

## PEARL OF THE ARMY

(Continued from first page)

was in the unmistakable handwriting of Ralph Payne. And its signature was genuine.

### TO MY EXECUTORS:

I die innocent of the crime of which I have been made the victim of others unknown to me. I leave my entire fortune to Pearl Dare as sole trustee, to use in unearthing the criminals for whose discovery and punishment I make my last prayer.

A solemn silence fell upon the tragic scene.

"Too late!" breathed the stricken girl. Her eyes met Toko's for the first time. "He's dead!"

"I have already telephone Colonel Dare to come for you," he said gently. Together they moved away.

The man with the lantern now gave Bertha Bonn a great start.

"I've b-been trying t-to ketch u-up with you for s-some time, Miss Bonn," he stammered. "I'd thank you t-to let m-me have them papers you j-just stuck in your dress and that locket o-on your neck."

She recoiled. "What do you mean? Who are you?"

"T. O. Adams of Monk's Corner, Nebraska, ma'am; that's m-me. Let m-me have them, please!" He spoke peremptorily.

She turned, but before she could escape he caught and pinioned her wrists, snatching the packet from her bosom and tearing the locket from the chain. Whereupon he released her and bowed to her profusely.

"Thanks, Miss Bonn!" he mocked.

Though outraged and frightened, curiosity was uppermost in her appraisal of him. He was a tall, well-set-up young fellow in common, though not ill-fitting clothes, which were soiled and torn in several places. His face, partly shaded by a slouch hat, bore the marks of bruises and was red as from subburn or overdrinking. His features for an ordinary man were well cut. In a clearer light Bertha thought that he might be very good-looking.

Bolstering her courage, she ventured the all-important question: "Where is my photograph?"

"What photograph?"

"The photograph that was taken from the locket."

"The photograph that was taken from the locket?"

"Yes!"

"You g-got me." He eyed her curiously.

She grew irritated. "As you must well know my return was assured me by—by Mr. Payne."

"Oh!" He became very alert. "That photograph! I'm sorry to s-say I haven't got it with m-me, Miss Bonn. Let-me-see, where d-did I leave Payne's photo?" He scratched his head and looked in the direction of the body of the person whose name had passed between them.

"Not Payne's! Major Brent's!" She advanced a pace or two. "Don't trifle with me! You're either very stupid or a mighty poor bluffer!"

The man was staring strangely, for the moment forgetful of the packet and locket. With a quick movement she knocked both out of his hand. Then the first of several uncanny things happened. He tumbled in a heap as if stricken by an invisible force.

She grabbed the lantern and searched the spot at her feet where the locket and packet had fallen. They had disappeared! She darted a suspicious eye upon Adams. He had not moved a muscle and was indeed quite unconscious. Her eyes swept the vicinity and could not detect sight or sound of any human presence. Again she examined the ground, using her hands as well as her eyes. Pinned under the boot of the dead soldier she found a crumpled note.

She tore it open with trembling fingers. Her eyes popped. It was the lost locket receipt of the Hotel Wilton!

Bertha experienced a sensation new to her—fear of the dead. She forgot Adams, she forgot the lost objects which had been intrusted to her by Payne, even for the moment she forgot Major Brent. She fled in a panic. Her one thought was to get away from the scene and back to the Wilton to investigate.

At that moment Adams recovered consciousness and staggered to his feet, watching her go. There was something half humorous, half pathetic and altogether mystifying in his demeanor. He grimaced at the corpse and broke into mirthless laughter, shrugging his shoulders. Then hearing noises, he stiffened. A couple of men carrying a stretcher appeared. They had come for Payne's remains. Adams strode away.

Temporary shelter had been provided for the wreck survivors in a track gang's cabin, for the nearest habitation was several miles to the north. Hither Adams proceeded gazing into the sleeping silence of the countryside as he walked wrapped in impenetrable thoughts.

The night was magnificent. The southern sky was resplendent with a million soft stars. From the earth into which the abundant rain had filtered, a fresh dark odor rose. Over yonder somewhere a wood owl hooted at the moon.

He came across Pearl Dare seated on the grass. Her face was damp with tears. She looked up as he was passing and spoke.

"Can you tell me, please, when the relief train will arrive?"

"No, ma'am, I can't. Shall I find out?"

She shook her head wearily. "Are you also a wreck victim?"

"Not exactly t-that."

"You seem to have been injured?"

"Jest b-bruised. And you, ma'am?"

She negatived. "You are the man who helped me—" Her voice broke.

Adams bowed gravely. "The m-man with the lantern. The dead feller was a friend of your'n, wasn't he?"

She shivered. "The dead man was Capt. Ralph Payne. I am Miss Pearl Dare. What is your name?"

"T. O. Adams of Monk's Corner, Nebraska," he responded for the second time that night.

"Monk's Corner!" she echoed.

"It's not on the m-map. It's a c-cow town."

"Oh!" She looked at him with some interest. "You must be a cowboy then!"

"Yes'm."

She felt that he was evading her.

"I'm too curious," said she, apologetically.

A pleasant light came into his eyes. "Kin I s-sit down and talk with you a w-while? Maybe I kin help you i-in your trouble. You seem to have a-a lot of it o-on your mind."

She signified an indifferent willingness.

"Cowboys make good soldiers," she commented to keep up the conversation which diverted her.

"Yes'm."

She looked at him askance.

"You'd look the part in uniform. Have you ever thought of joining the army? The country needs fighting men these days."

"Yes'm, I hev. How do you g-go about it? You travel around a b-bit in the army, don't y-you? Would m-my stuttering keep me out? Your dad's a great soldier, ain't he?"

The man's simple mind amused Pearl. "You ask too many questions at once," she replied with a little laugh. "I'll answer them all in one. Talk with my father when he arrives if the subject appeals to you seriously."

"Waal," he reflected. "I ain't g-got anything else to do, I m-might as well soldier." Then he changed the subject. "That there Captain Payne was s-some officer, w-wasn't he?" Insinuation lurked in his voice.

"What do you know about Captain Payne?" she asked sharply.

He replied in an indifferent tone.

"Nothin' mebbe except w-what I seen in t-the newspapers. They're always a b-bundle of lies, anyway."

She seemed to like that.

"Kin I s-smoke?" he asked, opening a cigarette case.

His observance of polite form was unexpected to Pearl. Her curiosity deepened.

"He m-meant a lot to you, d-didn't he?" he observed, hunting matches in his pocket.

"Very much, indeed," she murmured sadly in the momentary silence which had fallen.

"Now that t-there note—"

He struck a match and calmly lit a cigarette.

"T-that there note," he repeated, inhaling deeply; "that there last w-will and t-testament of his. T-that's a pretty big j-job for a little girl like you t-to tackle."

She sat up and glanced at his profile. He smoked and stared straight ahead purposely avoiding her eyes.

"Are you g-going to tackle it?" he questioned with a puzzling frankness.

Their eyes now met. "Why do you ask?"

"I'd l-like to help you."

"You?"

"Why not? I ain't g-got a job j-just now."

"I fear that a cowboy could not be of much assistance," she replied, indulgently.

"I'm a b-barber, too," he rejoined. "Barbers hear a l-lot of funny things, ma'am."

The idea seemed so fanciful that she giggled. "What else have you been?"

"Waal," he drawled, taking a soiled envelope from his inner coat pocket; "I've b-been a little of everything, I g-guess." He took a card out of the envelope and handed it to her. "M-my specialty of late's b-been telegraph o-operating."

He struck a match so that she could read. The card identified him as T. O. Adams, a member of the Organization of Telegraphers, a sort of trades-union.

"Operators hear a l-lot of things, t-too, ma'am," he drawled, putting the card back in the envelope which he returned to his pocket.

"Have you ever been a waiter in a hotel?" There was a touch of railery in her voice.

"I've been t-that, too," he answered, unruffled.

"What haven't you been?"

"Nothin', m-ma'am, nothing."

Again she questioned him with her eyes.

"W-waiters hear things, t-too," commented he.

Pearl did not know whether to stop or continue this seemingly empty talk.

"What, for example? Have you ever heard anything about Captain Payne? Anything—pertaining to this case?"

"I g-got a notion that I know w-where them military plans and t-that there locket is at this m-minute," he stated as calmly as if they were discussing the weather.

Both rose simultaneously.

"Where?" she ejaculated.

It was Adams' turn to be indulgent.

"If y-you decide to employ m-me to help you, I'll t-tell you where I think they are."

Pearl became cautious. "You'll have to see my father about that also," she replied, icily.

He bowed and instead of continuing on to the shelter abruptly disappeared in a clump of bushes.

Without hesitation Pearl followed. All along he had reminded her of some one whom she had seen somewhere. Now there flashed into her mind that he must be a member of the fo. ign alliance posing as a tramp. The thought that she might be pursuing danger never occurred to her.

Adams, knowing that he was being followed, quickened his step, striking out with strong strides along a timberland road which soon began to wind up a hill. He started to run and was quickly out of her sight. Half way to the summit he stopped, straining his ears as if for an expected signal. Then he dashed across the trail and entered the woods. When Pearl came up she paused, bewildered, and went on. She reached the ridge just as dawn was streaking the horizon.

Below lay a sheet of water on which not a ripple moved. To her right on a bluff was a curious looking shack from which ran many wires to a tall pole with cross-arms. She had seen a wireless station before and instantly recognized this as one. She approached it noiselessly and finding the door partly open looked in.

At first she saw nothing. Then suddenly upon the inner wall flashed a shadow which deepened into the silhouette of a man whose features were masked. In one hand he held a little round object. His fingers pressed it. A lid flew open. It was a locket. In the other hand was what appeared to be an envelope.

This now happened: The shadow opened the locket and took from it two disks which he slipped into the envelope through a slit at one edge.

Then the shadow became a blur against the wall and at the same time Pearl heard footsteps, a muttered foreign oath and a scurry of feet. She wheeled about. In her direct gaze was a refulgent moon, its translucent rays dazzling her vision.

What happened next will never be quite clear to her mind. She remembered that she peered about cautiously; that, catching sight of a muffled man behind the shack, she requested him to show himself; that he obeyed with reluctance, whereupon she demanded the envelope; that he started to comply with disarming servility.

Then she remembered nothing except a swift encounter, a struggle for the envelope on the edge of the bluff, the sensation accompanying a seemingly never-ending drop through space and a plunge into deep water.

She had a hazy recollection of a reassuring answer to her screams for assistance just before her body struck the surface of the stream; while immersed of seeing the muffer still upon the face of her antagonist; and the presence of a third person swimming furiously toward her.

She was prone on the shore when she revived. Toko was rubbing her vigorously.

Great joy appeared on Toko's face when she opened her eyes. He was dripping wet, too. The sight of him relieved her.

"Did you see him? Was it you who saved me?"

"Yes," replied Toko, still rubbing.

"I follow you. He get away."

She leaped to her feet. "We must find him, Toko! He is—is a great criminal! He possesses a priceless military secret! I saw it! I had it in my hands! Which way did he go?"

"I didn't know!" exclaimed Toko with regret and concern. "I show you!"

They hurried along the shore.

"Ah!" exclaimed Toko after some minutes of fast running. He stopped, pointing to a wuffler in the sand. She picked it up as they ran.

A few minutes later they again stopped, seeing a figure seated upon a rock just ahead. It was Adams.

They crept close behind him, who unaware of discovery was closely examining a sheet of parchmentlike paper about thirteen inches square.

It was the plan of military weakness and defense of the canal! Nor was the sketch now invisible. The water had dissolved the chemical disks revealing the hidden secret.

Quick as a flash both Pearl and Toko leaped upon Adams.

"You are the leader of the foreign alliance!" she panted as they went down, struggling. "You are the Silent Menace!"

(END OF EPISODE THREE.)

### Indigo in Southern India.

A primitive but effective method of obtaining indigo in southern India is practiced by the natives. The plant is tightly packed the day it is cut, in a large vat, into which water is run, and boards are then placed over the top and are kept in position by heavy crossbeams. The plant is allowed to soak for ten or twelve hours, during which time a heavy fermentation takes place. The liquid is then drained off into another vat, after which coolies beat and stir the soaked mass thoroughly with flails until the dye begins to emerge. The whole is then allowed to settle; the clear liquid is drained off, and the residue is boiled in copper vessels. It is then pressed into hard cakes ready for the market.

### Thank a Woman for This New Idea.

"Who is that man?" asked the giddy young person.

"A farm demonstrator."

"Indeed? I notice he has a large, flat case under his arm. Do you suppose it contains a sample farm?"—Birmingham Age-Herald.

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