

NEVER MIND THE LADY

by David Garth

Chapter 15

STUCK around and rest up a couple of days. That was useless and Bucky Corrigan knew it. He went on casually—"There's been shooting in the streets in Proponoire."

Willitt said nothing. "If the port is mined—" "Then I'll get off at Dos Rios and cut around Proponoire," Willitt spoke with a snap and bite to his words. "Get a gang from one of those villages on the lower Palva and get portered up the river."

Willitt stuck out his hand. "So long, Bucky." "So long, fella. Maybe we'll be together on a job some place—he awell, wouldn't it?" "Sure," said Willitt. "So long."

FUTILITY! It was expressed in every detail of the camp on the banks of that tropic river—futility, despair, and a malcontented frustration. There was no life—no sound except the humming of insects in that fever-ridden spot.

All was beaten and groveling—hedged in by a fringe of tangled vegetation and matted creepy trees that looked hollow and unreal—with a cursed muddy river licking the stony bases of the pontoons that supported a would-be conqueror.

The clearing was scarcely larger than a child's playground—it was but a spot plucked from the jungle and slowly returning to its own—decaying, torpid, and heated in its pathetic civilization like the head of a vulture close to the sun.

The main hut that spoke Authority was square and flat-roofed, with two-by-fours lining the walls, the window was jaggedly screened—insects mocked it as the river mocked the dredger.

A work table was littered with crumpled blueprints and sheaves of foolscap filled with sprawling calculations—two unmade cots with the mosquito netting in jumbled confusion over the disordered sheets—and sickness and madness everywhere.

There was one thing that defied the squalor and defeat of the place—that was the tall bearded man who slouched wearily over a table. His eyes were very bright, too bright, and the fine straight nose breathed jerkily, thin nostrils dilating like a racing thoroughbred.

But, without a hint of Mayfair clung to him; a square appearance of the shoulders, the breeding in his face, the shape of the hand that trembled with a pen—perhaps.

He was writing, not faring to lose the chance of what might be a last lucid moment.

This is left for you should not be able to last. You will get here and whatever you find—head up.

The usual talk request nonsense—take me back to the States; Carteret, Virginia, is where I belong—I'd like to return there. This undreamed-of sentiment will probably surprise you, but I know you'll respect the last wish.

For a moment a brief attempt at a smile appeared on his face. As if he cared where he was buried. But it was good enough as an excuse to get Terry out of the country should be by any chance have had other ideas.

His eyes returned to his message, the last vestige of humor gone, and he had to rest his head on his free hand as the pen resumed its shaky progress.

His pen dropped from his fingers and rolled across the table. He rested his head in both his hands and tried to focus on the framed picture of a beautiful woman with a wealth of auburn hair and a smiling mouth. He'd snatched the rattle from her baby's hand and given him a whip. "He's going back, Vic," he murmured. "Back to whatever you'd have wanted, I hope. Almighty God, how I hope so—"

Then Lawrence Willitt permitted his head to sink upon one arm, and sighed—like a tired child who is quite willing to be put to bed.

Two weeks later a young man boarded the "Atlantica," New-York bound, at Dos Rios, the last open coffee port since the guns of the revolution had begun to roar.

He paused by the rail and leaned on an elbow. For a while he watched the scurrying coffee porters down on the dock, then his gaze shifted to the long low range of hills in the background.

Behind them—Proponoire, the Palva, Pluto's playground—His eyes were misty for a moment, but only for a moment.

Something about him, the line of his mouth, the set of his shoulders, the jut of his chin, perhaps—could be named by one word. Iron!

THE bar of the Arundel Club was of glass, inlaid with silver. It was filled with fish, some of them very queer. There was one called a Trigger Fish because of the alignment of a fin, and this fish could go seventy miles an hour when it wanted to. It never wanted to.

The place had a thick carpet of Pompeian red, a sunken black dance floor, and walls paneled with full length mirrors.

Upstairs men and women in evening clothes played roulette and baccarat from midnight until dawn. The midnight crowd at the Arundel was famous.

There was quite a cluster about Allaire West. She invested all the qualities of a duel in her play, chafing the bank up a tree or losing her shirt and doing either in a graceful, composed way that inspired three cheers. Everybody was surprised when she suddenly got up and asked to be cashed in.

"You're stopping early tonight, Miss West," said Louis. "Tired of it?" "I'm everything all right!" he asked anxiously.

"Of course, Louis. It isn't your fault. It's mine. I don't seem to enjoy it any more. Seems a waste of time." She smiled. "Something I ate, no doubt."

She went downstairs and joined a small group at the bar. A nice-looking blond man who might have passed as a Viking made room for her.

"Are you going to drown your sorrows, or celebrate your luck?" he inquired. "Neither, Charley. What's the matter with that fish? Doesn't it ever move?" "All it does is eat," complained Charley.

Allaire tapped on the glass with a slim forefinger in a futile effort to stir the lethargic Trigger Fish. Charley tapped too. So did all the others. They tapped, and the Trigger Fish didn't even budge.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Allaire suddenly. "What fools we are. Getting all excited over a fish."

"I know it," said Charley. "But just think, Allaire, that fish can go seventy miles an hour. They've even reinforced the glass at the ends of the bar in case it should smack into them at full speed. If it ever got going places I imagine it would be hard to stop."

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



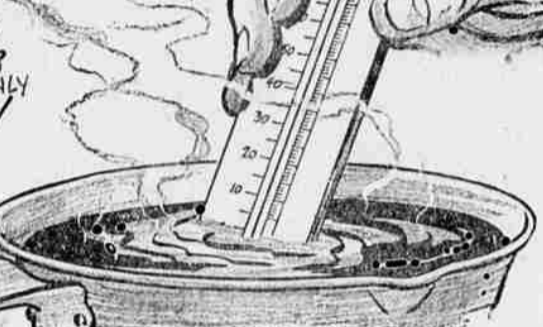
A PASSENGER LOCOMOTIVE PUFFS STEAM EVERY TIME THE WHEELS GO AROUND!



THE 7 CHILDREN OF MR. AND MRS. H. M. MARTINSON—LONG BEACH, CALIF., THE NAME OF EACH CONTAINS 7 LETTERS... ELLIOT, CARROLL, LEONARD, KENNETH, HALBERT, MARGARET AND BURNELL... ALL HAVE MIDDLE INITIALS, BUT NONE HAS A MIDDLE NAME...



A THERMOMETER REGISTERS COLDER WHEN THRUST SUDDENLY INTO HOT WATER!



The ordinary thermometer operates on the principle of expansion and contraction under changes of temperature. Heat expands, cold contracts—hence an increasing temperature causes the mercury or alcohol in the bulb at the bottom of the thermometer to expand. As this liquid expands it forces its way up the thin tube. The more it expands the higher it goes—and the temperature can be accurately read by the graduated scale.

Yet, strange as it seems, an ordinary thermometer will register colder when placed suddenly in hot water, and warmer when placed suddenly in cold water. This is due to the fact that when the change in temperature is sudden, then the glass bulb reacts first—with the sudden application of heat the glass expands, this increases the capacity of the bulb, and consequently the mercury runs down. As soon as the heat is conveyed through the glass to the mercury, of course, the mercury expands and shoots upward until it registers the proper temperature. Likewise, with the sudden application of cold the glass contracts first, making the reservoir smaller and forcing the mercury up. It is just a matter of seconds, however, before the mercury contracts and falls.

Tomorrow: Nation of Wooden Shoes. SEMI-ANNUAL SALE Now in progress ETHELWYN B. HOFFMANN. WINDOW GLASS—We sell window glass and will replace your broken windows reasonably. Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

STOCKING TIME By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

Comic strip panels showing a child putting on stockings. Captions: HANGS UP STOCKING ON MANTELPIECE IN LIVING ROOM; GOES UP TO BED WONDERING WHAT TIME SANTA CLAUS WILL COME TO FILL IT; COMES DOWN HALF UN-DRESSED TO MAKE SURE THAT STOCKING IS IN MOST CONVENIENT PLACE FOR SANTA CLAUS; GOES UP AGAIN WONDERING WHY PARENTS SEEMED A LITTLE STARTLED WHEN HE APPEARED AT DOOR; COMES DOWN ONCE MORE TO MAKE CERTAIN THERE ISN'T A HOLE IN THE TOE OF THE STOCKING; IS PUZZLED BY ACTIONS OF PARENTS WHO SEEM VERY ILL-AT-EASE AND KEEP THEMSELVES BETWEEN HIM AND STOCKING; RETIRES BUT HAS TO COME DOWN ONCE MORE TO CONVINCING HIMSELF THE PIN IS STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD STOCKING, FINDS PARENTS HAVE LOCKED DOOR; GETS INTO BED WONDERING WHAT MAKES PARENTS ACT SO QUEER, BUT IS TOO SLEEPY TO WORRY MUCH ABOUT IT.

SMATTER POP—By C. M. PAYNE

Comic strip panels about cats and shoes. Captions: NOW LET'S SEE? OH, YES! YOU HAVE AN EXTRA E IN FEET; WHICH IS THE EXTRA E, POP? I'LL CROSS IT OUT! CAT FEET; THE THIRD ONE; GEE, I DON'T KNOW 'YAKINTELL, POP! ALL OF THEES LOOK ALIKE TO ME; OH, YOU'LL LEARN THAT LATER.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Chance to Escape!

Comic strip panels about a man in a fish tank. Captions: SUDDENLY ATTACKED BY A BAND OF FIERCE WARRIORS, WHO RESEMBLE THE ORIGINAL AZTECS, TOMMY AND SKEETER HAVE BEEN TAKEN PRISONERS ON THE ISLAND IN THE SKY! NO USE TO STRUGGLE, SKEETS—THE ODDS ARE AGAINST US! TH' GODS, DON'T LOOK SO GOOD FOR THAT JASPER HOLDIN MY GUN; THE SAVAGE THROWS THE GUN INTO THE BRUSH; AND IT DISCHARGES A BULLET— QUICK, SKEETS! THIS IS OUR CHANCE!

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The 'Potatoes'!

Comic strip panels about potatoes. Captions: FIRST OFF, WHAT DO YOU SAY WE PITCH CAMP HERE, CRIP? IT'S THE POTATOES SO FAR AS I'M CONCERNED; LET'S GO TO THE CUT OVER LAND AND SEE IF WE CAN FIND THE TWO ROWBOATS THAT JEB MORGAN SAID WERE PULLED UP AND LEFT ON SHORE; LOOK, BEN! THERE THE BOATS ARE! BOY, OH BOY, THIS IS THE POTATOES! LET'S GO TO THE ISLAND, BEN! NOT JUST NOW, CRIP—

THE REEBS—Good Advice

Comic strip panels about a man's advice. Captions: WHAT DO YOU THINK? EMMA'S WORKING FOR MAX!! WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO THINK? I'LL BE AGREEABLE; SHE TELLS ME SHE'S GOING TO RETIRE—DOESN'T WANT TO WORK ANY MORE—TAKES A COUPLE WEEKS OFF AND GOES TO WORK FOR HIM! I SUPPOSE SHE GOT A COUPLE BUCKS A WEEK MORE! WELL, WHY DIDN'T YOU GIVE IT TO HER? YOU WENT AND HIRED A CHEF FOR \$50 A WEEK... ALL I KNOW ABOUT THIS IS IN YOUR PRESENT STATE OF MIND, YOU GOT ALL THE WORST OF IT. RELAX—PUT AN ICE BAG ON YOUR HEAD—AND SING 'LOVE THY NEIGHBOR'

ANTHONY, Dec. 30—(Sp.)—Mr. and Mrs. Bill Bigham and daughters and Mr. and Mrs. Albert Bigham and children spent Christmas at the home of Mrs. Bigham of St. Val. ... Everyone was shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden death of Mrs. Mary Kent. The sympathy of the district goes to the bereaved family. ... Use Mail Tribune want ads.

Luther Day, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Owens, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Vorton, Fred Dalton, Bill Wattenberg, Mrs. Sarah Hiley and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Von der Hellen. ... Mrs. Henry Owens has been quite ill, but is much improved at this time.

By C. M. PAYNE

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