The Lamp in the Valley

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

W. N. U. Service

THE STORY SO FAR

Sidney Lander rescued Carol Coburn from the annoyances of Eric (the Red) Ericson. She is returning to her native Alaska to teach. Her father, a sourdough, died with an unproven mine claim. Lander, an engineer for the Trumbull Co., which is fighting the Coburn claim, breaks with Trumbull. But he remains engaged to Trumbull's daughter, Barbara.

Lander becomes field manager for the Matanuska Valley project.

Carol and he both are enthusiastic about the future of the new colony.

Eric, the Red, and a gang of workers bring Carol a blackboard and becomes insulting. She faces them with a pistol. Lander arrives and knocks Eric out.

Once more Lander had been her protector.

INSTALLMENT XIII

"Are you all right?" he asked.

"I'm all right," I told him. And I attempted to prove it by going out and bringing in the mud-smeared and forgotten blackboard.

He stood watching me as I wiped the mud, and then what was unmistakably a bloodstain, from that ignobly acquired symbol of authority. Then, still without speaking, we stood rather foolishly looking into each other's eyes.

"This won't happen again," he said with a steely sort of quietness. He glanced down at his bruised knuckles. "You know, of course, what that rabble-rouser wants to do? He wants to throw a scare into you, to frighten you out of your job, to make this valley intolerable."

"Why should he?" I asked.

"I think," answered Lander, "it's because he has Trumbull behind him. There's more than one way, remember, of fighting a mine claim."

A ghostly voice was telling me that it would be sweet to lean against a wide shoulder like that, whatever the outcome, until life lost a little of its uncertainty.

A car horn sounded outside the shack. The door opened, and we stared at the rough and mannish figure of Katie O'Connell.

"You're the bozo I want," was her grim-noted announcement. "We've got to get action here or there'll be hell to pay. There's three clear cases of measles in that tent colony, and about two hundred kids who've been exposed to it. Colonel Hart's gone over for the Anchorage doctor, but that doesn't solve our problem."

"What is it you want?" asked Lander.

"I want Doctor Ruddock here," said Katie's prompt proclamation. "And inside of twenty-four hours I've got to have a hospital of some kind."

"Then you'll get it," Lander said with reassuring curtness. "We've got the material and we've got two hundred workers."

"What workers?" challenged Katie. "Those bindle stiffs in the CCC camp have just told me they're walking out. They say they're on strike. And the building-gangs claim they have orders to stick to houses."

"To hell with orders," barked Lander, "at a time like this. I say you'll get that hospital. And you'll get it, lady, before I take these boots off."

CHAPTER XVI

Action is eloquence, as Shakespeare once said.

Lander didn't fail the valley in its time of need. And Katie got her hospital.

All she got was a board shed interlined with plywood and roofed with tar paper, a bald-looking building with square windows and a row of army cots along one wall. But it was shelter for Katie's patients.

It didn't come easy. When Lander put his pride in his pocket and talked to the transient workers he got nothing but jeers. For Eric the Red, obviously, had been working on them. They declared they were already imposed on and underpaid.

But Lander didn't give up. He hurriedly canvassed the colony tents and unearthed three men who had once done carpenter work. Then he went after the old-timers. He got Hans Wiebel. Then he got Sock-Eye, and the quick-handed father of Olie Eckstrom, and a stalwart ex-cabinetmaker who knew the meaning of edged tools. The acid-spirited Sam Bryson, it's true, flatly refused to come to our help. But Salaria just as flatly defied all paternal injunctions and joined up with the group.

Then the dirt began to fly. Half an hour after the site and size of the building had been decided the pillars were bedded and the sills laid. While I helped to lug two-by-fours from the track side lumber piles the wide-shouldered Salaria strode back and forth with twelve-foot boards on her back. She gloried in dumping her gigantic loads at the feet of the busy Lander. And almost as fast as we could carry the allotted timbers they were caught up and measured and shaped while the sound of hammer and saw filled the valley.

Northern nights, at this time of the year, are not long. But, when darkness came on, fires were lighted and lanterns were swung above the busy workers. They neither grumbled nor rested.

It wasn't until the sun began to show over the peaks of the Talkeetnas that Katie and I took time off to serve them with coffee and hardtack. But by then the floor had been laid and the walls were up and the roof was ready and waiting for its covering of tarpaper.

By noon the roof was finished and Katie's brand-new Red Cross flag was flying from its peak. Then the windows were screened, and the drugs and dressings and towels and instruments and enamelware were carried in from the emergency tent. Everything looked so shipshape that Katie hurriedly donned a uniform, as brand new as her Red Cross flag, and gave instructions for the carrying in of the sick children. There were seven of them by this time. And just as the last of them was being tucked into bed Doctor Ruddock appeared in our midst and promptly announced that from that day forward he was to be recognized as the official man-of-medicine for the valley project.

I could see the glow that came into Katie's Celtic eye as she caught the significance of that announcement.

"That's great," she said, with a quaver in her voice. He inspected the building and lamented the absence of running water and laughed at the electric sterilizer, which couldn't be used, of course, until the completion of the Project's generating plant.

"They're throwing money away on the wrong things," he said, after a quick appraisal of the supplies.

And that seemed confirmed, two days later, when a motor ambulance was unloaded from a flat car, a highly varnished and urban-looking ambulance designed for the use of the new Red Cross nurse. But Katie promptly cottoned to that vehicle, which because of its sable paint scheme, she christened "Black Maria."

But Katie soon had other things to think of. Two cases of scarlet fever developed in our little tent city.

"That's great," Katie said.

And that stirred her Ruddy into still more frantic action. He bundled his nurse off to an isolation tent in a clearing at the edge of the Wiebel farm and commanded her to carry on as best she could.

"This is like stamping out a prairie fire," he announced. "We've got to check it before it starts."

Katie went without a murmur. I think she would have gone to the north pole if her abstracted man-of-medicine had ordered it. He boiled with indignation at the carelessness of the colony mothers. One neglected child, in spite of his warnings, developed pneumonia. And that brought a hurry call to me.

"We've got to have help here," he said when I confronted him in his crowded little tent office. "And as I'm stopping all public assemblage, your schoolwork peters out and leaves you free."

So I was not only a day-nurse and scrubwoman and deputy-marshal but also a human laundry and a stove-stoker and milk-distributor and oiler of desquamating little bodies. I took temperatures and changed sheets and doled out a gallon of cathartics. I kept the shed warm at night and the sunny side screened by day. I patted soda solutions on itchy little torsos and swabbed out spotted little mouths and baked sheets and played checkers with the convalescents and shooed overinquisitive urchins away from the door and went to bed so dog-tired that seven hours' sleep seemed nothing more than seven ticks of my alarm clock.

But behind my back, all the while, life was going on as life has the habit of doing.

For the colony wasn't without a valor all its own. Every mass migration, I felt, must have had its casual mishaps and touches of misery.

The misfits might rail at Ruddy and his health rules and the malcontents might squat about the Commissary porch and orate at the bureaucrats who were turning Matanuska into something worse than Soviet Russia But the real home-seekers were already out on their plots getting a bit of land ready for belated seeding or lending a hand at building shelter for their belated stock. They were the hope of the Project.

And among the women, I found, there was the same division between the misery-mongers and the homemakers. While the triple-chinned Betsy Sebeck sat on a chopping-block and railed at the Commissary for ladling out coffee that wasn't dated and butter that smelt cheesy, a more energetic group of housewives were down at the salmon stream, with pitchforks, ladling out half a ton of fresh fish, where the water was almost solid with red-meated bodies, which were promptly dressed and salted, or processed and canned and stowed away against a rainy day. Some of them, I noticed, had already planted sweet peas along the black-earthed terraces in front of their still unfinished houses.

They made my own humble wicky-up, when Ruddy's prairie fire was finally stamped out and I moved back to my home on the Jansen clearing, seem a very small and antiquated affair. The quietness oppressed me.

I was glad when Katie dropped in. But her spirits, for once, seemed anything but light and airy.

"What's on your mind?" I demanded.

"A couple of snapshots," was Katie's rather cryptic answer.

"Snapshots of what?" I asked.

"Of a snip of a surgical nurse down in that Seattle hospital," the gloomy-eyed Katie replied. "Ruddy just showed 'em to me. He seems to think she's the last word in womanhood."

Life, I felt when Katie went on her way again, was a dolorously muddled-up affair.

It didn't make a good beginning for my first night back in the wicky-up. And, a little later, it was crowned by a still more unpleasant thing.

For most unmistakably, on that first midnight of my new loneliness, somebody came to my cabin and tried to force the door open.

I wasn't sure just how much pressure my crossbar would stand. So I groped about in the darkness, after slipping out of my bunk, and made a search for Sock-Eye's revolver.

I waited, with the big six-gun in my hand, until the sounds began again. Then I deliberately fired a shot at the wall, as a gentle reminder of what that would-be intruder might expect.

The warning, apparently, wasn't wasted. For nothing but silence, after that awful roar of sound, came to my ears.

But, even though I took Sock-Eye's six-gun to bed with me, it was a long time before I could go to sleep.

CHAPTER XVII

Long before this colony was thought of there was a small school at Matanuska Village. It was housed in what had once been a wooden-fronted trading post. Its floors had heaved with the frosts of many a long winter, its walls had sagged, and its roof leaked like a sieve. Sam Bryson, its owner, soured by his removal as district superintendent, refused to lift a hand in repairing the old wreck. The CCC workers were equally recalcitrant. So Lander marshaled a corps of volunteers and tackled the job. The undulating floor was made level once more; the side walls were patched and straightened; two new windows were put in, and the roof was made waterproof. They also built a double row of rough little desks and replaced the rusty old drum stove with a new and shining air-tight heater, to say nothing of four equally bright and shining gas lamps.

The Project officials may have been short on labor but they proved prodigal enough with supplies. For they promptly shipped in six gross of blackboard wipers and a half truckload of chalk boxes and enough paper and pencils to run a state university. They also, ironically enough, sent a nickel and enamel water-cooler and an electric fan, both of them, of course, quite useless. But all shipments of textbooks must have fallen by the wayside.

S'lary, openly defying her acidulous old dad, helped me sandpaper the rough little chair desks and sweep up shavings and brighten the windows with chintz.

When I asked S'lary, as we worked there side by side, if it wouldn't be easier to pursue her studies in such surroundings, she startled me by the vigor of her revolt.

"Me plant my carcass in one o' them kid seats?" she indignantly demanded. "Me squat here and do sums with a bunch of undersized cheechakos who ain't able t' wipe their own noses? Not me."

She was conscious of my frown of disapproval as I watched those full and rose-red lips framing language so unsuited to the seeker of culture.

"Pop's been wonderin'," she observed with a new meekness in her smoldering eyes, "if you couldn't come and teach me private. And once I got t' handlin' a pen as easy as I handle a rifle, he allows, I'd be ready t' go outside and have a winter in the States."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

AIR TRAVEL ON CREDIT

Seventeen air lines have announced an installment plan for air travel. No down payment is required. You get a ticket to go up if your credit rating proves you are the sort of person who will come down and make good.

• • •

The idea should bring many more customers. Lots of people would fly if they knew it wouldn't cost them a cent until after they had landed.

• • •

This is the first time in flying history that it has been possible to risk your neck on a credit basis.

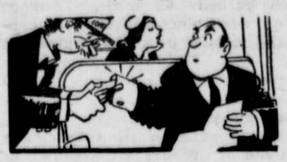
• • •

It is almost like hoping, collect-on-delivery.

• • •

And it is going to seem strange but highly satisfying to get out of a clipper and just say, "Put it on my bill."

• • •



This credit idea has already been introduced by some railroads. You can take a transcontinental choo-choo ride now on the so-much-down-and-so-much-a-month basis, and the idea is proving popular. Americans like to travel on the cuff, and there is something highly satisfying in being able to owe a railroad money.

• • •

When you have to plank down your money before you even get by the iron gates at a railroad terminal it takes something out of the trip. No matter how good the scenery is you discount it on the ground that it ought to be better for that much money.

• • •

If you are jerked out of an upper berth by a green engineer or bad brakes it is all the more exasperating when you know the discomforts have been paid for in advance.

• • •

But if you owe the railroad for the trip it's not so annoying.

• • •

The same will be true of airplane travel. Your hair may stand on end at the thought of a cross-country flight, but it becomes much easier to handle with a brush and comb when you know the company can't take a dime of your dough in advance.

• • •

And if you are dropping down by parachute, think of the satisfaction of knowing that it's all being done on the deferred payment plan!

• • •

There will be the kick, too, of getting a bill from the air lane company with a "please remit" notation and dashing off a little note:

"Gentlemen:

"Your bill for flight to Chicago received and in reply I beg to state that I did not enjoy the trip. It was very bumpy, the plane was two hours late and it was so cloudy that I did not see half the scenery I was entitled to. I was not satisfied and hope there can be an adjustment.

"P. S.—The hostess wasn't good-looking, either. I should say she wasn't within $10 of the good looks of the hostess on my previous trip so you can take something off my bill for this, too."

CAN YOU REMEMBER

Away back when an invitation to get off the earth was practically an isolated instance?

• • •

Defense workers are being housed in trailers in some parts of the country. After a night in a trailer a man must be pretty glad of a chance to go to the shop where he can get a good rest.

• • •

The horse seems to be finished in the army, but it requires a lot of imagination to picture anybody shouting: "A tank, a tank, my kingdom for a tank!"

• • •

Two hundred thousand workers in the printing trades want radio advertising curbed. In this they have the hearty support of at least 90 per cent of the radio audience.

In this department's opinion radio advertising is, most of the time, offensive, annoying and a darned nuisance. Elmer Twitchell, for instance, is so bothered by it that he lists all the products ballyhooed on the air waves so he will remember what NOT to buy.

• • •

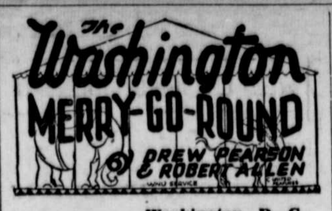
"Hellzapoppin" was performed for the draftees recently. This gave the boys a chance to laugh at the jokes that cheered their fathers up 25 years ago.

• • •

We can't be very close to war yet. George Cohan hasn't written a song for it.

• • •

An average of $30 was spent by every family in the country for amusements last year, mostly moving pictures. That's a lot of money to spend for souvenir soup spoons.



Washington, D. C.

SUBCONTRACTOR PROBLEM

Every train to Washington brings a group of small business men with rumpled collars and bulging brief cases. They've heard high officials declare that the defense boom should be evenly distributed. They've read about a subcontracting program for the smaller firms. So they come to town loaded with blue-prints and inventories of machine tools.

The visitors wait patiently in defense offices to ask the same question: "When do we get contracts or subcontracts?" Then they go home empty-handed, cussing the "bureaucrats running the defense program."

What they don't know is that the issue of subcontracting is being fought over daily, and with increasing bitterness, at the inner conference tables of the Office of Production Management. The question is whether OPM should crack down on the big primary contractors and force them to farm out their piled-up orders.

The powerful big industry clique says "No." It argues that forced subcontracting would be costly and unreliable. Bob Mehornay, a liberal small business man in charge of subcontracting, hotly denies this and is battling to overrule them.

The cold facts are that although 200,000 firms are available for defense contracts, 90 per cent of the orders awarded during the last half of 1940 went to 600 large concerns. And 114 of them got 95 per cent of all contracts over $100,000, amounting to $6,668,800,000.

• • •

ARMY MORALS

Genial Mark McCloskey, the Federal Security agency's recreation expert, has the soldier's moral lapse figured down to one crucial hour. This hour is the one during which he waits for a bus or train to take him back to camp.

McCloskey, whose job it is to worry about such things and work with the army and navy, has doped out that if time drags heavily during that hour of waiting the soldier may make for honky-tonks—and who's to blame him?

"The smart thing to do," McCloskey says, "is to brighten up the terminals. Give the boys a place to shoot pool, get some good chow at low prices, and read new magazines. Some pretty waitresses for the boys to kid won't hurt any either."

He doesn't think a tour through the museum of art or a brisk walk do much to combat temptation. Instead he'd like to see every town near a camp organize an honest-to-goodness information bureau for the men.

"If the boys want to go to a dance, get a date, visit with some patriotic family, or see a ball game, the community ought to arrange it for them," contends McCloskey.

He beams when he mentions the 200 girls at the Tom Huston peanut factory at Columbus, Ga., who volunteered to act as hostesses for soldiers at dances and social events.

• • •

ACTION ON HOUSING

Housing for civilian defense workers, one of the most muddled phases of the defense program, now looks as if it is going somewhere—thanks to the quiet intervention of Mrs. Roosevelt and Frederic A. Delano, uncle of the President and chairman of the national resources planning board.

Both exerted their influence through FDR, himself. The First Lady told him of shocking housing conditions among defense workers which she had seen in several cities, and warned that there would be serious consequences unless something was done quickly. Delano urged Roosevelt to get behind the C. I. O.'s plan for prefabricated homes.

• • •

WILLKIE CAN WEAR SHOES

Much water has gone over the dam since Secretary of the Interior Ickes labeled Wendell Willkie a "barefoot Wall Street lawyer." All is sweetness and light now between Willkie and the New Deal—which includes Mr. Ickes—since Wendell's outspoken support of the lend-lease bill.

However, one inquisitive reporter at a recent Ickes press conference wanted to be absolutely sure. "In view of recent developments," he queried, "do you still think Wendell Willkie is a Wall Street barefoot boy?"

Replied Ickes: "I think anybody has a right to wear shoes in Wall Street in this kind of weather."

• • •

MERRY-GO-ROUND

That $1-a-day wage increase asked by the United Mine Workers was a compromise forced on John L. Lewis. Looking for trouble, he wanted to demand $2 a day, but other UMW leaders, at the secret policy meeting, voted him down.

Although his re-election is still 18 months off, Rep. Bob Ramspeck's denunciation of the bill in the Georgia legislature to ban strikes in defense industries already has brought out an anti-labor candidate against him.

THINGS for You TO MAKE

Pattern No. Z9034.

ALL padded and preened are Hattie, the hen, and her proud rooster hubby. They've plain-colored wings, tail feathers and combs—and not one ruffled feather on their 13-inch print-material bodies.

• • •

Pattern Z9034, 15c, enables you to make both hen and rooster into delightful cuddle toys for the kiddies. Send order to:

AUNT MARTHA
Box 166-W Kansas City, Mo.
Enclose 15 cents for each pattern desired. Pattern No.....
Name .....
Address .....

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT

BABY CHICKS

Continually BLOOD-TESTING and BREEDING for Big Eggs, Fast Growth, Long Life and Rapid Feathering produces chicks of unusual Livability, Growth, Fast Feathering and Uniformity
Write today for catalogue and price list
MILFORD BREEDERS HATCHERY, Pikesville, P.O., Rockdale, Md.

Had Hen but Been Long on Legs and Short on Neck!

The landlady glanced round the table at her twelve hungry boarders before starting to carve the rather sad-looking chicken.

In rapid succession she asked each which part of the fowl he preferred. Ten of them decided on legs.

The carver dropped her knife with a clatter on the dish.

"What do you imagine this is?" she said, sarcastically, pointing to the chicken. "A centipede, or what?"

"Oh, no," replied the boarder who had been served. "Judging by the piece of neck I've got, I should imagine it was a giraffe."

YOUR EYES TELL how you feel inside

Look in your mirror. See if temporary constipation is telling on your face, in your eyes. Then try Garfield Tea, the mild, pleasant, thorough way to cleanse internally...without drastic drugs. Feel better, LOOK BETTER, work better. 10c — 25c at drugstores.

GARFIELD TEA

For Prompt Relief from Headaches without opiates or quinine
GARFIELD HEADACHE POWDER 10c-25c

FREE Stamped, addressed envelope brings liberal FREE SAMPLES. GARFIELD TEA CO., Inc. Dept. 11 41st at 3rd Ave. B'klyn, N. Y.

See doctor if headaches persist

Labor's Power

Labor has the power to rid us of three great evils—Boredom, Vice and Poverty.—Voltaire.

FEMALE PAIN
WITH WEAK, CRANKY NERVOUS FEELINGS—

You women who suffer pain of irregular periods and are nervous, cranky due to monthly functional disturbances should find Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound *simply marvelous* to relieve such annoying symptoms.

Pinkham's Compound is made *especially* for women to help relieve such distressing feelings and thus help them go smiling thru such "difficult days." Over 1,000,000 women have reported remarkable benefits. WORTH TRYING! Any drugstore.

WNU—4 13—41

MERCHANTS

•Your Advertising Dollar

buys something more than space and circulation in the columns of this newspaper. It buys space and circulation plus the favorable consideration of our readers for this newspaper and its advertising patrons.

LET US TELL YOU MORE ABOUT IT