

VALIANT DUST

by Percival Christopher Wren

SYNOPSIS: Margaret Mallon, best by foreign forces in the Citadel of Mekazen discovers that the "German" from whom she received her only help is really Col. Le Sage of the French Secret Service. He declares that Major Nicolas Riccoli of the Foreign Legion who has offered Margaret a hypothetical promotion into treachery to France with the coveted rank of Mekazen. Unknown to Margaret, Otto Bellman, her first sweetheart, is a soldier in Riccoli's command.

CHAPTER 37

MORE TREACHERY

AND Fate will have her little joke, won't she? Le Sage added.

"I haven't seen many jokes lately," murmured Margaret.

"Naturally it's a bigger joke to me than to you, but I'm sure you'll see a humorous side to it."

"Out of a welter of treachery, the treachery of the Kaid and Riccoli to Riccoli, and of him to them; the treachery of the Mallonis to the Kaid, and the treachery of Riccoli to France, comes the downfall of the lot of them, and the removal of the obstacle to France's civilizing march."

"From their efforts at war, comes peace—final peace, in this desert that shall blossom like a rose."

"The treachery of the Mallonis? Why, what do"—asked Margaret.

"Yes, my dear, black base treachery. Shall I tell you?"

"Tell me everything, please. The more I know, the more I can perhaps help, and the freer I shall be to do so."

"Well, the organization of which I am the head, in this part of the world, discovered that the Kaid was dallying with Germany. Or put it the other way about, if you like. Anyway, there were overtures, proposals and an understanding."

"It was arranged that one of Germany's best men should come and see the Kaid, come to a definite agreement—make a treaty with him, in fact."

"The Kaid was to get money, men and munitions, on the understanding that he used the men and munitions, and at any rate part of the money, to make war—any old war that should trouble the waters, and especially war that would make him Sultan of Morocco, worry and embarrass France, and generally, as I said—"trouble the waters."

"Then of course, Germany was going to fish in the troubled waters—fish for vast mineral concessions, among other things, as soon as the Kaid was Sultan of Morocco, or indeed, as soon as he was strong, and France and Spain were weak, in Morocco."

"And so Germany was sending this good man, one of their best, a real stormy petrel, with the highest courage, the greatest ability and the widest experience. Secret service, of course, with no overt backing, countenance, or support from home. If he succeeded, so much the better for Germany and himself. If he failed and were caught, that was that—and the end of 'Herr Schlacht,' known to his brother officers as Carl von Mit-tengen."

"Well, as soon as we know all this, it became my business to put a spoke in his wheel—and I conceived the bright idea of doing not only that, but being the new wheel myself, if you understand me. One fine day it would be a case of 'Herr Schlacht is dead, long live Herr Schlacht!'"

"I got in touch—very gentle touch, just like velvet—with the Señor Pedro Malloni—who was acting for the Kaid in Tangier—and in short, the Señor Pedro Malloni sold the Kaid and the German agent and the whole German connection, to me. He also agreed with me that the Kaid had had his day, and that it was time for so wise a man as Señor Pedro Malloni to put his money on another horse—rat from the stinking ship."

"For I was able to prove to him that France was going to sink the ship."

"Did my husband know anything of this?" interrupted Margaret.

"You want the truth, my dear?"

"Of course, the absolute truth."

"He was present at my final interview with his father, Jules Malloni, who was introduced to me by Pedro Malloni as his partner and agent. He was witness to our agreement and he helped me in my plans for intercepting poor von Mit-tengen."

"He knows, then," said Margaret.

"That you are a French officer, and in the French secret service? He knows you are not Herr Schlacht!"

"He knows I am a French agent," replied Colonel Le Sage. "He knows that Herr Schlacht is dead and

buried. It was he who was able to procure for me a mounted German photograph—from the mount of which I was able to remove the photograph and substitute my own above the name and address of the German photographer."

"What happened to the real Herr Schlacht, I mean?" asked Margaret.

"I killed him."

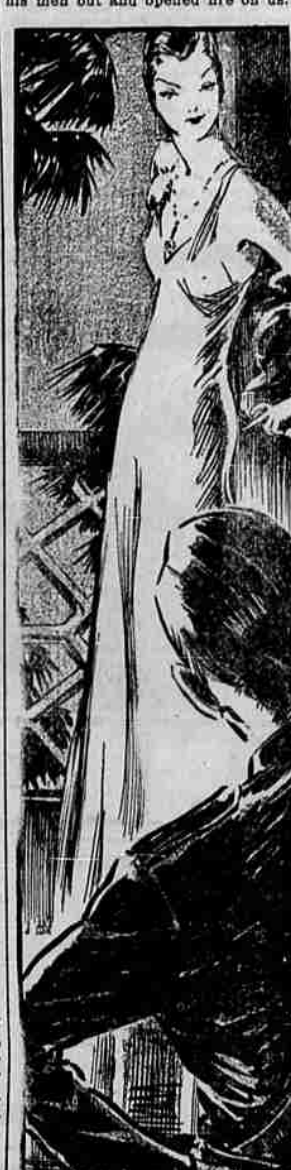
Margaret involuntarily drew away.

"Oh, I didn't murder him in cold blood, my dear. Curiously enough, I killed him in self-defense. As my little caravan approached his camp one evening, beside a water-hole in the Oued el Draa, he simply turned his men out and opened fire on us."

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"Filthy treachery," exclaimed Margaret.

I don't know whether he took us for Touareg from the Tanzeruft, or whether he had his suspicions of the Señor Pedro Malloni. I know I had my suspicions of Malloni as soon as von Mit-tengen opened fire on us at sight, and wondered whether he were double crossing, and had warned von Mit-tengen to look out for me.

"Anyway, it was, as I say, a case of self-defense—for we'd got to get to the water—for I don't say I wasn't glad of the excuse to go for him. So 'Herr Schlacht' died that day—and rose again that night in the person of myself."

"And when I reached Mekazen, the Mallonis were there all ready to vouch for me—pass-word, photograph, and all."

"Filthy treachery," exclaimed Margaret in deep disgust and indignation.

"Yes, pretty bad. It might be argued, of course," continued Colonel Le Sage, "that I'm as bad as they are; the receiver as bad as the thief."

"Oh, no," expostulated Margaret. "You are working for France, working for good—not for your own personal profit, not making money by betraying the person who employs you, and trusts you."

Colonel Le Sage raised his huge hand and patted Margaret's shoulder.

"Thank you, my dear. And now let's consider the 'Emperor Riccoli' for just a moment."

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And tomorrow the mystic password 'silverbury' again comes to Le Sage's ears.

jeot to certain procedure of the trial.

William Bishop, who joined the choir at Little Milton, England, in 1887, is still a member and has also been a bell-ringer since 1887.

At the wedding of J. Hewison, aged 71, at Milton, England, to Miss R. E. Lish, aged 66, the best man's age was 94 and the bridesmaid's 66.

MINERS REMAIN DOWN TO PROTEST FLOODING

WARSAW, Poland, March 23.—(AP)—Declaring they would rather die of hunger underground than slowly starve to death while without jobs, more than 700 coal miners at Klimentow have refused to come to the surface after completing Saturday's shift.

They have remained underground on hunger strike in protest of a plan of mine operators to flood two shafts in which they work.

JACKSONVILLE PLANS CLEANUP OF RUBBISH

TACOMA, Wash., Mar. 23.—(AP)—Edward A. Rich, prominent surgeon and yachtsman, died early today from burns received Sunday when his \$35,000 yacht, the Argosy, blew up and sank at its berth at the Tacoma Yacht club.

Phoenix Church Endeavoring To Reach All Homes

PHOENIX, Mar. 23.—(Sp.)—Sunday is "zero hour" in the evangelistic effort to reach every home in the Phoenix community. The pastor will speak on the subject, "Rebuilding the Walls," and there will be a roll-call of every member of the church. Each member is requested to make an effort to be present or to send word of greeting. This will be a very impressive service.

HOT SOUP

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Perhaps You'lul Have Another Chance, Jose!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORBES



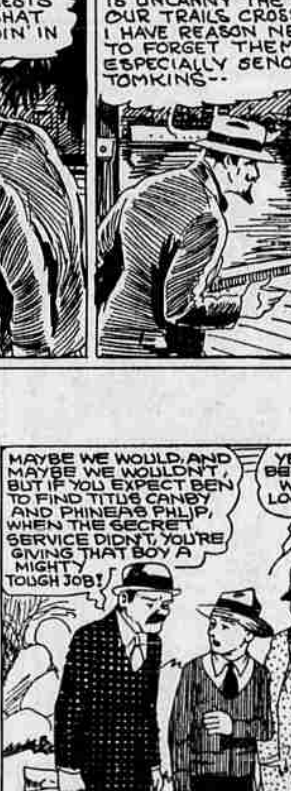
BOUND TO WIN—Jim's Final Wallop

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—A Little Dough For The Cook

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



SALEM BUSINESS MAN DEMANDS NEW TRIAL

SALEM, March 23.—(AP)—A new trial has been demanded for Charles Archer by his attorney, C. F. Prouas of Grants Pass. Archer was found guilty of appropriating wheat for his own use, but counsel for the defense claims three of the jurors now ob-

ject to certain procedure of the trial.

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At the wedding of J. Hewison, aged 71, at Milton, England, to Miss R. E. Lish, aged 66, the best man's age was 94 and the bridesmaid's 66.

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT NOW EVEN BETTER

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation