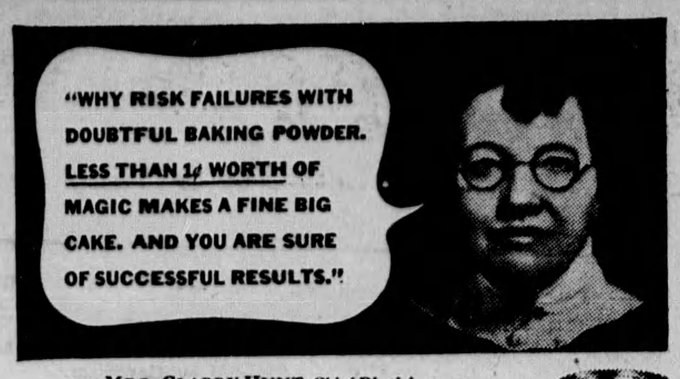

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The Flying Courier

by Boyd Cable

SYNOPSIS.

At Croydon aerodrome, Glynn Elliman, pilot of the Indian Air Mail liner, meets Norah Seaman. At the last minute, Glynn is ordered to stand by for a special job. The Prince of Napatala is ill in London, and in haste to return to India, where his father has died. He must be present to claim the throne, which his half-brother, "The Vulture," plots to seize. At the Prince's house, Glynn gets instructions to fly a new machine to London from the factory for the Prince's use. Agents of The Vulture in London hear of this and track him to the factory. The doctors refuse to allow the Prince to fly to India. As a last resort, the Prince has a short talking film made of himself reading the Proclamation of Inheritance.

CHAPTER V.—(Cont'd.)

The Prince's secretary sent a servant out to get a selection of attache cases, one of which was to be used as a container for the film. The servant brought back half-a-dozen from which the secretary chose one, and returned the rest by the same messenger. Stefan's spy in the house learned all this from the messenger (as he was well paid to learn and report even the most trivial happenings) as he also learned that a motor car was being sent to the Club aerodrome to bring back a gentleman who would be waiting for it, who would stay the night in the Prince's house, and who would be driven next morning to Croydon aerodrome, to get there in plenty of time before noon.

The full report of this was in Stefan's possession within an hour, and on the heels of it came another from Max at the aerodrome that he had "fixed" the Syntax to lose a wheel of the undercarriage in taking off, but that Glynn Elliman had just been driven off in a car in which the Prince's equerry had called for him.

With such details of inside information, it was not difficult for Stefan and his friends to come to a reasonable conclusion and at least to take steps to fit their needs to the conclusion if it proved to be a correct one. Actually in the broad essentials, their conclusions fitted and served them well—and Glynn Elliman very ill.

The pilot was to be brought to the Prince's house, stay there the night, and be driven to Croydon next day before noon. The next day was Saturday, and 12.30 p.m. was the hour of the Indian Air Mail's scheduled departure. It was not difficult to conclude that the pilot was to be sent on the Air Mail, nor that if this were so, he would be taking the film with him. At this point of the reasoning, the detail of the just-bought despatch case—which had up to then been deemed insignbificant—assumed a possible importance. If the Flying Courier were to carry the film to India, what more natural than that he should be given a case to carry it separately and sealed up so as to obviate bother at the various Customs. It was a long shot, possibly an idle chance of usefulness, but Stefan himself went to the shop where the case had been bought, and saying he had been sent to obtain, if possible, a duplicate of the one chosen by a friend of his out of half-a-dozen sent on approval that afternoon, had no difficulty in obtaining it.

The possibility of the Courier going by the Air Mail definitely pleased the conspirators. It would be so much simpler to keep in actual close personal touch with the Courier all the way, and to find a suitable opportunity to dispose of the film he carried, and, if need be, of him and the film together. And if the film were carried in the new attache case, so much the easier to substitute for it the exact duplicate. But if all this were wrong, and the Courier went on the Syntax, the former plans would quite simply be applied.

Stefan, Max and another called, separately and booked places on the Air Mail leaving for India next day.

Glynn spent a very pleasant evening with the equerry and had a delightful dinner of Indian curries and dishes and Indian "gup" of gossiping chat about people and places of the East. It revived very strongly in his memory the last such talk he had had—with Norah Seaman. He had thought of her quite often during the past week, but had made no attempt to communicate with her because he had been rather tied by the very strict orders to keep a still tongue about his proposed flight, and did not see how he was to avoid telling her something about it except by lying flatly. Somehow he did not fancy doing that, and preferred to avoid saying anything.

But now, on the eve of his setting out for India, he felt that he wanted a word with her, even if he had to sprinkle some lies through the word, or at the worst to tell her he'd been on such a job as he had hinted might be the one he was pulled off regular duty to take on—the testing of a new type of machine and reporting upon it. Worst of it was, he reflected, that she had been so dead set on knowing whether it was the flying of the Prince to Napalata that she was sure to ask a direct question or two about that, and it might mean lying like a flat-fish to put her off. But, anyhow, he couldn't resist the chance of hearing her over the phone, so he'd risk it.

He asked the equerry if he might use the phone, and received permission, with the warning proviso that he should say nothing about staying that night where he was, nor of his journey by the Air Mail.

"Stay right beside me," he said in reply to this, "and pull me up if you think I may be giving anything away. But it's only a girl I want a word with, and as I've only met her once, I don't flatter myself she'll be so very interested in where I'm staying, or where or when I'm going. But when I saw her about a week ago, I promised to meet her again, and I feel rather a hog not to have made polite excuses. . . . ."

"My dear fellow," cut in the equerry, "no need to say a word more. There you are. There's the phone, and excuse me a minute or two while you use it."

"Sorry, but I just won't excuse you," Glynn said promptly. "Females are apt to ask fool questions that stump one for a quick answer that won't spill things. Just you stand by so that I can say a side word to you and let her know I'm not alone if need be."

But his elaborate precautions proved to be entirely in vain. He rang up the number Norah Seaman had given him, got an answer, and found it was from some sort of maid or housekeeper who could only say that Miss Seaman was not in, and that she had, in fact, left there the day before, and that the "master and mistress" (presumably her hosts) were out for the evening.

Glynn gave her his name, spelling it carefully, and a message to ask the master or mistress to inform Miss Seaman that he would drop her a line in the next day or two.

"That's that," he said, as he hung up. "I suppose it won't matter if I write back a line from about Brindisi or Athens saying I'm outward bound with the Air Mail to India and I'll hope to see here in two or three weeks when I get back."

"Of course not," said the equerry. "Does she know that you are one of the Imperial Airways' pilots?"

"Yes."

"Then of course she'll only suppose you are back on your routine work."

"Routine work," echoed Glynn, with a faint grimace. "You've said it. D'you know, I had distinct hopes that this was going to be something better and livelier than routine work—especially when the Airways manager pushed an automatic across the table to me as luggage to start out with, and then you dropped in that one about glad to see I'd got a gun."

"Which I remember you had," smiled the equerry, "and carried in a way I've heard of but never met. D'you think it is better than the old-fashioned hip position for a quick draw and shoot?"

From there the talk slid off into technicalities of carrying and using offensive weapons, with a side discursion into the rival merits and demerits of a revolver and an automatic.

"Oh, well," sighed Glynn rather regretfully, "I suppose I can push my gun down in the bottom of my bag, or leave it behind me, now that I'm shipping out on the regular Air Mail. You don't need one on that trip any more than you'd do taking the Flying Scot to Aberdeen; or the Southern Bell to Brighton for that matter."

"I hope you won't need one," said the equerry seriously. "But you never know, and I'd say carry it quite handy."

Very quickly on the heels of that advice came a good reason for it—a report from the Club that it had been found that the Syntax had been tampered with, that a wheel of the undercarriage had been so carefully loosened that the machine must have crashed either in taking off or on landing, and that the job had been done deliberately and with knowledge enough to make sure the machine would have been at such speed when the wheel broke away that it would have meant a seriously bad crash and a "write-off" wreck of the machine and, probably, anybody aboard her.

"You see what it means," the equerry explained to Glynn. "It is evidently known to those who plot against us that the machine was there to fly the Prince—or you—to India. If they have marked the machine, they are quite likely to have marked you, who have been seen with it and flying it at the Club. The papers have told the full story of the film, and it may be guessed you carry it. You may even have been watched and followed to this house. It is almost a pity we asked you to come here."

"Don't you worry about that," said Glynn assuringly. "If I can't carry a simple attache case with a couple of little tins in it from here to India on the regular Air Mail, I'm not fit to carry a handbag from Piccadilly to the bank on a London general bus. The one's just about as safe as the other."

Nevertheless, the attempt on the Syntax modified the procedure for next morning, and Glynn drove in a taxi instead of the household car which might possibly be recognized as that of the Prince. He drove to Victoria, meaning to take the Airways passenger motor from their terminus office, but first went to the Post Office to send off a number of letters and a few telegrams to friends saying he would be away for a time, and would get in touch again when he returned.

(To be continued.)

London Considers Plans For Central Airport

The Corporation of London has unanimously decided to consider the erection of an airport or landing-stage. F. A. Horner, who brought the proposal forward, declared that in a year or two any city or town without a landing stage or aircraft port will be like a city or town without a railway station The nearest landing place to London at present is at Croydon, some 10 miles from the centre of the city. One suggestion is that a landing-stage could be erected over the Thames between Southward and Blackfriars bridges, where the river is only about 600 feet wide. If this position were used, there would be nothing to pull down, and a stage could be placed in one complete span across the river, so that it would not interfere with shipping.

"Always the real church has been not the dough of the mass but the leaven of the few."—Harry Emerson Fosdick.

"The 'successful man' seldom has much imagination; it is one of the secrets of his success."—Dean Inge.

"The murder story has for its high and holy purpose the pious intention of making the reader feel a fool."—G. K. Chesterton.

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Latest Findings In Science World

Britain Considering 24-Hour Clock Dials — Russianss Use Sun to Warm Bath Water

At a conference which was held in Washington in 1884 and at which twenty-five countries were represented it was decided to adopt the present method of reckoning longitude east and west from the meridian of Greenwich, England. An effort to change hours of the day would be counted clock and watch dials so that the from 0 to 24, thus abolishing "A.M." and "P.M.," met with resistance, especially in English-speaking countries. Now there is a strong movement in favor of this twenty-four-hour system of reckoning in Great Britain, where it has been permanently adopted by the army, navy and Air Force.

According to the British scientific weekly, Nature, the twenty-four-hour system was recommended for official and other purposes in 1919 by a Home Office committee, but the necessary legislative action was not taken. The attitude of Parliament has always been that expressed by the Earl of Lucan, who in 1932 rose in the House of Lords to say as the representative of the Home Office that "the public has not shown that it wants the change." As if the public would ever rise en masse and clamor for the abolition of "A.M." and "P.M."

Nature makes the point that the twenty-four-hour system can be introduced without abolishing the present system. For ordinary purposes there is little possibility of confusing A.M. and P.M. Nor is it necessary to alter clocks by having a twenty-four-hour from 1 to 12 and 13 to 24. It would dial or by having two sets of figures satisfy the British if the twenty-four-hour system were followed in timing letters and telegrams, in noting on post boxes the hours of collection and in indicating in time tables the arrival and departure of trains.

Sun Heats the Earth

At the Geophysical Observatory of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the Soviet scientists have set up a boiler which is heated by the sun's rays. So far as we can determine from the meagre description that has reached this country, the apparatus serves the prosaic purpose of heating water for laundries and for outdoor bathtubs.

The underlying principle of this method of harnessing the sun proves to be simple enough. Also very old. The water trickles in a thin film under glass. From the "boiler" it flows into the bathtub. Boiling water can hardly be expected; yet it is warm enough for its purpose.

Boiling points are governed by the pressure of the atmosphere. At sea level water boils at 212 degrees F., but on top of a very high mountain at so low a temperature that it is impossible to cook food properly without the aid of a digester—an apparatus which is tightly closed and in which the pressure and therefore the temperature can be raised. Although the water that comes from the Soviet bath water heater is probably not much more than 120 degrees F., it could nevertheless run a low-pressure engine, an engine which, with the aid of a vacuum, would cause the water to give off steam.

Great Heat From the Sun

Crude as it is, the Soviet solar boiler indicates that the hope of utilizing the sun's energy will not die. The reason is to be found in the astounding amount of heat that beats upon the earth from the sun. Enough is received to melt a terrestrial layer of ice 424 feet thick every year. At noon on a clear day in June the sunlight falling on 133 square miles of Philadelphia is equivalent to the power of 100 Niagaras. (The maximum output of Niagara Falls is estimated at 4,000,000 horsepower). In an eight-hour day in the tropics the sun lavishes, on a single square mile, energy equivalent to that released by the combustion of 7,400 tons of coal. About 1,800 times more energy inundates Sahara than is contained in the coal mined in the course of a year. Burn 6,000 million tons of coal and you unlock the amount of solar energy that Sahara receives in a single day.

What we need is a trap to catch the sun. The first man to invent one was John Ericsson, who built the Monitor. He devised a huge concave mirror which reflected and concentrated the sun's rays on a blackened boiler at the focus, and which was mechanically turned to follow the sun. Ericsson generated steam in his boiler and succeeded in driving pumps and other machines.

The late Frank Shuman modified Ericsson's plan by causing water to glow in a thin layer in a long glass-covered trough on which concave mirrors concentrated the sun's rays. Thus he managed to drive a pump and to irrigate land in Egypt. What the Soviet scientists have announced is therefore nothing but Shuma's old plant, and this on a very modest scale.

The Starchless Potato—Catalytic Effect of Enzymes Produces Odd Vegetable.

Dr. Harold Hibbert of McGill University found that enzymes have a peculiar effect on starches and cellulose, the woody part of plants. Enzymes are chemical ferments which have a catalytic effect in living tissue. Catalysis is a speeding up of chemical activity produced by an agent that itself remains unaffected. Dr. Hibbert saw starches and cellulose change into sugars and related compounds in glass vessel. Would the same effect be produced in the living plant? He decided to find out, with the aid of Dr. R. F. Suit of Macdonald College. The results are published in Science.

Potatoes were selected for the tests. Drs. Suit and Hibbert cut off the stems of the plants and then periodically vaccinated what remained with special bacteria of the kind that secreted the necessary enzymes. When the spuds were ripe they were tested with iodine, which has an extraordinary affinity for starch. One drop of iodine on starch and you have a brilliant purple color. Suit and Hibbert saw their iodine produce purple rings around the outside of a slice of potato, but none at the centre. What had happened in glass had recurred in the living plant. The starchless potato had been given to the world. Will some one come forth with sugarless sugar cane and proteinless wheat?

What use there may be for the starchless potato remains to be seen. The exact nature of the pulp which would normally be starch has still to be determined.

Evening is the delight of virtuous age; it seems an emblem of the tranquil close of busy life—serene, placid, and mild, with the impress of its great Creator stamped upon it; it spreads its quiet wings over the grave, and seems to promise that all shall be peace beyond it.—Bulwer-Lytton.

"To live to one's self only is never to live at all."—Sir Wilfred Grenfell.

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