

The WHITE FEATHER

By LECHMERE WORRALL AND J. E. HAROLD TERRY

The Most Innocent Query, the Most Offhand Manner of Offering an Object Accidentally Dropped, May Be the Veil Purposely Drawn to Screen a Guarded Thrust for Valuable Information

Mysterious Things Have Happened to the Plotters About to Complete Their Plans—The Only Way to Solve the Latest Mystery Is to Establish the Ownership of the Handkerchief Used to Blindfold Fritz

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The story opens in the West Crest private hotel in an English seacoast town which has been at war one month. CHARLES SANDERSON, a young English soldier, serving in the English Admiralty; MR. POLLOCK, a Justice of the Peace; CHRISTOPHER BRENT, a young English soldier; MISS MYRTLE, a young English girl; FRANK SCHROEDER, a young English soldier; and FRITZ, a young German spy, are the principal occupants of the hotel.

had always lacked force and depth. Now these qualities, though still tentative and unequal, as though they were trying to force their way through, were at last to be heard in her playing.

Brent or Pollock, Which?
CHRISTOPHER BRENT realized this, but being very human, that did not worry him nearly as much as the idea that Molly, too, might see it from that point of view. He had tried that day, as much as was consistent with loyalty to his work, to be just so clumsily that Molly, when she knew everything, would not be able to reproach him with being very adept.

"So now you think it is Brent, do you?" Charles was saying.
"I am sure it must be Brent. I watch and I watch Mr. Pollock and I see him do no more, but I see Brent with mine own eyes about the bird."

"It is Brent," Fritz repeated stolidly. "I am sure. Mr. Pollock, he is a strong man and heavy, but I do not think he could have leaped on my back like that. Anyway, here is the handkerchief," and he pulled a large red and green bandanna, still knotted, from his pocket.

"Well, there's no mark on it," Charles said at last, "might belong to anybody. But it smells of soap; soap and tobacco."

"Mr. Brent, he use scent," cried Fritz eagerly. "I see a bottle of eau-de-Cologne on his dressing table."
"This isn't eau-de-Cologne. Well, I must find out. You had better be getting on with the dinner now, Fritz. Clear out."

"Well, anything fresh?" she asked.
"Nothing in particular," replied Brent, beginning to move slowly in the direction of the sitting room with her. "I think everything's fairly clear now. We have got to prevent 'em burning the house down tonight and we've got to get our signals through to the cruisers, that's all."

"Hullo, Sanderson, you're back, I see," he boomed. "That's splendid. Telling Brent the latest news from town, eh?"
"No, as a matter of fact, we were discussing perfumes," replied Charles casually, still drawing the handkerchief lightly across his nostrils. He suddenly held it out toward Brent. "It is yours, isn't it, Brent?" he asked.

Charles took the handkerchief and inspected it again at the bandanna which he had drawn from his pocket.
At this moment Mr. Pollock, displaying a marvelous expanse of glossy shirt front, came into the room.

"Madame, de map is not dat I place on the pigeon's leg."

Charles was trying to find out something, but what, she could not tell.
"I have rather a special mixture," replied Brent casually, "a little tobaccoist makes it up for me."
"Oh! It's scented, isn't it?" asked Charles.
"Scented? No, I don't think so, I'm sure it isn't," and Brent pulled out his pouch and sniffed at it.

Guests at West Crest Private Hotel enjoyed their dinner one autumn evening in blissful ignorance of the fact that in a few hours they would be "roasting like pigs" in a fire that would not only destroy the house but give the prearranged signal to the U-boat in the harbor.

strong and vigorous enough to have got those plans away from Fritz.
"But if so," argued Mrs. Sanderson, "why did Pollock admit that the handkerchief was his?"
"My dear mother, whoever we are up against is certainly no fool, and he may have done it as a blind. In fact, if he did do it, claiming the handkerchief was about the cleverest thing he could have done. The trouble is, we are faced with the two alternatives of Brent and Pollock, and whichever one of them it is must have a genius for acting. Whether it is Pollock's pompousness or Brent's fatuity that is the mark, the measure of it is simply incredible."

"Ach," said frauheim suddenly "what about Mrs. Lee?"
"Mrs. Lee! I wonder. . . . Yes, that is quite a possible idea. What do you think, mother?"
"I certainly think it might be Mrs. Lee. We know nothing of her. She simply sent a telegram and came down."

"We must muzzle him tonight," said Charles. "The question is how? Getting him up to his room on some pretext and gagging and tying him up there is too risky."
"Ach, but wait," advised frauheim. "I have a plan." She folded her little arms on the table and leaned forward across them to him, her shoulders hunched up under her brown shawl, looking not unlike a big bird of prey, with her features that were so sharp for the broad modeling of her face and her bright brown eyes.

"Whatever kind of yarn can we spin on Pollock?"
"The truth is good enough for me," said frauheim placidly.
"The truth?"
"Yes. Is not Charles a servant of the English admiralty? Does he not lose here the valuable papers?"
"By Jove, frauheim," said Charles, "you have got it." He did not gesticulate. He Fritz or show emotion as readily as his mother, but even he seemed to gleam more with suppressed excitement, though he was quite stiff in his chair.

"Find Mr. Pollock, Fritz," he ordered, and ask him if he will come in here a moment. See that we are not disturbed."
"Very well, sir."
"I will go," said frauheim. "It would not do to have me, a German, present at this interview. You must tell me afterward. She wrapped her shawl about her placid shoulders and departed with Fritz.
A moment later and Mr. Pollock loomed in the doorway, his face beaming with an after-dinner rosiest.

"Fritz says you have been kind enough to invite me to have a cigar with you," he said cheerfully.
"Charles rose and drew a chair up to the table for him.
"I shall be charmed if you will have the cigar," he said, offering one. "But the real reason of the request is that my mother and I want the benefit of your counsel."
"Dear me, dear me," said Mr. Pollock, much gratified and pulling his chair in with the air of a chairman at a board meeting. "I shall be very pleased to do anything I can. As a J. P., of course, I have had great experience of human nature, and I may be able to throw a little light on anything that is puzzling you. What is it all about?"
Mrs. Sanderson leaned forward confidentially.

"You are very good, Mr. Pollock," she said. "The fact is, we are in a very awkward predicament."
"Indeed, you don't say so. I'm very sorry to hear it, I'm sure."
"It is this way," began Charles, leaning forward in his turn, so that Mr. Pollock was fairly hemmed in by Sanderson; "when I came down from London last night brought with me certain important papers—Government secrets. Those papers have disappeared."
Mr. Pollock stared at him, mouth and eyes open. "You don't say so!" he exclaimed. "That is serious, very serious. What do you suppose happened to them?"
"Stolen," replied Charles, "when I was really there. Do you suspect any one?"
"We suspect that one of our number is a spy."
Mr. Pollock almost bounded in his chair. "It is one thing to talk glibly about spies, plans, maps, and all the rest of the bag of tricks. Just as one may discuss a terrible railway accident on the other side of the globe. It is a very different thing, however, to have it made real to one of some intimate connection."
"So it really is true," he said, as though half to himself.
"What is true?" asked Mrs. Sanderson quickly.
"Spies and all that . . . I suppose there really is such a thing . . ."
"But, my dear Mr. Pollock," replied Mrs. Sanderson, "you read us paragraphs about spies out loud from the papers every day; you, above every one, have always been thinking and talking about spies. Why, then, should you be so surprised?"
(CONTINUED TOMORROW)



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