

PEARL OF THE ARMY

Continued from first page

claimed after the others, save Adams, withdrew, an idea striking her; "our lives have been thrown strangely together. Unwittingly you have been drawn into this terrible plot in which we are enmeshed. I am under very great obligations to you. Will you not come and pay me a visit? You will be most welcome, and, I think, helpful."

Miss Dare's invitation fairly took Bertha's breath away, it was so unexpected and opportune. She glanced carelessly at Adams. He arched his eyebrows and without being observed by Miss Dare nodded approval.

That afternoon Bertha gave up her apartment at the Hotel Wilton and became a guest in the Dare household.

When Colonel Dare returned he was not sure that he was pleased with this new state of affairs.

"You know nothing about Miss Bonn and what I hear does not reflect too well in her favor," he told Pearl, candidly.

"She's inoffensive, so far as I can see," Pearl replied, with a touch of hauteur.

To Pearl's inquiry about the result of his conference at the war office the colonel merely stated that the wafers had been delivered to the head chemist at the laboratories in the chemical building to be analyzed and duplicated so as to have an ample supply available if needed.

Then the colonel whispered an army secret into Pearl's ear.

"A million?" she repeated, at once greatly interested.

"A million volunteers," he reiterated.

"When will the call go out?"

"As soon as a mobilization schedule is prepared by the chief of staff and myself assisting the secretary of war."

Pearl clapped her hands in approval.

When Bertha joined the party in the dining room, Brent was forewarned and met her with dignified composure.

That night at dinner Bertha plied her feminine arts with such charm and recherche that he had to pinch himself several times, metaphorically speaking, in order to make sure that the engaging lady and the post sergeant's girl were one and the same. Man of easy and impressionable sentiment that he was, Brent began to think that he was a fool to defy Bertha. It would be much less difficult and certainly more pleasurable to take the place he knew he filled in her heart—and chance the rest. It was the easiest way with women of that kind, anyhow; and Pearl need never know.

The conversation dwelled upon matters of mutual interest; the first disappearance of the Canal defense plans; the death of the Granadian ambassador coincident with the conviction of Capt. Ralph Payne; Payne's untimely end in the railroad wreck and his fortune in proving the innocence he declared in those dying moments; the entrance of Adams into their lives and how now they believed in him, now doubting, never altogether satisfied that some link existed between him and the Silent Menace, yet forced to accept his explanations as true with the doubt always in his favor in the minds of the colonel and Miss Dare at least; their queer adventures on the Granadian frontier and Bertha's near tragedy when in the hands of the unscrupulous knave, Bolero, and how disaster was averted by a bullet from the pistol of Adams simultaneously with the routing of the revolutionists by Colonel Dare's timely expeditionary force.

From the frontier the talk drifted back to Washington and the unabated and increasing peril of the hour. Without taking undue advantage of a host's opportunity Colonel Dare asked Bertha many questions intended to flummox and settle their minds as to whether she was what she appeared to be, an innocent dupe of the conspirators with her eyes now wide open, or their secret agent of marvellously deceptive qualities. The dinner ended with the Dares unqualifiedly deciding the former, with unconsequential reservations. Brent seemed to agree with them, although in reality he differed, of course.

Thus came Bertha Bonn into an intimate place in the life and affairs of Miss Pearl Dare, whether for good or evil. Her determination to prevent Major Brent's marriage to Pearl was stronger than ever and now more possible of accomplishment. She believed firmly that Adams was the Silent Menace, though she gave no hint of this to anyone.

While chatting with Miss Dare in her boudoir, Bertha overheard the colonel say to Brent in the hall below: "Fie upon that, major! The Silent Menace and the Foreign Alliance will yet be caught. There are five hundred thousand lamp posts in America on which to hang five hundred thousand traitors and still leave us with innumerable courageous hearts and strong arms to defend the cause of liberty. Don't be a pessimist! You will soon be helping to

train, and for five years to come, a million sons of freedom who will answer the president's summons. All this talk about neutral "hyphenates" ready to lie down and let Europe and the Orient color the two seas with Yankee blood is bosh!"

These were strange and disturbing words to Bertha. She walked to a window and looked down on the street. It had been a long time since Bertha's mind speculated upon things of serious import. She was half inclined to envy Pearl Dare if only for the impulse to good and noble deeds life in that household encouraged. She shrugged her shoulders and sighed hopelessly. She had indeed made a mess of her life.

Pearl, who was studying Bertha quietly, wondered at her sudden abstraction. "What do you see on the sidewalk that makes you sigh so dismally?"

"Nothing but a lamplighter on his nightly rounds," quickly evaded Bertha, changing her mood. "That's queer!" she added and motioned to Pearl, whispering: "Come here!"

Pearl hastened to the window, gave one glance in the direction indicated by Bertha and ran to her desk. She opened a drawer and hurried back to the window with a pair of sea-glasses of the kind used on ships at night.

Through these binoculars Pearl gazed at the lamplighter. He stood on top of his ladder ostensibly testing the strength of one of the powerful bulbs in the cluster of electric lights on the post. In reality he had found and was reading a message evidently left there for him.

"Can you make it out? Is it something unusual?" whispered Bertha, softly and curiously.

Pearl's hands shook as she pressed the glasses against her eyes.

The Silent Army is to assemble at the Owl's hour at the Chemical building. The Silent Flyer will be there. By command of the Silent Menace.

The lamplighter replaced the note and leaping to the ground disappeared with his ladder under his arm.

"The wafers!" ejaculated Pearl, repeating the words to Bertha while the two dashed down the steps.

"The Silent Army!" repeated Bertha under her breath, as they rushed into the study, thinking of the words to which the colonel on that subject had just given utterance.

Pearl rapidly related her discovery and all hurried to the door. They met Adams on the threshold. He blocked their exit.

"See here w-what I just found on that there lamp post!" he stuttered, addressing the colonel, handing him a little piece of paper.

It was the message read and left by the lamplighter.

The apparently genuine alarm of the orderly removed from their thoughts any momentary suspicion of him in connection with this new mystery even though it struck them as odd that the convying of the Silent Menace with his accomplices was taking place almost within their door—Bertha and Brent both excepted. The latter recalled his experience with the lamplighter that morning.

Adams, so ordered by the colonel, went to the garage to get one of the automobiles for a dash to town. Some little delay ensued for Toko was sound asleep in his room in the upper story. While they waited the colonel telephoned to the barracks and ordered his entire regiment to proceed to the Chemical building. Brent on another line notified the war office.

"This isn't a hoax, that's sure!" muttered the colonel as he replaced the telephone receiver. He had been unable to connect with the Chemical building. Exchange told him that something was wrong with the wires there.

They were seated in the car; Toko was shifting the gears.

"Stop!" cried Pearl with a dramatic upward gesture.

High in the skies, quite distinct, yet unaccompanied by sound, two fiery red, dragon-like eyes flashed ferociously, dazzling and blinding human sight. They moved as swiftly as the wind although no breezes stirred.

Involuntarily they shrank in awe of the weird spectacle.

"It's t-the Silent Flyer!" fell from the lips of Adams.

Toko opened the throttle and the car almost lifting itself from the asphalt bounded forward.

They reached the Chemical building at neck-breaking speed, regardless of city laws and frightened pedestrians. Near the gates a soap box orator held spellbound an audience of a thousand or more peaceful enough looking citizens intent upon every word of an eloquent speech on the topical theme of "The High Cost of Living."

No scene could be less offending. The orator handled his subject with great tact and pronounced concern. It was really a philosophical discourse of a proper and educational nature.

Just when in a moment the infantry arrived from the barracks and ordered the crowd to disperse the cloak of

peaceful interest disappeared and as if by magic wild disorder prevailed, guns equipped with silencers were drawn and a terrific riot ensued. In the confusion Adams slipped away unobserved.

Pearl and Bertha followed the colonel and Major Brent into the building. Toko remained outside in charge of the automobile.

Strange things had happened in the building. Every employee had been gagged, bound and thrown on the floor. Desks had been pried open, papers littered the place and broken filing cabinets were strewn everywhere. And the big vault in which code prescriptions and chemicals of almost priceless value were kept was blown asunder at the precise moment the colonel and his party appeared in that portion of the building.

Pearl saw a masked man dart from out the rising cloud of smoke and dust. She dashed after him. The chase led to the top of the building. Here she flung herself upon the unknown person and succeeded in wrenching from his tightly clenched fist the box of wafers her quick eye discovered there. He tried to retake them but Bertha re-enforced her and drove him off.

The most thrilling experience of her life now befell Pearl. The masked man was seen to creep into a seat attached to a huge cigar-shaped object

both wrists in one powerful hand and with the other searched her pockets for the box of wafers.

"Thanks, g-girl," murmured the masked man in a voice strangely like Adams. He slipped the box of wafers into his own pocket and released her. "You g-got the grit of the devil and the nerve of a saint!"

Falling like a blazing rocket of huge proportions, out of the accentuated blackness of the night, the Silent Flyer crashed to earth. It lay blazing and sputtering in a cornfield not twenty feet from Pearl. A heap of ropes, wires and canvass, all that remained of her parachute, was piled on the ground at her feet.

The masked man, so like Adams in figure, manner and speech, after releasing her and obtaining possession of the coveted box of wafers, did not immediately depart. He continued to compliment her and to offer assistance in her plight.

Pearl ignored him contemptuously. After a few minutes she regained her strength and full use of her faculties and plucked her way to the remains of the Silent Flyer.

She drew as close to the burning air monster as she dared and still kept out of reach of the sparks. There was no sign of the aviator, whose escape from death was inconceivable.



Pearl's Hands Shook as She Held the Glasses to Her Eyes.

lying in a dark spot on the roof. It was the Silent Flyer. If she had thought twice she would have let him escape for she had the wafers. But her momentary thought was to see his face. She flew at and grabbed him just as he jerked a set of levers and the "thing" soared. Before Bertha's horror-stricken gaze Pearl was dragged into mid-air.

They vanished in a second. Then the red piercing eyes flashed down upon Bertha who shrieked and fell fainting in a heap.

From somewhere in the sky the motor of an airplane purred. Pearl's distended eyes glimpsed the machine sweeping by. She heard the driver yell. Then a canopy enveloped her. She exchanged her hold and clinging to a confusion of ropes, closed her eyes and began to sail downward through limitless space.

On the Potomac shore where Pearl's parachute landed her safely, some minutes passed before her senses returned. A blinding explosion rent the heavens. She reeled to her feet and looked upwards. The Silent Flyer was a sheet of fire, swooping earthward.

She covered her ears with her hands and closed her eyes tightly. When she opened the latter, she drew back in fright before the approach of a masked man. Seizing her, he buckled

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Then Pearl thought she espied someone concealed in the willows overlooking the Potomac shore. But when she reached the spot she decided that her imagination must have tricked her. The only thing in sight was a thick black muffler identical with that worn by the masked man. At that moment Adams, panted out of the bushes, uttered a cry of relief and called her by name.

He clasped her in his arms joyfully. She gave him a stinging blow and broke away. His arms dropped and he began to stammer an apology.

"I was so g-glad to see you alive that I m-mighty near kissed you."

"Don't ever do that again!" she rebuked, though she felt herself blushing.

"Where did you come from?" He pointed skyward. Then he directed her gaze to a "Dauber" standing in an open lot across the river.

"Were you in the other machine?" He nodded. "I brought yonder c-chap down after you let go in the parachute. That was some grit and nerve, g-girl!"

The words were so near the precise language of the masked man who forced her to give up the box of wafers that she stiffened.

"Do you recognize this muffler? Did you take the box of wafers from me?" she questioned, waving the muffler.

(END OF TENTH EPISODE)

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