

The WHITE FEATHER

By LECHMERE WORRALL
AND J. E. HAROLD TERRY

A little piece of thin paper, with a few scrawls and scratches on it, may mean nothing, or it may be pregnant with vital information. However, the fact that Molly discovers such a "scrap of paper" in the pocketbook of Mrs. Lee eases her mind considerably, as it removes suspicion from Chris.

A Jealous Young Woman, Determined to Learn the Exact Relationship Between Her Lover and Another Woman, Finds Out Enough to Satisfy Her, but at the Same Time Comes Perilously Close to Ruining Great Britain

In the United States There Are a Large Number of Amateur Spy Hunters Who, Prompted by Motives of Jealousy, Adventure or Love of Country, Innocently Hamper Our Secret Service Agents by Their Meddling

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SYNOPSIS
The story opens in the West Coast private hotel in an English seacoast town when Brent and Molly are at war one month. Mrs. Sanderson, the proprietress, her son, Charles Sanderson, serving in the Royal Navy, and Mr. Pollock, the Justice of the Peace, are the only guests. Molly's fiancé, Christopher Brent, a minister, is the latest arrival. Miss Myrtle, a minister's daughter, and Mrs. Lee, a young English woman, claim to be in the house, are the entire occupants of the hotel. Brent and Molly are representatives of the British Intelligence Office, and discover the reverse side of the innocent-looking girl's face. After a complete wireless outfit, Brent replaces a message that a U-boat is waiting off the harbor for a given signal. Brent dismantles the Marconi. This discovery positively links up the Sanderson household with a German spy plot destined to cripple Great Britain. Later, Brent sees sketches of the harbor and the brains of the plot. The fact that there is an artist in the house, and that the presence of carrier pigeons, and Brent shoots one of the birds as it leaves the house. He discovers a sketch of the harbor defenses in a small case tied about one of the man's legs. The artist decides to burn the hotel that evening, as a signal to a U-boat waiting out at sea. They also plan to burn all the occupants. Meanwhile Brent and Molly complete the details for the capture of the German spies. Absolutely at a loss to account for the many papers in their plans, Sanderson and his colleagues determined to take Mr. Pollock into their confidence, explaining that Sanderson has been robbed of certain Admiralty papers. Molly, in despair at the accusations leveled at her lover, decides to exonerate Chris and starts on a tour of investigation. She enters Mrs. Lee's room.

"A Scrap of Paper"

As a matter of fact, remarkably few personal touches had been imparted to the conventional white-painted, chintz-hung apartment. Over the gleaming brass rail at the foot of the bed a wonderful dressing gown had been thrown, a barbaric thing of strong reds and blues with gold thread shimmering through it, a very different dressing gown from Molly's own little white wrapper bordered with swan's down. The luggage showed signs of hard wear; the dressing table set was of tortoise shell with a gold inlaid monogram. Molly considered it rather bizarre. Beside the mirror lay the handkerchief satchel she had noticed before dinner. Molly slipped her fingers in, but they met only handkerchiefs. Exploring further, she found an opening in the lining, and this time pulled out the folded sheet of tracing paper. A glance at it, though, of course, she could not understand its import, told her that it was some kind of a plan. Thrusting it in her own dress, Molly turned out the light, opened the door a little way, listened, and crept out. She felt a different being as she went down the stairs again. Could this be she, the Molly who had thought life was all fun and happiness and Chris? This Molly spied and stole, and all with a certain feeling of ferocity at the back of her mind which she only remembered having experienced once

before in her life, and that was when as a tiny girl her father had threatened to have her dog destroyed because he bit the postman. Molly had fought then for her dog, had raised every argument against the postman and for her beloved Micky, and she had won. Now she was fighting for something far more vital. And just as she would not have minded if the postman had put a stop to the controversy by conveniently falling down dead, so now she did not mind what she could prove against Mrs. Lee if she could only save Chris. As she reached the sitting room door she heard Mr. Pollock's voice booming even more loudly than usual, and recognized in the sound of it that he had lost his temper. His attempt at diplomacy must have failed him, and, anxious lest he had worked Chris into one of his obstinate moods, Molly broke in on them.

Silence fell as Molly entered, and she looked from one to the other of the two men.

"Oh, father," what have you been saying to Chris?" she asked. "I asked you to leave it to me, didn't I?"

"I have been merely—with the greatest tact and diplomacy—asking a few questions that I have a perfect right to ask. I have been giving Mr. Brent an opportunity he has not seen fit to take, of confiding in me, and promised him that if he chose to do so I for one would try to help him. Nobody can accuse me of being a narrow-minded man, and I hope I have been able to make allowances and see the thing fairly."

Brent turned and looked in pathetic helplessness at Molly.

"Can you tell me what your father is talking about?" he asked. "Of course, I thought he was going to talk about you and I started in to confide right away, but he said I was impertinent."

"Father, dear, go away and leave it to me," said Molly, going up to him and taking the lapels of his coat in her two hands. "I am sure I can manage Chris a great deal better alone." Molly had not yet learned not to use the word "manage" out loud.

"Oh, very well, very well, I'll go. Thought you might like my support and protection. Of course, girls think they know best nowadays." And Mr. Pollock moved heavily toward the door.

"I say," said Chris cheerfully to his retreating form, "you might take over my quiet smooker with Mrs. Lee, will you? She must think it's jolly rude my leaving her like this." Mr. Pollock's only answer was a snort as he banged the door behind him.

Molly and Chris were left standing looking at each other, with a new shyness and constraint between them. Then Brent strode over to the mantelpiece and leaned his elbow on it, speaking to her over his shoulder.

"I suppose you want me to explain about this afternoon?" he asked.

"No; at least, that will come into the

general explanation, that's all, Chris, what's the matter?"

"Well, it's about spies. He's got them on the brain, poor dear."

"Spies? Poor chap," commented Brent, drawing at his pipe.

"He even suspects," continued Molly, "that there's one in this house. Just imagine!"

"By Jove, you don't say so? I say, Molly, that's really funny. When did the old dear think of that?"

"Of course you—you don't think it's possible, do you, Chris?"

"I don't know. Everything's possible, I suppose, but I should say it was exceedingly unlikely. Whatever's put the idea into his head?"

"Charles Sanderson."

"Nonsense."

"No, no, I don't mean that he suspects

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Brent stared at her with his pipe in his hand and his mouth open. Then a slow smile seemed to beam out all over him.

"You don't mean to say it's me?" he asked.

"By Jove, that's priceless. How pleased the old dear must be, because he's got his knife into me anyway. I say, that's the greatest compliment I have ever had paid me. No one's ever thought me brainy enough before," and he continued chuckling with pleasure after he put his pipe back in his mouth.

"They suspect Mrs. Lee, too," added Molly, watching him narrowly.

The laughter sank away from Brent, leaving him very grave. "Eh, what?" he asked.

"Chris, you must admit you've let father have some excuse for thinking of you, because of your not doing anything, I mean."

"Darling," Chris was beside her and had gathered her in his arms. "I was a pig, a brute, I admit it, but I wasn't sneering, I was only making a little fun of you. It's all so ridiculous, dear heart. Come, let's kiss and make it up and not spoil our few minutes together by being so absurd."

For one blissful moment Molly let herself yield to his caress and closed her eyes like a tired child as her head rested on his shoulder. Then she pulled herself together and, with a determination he had never seen in her before, thrust him away and sat up.

"Chris, you don't quite realize what has happened this evening," she began, "and I can't help you unless you tell me the truth. For one thing, you told me you had never met Mrs. Lee before."

"Yes, I did tell you that," admitted Brent, "though I suppose you don't believe it after this afternoon. Look here, sweetheart, let's understand one another. You think that I'm in Mrs. Lee's power, as you put it, and that she's a German spy. What makes you think that?"

"I know it."

"How do you know it?"

Molly slipped her fingers down inside her frock and brought out the folded paper. Chris took it and was still warm from the contact with her, but Chris was too absorbed in the business in hand to notice other than mechanically what would normally have been such a sweet detail for a lover.

"Do you know what that is?" demanded Molly.

"Looks like a map."

"It is a map. It's the one that Charles Sanderson lost. I found it in Mrs. Lee's room."

"You found it? You stole it, you mean?" said Brent rather harshly. And then his mind flashed back to the time when he remembered that he himself had stolen it from Fritz and that Charles Sanderson had stolen it from the admiralty.

"Everything's fair in love and war," defended Molly, "and this is both love and war."

"Diamond, diamond, what hast thou done?" quoted Brent half to himself.

"How do you know anything about it?" he asked.

"I saw Mrs. Lee slipping a paper into her handkerchief satchel as I was passing her room on my way to dress for dinner. I shouldn't have thought anything of it, although there was something odd about the way she took it out of her dress and slipped it into the lining of the satchel, but when father told me about Mr. Sanderson's loss I wondered if perhaps this had anything to do with it, so I ran up—and stole it, as you say."

"I see. You say everything's fair in love and war, Molly. Nearly everything's fair in war, though not quite all, by a long chalk. You can't be so scrupulous about that, because the thing ceases to be worth having if you tamper too much with the methods. Tell me, did you get this map in a burst of patriotic fervor, because you felt Mrs. Lee was a German spy; or did you want it because you thought all was not right between Mrs. Lee and myself, and wished to knock her down and out?"

"A little of both, I think," said Molly slowly, "but more of the second. Yes, I don't care if it is wrong, Chris. And it was most of all because I wanted to save you, and that's why I didn't mind what I did."

"Molly, you are an angel and I love you for it. But believe me when I tell you one can't be too scrupulous in love, just as one can't be too scrupulous in war. You know I mean what I'm saying, don't you?"

"Yes, I'm sure you do, Chris."

"Very well, then. It follows that I am not doing anything unworthy of our love, and that whatever I can't tell you has to do with something else. If there is anything about me that you find it hard to explain, Molly, it isn't on the personal side at all, remember."

"But it is so hard," said Molly plaintively.

"If you love me there shouldn't be anything that you can't tell me about."

"Dear little goose, there are dozens of things I wouldn't ever tell you about. But this secret isn't my own to tell you, yet."

"Then it must be more to you than your love for me," said Molly.

"In a way, yes."

"Oh," cried Molly, drawing away from him with a stricken look in her eyes.

"Dearest, there is one thing that does matter more than love. That is to say, personal things could matter more than love, of course."

"What is this thing that's so valuable?" demanded Molly.

"It's an idea, just an idea, that's all."

"An idea?" echoed Molly.

"Yes, it may be worth, or what people call honor—and honor leads one into strange places sometimes. But it's just an idea—or an ideal, if you prefer it. Something in the mind, and everything has to give way to it. Ideas are more important than anything personal, Molly. That's what you haven't found out."

Molly sat looking up at him in silence. This was surely not the Chris she had known, her eyes and brows, who had always laughed and joked with her and seemed so blasé and indifferent to the rest of the world. He looked very grave, almost stern, and yet something in his eyes told her he was being exactly the same as ever. Could he possibly talk like that if he were a German spy, she wondered. He had not been able to bring a single proof of his innocence, he had not attempted to. Well, unless he were the most consummate hypocrite—was he?—after all, he had lied to her about Mrs. Lee all day, but then he had lied about Mrs. Lee, she had known there was something behind.

Chris took the map gently from her lax fingers.

"Shall we say no more about it until tomorrow, Molly?" he asked. "Meanwhile I'll take charge of this. You don't know what fire you have been playing with, my dear. All Molly's suspicions came surging back at her, but not personal suspicions this time. She had actually forgotten the issues of his innocence, he had not attempted to. It was true that Chris was, after all, the most contemptible of beings—a man spying against his own country. She snatched the map back from him.

"Chris, I can't let it go at that; you can't talk me over. O, I don't know what to think. I'm so miserable. Do tell me the truth and let me help you. If you don't, father—"

"Well, what do you mean, what's he going to do?"

"O, you know what he is. He's going straight to the police to have you arrested."

"I say," said Brent, thoughtfully, "that would be awkward. That might have very unpleasant consequences, indeed." He kept his hands over hers, which still held the map, and thought rapidly. To tell Molly the truth was out of the question. She was too young, too inexperienced in hiding her feelings for that to be safe. In fact, it would be utterly unjustifiable. Better rupture all his personal relationships than run such a risk.

But it was not the breaking of any tie which was worrying Brent now. It was the fact that because of this bold and unforeseen move on the part of the enemy all his plans might come to nothing, the submarine get away, the house to be burned. To take Mr. Pollock into his confidence was more impossible than to tell Molly. He might just as well about his secret from the housestops. He could hardly be smiling as he imagined how Mr. Pollock would think he was behaving as usual to the Sandersons while at the time the glare of his eyes, the purple of his countenance, and his surprise, indignation, and alarm would be as plain for the Sandersons to read as one of their own ciphers.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)



"Chris, you don't quite realize what has happened this evening," Molly began.

up in the big chair again and looked up at Brent under her lashes as she half lay there. In the glow of the shaded lights she looked very childish and pathetically small, a little air of worldly wisdom that she had adopted sitting quaintly on her.

Brent felt all the best in his love for her well up as he looked. The temptation came over him to throw everything aside, to tell her the truth, so that she would trust him again. That is to say, the wish that it were possible to do so came over him with almost unbearable poignancy, but the idea was almost too remote to be a temptation. It merely presented itself as a thing that would have been so restful and comforting could he only have done it.

He did not go near her and sit on the arm of the chair as she had been confident he must, but still stood in front of the fireplace, as a man always does when on the defensive.

him, but Mr. Sanderson has lost some very important document, something belonging to the admiralty."

"Careless beggar, that's all I can say."

"When I say lost it," went on Molly, "I mean it's disappeared. It's been stolen, down here."

"Well, of course it's dashed awkward for him," answered Chris. "The admiralty won't like that at all. When did he miss it?"

"I don't know. Some time today, I suppose. He told father about it after dinner."

Chris began to chuckle. "I'll bet I know who your father thinks it is. Dear old Fraulein Schroeder."

"No, he doesn't suspect fraulein, neither does Mr. Sanderson."

"Fritz, I suppose."

"No, nor Fritz," said Molly impatiently, "nor Miss Myrtle, nor his mother, nor me. O, Chris, can't you guess?"

"O, I understand that right enough, but why drag in Mrs. Lee?"

"That's only guesswork on their part so far," answered Molly, "but I—" she paused nervously, then went on "I can prove she's a spy."

"Look here, Molly, do you know you are saying very serious things? You must be careful."

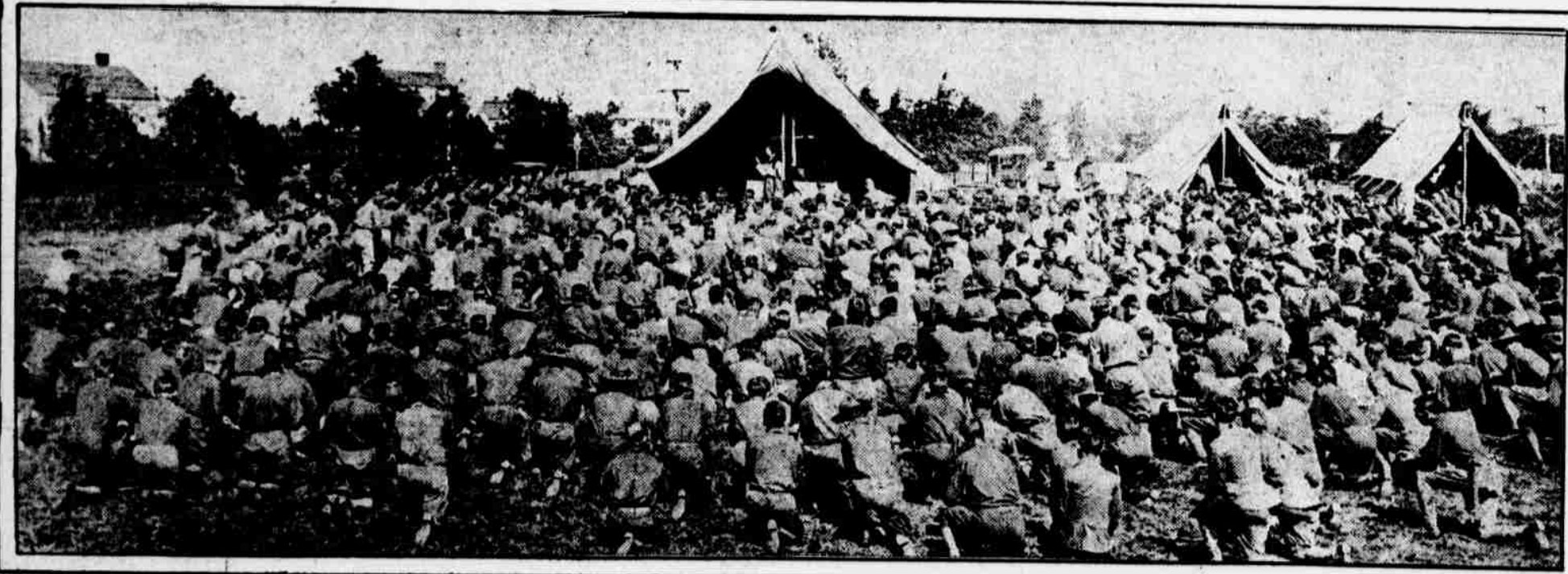
"O, I know it's serious enough to me, too, Chris. I know you are in her power."

Chris seized the opportunity to roar with laughter.

"My darling child," he said. "Have you been reading a penny novelette, or going to the melodrama on the pier? 'In her power' do I say, 'Inhand me, villain'? Do prompt me, Molly."

"Ah, you are being cruel," flashed Molly. "I know I'm not clever like—like Mrs. Lee, but you shouldn't sneer at me. Chris, how can you?"

PHOTOGRAPHIC REVIEW OF PERSONS AND HAPPENINGS MENTIONED IN THE DAY'S NEWS



A SOLDIER'S LIFE IS NOT ALL WORK AND PLAY
There are religious exercises, too, just as in civil life, as is shown by this impressive photograph taken at Camp Mills, at Mineola, Long Island, when the Sixty-ninth Regiment was at field mass.



HER TASK TO BRING ORDER OUT OF CHAOS
Miss Hannah Patterson, widely known suffragist from Pittsburgh, who has done excellent work in organizing the woman's section of the Council of National Defense.



GRAND DUKES CYRILLE AND MICHEL OF RUSSIA, IN FRANCE SINCE THE REVOLUTION, ENJOY A SOCIABLE GAME OF GOLF AT CANNES



ORLANDO A. SOMERS
New commander-in-chief of the U. A. R.



PHILADELPHIA LOVERS OF TRAP SHOOTING ASSEMBLED AT THE CURTIS COUNTRY CLUB AT LAWNSDALE FOR THEIR WEEKLY SESSION WITH THE BIRDS