

Dark Lightning

By Helen Topping Miller

Synopsis

Gary Tallman, young petroleum engineer from Alabama, misses his bus to San Antonio, Texas. Mona Mason, wife of a cattle rancher, gives him a lift. At her own home a red hog runs out into the road, she loses control of the car and crashes into a ditch. Unhurt herself, Mona has the injured Gary carried to the house. Mrs. Mason's twenty-one-year-old daughter, Adelaide, helps nurse him. Recovered, Gary is in love with Adelaide, but without a job cannot tell her so.

CHAPTER IV

And then there were only two days left, and on that morning Gary and Adelaide walked across the fields and into an eroded canon, where a little wet-weather stream wandered. They sat down to rest on a boulder and tossed bits of rock into the water. Gary crumbled a soft fragment in his hands and was idly brushing the dust from his palms when he jerked erect suddenly, staring at it, and then bent quickly and began picking up other pieces, looking at them keenly.

"What is it?" Adelaide asked. He did not answer, but went scrambling up the side of the canon, digging with a jagged stick at the low outcroppings. When he came down, his face was set and intent. "Has your father ever had a geologist out here?" he asked. "Not that I know of. Why?" "I'm not sure — I haven't had enough experience to be sure — but I'd like to check this area on a geological map."

"Gary — you mean oil? You think there's oil — on our land?" "I wouldn't say, definitely. But this looks to me like the right kind of structure — I'm probably wrong, but I might be right."

Adelaide's eyes were suddenly wide and excited.

"Gary — we could find out, couldn't we? Could you tell if you had a map?" "Not definitely. I know there's a fault that runs through this area — and you see this?" He crumbled the bit of rock in his fingers. "Sulphur in that — small bits, usually..."

"Oh, Gary — let's get a map! Could we get one in town? One of those — what you said?" "A geological map would show the structure. And if this area around here has ever been worked by any oil men — any of the geophysic crews — they'd probably have maps — hard to get hold of those, though."

"We could try. Let's go now. We needn't tell any one about it — till you know more about it." Her face was flushed and eager, her eyes burning. Gary knew that look. He had seen it so many times in the eyes of people who stood around watching a well being spudded in, watching drills go down and the damp, gray cores being lifted — a feverish, strange,

avid look. It changed those people — and Adelaide was changed. She was suddenly an alert, tense stranger. He tossed the crumbled clod away and was abruptly sorry he had said anything about it. Probably he was wrong anyway. Every young fellow who had a couple of letters on a degree had a dream of some day finding the biggest oil strike of all. And oil was like lightning — dark lightning. Where it struck, the peaceful was never the same again.

"Yes," he said slowly. "We can probably get a map. And an experienced geophysicist could probably tell whether there's any definite promise or not. What I've learned is how to get oil out of the ground after some one else located it, but I would want to advise your father to hire geologists — not yet, anyway — not just on my word."

"Oh, but if there should be oil under this place, Gary, Dad would be glad to hire any number of people. And if you're a petroleum engineer, you ought to know as well as anybody."

"All I've got is a degree, Adelaide — and a little desultory experience. I've had to work at other things — anything I could do to earn money. I've been more or less learning the oil business from the top of the derrick down."

"But if you should find something — and it turned out to be important — Oh, Gary, if we did get an oil well we'd be terribly rich, wouldn't we? And you'd be rich, too."

"P.E.'s don't get rich. They get paid for helping other people get rich."

"Oh, but Dad wouldn't have it that way. Oh, let's get my car and go, quick. They'll have a map somewhere in town, won't they?" "I guess so. Somebody would have one."

"And, Gary," she was still tremulous with excitement, "if it turned out that you're right, if we did find oil — you wouldn't have to go to Mexico. You could stay here and work for Dad."

"You mean — you'd want me to stay?" Stumbling along, his feet feeling wooden, he could not look at her. He heard her buzzing.

Her light answer was like cold water thrown into his burning face. "Oh, but of course! We have fun. And you don't get ideas like all the other men. I know. I can talk sense to you and not have to listen to a lot of awful nonsense about my hair and my eyes and all that dreamy stuff."

"I see. So you want to go on — talking sense?" "Of course. You've no idea what a relief it is. You couldn't have — because you're not a girl!" "All right," he said, a little flat. "We'll talk sense, then."

"And we'll go straight off and see if we can find a map. Gary — if it's true — I want you to tell Dad."

(Continued)

Strange But True

By F. H. MacArthur

If you were asked to name the loneliest island in the British Empire, you would probably answer the island of Tristan da Cunha. It lies half way between the Cape of Good Hope and South America.

St Helena is the nearest land, 1300 miles distant. It lies so far off regular shipping lanes that very seldom do ships call there. The island has 160 inhabitants, descended from a few British soldiers and their wives who settled there in 1816.

The two buttons at the back of a man's dress coat were originally used for holding a sword belt.

The Bubonic plague first appeared in England in August of 1348. The results were devastating. Whole villages and small towns were left without one living soul. Animals died and rotted in the fields. Prices of all kinds of foods skyrocketed. There were not enough clergymen to bury the dead and persons caught leaving one district for another without permission were branded with a hot iron.

The dreaded Black Death was brought from the Far East by fleas infested rats.

Men walked distances in pioneer days in this province that one would not care to undertake today, over roads that were only just usable in summer.

"P.E.'s don't get rich. They get paid for helping other people get rich."

Many and varied were the travelers along our Island roads. There were laymen, farmers, and peddlers, with sizable packs strapped across their shoulders. The latter became quite a plague and many farmers' wives were scared out of their wits.

Roads were in a terrible state, and most farm produce was moved by water, as the cost was cheaper. Winter travel was so impossible that merchants allowed their customers to purchase large quantities of goods in the late fall. If a trader sold meat or fish he was fined and sometimes put in the stocks.

By today's standards, hours of work were long, from dawn to dusk. But there was ample work for every able-bodied person. Here are a few of the trades then carried on — tanners, blacksmiths, shoemakers, cobblers, carpenters and haberdashers.

At harvest time a scythe would be paid about 20 cents a day with food and lodging thrown in. Other workers got very small wages. Good old days?

All nations do not make use of the same calendar. The Abyssinians, Chinese, and certain other races use a different system. The Jewish calendar dates from the period which the Hebrews believe to have been the beginning of the world. The Mohammedan calendar also dates from a different time.

A form of punishment still used in China, reminds one of our own stocks and pillory. The victim has his head pushed through a hole in a large square of heavy timber so that he cannot reach his mouth with his hands. Details of the crime for which he is being punished are written on the front of the timber.

The first carriages of which we read were two-wheeled chariots, used by the Greeks and Romans. Carriages did not come into regular use in this Island until roads were developed. Our pioneer parents used "shanks mare" or rode in cars.

Broadly speaking we should not call the monuments erected to our dead soldiers monuments. Why? Because an empty tomb ought to be called a cenotaph.

In the early days of printing, books were so scarce and costly that they were chained to their shelves. There still exists some chained libraries in Europe and America.

Canaries are very sensitive to gases which is why you will sometimes see them in coal mines. If the birds become restless the miners know that danger threatens.

people used lamps as clocks. Time was recorded by the level of the oil in the lamp.

The first coal ever burned by the English people was at Westminster. It was tried out by King James I. But it was used by the Romans, for coal ashes have been found in some of their camps. It was once called "sea coal" because it was picked up on the seashore after heavy storms.

The monks of Tynemouth were the first folk to sink shaft and mine for coal.

And strange but true, there are no fewer than 2,000 separate by-products from coal.

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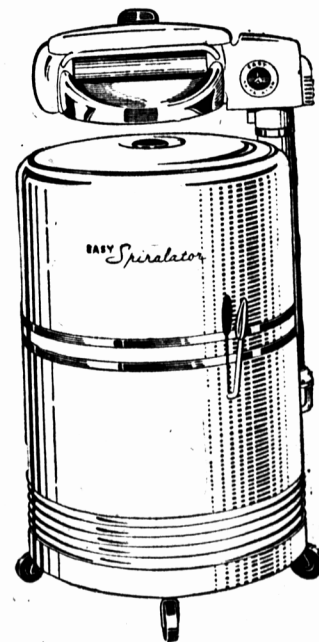
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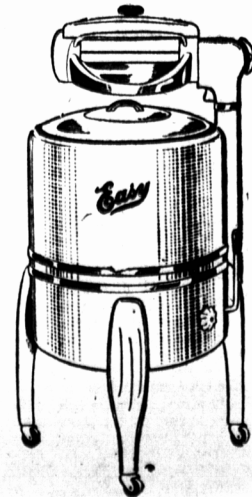
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