

MASTERS OF The Parachute Mail

by PETER BENEDICT

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Peggy Calder: Aged twenty, daughter of a retired army officer eking out an anxious existence on a smallholding near Abbots Ferry. Peggy is the "brains" of the family.

Peter Sherwood Milne: A barrister from the Public Prosecutor's Department. He is working in conjunction with the police in the fight against illegal drug trafficking.

Corrie Cowle: To all appearances a highly-respected young woman of society.

Lady Cowle: Corrie's grandmother. Small, fragile, clever, and an expert at all the arts. Music and painting are particularly her hobbies.

Leslie Graham: In public, a popular man-about-town, and Corrie's fiance. SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

PEGGY CALDER got up one morning at four o'clock.

Daughter of a retired army officer turned farmer, she was the business head of the family, and always the first to rise. But this morning, after a restless night, disturbed by the drone of an aeroplane, and nagged by toothache, Peggy had decided that it was no use staying longer in bed.

She walked down the garden, and the adventure began. A young man and a car were in the usually-empty garage. And the man was threatening her with a revolver.

All he wanted, Peggy discovered, was that she should shield him from the police, who arrived on motor cycles five minutes later.

Now read on!

THREATS BEFORE LEAVING

"Oh, nothing you need worry about. Just that we'd like a look at that grey car." He looked down significantly at the gravel under his feet. "Looks like you've had one here not so long ago."

Peggy was prodded; the gun was an excellent prompter. She hurried to cover her one pause. "That's from my uncle's; he was here yesterday; he only left about ten o'clock."

"I see," said the sergeant obviously satisfied, and as he obviously grimly disappointed. "And you've seen no strange man about? Nobody hanging about who doesn't belong here?"

"No," said Peggy, "nobody."

He looked briefly at both of his satellites, and remarked, after an exchange of views in the glances: "Well, it looks as if you were right. He must have shaken us at the Mill Lane turning, or else risked cross-country running on the short grass. We'll double back."

And that was all. They had been almost within touch of their man; Peggy had felt him tensing himself against the wall as they talked, to keep himself flattened out of their sight; and they were going away without him. They had reached the gate, and closed it behind them, and were kicking their motor cycles into action again. The car purred and shot away into the grass, to round upon its track, the cycles slipping easily into position on either side of it before it had gone many yards. They were out of sight in a minute, headed back on their futile hunt for the stranger on the spaces of the moorland, where he was not.

Peggy was dragged back into the shed by her wrist. Her captor leaned against the closed door, laughing.

"Well?" said Peggy, in miserable anger. "Are you satisfied?"

"Eminently satisfied. I couldn't have done it better myself. Lucky for us both wasn't it, that you didn't happen to be one of the hysterical type?" He tossed the revolver in his hand, and her eyes followed it instinctively up and down. "Don't be nervous," he said pleasantly. "I'm quite an expert with it."

Peggy did not doubt that; the thrust of it into her side had felt quite com-

petent enough for her.

"And now," he went on, "I'll relieve you of my company, which for some reason doesn't seem to make any great appeal to you. But listen to this! Don't go thinking you can open your mouth safely once I'm out of sight. Don't come over public-spirited, and start giving descriptions of me to the police. Because if you do, I'll make you wish you'd never set eyes on me."

"I wish that now," said Peggy furiously.

He laughed. "You've learned nothing yet. If you go back on me any time in the next twelve months—yes, or after—if you make just one little move against me—the most unpleasant thing you can think of will be honey and roses compared to what will happen to you. You'll keep your mouth tight shut, and forget this ever happened, or take the consequences. But don't say that you haven't been warned."

"I won't," said Peggy, between her teeth.

He turned in the act of opening the door of his car, and gave her a long, appraising look; and the dangerous expression came back to his face for a moment. He raised a warning hand at her.

"You're thinking you can shake me safe enough when I'm gone. I can tell it by your eyes. You're thinking it will be easy enough to ring up the police, or send a message through another person as a go-between. Don't think it! Take my tip, and leave it alone. Listen, girl, while you take no action against me, I've no grudge against you. But if you ever open your mouth to a single person, I shall find it out; and then heaven help you. That's all about it. Just so long as you know what you're taking on." He pulled his dark goggles down over his eyes, and got into the car. "Now open the doors."

She opened them. He still had the revolver in his hand.

"And the gates on to the road."

She opened those, too; by the time she had swung them wide the grey car was already creeping silently down the slope of the path behind her. She stepped out of its way, her eyes feverishly busy with the body of it, and the build, and the number, though this last would almost certainly be a different combination if ever she did see the car again, and she could not rely on it.

The car crept to the road with engine still shut off, and swung suddenly and sleekly into gear as it turned. She recorded mentally that it was a car which had cost a great deal of money; no small-time crook was this. Also she tried to get a fuller glimpse of his face, but it was hidden except for the too-full mouth which grinned at her impudently as he flashed by.

He shouted: "So long!" and waved his hand to her. She did not respond, unless the narrowing of her angry eyes against the sun's slant could be reckoned as a response. She wanted a mental picture of him, any which would conveniently stay in her mind. He had defeated her, and she was not used to taking defeat lying down. She stood there rigid by the gate, her hand holding it open behind her, looking after his car until it had disappeared on the valley road into Abbott's Ferry, in the opposite direction to that taken by his pursuers.

She did not know when she had disliked anyone so much. All her independence smarted at such usage. She had been the very convenient fly walking into his parlour just in time to be of use to him. Keep her mouth shut! Yes, she thought she would do that. After all, quite apart from unnecessarily worrying her parents, confidence in that quarter could hardly be expected to produce any useful co-operation. But forget it! Forget that she had let loose a dangerous criminal upon the world when she had practically had him in her hands! Above all, forget that she owed him a grudge for making use of her! No, that was not likely.

CHAPTER II PEGGY'S PRIVATE PLANS

It was too late to do anything about it. Her precious extra time had been used up already, and she had work to do. Soon her parents would be getting up, and if everything was not as usual, they would begin to ask questions; not, of course, because they, in the nature of things, preferred everything to run in routine, but because she had accustomed them to getting things that way.

So, for the present, she must postpone investigations of the mysterious car and its equally mysterious driver. She kept the most likely threads in her

mind as she fed the chickens and the pigs, and lit the fire in the broad kitchen grate. The tracks of the wheels might give her a lead; and there she was on safe ground, for there would be no other car over them this morning. It was not the breadman's day for delivering, and there was nothing else immediately due. And it was not going to rain. The sky was cloudless. For what they should prove to be worth, the tracks would keep.

She was curiously unconscious of anything melodramatic in the business. She knew that she was more than ordinarily excited and touchy that morning, and that things were happening to her which had never happened before. But that, in its way, was a stroke of luck. After all, she had been, on the brink of finding life at this moorland cottage in the backwoods, and it was anything but boring now.

In the afternoon Peggy shook her duties off her shoulders hurriedly, and escaped to the waiting cartrucks in the gravel. It was typical of her father not to see them, even when he had gone into the shed for his tools. True, they were not very deep or clear, and perhaps it needed the eye of knowledge to discover them at all.

Peggy sat on her heels in the path and studied them. She knew not the first thing about makes of tyres, and could not for her life have called the arrowhead pattern of them by its name; but she could memorize a design as well as anyone, and had this one by heart in a few moments, down to the indentations of the edge, seen more clearly where the gravel merged into the dust of the moorland road.

For once fervent thanks was due to those moorland roads, usually the recipients of nothing better than maledictions. They were not "made" roads; they had never been surfaced with tarmacadam, or any of the new compounds which make driving easy; they were simply levelled in the hard clay of the moors, and trodden down by centuries of use into their present state of near-rock. But there was plenty of dust on them—a heavy clay dust which did not blow about unless the wind was high, but lay where it was pressed; and it had retained most graciously, though here and there stony patches broke the sequence, the print of those arrowhead tyres.

If she had not known beforehand what to look for, she would never have found half that trail, and probably would not have traced it for more than a hundred yards from her own gate, where it was lost for a long stretch in a long outcrop of genuine rock, polished and shining in the dry weather. The grass fell back here, as it did in many places, and the road swelled to the dimensions of the crock of rock; and on either side the grass was short, so that a car could easily leave the road proper and take to the sort of cross-country run which was a commonplace up here.

But Peggy Calder thought she would know the place where he had left it. There had been a heavy dew that morning, and the grass, too, would be on her side in the matter of retaining prints. Several times she lost the trail completely for a while, but each time she found it again. It led her well out into the desolate stretches, where occasional copses broke the monotony, but no houses. There were a few ugly breaks in the ground where clay had been excavated until the quality of the deposit gave out; one of two shafts sunk for coal, with as little result; long stretches of heather and furze; clumps of birch saplings only breast-high to her, waving their shimmering leaves in the ghost of a hot wind. A fascinating place, in its way, but very lonely.

IN THE TRACK OF THE TYRES

She wondered if that was why the car had been there. And then she thought again of something which she had forgotten completely; the aeroplane. It was unreasonable, perhaps, to connect the two; but coincidence surely had not dropped all these unusual trifles into her lap in one morning for nothing. There must be a connexion, or at least the possibility of a connexion must be taken into consideration.

What it was, what it could be, she had no idea. But crooks—the vague term which she had borrowed from the films, to which this affair seemed to belong, covered a multitude of possibilities in the personality of her enemy.

"Crooks do not drive out to the middle of one of the loneliest places in Britain in the middle of the night for nothing. There had to be a connexion."

Already she could say truthfully that she was nearing the middle of the moor. She herself would not have been so anxious to cross it at night, but this man knew his way all right. He had done the journey before. And why? Why was this place chosen, if not for its very loneliness, and the fact that there were no houses within sight or earshot.

Cars could camp here for the night, and be noticed by no one. Aeroplanes could land—no, on second thought that was impossible; landing was, she remembered, a delicate business, and undertaken at night only on properly lit flying-fields, unless a mischance made it necessary to take a big risk in order to avoid a bigger. Besides, the aeroplane last night had not landed; she had been awake for some time, listening to the hum of it as it cruised

about over the moor, and watching the lights at its wing tips.

Now that she came to remember it so vividly, the lights at the wing-tips had gone out very quickly; that meant they had served their purpose; and their purpose had been simply to identify the machine to its confederate below. All of which was very pretty reasoning, but so far need not bear any relation to what facts she had.

Then she found the place where a car—she could not be positive of the tyre-pattern here, but she thought it was the same—had left the road, and taken to the grass. There was a cart-track here, long-grassed over, but usable, indeed probably much more usable than it had been before the grass covered it; it had once led down to one of the clay-pits; but the pit had never been more than a shallow and broad removal of the turf, and was now as green as ever it had been.

It lay in a great natural amphitheatre, a perfectly oval in shape, and about 100 yards across at its broadest. The cart-track made a lead down into it, and that was the only break in a ring of young birch trees which rimmed the top of the slope thickly, hiding it from anyone who did not actually thread their silvery trunks and look down into the hollow.

She found a place in the grassy slide down to it where a more lush growth, fat with milkweed, invaded the grass; and it was easy there to see that something heavy had passed over the trailing stems and crushed them, for they lay flattened and dark against the resilient under-carpet of grass.

Peggy walked slowly all round the arena, all over it, across it from side to side, and saw nothing out of the ordinary. She went higher, into the lower fringe of the young trees, and walked round once again. There were furze bushes there in plenty, low-set into the longer grass, so that she tread warily among them, twisting her dress closely round her legs. Halfway round and she had found nothing to excite or satisfy her curiosity. Naturally enough, he had taken away with him whatever he had come to get, whether it was mere information by word of mouth, or something more substantial.

Then she caught a gleam of something lying among the gorse branches, something dully white, which showed only as a crumpled piece of tissue paper left from the last picnic night show. She parted the stems over it, gingerly, with her hands, and it assumed a more intriguing shape. It was a handkerchief—no, it was the wrong material for that, coarser, harder, like unbleached calico. Peggy put her hand down to pick it up, though she had little hopes of it; and under it something harder and heavy was picked up, swinging against her wrist.

PEGGY FINDS A PARACHUTE

It proved to be a small parcel wrapped in strong greyish paper, and attached to the cloth by a whole complicated system of thin cords. Small it might be, but it weighed heavily for its size; her practised hand tossed it, and hazarded a guess of a pound, more or less; maybe an ounce or so one way or the other, but certainly not more than that. A compact sort of content to it, like a slab of butter but rounded in shape instead of cut off clearly.

The cloth baffled her until she wrenched herself out of the gorse bushes, and threw herself down in the grass to spread it out before her to its fullest extent. It proved to be round, or, more properly, semi-spheroid in shape, like the half of a balloon; it was quite three feet across, though she had not believed it could be half so large; and the cords were attached to rings all round its edges. She knew what it was. She had actually seen parachutes in use, not only on the screen, but actually in real life, on one of her rare holidays.

And this was a parachute for merchandise, and merchandise of a clandestine kind, something which could not be sent by post, which could not travel by road transport in safety, which could come only direct from supply to demand, and without the knowledge of a third party. Hence the hollow on the moors, ideally designed for dropping things from planes; for given a little bombing experience on the pilot's part, and a light shown from below by the confederate, the arena was a target large enough to receive all missiles, and smooth enough to conceal none of them once they were received. There could be few places so perfectly adapted to the purpose.

On the under side of the parachute she found something else of interest, of great interest; a few words pencilled on a slip of paper and pinned to the hem of the fabric. True, they meant nothing to her; but they might mean much to the police, who were notoriously neither so stupid nor so ill-informed as they were represented to be in contemporary fiction. She read them over, and for all her enthusiasm could make nothing out of them at all.

"Quoting you: 9:5 uoc. 4: no need await confirmation. Any queries through No. 4. Mere Col."

Quoting you! Why? Someone repeating his arrangements to see if he had them right? "Any queries through No. 4" was easy enough, but not helpful. It proved there were at least four in the know, at any rate. Which number, she wondered, cloaked the identity of the man with the grey car? And what was the racket? But she had the answer to that in her hand.

She braced her fingers under the string which bound the parcel; and there she paused. No, she would not open it; not because she had any wild ideas about infernal machines concealed in it, but because everything about it, even the way the cord was might mean something to those who had the regular task of handling such things. No, she would not disturb it in any way; she would fold up the parachute just as it was, and take the whole thing home, to be delivered to the police in Abbott's Ferry to-morrow,

when she went down to the market; and to be opened by them, and by no one else.

She walked up out of the hollow, and set out briskly for home. Suddenly and absurdly it occurred to her that she had lost something, and after a moment of mental searching she remembered what it was. Her nagging tooth, hopelessly outclassed in the matter of interest and excitement, had long since given up the unequal struggle and stopped aching.

(To be Continued.)
The characters in this story are entirely imaginary. No reference is intended to any living person or to any public or private company.
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Rev. Fr. Caufield's Mother Dies at Monteith

Mrs. Caufield Was One of the Honoured Pioneers of the Monteith District.

Death removed another pioneer of the Monteith district when on August 3rd, Mrs. Margaret Caufield, widow of Thos. J. Caufield, passed to her eternal reward. Born in Pickering, Ont., seventy-two years ago, her maiden name was Margaret O'Donnell. The greater part of her life was spent in old Ontario, and for many years after her marriage to Thomas Caufield they resided at Uxbridge, where their eight children were born.

In 1918, the Caufields became residents of the Monteith district. Predeceased by her husband in February, 1937, this estimable woman bore great and constant suffering with fortitude and courage over a lengthy period of time.

Her last mortal remains were borne from her home to her parish church at Val Gagne on Saturday morning, at nine o'clock. The remains were received at the door of the church by the Rev. J. R. O'Gorman, P. P., of Timmings. Solemn requiem high Mass was celebrated by her son, the Rev. J. A. Caufield, P. P., of Cobalt, with the Rev. P. Morin, P. P., of Val Gagne, as Deacon and the Rev. T. J. McManus, Kirkland Lake, as Sub-Deacon. Low masses of Requiem were said on the two side altars of the church by the Rev. R. McMahon, P. P., Kirkland Lake, and the Rev. R. J. Roney, Timmings. Present in the sanctuary were the Rev. H. J. Martindale, P. P., Schumacher, and the Rev. F. M. Weller, C. R., of North Bay College.

Paribearers were three sons of the deceased, Thomas, of Uxbridge, James of Cobalt, and Patrick, of Monteith, a son-in-law, Mr. Fred Paxton of Richmond Hill, and H. Plumer of Monteith, and Wm. Mansfield of Schumacher.

Five sons and three daughters are left to revere the memory of a faithful and saintly mother. They are the Rev. John A. Caufield, Parish Priest of Cobalt, Thomas of Uxbridge, James of Cobalt, Patrick and Austin of Monteith, and Mrs. Fred Paxton, of Richmond Hill, Helen, R.N., of Monteith, and Margaret of Toronto.

One Way to Solve the Big Railway Problem in Canada
(St. Catharines Standard.)
The Ottawa Journal hands one to the Canadian Travel Bureau. It reports the arrival in Rome of an Indian potentate with 12 wives, son and daughters of unspecified number, 50 servants and 650 trunks. An invasion of a few potentates like that in Canada might almost lift the C.N.R. mortgage or send C.P.R. common up a few points.



That Body of Hours

(by James W. Barton, M.D.)

We live so much indoors—home, factory, office—that to get into the sunshine with its bright cheer, its warm health giving ultra-violet rays appeals to us so strongly that we forget that one can get too much of a good thing. Thus it happens every year when the bright warm sunshine appears thousands of people forget that the sun has heat as well as well as brightness and this heat can burn the skin and cause shock and prostration just as can a severe burn. As mentioned recently a severe sunburn can cause chills fever, nausea and vomiting.

"Large areas of pale, soft untouched skin are suddenly exposed to an intense summer sun, which is often intensified by reflection from an expanse of water or cloudless sky. An hour passes without any noticeable change. There is no tan and scarcely any sunburn. Yet already the skin has received sufficient heat to cause severe and painful sunburn six hours hence. Unfortunately the individual doesn't realize it and settles down in earnest to acquire a real 'tan' Then follows an agonizing night of parched burning skin that puffs into thin blisters and the weakness and prostration of a severe burn follows.

Some one has well said that the only way to prevent sunburn is to keep your shirt on.

Dr. Allan S. Johnson, in "Hygeia," tells us that certain oils applied to the skin before exposure seem to hasten the tanning process and prevent burning, but skins vary so much that the oil does not help all skins.

To relieve pain and symptoms once the skin has been burned Dr. Johnson states, "The simplest and most effective measure is to apply cold compresses of tannic acid solution. This should be freshly made by dissolving 2 table-spoonsful of tannic acid powder in a glassful of water. Very strong tea, which has been allowed to cool, can be used in emergency."

The sun is helpful but should be taken in small, gradually increasing doses until the skin can withstand it safely.

The tannic acid treatment relieves the pain at once and within twenty-four hours converts the sunburn into a most gratifying tan.

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Kirkland Taxi Driver Hit with Knuckle Duster

Kirkland Lake, Aug. 8—Provincial police have been conducting an extended search for a man who shortly after midnight Tuesday smashed a Kirkland Lake taxi-driver in the face with a knuckle duster or hunting knife, and escaped into the bush near Dane.

Mike B. Dennis, driver for McCaulley's, took a call about 12.35 a.m. Wednesday to pick up a fare near the Up-town Theatre.

He found the man, and the latter asked to be driven to Dane. The passenger, who carried a small satchel, was uncommunicative. He was sitting with the driver, and at some distance this side of the Dane turn, Dennis states, the fare struck him heavily in the mouth, causing cuts which later called for ten stitches.

Dennis immediately opened the door on his side and plunged into the roadway. The car rolled on some 40 feet into the bush in the rain.

Dennis walked to Groulx's dairy farm, and telephoned his office and the provincial police, who under the direction of Constable A. McDougall, have been working on the case ever since.

It is presumed that Dennis' assailant had intended to knock him out and take the car.

His satchel was found in the machine, together with a cheap hunting knife which may or may not have been the weapon used.

Edmonton Journal:—The Montana rancher who saw his first street car in Calgary this week was just in time. Judging from the popularity of trolley buses, soon to operate in Edmonton, he almost missed the old tram era.

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