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 Napalata 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.

Glynn flies the machine to London but 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. Glynn's plane is found tampered with, so decision is made for him to deliver the film by the regular air route. He finds Norah Seaman is one of the passengers, due to her fathers illness in India.

CHAPTER VI.—(Cont'd.)

"I sincerely hope you'll have better news of your father," said Glynn. "You can get cables on the way at the different airports of course."

"Thanks," she answered. "Yes, I arranged for that, or rather Airways did it for me. But now, what about you? What are you doing here—as a passenger apparently?"

"Partly that and partly as spare pilot," explained Glynn. "But I am going right through to Karachi as a kind of special messenger with important—er—despatches and instructions."

"A Flying Courier," she laughed. "Sounds quite romantic. So that job was not to fly the Prince out to Napalata after all?"

"I found I was wanted to test out and report on a new machine," said Glynn evasively. "I was some days on that at the factory down in the West Country, and then I had to fly her to a Club aerodrome where her owner wanted her. It was only last night that I was back in town and able to ring you. I was pretty sick, as you may guess, when I heard you weren't there."

"Since you're so polite about it," she smiled at him, "I'll return the compliment and say I was disappointed not to hear from you again for so long and especially that you didn't tell me a thing more about the Napalata business I'm so interested in."

"You've seen what the papers said?" he asked. "That the Prince isn't allowed by his doctors to fly yet?"

"Oh, yes, I've read everything about it," she said. "And all about making the movie of him. You know it is being shown in the newsreels at the cinema tonight. I do wish I could have seen it."

They were interrupted by Mr. Max, who halted a moment by them as he strolled down the saloon. "Care to come along to the cocktail bar and have a drink, Captain Elliman?" he asked, and with a slight bow to her: "Miss Seaman perhaps would—"

"No thanks," she said quickly. "I really don't want anything, Mr. Max."

"Don't think I will either, thanks," said Glynn politely, but looking very hard at the man as he spoke and wondering where he had seen him before. Max murmured something and passed on his way to the bar.

"D'you know, I've met him somewhere—and recently," said Glynn thoughtfully. "But I can't—yes, I can. I remember now. It was in the Post Office where I was posting some letters and things this morning. Suppose he was doing the same."

Then he remembered how Max had spoken to the Indian he had been warned against, and began to wonder if the two were working together against him. Was it pure coincidence that Max had followed him into that Post Office, or was he spying on his movements? And if he had been spying, had he seen something that might jeopardize the safety of the films he was getting to India, because in the Post Office he had taken certain precautions it would be most dangerous to have known—

A laughing remark broke his disturbing thoughts. "Do you usually go to sleep with your eyes open?" Captain Elliman?"

"I beg your pardon. Hullo, we're beginning to slant down for Paris."

But although he was now busy enough explaining points of interest, he was still worrying over that problem—how much had Max seen of his actions in the Post Office?

CHAPTER VII.

When the liner reached the ground and the passengers debarked to be ushered through the Customs and to the motors waiting to take them into Paris, Glynn drew Norah Seaman aside.

"You know I'm partly on duty this trip," he said. "Well, I have to go to the office here and see to some things. If you've nothing special to do, I wish you'd let the others push off and wait here twenty minutes or so until I get through, and then let me drive you into Paris and round any of the sights we've time to see."

"It would be ever so much pleasanter," she admitted. "If you're sure it isn't bothering you."

"T'other way round," laughed Glynn. "Come along and I'll park you comfortably until I'm ready."

Actually he was making a fictitious reason for waiting there while the passengers went off. He was still worrying over that Post Office episode and he preferred that he should be free of the need to keep close guard over what he carried, by breaking away from that Indian and Max and possibly any others who were amongst the passengers.

When he was alone, he opened the despatch case he carried and which had not left his hand or his side through the journey, found the one film tin safely there, and locked the case again. Slung across his shoulder hung a leather binocular case, but when he unstrapped the lid and shook out the contents, it was not a pair or binoculars that slid out, but an oblong tin of the size holding a hundred cigarettes.

And when he opened and looked into the tin he saw no cigarettes, but a squeezed-in roll of cinematograph film. He closed the box, replaced it in the binocular case, and strapped it down again.

"All right so far," he murmured with a sigh of relief. "All that stuff about the cleverness of that Indian as an expert thief—and that chance of Max in the Post Office—is making me jumpy. But either they haven't spotted where I'm carrying the stuff, or they haven't had a fair chance to get at it. But there's six days and nights to go yet."

He was able to make the same examination and relieved remark both on the next morning and again on arrival at Brindisi on the Monday morning, and he began to feel a good deal more of a sense of security, and to think he had slipped off with the films by Air Mail without the Prince's enemies knowing anything about it.

The secretary and the equerry had both been so urgent and insistent on the certainty that the agents of the Vulture known to be in London would do anything in their power to destroy the films and, or, the Courier carrying them, that he had been fully impressed. The damage done to the Syntax was taken as clear evidence it was known the machine was for the use of the Prince, and it was hoped that it would also be supposed that the courier would fly the films out in the same machine. Glynn, after a couple of days, without sign of any attempt to rob him, was coming to believe this had happened, and that the ruse of sending him by Air Mail had thrown the enemy off the scent.

In the light of later events he was to believe that the lack of any attempt on his charge for the first day or two was either due to the plotters wanting time to make sure how and where the film was carried, or perhaps to lull him into a sense of security.

If the latter was the intention, it was certainly a wise one, because by the third night, although he never left his attache-case out of his sight or reach, he was certainly less alert and on guard against possible efforts to rob him than he had been on first leaving London.

On the Monday, the third day of the journey, they transferred from land to oversea transport, leaving Brindisi in the big flying boat which was to carry them over the sea stage from the tip of Italy to Greece and Athens, and then on next day to the far end of the Mediterranean and Palestine.

It was a brilliant sunlit morning when the "boat" took off and Norah, like the other passengers, was thrilled by the new and exhilarating sensation of the flying boats, first slow glide over the smooth waters, speeding up and up until, with her engines roaring full out, she was tearing over them with a cascade of curving spray and water waves seething out from her sides. The shuddering drum of water, the hiss and spatter of flying spray at the portholes ceased suddenly, the blue sea fell away below them, and the huge boat was lifting steadily and smoothly into the air.

"Wonderful!" breathed Norah. "Even more thrilly than flying off the ground, Glynn."

"Then let's hope for a spot of sea running next time, Norah," laughed Glynn. "It's more thrilly still to feel her bouncing from wave to wave, and chucking the spray in clouds."

"But is that safe," Glynn?" she asked.

"Safe as houses, Norah," he said promptly. "You'd be astonished at the strength of these boats and the weight of a sea they can climb off, or drop on, or ride out if need be."

It will be noted that by this time they were well into the "Glynn" and "Norah" stage of friendship, but there is a friendly companionship between airline passengers which ripens even more quickly than amongst those in a liner at sea, and Glynn, it must be remembered, had started the journey with every intention of making the most of the chance to enjoy the friendshi of Norah Seaman.

For the first half of the day's flight they were over the empty blue sea, and for the second half flew with the shores and waters of Grecian islands and channels below them, and Glynn busy with his maps showing Norah where they were and the different places they could see. Like the overland liners, the cabins of the flying boat were so insulated from sound and the engines so placed that there was no need to talk louder than in an ordinary first class express train carriage, and with seats side by side and heads as close as Glynn and Norah had theirs for a good part of the time, their talk could be (and was) quite quiet and confidential.

They had favoring breezes that day, so made good time and brought Athens into sight well ahead of schedule time in the evening. The pilot brought the liner in at a good height before circling and gliding down, so that the passengers had full opportunity to get a bird's eye view of some of the world famous wonders of the classical city.

(To be continued.)

Move On

If you do not like your home town, or the speed at which it grows;
If you do not like its scenery, or its climate, or its shows;
If you do not like the people that your home town fascinates,
There are cars and trains now leaving for other towns and states.
If you cannot boost your home town, where men rise and fall each day;
If you cannot use the bright sunshine to make glad somebody's way,
If you cannot join in boosting, then you must have knocking traits,
And they're selling tickets daily for other towns and states.

Even The Horse Laughed

Farmers throughout the United States, being urged on every hand to reduce their production in order to relieve the surplus situation and thus to raise the price level, are passing through a period of perplexities, as this letter to the New York Herald-Tribune from a "New England Farmer," who may or may not be genuine, clearly proves:

"To The New York Herald-Tribune:

"This morning I went out to the henhouse and called a meeting. After all were present with the aid of a handful of corn, I said: 'Look here, you fellows (I always call 'em fellows, sounds more 'go to it' like than ladies), I've got word this morning from Washington—no, not George Washington—Washington, D.C., that you fellows have got to 'lay off' this two-egg-a-week stuff. Only one a week from now on or I'll get fined for overproduction, and maybe sent to jail. At least that's what I hear about those fellows down south raising cotton. They got to quit, so I suppose you and I'll have to quit too.

"Now remember what I've told you. I can't stay here talking to you any longer. I've a lot to do. I've got to hustle down to the pond and tell it not to freeze so I won't overproduce ice; I got a lot of apple trees to cut down, there'll be too much cider. I'm going to set fire to those hay stacks down in the lower field, I got too much hay. These cows have got to ease up on that milk stuff, I must tell them, and I got to speak to the geese and ducks and turkeys. I don't want to be fined or go to jail."

"A New England Farmer.

"Wellesye, Mass., Feb. 3, 1934.

"P.S.—When I left the barn I thought I heard my horse make a noise, it sounded kinder like a laugh, I wonder?"—Winchester Press

Greenfield, Eng. having evidently tried valiantly to arouse his master by snuffling into his ear and biting it, Henry Lister's dog was found beside him on the ground after a fatal attack of syncope.

"SALADA" TEA

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Delightful Quality

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Pithy Anecdotes Of the Famous

In the third year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when she was 28, her silk woman, Mistress Montague, presented this redoubtable daughter of Henry VIII. with a pair of black silk knit stockings for a New Year's gift—relates Robert Cortes Holliday (in "Unmentionables: From Fig Leaves to Scanties.") After a few days' wearing, these articles pleased her so well that she sent for Mistress Montague and asked her where he got them and if she could help her to get any more.

Liked Silk

The enthralling conversation which ensued is thus set down in Stow's "Chronicle"—also in Mr. Holliday's unique history of feminine things "sacred and profane":

"Mistress Montague answered, saying, 'I made them very carefully of purpose only for your Majesty, and seeing these please you so well, I will presently get more in hand.'

"'Do,' said the Queen, 'for indeed I like silk stockings so well, because they are pleasant, fine and delicate, that henceforth I will wear no more cloth stockings'."

Clergyman Inventor

It was during Queen Bess' reign that the Reverend William Lee of Nottingham—a clergyman with a "sock"—invented a machine that would do knitting—the stocking frame, which has been called "the most perfect of primary inventions."

"No less illustrious a fancier of fine stockings than Queen Elizabeth, it is said, was induced to go to Lee's humble quarters to see it," says Holliday. But the stocking knitters became generally alarmed with the result the parson-inventor did not get his patent.

"A handicraft postponed the advent of the Machine Age!" adds Mr. Holliday.

Refuses Patent

In refusing the patent, Elizabeth wrote:

"Had Mr. Lee made a machine that would have made silk stockings, I should, I think, have been somewhat justified in granting him a patent for that monopoly, which would have affected only a small number of my subjects, but to enjoy the exclusive privilege of making stockings for the whole of my subjects, is too important to be granted to any individual."

Lee's first machine was not capable of knitting more than eight loops to an inch width—too coarse for silk, explains Mr. Holliday.

An Irish Tale

Major A. W. Long, in "Irish Sports of Yesterday," relates this anecdote of a quaintly Hibernian flavor:

Patsy and the driver went into the hotel dining room. Then I heard Patsy's explanation of the unpardonable absence of whiskey and poteen, followed by:

"But did ye ever taste Benedictine? 'Tis made by the holy monks."

Then, through the open door I saw the driver swill off a liqueur glass of the best Benedictine, and, after contemplating the empty glass for some time, he said to Pat:

"That's gran' stuff God bless the holy monks whatever, but to hell with the man that blew the glass for shortnes of breath."

Take Heart

Young and ambitious writers who feel discouraged because publishers refuse to put their work between covers, may take heart (says Mr. Finger) when told that the first publisher who read Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" would have nothing to do with it; and the the publisher who bought "Northanger Abbey" for the equivalent of fifty dollars, pigeonholed it, and so it remained until many years later, for the same sum, by the Austen family.

He Did Well

One of the greatest tributes ever paid to Jean de Reske, the "Prince of tenors," came at the end of a procession of his colleagues to his dressing room at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, to offer their congratulations upon his successful reappearance after a year's absence through illness.

Enter the electrician, who, thrusting a "horny hand of toil" into that of de Reske's, exclaimed:

"Jean, you done fine!"

All in the Game

Jean de Reske started out as a baritone, but made no great progress. Disheartened, he retired from the operatic stage only to reappear later as a tenor. And what a tenor! The story goes—it is told in "Jean de Reske and the Great Days of Opera," by Clara Leiser—that the premiere of Massenet's "Herodiade" had been postponed for a year because no suitable leading tenor could be found. One day Massenet happened to hear Jean singing in the back of a Paris music shop. The long sought tenor was found at last.

Stage Fright

But on the opening night de Reske faltered and refused to sing. Remonstrations having failed, his brother Edouard (later to become famous himself as a basso) and the manager locked him in a dressing room, thrust him into his costume, and at the right moment pushed him bodily on the stage—with what result the world now knows. Jean again became panicky on the second night and threatened suicide!

Grog

The origin of that comforting word "grog" dates back to 1740 when Admiral Vernon ordered that the sailors rum—at that time usually called arrack—should be watered, says Eric Partridge (in "Slang To-Day and Yesterday"). Displeased, the sailors named the insulting beverage "grog," because the Admiral was already known as "Old Grog" from his habit of wearing a grogram (that is, a coarse fabric) garment, either cloak, or foul-weather coat, or breeches.

Sounds rather groggy!

More Origins

The expressive term "claptrap," high-sounding nonsense, is nothing but an ancient theatrical term, and signified a "trap" to catch a "clap" by way of applause.

"Coster" is a slangy abbreviation of "costermonger," originally "costardmonger," a seller of apples—"monger" is a merchant, "costard" a large apple.

When Sir Thomas Lipton spoke of "lifting the cup," he was merely using a provincialism (as in "shop-lifter"), but when the people of the United States took up the expression in good-natured mockery, it became slang.

Speaking of slang: Do you know how the expression, "dead marine"—synonym for an empty bottle—is said to have originated? William IV., when Duke of Clarence and Lord High Admiral, at an official dinner, is related to have said to a waiter, pointing to some empty bottles:

"Take away those 'marines'."

An elderly Major of Marines present rose and said:

"May I respectfully ask why Your Royal Highness applies the name of the corps to which I have the honor to belong to an empty bottle?"

The Duke, with the unfailing tact of his family, saved the situation:

"I call them 'marines'," he said, "because they are good fellows who have done their duty and are ready to do it again!"

Here are a few examples of war slang:

Salt: "Lot's wife."
A Coffin: A wooden overcoat."
A Doctor: "Castor oil artist."
A cigarette: "A coffin nail."

Perfect Crib Hand

Milwaukee, Wis. — William Ollerman failed to win a cribbage game in spite of the fact that he held a perfect hand. His cards in the order dealt, were the five of spades, clubs and diamonds and the jack of hearts. His fifth card drawn from the deck was the five of hearts, making the highest possible score.

Keep your face with sunshine lit
Laugh a little bit.
Gloomy shadows oft will flit
If you have the wit and grit
Just to laugh a little bit.
—J. E. V. Cook.

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