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Ashes of Lightning

by Vincent Cormier

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, invalidated out. Now works as an inspector in the Lowwood tank plant.

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

HECTOR FLANAGAN: Works superintendent. Hostile to Moreton.

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXV PROFIT AND LOSS

Already the high adventures, the fears, and the strange endurances of those days had passed... Moreton, in retrospect, cast up their total of gain and loss.

Carol, of course, was the central wonder of them all. Had it not been for that period of mingled misery, rebellion and revelation which came to him, when he had to leave with Flanagan for London—that torturing time when he had to leave her, lost, to follow the behests of his Service—he might never have realized how deeply he loved her. It was then that the glory shone.

When he took her in his arms, terrified, after her experience on the window-arch of the Priory, he knew that the glory was enduring. He had been old in his youth. His hazardous and responsible work had killed sentiment or, rather had encased it, for war's grim season. Now the trammels had broken; he was free, glittering. This youth, he felt, would out-last age—then, with one final return of the old cynicism, he remembered that such was the stuff with which all lovers wind their nests.... Then he laughed, at all cynics.

Of loss—there was Calthrop. He missed the pleasant brown face, the patient mien, and the quiet doggedness of his friend. Roger was down near Bristol. His chief concern, these days, was to evade those people who looked at the new ribbon on his tunic and inquired what he had been doing to merit it.

Of loss—the unfortunate Baines, and Letty Smithers' broken and lacerated leg. It was plain to be seen now, that the mysterious explosion behind the bench had been a mis-timed effort to rid the world of Carol and himself. "Flanagan" and Helme had noticed his concern in the growing tale of sabotage. They had also wondered how he came in possession of those "ashes of lightning" in the tube he had placed by the mug of tea. And the

traitors had planned his liquidation, careless of Carol Gilroy's fate.

Of loss, too, the oddly happy days of effort in the Lowwood inspection bays, with Fruity Flintoff singing his ridiculous jingles and with the others rallying, and sometimes wrangling, all to one end; production.

The lights were gone, for him. The surge and screech of machines; their whines, their throbbings their proud and ceaseless songs of power, were no longer of his life. The wearisome and monotonous routine of tens of thousands of differing components; the rigging problems of calculation when tolerances were defined as "plus nothing," "minus .032"—the weight of steel, the cut and shimmering mirror-rod of it, the very icy smell of it—even these he would miss.

And Banni, his spaniel ways and slow little chitching jokes were lost, forever. But, Moreton wondered had not Banni gained? Tortured to rags in a concentration camp; bereft of all his family and belongings; homeless and helpless, and unutterably tired—if death had not come to Ludwig Banni as a gravely smiling friend, then no verities existed under Heaven.

Of gain, there was that immensity of achievement which had resulted in the complete annihilation of the company of saboteurs, together with the seizure of all their secret arms, their radio-transmitting and receiving sets... and their supply of those terrible incendiary tubes.

For good or ill, Moreton's tactics in informing "Flanagan" that he would soon cease to be a machine-shop superintendent, and his deliberate allowance of Helme's eavesdropping, had realized that they were in imminent danger of arrest—the singular loss of their works' identity cards helped to that conclusion—and they cut paint-ers.

"Flanagan" acted with instant viciousness. He laid out a ring of wired tubes and fired the moors. More than likely, Helme actually switched the power into the deadly things—what time "Flanagan" radioed for the squadron of bombers to compete the heilish task of blotting out Lowwood works.

Inspection of the secrets of that lurking place in the ruins of St. Mary's Priory had made everything terribly clear.

In a tiny chamber, a long-forgotten turret room at the top of the pile, much was discovered. A portable wireless transmitter and aerials were there. A box containing a highly geared hand-generated magneto was also there—as were thirty more of the "ashes of lightning" tubes and coils of fine flex and cylinders of magnesium-electro. Enough incendiary gear, in fact, to duplicate the moorland fires, if necessary.

The Y-shaped prominence, which Jenkinson had first noticed, was a reinforced duraluminum contrivance which permitted a fine silken net—something like twin rope ladders—to sink down the ruined masonry, following its every curve, so providing a means of exit and approach to the turret room. Since the silken ladder-thing was no thicker than twine and dyed a natural grey, there was little fear of "Flanagan's" device being discovered, ordinarily.

Moreton sickened at the thought of Carol's ascent of that dizzy ladder, infuriated by the Hunnish cruelty which had driven the terrified girl up those swaying loops. For "Flanagan," following on her heels, had literally flogged her aloft with that dog-leash.

When she had reached the turret room he flung the heavy-ended thong out to the darkness.

And, by its twisting around the lamp standard, its presence led to his capture.

Another gain; a marvellous one—Carol's life! "Flanagan" intended her death, whether or not he got free, from the moment he attacked her he told her that. He had planned to that grim end.

Leaping out of the darkness near the pillar-box he had lashed the setter, Rollo, across the head with a piece of rubber tubing filled with lead shot. He dealt a similar blow to the girl. Wife she was half dazed he put adhesive plaster across her mouth, and dragged her to the ruins. Everything was accomplished in a few minutes, even the ascent of the silken steps.

As Carol sturdily said she would have mounted those without him having to use the leash in hope that, when she got to the top, she could kick back at him and send him hurtling down. But, the cunning German had foreseen, as much! He forced the girl to stand well away from the ladder before he left its loops for security on the stonework.

Then Aitcheson's remarkable shot! They had transferred the man. He had gone as a sergeant to other employment—for queerly enough, his fellow soldiers, while trained for war, could not stomach the glacial marksmanship who seemed to have obtained a long-abiding satisfaction out of his killings of Helme and "Flanagan." He pondered so, and purred above his thoughts.

Moreton was not so squeamish. He thanked God for Aitcheson's deadly skill. Gilroy as his thanksgiving, had given the man a cheque which altered his satisfaction into an excited and red-faced jubilation.

And now the days grew less for Farnanda and Doctor Ulic von Siebert both late of Germany. Before them was that eternal nothingness to which their country's sinister service had doomed them.

Von Siebert's round golden head had achieved a near-miracle in its creation of those incendiary tubes. So far as British chemists could determine, his device consisted of a potential of energy—a radio-active substance—suspended in heavy oil for security, as sodium is suspended in rock-oil, or phosphorus in water.

Transmitted electrical energy, or even a slight rise in ordinary temperatures, caused the infinitesimal granules of this stuff to whirl like needles of lightning, growing enormously from latency to fury as temperatures rose. On bursting through the quartz in which it was contained, the released force created fire—fire which, like thermite needed no oxygen to support its combustion.

And, the stuff had another property. Wiped, with its safeguarding oils, on steel, a system of disintegration was begun. Hence the ruin of those sun-wheels during the break for the Lowwood Feast, had explanation. The metal had been "rotted" throughout, until it flaked and grew soft.

Yes, Moreton pondered, as he got up to search for tea, Siebert, the genius of flame, had planned well—sabotage in excess!

NO TIME FOR DALLIANCE
Carol sweetly conscious of the glinting stone on her engagement finger, poured tea and handed it to her father, and Giles Moreton. Hannah had contrived another perfect little repast. Moreton noticed—honey, scones, muffins, and cakes with currants in them; blessings on Hannah the Gaunt!

"Well, Giles, and what have you been thinking out this time? Another brains trust session I notice!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, darling! As a matter of fact it won't occur again but, I've just been totting up my profit and loss account."

"That's the way, Giles!" Mr. Gilroy fed a piece of scone to Rollo. "Always keep the books straight, even amid the manifold distractions of love!"

"Daddy!"

Giles Moreton laughed. "The gain, I find, is almost tremendous. Achievement in arms kudos—and you, Carol." With sparkling eyes, Carol surveyed the pair. Then, gravely, she said: "I've got my release, dear. I—I couldn't go back to Lowwood." She paused. "I wonder, what would you say, Giles, to my going into the Army?"

Giles Moreton made a little whoop and put down his cup.

"Say? Say, Carol Magnificent. That—that determines me, too! I don't like my job any more I'm all for a quite life, too. If you go—I go. What do you say to that?"

"There was a quite time—a time for thinking then Carol, her eyes brimming, but her lips tremulous with nerve brave smiling, whispered that she thought the idea a good one.

"If I might make a proviso," said John Gilroy.

"Why—of course daddy."

"Certainly, sir."

"Then," the old lawyer soberly remarked, his eyes on both of them, affectionate and proud, "let there be a honeymoon first. Our times are not the times for waiting, are they?"

Carol stood at his left side, Giles at his right hand. Across his grey head they looked and smiled.

"No," they said in one voice. "There shall be a honeymoon."

(The End)

The characters in this story are entirely imaginary. No reference is intended to any living person of to any public or private company.

TOO LAZY

One of our neighbors, instead of catching up on his sleep on holidays, always arse at his usual time. Many of us thought he wasted his opportunity, but I reversed my opinion after hearing him greet one sleepy-eyed late riser. "A man who won't get up to loaf is too lazy to enjoy it!"—Readers' Digest.

Twenty Years Ago

From the Porcupine Advance Files

Twenty years ago Timmins had a dog question just as it has been having that sort of thing in more recent days. The big difference in the two questions however, is the fact that to-day the question is about unlicensed dogs around, while in 1925 the objection was to licensed dogs being picked up by the dog catcher. Complaints had been made to the council that dogs with the year's tags on them and running peacefully on street in dog fashion, doing no harm to anybody, were being picked up by the dog catcher and taken to the pound where they were destroyed before the owner could find out where their dogs had gone. The Council thought this was a bit thick, as one man put it, and so the order was made that dogs at large on the street and not doing harm to anyone were to be left alone if they were wearing the 1925 tags. At the time the comment was made that it was only the harmless pet dogs that were picked up. It was a fact that some big and vicious-looking dogs that roamed around were not interned. Some of this type of dog would daunt all but the bravest in the line of dog catchers, particularly in view of the fact that there was no dog-catching equipment in town at that time, and all dogs had to be caught by hand, as one Irish gentleman phrased it.

William Gagne, proprietor of the Lady Laurier Hotel in 1925, and in earlier days in town the owner and operator of a planing mill here died on Feb. 25th, 1925, after an illness of several weeks.

In 1925 'The Advance' continued the advocacy of a new post office for Timmins and a wharf at the Mattagami river. Just about this time of year in 1925 'The Advance' was somewhat "let up" editorially because there was an item in the Dominion House estimates for \$25,000 towards a community hall for Hailebury, and not a doggone cent for Timmins. It was forcibly pointed out that Timmins paid its full share of Dominion taxes, but never seemed to get anything from the Dominion in return. The Advance proceeded to point out good reasons why Timmins should have a new post office and there should be a wharf at the Mattagami river. It took literally years of agitation to get these due necessities for Timmins, but they did come along eventually.

As suggested in this column a week or two ago, the sport of ski-ing was very popular here twenty years ago. 'The Advance' twenty years ago had the following item:—"Secres of young people of the town took advantage of the splendid weather on Sunday to spend the day ski-ing—a sport which is gaining great favour in the camp. The hill near Dalton's brickyard is an ideal spot for ski-ing, and nearly every Sunday afternoon scores of people can be seen making their way in that direction to indulge in this exhilarating sport."

At this time in 1925 a Cobalt man announced that while on the Loom Lake road he noticed four fine, big, fat robins building their nests for the year. The comment of 'The Advance' was that this was the first good suggestion ever made for the results of the Ontario Temperance Act. If drinking home brew and alky gave visions of big, fat robins building their nests that was a lot better than in older days when men saw sky-blue-scarlet green devils after a few too many drinks.

"A very pretty wedding took place at the Presbyterian Manse, Timmins, on Wednesday, Feb. 18th," says 'The Advance' twenty years ago, "when Miss Gladys Vera, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F. Little, 74 Fourth avenue, was united in marriage to Arthur Edward Randall, son of Mr. and Mrs. A. G. Randall, 76 Lake Front, Toronto."

Hon. G. Howard Ferguson was always a faithful and intelligent friend of the North Land. Twenty years ago in an address to the Daughters of the Empire at Sherbourne House Toronto, he spoke of the North and its future greatness. He pointed out that although the North had four fifths of the area of the whole province it had only at that time a population of 250,000. The Premier's knowledge of the North did not comprise things he had just read or heard. He had some months before made a trip to the North going to Hudson's Bay by canoe, and returning by hydroplane. Timber, coal, china clay and other minerals, together with immense resources in water power were among the resources that Hon. Mr. Ferguson believed to be simply awaiting development in the North.

Mocassin dances were popular here twenty years ago, and were usually great fun for all attending. One held in February, 1925, at the Timmins skating rink was attended by over two hundred dancers as well as by literally hundreds of spectators. There was a broom ball game, novelty races and many other special features.

Under the auspices of the Timmins Golden Chapter of the I. O. D. E., a play entitled "That Girl Mickey" was presented in the Goldfields Theatre on Feb. 18th, 1925. The large audience showed pleasure in the play, while special musical numbers given were also much enjoyed.

The Associated Boards of Northern Ontario held their quarterly meeting in King's hall, Timmins, in February of 1925. Alex Dewar, of Iroquois Falls was in the chair. There were delegates from all over the North, with a special representation from the Kapuskasing area. Rev. Fr. Lajoie, of Kapuskasing spoke eloquently of the need for roads for the settlers in the Kapuskasing district. He pointed out that many of them with farms hewed out of the

bush, still had to pack their supplies on their backs and take out anything they raised in the same way. At first there was some opposition to the suggestion of Fr. Lajoie that the government be asked to spend up to \$250,000 in the following five years for roads in the area west of Cochrane, but the delegates from Timmins eventually joined the Western delegates and a resolution was passed urging that the roads for settlers be dealt with by the government. The objection to this came from those who could not see anything but the need for roads and highways in this part of the North, and who were afraid that if the money was spent around Kapuskasing there would be so much less for this area. Against this the Timmins delegates argued that not only were highways needed but that roads for settlers were equally needed and that BOTH should be built as soon as possible. G. A. Macdonald brought the case of the settlers in the matter of the Mattagami Pulp and Paper Co to the attention of the boards. When the company went into bankruptcy the accounts of the settlers were considered as not preferred, and from the set-up as it appeared these settlers would get very little for their wood, if they ever received anything. He argued that this was a disgrace that should be avoided. The settlers had lost right to place a lien on the pulpwood sold to the company by what now appeared to be a piece of sharp work. They had been induced to accept notes for payment, being assured that they could cash the notes at the bank, but the company made an assignment before the notes came due and the settlers having to endorse the notes were compelled to pay them to the bank on maturity. This meant the virtual ruin of the majority of the settlers concerned. The Associated Boards of Trade were convinced that a wrong had been done and eventually the meeting passed a resolution asking the government to do something in the matter. Another Timmins resolution urged the establishment of correspondence courses in the province to provide education for the children in sparsely-settled areas where there were no schools available. The Government of Hon. G. Howard Ferguson later adopted this plan with the result that literally thousands of children have received a fair education who would otherwise have been unable to receive any at all. T. F. King, of Timmins, sponsored a resolution asking the government to investigate the matter of high power rates in the North.

Among the local and personal items in 'The Advance' twenty years ago were the following:—"Rinn Bros. this week moved their ladies' wear store to No. 5 Gordon Block." Born—in Timmins on Feb. 25, 1925, to Mr. and Mrs. Sam David—a son. "Mrs. Drew, of Canington, Ont., returned home last week after visiting her son Mr. Geo. S. Drew." "Mr. I. K. Pierce, who recently visited Mayo Bros. hospital for treatment, and who was considerably benefited thereby, has left for a holiday in Los Angeles, California." "Mrs. R. P. Teare, one of the early residents of Timmins, but more recently living

How Old Land Looks on Community Centre Idea

(London Spectator)

A pamphlet on community centres just issued to local authorities by the ministry of education opens with an essay on "the needs and uses of leisure."

It might be supposed that the uses to which men and women of the industrial classes put their leisure (it is foreseen that increased mechanization in industry will mean more leisure for the workers) was a matter for the individual and not the concern of the state. Certainly it would not be its concern if that meant regimentation.

But that is not what the ministry had in mind. It rightly feels that it is the duty of the state to provide facilities such that the citizen, released from excessive hours of work, may have the means of employing his leisure satisfactorily. Voluntary associations have their part to play, but they are not enough. It is the state, working through local authorities, which should provide recreational and educational centres where adults can meet together and talk, play eat, organize communal activities and exercise their minds.

For this purpose there will be required suitable buildings, wardens, paid helpers, and voluntary workers. Only a local authority can undertake such provision of community centres, though its expenditure will be supplemented by grants.

It is significant that it should be the ministry of education which should be the ministry of education which is taking the lead. This department which obviously should fill view than once it did of its education-

at Thornhill, Ont., is visiting friends in town for a couple of weeks and is being heartily welcomed here by innumerable friends and acquaintances. "Mr. T. Kelly received the sad news last night of the death of his father at North Bay. Mr. Kelly, Sr., had been ill for some time and his death was not altogether unexpected. The sympathy of all will be extended to Mr. Kelly in his loss." "It was expected that the New Empire Theatre would be reopened on Monday of this week, but the work of redecorating and altering has not been completed yet."

al duties. The coming age of leisure required that there should be some organization to provide for the recreational needs of the released workers. The ministry of education is the department which obviously should fill the gap.

Expect Big Attendance at Prospectors Meeting

Officials of the Prospectors and Developers Association say that from information received so far it appears that the annual meeting on March 3th 6th and 7th at Toronto will be very well attended. Reservations for the banquet on March 7th have been heavy and as the number that can be accommodated is limited to 600 early purchase of tickets is suggested. Last year a large number of persons applied after all the tables were taken.

As reported previously an unusual feature has been secured for the afternoon session on March 7th. At that time Dr. Frederick H. Pough, chairman and curator of the Department of Geology and Mineralogy, American Museum of Natural History, New York, will tell of his two expeditions to Paricutin Mexico's newest volcano, illustrating his talk with motion pictures in natural colour.

St. Mary's Journal-Argus.—Dolly: "We women endure pain much better than men." Molly: "Who told you that?" Your doctor?" Dolly: "No; the shoe salesman."

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