

Dark Lightning

By Helen Topping Miles

(Continued)
CHAPTER XI
(Continued)

"But there's plenty of oil — there must be — they keep finding it in new places, Gary."

"It took a million years to make what oil there is. The earth isn't straining and stirring and moving, throwing seas out of their beds and pushing up big ice fields and volcanic uplifts, now. All the oil there is was made before anything living, with a mind to think with, lived on this planet. Formless things, whose names we don't even know, died at the bottom of strange seas — and it's their bodies that were pressed and changed into oil."

"You make it sound so tremendous somehow — and solemn."

"The earth is tremendous and solemn. It's only men who are little and avid and pathetic, with their scrambling appetites and their blind stupidity. If there are gods up there, I think they must laugh sometimes to see these ridiculous little creatures they've created, scurrying around down here, smatching and destroying like so many insects."

"You'll have to tell me where to go, Gary — if there's all this oil, how can Dad sell the little he'll get out of one well?"

"He won't stop with one well. Anyway, a lot of these wells are shut down. The Government only allows them to produce twenty barrels a day — but it isn't practical to let a well flow for just a little while, long enough to produce twenty barrels of oil. It doesn't warm up, and paraffin forms and clogs the pipes, so they keep 'em shut down for several days and then a well flows a hundred barrels or more. And a good many of these are old wells. See those pumps on 'em — those big beams going up and down? They're pumps — they won't flow any more. They pump out the oil and they get water with it — and if they get more than two per cent the refiners won't buy it, so the producer has to figure some way to get the water out."

"Such a lot of tanks. Will Dad have to build tanks, too?"

"He'll have to have a little battery — and a separator to get the gas out of the oil. These people over here pipe their gas to the stripper plants and the strippers squeeze the gasoline out of it, then the gas is piped back to the lease owner. He can heat his house with it, and if there's too much he can burn it. See those flares burning over there? That's waste gas being burned so it won't drift around and settle on the ground and cause trouble."

At Gary's direction Adelaide turned into a muddy little road that twisted between stumps, over



HOLY RIVER HOLICAUST—More than 500 pilgrims are reported dead and another 2000 injured at the confluence of Ganges and Jumna rivers in India. Coming to wash their sins away in the annual Kumbh festival (above), the pilgrims began a stampede that ended in disaster.—(NEA Telephoto).

frail wooden bridges, past leases, each one fenced carefully with good steel fence, past batteries of tanks and little shacks with rickety care standing in the yards and dreary looking clothes flapping on lines. Lean, faded women came to the doors of these shacks, looked out hopefully, patiently watched them pass; dirty children scrambled out of the road; dogs slunk into bushes; the hungry, vague, hopeful fringe of humanity that lingers on the edge of every oil field. The men, muscled and lean, waiting for roughneck jobs, pipe-laying jobs, any scrap from the vast, teeming feast of exploitation; the women scouring red mud from their floors, scrubbing their men's greasy shirts on washboards, watching every car that approached, with that unending look of new hope in their listless eyes.

They passed yards, fenced and locked, piled with a conglomeration of machines, with great stacks of pipe, every joint painted yellow; and shops built of tin roofing, where in semi-darkness men worked over grinding and threading machines that spit fire as pipe was threaded or drill bits sharpened.

"Now we have to look for a well that's just been finished," he said, "where there's an outfit standing waiting to be moved. The stuff is so heavy and so expensive to move that they leave it standing on the derrick floor, usually, till they get another drilling job. And then, after we find an outfit, we have to persuade them to move twenty miles or more on a selling job too, for mostly they don't like wildcats very much. But with so little drilling going on right now, we probably won't have much trouble."

"How can you tell a well that's finished?"

"There's one over there. See that derrick with the red mud piled around under it and all the machinery still standing? Well, it's

down and cased in and the Christmas tree's set up — so I know it's finished."

"I don't see any Christmas tree. You're crazy, Gary."

"See that contraption of pipe and wheels and stuff sticking up out of the hole in the floor? That's what oil men call a Christmas tree. It's the machine that controls the well after it's in. You wait here, I'll see if I can find the watchman on this outfit."

"I want to go — I want to see, too."

"Spoil your shoes."

"I wore these old ones on purpose. Gary, do you mean we've got to move all that tremendous lot of stuff to our ranch?"

"If you want an oil well you have to. See those two boilers with the stacks sticking up? They make the steam that runs the rotary and pumps the water. That big thing up on the derrick floor — painted blue — looks like part of a battleship or a submarine or something — that's the draw gear — turns the bits and hauls up the block and the swivel."

"I had no idea just digging a hole in the ground was such an enormous job — that they needed so many things to do it with."

"They need 'em. And they cost plenty. A new drill outfit costs around twenty-five thousand dollars. You can rent one, though, for around seven hundred and fifty a day."

"A day? My child, they stand idle a lot of the time, and the man who owns one has to earn interest on his investment and pay his hands."

"Does Dad know it? I suppose he does — he said he had all the figures. But if you get millions and millions of barrels of oil, I suppose you get your money back?"

"You can't pump out millions and millions of barrels. The Government won't let you. Watch out now, this is rough going. Don't tear your stockings on these planks."

(Continued)

N.B. Border Town Has Unique Stamp Business

ST. STEPHEN, N. B. (CP)—This town on the New Brunswick-Maine border claims the biggest stamp business in Canada. Only two or three comparable firms in the United States have greater volume.

The company here which mails stamps by the millions to collectors was founded 23 years ago by Ralph O. Garcelon, now 45, who started with a mediocre collection. The company seldom deals in rare stamps, but ships its offerings in huge quantities.

"We conduct a mail order business," Garcelon explained in an interview. "We send out the greater part of our volume on approval to stamp collectors. Apparently there is a high degree of honesty among collectors. Our losses, under the approval system, are relatively light."

Trans-Border Trade

The huge volume has been instrumental in raising the classification of a post office in another country. Many of the stamps fan out through the United States from nearby Calais, Me., where the acting postmaster says business from the Canadian stamp company has been a major factor in promoting its office from a second- to a first-class rating, based

on gross receipts.

Last winter five tons of one grouping alone were mailed. More recently, rows of girls at neat desks assembled 100,000 packets of Czechoslovakian issues, 40 to a packet, for a total of 4,000,000 stamps in the single offering. In another period the quick-fingered girls shipped 5,000,000 Yugoslav stamps into 100,000 envelopes.

The company employs 60 or more workers in winter, its busiest time.

Mr. Garcelon became a stamp collector at the age of 10. Although his collection never passed what he calls the "beginner's stage," he sold it six years later and ventured into the retail end of the hobby. After a year he was able to quit his bookkeeping job and, in the third year, hire one helper.

Popular Hobby

Asked why stamps fascinate so many people, he said:

"It's the attraction of something from foreign countries and the scenes of different ways of life. And there's the satisfaction of a project, getting in an album a complete set. The beauty of many stamps is another main attraction. Some are very fine, with the engravings real works of art."

Mr. Garcelon is not impressed

Sound Weapon Of No Avail

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Loud-speakers set up an eerie din at sundown Friday night as Philadelphia unlimbered its new sound weapon aimed at frightening thousands of starlings from lofty roosts atop city hall.

The weird crying sounds mingled with the chattering of the starlings startled pedestrians. At least three sound trucks circulated in Penn square emitting the noises.

"It's simply the cry of anguish of a frightened starling," Commissioner Walter S. Pytko explained. "If it works, it will get rid of the starlings once and for all."

But the starlings apparently just sat back and laughed. Few left their perches. Pytko, who engineered the project, said he'll try again.

SPECIAL SKILL

An expert sheep-shearer in England clips a sheep in an average of five minutes.

with Canadian issues in the last few years.

"In my opinion, Canadian stamps were among the most attractive issued anywhere up until about 1950. Since then Canada has put out quite a number which are far from attractive."

He considers British colonials, designed and printed in Britain, tops in stamps from an aesthetic standpoint.

A Pair Of "Rockhounds" Find Precious Stones In N. America

CHILLIWACK, B. C. (CP)—Frank Edwards and his wife have been searching for precious and decorative stones for 25 years and call themselves "rockhounds."

Mostly they have searched through the Fraser valley, but they have also accompanied rock-hunting expeditions all over North America from Alaska to Mexico and have boxes loaded with precious and semi-precious stones and display stones of no commercial value—all of varying colors and shapes.

In their home they have equipment for cutting and polishing and make brooches, stickpins, earrings and other ornaments.

The Edwards are members of the recently-formed Fraser Canyon Jade and Rock Society.

Jade, originally considered an exclusively oriental gem, is found in gravel bars of the Fraser River, varying in size from a pebble to boulders weighing hundreds of tons.

Clear imperial jade, particularly the apple green variety, is the most valuable kind found locally and has high commercial value.

Zircon—clear stones—are found along the Fraser and Vedder Rivers. These are fairly valuable.

"Thunder egg," a volcanic bubble thrown up in ages past, is found along the Fraser and from

it can be taken agents of brilliant color.

Petrified palm tree roots have also been found locally and from the Columbia has come petrified teakwood, suggesting that a much warmer climate once prevailed in this area.

"There are some weird deposits indeed," said Frank Edwards. "Near Princeton there is a mountain of petrified wood of all colors."

Negotiations To Sell Gypsum Plant Continue In Newfoundland

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CP)—Premier Smallwood said today that negotiations are still going on for the sale of the government-owned gypsum plant at Corner Brook.

The government built the plant several years ago with plans to sell it to private interests if it proved successful.

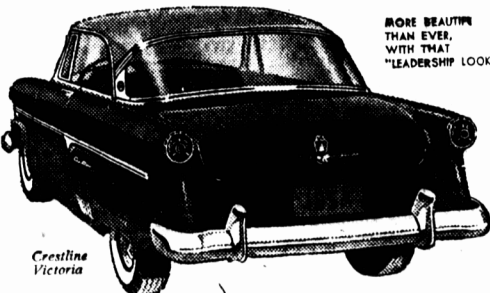
Mr. Smallwood said 60 replies have been received from advertisements in United States and Canadian newspapers and said six of them are good prospects.

CEYLON PEAK

The highest point in Ceylon is known as Adam's peak, 7,490 feet high.

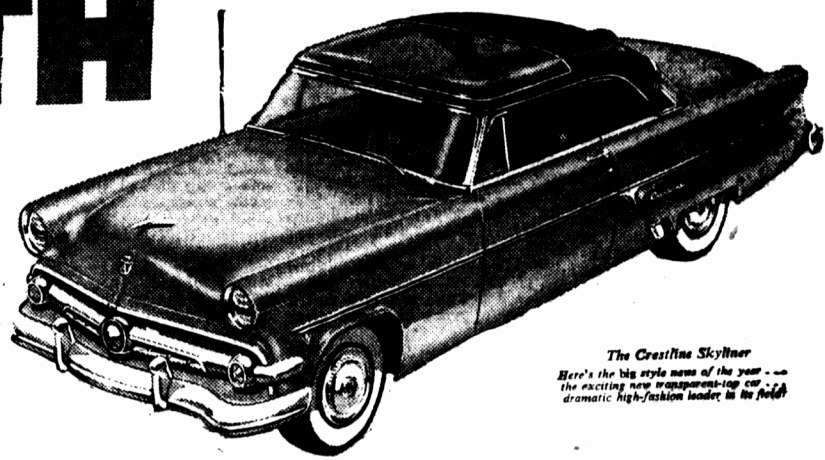
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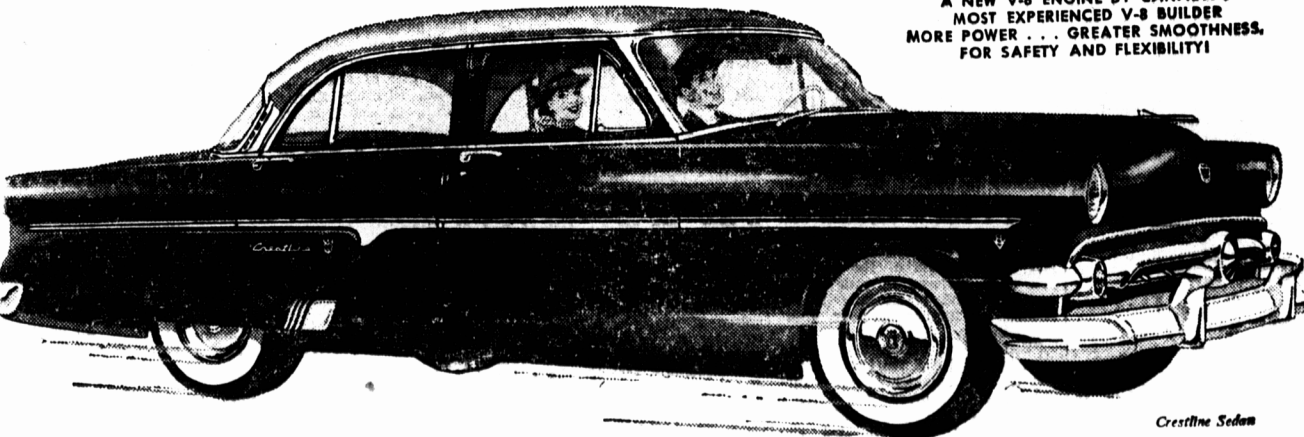
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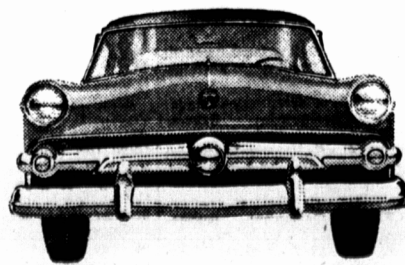
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Sask. Festival Judged 'Successful'

REGINA (CP)—Regina Little Theatre's production of "The Country Girl" by Clifford Ode's was judged best play Tuesday night at the conclusion of the Saskatchewan regional drama festival.

Prince Albert Players won top honors in the one-act play class with Philip Johnson's "Orange Blossoms."

Peter Scott, former Winnipeg radio announcer, was named best actor for his part of Berne Dodd in "The Country Girl." Mrs. Helen Bothwell was judged best actress for her portrayal of Georgie Eign in the same play.

Graham Suter, British adjudicator, said the eight-play festival was "successful."

"Some of the smaller towns in Saskatchewan are putting on big shows and doing great credit to themselves," he said.

"The Country Girl," the last presentation in the four-day festival, was superbly directed and the acting "exceptional."

RCAF Plane Crashes In The Mediterranean

FINALE LIGURE, Italy (AP)—A Royal Canadian air force plane crash-landed in the Mediterranean Wednesday 150 yards off the Italian Riviera coast.

All five members of its crew escaped in rubber boats and were picked up by a fishing bark before they could paddle to shore.

The pilot of the craft, which was flying from Gibraltar to Marseilles, was identified only as "Capt. Annis." Two unidentified officers and two non-commissioned officers also were aboard the plane.

Cause of the crash was not immediately determined. Authorities said the plane is lying in only about eight feet of water and can be recovered.

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