

PEACOCK FEATHERS

by Temple Bailey

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CHAPTER 56

AFTER DINNER, my father and Aunt Mary left us with our guests. Stephen went with his grandfather, Jason following. The old dog adored the child, and was his constant companion.

And when we were alone, Olga said, "Max and I have come to ask you to take some of the money, Mimi."

The set of Mimi's head gave her a startled air, like a young deer some upon unawares.

"I thought we had settled that long ago, Olga."

"No. We have more than enough, Max and I. And I want to divide it between you and Lionel. I have always felt you ought to have it, even when I wouldn't admit it."

"If Grandfather had wanted me to have it, Olga, he would have said so."

"He did say so," some of the pink had faded from Olga's cheeks. "I came across an old diary of his the other day. Max has it. Show it to Mimi, Max."

Her husband brought out of his pocket a small book bound in black leather. He turned the pages until he found a certain date, then handed it to my wife.

She read it, flushed and paled, then read aloud what the Senator had written. "I ought to change my will. Mimi must have her share. Tomorrow I will speak to Olga."

"He never spoke to me," Olga explained. "Oh, I hope you will believe that. He died the next day."

We did believe it. Whatever other faults she might have, Olga was not dishonest. She had laid the diary away without looking in it, and it was only by chance that she had gotten it out again, hoping to find certain memoranda which might relate to other affairs.

Mimi, holding the little book close, said, "It isn't the money which matters so much, but the fact that he thought of me."

She was finding it very hard to get control of herself, and I knew that tears were near the surface. So I spoke for her.

"We are very happy here. I am not sure that money could make us happier."

"Well, it could make life easier," said the practical Olga, "you know that, Jerry."

And then Mimi flung a question at her. "Why should life be easy?"

"Oh, well, everybody knows," Olga informed her, with a certain

complacency, "that it is much nicer that way."

She knew it at any rate. She came of a stock which measured its felicities by feather-beds and rocking chairs and huge feasts four times a day. And her modern interpretation of the things which make people happy was her puffy black and gold furniture, her luxurious limousine, her fat chocolate cakes with her coffee.

Each to his own idea! There was Mimi, slender as a boy, fit as a fiddle, ready to ride with the best of us, her mind meeting keenly the problems of the day's work—her heart satisfied!

"And anyhow," Olga was saying, "if you don't want the money for yourself, you will want it for the boy."

"Stephen! Oh, why should I want it for Stephen?" was Mimi's impetuous demand. "I don't want him to lean on the thought of an inheritance, as Lionel and I leaned. It colored everything for us. Some day we were to have Grandfather's money; the time between was simply to be bridged over as best we could. Why, until Jerry was ill, I never knew there was anything in me that would count. I am not sure that I can make you understand. Everybody liked me because I was good-looking and wore pretty clothes. But I had never really liked myself—"

She was putting it in her whimsical way, smiling a little as she said it. But I knew she was in dead earnest. She had won her own self-respect by achievement. Few women of her class ever know the thrill of that feeling.

Her bright glance surveyed us. "Of course, this doesn't mean that I am going to renounce the pomp and vanities of the world. I am human, and I know what money will mean to us up here. But I am half afraid of it—"

I knew that she was afraid for Stephen. I held out my hand to her, "Why should we be afraid of anything?" I asked her.

She came over and sat on the arm of my chair. "Well, I'm not really. And it will be wonderful, won't it, Jerry, to build our—shining palace?"

My imagination leaped to meet hers. The thing of which we had once despaired had come to pass. And I was glad it had not come before. For my wife was mine and I was hers in a way we could never have been had we not been tested and tried. We had fought shoulder to shoulder in the battle of

life. We would reach the heights together.

The money which Olga at once made over to us changed, to some extent, our mode of living. We have a long, low house, as enchanting as the one I pictured when as a boy I listened to Uncle Jerry's glowing eloquence. We have books and a big car which keeps us in touch with the outside world. My wife wears shimmering silken evening things, and Aunt Mary, for the first time in her life, owns a dinner gown—it is like a flame and she loves it. My father preaches in a little church which we have built for him on the mountainside, and its bells call the people from far and wide to worship.

Yet our days are, as a rule, busy ones. Mimi and I manage the farm. We have blooded stock and pedigreed poultry, our little ducks still go down to the water to swim; Mimi still coddles her old hens, looks after the lambs, and feeds the pigeons.

And our small Stephen grows sturdily—a lad who belongs to the hills and sky, to the forest and streams. He has no thought of his inheritance. He has a thousand things to do. As for the rest, we can only pray that God will keep him.

Our happiest days are those when Mimi and Stephen and I ride up into the mountains—Mimi in gray tweed or corduroy; in her hat the tip of a peacock's feather as when I first saw her. Sometimes we ride for days, seeking some high, clear lake—reaching timberline, breathing the thin upper air. We have nights under the stars, when, with Stephen asleep, we talk of the things my father said to me long years before, by a lily-scented pool.

"No one can be rich, Jerry, with a starved soul."

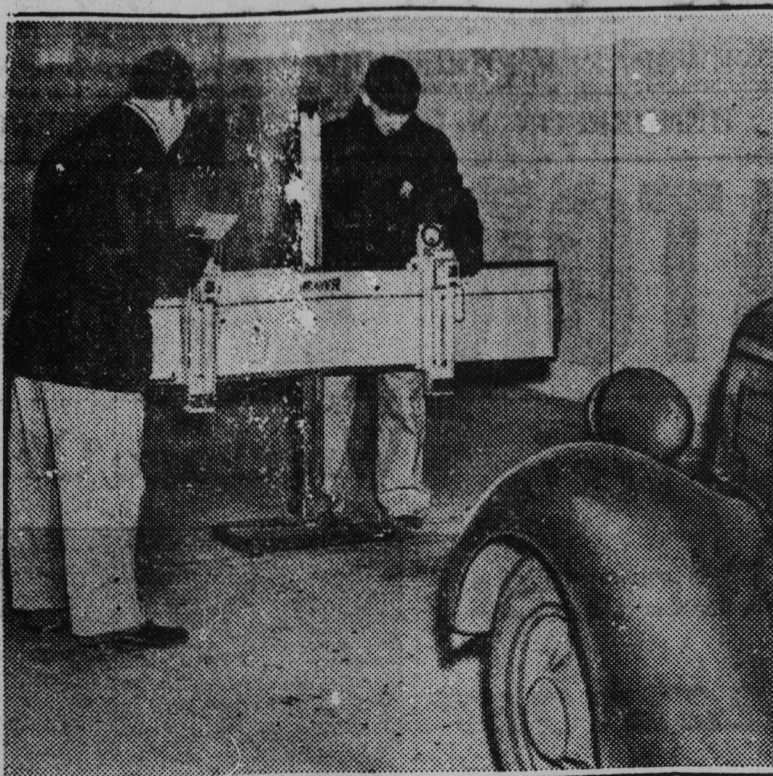
We know, Mimi and I, that it is not our money which makes us rich, nor is it, indeed, our achievements. It is, rather, our aspirations, and our love of each other and the boy.

Some day I am going to write the book which I have planned. But the time has not yet come. Meanwhile, I have penned these simple chronicles—of a boy who dreamed, and of a girl who made his dreams come true.

P. S.: It is 12 years since I have written this—and I would not change a line. It is better than the book I planned; it is a chronicle of life.

(THE END)

Jersey Checks Cars for Safety



A state inspector is shown checking the headlights of a car in an inspection station, one of the 28 throughout New Jersey, where compulsory inspection of motor vehicles is in effect. Car owners are given seven days to correct faults in their autos, and are liable to possible fine or imprisonment if the faults are not remedied. (Central Press)

Catch Sea-Going Pet



This bulbous-looking mammal is puzzling experts at Florence, N. J. Eugene Dobos and John Molnar, who captured it, are shown above. Taken from the waters of the Delaware River, some say it is a harbor seal, others that it is a sea elephant. Anyway, it's 5 feet long and weighs 200 pounds, and eats five pounds of fish a day. And Gene and John make a little pin money by exhibiting it at ten cents a look. (Central Press)

Held in Puerto Rico Plot



Julio Pinto Gandia (left), lawyer and president of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, was sentenced, with seven others, to five years in the Atlanta Penitentiary for the attempt to assassinate United States District Judge Robert A. Cooper (right). The attempt occurred after Pedro Albizu Campos and seven confederates were sent to prison for trying to overthrow the U. S. government in Puerto Rico. (Central Press)

DID THESE CHILDREN ELOPE?



Lowell Mast Edwena Keyser Missing from their homes at Bremen, Ind., Lowell Mast, 14, and Edwena Keyser, 13, are believed to have eloped in the Keyser family automobile. They left home with little money and few clothes. (Central Press)

BOY, 19, HELD IN SLAYING



A youth booked as Robert Svendsen, 19, is being held in the Moore county, N. C., jail in connection with the slaying last August near Carthage, N. C., of J. E. Carraway, tourist camp proprietor, authorities announced. He was arrested in Hamilton, Ont. Officers said they expected to make an additional arrest in the near future.

PORTRAYS ROLE AT F. D. R. BALL



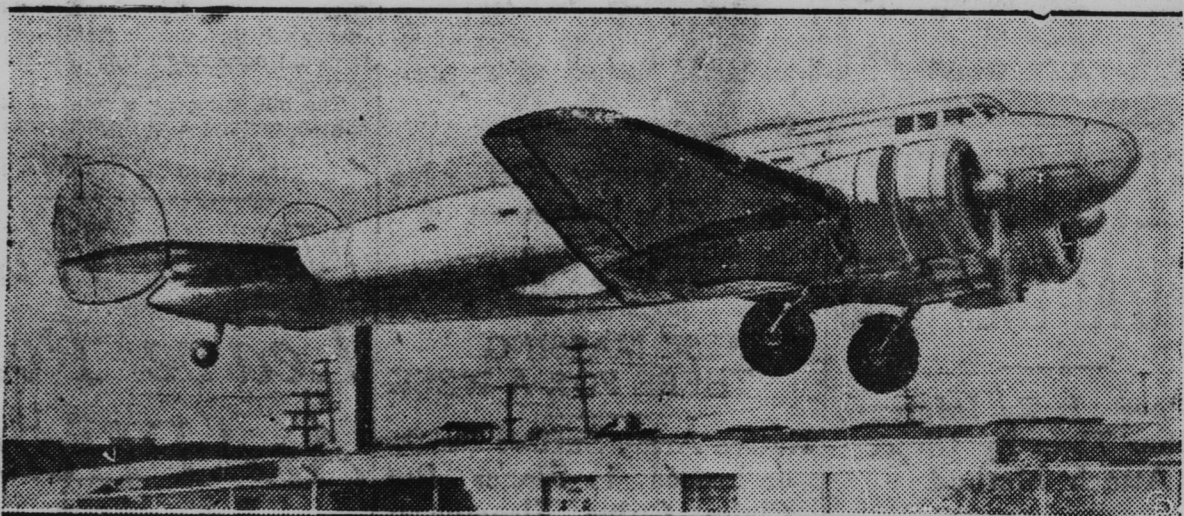
Nancy Bridges . . . portrays "Spirit of Youth" When the annual birthday ball for President Roosevelt is held in New York, Jan. 30, Nancy Bridges, socialite of Lebanon, Pa., will portray the "Spirit of Youth, 1838" in the costume she is wearing, a rose taffeta dress of the Martha Washington period.

A Plea for Better Schools



Mrs. Jacob Scherger, president of the United Parents' Association of New York, is pictured above, presenting a petition to Minority Leader Steingut at Albany. The petition calls for a million-dollar bond issue for building construction and improvement of health service in metropolitan schools. More than 700 New York City teachers invaded the capital to promote interest in the petition. (Central Press)

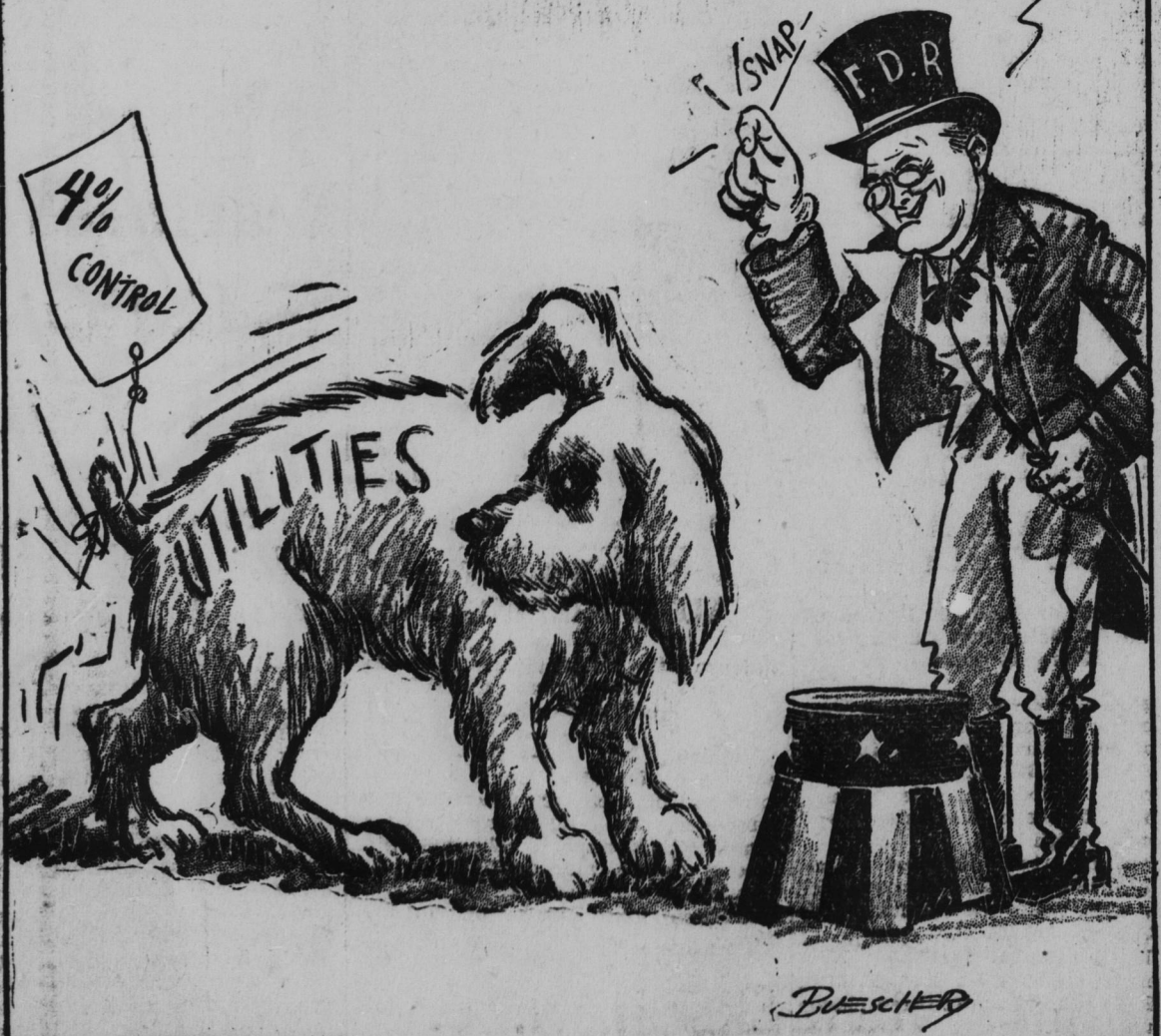
Type Airliner in Which 10 Were Burned to Death



Type of plane which crashed is an all-metal, two-motored Lockheed Zephyr recently put into service on the airline. (Central Press)

HE'S DETERMINED TO TRAIN THE DOG

SIT UP UTILITY, AND GET CONTROL OF YOURSELF!



"An ownership of about 4 per cent of the securities (of utilities) controls the other 96 per cent. Here is a 96-inch dog being wagged by a four-inch tail."—President Roosevelt in Jackson Day speech.