



The scene of the Great Lindbergh Kidnaping. The darkened portion represents the formidable Sourland.

The GREAT LINDBERGH HULLABALOO

An Unorthodox Account

by

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To
WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST
*who fired me for writing it, this
true account of a national
tragedy is respectfully
dedicated*

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INTRODUCTORY

I AM convinced, as this book goes to press, that the son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh is well and safe.

I do not think he was kidnapped for ransom, nor that he has been subjected to any of the alarming situations the public has imagined for him.

What is more, it is my conviction that the child will be returned to his parents within a very short time after the contents of this book become known . . . safe, even a pound or two heavier as the result of extremely good care.

No one who has carefully examined the facts from day to day, can believe that the removing of this child from its home was the work of cheap, money-mad thugs, nor of any ordinary kidnapers, whether professional or amateur.

How the Lindberghs became the victims of this truly national disaster will probably never be satisfactorily explained.

The public . . . all the public has wept for the baby and for the Lone Eagle, its great national hero. It has wept for Mrs. Lindbergh. It has spent its money freely and unstintingly to bring the baby back, even in these depression times.

Is it not, therefore entitled to ALL THE FACTS that have been culled?

As a reporter for the New York "Evening Journal," I was assigned to this story ten minutes after it broke. For five weeks at Hopewell, New Jersey, I tried to get to the bottom of it.

I think I did.

L. V.

April 12, 1932

CHAPTER I

THE STORY BREAKS

A FLASH over police teletype at 10:46 on the night of March first.

Just a routine set of details about a baby stolen.

Within an hour the biggest single news event of history was winging its way to newspaper offices in New York City and San Francisco, Paris, London, Shanghai and Cape Town, Moscow and Sidney, across wires that groaned beneath the unexpected burden of copy, and cables that hummed to the tune of the strangest tale they had ever told.

Radio programs died on their feet, while excited broadcasters rushed on the air with the only fact in the world worth talking about.

"Colonel Lindbergh's baby kidnaped sometime between 7:30 and 10 p. m."

That was as much as they knew.

It is still as much as they know.

Within a few hours after the flash came, the most gigantic machinery for crime detection that has ever been hooked up to operate throughout the civilized world had been called into being.

Its humble "touch-off man" was the chief of police of Hopewell, New Jersey, a ruddy faced gentleman whose duties until that day had consisted of regulating traffic at the cross roads of Hopewell's main street and pulling the rope in the post office belfrey that sounded the village fire siren.

Nevertheless, the information transmitted through him to the police at Trenton was to cost the taxpayers of the State of New Jersey thousands of dollars, and the taxpayers of the United States of America millions more.

Every resource of the police of the State of New Jersey, every resource of the United States Department of Justice, every resource of every police department

in every city in the land was to be concentrated for weeks on the unique task of finding the baby . . . the lost Lindbergh baby.

War in the Far East became a picayune affair, that need no longer interrupt commerce nor embarrass the administration.

Depression was forgotten except by the unemployed, in the intense, intimate thrill of the greatest mystery plot anyone ever dared to dream.

Men had a detective story that had the tang of flesh and blood to it, with a fresh development every day; and women had a human interest drama worthy of their tears.

For eighteen million Americans who are starving present a sordid picture. But every true mother's heart can thrill to the immensity of tragedy that was Mrs. Lindbergh.

Life is like that, as every reporter who knows his stuff can tell you.

But underneath it all—at the scene of the drama itself—was something strange

and unbelievable. Hopewell, New Jersey, (from the environs of which the child had been stolen) was not deeply disturbed—in spite of its crowds of reporters, detectives and hangers-on. It was like a crowded stage on which many characters were doing their parts energetically and noisily. The theatre was full of weeping. But the actors, having done each the part assigned to him, went about their routines with equanimity.

What had REALLY happened?

To aid me in the examination of fact, I must marshal every circumstance that is grouped about it, every clue, every event that has since transpired and that is capable of throwing light upon it.

I must find out everything that is known anywhere about the persons that fact concerns, so that I may judge it in the light of their true personalities.

As a taxpayer I have a right to do this, no matter how deeply I may probe. As a citizen I have a duty to do so.

As a reporter assigned to the Lindbergh

kidnaping from the moment it broke, I may add that I had an unusual opportunity to examine the situation thoroughly.

— — — — —

I was seated at a typewriter in the city room late on the evening of March first, putting the final paragraphs to a story covering an evening assignment.

A sad-faced, habitually non-communicative rewrite man sidled up to me, and volunteered, out of the corner of his mouth opposite his huge cigar:

"The Lindbergh kid has been kidnaped."

"Like fun it has," I said, and went on writing.

I couldn't imagine for the life of me why he would go out of his way to pull such a gag as that on me.

He shrugged his shoulders and walked back to his own machine, slouching indifferently into his chair.

I had typed the last word and period to my story as I heard the word "kidnaped"