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## THE PEARL DOCTOR

Arthur B. Reeve, in the New York Sun.

Continued from last week.

A second search of the apartment of Louise and Violet yielded nothing of a directly incriminating nature. There was however, in the writing desk a large packet of letters from Wheaton, covering a long period.

Clare read them all carefully. The young man had been infatuated with her. That was evident. But even in the tone of his love letters it was apparent between his lines that he was more secretly flattered at having excited in her a feeling of love than capable of really appreciating it himself.

He was cautious, often to the point of coldness and brutality. His fear of scandal, which appeared directly or indirectly in every letter, was excessive in one who seemed to care so little for facts and acts, but solely for the publicity of them.

Wheaton had been treading a course that must inevitably lead to open scandal in time. Had he foreseen it? Had he tried to avoid it? Were his instructions to Clare to spare no effort to get at the truth so long as his name was not involved, born of his certainty that he could not now be involved in the girl's death, though he was still afraid that the old scandal might crop up embarrassingly?

One very significant thing, it seemed to Clare as she went over the case, was the bitterness which Violet LeCompte showed toward Wheaton from time to time. It was not that she ever spoke directly. Indeed, it was quite unnecessary. The implications and the implications plainly showed that her mind in some

Once only, even to continued questioning by Clare, had she betrayed even a hint of what seemed to be lurking in her thoughts. They were talking of the Valdoreme pearls.

'Louise was a fool ever to have let him put those pearls on her,' she exclaimed.

Then she bit her lip. Either she could not or would not voice her suspicions. But the remark was sufficient to cause Clare, without further reasoning, to discard Callahan's theory that the Valdoreme pearls had nothing to do with the tragedy. The more she thought about it, the more she felt that, somehow, in some strange way, Wheaton and the pearls were at the bottom of the mystery.

Finding no answer to her question in any of the evidence she had so far been able to unearth, Clare became decidedly interested in pearls in general and the robbery in particular. She spent the rest of the morning and a good part of the afternoon interviewing jewelers, customs officers, and detectives who had worked on the first case, but without discovering any new facts. The first day saw her little advanced toward solving the puzzle.

Still, the fact that she was investigating was enough and Clare was not surprised the next day to receive a very agitated gentleman from the customs service.

'Miss Kendall,' began the customs man nervously, 'I understand that you have been inquiring about the Valdoreme pearls. A pearl necklace, one of our special detectives tells me, has very quietly been offered for sale by Gaston Margot, a Fifth Avenue dealer who has the re-

putation of being not over-scrupulous. Before I take you to see it, I want you to look at this description of the necklace that was given us by Mr. Wheaton himself.'

Clare read:

The necklace consists of four strings of one hundred and twenty pearls, perfectly matched and graduated, ranging in size from some small ones up to two, hanging as pendants, of very large size. Were it in perfect condition it would be almost priceless. For years, however, it had been growing dull and tarnished from neglect and old and uncongenial wearers.

A photograph accompanied the brief description.

Margot's shop impressed Clare as being almost what might be called a sort of high-class pawnbroking establishment. He had engineered several questionable sales of gems, she knew.

They entered, looked about at various things and finally asked to see the pearls. Well, this is an exact replica of almost precisely in number and arrangement with those of the Valdoreme necklace. The customs man was so ruffling with suppressed excitement as they turned to leave the establishment.

'I shall sue out a warrant immediately,' he whispered to Clare. 'Why, I never saw or heard of such a barefaced game. Here it is not half a year after the smuggling of the pearls, described in every paper in the country, and some one has the nerve to offer them for sale.'

'Just a moment, please,' interrupted a voice behind them. 'I thought you did not look like buyers, nor like crooks. Did I hear you refer to the Valdoreme pearls? Well, this is an exact replica of the necklace that was lost. As for being the necklace itself—pouf! you can ask any one in New York who knows anything about pearls and he will tell you that the old Valdoreme necklace was made of decay-

ing pearls. Look for yourselves. Did you ever see pearls more fresh and lovely than these? Bah—do you really want to know the truth? Yes? Well, I assembled these pearls myself and made them up after the famous design.'

It was Margot himself. There was nothing to say. The customs man bit his lip and turned to Miss Kendall in mute appeal to meet this phase of the matter. She was calmly scrutinizing the dealer. There was no disputing his statement. These pearls certainly were not decaying pearls, as she had noticed immediately.

'Come in and look at them any time you wish,' concluded the dealer, half-smokingly. 'This is an established place. You will always find us here. But I don't think you will find the pearls here, not long. Such a bargain is to good not to be snapped up quickly.'

Clare had said nothing in reply, for she had already placed a "shadow" on Wheaton. It did not surprise her, therefore, later in the day to learn that among her recent callers had been a man who represented the Fifth Avenue dealer. A hurried telephone message from the "shadow" later in the day informed her that Wheaton had been seen entering the store.

Since it was known to every one that she was working on the case she decided to take the risk of entering the store again herself to make sure whether the alleged replica had been sold.

'Ah, madame,' greeted Margot, recognizing her, 'you see, it is as I said! You are too late. The beautiful replica has been sold. And you would never guess the buyer.'

'No?' queried Clare.

'Nevaire,' responded Margot.

'It could not have been Mr. Wheaton?' she asked abruptly.

Margot shot a swift and suspicious glance at her. 'Then you are really a detective?' he asked. 'Yes, it was M'sieur Wheaton, who lost the old original. The pearls have fascinated him and he now pays for the original, plus not the sixty per cent, duty, but the ten per cent, on unset jewels and something more to pay me for the trouble of assembling them and the workmanship of the copy. Ah, but it was a bargain at that!'

The man was baffling. Clare could not figure it out, and beat an orderly retreat. Having nothing else to do just at present she decided to drop in at Lawson's laboratory.

'I think if we took a little walk up the Avenue it would help to clear your mind,' he suggested. 'I can see you have been brooding too much over this case. Forget it for awhile.'

They had stopped in their stroll before the window of a book shop and were looking over the display of the latest fiction.

'Billy,' exclaimed Clare suddenly, 'regarding books, let's go in and see what they have on pearls. Pearls are on my mind just now much more than fiction.'

The clerk after a long search brought out a book, Lawson insisted on paying for it, and they continued their walk.

'We're only a few blocks from home,' remarked the girl, as they neared the Park. 'You've been so kind, to me to-day. Bill; won't you come in for a cup of tea.'

'I was only waiting for an invitation,' he smiled.

A few minutes later they were chatting cozily in Miss Kendall's little sitting room.

'Billy,' his hostess confided over the tea caddy, 'it is the strangest case I have ever worked on. First comes a murder that looks like a suicide. Now comes a replica that looks like an original. From that glass tube that I discovered you proved scientifically what I had already arrived at intuitively, that it was a murder and not a suicide. Now it is up to me to figure out the rest of the problem.'

She was turning over the leaves of the book on pearls which she and Lawson had purchased. Suddenly pausing, she cried: 'Listen! Let me read this about the death and diseases of pearls,' Clare read:

Pearls can and will decay if exposed to such influences as will destroy the calcareous or animal layers of the pearl. Hence the many sentimental stories of the dying of pearls. It is known that they have decayed in safe deposit boxes if in contact with wool or the colored velvet of jewel cases. The "skin" seems to be affected.

Experts are puzzled to find an explanation for the cause of the disease, but it is probably a form of starvation. It is as though the pearls find nourishment in the life that is seated in the skin of beautiful women, for which reason jewelers maintain that pearls must be worn on the bare skin.

There are women in Paris who have established tremendous reputation as successful pearl doctors or pearl mothers. Often old necklaces need a young, soft, warm, healthy, clear-skinned beauty to save them from decay and bring them back to beautiful life. The peculiar and well-advertised virtue of some of these pearl doctors attracts the attention of owners of decaying pearls who engage them with delightful results.

Clare snapped the book shut, rose to her feet and began pacing the floor. Dr. Lawson regarded her with undiminished admiration. It was hard to sit still and in silence, but he had to do so to interrupt her, he thought. What a girl she was, as she paced to and fro in the little room, feminine in every inch of her figure yet with what an athletic, prehensile, even muscular, intellect.

She stopped, caught his eye, and her face changed instantly. 'Excuse me, Billy,' she murmured, 'but when I get deeply absorbed in a case I can't help forgetting other things.'

She dropped down on the davenport by him. He moved closer.

'No, no, Billy,' she laughed, disengaging her hand, 'no there. Don't interrupt a clew by a proposal now. You know, Billy—Doctor Lawson—how much I think of you—as a friend. How can I ever thank you for suggesting that little walk? I believe it has been the means of putting me on the right track at last.'

Without changing a degree of the ardor of his glance that she had checked but leaning forward now with his chin on his hand, as he rested his elbow on his knee, near her, he raptly studied her flushed face.

'How?' he asked simply. 'What do you mean?'

'Billy,' she said talking rapidly, putting her hand on his arm and meeting his eyes steadily as she announced, 'the Valdoreme pearls were never stolen at all.'

'Never stolen at all?' he repeated incredulously.

'No. Think a minute. Why pay a sixty per cent, duty when there was a cheaper way of bringing them into the country? Again, why buy decaying antiques at all, at even bargain prices, unless they could be restored? The book has just told us the scientific way in which they could be restored.'

Concluded next week.

'Give unto me, made slowly wise, The spirit of self-sacrifice; And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live!'

—Wordsworth.

To line clothes-basket with oil-cloth, is a very good plan as it then always be kept perfectly clean.

A Daily Thought.

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related, that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.

—Thomas Paine.

### MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO VISIT CANADA.

LONDON, June 26—In connection with the tour to be made of Canada and Australia, and possibly New Zealand, by the British Members of Parliament, it is officially announced that the following have been selected:

Lord Emmott, Colonial Under-Secretary; Lord Sheffield, Lord Hill, Lord Castlemaine, Stephen Collins, Sir E. H. Carlisle, W. F. Crooks, L. S. Amery, Norton Griffiths, Hamar Greenwood, Donald McMaster and Sir Joseph Walton.

### DUCHESS OF CONNAUGHT RETURNS TO LONDON.

LONDON, June 24—Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and their family, returned to London yesterday from Bagshot. Major Murray, the Duke's equerry, informs the Canadian Association Press that the Duke has not yet settled the date when he will return to Canada. An official announcement will be made later, but the Duke should decide to extend his term there in any way.

The human family is subject to fifty principal forms of government.