ATTACK ON AMERICA

©BY GENERAL ARED WHITE

W. N. U. Release

THE STORY SO FAR: Intelligence Officer Benning's warning that 200,000 foreign troops were poised in Mexico for an attack on the United States caused grave concern in army headquarters, but the people branded the statement as "war mongering." Four large southern cities were suddenly attacked from the air; Washington was bombed and the President killed. General Brill, commander of the army in Texas, reported to General Hague at Washington that he was opposed by greatly superior forces. General Hague told him to resist the enemy's advance at all costs. Brill ordered Captain Boll to lead the 11th U. S. Infantry into position for battle. Boll's motor column bravely withstood a terrible strafing from enemy aircraft, but he ordered the men to abandon their trucks when he observed twenty more planes approaching. Further resistance seemed useless to him.

Now continue with the story.

INSTALLMENT NINE

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CHAPTER VIII—Continued

As Boll's eye went back into the air, his mind was lifted suddenly out of the depths of black despair by a joyous miracle of development. Those new planes were closing in and he made out by the shape of wings and fuselage that they were not Van Hassek planes.

Boll's hand flashed out his field-glasses. He glued them to the skies. From under the wings of those inrushing squadrons flashed the glorious legend "U. S. Army."

American planes plummeted down. Van Hassek's hornets now were droning about in a Lufberry circle awaiting the developments of attack. In a twinkling the American birdmen projected an audacious assault. Planes circled, dove, rolled, darted in the throes of combat. A plane came whistling down. Boll's jaw tightened as he saw the first casualty was an American plane. But quickly two of Van Hassek's birdmen came tumbling out of the sky.

If the Van Hassek pilots had stalled for reinforcements, they now decided upon precipitate flight against superior number. Another Van Hassek plane went down. In a minute the cloud of darting falcons passed into the distance behind.

A noon sun was burning the baked hills and swales when Boll's survivors rolled in on a Second Division outpost south of Kirk. Boll's cheek, caked in blood, was throbbing with pain, his right arm hung stiff and useless at his side. He climbed from the truck and stolidly checked his command as it came through the outpost. Forty-two moaned in the throes of wounds, twenty-nine had been left dead along the crimson road from Laredo.

The outpost commander came hurrying up.

"Sorry to report in with my command shot to pieces like this, Colonel," Boll reported in grim dejection. "But the only choice was—capture. Where's the hospital, sir? My wounded must have care at once!"

"Eleventh's men are being evacuated to San Antonio, Captain," the outpost commander advised. "Colonel Denn was killed, total casualties over three hundred men. But maybe that's not too bad when you consider our border cavalry was all gobbled up. The Twelfth and Fifth are still fighting it out, but they haven't any more chance than Custer had. From all reconnaissance reports, we'll be attacked in force here before many hours pass. All right, Boll, get rolling."

CHAPTER IX

In Washington, Captain Benning spent a sleepless nightmare of a night on the assignment from Flagwill of observing panic-stricken streets.

Daybreak and exhaustion restored some degree of reason. People moved about now as if stunned, but from time to time looking fearfully into the skies or straining at every word of radio loudspeakers that had been put in service on principal streets.

Traffic jams finally had been reduced, steady streams of cabs and cars were pouring out of the city on all roads. Thousands flocked about the railway station clamoring for standing space on any train that led away from Washington.

Extra editions of newspapers burst into the streets at frequent intervals.

Texas invaded. Extras massed black headlines over meager dispatches from San Antonio. Van Hassek was moving north in three columns. American infantry and cavalry were fighting him at the Rio Grande. American Second Division was moving south to repel the invasion.

Another extra dashed out. Washington safe! Benning read eagerly. It had been as Flagwill guessed. The night raiders had planted a refueling field. Back of the Tennessee River, southwest from Nashville. The thing had been camouflaged as a new airways enterprise, had even been fostered by ambitious and unsuspecting chambers of commerce.

When the bombers and their convoys of fighting craft had put down to fill their tanks after bombing Washington, a few mounted machine guns had kept curious natives away. The aircraft had taken all personnel off at resuming their flight back to Mexico. Another raid on Washington would be impossible—unless attack could be launched from the sea.

That subdued hum of relentless activity filled the Munitions Building. Faces were lined and gray from strain and fatigue, but eyes burned from smudged sockets with stern resolution.

The night's panic had swept the whole country. In the midwest there had been incredulity at first. The whole thing seemed too inconceivable. Invasions, bomber raids, were an intangible atrocity occurring to distant peoples and recorded in dispatches. Those inexplicable atrocities belonged to the black pages of Shanghai, Canton, and Madrid.

Already the hue and cry was rising west of the Alleghenies sharp on the heels of the first hysterical waves of fear. What of the Army? Why had our armed forces been caught napping? Why hadn't the raiders been detected and shot down?

The first reports of mobilization of Army and National Guard were pouring in. Mobilization was less than one fourth complete. The Regular Army was ready to entrain for concentration points from its far-flung network of small garrisons whose location had been dictated by chambers of commerce and congressmen rather than by the necessities of military training in the vital team-play of larger units.

Plans were being laid for a call for 500,000 volunteers. That would have to wait action by Congress, but Congress could be depended upon now to go the limit. A draft army of a million men would come next.

As for modern equipment, that would have to wait. There would be no such thing as buying it in France and England, even in Canada, as at the time of the World War. A year, or two years, might elapse before industrial mobilization the country's own resources, could

"I have two reports that will interest you."

provide anything more than the crudest necessities of combat. If a major war was in the offing, the country would have to depend upon the massed valor of its manpower to take unequal red losses and drive through at all costs.

It was nine o'clock before Colonel Flagwill stamped in from the Chief of Staff's office. His face was ashen and lined, but his level black eyes glowed vitality.

"What an inglorious tangle!" he muttered to Benning with a tormented shake of his head. "Which way to turn, that's the question bedeviling all of us."

"I've been reading the reports and recommendations of the staff sections, sir," Benning answered. "Mobilization seems to be moving right along and the panic is cooling off, even in Washington."

"Mobilizing is one thing, fighting another," Flagwill snapped out. "By tonight, when the Second gets cracked at San Antonio, the whole country will be howling for action. The howl for anti-aircraft is already pouring in—and every one of our ten regiments of anti-aircraft is short something, a battery or two, a full battalion, or essential equipment. Not to mention ammunition.

"The big trouble is, we don't know yet what we're up against and we've got to play a cautious game. If all we had to consider was Van Hassek, we'd rush troops in there and give him his lesson in a very few weeks. What the public will not be able to understand, nor even Congress, is that we've got to use most of our peace-strength army as a framework for building a national army.

"But anyhow, come what may with the future," Flagwill went on with a sardonic grin, "the Chief has just made one ten-strike of a decision. We're to make our first real military stand down around Fort Worth, which is about as far as Van Hassek would dare go in any event."

Flagwill bolted a sandwich and washed it down with a cup of coffee, then pulled himself up to his desk.

"I've two reports that will interest you, Benning," he announced abruptly. "First, we've a tip from London that the Coalition espionage system in the United States is organized to completely wreck our industrial organization. That merely confirms what we'd guessed long ago. They also suggest that the enemy espionage has its headquarters in New York, disguised as some large corporation, no details available. Second, I have positive information that Van Hassek's bombers had ground liaison in Washington last night. Light signals were flashed from the area of the White House during both raids."

Benning started. Into his mind flashed Captain Fincke's cryptic statements at the Shoreham. Promptly he decided against reporting this conversation for the time being. He gave Flagwill a brief account of his discovery of the Austrian captain and Colonel Boggio and explained his logic in not immediately causing their arrest.

"All right, Benning," Flagwill said, his eyes snapping. "I'll assume you made no mistake in not arresting them last night. But now you forget everything else and get out after them! Use your own judgment about when you make arrests, but see to it they don't get away from you. I needn't tell you that the Coalition spy net is ten times more dangerous in the long run than Van Hassek's present rotten invasion."

CHAPTER X

General Mole sat in the hot shelter of his command post which had been dug by engineers into the reverse slope of a squat ridge. He puffed glumly at the stub of a cigar as he observed the arrival of his regimental and battalion commanders whom he had summoned from over his battle position.

Planes soared overhead, American combat planes covering his position against air attack. From time to time an observation plane dashed low with a dropped message reporting progress of the Van Hassek approach. At last word, the main Van Hassek column had cleared the Nueces River after routing a motorized battalion strong-point that Mole had sent out to gain contact and delay the enemy.

Mole's plan of battle was shaped; his formal orders had been distributed. Since morning the men had been digging in.

All his artillery had been dug in and camouflaged. Here he had an immense, hastily organized citadel of mutually supporting strong-points. Machine guns had been placed for the maximum of destructive effect. The breaking of one line yielded the enemy the grim necessity of attacking a new one. Roads menacing his flanks were strongly covered. It was not such a position as he would have selected of his own choice, but since necessity forced it on him, he meant to make the most of his opportunities for stubborn resistance.

His senior aide-de-camp came up to him and saluted.

"Sir, the officers are assembled," the captain advised.

There was a greenish hue to the general's lean, cadaverous face, brought by the stress of the past few days. His eyes were bloodshot under puffy black lids, but they shone with a stout, even glitter, that proclaimed the mastery of will over flesh. As he stood up to face his assembled commanders, he was perfectly contained.

"I wanted a few words with you before we go into action, gentlemen," he began in a calm voice. "The decision to fight here was made for us by General Hague. Therefore, it becomes our decision. Let me frankly say that the Army is on the spot, that the people wouldn't understand the simple wisdom of our falling back without a fight."

He paused and his pale, bluish lips drew down into an expression of bitterness.

"All right, we'll go through! We'll hold! We'll give the country a new tradition to remember! We'll fight Van Hassek with one regiment to four or five! If we're attacked this afternoon we'll fight until night. We'll hold through tomorrow. Then I'll make my further decision. When the time comes I'll give the order for withdrawal which must be by night."

General Mole paused again to look about among them and then spoke in slow, biting words.

"Gentlemen, a final word! We'll show the country what our mettle is. We'll show the enemy what they can expect to meet once our armies are mobilized and organized and trained. Remember this, if we lost every last man in the Second Division, our losses would still be only a fraction of what the good old Second took in France, even if nobody remembers that fact but the Second's survivors!"

His voice rose to a furious intensity and his clenched hand rose above his head.

"A new Alamo to remember, gentlemen! That's what we'll give the country—a new Alamo to remember! Put that thought into the teeth of your men. That's all!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

NEXT WEEK

Another Absorbing Installment

Kathleen Norris Says:

Pamela Wants to Be Popular

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

There's one girl and one man who are breaking my heart.

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

PAMELA wants to be popular. She works downtown in a lawyer's office; she gets good pay; she maintains a bachelor-girl establishment with another girl; she is 26, pretty enough, smart above the average, but not popular.

"My manner isn't shy, because I take good care it shan't be," writes Pamela. "But way deep down in I'm shy. I know men like my looks, but a lot of them are shy, too, I guess—except the married ones. The only attention I've ever had is from married men, and that doesn't mean much. The younger men in our office, and I could fall in love with at least three of them, will stop at my desk to dictate a letter, ask me if I've seen this picture or that, recommend a good murder story if they see a book on my desk, and then pause by some other girl's desk for three or four words that drive me perfectly mad with bewilderment—and I suppose jealousy. I mean they will say to some really less-attractive woman, 'Fun at that crazy restaurant last night, wasn't it?' or 'Crazy about the new hairdo,' or 'How about Tuesday, honey?'

Too Tense Among Men.

"Why don't they do that to me? But of course I know why. I know I'm stiff, awkward, stupid with men. I clear my throat and get red and say things I don't mean to them. My clothes are right, but they're just a little TOO right. Clean, neat, dowdy, correct. When I ought to shut up I giggle and chatter and when I ought to break a silence I can do nothing but swallow and stammer. But girls like me, and I know I amuse them, and as I say married men always seem to understand me and I can talk to them.

"Now, what I can't understand," the letter goes on, "is the sort of girl who attracts men and always has lots of attention. They seem to make no effort. Brainless little fools who can't spell are trotting off for lunch with the nicest men in the office; murmuring and blushing and having a glorious time.

Resents Being Overlooked.

"There's one—I didn't mean to get this far, but I may as well admit it—there's one girl and one man who are breaking my heart. The man is my immediate boss, but in a corporation as enormous as this that doesn't mean he's so very high. But he's sweet and big and clean and smart and I like him terribly. The girl is named Lola, she's an uneducated, noisy little thing with badly dyed hair in a wild mop, but whatever she is or isn't he likes her, and she can actually play fast and loose with the dates he tries to make with her; maybe she can go tomorrow night, maybe she can't. If he marries her she will wreck his life, leave him in a few years and take his child with her, and it seems as if I couldn't bear it. Why WILL men fall for girls like that, and never see other girls who really have background and education and code and the love of home and family behind them?"

Well, that's an old, old problem, Pamela, and until men solve it Reno will continue to be flooded by pretty, empty-headed little wives who think nothing of breaking vows and ruining children's lives.

Girls' Uneasiness Affects Men.

Your predicament is not a new one, either. You say your manner is not shy, but shy or not it is awkward and uneasy, and that infects men instantly with something of the same discomfort.

Perhaps you think too much of the impression you are making on them, and too little of the innate qualities that your manner represents. Charm is an elusive thing to describe, because it means very real qualities, it means heart, soul, mind, character, training, self-discipline. With enough of these things any woman is equipped to face life and its changes confidently; she KNOWS she will find friends, win the man she wants, make a success of herself.

Cultivate Charm.

But in your case I wouldn't worry about these casual and temporary conquests. Ignore them for the time being, and devote yourself to the cultivation of charm. Get interested, genuinely, in life, and life will get interested in you.

Charm means personal freshness, pleasantness of manner, alert understanding and sympathy for everyone about you. It means that when you are sitting at your desk, idle for a moment between tasks, you are half-smiling; it means that you keep up with your reading on current topics and keep away from tactless controversy and loud-voiced expression of opinion. If you happen to be made of crusader stuff that is of course something else again; crusaders rarely have charm.

To attract the man you like to you make no visible effort. But whenever you get a chance to speak to him have something to say that will immediately draw his attention from the fact that he and that rather standoffish Miss Brown are actually talking together. Years ago a certain shy little member of my family used to start off to dances after asking me seriously: "Tell me three things to say to my boy." Think of three things to say to yours. If it is only, "Weren't you caught in that downpour yesterday?" or, "Is this new time schedule going to mean you have to take an earlier train from Pelham?" or "Did you hear the nice news of the Smith baby?" it will answer the purpose. And if, after a monosyllabic reply you have to begin again, plunge in courageously. "My sister and I were in Brooklyn when that storm started, my mother lives over there. You know, in the Library neighborhood. We live in town, but Mother expects us every Saturday—" and so on, easily and carelessly, just as if you were talking to a woman, until he picks up the conversation again.

Act Friendly—Unembarrassed.

If the shy woman, who feels stiff and tongue-tied with men, could only remember that talking to a newly met man is just like talking to a new woman acquaintance, her whole manner and attitude would change. Girls like Pamela never dread meeting other women; they know that their approach will be friendly and unembarrassed. Try that same friendly lack of embarrassment upon the man you want to attract, Pamela; try it on all men. And at the same time deepen your own character into kindness, interest, understanding of those about you, and by the infallible magic of charm you will not only get your man, but everything else you want in the world.

PROBLEMS OF A STENO

Both single and married men pay her attentions during working hours. Pamela is puzzled by reactions of men in the office where she works. She writes Miss Norris to ask if she says the right things to become popular with certain men. And she wonders why girls less attractive than herself, receive more attention from the most desirable men. Kathleen Norris answers Pamela with her usual helpful advice and clarity of thought for any social problem.

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