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CONTENTS

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FICTION

| | |
|--|----|
| A CHRISTIAN AWAKES (short story) . . . | 7 |
| Garnett Radcliffe | |
| THE FUTURE OF GERAUD (short story) . . | 10 |
| Leslie McFarlane | |
| WHEN HALF-GOBS GO (short story) . . . | 12 |
| Katherine Haviland-Taylor | |
| GREENMANTLE (serial) . . . John Buchan | 15 |
| FOREST FEES (short story) | 20 |
| Paul Amstutz | |

GENERAL ARTICLES

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| WHO GETS THE BIG JOBS? | 9 |
| WAR AND THE CHURCHES | 18 |
| General Evangeline Booth | |
| THE WHITE BOY SLAYS | 19 |
| N. de Bertrand Lagrin | |
| A NEW CODE FOR THE CO-EDS | 24 |
| W. STEVENSON FOX | |
| ENGLISH HARVEST: PART 4 | 26 |
| G. R. Stevens | |

SPORT

| |
|--|
| WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A FOOTBALLER. 14 |
| Dink Carroll |

SPECIAL DEPARTMENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| IN THE EDITOR'S CONFIDENCE | 2 |
| EDITORIAL | 4 |
| MACLEAN'S PICTORIAL PAGES | 23 |
| SHOTS AND ANGLES (MOVIE REVIEWS) . . | 30 |
| ANN ROSS | |
| MATTER OF FACT | 48 |
| MACLEAN'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE | 50 |

HUMOR

| | |
|--------------------------|----|
| WIT AND WISDOM | 54 |
| PARADE | 56 |

WOMEN AND THE HOME

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| VEGETABLE DISHES | 51 |
| M. Frances Hicks and Ruth Mackenzie | |

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Policing B. C. Series: No. 3

The strange story
of Arthur Lamour,
who was abducted
and sold to Indians

The White Boy Slave

By
N. de BERTRAND LUGRIN

IN THE latter part of 1894 an item was culled by the Provincial Police of Victoria from a Seattle paper, scanned by the force, and put in their clipping book as interesting but probably no business of theirs. The brief account told of the kidnapping of a small boy, Arthur Lamour, son of a well-known lumber man and member of the Legislature of Michigan.

Arthur, who was described as seven years old, fair-haired and blue-eyed, shy and with a graceful manner, was attending a boarding school in Chassell. His father was divorced from his mother, who had married again. Lamour was paying for Arthur's education, though his mother kept a supervising eye upon him and visited him periodically. It was she who first learned that the child was missing. He had disappeared one afternoon from school as though the earth had swallowed him, leaving no sign. Search had been made for days, it being thought at first that the little boy had wandered off and lost himself. No one remembered having seen him, Chassell was a small place, and the police decided he must have been kidnaped, his father being a rich man. But the curious part of it was that no ransom demand was made. Weeks and months of searching brought no result, and advertisements were put in Western papers as a last resort.

Those were the days of the great seal hunts, when schooners from Canada and the United States sailed north to the Bering, vying with one another as to which should bring home the biggest catch and be most successful in eluding the gunboat patrols. Best of all seal hunters were the Coast Indians from Vancouver Island. At home in canoes in all sorts of weather, they were marvellously skilful with the harpoon. Every spring, just before the migratory herds swept up from the South, the sealing captains used to go to the Indian villages on the West Coast for their crews.

In the month of January, 1895, several of these captains took passage on the S. S. *Masdeu*. On the voyage north they heard a weird story from a man who was on board to the effect that a chief of one of the small tribes near Kiyuquot, a man by the name of Tutanoise, had recently purchased a slave, a small white boy, from a man who had come up to his village who was very poor and had nothing to do but ride. The man's name or the boy's was not divulged.

One of the sealing captains took it upon himself to investigate, and went to the village of Chassell, where Tutanoise lived. He met the chief, who was an old man, of a gentle, rather kindly nature and who admitted at once that he had bought a white boy.

But not, he explained, to make a slave of him. Tutanoise's tribe was becoming sadly depleted through the inroads of civilization, and it was his desire to build it up again with new blood. For this purpose he had paid \$500 for the white boy, who was to be brought up as a chief, taught to hunt and fish and spear the seal, to shoot straight and learn the self-restraint which goes to the making of a great warrior. Tutanoise displays no reluctance when the captain asked to be shown the child.

The captain found him in the lodge of the chief—a delicate-looking, blue-eyed boy with long flaxen hair. He

was sitting, as befitted the dignity assigned him, on a small seat on the platform which ran round the lodge, wrapped in a blanket, and painted on his arms and legs. He looked, the captain told the police when relating the occurrence at Kiyuquot, very frightened. But he said he was not nearly so much afraid of the Indians as of the man who had sold him. He wept when he spoke of him, and said he would rather step with Tutanoise than go back to him. It was only with difficulty, however, that he could be persuaded to say much about himself. Plainly he was still afraid of his supposed father, who had ordered him not to talk on pain of severe punishment. The "father's" name was Peter Bellingier. He was still, according to the Indians, somewhere on the West Coast, probably at Kiyuquot, whence he had gone after selling the child to try and find work or a boat that would take him north.

Enquiries by the police showed that a Peter Bellingier, slightly crippled and with a small boy in charge who, he said, was his son, had come to the Songhees Reserve opposite Victoria, from Seattle. He had some whisky, which he sold to the Indians. Later he decided to go up the West Coast. He and the child took passage on the *Favourite*, which was carrying lumber to Clayoquot. Bellingier claimed to know something about carpentry, and wanted to get work building houses for the natives. He had talked freely on the voyage, claimed his wife was dead and he had lost all his head. He took almost no notice of the boy, who was seafish, so that the Indians, pitying the child, had put him to bed and cared for him.

Unable to secure employment, Bellingier had gone to Chassell, and later showed up at Kiyuquot without the boy. Nor would he say anything about him. The natives, suspicious, would have nothing to do with him. He tried to get north on a schooner going to Sitka, but was rebuffed.

The police were told that it was probable he was still at Kiyuquot.

Superintendent Innes sent a constable to Chassell to get the boy and Hussey witnesses, and gave orders to locate Bellingier and bring him to Victoria. Several police were detailed for the latter mission.

Arrived at Kiyuquot, they learned that Bellingier was still in the vicinity, but invariably kept out of sight of any newcomers. He had not been seen for several days, and appeared ill and discouraged, though he seemed to have plenty of money, gold pieces and silver.

It took the policemen forty-eight hours, searching night and day, to find him. He had hidden in a hollow cedar tree, and when they came upon him was a pitiable object, soaked to the skin, for it had been raining steadily for days; without food, and apparently suffering from rheumatism and other ailments. He admitted having sold the child to Tutanoise. Said he did it out of kindness. He was not able to look after him and the chief had promised to be good to him. He swore that the boy was his own son, Arthur.

Bellingier, Arthur, Tutanoise and his wife and others being on hand to testify, the case came up for preliminary hearing.

Magistrate Macrae was on the bench and the room was crowded, small Arthur being the centre of interest. He sat beside his rescuer, Constable Hutchinson. Pale and excited, he still looked sadly frightened and shuddered noticeably whenever he glanced at Bellingier.

The Missing Boy!

TUTANOISE of the Chacklet tribe, was the first called, and Father Nicolson translated.

"My name," said he, "is Tutanoise, and I am of the tribe the second chief. I saw the man Peter, the accused, for the first time at my village, months ago. He came on a steamer called the *Nootka*, owned by an Indian named Toquix. He had the little boy, Arthur, with him. Landing from the schooner, he took the child and a big trunk to Toquix's house, where he remained for a space of two months. The accused did not work, so far as I know, and he did nothing for the child, who was always dirty and seemed not well.

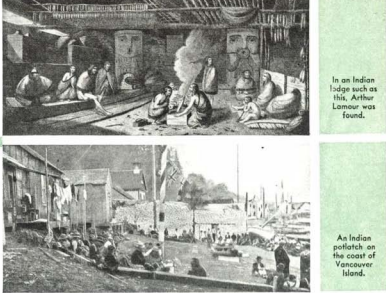
About twenty days ago one of the chiefs invited the Kiyuquot Indians to a potlatch at our village. The Kiyuquot remained six days, and on the evening of the last day the prisoner came to my house with the child. At that time the Kiyuquot were preparing to leave for their own homes. The accused asked me to buy the child, and I held down my head, feeling full of shame, and did not know what to think concerning the matter. He asked me a second time, and I still made no reply. He asked me yet again, and I considered. I knew the prisoner neglected the boy and showed no love for him. I thought it my duty as a chief to look after him, now that he had been brought among my people.

The prisoner wanted \$100 for the boy, but I could pay only \$50. We went to my house. I paid two gold pieces and the rest in silver dollars and half dollars, and he tied it up in a large bandolier. Then he said to the boy, "I am going to leave you now with the Indians." At this the child seemed very frightened and he cried. He cried so hard that the Indian women were afraid he would hurt himself. My wife took him on her lap and tried to comfort him, but he still cried very loud. So the prisoner took hold of him and said something to him in English, and the boy covered his mouth with his hands and tried to be quiet. Afterward the prisoner went away.

No, he did not say good-by. He did not shake hands or kiss the boy. He picked up his money and left the house, and later I saw him getting in a canoe with the Kiyuquot Indians. The next time I saw him he was at the great house in charge of three constables. After he went away I gave the boy in charge of my wife, and the took him around with the other children to play with them in their games." Tutanoise's wife told practically the same story, enlarging on Arthur's grief and fear. Other Indian witnesses substantiated the evidence of these two.

Then Arthur himself was put into the witness box, and at once became so overcome with shyness that he slipped to the floor and tried to hide. Justice Macrae bade a constable

Continued on page 30



In an Indian lodge such as this, Arthur Lamour was found.

An Indian potlatch on the coast of Vancouver Island.

fetch him to sit beside him, remarking that now Arthur was the youngest magistrate in the Empire.

But the boy, still nervous, seeing all eyes fixed upon him, began to cry. Even when Superintendent Hussey offered his watch, he was only entertained for a moment. Finally Constable Hutchinson was asked to question him, and he was more successful, eliciting startling information.

"What is your name?"

"My name is Arthur."

"Arthur Bellingier?"

"No." Perhaps he caught Bellingier's eye then, for his lips trembled and he could not be induced to continue for some minutes. But at length he said loud enough for the whole court to hear:

"Bellingier is not my name. I am Arthur Lamour."

Result of the Trial

FOR A MOMENT the magistrate's command for order could not be heeded. The case was one of the most sensational ever heard in Victoria, having no parallel in the police annals. The frightened child presented a pitiable spectacle, and now, from his own lips to learn that he was the long-lost son of Lamour was more than the assembly could bear in silence. Sobs were audible, and there were threatening gestures and looks toward Bellingier. The confusion enhanced Arthur's

The White Boy Slave

Continued from page 19

nervousness, and again he began to cry. But at length, his eyes fixed on his constable friend's face, he went on in a low voice to answer questions.

"I am just seven."

"I went to school in Chassel, and my teacher's name was Miss Ribot. I learned to spell cat and dog and lots of other words."

"No, I did not go to Sunday School."

"I first saw Peter Bellingier in Chassel. Yes, I know him well. But please, I don't want to."

"I came to my school in Chassel one day and took me away in a wagon. We went on the cars a long way till we came to a place called Yakims. Afterward we came to the sea and lived with the Indians."

At this juncture the child was overcome with diffidence and would not continue.

Bellingier was sent up for trial before Mr. Justice Drake for selling the boy into slavery. In the meantime word had come from Marshal Horace Stevens of Michigan, regarding the prisoner. After Lamour's divorce from Arthur's mother, the latter had married Bellingier, and they had lived together for some years, when Bellingier had

disappeared, taking with him a seventeen-year-old girl who, it was understood, had since died. "This man," wrote the sheriff, "is a thorough rascal and beast."

The charge of kidnapping was not sustained. It could not be proved that the child did not go with Bellingier in the first place of his own free will. The Court held the charge was not limited to kidnapping.

Defense claimed that no kidnapping had been discovered, nor had the Court proved conclusively that the prisoner was not the father or that he did not stand in *loco parentis* to the child. A parent might sell the services of a child as in the case of binding an apprentice. It must be shown that Bellingier had acted without lawful authority, otherwise there was no case. Personally, the presiding judge said, he might hold his own opinion, but he was only at liberty to go by evidence. There was no charge of assault or force or duress.

The case was dismissed, and Bellingier left the dock. He beckoned to Arthur to follow him, and the child, with an imploring look round, started to obey. They had almost reached the door when he broke into such

heartrending sobs that the Court halted them. Constable Hutchinson volunteered to look after the child, pending a Court order. This was decided upon and Arthur ran to his friend, clinging to his hand.

Shortly afterward word was received from Chassel. There was no doubt that Arthur Lamour was the missing child. He was sent for by the authorities, as the message expressed it, "to be cared for by his mother."

What became of Bellingier is not recorded. Following the trial, he left at once for Seattle, and British Columbia knew him no more.

From information which did not come out at the trial, it was learned that Bellingier had intended to hold Arthur for ransom, but a chain of circumstances decided him to abandon the child. The young girl whom he had taken away with him had died, so they heard, on the journey from Michigan to the Coast, from what cause or causes it is not clear. But Arthur said himself that she was "sick and often cried." No doubt Bellingier was frightened as well as distressed, having the girl's death and the crime of abatement on his conscience. In all probability he assumed another name upon his fortunate escape from British law, and as Peter Bellingier ceased to exist. One imagines, however, that sooner or later, he must have met his just deserts, perhaps under an alias.