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RECEIVED
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Weary River

By COURTNEY
RYLEY
COOPER

Illustrated by T. D. SKIDMORE

*Jerry, in prison, sang over
the radio. And that's how
it started*

EVERY Monday, Wednesday and Friday night a group of gray-clad men, each carrying a musical-instrument case, crowded happily into the long, black carry-all which ran from the Big House into town, and there went to a velvet-hung room on the top floor of the local hotel, where for two hours they played before the microphone and then, once more under discipline, moved out to the waiting bus and the journey back to their cells. They formed the jazz band of Ladrington Prison; and the leader, who played the piano, was a young fellow whose Bertillon record marked him as having been the "gay cat" for a safe cracker.

It was by such things as this that the warden of Ladrington Prison proved his contention that a penitentiary had a greater mission than merely to keep men caged. Ladrington's warden, he prided himself, was a builder; among his convicts the prison stoop and the prison parlor were absent, the prison walk, too, and the furtiveness.

More than this, when a person stood forth for unusual endeavor, whether it were in the labor gangs or elsewhere, he was allowed to forget that he was only a number and take his name again. This happened for the leader of the jazz band shortly after the little town had called upon the prison for talent to aid in its broadcasting program, and the leader, fearful for the success of an ill-rehearsed number, had substituted a piano number by himself.

Jerry Davis had given up his freedom grudgingly; guilty, and knowing it, he nevertheless had fought to the last atom of his energy and the final penny of his small store of money that he might remain beyond the law. Yet, withal, Jerry Davis was not a criminal in the common sense of the word; the thing he

had done had been committed with the thought of friendship paramount. For that he had taken his chance and lost. His sentence had been for fourteen years, five of which had been served, when the city of Ladrington, as so often happens with those who blunder in unknown fields, had stumbled into a masterpiece of broadcasting.

The resumption of his name had done strange things to the straight, sinewy-strong man. It had brought new light to eyes which, deep-set and dark, had always carried within them the hint of slow fires burning deep beneath. They

*The widening of
her fright-ridden
eyes caused him
to whirl quickly.
"Run!" he com-
manded. "Run, I
tell you!"*

had always contained this light; Jerry Davis, sensitive, reactive to beauty in a queer, almost painful way, was one of those strange admixtures of life with the soul of an artist and the calloused elbows of one who had met the world.

Had Fifth Avenue reared him, there might have been another weakling genius for music critics to discuss. But it had been the vicinity of Mott and Pell streets instead, in the days when the sight-seeing busses, rolling from Broadway into New York's Chinatown, had something better to offer than mere memories.

When Jerry was twelve his father, the only relative he had ever known, died, and no one missed him save his son.

ABOUT that time there was need for an energetic boy in the kitchen of Ah Wing's Chop Suey Parlor, and Jerry had gone there. One day as he worked at stacking the dishes and replenishing the fuel in the big range the boss, whose only connection with Chinatown was the Oriental name with which he adorned his place, came into the kitchen, and, jamming his hands into his pockets, stood listening, as the boy went singing about his labors. At last:

"Got pipes on him like a choir boy," he said to the manager. "Same kind of a face too. Might be a knockout singer mother stuff to the late drunks."

So Jerry left the kitchen for the restaurant proper.

Years passed there, with Jerry Davis a definite figure now in the shadowy, shuffling place of darkness and light which called itself New York's Chinatown. He came to understand crime as such, apart from the theory of it as held by the respectable, and when the old piano player who had taught Jerry returned one night when Jerry was twen-

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ty-five the interview was neither long nor awkward.

"Sure," he said as he twirled about upon his piano stool, the facile fingers of his left hand rippling the keys into the suggestion of a faint, far-away melody. "Sure, Nick. I know you wouldn't ask me if you could get anybody else. You were a friend to me. Sure."

So they went west, and Jerry gay-catted while Nick, with his soup and his drills and his blankets, sought to invade the confines of a safe. But three burly cops spoiled their plans. Jerry saw them as they closed in, and shouted a warning to Nick, who made his get-away. But the gay-cat, trapped by the trio, went to jail, and fight as he might he failed to find freedom again.

Now Jerry was thirty, and truly alive again after five years.

ONE day as he moved about his work in the prison library, his key-strengthened fingers turned the pages of a book of poems and halted as a verse of Swinburne caught his eyes and they became suddenly lustrous. At last he closed the book and put it back on the shelf. But the last two lines of the verse remained, refusing to depart:

*That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.*

The lilt of it would not leave him; he played badly that night for the first time since he could remember; strange themes insisted on finding their way to his fingers and thence to the keys: queer breaks which had nothing to do with the music he was striving to interpret. And when he sang he halted, as though his brain were struggling to hold back something which insisted on striving to break through.

Three nights later, in the darkness of his cell, Jerry Davis crawled from his sleepless bunk, and, fumbling, found a stub of pencil. Prison rules were in effect; there could be no light; handling carefully the scraps of paper which he had dragged from beneath his bunk, he slumped to the steel floor of his prison, and there he wrote the thing which all night had been racing through his brain. In queer, scrawly lines, scarcely decipherable, run together in the darkness, or slanting at wide angles, he put it down, a classic in common rhyme.

The next day, fagged from loss of

sleep, yet driven nevertheless, Jerry Davis worked out the music as he went about his duties in the library, humming the notes over and over, or pausing for just an instant that, in quick dots and figures upon a pencil scale, he might jot them down, a bar at a time, for future coördination. At last, pitifully expectant, he turned it over to the warden and awaited developments.

"Jerry," said that person the next morning when the convict had answered the summons to the executive office. "I don't know." He picked up the handwritten music from his desk and looked appraisingly at it. "Of course, I'm no judge of music, but there don't seem to be much of a catchy refrain to it. I had my daughter play it last night, and she kind of thinks the same way I do. The words are pretty, mighty pretty, but I don't know that it'll ever be awfully popular."

"No, sir," said Jerry Davis, and cleared his throat. The warden looked up, noted the disappointment in the other man's face, and rose.

"We'll go to the assembly hall. Let's see if it's any different when you play it."

Jerry took his place at the piano, disregarding the music—he knew its every note by heart. He seemed to forget the warden; now he was playing to those empty benches, half turned, smiling, as if the figures of his fellow men were there—men who could understand. The warden stirred when it was done and rubbed his hands together as though the palms had been perspiring.

"Wonder what was the matter?" he asked. "That wasn't the way it sounded last night."

Jerry rose from the piano.

"No, sir," he said. "I know, sir. You see, there's something I—can't write down in the music."

"I guess there is a lot in the playing. Well, give it a try to-night." Then, as

an afterthought, "You might announce it—there'll be a response if it's any good."

"Yes, sir," said the convict gratefully, and that night, dry-lipped, he faced the microphone. "Now our pianist, Jerry Davis, will play and sing something new for your approval," he said with an attempt at nonchalance. "A little composition of his own, founded on Swinburne's Garden of Proserpine, and called 'Weary River'."

"Bunch of telegrams," said the warden an hour later. "Guess you'd better give it to 'em again. Seems to have made a hit."

It was the beginning of a wave of popularity, the extent of which Jerry Davis could not understand nor know. Some radio editor had called him "Master of Melody." The alliteration pleased others; soon every radio schedule carried it; often the telegrams now forgot the true name of the convict in his more graceful subtitle.

One night a minister, pressed for a Sunday sermon, turned the dials of his radio set for relaxation—and came upon Jerry. He found a moral in the Master of Melody, something about the uses of adversity, and preached of it the following Sunday.

THE subject knew nothing of it, just as he failed to see the newspaper stories that were increasing constantly with the passage of time, concerning this dark-eyed, music-loving man who, from behind bars, had made

himself known to the world. One day, some eight months later, he answered a call to the warden's office.

"Well, Jerry," said the official, "you'll be going out Monday. Some radio fan started a petition. Got about forty thousand signers, and then turned it over to the governor." The warden chuckled. "I've heard about fellows playing their way into the Big House, but this is the first time I ever heard of one playing his way out!"

"NO, SIR; yes, sir," said Jerry Davis, and returned, dazed and trembling, to his work in the prison library. Only for a short time, however; once more a messenger entered, to summon him anew to the office of the warden.

A slick-appearing, dumpy, black-haired man sat beside the warden's desk, flipping his chamois gloves over the turned handle of his heavy cane. He rose at Jerry's deferential entrance and smirked when the warden introduced him. Mr. Blum, said the executive, had come from Chicago, upon reading the newspaper accounts of Jerry's impending release, with a proposition concerning vaudeville.

Four nights later Jerry Davis, trim-appearing in black and white, awaited his cue in the wings of a theatre. The wisecracking act which had preceded him was taking its final bow; all in an instant the curtain was up, and he was standing beside his piano, bowing as the applause greeted him. Then the stillness, as he took his place at the keys, broken only by the whispering of the auditors as they bent, one to the other! And out of that whispering came one word, which shot over the footlights with telegraphic sharpness, an epithet, no matter how softly applied:

"Convict!"

It created but little impression now. Prison and his prison life were but too lately left behind for Jerry to think of himself in terms of disassociation; he was a convict still, a convict pianist, with his field of musical activity transferred from the broadcasting-room to the stage; that was all.

Outside the stage door a shadowy crew waited, all with begging plaints; one caught him by the arm:

"You wouldn't turn down a pal that's been in stir?" he begged. Jerry Davis pulled hard at his breath; then hastily, as if striving to free himself as swiftly as possible, drew from his pocket a handful of loose silver.

"Pass it around," he ordered, and suddenly sickened, hastened for a taxicab and his hotel. There a telephone call awaited him. It was from a "flusie," inviting him to front for her, doing a jolt for the badger game. The next afternoon, as he seated himself at his piano for his matinee performance, Jerry Davis winced in spite of himself.

The epithet had come as usual over the footlights—merely the remarks of those in the audience who were fully informed, retailing history to those who were ignorant.

In the days and weeks which followed Jerry Davis realized that he resented it not so much for what it meant as for what it did—the stamping and placing of him in a definite category from which there seemed no means of escape. When he had played before the microphone as a member of the penitentiary band, he had been a hero, in a way. Out here he saw that he was only a freak performer, to be viewed as a monstrosity, little else.

Gradually the fire vanished from



Jerry saw them as they closed in, and shouted a warning to Nick, who made his get-away. But the gay-cat, trapped by the burly trio, went to jail

Only Jerry himself could answer how wholly it suited.

For this was a vacation, a joyful, happy, boyish vacation, under the billowing big top of the Great Mammoth, in the life and activity and noise and bustle of a tremendous show as it made its way from town to town—a new locale each day, a new thrill in the close-packed throngs, the blare of the band of which he formed a part, the deep-throated music of his callopie, carrying the burden of the main melody as the various numbers were played for the swiftly changing performance. Gradually, withal, the old reactions came back to him: a choking at the beauty of a cloud-fringed moon, sailing over the gigantic mushroom space that was the circus lot; the brightness and activity of the padroom; the sight of a slender

What's that got to do with her being scared?"

"Any frail's scared of being beaten up."

"Oh, that kind, eh? Hard-boiled with kids and women? Why don't she ditch him?"

"Same reason. Afraid he'll bump her off." The bass horn laughed again. "Nix, pal. I've seen you watchin' her. No chance; that guy's got her licked."

"Just interested, that's all," said Jerry. Then, with a steely sort of enmity which he could not understand, "So he's a tough egg?"

"When he's doped, yeh."

"All that too?" Instinctively there had returned a drawling, high-pitched tone of voice, reminiscent of Mott and Pell streets. "Yet the racket stands for him?"

"On account of her," said the bass horn. "She's good, that kid. As far as the man-and-wife stuff is concerned, that ain't nothin' to him. She lives in the performers' car, an' he stays with the ticket crew. Got some kind of agreement, I guess, that if he'll leave her alone she won't divorce him. Anyway, she knows blamed well that if she'd try it, or hook up with somebody else, he'd bump her off. Watches her like a hawk; she's his meal ticket, and don't ever think he misses any chance to trade on it! Gettin' worse all the time now—the boss has been sendin' him ahead to check up on the billposters or most anything else lately to keep him off the lot."

IT WAS three days later that Jerry Davis met Alice Larrabee. A circus is only a family, after all; there is little need for introductions. They spoke naturally as they met, crossing the lot after the matinee for the usual showman's afternoon sortie downtown. As naturally he fell in beside her, and took her arm, showman fashion, as they crossed the streets. He knew her name; she knew his alias: new faces remain so but a short time under the big tops. Downtown he paused before a confectionery shop.

"I'll buy a soda," he ventured. Then they were together at a little table in the back of the place, and he was studying her, without knowing it: the clearness of her eyes and skin, the femininity of her; the alluring twist of her lips when she smiled like a child striving to be serious and failing, and with it all the hesitancy, the narrowness with which she watched the entrance.

"Looking for somebody?" asked Jerry Davis.

"No," she answered quickly enough for him to know that she falsified. For a moment they centered their attention upon the drinks before them. At last:

"How long have you been married?"

"You bandmen know everything, don't you?" She laughed at the directness of his question.

"Well, not that, or I wouldn't have asked."

"Six years."

"Gee!" he said it whole-heartedly, "you were only a kid!"

A cloud seemed to pass over the girl's countenance.

"Yes," she said quietly.

After that conversation was more perfunctory; they parted at the confectionery door. But the next day Jerry saw her again and on succeeding days.

Then one afternoon he was startled by catching sight of her crossing the lot toward town. Her head was down, a handkerchief was at her lips; even at this distance, Jerry Davis could see that she had only recently ceased sobbing. Hurriedly he (Continued on page 46)

his act; even Weary River became little more than ordinary vaudeville song, done for persons who had come to feast on notoriety rather than to listen to the outpouring of one who reached — and reached — but whose fingers touched nothing. At last, in April, his contract was done.

"TELL you what I'll do, Jerry," said Jake Blum, back at his desk from the barber's chair. "You're a smart boy, I don't have to write it on a blackboard for you. After all, you know, your act ain't so hot. All you got is the novelty, and a show shop needs more'n that. You see, some way, you ain't got the fire and the pull that you had over the radio. The stuff ain't there, do you get me? How about a summer over the small-time and five hundred a week for the next season?"

Jerry Davis shook his head.

Back at his hotel he sat down at the desk for his weekly letter to the warden of Ladrang Prison. This time control departed; when he had finished Jerry Davis took it dejectedly to the mail drop down the hall. It had been a hard job to confess failure. After that he merely wandered. Toward late afternoon he slouched in the lounge of the hotel, reading an amusement weekly, only to tear suddenly a small advertisement from it, look at the clock, then move hastily four blocks away to a rookery type of building and an office therein, hung heavily with posters, and smelling of printers' ink. The advertiser sat at a roll-top desk, pawing over stacks of railroad mileage books, and cussing billposters over his shoulder as he carried on a conversation with a fellow worker across the room. Jerry approached him.

"Mace is my name," he said. It was

the first time that he ever had resorted to a moniker. "Jerry Mace. That callopie job taken yet?"

"No," answered the circus manager. "Think you could fill it?"

"Compressed-air instrument isn't it, with a short keyboard?"

"YEH. Not using the steamer any more. The Great Mammoth don't make parades. Just use this in the band. Experienced piano player, are you? Little tired of these straight callopie thumpers."

"If you don't think I am," answered the man who called himself Jerry Mace, "just lead me to a box."

"One over at the hotel. Come on. If you're kayo, we'll ship you out tonight. The job pays thirty a week and cakes. Suit?"

girlish figure as she each afternoon and night moved gracefully up the tape to her act on the Roman rings, while the eyes of Jerry Davis that was left the music that they might feast upon her.

"Is she new in the circus racket?" he asked of the bass horn one afternoon and indicated with a nod of the head the form of Alice Larrabee, passing from the finish of her act to the padroom. The bass horn laughed.

"Lord, no. Born in it. She did that act when she was a kid. Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. She looks so scared—sometimes."

"Good reason. Her husband's back on the show."

"Yeh?" Jerry sounded a chord in G for the finish of the perch act, and resumed the conversation with a forced air of nonchalance. "Married, huh?"

"I listen to you every night and wonder why you are there—what you have done that you should be there"

Money Mad

By
WALTER
DAVENPORT

ONE out of five of us was afflicted in the recent epidemic of frenzied finance. Yet not one out of five thousand knew what it was all about. So in the interest of the amateur plunger Mr. Davenport investigated and found out some amazing things! The Stock Exchange is a business institution vital to our financial life. Shorts and longs do not refer to pants. Puts and calls can be operated by any child. The bulls and bears, who gore and claw the poor lambs, are often skinned themselves. Here's a stock-market story that even a novice can understand and, less likely, profit by.

UNTIL the market broke under its own weight, the heartbeats of somewhere between ten and twenty million gambling Americans were being regulated from a stone floor which happens to be called the New York Stock Exchange.

There was no panic, in the old meaning of that word, marking the end of the greatest bull movement we have ever witnessed; the brakes were put on too gradually and scientifically for that. But the speculation had to stop, just as all abnormal phenomena must come to an end, making it possible for magnates and their valets, clergymen and their parishioners, shopkeepers and their clerks, gamblers and their touts, fathers and their sons, mothers and their daughters to go back to their jobs again.

A few years ago it was a small group of favored men that did the spectacular work in Wall Street. A few household names covered the great operators. They were always the same names. One man or one little group of men could dictate the trend of finance; the Vanderbilts, the Goulds, the Sages, the Fisks, the Cudahys, the Hills, the Harrimans. But no more of that. The market is too huge.

In a few hysterical months—the climax of four years of mounting markets, of inflated values—stenographers and gardeners, butlers and gas-meter readers experienced the magnificent thrill of seeing a year's salary fall into their hats in an hour.

Your bootblack made \$40,000 in a month. Your chauffeur won \$5,000 by buying on margin the stock of the company that made your car. Cooks and delivery men, school-teachers and janitors caught the fever and even high-school boys and girls were pooling their pocket money to buy stocks—any old stock—and collecting their profits with



It amazes you, as you watch the floor of the exchange, that the whole business isn't utterly messed up.

the naïve wonder of Aladdin rubbing his lamp for the first time.

Every state in the Union and every town that could muster a single broker's office joined the helter-skelter rush for riches.

Unless you were in it and therefore blinded to everything except your own personal fortunes, you couldn't get any comprehensive view of the scramble.

The only grand-stand seats available were those offered by the galleries of the New York Stock Exchange, wherein the battle concentrated—the nerve center of the money-mad country during those bewildering and bewildered weeks.

What you saw and what you heard there in the Stock Exchange was grimly ironic. For all the absence of irresponsible stocks from the lists, this scene reminded you somewhat of the furor which obtained around Charlie Ponzi's offices in Boston, in 520 per cent Miller's headquarters in Brooklyn, of Cassie Chadwick's day in Cleveland and New York, of the tales of the South Sea Bubble, of the Mississippi Bubble, and the Dutch Tulip Mania of the seventeenth century.

Those Crazy Weeks

I TALKED to brokers, on the floor and off, before the break. Some groaned that the bottom was sure to drop out of the market; that ruin of a peculiarly

lasting character lurked in every offering.

But they'd leave off their prophecies of gloom to come and rush to telephones and back again to execute orders from farmers in Mount Joy, Pa.; miners in Butte, Mont.; beef stunnings in Chicago; cowpunchers in Texas; apple pickers in Oregon, and movie extras in Hollywood—all speculating through a local broker who carried on through one of the eleven hundred New York brokers who have seats on the Stock Exchange.

Four years ago the turnover of a million shares in a single day in the stock market was a first-page sensation. Two years ago the nation got a twelve-hour thrill because two million shares had changed hands one day. A year ago we grew apprehensive of panic because three million shares had been traded. But now they were seeing four-million days, and EVEN ONE FIVE-MILLION DAY.

To nine tenths of the speculators in those crazy weeks nothing but mystery existed beyond their decision to buy something and the acceptance by their brokers of their money with which to buy.

Yet it was and is simple enough.

Suppose you live near New Caledonia, Iowa, and in New Caledonia there is a small office in the Conover Block, wherein Leed, Jackman & Co., brokers, of Des Moines, maintain a branch office.

You instruct the representative of Leed, Jackman & Co. to buy 100 Pacific common for you. With prices fluctuating so rapidly it is probable that he won't take your order to buy at a certain figure—say \$80 a share—because by the time he gets the order to Des Moines and Des Moines relays it to the broker who is the Leed, Jackman correspondent in New York and the New York broker passes it on to his partner on the floor of the exchange, where the actual buying and selling is done, the price could change a dozen times. It might take ten minutes. If, of course, you do your business in Des Moines where Leed, Jackman & Co. maintain a leased and ever-open wire to New York the whole thing might be transacted in two minutes.

How Iowa Reaches New York

AT ANY rate, your broker in New Caledonia telegraphs Des Moines, and in no time at all your order is in the hands of a well-nourished, smartly tailored gentleman on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. This gentleman, being a floor trader, has a number. If he is wanted on the telephone, which he is about ten times a minute in big days, his clerk, who is forever hovering near, is notified by one of the Stock Exchange pages who has noticed the broker's number leap into one of the squares of the