

VALIANT DUST

by Percival Christopher Wren

SYNOPSIS: Herr Schlaicht, apparently a German agent plotting with the Lord of Malguzen in his Citadel, arrests Margaret Maligni that she knows more about her previous position in the Citadel than she herself does. Margaret, arrested under insulting advances from Ralsul, son of two Kald districts, Julius, her husband, and is disliked by all the Moorish element in the castle. She demands to know what Herr Schlaicht is doing in Malguzen.

Chapter 27 FRIENDLY PLOTTERS

I AM watching the situation, my dear young lady. There are going to be—developments. This waste, uncultivated country, these savage barbarous people who are two hundred, two thousand, years behind the times, have got to—adjust themselves, or be adjusted to the advance of civilization, the march of progress.

"Europe must expand. The colonizing nations of Europe, save your own great country, which has already colonized half the world, have their eyes on Northern Africa—Germany, Spain, Italy, France, Morocco, a potential granary, a mine of wealth, is too near to hungry Europe to be allowed to lie fallow."

"Is the motto of civilized and enlightened Europe also 'might is right' then?" asked Margaret. "It seems a little hard on the Moors, doesn't it, that a European nation should invade their country simply because it covets it, and is strong enough to take it?"

"And what about when the Moors coveted European countries and were strong enough to take them? Didn't they invade Italy, France and Spain, time after time? Weren't they the curse of the whole Mediterranean? Didn't they conquer Spain and rule most of it with a rod of iron for five hundred years? But do not let us talk politics now. Let us agree to be friends, and to help each other, shall we?"

"I shall be grateful for your help, Herr Schlaicht. If you will give it, should I need it," replied Margaret. "And I shall be glad to help you in any way that I can. But I can't help you by betraying confidences, or repeating things I hear, or anything of that sort. And now I must, and I will, go. So please show me the way out, or I'll try and return by the way I came."

Herr Schlaicht bowed. "Come with me, Fraulein," he said. "You and I will talk some more, isn't it? You and I are going to be ver' good friends and help each other ver' much."

A few minutes later, suddenly weary in mind and body—wary as never before had she been in all her life—frightened, unhappy and puzzled, Margaret reached her room.

She would have been yet more puzzled could she have overheard the conversation then being carried on between Herr Schlaicht and his squire-eyed "servant" in the room allotted to the former, particularly as the two men sat down together and talked, drank coffee and smoked cigarettes, in the style of friends and equals rather than that of master and servant.

"Oh, no. Utterly and absolutely incorruptible. You couldn't buy a word from her with a diamond tiara, a rope of pearls and a million francs."

"I was afraid so. In fact, I felt perfectly certain that it was a case of nothing doing—on those lines. But she might be extremely useful if you worked on her fears, or rather used her very legitimate fears to make an offensive and defensive alliance," mused the "ver' clever Arab" who was playing the part of servant to Herr Schlaicht.

"Yes, that was my idea," agreed Herr Schlaicht. "She'd be absolutely staunch to her husband so long as he played the game by her, but I fancy she'd be on the merciful side if he let her down badly, that is to say, if she found out that he was unfaithful to her, as of course he is."

"Still more so," observed the other man, "if he even seems to take the line of complacent husband when Ralsul pesters her."

"Yes, if we can stop in just when and where her husband falls her and the breach between them is sufficiently irreparable we might get her—through her gratitude and sense of self-preservation. . . . She's the type who'd sell you nothing, but give you everything—if you deserved it."

"How far do you think she's in the know?"

"Do you mean with regard to the general situation, the treachery of the Maligni or our identity?"

"Well, everything."

"I'm perfectly certain she knows absolutely nothing—except what I told her—that war might come this way. I'd stake my life on it that she hasn't the vaguest idea that Papa Judas Iscariot Pedro Maligni and his precious son think they are in with us and would betray the Kald to Germany—or the highest bidder. Also I'm equally sure that she takes us at our face value."

"And yours, my lad, is a face of great value when you take your teeth out and put that squint on," added Herr Schlaicht.

"What makes you so certain that the girl knows nothing?"

"Psychology, my boy, psychology. And my great and priceless gift of character-reading. Do you think that girl would stay here for one day if she knew what the Maligni game is? Do you think a girl like that would be a party to such villainy or any villainy at all? Look at her face, man. She's a transparently honest, honorable, typical Anglo-Saxon girl of her class. If I'm mistaken in her, I'll resign from the secret service on the day I discover the fact."

"I agree. But what'll she do if she does discover anything? Or suppose she finds her husband can't or, for his own good reasons, won't protect her from Ralsul?"

"Try to bolt. Go back home, if she could. Which, of course, she couldn't."

"We don't want to lose her while there's a chance of her joining forces with us."

"No. It's a difficult situation. She'd be absolutely invaluable if she'd come in with us completely. We could tell her everything, and she could show the Maligni that she knew—pretending that she'd guessed it or overheard something. She could also pretend to stand in with them and demand to be admitted to all their councils and plans and secrets. But the devil of it is the moment we told her the facts she'd be sick with horror and disgust at their treachery and would simply go—and die in the desert."

"You don't think she'd be out for punishing them, having revenge on her husband for bringing her here and keeping her in the dark?"

"No, the Anglo-Saxon of her class and type doesn't react in that way. They don't go in for vengeance. Her one wish would be to clear out and have no more to do with him."

"As you say, we'd feel a lot safer if she would spy for us, for I trust the good Pedro 'ust about as far as I could throw him with my left hand."

"And not as far as I could kick him with my right foot," agreed the other. "The probabilities are that they are to be trusted in this particular matter because the stakes are so big. But if there were another purchaser in the market with a longer purse. . . ."

"The longer his purse the shorter our shirt."

"Yes," agreed Herr Schlaicht, "or if the wily old Kald got on to their game we should join them in some really choice novelty in the not-too-sudden death line."

"All of which makes for the probability of honest conduct on the part of those honorable Maligni gentlemen."

"Yes," Herr Schlaicht added: "I'll send you to the English girl's room with notes from time to time, making appointments so that I can talk with her as often as possible. . . . It won't be long before she'll be remembering my offer of help and friendship."

"Yes, it wouldn't do to be caught talking with her. You might get her to come here later on, when you've fully won her confidence. She could easily get a Moorish woman's kit and yell."

"Yes, she might come to regard this room as the one place where she was safe," agreed Herr Schlaicht, "and we certainly might get something out of her if we are very clever, what with her terror on the one hand and her indignation and resentment on the other."

"Poor little girl," he added kindly. "The secret service isn't always a gentleman's job, my friend."

"No, but it's a man's job, old chap," replied the other, "and you're the man for it. . . . Best man we've got bar none."

Margaret has a harrowing scene, tomorrow, with her husband.

According to word received by Chief McCredie from Harvey A. Thatcher, chief of detectives in Portland, the boy was last heard of in Medford during October. It was reported to Portland authorities that the boy planned to go prospecting in the Jacksonville region with two men.

He is described as four feet eight inches tall, and weighing between 95 and 100 pounds.

Fender and body repairing. Prices right. Brill Sheet Metal Works.

Activities of Legion Auxiliary

By Mrs. Cole Holmes

The sewing club of the auxiliary met at the home of Mrs. Walter Olmscheid last Monday evening. There were eighteen members present and about three hundred poppies for the graves were made. Later in the spring these poppies are to be waxed and shaped. It was a delightful evening and delicious refreshments were served by the committee.

The next meeting of the auxiliary will be held Monday evening, March 13th, at the home of the president, Mrs. K. D. Ross, 56 North Pesch street. It is the social meeting of the month and Mrs. Eiders, district president, will be guest. A pleasant evening is being planned by the committee. The refreshments are in charge of Mrs. Belva Aiken and Mrs. Lorena Leach and the committee.

Ten reasons why you should join the auxiliary:

1. Peace Time Service—The blue and gold emblem testifies service for God and country in war, and service to community, state and nation in time of peace.
2. Rehabilitation—You are making it possible to attain our objective of every disabled ex-service man and his dependents taken care of by our government.
3. Child Welfare—By belonging you are helping to carry out the great child welfare program that the auxiliary is sponsoring.
4. Americanism—You are backing the greatest principles of Americanism by combating un-American propaganda, supporting patriotic education among the children and our citizens and making our communities better places to live in.
5. Junior Education—You will help teach sportsmanship and higher ideals to the youth of America thru sponsoring the Girl Scouts and conducting contests thru the schools.
6. National Defense—You will help in our great national defense program for adequate national protection and thorough cooperation with the R. O. T. C. and with the legion defense program.
7. Legislation—Every piece of legislation beneficial to ex-service men has found the auxiliary and legion behind it.
8. Non-partisanship—You become a member of the most democratic organization in the world. The only requirement is that son, husband or brother is a member of the legion or died in the service of his country.
9. Comradeship—You join with a group of women who are one in their aims and who are banded together to help the disabled and suffering.
10. Organization—Individually you and I can do little but with a large membership of about a million members we can accomplish anything that is worthy.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



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BRINGING UP FATHER

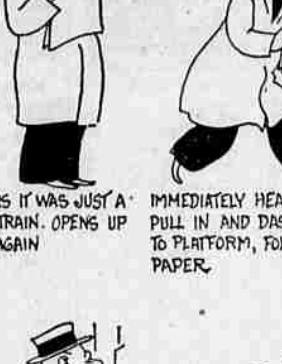
By George McManus



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SURBURBAN HEIGHTS—THE MORNING NEWS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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REWARD OFFERED FOR BOYS RETURN

Although \$50 reward has been offered for the return home of Charles Benvenuto, 14-year old Portland youth, no reports on his whereabouts were received yesterday by Chief of Police Clatous McCredie.

WRIGLEY'S

SPEARMINT GUM

A WORLD OF FLAVOR

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