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Ashes of Lightning

by Vincent Cornier

Author of "The Steel Dutchman," "The Flying Hat," Etc.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

GILES MORETON: Twenty-five, handsome but temperamental. Reputed to be a former R.A.F. pilot, invalided out. Now works as an inspector in the Lowood tank plant.

CAROL GILROY: Daughter of local solicitor, who has taken up war work as a viewer in the Lowood plant. She is interested in Moreton, who mystifies her.

HECTOR FLANAGAN: Works super-intendent. Hostile to Moreton.

"RATTY" HELME: Progress clerk, who toadies to Flanagan.

MAJOR - GENERAL SIR ALBERT HARDISTY: General-Officer Commanding the district in which the Lowood works are situated.

CAPTAIN CALTHROP: Intelligence Officer on Hardisty's staff, specially interested in security questions.

CHAPTER XV HERE WAS PEACE

The Gilroy's house in Cathedral Close proved to be a gracious sanctuary. Moreton relaxed and gave himself up to enjoyment of its charms.

He had never known a place quite like it. The serenity of the mid-eighteenth century, in which period it had been built, seemed to invest its every air. Tall windows with scalloped panes, panellings in Wedgwood blue and others of dim golden oak; sheen of mahogany, shimmer of silver glowing canvases, all contributed to tranquility. Inconspicuously, Moreton lost those intolerant moods of his.

John Gilroy also helped to conquer them. He had not practised as a lawyer for thirty years without the faculty of searching into men and deciding about them. In his opinion Giles Moreton had been living on his nerves. The youngster was a mass of conflicting elements: sensitive, dreamy, beauty loving, yet realistic in his interpretation of duty.

So Gilroy smoked his pipe and watched his marrows and puffed smoke into late roses, ruminating. When he made up his mind he took himself off to the General for a talk.

Days were passing without any further progress being made in the mystery of the saboteurs. The Lowood factory was closed down, indefinitely. A second bombing raid had resulted in a cracked floor for the assembly department and the severance of a ten thousand volt high-tension cable. Piers and pillars, supporting the machine-shop had been jarred out of truth and some fifty machines, grinders, drillers and hoppers, needed re-bedding.

Moreover, the moorland fire still menaced the plant.

With wind veering to the north-east the creeping seams of burning soft

coal and peat succeeded in tunnelling beneath the static water of the great ditch which the troops had made. Retreating before half a dozen subterranean fires—rumbling and glowing corridors of awful flames—more and deeper saps had to be driven, and more waters diverted, until the troops battled with their unusual enemy within four hundred yards of the works' boundary.

Twice in a week Moreton was summoned to conference with his superior officer. He returned from these, his mind a turmoil, to the quiet and the healing of that house in Cathedral Close. He had been shown figures... the alarming debit records of totally-suspended production and they sickened his spirit. A major battle could not have taken a greater toll of armoured vehicles than this mass-sabotage. Although the multitudinous drawings were being tripled and although other plants were being speeded up into wider production, the fact remains that Lowood—laid out exactly and engaged for over half a century on the specialized production of gears—could no more be duplicated than it could be replaced. Apart from the massive aggregation of working-plant, some of it unique in the world, the most skilled of personnel was concentrated in the area, and diffusion of these experts throughout other works would prove a well-nigh fatal weakening of effort.

The ugly truth had to be recognized through Flanagan and his toady, Helme, the enemy had struck an almost paralyzing blow at the very heart of the industry.

Moreton, sometimes, used to imagine what would happen if ever he found himself within striking distance of either. And, sweating with fury he would pray that the ordinances of duty, in such an eventual encounter, would preserve him from the murderers he knew lurked in his soul—

"Black again, Carol," old John slowly said to his daughter, after watching Moreton pull out of one of these sombre moods. "By George but he's going through it! I don't believe a dyed-in-the-wool Nazi could be more of a fanatic."

"I—I know, Daddy," Carol was intensely worried; fearing in her secret mind that her father was receiving the worst possible impression of the one she loved. "It's quite terrible, the way he's taking it all to heart."

"Better by far," Gilroy robustly declared, "he does so, than play the dilletante." He sighed and mused, with a far-away wistful gleam in his eyes. "I—I was after his stamp, years ago though I'm sure you'll find that hard to believe. We were very poor at the outset, with a family practice sucked as dry as an orange. Each cause I took up I worried on like a dog. Your mother understood—and let me be. But," and he spoke proudly, "thank God she lived to see her patience rewarded. The fiercer the storms of youth, my dear, the calmer and more confident one is when the middle seas are reached—still that wistful looking—and the tides move towards sunset."

"Daddy, you don't know how grateful I am for your telling me this. I—I was afraid."

"That low rich chuckle of his. 'Afraid' Carol, that this intense young man of ours was wearing out both my approbation and my patience—eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, forget your fears, my dear. I'm not easily mistaken in my assessments, and the youngster appears to me to be primed with the right stuff." The girl's relief was so pathetically obvious that Gilroy was flushed by a queer tinge of remorse. "Perhaps, Carol, I ought to have said something like this earlier. And so I would have done, but that the scrambling and unquiet time did push it out of further question. There, you've got me in to my allad habit of quoting Shake-

spear again! Off with you; go and play to him—his smile was tender.

After a while Moreton quietly entered, drawn by the diffident ghost of Schubert yearning from eternity for the winds and the lilacs and the jinglings of some Maytime in Vienna, when he had caught them by his genius into an immortal serenade.

CHAPTER XVI SNIPER ON THE PRECINCTS

Now it came to pass that the sun of Captain Roger Calthrop arose in all its splendour.

He had chafed under Moreton's apparently effortless mastery of the whole situation. "Chafed" is not enough; he had experienced, quite despondently, an overwhelming sense of inferiority. Fate, he considered, had played him a shabby deal. What effective cards had been, had stacked themselves, completely for the Secret Service man. His own hand had been meagre—foul.

Then he noticed Flanagan's best pair boots.

Unlike Helme, Flanagan had not returned to his lodgings. His personal possessions had not been destroyed, and the Security Police had taken them. For a man in Flanagan's well-paid position there was a little. Three suits, a raincoat, four pairs of boots and shoes, and a scanty assembly of linen and hosiery, completed the haul.

There were neither papers nor letters of any kind.

Calthrop was attracted by the look of those boots. They had a square-shouldered, unusual shape about them; an oddly "official" look. Turning them over, he noticed that small steel plates were snuck into the heels—not on the outer edges, to prevent wear, but on the inner curves. A man shod with the boots, standing to attention would have those semi-heel plates touching.

Calthrop exulted. He had not cneuhdredth part of the knowledge of Nazi Germany that Moreton possessed, but he had enough to inform him, accurately, of the purpose of those plates.

"I've got spurs that jingle-jangle-jingle," he jocosely hummed as he picked at one of the plates with a jack-knife. "I'll bet anything I'm right!"

And he was right. Excepting the lowest covering of leather, the heels were of wood—boxed out at that.

The steel plates had covered small cavities cut into this wood—identifying "Flanagan" as the German officer of some crack corps, in all probability the Schutz-Staffel; an S.S. man of the Nazi "inner-ring."

Much after the same fashion as bygone cavalryman used to fit a pair of thinly-filled spines into their spurs, instead of rowels, in order to make a musical clink as they walked, so these boots with their sounding board heels. A heel-clicking Nazi, wearing them, would reveal in the smartly effective detonations they would make.

A German officer's hand-made boots—what else.

Calthrop had all the clothes submitted to expert, microscopic examination. Within three days he received an astounding report.

Suit labelled "A," the best of the three, was of foreign build its fabric was, commercially unknown in Britain—a "Siltian merino" probably woven in Lodz, Poland, before the war. Dust and fragments extracted from it showed that it had been frequently worn in an area where a certain kind of tobacco is grown and the yellow limestone known as dolomite prevails. District defined as that bounded by the Rhine, the Main and the second-class Ludwigs Canal, connecting Bamberg with Ratisbon on the Danube.

Here was evidence complete that "Flanagan" was a German!

Of the suits "B" and "C" an even more astonishing report was received. Neither was the personal property of the man who had worn suit "A."

"Flanagan" was swarthy; the suits "B" and "C" had been worn by a man with violently "carrot" hair a man moreover, who hailed from Australia.

Seeds of erect and lucerne had been found in the trousers' turn-ups and these were of such a precise genus that they could be identified, without any possibility of doubt, as having been grown on the sheep-rearing savannas of Queensland, or west of the Eastern Australian highlands, "between" the report formidably declared "the isohyets of fifteen to thirty inches" outside tropical areas, where meadow-growing rainfall was reliable and annually constant.

Best of all, a tie was found to bear the tab of a hosiery in Sydney... and, on the waistband lining was a red-threaded device, "X.C. No. 1972V," a dry cleaner's tally also of Sydney.

Cables and short-wave radio systems were set to work.

Within another twelve hours it was found that the tie and the dry-cleaned suit had belonged to one Hector Flanagan, a rolling stone, successively a marine engineer, a bar-tender, and an odd-job hand on a Queensland sheep station. It was learned that this man had gone to sea again, early in the war, and had proceeded to Great Britain—where he joined the Army.

Hence it came to pass that this uprising sun of Captain Calthrop flooded dark mystery with light, and with sometimes more tangible than light living substance.

For, away in Libya, a hard-bitten and fiery-headed Irish-Australian sergeant found himself withdrawn from war's alarms, as by a miracle. They treated him gently, "this-side-up, with-care" packed him into a Liber-

ater bomber... and forwarded this puzzled man to England.

So much achieved, Captain Calthrop went off to Cathedral Close for a palaver with Moreton, who listened in approving silence.

"This Sergeant Flanagan," Calthrop laughed, "is a hard nut from all accounts. He's having a few hours rest, under guard, of course, in London. When we get him up here and grill him, it's a pound to a pipe-straw we'll get a line on the 'Hector Flanagan' who worked at Lowood."

"Still betting, I notice," Moreton grinned. "Well, we'll have to wait and see. Apparently it's a case of stolen—or lent—identity. Hector Flanagan, the Australian engineer, disappeared into the desert and 'Hector Flanagan' Nazi spy and saboteur," he almost hissed, "comes to filthy life in England."

"That's about it," Calthrop agreed he rose to take his leave. "And, you old rogue, I'm as proud as a tyke with two tails at having drawn abreast with you!"

"So am I—pleased" Moreton's face reflected the honesty of that. "It's been a perfectly splendid bit of work, Roger! I do congratulate you. You've no idea how bucked I feel!"

When Captain Calthrop had gone, Moreton went upstairs to his rooms to enjoy a cigarette before dinner—to those happily arranged chambers which had belonged to Carol's brother Pete, a lad now serving in the R.A.F. in India.

But Moreton could never think of this youngster as a warrior. So long as these rooms remained as he had left them, just so long would there be the golden spirit of a boy to gleam from shadows and to glow within the tapestries of these more sombre courts of time.

Here were his books and the mechanical toys of his school days; erecting strips of steel, nuts and bolts, and pulley-wheels; a little dynamo a steam engine, and a model locomotive... birds' eggs climbing-irons; bats gloves, and golf-clubs. Then youth—with its carefully treasured fly-rods, flinty and superb productions of balanced cane, which must have cost a score of pounds. A rook rifle, a hammerless ejector...

A distinct shock came from the outer wall. It jarred the whole place.

Moreton went to one of the tall windows and looked out.

The long garden stretched down from the back of the house to a narrow stone-fagged path which, being a right-of-way for other tenants of the Close, was terminated by a wicket gate built into the Cathedral precincts wall. This path too, had its sentry. Moreton could see the man, halted, looking up in the air as though puzzled by something abnormal.

Beyond the flagged path stretched the lawn known as Monks' Myre; a waterlea from which the old Cistercians used to fish the placid river Heller. The precincts' wall ended, at the river's southern bank, merging into the grey stone parapet of the bridge called Water Gate. Over the northern bank, arranged tier on tier were the tortuous streets of the ancient and hilly city.

Moreton was not concerned with the vista. He wondered what had caused that pick-axe blow on the brickwork below the window. He also wondered why the sentry was acting in such a curious manner. He had ceased to stare about at the empty air—and sidled backwards, now with his gaze fixed on a solitary walnut tree which stood some forty yards from the bottom of the garden on the Monks' Myre.

"Hannah's tree," the Gilroys called it. For their housekeeper savaged it each August, taking its green fruit for ketchup and pickling. Moreton smiled at a mental picture of the gaunt Hannah belabouring the graceful tree.

Glass gusted like glittering snow. Two distinct blows, as of heavy hammers, struck at the wall behind Moreton—who felt a stab just below his throat, a biting dart of pain which twisted him, agonized away from the shattered window-pane.

He closed his eyes, feeling oddly dizzy so he did not see that sentry, dropped on one knee emptying his rifle magazine in a burst of rapid fire, into the foliage of the walnut tree.

But he heard the shots and the wild scream of the man who, clawing madly, fell from the tree to the ground.

(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.

Legion's Good Work in Adjustment of Pensions

Ottawa, Jan. 24 (Special)—Canadian veterans, or their dependents, were enriched by more than \$40,000 during the three month period, Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, as a result of the efforts of the Legion dominion headquarters service bureau, R. Hale, chief pensions officer of the Legion, revealed here in his quarterly report.

Claims successfully adjusted, including veterans of both the present and the last war or their dependents, totalled 273, with 1902 of the adjustments going to present war veterans. The successful adjustments were brought about as the result of 815 interviews between Legion adjustment officers and government officials.

At the end of the year, Mr. Hale's report said, 4,254 active claims were being investigated and adjustments sought. Of this number, 1,785 were claims for dependents' allowance.

His report, Mr. Hale pointed out, did not include claims adjusted by Legion provincial commands.

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Quoting the Hon. Humphrey Mitchell Minister of Labour. "Up to the present time the Labour Department has not found it necessary to enter a prosecution against any employer for failure to replace a member of the armed forces, after discharge, to his former employment. It would seem that employers are anxious to carry out the terms of the Reinstatement in Civil Employment Act."

Which makes very nice reading, even though a trifle premature, because that statement was made last July, and the proof of the pudding will be when the time comes to eat it; when the flow of returned men to their native land begins in real earnest. If we can accept that one word "anxious" in its full literal sense, rehabilitation should proceed smoothly and satisfactorily. But there are bound to be complications that no single Act of Parliament can foresee and provide for.

Under the Act employers are required to reinstate war veterans in their original jobs—to re-employ returned men under certain definite conditions—"not less favorable than those which would have been applicable to him had he remained in the employment of the employer." This is a clear statement that not only does the returned man get his job back but he is also entitled to the seniority that has accrued until the time of his discharge from the Forces. The Act applies equally to men and women in the Services, who were at least three months in their employment before acceptance by the Forces. Where two or three persons left an identical job for the Forces, the first to leave is the one entitled to reinstatement.

This is only one of the snags that are due to prevent the Act from functioning smoothly. In almost every trade and occupation there has been a steady stream of employees passing successively through each particular job to end up eventually in the armed forces. Cases have arisen which involve reinstatement in employment covered by trade union agreements. It cannot be denied that in this district, and we have no reason to believe that this statement does not apply with equal force to other districts, there are many men at large of military age who are able to pass the most exacting medical tests devised by the mines. These men, by some devious means or other, have succeeded in weaving clear of even the Zemble net, in some cases, to the writer's knowledge, they are quite proud of this achievement, and are now filling vacancies left open by men who are at present serving their country in the fighting forces. Are these men, whom even the Zombies apparently rate at their true value, they seem to be able to get along quite well without them, going to be allowed to shelter behind the skirts of their trade unions when the time comes for them to step aside?

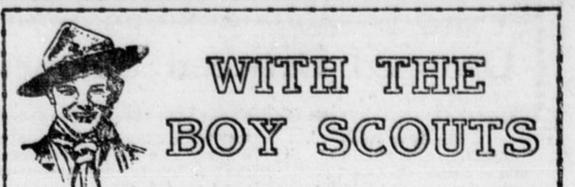
Such appears to be the case. To quote: "In each case it has been the policy to insist on reinstatement in the spirit required by the legislation, but the effect of any existing trade union agreement in such a matter as seniority has to be considered." If that ain't passing the buck—what is?

Leading Stoker, Ed Darridge, who has seen five years' service with Canada's fighting navy in many war zones, was a visitor to the Club on Saturday. Pte. N. McCracken of the Queen's Own Rifles was also present on that occasion. Pte. McCracken was badly wounded in Holland and is leaving for Christie St. Hospital to undergo further treatment. He also saw service in France and Belgium. W. O. Walter Greaves, R.C. A.F., an old and beloved member of Branch 88, and president of the Branch at the outbreak of the present war, called in and gave the boys the onceover on the same evening.

An observer of the semi-finals for the Doubles cup and last week's league games opines that Sydney should consult the Dart League before committing himself to any future prognostications on the probable state of the weather. Warm and sultry might fill unexpected heat wave. J. Gordon was the bill, as the amount of hot air expended could easily account for an out of town and Jimmie Wakeford could only muster one other beside himself to represent Legion in their game with United. By a strange coincidence United also had only two men available, so they fought it out on that basis. Legion gained three points; United one.

Aity-Aits met Moose with a full team. Bill Nixon turned out with a man short but put up a good fight. Al was in fine fettle and scored a couple of doubles. Jenks and Walter distributed their quota of hot air; they're good at it. Jenks, especially, after he scored a double to win. High scores: Walter Wilkinson 125; B Ill Nixon 125; Mason 96. There may have been others too modest to bring their high scores out into the limelight.

Imps took four points from the Fire-fighters by default, which leaves Paddy in the dumps; default games are no help to the aggregate score and this is the fourth game that Imps have engaged in without helping the aggregate. Cheer up, Paddy! White Cross took three points from Wanderers, thus adding to their aggregate and helping them to hold down top position in the totals. Seven Up and Windsor are in the running with Imps for leadership in the Shield League.



Hello Scouts and Friends:—Perhaps the heading of this column should be changed to Hello Friends and Scouts as we receive quite a few comments from readers of this column who are not Scouts and yet pass a few words on to the writer of the column. I appreciate your views and encouragement very much. It is indeed gratifying to know so many people read this little Column.

7th Timmins Troop Well, as usual, the 7th Troop heads the Column. As one of the Boys from the troop suggested instead of the Boys Scouts News it should be changed to Canadian Legion Scouts News.

Meeting opened with Flag break and inspection of the troop by Scouter Wheeler.

Patrols' corners and Hobby work followed with all patrols working at different articles.

A real lively and rough game was played by the troop in which sheer weight seemed to be the main object. Well, if you were the last on the floor you sure had to pay for the honour. A name was given to the new patrol and we hope they don't turn out as dangerous as the name. Rattlesnake patrol! I don't ever remember seeing a rattlesnake as big as some of the boys in that patrol. My, my, what a bite they could take.

The troop would like to know what happened to the Scouter and boys of the second troop who were supposed to visit us last Wed., Jan. 17th. Who forgot (?) perhaps we should call for you all.

7th Pack The pack worked most of the night on knots and promise. A few fast games were played and most of the boys were all puffed out by the time the meeting came to a close.

A few comments on Scouts and Scout work. How many Scouters have read the new rules effective in September? That is a long way to look ahead but from first glance it will take a lot of extra work.

Note also that the union jack is no longer a jack but is called FLAG.

As pointed out the Flag is correct as it only becomes a jack when it is flown on the Jack staff or forepart of a ship.

Are you doing your part for BOY SCOUT WEEK? I would like to hear from some of the troop scribes as to what your Scouters' plans are for that week and let us put it in the Column and then everybody knows what is going on and can plan where to go to. Oh yes the Cubmasters have planned a big gathering in the hall for Wed., Feb. 21st. Oh no, I didn't forget the hall but it is not quite sure yet where it will be held.

I can see one of our readers getting

very impatient because he always reads the joke or story portion. Sorry, but the HITLER joke will be published later on in the week so watch for the advertisement which will appear later.

Should have asked for wings: As a soldier went aboard ship he asked a sailor for a "life jacket". Sailor replied grinning: "You won't need it? were loading torpedoes down there? On top of that Ammunition, On top of that T. N. T. On top of that you."

In a Pinch Mussolini wired Hitler: Rush food people starving.

Hitler wired Mussolini: Tighten belts. Mussolini wired Hitler: Rush Belts.

Quotes "We scouts are thinking ahead of that day when the flags of all the nations will fly free, and when the youth of the world will march again in a united procession to proclaim that by goodwill and friendliness the nations can live together in peace and security."

yours for scouting Scouter Wheeler

CHANGEABLE

Throughout the evening meal, neither had spoken. But as soon as the dishes had been cleared away and they were seated before the fire, the husband's face lost some of its hardness.

"You know, dear," he said, breaking the long silence. "I've been thinking over our argument."

"Well!" she snapped, without looking up from her sewing.

"Yes, dear, I've decided to agree with you after all," he said meekly.

"That won't be any good," she sniffed. "I've changed my mind."—North Bay Nugget.

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