to ask the sash-wrapped youth his name. I liked the feeling of warmth he carried under that cocoon of wool and rags.

"Ah ban Olie Eckstrom," he said with the friendliest of smiles.

It wasn't until we came to the edge of a clearing that Sock-Eye stopped for breath.

"There be your wickyup," said Sock-Eye, with a wave of his mittened hand.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Kathleen Norris Says:

Don't Marry a Man to Change Him

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

He never rises when a woman stands up to leave the table; he doesn't take off his hat when women are in the elevator, or pull out my chair. In short, he is a rough diamond.

Marriage Fears

You don't like a few habits of your husband-to-be? Should you marry? Kathleen Norris says . . . Read her answer and her advice to young brides who are hesitant and dubious about their fitness to solve the problems of matrimonial life.

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

THE fears of a girl before she takes the serious step of marriage are very natural fears. Any girl who is willing to jump into the new life, accept the new name and home, responsibilities and position without any misgivings, is a rather shallow girl. We expect the bride to be a little dubious, a little hesitant, a little afraid of her own fitness to handle the problems of marriage.

But the other extreme is almost as unfortunate as the one of too much confidence. To weigh and measure, doubt and worry, analyze and hesitate over your matrimonial prospects is to rob the happiest time of your life of its fragrance and beauty. When I receive a letter like the following, I have small hopes that the girl who wrote it is headed for a successful experience as a wife.

An Eye to Alterations.

"David and I have been engaged for more than a year," writes Maude Brown. "He is 34, I am seven years younger; we are both school-teachers. Everything I know of David's character is fine, but there are many little things about him that worry me; they may not seem important to most girls, but they are to me. I would not hurt his feelings for the world; just because he has not had some of the social advantages that most of my friends have had. But I feel that just a few changes in him would make him perfection itself and I need advice as to how to go about accomplishing them. Intellectually he is more than a match for any of my friends; next year he will probably be superintendent of our Union High, the youngest man ever to hold that position.

"To give you an idea of what I mean. David is very outspoken. Before our friends he will say things like: 'How can you folks afford that?' or: 'we're going to board with Maude's mother awhile, at regular boarder rates;' little intimate matters that embarrass me and my friends. Once at a picnic David refused frankfurters saying that they 'gave him gas;' he never rises when a woman stands up to leave the table; he doesn't take off his hat when women are in the elevator, pull out my chair, or open the car door for me. In short, he is a rough diamond, but he is a diamond!

Makes Her Feel Self-Conscious.

"Now, if these things worry me before marriage, and make me self-conscious before all my old group—he is a comparative newcomer in town, by the way, will they not worry me infinitely more when we are married, and I feel that there is no escape? Marriage is a delicate and an intimate relationship; to a sensitive woman there cannot be in it too much consideration or finesse. I want to be proud of my husband in every way, and in every way that really counts, I am proud of David. He is moderate in all his habits, popular, thrifty, successful.

Would Destroy David's Bigness.

"I would hope by gentleness and example and the influence of a wife to influence him, but even now he only laughs good naturedly if I am disturbed, and within a few days repeats the offence, whatever it was. David really does not see in what way he is failing me, and I ask myself if he ever will see. Have you had problems similar to this one before, and if you have what has been your advice?"

My advice in this case, Maude, is to David and not to you. It is Punch's immortal advice to the young man about to marry. "Don't." You are going into this partnership determined to destroy David's bigness and confidence and originality by a long process of fleabites; you care already for the opinion and judgment of your friends more than you care for him. Your attitude is not loyal, protective, confident; you are not looking beyond these school-teaching days in a small town to the days when he, with all his crudeness and frankness and tactlessness will be moved on to a better position. No, you've determined to make a polished courtier out of him, a husband who does everything Maude wants him to do, a lackey dancing about with chairs and opening car doors and never forgetting to remove his hat.

It's unfortunate that David didn't have a mother during his small boyhood, to train him in gentler manners. The example of a wife may indeed change him miraculously but only if that wife makes him feel that he is the one object of her solicitude in the matter. Not to impress her friends, not to save her "embarrassment," not to spare her old-maidy nerves, but because she loves him, because she is close to him in everything, and she likes to receive from him the little attentions that all women prize.

To take the attitude of a teacher, to guide, will destroy her marriage sooner or later, for David is obviously the bigger-natured person of the two, and to have a swarm of gnats, in the shape of gentle reproaches, sweet reminders, sensitive tears and hurt suggestions buzzing around his head from morning until night will speedily disillusion him.

True Spirit of Wifehood.

In one of Dickens' stories there is an incident of a country farmer and his lass, who come to the bureau for a wedding license. The man cannot write and so makes his mark; the girl makes her own mark beside his. Later some friend reproaches her, reminding her that she was well educated and can of course sign her name. "Yes, I know," says the wife-to-be, "but the dear good fellow hasn't had any schooling—I'm to help him get started, and I didn't want to shame him!"

That is the spirit of wifehood. Wifehood has to be oneness or it isn't anything at all. To be watching a man nervously, exchanging disturbed smiles with your friends, trying to shush off your husband's references to the fact that Mama is in money difficulties or that frankfurters occasionally disagree with certain stomachs may satisfy your little inch-wide sense of propriety, but it isn't marriage, and the woman who feels that it is will be much happier unwed.

Ninety-Seven Per Cent All Right.

If you go into it at all go into it confidently and gloriously, willing to put up with 3 per cent of imperfections for the sake of that 97 per cent of solid fineness and character and achievement.

Some years ago a bride that I knew asked four old friends in for tea. They didn't know her husband very well! they were surprised to find that "tea" was actually tea and not cocktails and that he didn't smoke, didn't like many of the things they liked, and had a distinctly Swedish accent.

Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

The Questions

1. What is a stirrup cup?
2. Which of the following canals was the first to be constructed—Welland, Suez, or Panama?
3. What Roman emperor bestowed a consulship on his horse?
4. Which word in the English language has the most meanings?
5. From what animal is most catgut obtained?
6. What sorceress in mythology changed men to swine?
7. When were the first dining cars introduced by railroads?
8. War is compared with which of the ancient gods?

The Answers

1. A farewell drink.
2. Suez canal, cut in 1859-69.
3. Caligula.
4. The word "set" has more meanings and more possible uses than any other term in the English language. In defining and describing it, the Oxford dictionary, for example, employs 30,000 words.
5. Sheep.
6. Circe.
7. The first railway dining car was introduced on the Baltimore & Ohio route in 1863.
8. Moloch (a god, worshiped by several Semitic peoples), to whom human sacrifices were offered.

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