

### Dark Lightning

By Helen Topping Miller

#### Synopsis

Gary Tallman, young petroleum engineer from Alabama, misses his bus in Texas and Mona Mason, wife of a cattle rancher, gives him a lift. Gary is injured when her car crashes in a ditch and the Masons nurse him back to health. He falls in love with Adelaide Mason but will not propose until he has a job. Gary suspects there is oil on Harvey Mason's land and Hickey is employed to drill. Harvey persuades Gary to remain until after the test. When Oliver Kimball, Harvey's son-in-law, accuses Gary of causing the difficulties Mason encounters in the operations, Gary, enraged, leaves to work elsewhere. Harvey is called away and Mona asks Gary to superintend the drilling. At five thousand feet there is still no oil.

#### CHAPTER XXVII

The last morning, Gary walked out to the well and looked up at the proud, shining derrick. Tomorrow it would be a monument to a fool, all right. And presently it would come down. And in a month or two, only the black-rimmed slush pit and the concrete corner posts would show that once men had built high hopes on this place.

Gary went to the slush pit and scooped up a handful of the gummy rock, working the fragments between thumb and fingers. He sniffed at it and ran his tongue over it. It smelled and tasted of salt and sulphur.

At ten o'clock Hickey came back, and the men began swabbing, and even Mona Lee came out to watch. Adelaide stood with her fingers locked so tensely that her knuckles were white. Even Gary felt cold sweat standing on the back of his neck, as the swab came up, over and over, drizzling muddy ooze and milky looking water, but nothing else.

"You ain't got no oil there, Hickey," said the swabber. "You ain't even got you a good water well. Well, that's the way she goes." Adelaide began to cry. "We've got to tell Dad," she said. "That's

the awful part. He said to wire him—and how can we bear to do it? He's worried to death up there—and then to get a wire from us that the well's a failure—"

"We could wait till morning," said Mona Lee. "Not that it will do much good to put it off—there's nothing more they can do here, is there? There's just no hope at all?"

"We can go on down," Gary said. "But Mr. Mason's orders were very definite. We've drilled to fifty-three hundred feet now—three hundred farther than he instructed us to go."

Mona Lee turned to the crew on the derrick floor. "You've all worked so hard—and I know you're disappointed, too. I want you all to come up to the house. Maria's frying chickens and I want to give you a good lunch just to sort of end this with a period, you might say." And she laughed, thinly, but with a little choke of heartbreak.

"Mis' Mason, I sure wish I could go on down there a ways farther Hickey argued. "I hate to give up on a well."

"I know. We hate to give up, too. But there's just nothing else to do. I guess the Masons will be starting in again now—starting in with nothing much, the way we did twenty-five years ago."

Gary stayed at the well all day, watching the drill pipe being hauled, disconnected, and piled in an orderly stack. Hickey sat on the ground with a bucket of yellow paint and every joint was dried and scoured clean and treated to a coat of paint to keep the threads from rusting.

"Well, we did our best, Hickey," Gary said. "And now I guess I'll be on my way—Mexico or some other place. So I may as well say good-by now."

Hickey held out a paint-smear-ed hand. "First time I saw you," he said. "I thought you was a young squirt, all swelled up with a lot of book learning and smart ideas. But now I kind of like you. If I get me another job to move on to, you wouldn't want a rough-necking job, I reckon? Kind of letting an engineer go to waste, putting him up top with a pair of tongs—but if you ever get broke and ain't got nowhere to go, you know where I live."

"Much obliged, Hickey. I won't forget. But I think I'll drift a-long—farther."

(Continued)

Sir Charles Wheatstone invented and patented the English concertina in 1829.

### British Cruisers Equipped With New Six - Inch Gun

LONDON, (Reuters) — Britain is arming her cruisers with a new six-inch gun whose revolutionary rate of fire makes them the match of Russia's most modern cruisers, the House of Commons was told early today.

The disclosure came from Cmdr. A. H. P. Noble, parliamentary secretary to the admiralty, towards the end of an all-night sitting largely taken up with consideration of navy costs for the coming year.

During the debate, James Callaghan, a former Labor government financial secretary to the admiralty, complained that Britain had about 24 "middle-aged or elderly" cruisers between 9,000 tons and 10,000 tons armed with 3.25 and six-inch guns.

He compared these to the "magnificent" Russian cruisers of the Sverdlov class, saying he understood the Russians were building eight such ships of perhaps 15,000 to 20,000 tons.

Noble said Britain is continuing to modernize her six-inch cruisers and when this is done they will be first-class ships able to take on Sverdlov cruisers on "quite favorable terms."

#### Fire Power Increased

There had been two developments in the gunnery world: "We now have a new, first-class six-inch gun which is really a revolutionary rate of fire. Four of these guns will deliver five tons of metal per minute."

"Similar progress has been made with a new three-inch gun which will have a rate of fire normally associated with heavy machine-guns."

He said nine ships of the Sverdlov class are in existence and others are being built. Much of the Russian effort was also going into the building of ocean-going submarines.

Opening the debate on the £33,000,000 estimates for 1954-55, J. P. L. Thomas, first lord of the admiralty, said greatly improved "homing" weapons for destroying submarines will shortly be in service with the navy, and a new swept-wing jet fighter able to carry atomic bombs will be built for the navy.

He could not say when the new jet will be in service, but he did say the navy will shortly get new anti-submarine weapons.

Brain Fires Charge

These include a guided missile launched from the air which "homes" on its target and an improved type of depth charge called the "limbo" aimed and

automatically fired by an electronic brain after it has found a submarine.

Another weapon on the anti-submarine front would be a locating device dropped into the sea at the end of a wire from a hovering helicopter. This "dipping sonar" promises a great improvement in finding the accurate position of a submerged submarine, Thomas said.

The minister also reported steady progress in the development of a large guided missile fleet and convoy protection. The first guided-weapons trial ship will be fitted out soon, he said.

### "Loss of Direction" In Can. Education Says Dr. Neatby

MONTREAL, (CP) — Canadian education is threatened with a total loss of direction, Dr. Hilda Neatby, University of Saskatchewan historian, said Monday night, addressing a Montreal Education Week meeting. Dr. Neatby urged a revival of "mind-centred schools."

"The first essential task of the school is the feeding and training of minds," she said. "Other tasks are auxiliary and secondary."

Dr. Neatby is author of the book "So Little For the Mind", which criticizes Canada's education system.

### South Korean Paper Assails Prime Minister

SEOUL, (CP) — A South Korean newspaper today said Prime Minister St. Laurent is one of a group "becoming tools and dupes" of the Communists.

The English-language daily Korean Republic assailed the Canadian leader for saying here Monday that he believes the Allies should be realistic about recognizing Communist China.

"In the prime minister's definition, it would be realistic to accept disease and murder and brigandry just because we have

them with us," the paper said. It added that "the St. Laurents of this world actually are embracing the faceless creed of communism by unwittingly advocating a policy of appeasement."

The semi-official paper said "the prime minister makes the same Red-inspired and terribly perilous error in indicating that the Chinese accept their Communist masters."

The prime minister, who concluded a Korean visit today, had been quoted as saying he felt the eventual recognition of the Red Chinese regime must be accepted since it was the government the people wanted.

#### POLLUTION PROBLEM

Oil pollution of the sea by ship traffic is estimated to kill more than 200,000 birds annually on British coasts.

### Loads And Speeds Restricted In Quebec

QUEBEC, (CP) — The Quebec roads department Wednesday issued regulations of loads and speeds on provincial highways during the thaw period, setting a maximum speed of 30 miles an hour for buses and 25 miles an hour for trucks.

The regulations will become effective shortly. The department said in a statement that the thaw period usually starts between March 25 and April 10.

Loads permitted vary from 9,000 pounds to 30,000 pounds, depending on the vehicle and the highway.

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### Royal Children Don't Know Of Trip Next Month

LONDON, (Reuters) — Prince Charles and Princess Anne still don't know about the trip they will take next month to meet their parents in North Africa.

And, a Buckingham palace spokesman said Tuesday, the surprise will be kept a secret as long as "the people in authority" see fit.

"There was no point in getting them over-excited," the spokesman said.

The children don't expect to see the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh until May when the royal couple come back to London from their six-month round - the-world tour.

Measles Denial

But it was decided last month that the prince and his sister will cruise to North Africa to make the family reunion there.

Prince Charles showed during the Coronation last June that he can get "over-excited" by big Royal occasions. There was press criticism saying the palace command had let him have too much of the spotlight. There were demands that he be allowed more of a child's normal life, lest he become spoiled.

Palace officials firmly denied that the two children were being kept out of the secret because they have measles.

### Sentenced For Illegal Explosives


HALIFAX, (CP)—A young deck-hand of the Swedish freighter Danholm has been sentenced to jail here after RCMP found enough explosives in his locker to sink his ship.

Hans Olof Pettersson, about 20 pleaded guilty to a charge of illegal possession of explosives and was sentenced Saturday to 10 days in jail.

The charge was laid after a routine RCMP search of the 3,643-ton freighter of the Swedish-America Line.

An RCMP spokesman said Pettersson had a small quantity of dynamite in his locker. It wasn't a bomb, he said, although if used in the right way could have done as much damage.

There was no suggestion of any political implications, he said. The Danholm, meanwhile, has sailed for the West Indies but is expected back here within a month.

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