

### Slow Boat From Marseilles

By Michael Hastings

continued

"I suppose that is why we were so scared. The shock of the ship as she jerked. It broke into our dreams. I suppose poor Stefan Litwin rushed up on deck from his cabin and somehow fell overboard."

She looked at him as she said these words. He had the feeling that she was studying him, watching for his reactions. What were his reactions? Was there anything that he could say? What of the half-formed suspicions which lurked at the back of his mind? It was not, though, time to speak yet.

"It isn't easy to understand what happened," he said slowly, picking his words with care. "Admittedly, there was a fog. But it was possible to see a yard or so ahead. So there was no reason why he should have blundered to the rail without knowing. Again, there was very little motion. The sea was dead calm. So how did he come to fall in?"

Vanya looked him straight in the eyes.

"You mean . . . it might have been deliberate? They have mentioned the possibility of suicide."

"I don't know," said Oliver. "Theoretically, he might have lost his head — become convinced that the ship was sinking, and have jumped over the side."

"But you would not say that he did?" he asked.

"I wouldn't. I know nothing of him. Was he the kind of man to do that sort of thing? Had he tried to commit suicide before in his life? Had he been very depressed lately? Perhaps those are questions which Jan Kiernik can answer."

"He has answered them already," said the girl. "It seems that the two of them were together most of the time during the war. Jan says that Stefan was the last person in the world to kill himself. His actual words to me were: 'I have had to look after him all the time. He would never have jumped over the side without coming to me first to ask for permission.'"

Oliver looked thoughtful. "It would be a good idea for Jan to have a talk with me," he said. "We might compare a few notes."

Vanya's eyes widened.

"You mean — that there are things . . ."

"I've been rather puzzled about one or two points," said Oliver, trying to make his voice sound casual. But the girl was not deceived. She suddenly took him by the arm.

"Then you begin to know what I can only sense," she said. "There is something evil about this ship — and this strange voyage."

"I wouldn't say . . ." he began; but she interrupted him.

"Please," she said. "Don't try to hide things. I have already seen so much trouble, so much evil in the world. I am not likely to shrink from some more."

"There's nothing that I can tell you," he said. "It would be different if I knew something. Or even if I had some reasonable suspicion. But I haven't anything. I've spent hours thinking about it — and I've made no progress. For example, there is Dr. Prinz. I don't trust him. I didn't believe the story that he told me when he asked me to join the ship. . ."

"Then why did you join?" Vanya asked, with a puzzled frown.

John Oliver smiled ruefully.

"There isn't even a sensible answer to that," he said. "To begin with, I was bored. This voyage promised a bit of excitement. I put Prinz down as a man involved in the stormy politics of one of the small republics — probably a Central American one. I reckoned that he was probably running arms in to assist a new drive for power." He hesitated. "I reckoned that I had no particular obligations to Dr. Prinz, who'd been out to deceive me from the start."

"And do you still think that drugs and armaments explain this voyage?"

Oliver shook his head.

"I'm not nearly so sure about it now," he said. "It's the carrying of passengers that has me worried. I can understand a passage being given to your father and yourself. After all, you have somewhere to go at the other end. There will be people to vouch for you. Even if your papers are not quite in order that can, no doubt, be adjusted."

The girl nodded her head.

"That is the case," she confirmed. "My father is being helped by one of his old students — a Dr. Don Miguel Avalos — who seems to have considerable influence in Buenos Aires."

"I am not surprised," said John Oliver. "But what of the other passengers? Are there people at the other end waiting for them?"

"I think they are entirely dependent upon Dr. Rutter," the girl said. "But I know very little. I imagine they have all been cautioned not to discuss the future. Certainly they give nothing away."

She paused. "Jan Kiernik is the exception. But it is because of what happened to Stefan Litwin, and because he has suspicions, that he is prepared to talk freely."

"It might be as well to arrange a meeting rather carefully," said Oliver.

"You feel that there is some danger stalking the ship?" she said quickly. "I have the feeling that I am being watched. It may be fancy; but I sometimes have the idea that we are all under some sort of observation. There



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are some of the crew . . ."

"Yes," Oliver said. "I've never seen a more cut-throat bunch in all my travels."

"I feel so helpless," said Vanya. "All the time there is father to look after. I cannot turn to him for support, or for advice. I do not feel that I can trust Dr. Prinz."

She looked up appealingly. "There is only you," she said.

"You can always come to me," said Oliver. He spoke lightly; but the serious expression in his eyes showed her that he meant his words to be taken as a pledge. "If

you cannot — for any reason — come yourself, send Jan Kiernik. I shall know that the message is genuine if he prefixes it with the word 'Promise.' Don't hesitate — and don't worry. The situation may not be as bad as you think. Even so far as the crew are concerned, I have two men who will do as I order."

(To be continued)

BROOKFIELD W. L.

The regular meeting of the Brookfield Women's Institute was

held at the home of Mrs. Robert Andrews. In the absence of the president the vice-president took charge of the meeting.

Meeting opened by repeating creed in unison. Minutes of last meeting were read and signed.

Roll call answered by ten members and one visitor present; collection 65c.

Eleven members have paid in \$1.00 towards the Institute funds. There was no report from this sick committee.

There was a discussion on getting a music teacher for the

coming year.

Mrs. Wilfred Wood and Mrs. Robert Carr were appointed on the programme committee for next meeting.

Mrs. Wilbur Stetson invited the members for next meeting.

The meeting closed by repeating the Lord's Prayer.

Two interesting contests were put on by Mrs. Pearl McLeod and Miss Bernice Wood.

A delicious lunch was served by the hostesses.

### No Soldiers In Forest Fire Fight

FREDERICTON, Oct. 28 — (CP) — No soldiers were conscripted for forest fire fighting in New Brunswick in recent months, the Provincial Forest Service reported.

A spokesman was commenting on a statement attributed to Brig. J.M. (Rocky) Rockingham. The

commander of Canada's special force was quoted as saying in an interview at Edmonton that some of the men absent without leave from the force had been delayed because of their conscription from an east-bound train to fight a forest fire in this Province.

The forestry spokesman speculated that the incident might have occurred in Quebec Province, where fires prevailed at about the same time. A series of fires started in New Brunswick Sept. 30. They were out approximately two weeks later.

### BULLETINS FROM BIRLAND

By W. G. G. G.



### BLUE-WINGED TEAL

The friendly Blue-winged Teal is 1-3 inches long, is one of our smallest Ducks: just about half the size of a Pintail. The grey head of the male would be inconspicuous were it not for a pure white crescent in front of the eye. Only small size and blue shoulders like her mate prevent us from confusing the mottled brown female with several other species. However, any tiny Duck with a large chalky blue wing patch may safely be called a Blue-winged Teal. When a flock flies overhead, the best distinguishing mark is the contrast between the under side of the body, which is dark, and the under side of the wings, which is white. Just hearing these Ducks, you can be fooled into supposing there are two species, because males chirp and peep when on the wing, whereas females give a light "quack."

Migration is made in large flocks, flying very rapidly in compact lines. Their precipitous landing is a characteristic. Apparently feeling the cold more than their even smaller relatives, the Green-winger, most of the Blue-winged left in September. If the two species have not already combined, they usually do so once they reach their winter quarters in the lower eastern states. When they are flying above eye level, it is possible to distinguish between them. The Green-winger have lighter underparts, shorter necks, and larger heads.

The Blue-winged commonly breeds through the prairie sections of Canada, north to Great Slave Lake, and right across to the east coast. This is a bird preferring small waters to large. Its home is made on the ground, usually only a few feet from some shallow, marshy slough or pond, in which environment vegetable matter, seeds, water weeds, and other food may be obtained. Depending to a great extent on camouflage, it often nests right beside a path, or even an occupied house. Dead grasses and weed stems are used for the nest, which is lined with feathers.

On leaving home, the canny mother bird carefully covers her eight to twelve pale buff eggs with the blanket of down that she had plucked from her own breast and left ready for this emergency. She always returns stealthily, sneaking up in a round-about way through the grass and weeds amidst which it has been placed. Then, judging that her mottled brown plumage makes her invisible, she remains immovable, allowing a stranger to come near enough to touch her.

Do Robins travel far?

### Story Of Victoria Chosen Royal Film

LONDON, Oct. 28 — (AP)—The King and Queen are going to the movies Oct. 30 to see a fictionalized slice of family history. It's "The Mudlark," a story about Queen Victoria and a little ragamuffin who breaks into Windsor Castle.

The film was produced in Britain by Twentieth Century-Fox with Irene Dunne, the only American in the cast, playing the role of Queen Victoria.

King George himself had an unofficial part in selecting the picture as the royal film for 1950, that is, the film chosen for a royal performance.

The Royal Family had already shown an active interest in the filming of the story and had a lengthy discussion with Miss Dunne, Queen Mary, who had bought two copies of the novel on which the movie is based, incidentally advised Miss Dunne that Queen Victoria had a "sweet voice."

Queen Mary, who has not attended any of the royal film performances since the war, has arranged to see the picture in private at her home.

But the committee which makes the selection of the royal film was faced with a delicate problem. The picture occasionally treats Victoria and the throne with a familiarity which the committee thought might not be proper for a royal showing and they decided to seek guidance from Buckingham Palace.

In reply they got a message saying in effect that the King hopes he will see the same version of the film that is to be offered to the public. That decided the committee, and incidentally proved sweet solace for Miss Dunne and Twentieth Century-Fox.

The selection of Miss Dunne to play a British queen had set off a storm of criticism in the press and movie industry here. Then the same critics set off a vocal barrage when it was announced that the American-produced and directed film had been entered in the list of competitors for the royal film performance.

Other leading roles in the picture are played by Alec Guinness as Disraeli; Beatrice Campbell as the queen's lady-in-waiting, and 19-year-old Andrew Ray as "The Mudlark."

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