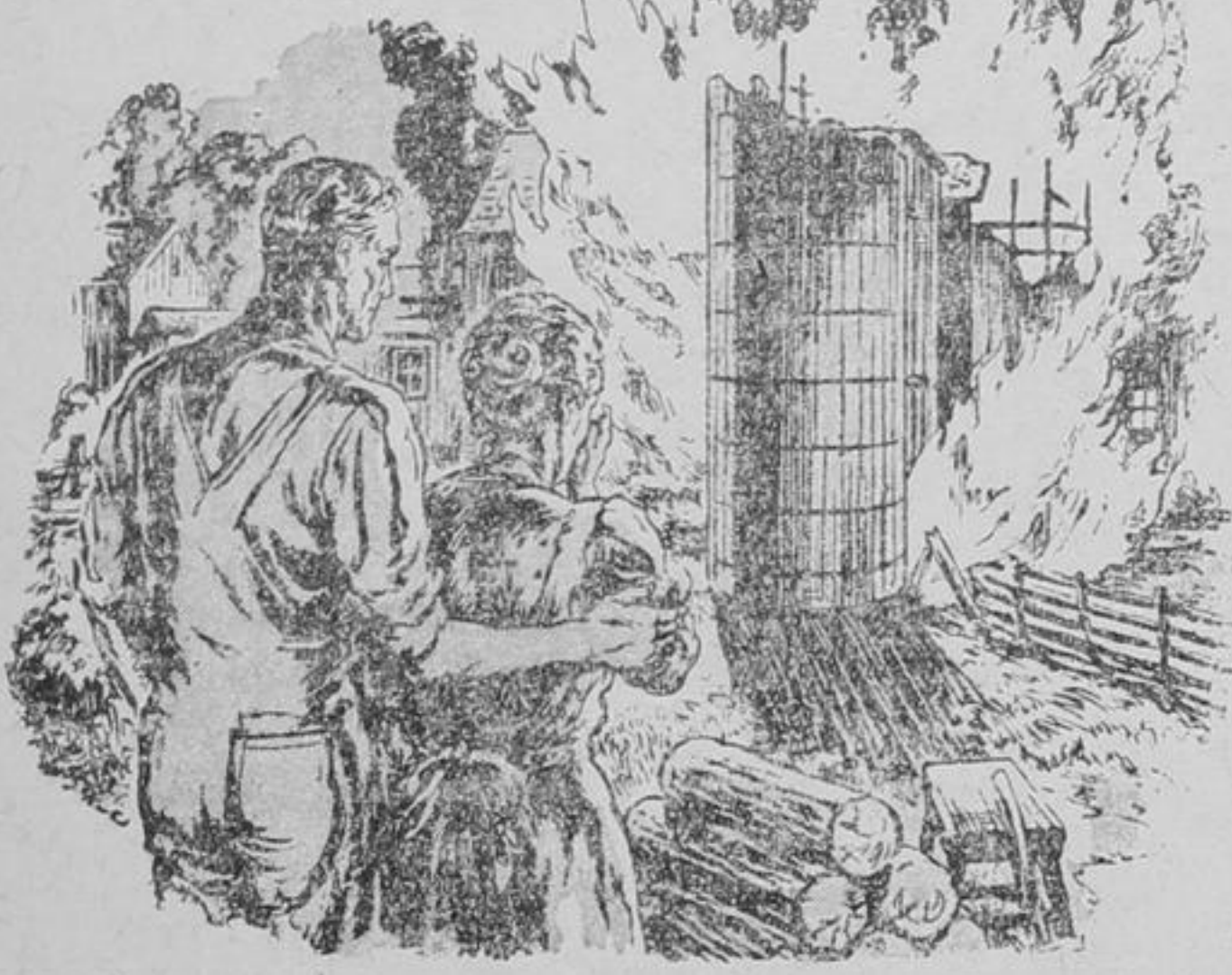


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Neighbours could have saved this barn. But they did not know about the fire — there was no telephone to call them. No farmer should be without a telephone. One single fire would pay ten years' telephone cost for a whole county. Every farmer should consider at least the safety of his home, family and chattels. The telephone banishes isolation, calls aid whenever needed.

LOW RATES FOR FARM TELEPHONE SERVICE



THE LIBERAL SHORT STORY

"CHINA DOLL"

By Frederic Arnold Kummer, Jr.

After the Panay bombing the Japanese high command clamped down hard on us newsreel men. They realized, of course, that those films of Eric Mayell's shown in the United States, would cost them plenty, not only in boycotts but in national sympathy as well.

As a result the fellows stationed behind the Chinese lines got all the pix, while the rest of us were forced to take routine shots of Jap troops on their way to the front, or starving refugees in the Settlement running behind the rice trucks on Nanking Road.

But when it came to real war shots, we were told politely...very politely...to stay away. Which after the battle of Shanghai was an awful let-down. Three months before we had the Jap fleet in the Whangpoo, blasting away at Chapei, shells whistling over the Bund Soochow Creek choked with bodies. And now nothing to do but watch the Shanghai Volunteer Corps drill, or swap yarns with the 4th U.S. Marines. A fine life for an ambitious cameraman!

Well, time dawdled on until one afternoon in January when I was standing at the longest bar in the world sipping a scotch and soda and talking to a young Annamite officer from the Concession Fraincais. Just as he was getting really wound up on the political situation, a house-boy came in paging me.

"Person to see you," he murmured.

I followed him out of the bar, curious. By "person" he meant a Chink, only whites were 'gentlemen', high-ranking Chinese being "Chinese gentlemen." This fellow who was waiting for me on the steps outside, looked like a low-grade coolie. His clothes were a patchwork of rags, but in contrast to most Shanghai coolies, he looked fairly well fed.

"What d'you want?" I demanded. The man bowed, handed me a note, dirty but neatly typed.

"Dear Rusty," it said. "I'm up near Haiwei covering what I call in my despatches 'the Haiwei front.' Actually it's a Chinese outpost and a Japanese outpost on opposite sides of a paddy-field. They take potshots at each other when they're awake. Two missionaries up here are helping the refugees, while I sit around and wait for the scheduled Japanese push. There ought to be a good story in it, if and when. Meanwhile we need a fourth at bridge so I'm inviting you up for the weekend. Bring your camera and if the attack comes off, maybe you'll get some pictures. Yours, Dolly O'Hara."

Dolly O'Hara, more generally known as the China doll and considered by some the most beautiful girl in Shanghai! More, she was an ace reporter of the Shanghai Herald as a crazy, reckless and impudent wench as ever hit the China coast. I'd first seen her sitting on a Settlement parapet during the fighting around North Station... red hair flying and a wide Irish grin on her face. Stray bullets zipping all around and there she sat. I learned afterwards she'd bet Brady of the Times that she could stay there ten minutes without being hit. Which was typical of the China Doll. So for the next three months I'd followed her around Shanghai with a matrimonial gleam in my eye. Just as I figured she was due to weaken, Dolly disappeared. And all the city editor of the Herald would say was: "That dizzy dame's on her own somewhere north of Shanghai. At least that's where her copy comes from."

"Oke," I said, getting at the coolie. "Follow me, chop chop." And I lit out for my flat to change into breeches, boots and a wool-lined leather coat. I took a camera too, not my big one, but a little portable Westman that could fit in my coat pocket. Grabbing a half dozen rolls of film I told the coolie to lead the way.

Well, up to that time I'd thought I knew something about Shanghai but after my guide had snaked his way through the ruins of Chapel for an hour or so, I was completely stymied. We walked all afternoon and the entire night.

Shortly after dawn we stumbled into Haiwei. And there, helping a couple of white people load a truck was the China Doll.

"Lo Rusty," she laughed. "You look all in."

"I was, but the sound of her voice made me forget it. Dolly had on a long, hooded coat that covered her flaming hair, yet seemed somehow to accentuate her slim body. Her blue eyes were gay, and the slight powdering of freckles over her nose emphasized the absence of make-up.

"You're too late for bridge," she announced. "The Jap push has start-

ed and Dr. and Mrs. MacDonald are moving along. Come over and meet them before they shove off."

I stuck out a dirty, half frozen hand, shook hands with the MacDonalds.

"Sorry we have to leave," the minister said, "but it's getting a little too warm here for us."

As he said that I realized for the first time that a battle was in progress. You could hear the cough of field pieces, the patter of machine guns, and a rattle of rifle-fire. Close too. Haiwei was deserted.

"This is no place for you," I said to Dolly. "You'd better go with them."

The China Doll stared at me, her eyes blue ice.

"And since when," she snapped, "have you been my boss? Do you think I'm going to miss a chance to get an eye-witness story of a battle? You can run along if you're afraid."

That hurt me. Without saying anything, I pulled the camera from my pocket, cranked it up, Dolly grinned, went to help the MacDonalds tie a huge American flag over the roof of the truck. Then the missionaries climbed into the back and sat down on the pile of luggage while a neat little Chinese chauffeur raced the motor to warm it.

Maybe it was the spsttering of the truck that drowned out the sound of the plane. Things happened too quickly for us to be sure. The China Doll was standing in the middle of the cobbled street waving good bye to the MacDonalds. I was behind her, adjusting the sights of my camera, still sore at her crack about my being afraid. Just at this moment the plane burst through the low grey clouds, machine guns spitting. I remember thinking it sounded like somebody tearing linen, only magnified a thousand times.

"Duck!" I yelled, putting the camera to my eye and pressing the button. Through the sight I could see the red Jap emblem on the plane's lower left wing. Little puffs of dust and powdered stone arose as the bullets hit the cobbles; the street was full of ricocheting lead. Something struck my shoulder and I swore under my breath because it made the camera wobble. The plane was not more than a hundred feet above the MacDonalds' truck, but the pilot wouldn't or couldn't stop firing. All at once MacDonald grabbed his leg with both hands and the Chinese driver toppled forward over the wheel. The plane zoomed up, disappeared into the clouds once more.

"Blessed Saints!" I heard the China Doll exclaim. "Is it bad, MacDonald?"

The sound of Dolly's voice aroused Mrs. MacDonald who had been sitting there in a daze; she dove into the pile of luggage and came up with a medicine kit. While she was bandaging her husband's leg, the Doll ran around to see about the Chinese chauffeur. He was dead... unpleasantly so. Right there my film gave out. As I reached for another roll, I noticed blood on my finger. The whole lining of my coat seemed wet; I felt light-headed, dizzy. Dolly was running toward me when the little Japanese armored car skidded around the corner.

"Hey!" Dolly flagged it to a stop. "Americans! Wounded; Savvy?"

A dried-up Jap officer with long moustaches climbed from the car.

"So unhappy," he began flashing his teeth in a meaningless smile. "We... here he frowned noticing my camera. "Photographs of military action not allowed. I must..."

"Listen, Handlebar Hank!! Dolly blazed. "One of your planes has fired on the American flag, wounded American citizens! If you know what's good for you you'll go for an ambulance, chop, chop!"

The little guy seemed to waver for an instant then jumped into the car, barked an order to the driver. I watched them disappear around the corner.

"Rusty!" I heard the China Doll say. "You're hurt!"

"Yeah," I mumbled and then the lights went out.

When I came to, my shoulder was thick with bandages and my head was in the Doll's lap.

"Sissy!" She grinned down at me. "I fixed up your puncture. With the MacDonald's first aid kit."

Before I could answer an ambulance rattled up and our friend with the moustaches hopped out, followed by a couple of stretcher bearers. They picked up MacDonald, slid him into the ambulance, and came over to me.

"So serious mistake," the officer began. "Many apologies..."

"Skip it," I muttered, sitting up.

"Let's get back to Shanghai." "Unfortunate," he smiled. "Pictures may reveal military secrets to enemy..."

Which was just a lot of play-play pidgin. He knew there were not any military secrets on the film... what he wanted was to keep the pictures of a Japanese "mistake" from being shown in the U. S.

"Listen!" I yelled. "You can't get away with this!"

But he did. While I sat there swearing, he took the films from the camera along with my rolls of spare film, and touched a match to them. Even went through all our pockets, smiling blandly. I was fit to be tied.

The ride back to Shanghai was completed in grim silence. Our friend with the whiskers tried to make conversation, but nobody answered him. All I could think of was those pix, the best since the Panay shots, being burnt up! A scoop like that would have netted me a bonus, a raise, and a place in the newsreel hall of fame!

As soon as we reached the Settlement, Dolly made a dash for the nearest phone to get her story in. I had the ambulance driver drop me at the Marine barracks, where Dolly said she'd meet me as soon as she was free. When Anson, chief medical officer saw me, he almost swallowed his cigar.

"Rusty!" he gasped. "Where in..."

"Take a look at this hole in my shoulder," I said weakly. "I'll explain while you're working."

So Anson picked up a pair of scissors and began to cut away Dolly's improvised bandages.

"Huh!" he chuckled. "Enough gauze to patch up the whole Chinese army! I..." He took a round, foil-wrapped object from the tangle of bandages, laid it on the table. "A roll of films!"

"Films!" I muttered unbelievably. "But..."

"Rusty!" The China Doll burst into the room, radiant. "All right?"

"Sure," I said, staring at the films.

"But these pix..."

"Oh, them. Why they're the shots you took of the machine gunning. I slipped one of your spare rolls in the camera before the Jap officer got back. That's what he burned up."

"So this is the real McCoy," I murmured. "Dolly—darling!"

And then suddenly she didn't look gay or devil-may-care; her eyes were wet and very tender.

"Huh!" Anson chuckled, sponging my shoulder. A fine time for a man to have only one arm!"

RURAL TEACHERS' PLIGHT

Today we find the deplorable condition of many rural teachers being paid less than what girls receive for factory work. When it is considered that young men and young women have to make a sizeable cash outlay and spend from five to six years after leaving elementary schools to equip themselves for the teaching profession, it becomes readily apparent that they are woefully underpaid even though they receive the \$500 minimum wage set by a provincial regulation.

That is less than \$10 a week over the calendar year. True, teachers have a long vacation in mid-Summer, but they cannot live on air while they are not teaching. Moreover, some have to go to the additional expense of taking Summer courses to hold their positions.—Kitchener Record.

Don't take down the stove before Easter.

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