

The WHITE FEATHER

By LECHMERE WORRALL AND J. E. HAROLD TERRY

Even the Most Peaceful Nook on England's Shore Was Not Immune to the Scourge of Germany's Spy System, and West Coast Harbored What Might Have Caused the Allies' Ruin

The Recent Discovery of Secret Wireless Plants in the United States Unfolds a Prospect of Possible Danger to This Country Such as That Which Nearly Crippled Great Britain

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SYNOPSIS
The story opens in the West Coast private home of an English seaman's wife who has been at war one month. CHARLES SANDERSON, serving in the Royal Air Force, is the son of the hostess. CHRISTOPHER BENT, Molly's fiance, is a German deserter, and FRITZ, a servant in the household, is the spy. Molly, the hostess, is the daughter of a German seaman, and she is the only one who knows the secret of the spy's presence. The story follows the discovery of the spy's wireless plant and the subsequent investigation by the British government.

denise which protects children, drunken men, and fools. It would be the real English good luck if Brent were to stumble on something which a clever man would never find; it is so much easier to defend oneself against clever men.

"I don't think we need worry about him," rejoined her son. "He wouldn't even understand what a carrier pigeon was for if it flew up under his nose. Neither would that young Pennicuk you introduced me to coming from the station, though he's a very different type in other respects. A little while ago I don't suppose he knew one end of a rifle from another, and in a few months more, if nothing happens to prevent it, he will be fighting with the best of them. They have no science, these English, but they certainly have a wonderful spirit. Do you know, mother, it's sometimes quite an effort for me to remember that I am a German. The English ideal certainly has a genius for absorption."

"My son! Do not say such terrible things, even in jest. You are a German and some day you will be a great German like your father before you."

"Perhaps," agreed Charles rather moodily, "but it isn't always as simple as you think to see exactly where one's duty lies. However, a German I am; as you say, and so the Fatherland must be my first consideration. Did Fritz get all the dispatches through?"

"Yes, all of them; the fishing fleet took them."

"Good," replied Charles, his voice now dry, brisk and businesslike. "And how many of the Potsdam carriers are left?"

"Two, one of them has hurt his wing on the other must not be used excepting on a matter of the first importance."

A satisfied smile touched lightly at Charles's usually stern mouth. "Would you call a map of the English mine field of the first importance?" he asked.

Mrs. Sanderson gazed at him for a second, hardly daring to believe her ears. Then a light of enthusiasm that seemed to transfigure her comely but commonplace face kindled in her eyes.

"My son, do you mean it? However did you get it?"

"Very simply. Stayed in one lunch time and traced it. There you are." He produced his pocketbook and, taking from it a thin sheet of folded paper, handed it to his mother, who unfolded a few buttons of her tight black satin bodice and thrust the precious paper within.

Then with something almost ceremonial in her action, she took her son's head between her hands—they were nearly of a height—and kissed him on the forehead.

"You have done a great thing for the Fatherland," she said solemnly, "and our imperial master will not forget you. And now tell me, what about these troops from the north? That is a vital question to which we must bend all our energies. Are they going through?"

"Impossible, impossible!" she cried. "No one can have got at it."

"What's the good of saying it's impossible?" said Charles impatiently. "I tell you the detector's smashed to pieces. Look here."

Mrs. Sanderson made a violent effort to control herself, though her hands were trembling.

"It was all right last night," she said. "I got your message."

"Then it's been done this morning," said Charles. "Who's been in here? That's the question, mother."

"Everybody. I couldn't help it, thanks to the accident to the lounge. Every one expected to come in here and I thought it would look suspicious if I refused, and I thought there would probably be safety in numbers."

Fritz's face had become discolored, his eyes seemed to bulge.

"By our imperial master, I swear," he managed to gasp out.

Sander's fingers relaxed and he let Fritz stagger away from him toward the couch.

"Then, who is the spy?" he said roughly. "Of course it must be some one in the house."

"Mistair Brent," said Fritz feebly as he rearranged his disordered collar. "He was in this room alone a little while ago and he threw a lighted match on the fire. I see him, I tell you, sair; with mine own hands I put it out."

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"I hear," remarked Miss Myrtle, in her thin, ready voice and with a malicious glance toward Mrs. Brent, "that Miss Kidlington was most successful with her white feather campaign this morning."

"I disapprove entirely of such methods," boomed Mr. Pollock. "If a man cannot win will not hear his country's call he must either be able to give a reasonable excuse to his friends or be prepared to sacrifice their esteem." He spoke with raised voice and obvious intention. "Impertinent young women have no right to force such explanations by employing emblems of cowardice."

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"Don't think I'm sticking myself up as an authority," put in Mrs. Lee pleasantly, "but as a matter of fact I think I can tell you. I came across the explanation the other day."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Pollock, all politeness. "Yes, it dates from the time when cock fighting was a fashionable sport. A white feather is never seen in a pedigree gamecock. Its presence indicates a bird of baser breed."

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"No, not at all," persisted Miriam. "I didn't mean it that way. But heaps of men with a fine youthful constitution like yours have managed to mislay their birth certificates in a spirit of patriotic enthusiasm."

Every one else had stopped talking and was listening to this little altercation, conducted with such apparent politeness. Molly's face was flushed; she did not know whether to be grateful to Mrs. Lee for diverting attention from Chris or to be angry with her for baiting Mr. Pollock. Her personal distrust of Mrs. Lee supplying the balance, she decided on the latter course.

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"Men who is the spy?" Charles said roughly, letting his fingers relax.

"Fritz is everybody out," asked Mrs. Sanderson.

"Everybody. Meestair Pollock, he was in at the telephone, but he has just gone out to buy a paper and I saw Mr. Brent go with him. Miss Myrtle, she is in her room, and Mrs. Lee and Miss Pollock, they are in their rooms."

"Good," replied Charles. "Hang about in the passage and keep your eyes open. Fritz, we're going to use the wireless. Mother, you stand by the window."

When Fritz had left the room and Mrs. Sanderson had taken up her post, Charles crossed over to the fireplace and, pressing the spring, brought the Marconi installation revolving round toward the room. He placed the receiver to his ears and picked up the key. Silence rewarded him.

"Funny that he isn't calling," muttered Charles, glancing at his watch again. "I will try signaling him." He tapped out a call and waited again. "What the devil can be the matter? The thing can't be out of order." He bent down to examine it and caught sight of the damaged detector.

"Damnation! Somebody's been tampering with it. Mother, look here."

Mrs. Sanderson hastened across the room, her black satin dress creaking and rustling, her face flushed with agitation.

"Young Pennicuk!" said Mrs. Sanderson thoughtfully. "No, if he did hear of such a thing he could never have consented to 'before lunch' and 'after lunch.'"

"Ach!" cried Fritz. "You are right, it is not Brent, nor this Pennicuk. It is Meistair Pollock. I see it all now."

"Mr. Pollock?" exclaimed Mrs. Sanderson. "How perfectly absurd! Why, he hasn't the brains, either."

"My dear mother," said Charles, a little impatiently. "To judge by appearances nobody in this house has the brains. Yet somebody must have. It isn't good to go by appearances. What makes you suspect Pollock, Fritz?"

"Just now he was rung up on de telephone," explained Fritz. "I listened and I hear him talk about spies. He say Marconi and wireless, he talk a lot about spies."

"He always does," objected Mrs. Sanderson. "I hardly think he'd have done it so publicly over the telephone if there were anything in it."

"If Pollock's clever enough to have discovered this thing, he's clever enough to do that," muttered Charles, "but I can't say I think it very likely. You and Fritz must watch carefully all day, mother. I must go up to town at once, confound it. Don't for-

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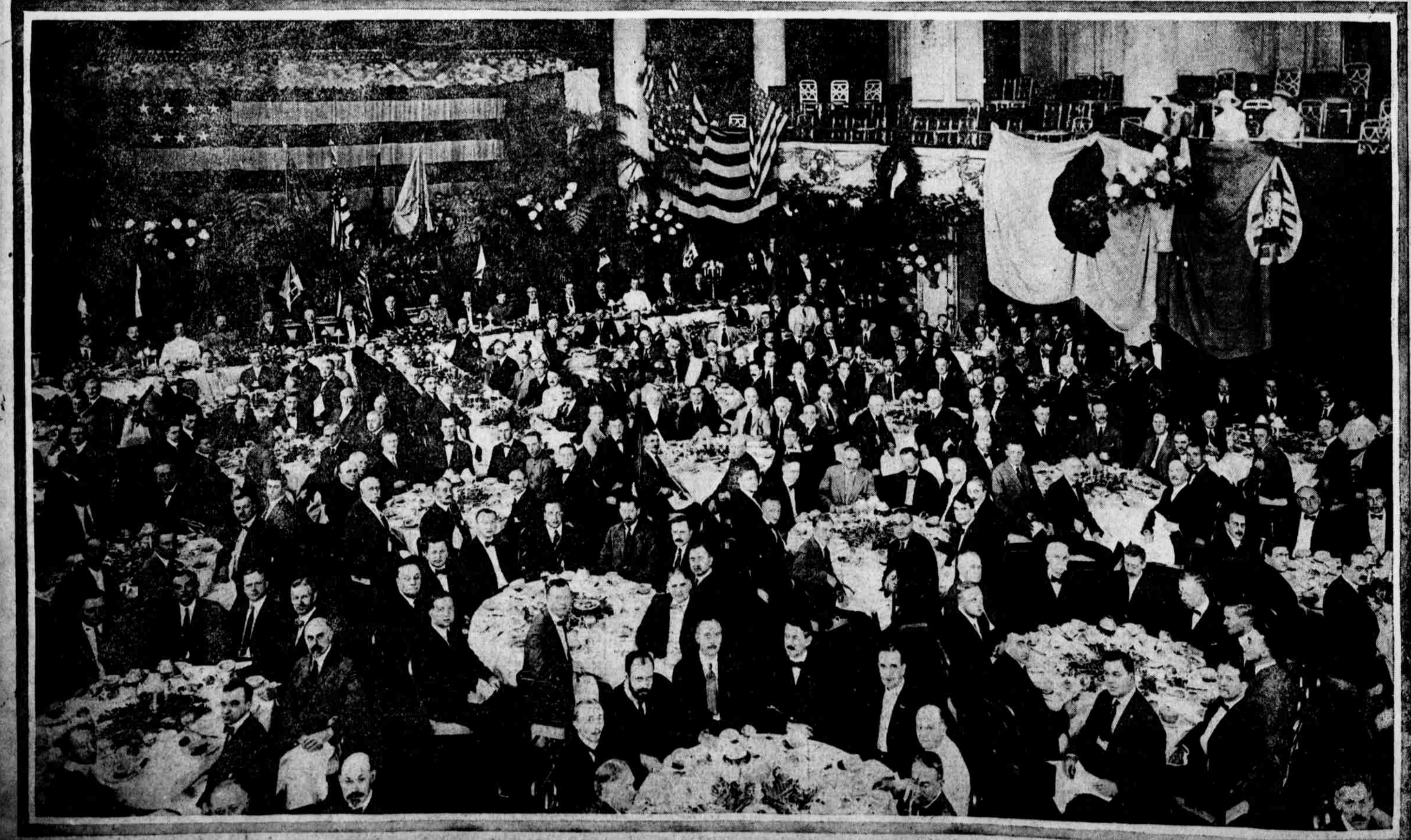
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