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 unproved mining claim, returns North to teach school. Sidney Lander, mining engineer, rescues her aboard ship from annoyances of Eric (the Red) Ericson. Lander is engaged to Barbara Trumbull, whose father is fighting Coburn's claim. Lander breaks with Trumbull and moves to Sock-Eye Schlupp's shack. Carol gets a school job at Matanuska, but there is no schoolhouse, and her residence is a shack. Barbara visits her one day while she is busy cleaning up the place. She slights Carol and finally tells her it is no use trying to get Sidney away. "Then what are you worrying about?" asks Carol. Barbara explains she is worried about the change in Lander's career plans.

INSTALLMENT VIII

"About the change in Sidney," was the unexpectedly frank response. "He's a man of his word. And he's a good mining engineer. Yet he's willing to throw up his chances by hanging about this God-forsaken valley."

I resented that slur on the land of my adoption just as I resented the implications behind it.

"I have no intention," I said, "of interfering with Sidney Lander's career. I happen to have a career of my own to look after."

"I understand you're to be a teacher here," she said with a commiserative small smile.

"I am," I replied. "And my work will keep me too busy to think of wrecking other people's happiness."

"May I tell Sidney that?" she asked as she buttoned her queenly cloak of mink.

"Of course," I retorted with more vigor than I had intended.

She stood silent a moment, and I could see the hardness go out of her eyes.

"Thanks," she said, rather quietly.

Before I knew it, in fact, I found myself taking the hand which she held out to me.

CHAPTER IX

It didn't come to me as a surprise when I learned that Sidney Lander was no longer concerned with the management of the Willow Creek Mine. What perplexed me was the discovery that he didn't go to Seward when Barbara Trumbull sailed for the States.

But it wasn't mine to question why. All I cared to remember was that, for reasons entirely his own, he somewhat sedulously kept his trail from crossing mine.

So, in that interim of suspended action, I lost myself in action enough of my own. I trimmed the wick of the lamp of learning and came a little closer to my valley neighbors. And even Sam Bryson, I began to feel, was no longer an open enemy. He thawed out sufficiently around the edges to come and inspect my shack and declare the school board would have to keep me in firewood.

One Sunday, as I was shoveling the drifts from my doorstep, Sock-Eye arrived with a home-manufactured hand sleigh, which same, he dourly explained, would make it easier for me to mush supplies from the village. On that sleigh, however, reposed a war-scarred old rifle and an equally worn revolver, to say nothing of a Morris chair which he had fashioned with his own hands and upholstered with the hide of a moose brought down by his own trusty forty-five.

When he took me out to practice marksmanship on the side hill back of the shack, the rifle made my shoulder sore and the six-gun did things to my wrist. But I soon found I could hit a spruce plank at twenty paces. Sock-Eye, watching me, eventually admitted I handled a shooting iron like an old-timer.

"I'll bet it was your pappy first showed you how t' handle them peace-makers," he chucklingly observed.

"It was," I admitted as I took a final pot shot and made the bark fly from a hemlock trunk.

"Then he gave you eddication that meant something," conceded Sock-Eye. "I've seen a heap o' changes in this cockeyed country. But she's still raw around the edges. And there's times when slappin' leather's still the short cut t' a square deal."

My teaching was an odd sort of teaching. For morning by morning, in parka and mukluks, I set out for one or another of the lonely homesteads, and there, beside a stove crackling with spruce wood and birch, I held my classes, sometimes with the Monday's washing or the Tuesday's ironing being done on the other side of the room, sometimes with the sourdough sponge being worked into loaves on the far end of the table at which my solemn-eyed little scholars were at work with paper and pencils. I was asked, as a rule, to have dinner with the family. Sometimes, when I started for home, I'd be given a jar of blueberry jam or a bowl of sauerkraut, sometimes even a slab of deer meat.

But very few of them, I found, were able to be givers. Most of them were shockingly destitute.

I did considerably more than teach the three R's and correct papers and pass out assignments. Sometimes I looked after a baby or two, and took the bread out of the oven, and airily prescribed for an earache or frost-bite, and tried my hand at cutting a pupil's hair, and attached much-needed buttons and even more urgently needed patches to the garments of my not ungrateful little scholars. They no longer laughed at Sock-Eye's old revolver, which I carried in a belt holster around my waist and from which I derived a somewhat foolish sense of protection. For I felt more self-reliant, with that old firearm swinging against my hip.

When Sam Bryson first told me he had a girl in need of schooling I pictured a frail and frostbitten child in pigtails. But Salaria Bryson—universally spoken of as "S'lary"—turned out to be something quite different. I found myself confronted by a dusky and wide-shouldered Boadicea who towered several inches above me. She wore her hair close-cropped, dressed like a man, and could swear like a trooper. She was hard-muscled and strongly-knit and could swing an ax or drive a team or carry a deer carcass over her shoulder. She proved herself fonder of hunting, in fact, than she was of housework. And taken all in all she seemed about the most perfect specimen of physical womanhood I ever clapped eyes on.

Her attitude toward me as a chalk-wrangler was openly hostile, until she discovered I was Alaska born and had once lived in a hill camp. She was willing, after that, to overlook my unhappy dower of book learning. But there remained something pathetic about S'lary. She had missed so much of life, without quite knowing it. She was as strong as an ox and as tireless as a sleigh husky and as fearless, in one way, as a wildcat. She knew her woodcraft and could keep herself alive, I suppose, in any corner of Alaska. But she was afraid of that side of life which a schoolteacher stands for. The sweat came out on her face when I gave her a list of third-grade words to spell.

S'lary, however, was seldom meek. She shared her father's resentment against the outsider in general and all invaders of the valley in particular. And certain newcomers, she intimated, would live longer if they talked less about that raft of broken-winded cheechakos

The sweat came out on her face.

the government was shipping up north in the spring.

They were to be families, rumor had it, taken off relief in the Middle West, hard-working farmers who had failed in their old homes and were looking for a new Land of Hope.

"But if they was failures there," contended Salaria, "they'll sure fail here. And all they'll do, after the first freeze-up, is amble out and give the valley a bad name."

"But they're to bring their women and children," I pointed out, "and the government is to stand behind them and build their houses and supply them with seed and stock."

I could see Salaria's eyes flash.

"And it's a hell of a lot the gover'ment did for the old-timer," she exploded. "They fixed it so we couldn't even land a salmon or kill a deer without havin' a warden at our heels. They put the bush-rat out o' business by playin' into the hands o' the big minin' companies. They kept us with the Indjins and Eskimos and squealed like a stuck pig when we asked for a school allowance. And they wouldn't even build a road for us."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "they'll bring along some of the things we seem to need."

"What t' hell do we need we ain't got now?" was Salaria's prompt challenge.

I meekly suggested that hospitals and schools and churches and good roads and telephones and a radio station might help a little.

Salaria's smoldering eyes viewed me askance.

"I reckon you've been powwowin' with that long-legged college dood who's dennin' up with ol' Sock-Eye for the winter. He sure burns my pappy up hot-airin' about what's goin' to happen to this valley. But any silk-shirt swamp-drainer needn't look for too many lovin' words from the old-timers who came in here with a skillet and ax and hacked their homes out o' the wilderness. Them was men with the bark on. They cleared their own land and built their own wickyups and didn't ask an agent in brass buttons t' slice their sowbelly for 'em."

It was at this point I loosed an arrow in the dark.

"Then you don't approve of Sidney Lander?"

Salaria's smoldering eyes grew perceptibly softer.

"He don't approve o' me," she finally proclaimed. "He goes dumb ev'ry time I git within rifle-range o' Sock-Eye's shack."

CHAPTER X

Sock-Eye appeared at my door and presented me with a bearskin, fresh off the stretching frame.

I suspected this was merely an excuse for a man-to-man talk.

Sid Lander, my caller casually explained, had just blown in after a week out on the trail. As I had no answer for that announcement Sock-Eye sat morosely and meditatively chewing his cud.

"I reckon you think quite a lot o' Sid?" he finally ventured.

I felt the need of picking my way with care.

"He was very kind to me once," I acknowledged.

"There's too many females think a lot o' that hombre," proclaimed my saturnine old friend. "It's sure gettin' him roped and hog-tied before his time."

"What's the trouble?" I asked with an effort at lightness.

"The immejit trouble is that outlaw offspring of ol' Sam Bryson's," he announced. "S'lary's hit so hard she ain't got no shame left. She's borrowin' readin' books from him and carryin' home his socks t' darn. And that ain't good for no hombre who has obligations elsewhere."

"What obligations?" I inquired.

"I reckon he's told you he's goin' t' marry Big John Trumbull's daughter?"

I could feel the bearlike old eyes studying my face.

"Yes, he told me that," I said as quietly as I could.

I couldn't forget what Sock-Eye had said when I was giving Sam Bryson's daughter her next lesson. She surprised me by her new determination "to better herself." She at last seemed willing to improve her mind.

She even asked me about cosmetics and how they were used, though those rich and ruddy lips of hers were in need of no chemical kalsomining.

I could see a faraway look come into her eye.

"D' you ever git a sniff o' Sid Lander after he's had a shave?" she hungrily inquired. "He smells better 'n that drugstore down t' Anchorage. But what I can't figger out is why he doubles up with an ol' has-been like Sock-Eye Schlupp, why he's willin' to batch it with a run-down bush-rat when he ought t' have a woman doin' a woman's work for him."

"Have you ever told him so?" I asked.

Salaria's wide shoulders drooped a little.

"It wouldn't do no good," she listlessly proclaimed. "He ain't interested in females that-away."

"But he's a man," I reminded her.

"I s'pose he is," Salaria retorted with a heightening flame of indignation. "But I'll bet my bottom dollar that lousy four-flushing pie-eatin' Trumbull blonde back in the States is sourin' that hombre on women for life. I seen 'em when she flew in here. And he wasn't turnin' no hand-springs when she hunted him up."

As I stood staring into Salaria's flashing eyes I began to realize that she was of the same statuesque mold as Lander. She had the same love for open trails. She had the same ruggedness of body and the same wide jaw and the same brown tone to her skin. And I fell to wondering, with a ghostly twinge of envy, if there mightn't eventually be some kinship of spirit between them.

"I'll respect your secret, Salaria," I said with what dignity I could command.

"Secret? It ain't no secret," was the prompt and primitive reply. "Even ol' Sock-Eye knows Sid Lander could do what he likes with me. And the fire-eatin' ol' killer piped up and said he'd put a bullet through any short-horn female who made a pass at that shack-pard o' his."

"What's Sock-Eye saving him for?" I found myself questioning.

"For that sap-headed Trumbull blonde that's got him hog-tied, I s'pose," was the sadly intoned answer. "He's willin' t' play ball with her even after her yellow-bellied old man came and bought up the Happy Day outfit jus' t' give Sid his walkin' ticket and grind his nose in the dirt."

I sat down to think this over.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

GRASSROOTS

by WRIGHT A. PATTERSON

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

SENATOR ALDRICH—AND THE NATIONAL WEALTH

SOME YEARS AGO the then Senator Aldrich of Rhode Island said to me in his office in Washington:

"People would be best served if all the wealth of the nation might be controlled by, say, a dozen men. These men would realize their responsibility and see to it that no one might go hungry or cold."

"Yes, Senator," I replied, "that possibly might prove true if you picked the right 12 men. I presume you believe you should be one of them? I believe I should be, and the man who is sweeping Pennsylvania avenue will agree with your premise if he, too, is to be one of the 12."

With a smile spreading over his usually dignified countenance, he said:

"My statement was a foolish one, let's forget it."

That it was foolish is evidenced by the constantly increasing amount of national wealth and its ever-increasing equalization among people of the nation.

When that statement was made, only a limited few could own an automobile. Today there is a car for every four people in America.

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THE SO-CALLED RICH MAN is merely the custodian of wealth. He cannot take his accumulation with him either to heaven or to hell. He must leave it to be divided among posterity. The old adage of three generations from shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves still works.

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ONE OF THE ROLES OF A KING

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE told me an interesting story in London in the fall of 1918. I had offered congratulations on his having settled the Welsh miners' strike and getting the men to go back to work, with their grievances to be settled when the war ended.

"But I did not do that job," said Lloyd George. "I thought I could, for those miners are my people, but I tried and failed. It was His Majesty who accomplished what I could not. He went alone to Wales. He went to the miners' meetings, called on many of them in their homes, pled with them as one Englishman to another to forget their grievances until the war was won. They went back to the mines for the king, not for me."

It gave me a new idea as to what King George meant to the English people, and his influence with them.

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VON LUCKNER

IT IS REPORTED that Count Felix von Luckner is in command of a German sea raider operating in the Pacific. In the first World war, Count Von Luckner commanded the Seeadler. I knew him in this country after the war. He was proud of what he had accomplished for his native country, but especially proud of not having caused the death of a single individual during all of his operations. He said he did not believe the killing of non-combatants helped in any way in winning a war. If I had to be captured by a German raider, I should hope it might be commanded by Count Felix von Luckner.

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WHEN PROSPECTORS MADE FORTUNES AND CAREERS

IN THE EARLY YEARS of this century Jack Hamill and Percy Robbins were partners prospecting in the Canadian northland for gold. Later Robbins, a trained mining engineer, became the managing director of one of the big gold mines at Timmins, Ontario. When we entered the first World war he, as an American citizen, returned to Chicago and joined the army. After the war he went to South Africa as the managing director of the De Beers diamond mines. At the time of his death some two years ago, Robbins was operating big dredges on a placer gold field at Candle, Alaska, on the shores of the Arctic ocean.

Jack Hamill has been in the millionaire class a dozen times, and has been broke equally as many times. Today he controls big copper mines in the northwest Canadian territories, and is mining pitch blend and extracting radium at Great Bear lake, beyond the Arctic circle in Canada.

This represents a couple of intensely interesting careers of men who have done things in the wide-open spaces, men who have added to the wealth of the world. They are, and were, of a type that is worth knowing.

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FRIENDLY AMERICA

STRANGER. There is no such individual in any small city or town of rural America. In these places all are friends.

On my first day in a town I had never visited before, each person I passed gave me a cheerful, friendly greeting. The little children told me their names and their parents' names. I was not a stranger in a strange place. I was surrounded by friends in a place strange to me. It was the friendliness of rural America.

Kathleen Norris Says:

'Where Is God in All This?'

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

"God," said the lovely mother of a houseful of sons to me, on the church steps last Sunday, "could stop all this overnight. WHY DOESN'T HE?"

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

WOMEN by the hundred write to me pathetic and bewildered letters about the fearful wars that are rocking the world today. Most of them are praying women, and they have been praying a long time for peace; some of them, like myself, have been for twenty years members of peace organizations. Their faith has been heavily tried during the last eighteen months; they feel that their fervent and incessant prayers are unheard. "Where is God in all this horror?" they ask. "Why doesn't God help us?"

"God," said the lovely mother of a houseful of sons to me, on the church steps last Sunday, "could stop all this overnight. WHY DOESN'T HE?"

Personally, I don't see how any thinking woman can ask this. As well scratch a match, apply it to curtains you have already soaked in gasoline, and then wonder that the house burns down. To rush about then screaming, "Oh, God, hear us! Put out this fire!" would be nothing short of blasphemy.

A Plan Never Tried.

A long time ago wise men, good men, agreed that the world should have a new plan. Enemies should be forgiven; won by love rather than hate. Evil should no longer be overcome by evil, but evil should be overcome by good.

Did they ever try this, among the then scattered and weak tribes that were the beginnings of the nations of Europe? Never. Never once. They always said just what good and wise and Christ-professing men are saying today. "We'll destroy this one enemy and trample him into the dust. And THEN we'll all live in peace and harmony forever!"

If 15 hundred years ago the law of love, brotherhood and forgiveness had been observed, what would have happened? Christian lands would have been invaded by infidels, answer the histories promptly. Well, it is highly possible that bands of Asiatics might have penetrated into central and southern Europe, and attempted to foist their types of civilization upon the hardier and more enlightened northern stocks.

For a generation or two they might indeed have influenced them. Then the higher law that recognizes love as its root and reason would have triumphed. The invaders would have been absorbed, would have been won to the new and miraculous creed.

Europe Eternally Warring.

But it wasn't the danger of barbarian invasion that began to destroy Europe a thousand years ago and that has been eating at her vitals ever since. It wasn't the outsider. It was the Christians themselves, eternally warring. It was religious wars, territorial wars, boundary wars, family wars; one war for 30 years, one for 100 years. It was wars of Christians against innocent—if unconverted, alien races; it was militaristic power, and militaristic abuse, generation after generation.

Was there ever forgiveness, restitution, apology? Never. Among these brothers—and all of the European nations are brothers, and the same blood flows in all their veins, was not the insolent reply of Cain rather than the law of Jesus Christ made the international answer? "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Being Schooled in Hate.

We are being carefully schooled in hate for everything German today, because of one mad German house-painter who has been raised by war and famine, pestilence and crime to power. We forget that among the Germans are home-loving, music-loving, law-loving people. We forget that all European civilization, our own included, has been following one line for hundreds of years. Our marital, property, business laws are similar; in our home towns are the same books and rugs, the big chair for Daddy, the comfortable low rocker for mother, the cribs and play-pens, the delicatessen store at the corner, the kindergartens and libraries and concerts, and the ringing of church bells.

LIVING HATE

Wars are so obviously wrong. This one will end, with both sides retiring to lick their wounds, bury their dead and begin to rebuild. And Kathleen Norris wants to put an end to all this. Read her sane, American plan for peace.

These people who are killing each other have everything in common. They even have in common the hallucination that a greater nation has the right to oppress a weaker one, to enrich herself infinitely at that weaker one's expense. Or perhaps I should say that some of them are only outgrowing that hallucination a little faster than the others.

Discuss Terms for Peace.

If I had the power today I would ask each warring nation throughout the world: "What are your terms for peace?" I would have all the world know and discuss these terms, adjust them, modify them; concede this island there, that trade concession there. I would have the President's opinion, the pope's opinion, the opinions of rulers and kings. I would know at last just what all these men are fighting for; just what trade advantages were threatened when these great nations went into war.

This should have been done 18 months ago; 18 years ago, before we ever heard the names of Hitler or Mussolini. This should have been done when beaten and crippled Germany was attempting to struggle to her feet as a republic, when we were all laughing at her, and buying million mark notes for five cents. They were playfully called "book marks," do you remember? They should have been called marks of starvation, marks of ruin, marks of revenge.

Try God's Way.

We know only one thing of this war. It will have to end. One side, the side counting the most ruin and the most dead, will take a certain amount of ruin and loss when it ends. The other side will take slightly less. Both will retire to lick their wounds, bury their dead, and begin to rebuild. They've done this since the days of Charlemagne; they'll continue to follow this pattern until there slowly seeps into hearts of the rulers and war-makers—not the people, not the men and women who die in the wars and pay for the wars!—but the rulers and war-makers, that it might be as well to try God's way.

It might be as well to see how long these boasting dictators would last, with God against them. How long injustice and religious intolerance could flourish, with All-powerful God opposing them. How quickly little centers of love and faith and brotherhood would spread until they touched borders, and all His world be inundated with the greenness and glory of peace and confidence and security.

Until that day begins let's blame men, the insincere men who say love and live hate, who say forgiveness and live revenge. If ever we really turn to God He will not fail us. But until we do let's at least refrain from blaming Him for what we do.

Concealing Dinner Table

In extra large living rooms, made to serve as a dining room as well, it is frequently desirable to have a decorative screen to conceal the dinner table while it is being set or cleared. Such screens, in three or four hinged sections, can easily be made at home by applying panels of pressed wood over wood frames. The finished screen can be left in its natural brown color, varnished, painted or covered with a decorative wall paper.