

# The Thousandth Chance

By HENRY J. FIDLER

Roger Ackroyd, the well-known financier and company promoter, sat in the board-room of his luxurious offices in Lombard Street with Colonel Ivor Danielson, D.S.O., chairman of many companies of which he had been the promoter and was still the moving spirit, eyeing him fixedly across the table.

The colonel was haggard and desperate, with the desperation of a man who knows that his good name as well as his entire fortune may be blown to the winds in the course of a few days. There were deep lines below his eyes, and he looked very old and frail, but his voice was firm and unshaken as he plied Ackroyd with question after question.

Ackroyd, no sign of emotion showing on his bearded face, fenced and parried as best he might.

He was sorry that there had been such a sudden and catastrophic fall in the shares of the whole batch of companies which were known colloquially in the City as the "Ackroyd Group," but he really could not be held responsible for the whims—or the nerves—of the investing public.

In the course of the conversation, Ackroyd, in a moment of unguardedness, had mentioned the name of a safe deposit company, and the name of a safe deposit company, and the name of a safe deposit company.

That led to him of £30,000 by the National Investment Trust? That was fully secured—had been approved by the directors of the Trust, had been duly entered in the minute book, and had been signed at the next meeting of directors by Colonel Danielson himself, as chairman of the Trust.

What was the security? He could not remember off-hand, but was quite sure that everything was in perfect order; the secretary of the Investment Trust would have seen to that, naturally.

It was nearly seven o'clock in the evening; all the staff had left long before, and Ackroyd felt that he could endure this persistent and merciless cross-examination no longer. He glanced at his watch.

"I am sorry, colonel, but I must leave now; I have a dinner engagement to-night," he said, rising from his chair. "I hope I have set your mind at rest, and convinced you that those absurd rumours have not a vestige of foundation in fact?"

He passed, but Colonel Danielson, ashen-faced and grim, maintained a chilling silence. Ackroyd shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

"Would you care to wash your hands before you leave, colonel?" he asked, leading the way to the elaborate toilet-room, with porcelain hand-basins and marble floor, which was strictly reserved for directors and high officials.

Colonel Danielson, drying his hands, made his final pronouncement.

"I am sorry, Ackroyd," he said, "but I am still unconvinced, and I am determined to have a searching examination into the affairs of my companies made at once. I am a soldier rather than a man of business, and it would perhaps have been wiser for me not to have undertaken so many and such grave responsibilities in the City. Your explanations of those intricate transactions between the companies are past my comprehension."

He paused for a moment, then delivered his ultimatum.

"To-morrow," he said firmly. "I shall call in a firm of independent accountants, and give them instructions to conduct a drastic audit of the books of every company of which I am either chairman or a director. I shall expect you, as general manager of the concerns, to have all the books and documents ready for inspection, and to be personally in attendance to give any necessary explanations."

"Certainly, if you wish it, colonel," replied Ackroyd calmly, putting on his hat and coat. You will find that your fears are quite groundless, of course; but if it will set your mind at rest, that is all that matters."

accommodation address off City Road, had come into Ackroyd's hands a couple of days before. It notified him that he had been appointed bathroom steward of the Cedric Castle and must report at Southampton to take up duty ten days later.

That was all that was necessary; a stewardship on a liner was almost the ideal position of obscurity while the hue and cry was hot after him. When it had more or less died down, he would retrieve his plunder from the safe deposit company, and in some far-off country James Huggett would be a rich man for life.

That evening, at his luxurious flat in Bruton Street, the financier proceeded to put off the identity of Roger Ackroyd and assume that of James Huggett.

He first clipped his beard and moustache as close as possible with scissors, then shaved himself clean. He had prominent, bushy eyebrows, which he trimmed down until they appeared thin and ill-nourished. He had been noted for the whiteness and evenness of his teeth, and few suspected that they were mainly artificial; the removal of a couple of dental plates, with the assistance of a hairdresser's moustache and the trimming down of his eyebrows, made an almost unbelievable change in his appearance.

Lastly, he applied a dye to his greying hair, parted it in the middle instead of on one side as formerly, donned a shabby suit, and contemplated himself in the glass.

Roger Ackroyd had vanished, and James Huggett had been created in his stead. His appearance now was identical with what it had been when he was photographed for the bogus passport and had interviewed the secretary of the safe deposit company.

He put only a few pounds in his pocket, but round his neck, suspended on a light steel chain, was what he now valued most in the world—the key of the safe in the safe deposit company's vaults, which would place an enormous fortune in his grasp immediately he desired that the time was ripe.

Ackroyd travelled third-class to Southampton by a night train and took a room in a humble sailors' hostel. He reported himself the following day at the Southampton office of appointment, and was ordered to return in a week's time to sign on for the Cedric Castle's next voyage to New York.

During this period the papers were full of his name; the accountant called in by Colonel Danielson had reported the misappropriation by Ackroyd of enormous sums of money, a warrant had promptly been issued for his arrest, and the police throughout the whole country were searching for him.

For several months he carried on his duties as bathroom steward on the liner, unsuspected and almost unnoticed. But it was with something of a shock that he found one day, as the vessel was leaving New York for Southampton, that the passenger list contained the name of Colonel Ivor Danielson, and that the colonel had been allotted one of the cabins included in Ackroyd's charge.

He tapped on the colonel's door the first morning out, with a brief "Bath ready, sir," and led the way to one of the bath-rooms. The bath was filled with cold sea-water, and Ackroyd dipped into it the steam-pipe from the engine-room, turning the tap so that the steam bubbled up through the water and raised its temperature by rapid stages.

"Temperature as you like it, sir," asked Ackroyd, after a moment, testing the water with his hand.

In that fraction of a second, though Ackroyd was quite unaware of it, Colonel Danielson directed a glance of searching inquiry at the side face of the bathroom steward. His eyes narrowed, and his lips pursed as though to whistle; then, in a flash, his face became set and emotionless as Ackroyd looked round.

"That will do nicely, thank you, steward!" he said calmly, dipping his finger into the water.

Ackroyd left the room and heard the bath-room door locked behind him with a sense of jubilant relief. He had felt fairly secure before; he was convinced now that his disguise was quite impenetrable.

The Cedric Castle was alongside at Southampton, and the passengers were going ashore, when word was brought to Ackroyd that he was wanted in the purser's cabin. He went there, unsuspecting, to find himself confronted by a detective-inspector, in plain clothes, and a uniformed constable.

the name and address of the safe deposit company, hopelessly inaccessible to him, though it would inevitably be found and its significance realised when he was searched.

Words came to him then, despite his sickening consciousness that all was over, and that nothing he could say would be of any avail. A torrent of protests and denials broke from his parched lips, and the inspector listened with rather an uneasy air.

"Call in Colonel Danielson!" he told the constable at last; and a moment later the colonel entered.

"This is the man, I suppose, sir," asked the inspector.

"That is undoubtedly Roger Ackroyd," returned the colonel.

"Well, I hope you're not making a mistake, colonel," said the inspector, coughing rather nervously. "I'm bound to say he's not very like his photographs or the official description."

"He has altered his appearance as far as he could, but a beard and moustache, longer and bushier eyebrows, and a set of artificial teeth would change him back to his old guise," rejoined the colonel firmly. "There's one simple test, inspector. Doesn't the description of Ackroyd resemble the man before you?"

The inspector consulted a Lolo-graphed form.

"That's right, sir," he confirmed. "A scar just above the left elbow," the description says."

Defly he pulled up Ackroyd's left sleeve, revealing an unmistakable scar just above the elbow. The inspector gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, that should about settle it, colonel," he said. "Was it the scar that first put you on his track?"

"No; it was not. I have not seen the scar, though I felt sure it would be there."

"It was his general appearance that made you suspicious, then?"

"Not at all; it was the most trifling little thing," said the colonel. "On the night that Ackroyd disappeared, he and I were washing our hands at adjoining lavatory basins, and I noticed idly that he tested the temperature of the water in the basin by putting the back of his hand in it. He did the same thing when he prepared my bath the first day out from New York; that was the thing that drew my attention to him."

"I think I've heard that that is really the safest way of testing whether water is too hot," said the inspector thoughtfully.

"I believe it is, and for that reason some nurses habitually use it," replied the colonel. "All the same—well, you watch a man about to wash his hands, and see if he doesn't invariably test the water by dipping his finger in it."

He rose to leave the cabin.

# The Big News on the World Peace Situation



Both Egypt and Judah will be involved in a common destruction.

"For thus saith Jehovah unto me, 'God's word follows, in opposition to the foolish and empty words of the Jewish nobles who trust in Egypt. As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey.' Lions were common in Palestine in ancient days. 'If a multitude of shepherds be called forth against him.' As the leaders of Judah are summoning in their army the multitude of Egyptian chariots and horsemen. 'Will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them.' The king of beasts with his roar will put down the weak hosts of men. 'So will Jehovah of hosts.' Jehovah Sabaoth, the most majestic of God's titles. 'Come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof.' Mount Zion was the original Jebusite stronghold captured by David.

"As birds hovering, so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem." Listen to this expansion of the metaphor of the hovering mother-bird in one of the Psalms: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust." "He will protect and deliver it, he will pass over and preserve it." As the death angel passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, marked by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on doorposts and lintels, and did not slay the first-born there, so God spares his children and saves them from their doom.

"Turn ye unto him from whom ye have deeply revolted, O children of Israel." Then, as ever, this was the sum and substance of the prophet's teaching; conversion; with that, all was hope; without it, all was fear.

"For in that day." The day of the fall of the Assyrians at the hand of Jehovah, foretold in the next verse. "They shall cast away every man his idols of silver, and his idols of gold." In that day the Jews will see how vain was the Assyrian's trust in their idols. "Which your own hands have made unto you for a sin." "For a sin" means "to be to you an abiding cause of guilt and punishment."

"And the Assyrian shall fall by the sword, not of man." The point of this verse is that Assyria was not to fall by the sword of man at all, but by the sword of God. "And the sword, not of men, shall devour him." That is, destroy him. "And he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become subject to taskwork." As the young men of the Jews have been subjected to slavery.

is assured within 16 months—unless the Cabinet decides to halt it.

Moreover, senior officials of the National Defence and the post-office departments have formulated detailed plans for the transcontinental airmail service and these plans are now before the Cabinet. No decision is likely to be reached in the immediate future for the reason that the service cannot be launched until the construction of the airways is finished.

The plans, however, call for planes with a cruising speed of around 170 miles per hour and a maximum speed of 200 miles per hour. Leaving Montreal at about 8 p.m., the west-bound plane will reach Winnipeg in less than seven hours and will arrive at Vancouver some 16 hours after leaving Montreal. As with rail service, a plane will leave Toronto each night and will meet the Montreal plane at North Bay or Sudbury, thus giving a transcontinental service from Toronto westward.

Transcontinental airmail, however, will be made possible by the completion of one of the most difficult construction jobs in modern times.

Seven years ago, when a transcontinental service was first endorsed, the Federal Government chose the Prairie Provinces as the first link and began construction on an airway from Winnipeg west, through Regina and Moose Jaw to Lethbridge and north to Calgary and Edmonton. This airway was completely equipped in every respect. There were emergency landing fields, equipped with boundary lights and gas beacons, every 10 miles. Larger airbases were built every few hundred miles. Three million candle-power beacons were installed at terminal points such as Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary. Radio direction beams and a teletype weather service facilitated night flying.

The western airmail service was inaugurated in the Spring of 1930. The contract for flying passengers and mail was awarded to Western Canada Airways, which has since been absorbed by the Canadian Airways, Limited.

A substantial business was built up. A 30-hour train trip from Winnipeg to Calgary was cut to seven or eight hours, with a consequent

DIFFICULT

When the western airmail was shut down, Canadian Airways, Ltd., continued in business, flying off air services maintained with and without Government subsidies to the northern mining fields and the arctic settlements. The company, apparently, decided to hold on. In the belief that within a few years the transcontinental service would be started.

This company, of which J. A. Richardson, of Winnipeg, is president, is the strongest organization of its kind in Canada. Both rail companies are large stockholders and the company is, in every way, a national one.

LATEST PROPOSITION

But it has emerged in recent weeks that the Government is considering a new air set-up with respect to the transcontinental service. The latest proposition is that public tenders be not called for. If the contract is awarded on this basis (and American companies excluded, as in the past), Canadian Airways would be bound to obtain it. But it is just possible that the Government will decide to fly the transcontinental airway with a state or semi-state owned organization. Such an organization would be independent of, but closely affiliated with, the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The decision in this regard will rest with the Government. But it is apparent that the influence of the higher officers of the army is being thrown into the scales in favor of a state operated mail service. Private companies, such as the Canadian Airways, Ltd., are emphatically in opposition to the plan.

While a transcontinental airmail service is probably not more than if months distant, the air-carriage of passengers is farther away. It has been decided not to permit passengers to travel the transcontinental airway for at least a year after the airmail begins.

The reason is that the flying across Northern Ontario is regarded as hazardous and a year's experience will not only add to the safety of the service, but will indicate, by the number of accidents that occur, the degree of danger involved.

English City Elects Mayor

Halifax, England.—Councillor Miriam Lightowler, a Conservative member of the Town Council for ten years, was unanimously elected Mayor—the first woman to hold that position in Halifax.

# THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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