THE WHITE HORSE *and the* RED-HAIRED GIRL

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I

There are no shepherds in the United States now. The word, with its kindly and tender associations, its suggestion of small flocks, of individual attention, of snug folds, of care at lambing time, has dropped unnoted from public use. Who could apply such a word to the man who drove ten thousand sheep along the dusty buttes of the Sierras? Who could found a parable on these men or associate spiritual leadership with them? And so we added a syllable and called them shepherders. But the word lives in England. The trouble there begins when the shepherd is a shepherdess; for if anybody called her that, people would laugh and think of Arcadia and Elizabethan poems; and if her crook was mentioned, thought would fly to May Day and colored ribbons.

So I shall simply say that Miss Margaret

Travers, of Tortholme Manor, Churwell, Berkshire, was driving thirty-one ewes along the road; that she was helped by a black sheep-dog with a tan ruff; and that she carried a cane five feet long, the head of which was greatly curved. She wore a belted coat, which below the waist became a skirt, ending at the knees. As she walked, and the short skirt waved, the buttoned ends of her breeches were to be glimpsed. She was a pioneer, a portent and a prophecy; for this was December, 1914, and no one dreamed of a shortage of food, or thought that the girls of 1917 would exchange tennis rackets for hoes, golf clubs for spades, and typewriters for ploughs.

She was young and slim and vital; but it was not because of these attributes that she found it impossible to linger in the rear of her deliberate flock. Unless violently active, thought and memory came; and these were bad company on a lonely road in the beginning of the early winter twilight; and especially on a road every foot of which was associated with the twin brother who had been reported missing at the fall of Antwerp.

She made a sign to her dog to remain as rear guard, and she went swinging past the sheep. A little misty cloud hovered always over their warm backs in the frosty air as they browsed

along on the grassy turf by the roadside. Her footsteps rang as metal on metal, for there were little nails in the soles of her shoes, and the sharp toes of passing flocks had so cut the earth from the macadam that the surface was a mass of tiny flints. Suddenly there came a rustling as of a well-kept saddle, pleasant to horse lovers to hear.

She was half a mile ahead when she opened the gate into Bigmonday field, and there she could not help but wait. It pleased her to see approaching down the field an old man leading a clothed horse, which danced on pipestem legs. She smiled; and then she gave a little start and glanced upward at the branches of the spreading beech. Its dry, persistent leaves still clung and faintly tapped on one another with a sound as of myriads of tiny pattering feet. To this tree Geoffrey and she had stolen more than once from the nursery in an awed moonlight search for fairies.

"Good evening, Tom!" she called. "Who's that?"

"Sachem Third, Miss Peggy; and chilled to the bone I should say, what with two hours on a siding for cannons to pass."

He was indignant. Blue-blooded horses had always had imperious right of way in that district

of training stables. Sachem pricked the small ears that projected from the breaks in his monogrammed blankets and looked at her through round holes like goggles in his headcloth. His grandsire had been named by a humorous breeder in sly allusion to a certain Tammany leader who once trained near by.

"Is he entered?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Peggy."

"But they may have to stop racing, Tom."

"They'd stop the war afore they stopped the Derby," the old man said, with conviction. "I'm fair fed up with the war."

He came a step nearer and peered at the girl from sunken, sad eyes. They had had that humbled look since adolescence; for in the very hour in which he had been judged eligible for promotion from stable boy to jockey he had unaccountably and fatally put on fat; and so a princely income and fame had been denied him. The irony was, that bitter disappointment made and kept him lean; but then it was too late.

"Any news, Miss Peggy?" he asked in a low voice.

"No news, Tom," she answered quietly. "I don't give up hope."

But the old man turned his creased and

wrinkled face away, for her eyes denied the voice. She did not tell him that powerful friends had searched Holland, to which many of the Naval Brigade had escaped; that the Red Cross had inquired in German prisons; that even in Antwerp itself a special inquiry had been made by American officials. The old man glanced up at the ridge of the downs.

"I mind the day I was riding the grass way"—he meant the wide Icknield Road, which was a great and travelled highway when Cæsar came—"and there was Master Geoff and you digging down the king's barrow with wooden spades." He meant the great tumulus of a Danish chief. "And the day you was both lying winded at the foot of the 'Oss; sliding down the 'Oss, neck and body and leg, you says when you come to." He meant the great White Horse, cut in the chalk of the hillside, which some say was there long before Alfred the Great won the battle of Ashdown.

"Yes, Tom; and it was you who got a trap and drove us back the day we ran away and hid in Wayland Smith's Cave."

" 'Twas so, Miss Peggy. And how's the farming?"

"I can't get good men, Tom. Plenty of eligi-

bles, of course! but I won't have a man who could join up."

"It'll all be over in the spring, Miss Peggy," he said, as he led the colt through the gate.

"Oh, yes; of course! Look out for my sheep! Don't startle Sachem on to the flints. . . . Good night!"

She turned away from the ridge and its memories; but she could not escape others. She could just now see Oxford across the valley and over the hills; but she thought of the day when she had visited the undergraduate brother and they had got themselves locked for hours in Magdalen Chapel. The black spot on the hidden Thames was Abingdon, and she recalled the crushing of the little half-rigger and Geoffrey against the Culham lockside by a brutal launch, and how she had held him up in the seething water until they had got a boat-hook under his collar.

She set her teeth and turned her eyes from the north; but they saw the tree-crowned hill the Romans called Sinodun, and the Saxons, Wittenham Clumps. At its foot was Day's Lock; and from that Geoffrey had fished her out and stood her on end till the water had run out of her throat and the air had run into her lungs. The

valley at her feet, the runs with the Craven and the Vale of White Horse hounds, Geoff leading on his bright bay, and she on her chestnut—there was no escape from memories whichever way she looked.

She turned to hunt up the belated sheep; but stopped short, for she saw a little girl coming across fields from the village and she was almost sure it was little Maggie from the post office. Telegrams about social and trivial matters had ceased by tacit consent. People tore them open now with trembling fingers, fearing a War Office or Admiralty message telling of death or wounds or German prisons. In the two months since Peggy had flown from the London flat and had forced or cajoled the bailiff and the cowman and the shepherd and young Williams to volunteer, she had received several telegrams about hay, potatoes, a tractor and artificial manures; but she had never opened one without a thrill—not of fear, but of hope. And so she jumped over the stile, calling out:

"A telegram! For me?"

"Yes, Miss Travers; and two letters."

The telegram only asked whether the Home Farm was selling store cattle. Miss Travers opened one envelope, post-marked Rozendaal,

and was just able to decipher in the dim light four names and addresses, and a request in French that these mothers should be notified that their little daughters were well, and sent love. The signature was a cross—nothing more. Strange war letters had already come to the girl and she assumed that membership of one committee or another had brought this communication. She could see that the second envelope bore the same spidery French handwriting, and she put it in her pocket unopened.

She folded her sheep, cut half-frozen mangolds for them in the root-cutter, and then went to the shut-up manor house, where the shrouded furniture threw bobbing, ghostly shadows from her lantern and her footsteps roused cavernous echoes. The dog whined and nosed about. "He's not here, Shep," she cried, and blinked back tears as she opened the telephone book. Only one of the persons named in the list of addresses was to be found—Mrs. Tomlinson Bates, of Kew, London.

When Peggy at length was connected she asked, in her clear, low-pitched voice, whether Mrs. Bates had a daughter abroad. Excited answer came that little Ellen was at a convent near Werchter, between Brussels and Louvain.

"She is well and sends her love," Miss Travers said. Now another voice came, agitated, almost hysterical. Who was she? Where was she speaking from? How had she heard? Was she a neutral? Could she fetch Ellen out of Belgium? A shell had gone through the child's dormitory. Ellen was starving. She had no winter clothes.

A crash; Miss Travers was cut off; she thought Mrs. Bates had fainted. She fumbled with numbed hands at the other letter, bending over by the dim lantern; and this is what she read: "He now talks much of you. He sends his love to his dear Peggy and says you must carry on. We cannot give the treatment or the food we should wish, and the air of the cellar is not good for him; but his wounds are healing and his spirit never flags. He will not be strong enough for the rough underground road for a long time. Remember always, please, that no one must know; no one! The Germans watch the English journals and there are always spies everywhere. Trust in God and pray." Then the sign of the cross. Nothing more.

"Shep! Shep! He is alive! He is alive!"

The sharp cry set the dog to barking and bounding in the great hall and something fell

with a great smash. The girl was startled back to self-control.

"Shep, come here!"

From the echoes of her voice seemed to come a question: Was she going to fetch Ellen out of Belgium? She uttered a long-drawn cry like that of a child who sees a shower of golden stars at fireworks. Why shouldn't she bring Ellen out of Belgium? Why shouldn't she be a neutral? Americans were neutrals. Why shouldn't she be an American? Why shouldn't she bring Geoffrey out too? Was it impossible? Lady Daintry would know. Lady Daintry knew all about passports and regulations and red tape.

The girl flew again to the telephone. A guarded talk, for they would be listening at the Abingdon exchange; wonderful news, but clouded. Was it impossible to be a neutral and go where neutrals went? No; she could not come across the valley, for she had sent her household in her auto to a picture show at Abingdon and she was alone at the farm. Splendid! Lady Daintry should come to her instead.

She never lifted her lantern when her feet crunched in the hall on fragments of porcelain, and she ran across fields as fast as slippery paths and a swaying light would permit. She flung

great logs on the huge fire at the end of the kitchen. Nobody dreamed at the Home Farm of using a sitting-room when privacy could be had in this red-tiled, oak-raftered, oak-dressered kitchen.

Peggy sat, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, staring into the great red blaze. Letters had gone astray, of course, from the good Reverend Mère, of this convent, who was so bravely hiding Geoffrey in a cellar. Had the Germans got those letters and searched him out? Wounded? How badly? How? Where? She jumped to her feet, ran and changed. The slim boy came back a girl, with a rippling river of burnished ruddy hair flowing down about her. She did it up by the warm fire, going over sometimes to a mirror that some vandal cook had at some time nailed in the oak panelling.

Lady Daintry came, a round ball of fur, ludicrous of body, delightful of fat face. She was abnormal with the kind of fat which made people think that if she bounded slightly she would hit the ceiling. She had a clear fine skin, was fifty, without a grey hair, clever, adventurous by proxy, and very kind-hearted. She habitually expressed good sense and affection in words of extraordinary levity. She was the widow of an

ex-Minister to Holland; she had a house on the loveliest backwater of the Thames, at Sutton Courtney, where kingfishers shot past like blue bullets in summer and sometimes wild ducks bred in spring; and her only son Jack, about Peggy's age, was in the Officers' Training Corps.

She shed her furs and then read the letter.

"Poor old Geoff! Fancy Geoff shut up in a cellar with a lot of nuns!" She blinked her embedded eyelids; then looked at Peggy. No one ever thought Lady Daintry ridiculous after receiving a look like that. It warmed the heart. It encouraged. "Startle me with your mad scheme!" she said, as she proceeded to fill a Richmond chair too full.

Peggy talked until the household returned. She talked in Lady Daintry's auto, for Peggy returned with her ladyship for the night. She was silent about the mad scheme at dinner. She implored and argued afterward in her ladyship's sitting-room. She cajoled and pleaded in her ladyship's bedroom.

"Go to bed," said Lady Daintry as the clocks sounded one. "You can never be a Yankee; you are too well-bred." She did not mean that; but England was bitter then against "dollar worshippers, who would not fight."

Peggy, assured that her plan was at least not absurdly impossible, slept soundly by will power; for she must be in topping form for all she would have to do if Lady Daintry yielded consent and help. In the morning Lady Daintry said:

"Make notes, Peggy."

Then Peggy knew she had won. Notes, with Lady Daintry, followed decisions. "Write only the important things," went on her ladyship, "and criticize everything." Lying on a sofa, a high, shapeless bundle, she shut her eyes and began to think aloud: "Passport for two. Only husband and wife can go on one passport. You can explain away the missing husband on the outward journey. Mrs. Margie Fargo."

"Dare I?" Peggy asked, looking up, startled. "I met her here at dinner, remember."

"Let's hope she'll never know," Lady Daintry said. "She got reams of letters from home and left them about everywhere. I saw the cook reading one once, and the boatman brought two from the punt one day. I found half a dozen after she had left. They're on the table there. I read the lot in bed this morning. Very intimate; but they're not your secrets. They'll convince any official that you're American. That's

why you're Mrs. Montgomery Fargo, of —— Now what is that place?"

Peggy consulted the letters.

"Kan-Ka-Kee, Ill.," she read out. "What's Ill.?"

"You must hunt that up," said Lady Daintry. "It does not stand for Michigan or Connecticut, I suppose; but there are other states. Write to the mothers of the convent children, signing yourself Margie Fargo. Say you will see the London mothers to-morrow. They will fall on your neck and cry when you say you are going to get their girls, and will give you letters to the Mother Superior to deliver up their daughters. Go to the Gloucester mother the next day; Mrs. Pollard, isn't it? She, too, will think you an angel from America. She'll be sure to know the American Consul at Gloucester. He's the passport man. He won't have had much experience. You'll be locally introduced and have splendid letters to show him and a jolly good reason for going. Hand me that Almanach de Gotha."

Peggy handed over the German-printed volume with an expression of disgust.

"If your beautiful nose," her ladyship said, "is going to be turned up like that in Belgium it will lead you straight to a German prison.

Peggy"—Lady Daintry's voice trembled—"you are much too pretty to go there. You are risking more than you know."

"Nonsense! We've had all that out," Peggy cried, with a fierce impatience. "What would you stop at if you could perhaps save Jack from a German prison?"

Lady Daintry chuckled.

"There are some dangers I should be fairly safe from," she said. She consulted the volume. "Yes; there is a consul at Gloucester. Funny thing—crowned heads and American Consuls in the Almanach de Gotha! But so they are. Mrs. Pollard will take you to him, mad for her poor little kiddy, never doubting you, swearing by you. Say to the consul that you are bringing your husband the next day to sign a joint application for a passport. Say that he's—how tall is Geoff? Well, say that—five feet eleven; eyes, grey; nose, prominent; face, long; chin, square; complexion—well, medium. Yes; he'll take that word. That's Geoff, you see. Make an appointment for the next afternoon and wire me the hour. I'll motor down with a man."

"I don't care who he is," she said; "but I know no double for Geoff." Peggy laughed.

"I'm going to lend you Jack," her ladyship answered.

"Jack? He's shorter. He's shades darker. His eyes——"

"The consul is looking into yours, not his, if you manage right. Remember, everything has been written down the day before and the consul has no tape measure for height. We're all so vain that we wouldn't stand real descriptions on passports. If height and eyes are right a passport will fit any man. The photograph? We peel that off as soon as we get back here. It will work, my dear; it will work!"

"But Jeannette?"

"She would lend you more than her fiancé to save Geoff."

"Yes, yes; Jeannette would," Peggy agreed. "But remember, Jack might be prosecuted."

"And what risk are you taking? And will Jack boggle over that little trifle, do you think?"

"You're a darling!" Peggy cried impulsively. "And shall I kiss Jack and call him Montgomery when he turns up at Gloucester?"

"No. You've only just parted. Call him Monty if you like. Now write your letter and look up your trains. Peggy, here!"

The girl went and stood over her ladyship, im-

pressed by something in the voice. Lady Daintry drew a locket from her vast bosom and opened it.

"When I got so fat," she said, "I had to have it filed off." She put the wedding ring on Peggy's wedding finger. "Bring it back, and Geoff with it," she said. Peggy bent and kissed her.

Four days later Peggy arrived at Victoria Station with one suitcase and a handbag. The approach to the continental train she found railed and boarded in, and an improvised counter suggested a custom-house. She stood before the first of the many inquisitors she would have to meet on her journey. The inspector, a combined railway and police official, opened her bag with a smiling apology.

"It's wartime, miss," he said; "and we have to examine——"

He stopped short, stared at the contents; then at Peggy. He rammed his hand down and turned back the man's clothes with which the bag was crammed. Peggy serenely glanced about, as though indifferently awaiting the end of this tiresome formality.

"But, excuse me, miss—madame."

"Well?"

"Is this yours?" he asked, pointing.

"Of course; mine and my husband's."

She had rehearsed this scene half a dozen times. She stretched out a hand and with a careful matron's touch, refolded a lapel of the coat Geoffrey was to wear out of Belgium.

"Oh, yes; I see! We'll leave it till he comes," the inspector said. "He has the passport, I suppose."

"If you wait for him," Peggy answered with a little smile, "you'll wait some weeks. He went over yesterday."

She drew a long envelope from her handbag and produced from it her passport. The official studied it; then scrutinized the imperturbable Peggy.

"Last night?" he repeated, puzzled. "But this is for him too. How could he go without this?"

"He's a journalist," was her prompt explanation. "We expected to come to-night. He got word it must be last night. I couldn't possibly get ready. He left this for me and had just time to get a special Home Office permit."

"Quite so!"

The inspector was perfectly satisfied. It might have happened just as she said. Peggy

had too many acquaintances among civil servants not to have got every detail right. These young gentlemen had had little idea that in carefully explaining the workings of a system they were showing Peggy how to evade it. The official looked at a discolored place on the passport.

"You shouldn't have taken his photograph off," he said.

"What were we to do?" Peggy asked. "He had no time to have others taken for the permit. He simply had to have this one. As it was, he rushed off in such a hurry that he left this suitcase."

"Journalists," the inspector said, "are always in a hurry. Then, where's your luggage?"

"He took mine—half-packed. I don't dare to think what he said when he opened it." Peggy laughed.

The official closed the suitcase, with a wide grin.

"I'll take it to the train for you," he said; and he led the way.

She paused and looked about her at the little knots of people who, like herself, had passed the searchers. This delay gave a frowning man outside the railings a chance to inspect her. Jack Daintry had furtively come to the station and

stood among other watchers, his face pressed close to the iron bars of the high barrier. He had opposed this mad plan, but had been overruled by three women. She looked so young and so astonishingly pretty! His madness had made this wild journey possible. He had perjured himself and denied his nationality for this. He had been trapped and bamboozled and cajoled into delivering this irresponsible girl, unprotected and alone, to the enemy. He had expected, if he caught a glimpse of her at all, to see her very quietly dressed, tripping along almost timidly, attracting no attention except such as might be given to a young governess travelling alone; but people turned and looked and smiled with pleasure.

She was marked; the gloomy watcher saw that. He had not realized how noticeable she was; how vivid her personality; how she caught the eye and stamped herself on memory. He criticized her dress. That moleskin coat, reaching to her heels, could be observed and remembered by the blindest German sentry in Belgium. He thought her most becoming toque was frivolous, and objected even to the grey veil that fluttered a little in the breeze. He frowned at the pink rose she had fastened in the high collar of her coat. It

bobbed up and down below her left ear, and it gave her just the charming and capricious air that, above all things, should have been left behind.

Peggy turned suddenly, saw him before he could duck his head, and darted over; but a policeman intervened, explaining that passengers, after passing the barrier, must not "be in communication" with anybody. She waved a hand and nodded gaily as "poor dismal old Jack" forced a hollow smile. She was glad, indeed, that she had removed from the passport the photograph of a husband who was not a husband; who had gone to Holland the day before, yet had just waved her a farewell. On this complicated thought she took her seat in the Pullman.

Off at last! Peggy had reserved an end chair in the Pullman, not knowing that it faced the car. She saw that everybody was reading, but that everybody looked up often; that eyes met eyes, and that each pair dropped too quickly. She seemed to be looking at a new, strange race, whose manner, dress and appearance were assumed; and the feeling grew as she became more responsive to the atmosphere of mutual espionage and suspicion.

Up until now she had moved among people she

knew or knew about; for the first time in her life she had something to conceal, and she was acutely sensitive to the silently and subtly conveyed uneasiness she rightly believed was all about her; she had, in fact, come under the edge of the shadow of war. The world had not yet become used to war; and in December, 1914, hardly any but officials, couriers, newspaper men and members of the American Relief Commission, as it was then called, crossed to Holland with normal nerves.

She fought the infection and thought that part of the gloomy constraint was due to the presence of two German ladies. They were unmistakable. They sat erect, looked straight ahead of them, and bore themselves with a notable arrogance. Peggy asked herself whether she should behave like that if she was in a train going from Berlin to Bentheim, on the Dutch frontier.

She owned up fairly that she could not be natural and certainly could not look pleased. She felt an actual physical repugnance to these women; and she did not know that her face had clouded and that her curved upper lip had become a straight line with compression. She pressed her upper arms close against her with a little shiver; then she remembered that she was a neutral.

She looked away from them to meet the steady gaze of large, soft brown eyes. She escaped this sudden meeting of glances with the indifference of a life training in such casual encounters, and retained a fleeting, odd impression of a good-looking, clean boxer, with the eyes of a girl.

A small table separated her from a man who faced her, and she had been conscious for some time that he had been covertly watching her. His olive skin was a rich brown and pleasantly shiny, like a horse-chestnut. He spoke to her in South American French. She snubbed him mercilessly; for rich South Americans travelling in Europe sometimes required sharp treatment from ladies travelling alone.

It was a relief when the guard came for the tickets. One of the German ladies asked whether they could get an evening paper at Folkestone Pier.

"No local papers, madame; nothing later than you have," the guard answered.

"But if ships haf been sank or mines are there, is it that we must cross?" she said.

"You sleep on board, and the boat doesn't start till daylight," the guard answered. "There's no danger."

Peggy caught a tightened lip here and there;

and saw one frank, natural grin. The grin was human, even though it jarred; and it proved that the man with the enormous brown eyes was not suffering from tension of the nerves. Peggy was proudly contemptuous that the only one to express fear was a native of the country which sowed the peril.

At Folkestone the South American offered to carry her bag. She courteously declined. Pleasantly, also, as she thought, she declined the help of the brown-eyed boxer. She did not know how great a gulf lies between English and American manners in small courtesies, and with what cool condescension the American conceived himself rebuffed. After a long wait in a dense crowd she was perfunctorily passed to the boat; and she promptly went to her berth. The water lapping against the piles of their pier sent her to sleep.

After a solid breakfast the next morning she went to the deck and gazed across the water at the English coast, so peaceful, so soft in the haze of distance. War? It seemed absurd, incredible. She turned and looked seaward; and she flung out her arms to this wide salt-water moat which surrounded and protected the homes of her land. She laughed at the whitecaps jigging up and

down in the freshening breeze. Mines hidden beneath them? Submarines lurking? It seemed incredible.

But no vessel was to be seen toward the east, while many steamed between her and the coast; it was clear that all were pursuing a charted course, of which her vessel was on the seaward edge. She walked the windward side, having it all to herself; and each time, toward the bow, tiny pellets of icy spray stung her face; and she lingered at each turn to catch more of this exhilarating sprinkle. Always, as she stood, she looked to the east. Belgium and Geoff were there.

The South American staggered to her side. He broke into perturbed, hurried speech. He told her he was Señor Allones, a diamond merchant of Rio de Janeiro, a man of affairs, rich; that his wife and two little children were starving in Scheveningen; that all exchanges were broken down with Brazil; that all his diamonds were hidden beneath the fourth stone at the left on entering the cellar of 1501 Lange Leemstratt, in Antwerp; and that those diamonds were of the value of four million francs. He paused on this, and looked at her with pleading eyes. Peggy calmly stared at him and wondered that a

reasonably intelligent-looking man should try such a silly game on her.

"Monsieur trusts me profoundly," she said, with dry irony. "He places all his fortune in my weak hands—and I am unknown to him."

She waited to hear whether he would ask a loan of ten pounds or a hundred on this Antwerp nest of brilliants. He could not go into Belgium, he said; the Germans refused a pass. Madame could at least bring three or four of the largest, of the cut ones. They would excite no suspicion. An American lady with diamonds in her purse—it was natural, proper, the usual thing. It was so simple, so easy; a woman of Flanders lived in the house in Lange Leemstratt; the house was all pitted and marked by shrapnel from a German shell. She did not know of the diamonds. He had hidden them secretly. She could be told, and madame could give her one—whichever madame chose—as large as madame liked.

"I will keep your secret, monsieur," she said; "but I cannot help you. I am on honor."

Then she waited for the request for a loan; but it did not come. He stood mute, studying her face; and when he saw it was inflexible he only murmured that he was sorry to have troubled

madame, and turned away. She stayed him with a friendly gesture.

"I am sure you will get them sometime," she said. "Will you give me your address and let me send ten pounds to madame, your wife?"

He drew himself up, refused with a haughty dignity, and went away.

She looked out over the water and saw four destroyers rushing toward the north. She judged their progress, with a practised eye, as approaching thirty knots an hour. "There's something up!" she thought, and her heart thrilled. She stood watching with fixed eyes until they were hull down. A trawler came and looked them over, and she saw naval uniforms. She waved her hand, and welcomed the salute and the cheery smile from a tanned young man. She never left the deck all day; never thought of mines; hardly saw a fellow-passenger on this windward side; had her luncheon and her tea brought to her, and was disappointed when, at dusk, the steamer was skirting the sand-dunes of Flushing, that she had not caught the boom of at least one gun from Zeebrugge.

The Dutch custom-house officials looked at Peggy, not at her suitcase, and politely waved it away unopened, and the examination of her pass-

port was nominal; but two Dutch soldiers sprang to attention and held crossed bayonets fiercely in front of her when she subsequently attempted to pass out of the railway station by a small exit. She turned aside, stepped through the next archway, and went on smiling. It seemed to her that this incident typified the whole great farce; no real effective guard on frontiers anywhere—just elaborate pretence and fussy examinations, which found nothing, and crossed bayonets at places that did not matter.

She was right. But three months later she could never have secured her passport or have been permitted to leave England. It took nearly a year for governments and officials and the world to adjust themselves to war. Meantime the innocent and the dangerous, the spies and the neutrals, the honest and the others, came and went almost freely, with vast official pretence of regulations that regulated little. Governments knew that, too, and corrected it as fast as they could; but personally conducting a world proved to be a monster business.

She went through the big, dingy combined dining- and waiting-room. Her eyes widened at the change in the pallid and downcast Germans she had seen in the Folkestone waiting-room.

They were merry and boisterous now, and she saw them clink beer mugs; and she heard one man say: *"Siegestag."* She could not dine there. She went across the road to a hotel, found the dining-room with but two empty tables, and chose the one by the fire. She seated herself, and then saw that her immediate neighbours were the two German ladies of the train and two men who had met them. They were all in high spirits, and the men were drinking champagne from tumblers, touching rims. She heard triumphant laughter, and she caught the word *"Siegesfest."*

It seemed natural to her that they should be happy at this family meeting, but strange that it should be called a "feast of victory." She asked the head waiter in murmured English whether there was any news. He answered in Dutch, then in German, that he had little English. She repeated her question in French.

"Has not madame heard?" he answered promptly. "Scarborough has been shelled and the fort of Whitby Abbey?"

"The fort?" she blazed, white with indignation. "It's a lonely ruin on a hilltop."

"I beg madame's pardon. I speak as the evening paper speaks; no more."

She remembered that she was a neutral and ordered clear soup.

Beautiful Scarborough, most innocent of seaside places; Whitby Abbey, crumbling cradle of Anglo-Saxon literature—she knew them both. But the great shock to her and to all England of this first attack of its kind on unfortified places, was not that this assault was outside the laws of nations, wanton, purposeless; but that any such sacrilege was physically possible.

So secure through long ages has England been from sea attack that the home island has become to the English a high altar, holy, untouchable, ringed about as much by sacred tradition and invulnerable memory as by water and naval power. This sly attack from furtive fleeing vessels woke England up, filled the recruiting offices, and might easily have been the means of sending Peggy to a German prison. She sat with bent head and down-gazing eyes, vainly struggling for composure; vainly trying to shut her ears to the triumphant German voices. The waiter changing dishes bent over and murmured:

"Madame est remarquée!"

She made a movement with her hand as though the room was whirling; and the waiter said louder that it would soon pass away if madame would

eat and remember that she was no longer on the boat. She smiled, ate, and afterward looked quietly about her. The nations had grouped, with the exception of the English; there were only two there, and they sat, like herself, at separate tables, alone. The Belgians, sad, silent, were easily distinguishable by their unalterable depression. The Americans were fraternizing, talking, laughing.

Peggy caught scraps of sentences from which she could know that, with utter frankness, they were telling each other who they were and why they were there. She had in previous travelling observed this national candor, with that sense of superiority felt by a detached and reticent people, who can talk for hours on general subjects, and end without curiosity as to whom they have talked. She thought some were ostentatious in their frankness, as though anxious that everybody should know they had legitimate reasons for travelling in wartime.

A hilarious burst from the German table brought one flashing glance from Peggy toward the one Englishman within direct range. To her dismay he caught it and came over instantly. As he might be supposed to be approaching the German table, silence fell, and everybody turned.

"The fire may be uncomfortably warm," he said in a level, quiet voice. "I don't know whether you know there is an unoccupied table in that corner."

"Thank you," Peggy said, as promptly as though her answer did not almost choke her; "we Americans like warmth."

She spoke just as she had spoken to the brown-eyed man on the pier at Folkestone; but the Englishman resumed his seat without sense of rebuff. That cool, impersonal tone was precisely right to him in refusing a small courtesy offered under a misapprehension.

Peggy's heart glowed. She knew that this fellow-countryman was white-hot inside about Whitby, and that comforted her; and she thought that his effort to put the length of a room between her and triumphant Germans was the most considerate attention ever offered to her. It steadied her. The courtesy was doubly welcome because it came from "one of the right sort." Accent, pronunciation and manner stamped him unmistakably. There was one of her own kind in that room and she felt less utterly alone. This steady, quiet fellow-countryman, if he were on such an errand as hers, would never flinch if he heard that London had fallen. She straight-

ened, told the waiter that his advice had been good, that the room had ceased to roll and asked for a second helping of fish.

Peggy thought she would be less conspicuous if she were not alone. Some one would be sure to offer help at the station, especially as she had publicly announced herself a citizen of the United States. But he must be the right sort. How should she know that? She was utterly at a loss. She remembered that she and Geoffrey had once—only once—been puzzled about an Englishman, and Geoffrey had led the man to say four words. The unconscious probationer had pronounced Calais to rhyme with palace, valet with pallet; had uttered grass with a short, not a broad a; and had spoken girl so that it would rhyme with neither whirl nor curl.

Geoffrey had thawed instantly and had afterward said that, whatever the chap had fallen to, "his people must have been all right; he's 'county,' right enough." She wondered what corresponded to county in the United States; so far as she could understand, they had no landed gentry. She had known cosmopolites, of course, who founded their manners on English standards; but none of these was in the room.

Peggy, admitting that she had no shibboleths

for the men of her adopted nation, watched casually as she ate, specially considering the man who had offered help in Folkestone and who might offer again. He was sitting at a table with three others and she knew he had often looked at her. His eyes were Italian, but all the rest of him was unmistakably American. He was too brilliantly good-looking; he was large and well dressed; and he was enjoying his dinner immensely.

The meaning of that boyish grin in the Pullman was clear to her now; he was without self-consciousness. If anything amused him he laughed. If anything troubled him he looked as sorry as he felt. His face was too expressive; but she summed him up as "rather decent, if not quite the thing," and selected him.

A man entered the room. Peggy caught her breath. She was confronted with one of the dangers she had foreseen, but she was not prepared for it in such extreme form. The newcomer did not glance about, but took a seat at the vacant table, slouching, with bent head. Peggy was shocked at the change in a once gallant boy.

Charlie Anstruther had gone blithely, as one of the Naval Division, with Geoff, to Antwerp, and had been a member of the Collingwood Bri-

gade, which had escaped into Holland and been interned by the Dutch for the period of the war. She had read of the effect of internment; of the dreary hopelessness of it; of the gnawing grief at idleness while one's country called. She had almost cried over a letter from him; to see him thus now roused pity beyond thought of tears.

She hastily paid her bill and escaped. He did not raise his bowed head. She hurried to the long, dark station. The train was made up and she went for her suitcase. The man with the big brown eyes was at her side before she could lift it.

"Please let me," he said.

She thought her thanks effusive; he thought them cool. She believed her permission to travel in the same carriage especially gracious; he thought it chilly. She was pleased when, at the last moment, the heavy-eyed Brazilian entered the railway carriage. She welcomed his presence and spoke to him with a sympathetic cordiality.

"I am Humbert Honest, of Chicago," said the American. "What's your state?"

She answered that she came from Kankakee. He eyed her and said:

"A go-ahead town and beautiful, now that the state capitol is finished."

"It's some burgh!" Peggy answered, having studied up slang.

She spoke with enthusiasm; but she was quaking, and deftly she altered the topic. She found this man to be very manageable, and he followed where she led; but it was clear that he admired Kankakee, for every once in a while he spoke of it.

"That palm grove in the Kankakee capitol grounds is shooting up till the tops hit the stars," he said; and Peggy answered that the fronds were brushing the Milky Way.

Later he asked whether frosts ever really hit the orange crop at Kankakee.

"They burn great kettles of smudgy stuff in the orchards," Peggy explained promptly.

She had read about this somewhere. She described how they watched the thermometer and made preparation when the temperature fell. When he asked, later, whether Kankakee lemons were marketed under a brand, she answered—not to appear to know everything—that she was not familiar with commercial methods.

"Anyway," he said, smiling, "they never hand you a lemon in Kankakee."

Peggy laughed, for she saw that this remark was meant to be funny.

"You know the customs of the place well," she said. "Did you live there?"

"I covered that territory," he answered.

Peggy dropped questions and learned his meaning. She understood that he had visited Kankakee as a travelling salesman, which she was sure meant the same as a commercial traveller. She was a little shocked, for she had been reared with prejudices against such people; but she showed no sign of that. She led him to talk of himself and found that he required no pressing. He had been born an American citizen of an American mother; his name, Umberto Onesti, he had anglicized on the death of his Italian naturalized father. He represented automobiles in Antwerp, where Germans had stolen forty despite his protests. He had run over to London about this shameless interference with neutral rights. Now he was returning to save the other forty if he could.

He did not tell her that he had made a profound study of the psychology of salesmanship, which included a study of humanity; that the combination of an American brain and chin with an Italian eye and voice was a gift from heaven sedulously cultivated; and that he had been called

"a live American wire, insulated by an Italian silk covering."

Peggy was genuinely interested when he told her, with naïve frankness, of his struggles. She liked, too, his enthusiastic patriotism. He owed everything to the United States, he said; and, though he was hot for intervention, he refused to criticize his Government. He only stopped talking when the train stopped at Rozendaal.

He wiped the frost from the window-pane and looked out at the dimly-lighted station, peopled only by sentinels.

"Here's the diving board," he said. "You come back here day after to-morrow and take a header from civilization into barbarism." He saw her glance apprehensively at the apparently sleeping Brazilian. "I don't mince my words," he continued defiantly. "My opinion of Germans went with every car they stole." And he bluntly enlarged this theme, telling of some Antwerp happenings of which he had personal knowledge. There were so many that he had not finished when the lights of Rotterdam became visible.

The Brazilian, courteously interrupting, spoke for the first time. He repeated the story of the

diamonds, including the address in Lange Leemstraat. He ended by saying:

"Bring them out, Mr. Honest. Take what you like of them—up to half."

Mr. Honest's dark eyes never left those of the Brazilian until the latter ceased to speak. Then the long, curling lashes drooped for an instant as their owner reflected.

"I'll do it," he answered, at length, in French, quite intelligible but evidently picked up. "I take no responsibility, of course; and I don't know when I'm coming out. Give me your address and tell me more about this landlady in the shell-pitted house." He listened intently: "Here's my card and Rotterdam address. If they are found on me, and taken, you must not kick. Now we'd better not arrive at Rotterdam together; and don't come near me there."

The Brazilian uttered melancholy thanks, picked up his bag, and went out into the corridor.

"He's a fool!" said Humbert Honest. "I'd go into a penitentiary and shout the story to the prisoners rather than trust to Germans. Yet he is sorry already that he put it up to me."

"Sorry? How do you know that?"

"Didn't you see the way he looked at me when I said they might be taken from me? If they are

he'll never believe it. And that's what I'm up against—and all for kindness too! But he's desperate," he added, grinning; "so he trusts me. I know the man by sight. I've seen him in Antwerp."

The Brazilian opened the door and thrust in a livid face: "Would monsieur bring only half? If monsieur should be searched——"

"You trust me or you don't, señor," said Honest. "I'll do the best I can; and I'm not asking anything. See?" He waved the Brazilian away as the train slackened. "Nerve all gone," he said; "lots about that way. He'll speak to me once too often and some secret agent will hear it. The Germans will put his last shiny stone into my last auto, and then—zipp for Aachen! Once past that town—good-bye!"

At the station Mr. Honest was really useful, securing for her the last remaining taxi. She thanked him with frank gratitude and departed with a conviction that she had played her part to perfection.

At her hotel she went straight to her room. She slept dreamlessly, and awoke, protesting, to the eight-o'clock knock, which heralded the coffee and rolls; but she sprang up to unbolt the door. On her tray she found a parcel addressed to her,

which, opened, disclosed an orange and a piece of paper inscribed: "With the compliments of Humbert Honest." She laughed at this singular attention. She had heard that Americans loved morning fruit and she assumed that Mr. Honest was trying to be especially nice. He had evidently wished not only to please her palate but to gratify her home pride. She remembered he had spoken of Kankakee oranges and she wondered whether this was one.

She examined his handwriting and thought it too clear and commercial. She turned the paper, torn apparently from a notebook, and saw a map of the state of Illinois. A blue-pencilled cross marked Kankakee, and another, Springfield; and the first-named town was a circle and the other a star. Why should he mark Springfield? And why mark a cross in the margin against the fortieth parallel of latitude? The thought came flashing that Kankakee was not the capital of Illinois and that oranges could not grow so far north!

"The mongrel bagman!" cried forcible Peggy, flushing red with anger.

She eyed the orange as though to pierce the rind for a meaning. Was it a horrid joke? Was it a message of enmity? Did it threaten black-

mail? Could its sender be bought? Had he a price? Did he want money?

"It's what you might expect," Peggy thought, "from a man with the jaw of a bulldog and the eyes of a Pekingese."

But she was very anxious.

II

Hot, light white rolls! Peggy munched them as she dressed, rosy red from her ice-cold bath. She paused from time to time and looked vindictively at the orange; and each time she shook her head, with a menace, and her fine nostrils quivered. Her upper lip twisted into a curve as she recalled what she had heard of commercial travellers—a race apart, sneaking into back doors of commercial firms, there to be snubbed by proprietors while they rubbed their hands together and smiled at insults; a class herded separately in the commercial room at provincial hotels while respectable people ate in the coffee-room; such bounders that if an obnoxious man got into a first-class carriage he was always put down for a commercial person, swaggering among his betters. She had never met one before, so far as she knew, and her anger was trebled because its source was one of the despised class; and trebled again because the man had made a small success of his miserable life and dared to hold toward her the manner of an equal.

She snapped viciously the clasp of the slide on the back of her head and rang for two eggs and buttered toast. The little chambermaid looked, in her close-bound cap, as most Dutch maids do, like the baby head of Charles II in Vandyke's painting. She understood; she shook her head but could not explain. Another came and, with much difficulty, made it clear that hotels were allowed a little white flour for morning rolls, but that the bread was made of war flour, which refused to toast; also—yes; eggs could be had, perhaps, if madame paid. Peggy was astonished that any nation should be short of fine white flour; and was proud that this first experience of the material sacrifices of war should come in a neutral country. She ordered war bread, honorably refusing more than her share of the rolls, and ate it as a duty.

England could never come to such stuff. England ruled the waves and could import wheat from everywhere; besides, the war would be over in the spring. Everybody knew that Germany could not last longer than that. Germany's manpower was already declining; that had been proved over and over. And everybody knew that the German harvest had been light and that there were no resources of food.

Peggy finished her breakfast, sorry for poor neutral Holland and doubly proud of her homeland. There was a great meaning in white flour; it meant merchant fleets coming and going at will; great granaries in loyal-daughter lands; and a calm, unruffled people, inexorably conquering. But these reflections on the significance of white flour were running side by side with thoughts on the meaning of an orange. From time to time, as she was packing, she eyed obliquely the yellow monstrosity on the chimney-piece above the stove. Suddenly it glowed blood-red; and she jumped up, startled, to see that the back of the stove had become red-hot and was throwing baleful gleams about. She snatched the orange up, wrapped it in the map of Illinois, and flung it into the blaze.

The protesting sizzle that soon came soothed her ears and helped her to consider. Blackmail? Must that stop her on the thresholds of Belgium and Geoffrey? She stood, with drooped head, clasping her hands, absorbed; and it seemed by degrees clear to her that it was not blackmail. Humbert Honest's face and manner were not those of the sly, cruel criminal, who could be bought for money. A wretched joke? She considered this as she finished lacing her boots. But

no man would twist a girl into a knot of silly lies about Kankakee just to laugh boorishly at her the next morning. She straightened, with a grimace, driven to a nauseating conclusion: The man was a woman stalker. She was alone, unprotected; fair prey for such as he. His sentimental eyes; his soft, carrying voice; his "brute of a chin"—yes; they were the marks of one who was a cad to the marrow. Must that stop her going to Geoffrey?

She shrugged her shoulders; went over to the mirror and studied her face, turning her head slowly from side to side. For the first time in her life she appraised her eyes and her lips and her half profile and her complexion for their worth in a conflict with one of the other sex. Could she so charm him that he would trust to promises? Could she make him believe she was so much interested in him that he would await her return from Belgium? Then, perhaps, Geoffrey and Charlie Anstruther, between them, broken as they were, could manage somehow to give him a good hiding. The remains of the orange exploded with a vicious little pop. She thought it a good omen and smiled dryly. She put on her hat, smoothed her hair with swift upward pats

of her left hand, and swept the room with a last glance as she fastened her moleskin coat.

Her single suitcase was packed, and she was ready to rush away if she found she could get her papers signed in time for the one train of the day to Rozendaal. She walked quietly down the hall, sure that Humbert Honest was lying in wait. It was horrid; but she must cajole and charm and tease and lie and promise. If his message meant that—and what else could it mean?—she would play mouse to his cat until Geoffrey was out of Belgium. Then—— This outdoor, fresh-air girl, who had what she called men pals, but who hated sickly flirtations and despised sentimental philanderings, shook her head, with a menace, and got out of the elevator with a lovely pink flush on her cheeks.

She entered the lounge with the easy unconsciousness of her training, which taught that effort should seem effortless. She resolved that she would be her natural self until need came to be something else, and that she would call an orange an orange until told it was something more.

She saw him across the room. He seemed taller than she had thought, his chin more prominent and his eyes less effeminate; and he came

striding over with a suggestion of virility and force.

The aloofness she had laid aside the night before veiled her about like an invisible net. Unconsciously, unobtrusively, but none the less effectively, she appeared to challenge the world to prove its right to address her before addressing her. She saw the man's expressive eyes brighten with unmistakable admiration as he crossed; saw them drop as he came within the radius of her chill. She thought, with satisfaction, that, though he might be crudely insensible to class distinctions, he was acutely sensitive to shades of manner.

She thanked him for the fruit and went on toward the door; but he asked for five minutes. She paused, glanced at her wrist watch and said, with gracious condescension, that it was still very early; that she could and would, with pleasure, spare him even ten.

"You talk French like a Parisian, Mrs. Fargo," he began abruptly; "English like a Londoner."

"Oh, like a cockney!—I hope not," she broke in, with such energy that he laughed.

His voice was so soft and musical that an enemy might call it suave; but his laugh was real

mirth. Peggy began to be puzzled. Such men as this one, she thought, do not laugh innocently.

"You speak it like an Englishwoman," he corrected.

"And how should it be spoken?" she asked.

"Oh, of course you have the right to speak your own tongue as you like," he said, with a significant accent on the your. "The language you haven't learned is American. You have cut off chunks of two-year-old American slang and inserted them into your talk neatly. They are paste diamonds in a beautiful setting. You don't know the North from the South."

Peggy owned up. She lifted her head.

"I am English," she said; and she was surprised that there was a catch in her voice.

Six months before she would have called anybody theatrical who uttered such a commonplace, even with her restrained ardor. But the fact was now not a commonplace. She was not only proud that she was English but proud in proclaiming it.

"Fine!" he cried as he bent over her. "I like to hear that. I like to hear you say it like that. Now I feel just like that about my country. If my father had not emigrated, with a pick and shovel, I should be an Italian peasant now. I

owe a big debt to the U. S. A. And that's why I butted in. There was no chance to say it last night. I dared not write; no one knows who reads letters these days. I had brought a few oranges from London; so I sent my message like that. You hold an American passport. Forged American papers have been scattered about like leaves in the fall; and some have been obtained by fraud."

She straightened involuntarily and her eyes widened.

"I don't suspect you of anything serious," he went on. "I didn't last night. Honest, I didn't. But I do think you're taking a great big chance for the sake of your friends and their children. You've counted the cost to yourself, of course; so, if you don't put it over I'll say nothing about German prisons and firing squads. But have you counted the cost to Americans? You haven't, of course. You've never thought that if you're found out you'll help to discredit every American passport and put Americans to all kinds of trouble—and danger too. I'm bound to notify the consulate."

A belated great truth suddenly burst on Peggy —a truth that had not occurred to Lady Daintry or impressed itself on the girl. She remembered

that marriage changes nationality; and incidentally that she was supposed to have a husband.

"You force my poor little secret from me," she said. "I may be slighted, even insulted perhaps, if it is known that I have never been in the United States; that I am British-born. So my American husband and I——"

Humbert Honest stepped back, flinging up his hands. She had never seen so sudden a change in a face.

"American by marriage," he said; "and all legal and right! And I never thought of that! I'm a bat-eyed butter-in. I—— Of course you had to put up the bluff! They can't call it. How would I know a Berlin lady from a Vienna dame? How will any bullet-headed Prussian know Kankakee from England? Mrs. Fargo, I humbly ask your pardon for interfering with what was none of my business."

Peggy bowed, with a high dignity, and went out. She smiled cheerfully in the street. She liked the man. She did some small shopping and then found the American Consulate. She stood and looked at the American Eagle on the shield, hanging on the walls of a quaint, narrow house in an Old World street—her first real test; but it proved to be no test.

Humbert Honest was there, arranging his own credentials. He introduced her, indorsed her, said that her husband was his oldest friend, and got her out within seven minutes.

"Now for the Germans!" he said. "Will you take me in your taxi?"

She had resolved honorably that she would allow no one to involve himself in her dangerous affair; but she had no means of escaping from a young man determined to expiate a great wrong done to her.

No tremors came to her when the taxicab stopped in front of the German Eagle. As she calmly crossed the sidewalk she subconsciously wondered why the peace-loving Americans had also adopted this predatory bird, and whether they would always continue to stamp it on the dollars they were making.

A crowd was inside, and momentary silence at sight of her and her little flag; a woman's back conspicuously turned on her; a pair of blue saucer eyes trying to shoot dagger glances from above round pink cheeks. She caught a muttered comment in German about Yankees who sold their souls for gold; and then they were approached by a young man who greeted Mr. Honest cordially and invited them into a private office.

Honest promptly guaranteed her American citizenship and her neutral sentiments, her errand, and her husband in Brussels. She answered a dozen perfunctory questions, produced her viséed passport and the letters from the mothers of the children, and within ten minutes was clasping tightly the pass that finally opened the road to Geoffrey.

She was astonished when Humbert Honest was politely asked to wait a day or two. He scowled; then laughed.

"Reports of what I did and whom I saw in London have not come from your secret agents over there," he said.

The vice consul winked pleasantly and denied this.

"Come," said Honest to Peggy; "you may still make it."

"Make what?" she asked, breathless in the taxi.

"The train to Rozendaal. My car is waiting at the hotel. It is at your service."

Peggy was conscience-stricken. In his wonderful effective zeal for expiation Humbert Honest had deeply involved himself. He had a right to the whole truth and to withdraw his indorsements if he should so choose; but Peggy shut heart and thought to all but a twin brother in

Belgium, wounded. She thanked him quietly, and her shining eyes showed only gratitude and hid no remorse. The car was waiting. He ran for her suitcase.

"Remember," he said, "I have sworn I've known your husband all my life. If we meet in Belgium he must say, 'Hum, old man, how are you?' and register brotherly love on his, no doubt, handsome face."

"He shall; oh, he shall!" said Peggy, and she grasped his hand and pressed it.

"Good luck!" he called after her, and she waved her hand.

The sun shone brilliantly, the air was tingling cold, thin ice covered the canals, and the auto bumped over frozen mud. Peggy apparently watched windmills and glanced at farmsteads; but she was thinking of Geoffrey. She awoke to her surroundings only when a troop of Dutch cavalry trotted by. The excellent alignment, the soldierly bearing and admirable seat of the men, and, above all, the quality of the horses, surprised and pleased her.

This was the only sign of war she saw in long stretches of flat, frozen country. When at last the car drew up at Rozendaal Station she found there came need of hurry. The lawless

neutral train, which kept no regular hours, was about to move. She was hustled on board by a Dutch soldier.

Peggy glanced at the couple opposite, sumptuously dressed in furs—the man a trimmed dandy, with an imperial, who looked like a small Napoleon Third; the woman with great diamonds in her ears. They were talking with a Dutch lady.

"Moi, je suis Belge," said the lady with the diamonds.

"Mon Dieu!" cried the Dutch lady. *"N'avez vous pas peur?"*

The couple shrugged.

"Why do you wear your diamonds?" asked the Dutch lady.

"The pigs might pick my pockets," said the Belgian; "but even they will not rob my ears."

Peggy looked into their faces. It was her first close sight of that strained, tense expression which stamped the dignity of suffering on the face of a nation, and lifted every glance from the eyes of its people into an appeal to the conscience of the world. Peggy broke into the talk and said she had read that order was very good in Antwerp.

"There is always order in a prison," said the woman. "I——"

She stopped and stared out at nothing, while her husband continued to look out from his side at nothing. Peggy, dumb, bowed her head. Not a word was said until the train drew up at Esschen.

"Canaille!" the woman hissed low; and Peggy saw a German soldier standing, rifle in hand, with fixed bayonet.

Peggy, on the platform, was caught in a throng of tanned and toilworn Belgian peasants, swept through a doorway, and carried to the head of the waiting-room. The rough hands of a German private felt in and about her suitcase while another private examined her passport. She watched this silent, brooding crowd, who had chosen to return to slavery at home rather than to remain in refugee camps in Holland or England. The faces of the men wore such an expression that pity was sacrilege.

Peggy glanced at the one German officer in the room. He stood upright, not stiff, his hands negligently by his side, his calm, kindly eyes quietly overlooking the scene. No Prussian, no Junker, no barracks-living officer, that; a scholar, perhaps, prematurely grey at forty. He could

stand like that and face these haunting eyes, and not go out and kill himself for shame of his country!

Peggy turned her eyes on the women, and she saw them sane and calm-eyed in comparison with the men; and this puzzled her, and made her think them dull and stupid until suddenly she perceived and understood the wonder of motherhood. The women were too busy to brood. She smiled at a mother nursing her child. The woman smiled back and glanced down at her baby. No past haunted, no future troubled the mother. Her child had food.

Peggy saw that the crowd held no young girls, and no young men except priests, who wore long cassocks and shovel hats, and who nearly all smoked very bad cigars. Most of the peasants were tinged with grey and doubled under heavy loads, which included at least the family bedticking and now and again a small feather-bed. The woman with the diamonds was conspicuous; and Peggy wished that this woman could exchange her earrings for two children, and so lose that half-mad tightening of the muscles round the large, rather vacant blue eyes. It was the first time Peggy had ever looked at a number of people without classing them. She did not say to

herself that these were just human beings and that she was one of them; she felt it.

She was about to stretch out her arms and take a child from a tired mother when she was asked explanations about a man's clothing and the missing man. The officer, exceptionally, had no English and little French. Peggy told her lie in halting German and it was the more effective from her cold aloofness. She saw that the first German officer she encountered was conscious of her attitude, and that he felt it; and it was the better remembered afterward, for it was the only instance of the kind in her journey. She could not have acted differently if her admission to Belgium had been at stake. She was moved to new depths.

The officer passed her on with a wave of the hand, and she took her seat in a corner of the new train and watched these families patiently gathering anew on the platform the intimate little personal belongings the German soldiers had rudely thrust back into their bags and parcels. There were new warm clothes everywhere, she saw, and well-shod children. The refugee committees had sent them all back well equipped for the winter. She turned her head as some Ger-

mans passed along the platform laughing and talking.

The outgoing neutral train was on the move for Rozendaal and freedom. From the carriage opposite a pair of eyes gazed at her from between a low-drawn cap and a huge coarse muffler. They were fixed on her with such intensity, such vivid, eager recognition, that her glance responded. Their owner flipped back his cap; and there was just time, before he passed out of sight, for her to smile at her brother Geoffrey!

III

Peggy never knew anything of that journey from Esschen to Antwerp. Her heart and her thought were with Geoffrey—across the Border, free. If only Humbert Honest had not been so dreadfully penitent and efficient; if she had been held back but one day—— A trifle, this, after all; for Geoffrey was free!

The Germans in her carriage, tourists, come to see their new city of Antwerp, were aflame with curiosity and interest. The great stretches of barbed-wire entanglements on right and left along the border; the hacked and burned woodlands, with here and there a blackened pile of bricks where a country house had stood; the empty fields and empty roads and empty houses, which succeeded the border destruction; the great guns here and there, watched over by solitary figures in grey; the grotesque skeletons of overturned locomotives and cars; the grass-grown streets by the deserted quays, where dead ships thrust up rusty funnels; the pierced and shattered and crumbled houses in the shelled suburbs

—this ruin and waste and desolation excited the deep compassion of these elderly commercial travellers, who had never been in any war zone until now.

They were very sorry that Belgium had not known her duty by Germany and had called down on herself such merited punishment. But the lesson had undoubtedly been learned. The good German Kultur and perfect German organization would lift up and improve these poor people and they would come to be grateful. They should share in the coming prosperity. Germans were generous. Yes; a German Antwerp would bring riches enough for all.

They were not smug hypocrites, these three simple, honest, German travelling salesmen. They believed all they said. That belief is what the world is in arms against.

Peggy heard none of it, saw nothing, and woke to her surroundings surprised to find the train in the beautiful central station at Antwerp.

The same dumb cowed crowd as at Esschen; the same rough examination, which never found anything—for who would go on such a journey with suspicious possessions?—the same sombre, brooding shadow over human souls. But all was changed to Peggy, because she was changed.

Geoffrey was safe. She had nothing to hide; nothing to fear. She wasted no time in idle sympathy, but blithely did things. She relieved overburdened mothers of children, ordered German soldiers about, and saw three large families, including two feather-beds, through the barrier.

When at last she had time to think about herself she cheerfully explained away once more those men's clothes, soon to be given to some needy Belgian, and went, as directed, to a room for personal search. The woman searcher relaxed grim lips at the entrance of this vital, cheerful American girl, so obedient, so willing to undress if demanded, so careful to speak in German. She asked whether anything was concealed on the person, passed a formal hand over Peggy's chest and back, and nodded her head.

"Auf wiedersehen!" said Peggy; and the girl smiled and remembered on the outward journey. Peggy was free of Belgium. She was surprised to find porters waiting at the head of the fine stairway leading to the Salle des Las Perdus—elderly Flemings, heavy-eyed, humble. She was more surprised at the effect of her sudden appearance. Their worn faces brightened; they smiled, all of them—human smiles, warm, grateful. She did not understand, but responded.

One took her suitcase and she followed, looking for the great bronze gates. They stood, though the English papers had filled columns about their removal. Sandbags outside, and guns projecting down the Avenue de Keyser, and a long queue of watching women, poorly dressed, dishevelled—some of these caught Peggy's eye; and then surely came the brightened face and welcoming smile. Peggy asked in French what they were waiting for.

"For those they have lost, madame. Sometimes one comes back. It is as from the dead."

Peggy stopped in midstreet and looked back. She understood something of the meaning of the dispersal of a people.

"Why do they smile at me?" she asked as she turned.

"Madame is American."

She began to understand the meaning of a nation's gratitude.

"Army headquarters?" she asked.

"The hotel, madame."

"I cannot go there."

Armed sentries paced, officers came and went in a stream. The porter glanced about.

"The pigs are everywhere," he muttered. "The others are just the same."

So she followed up the long corridor and was received by a uniformed Belgian porter as though such guests were usual. She proceeded just as she had planned—just as if Geoffrey were still in Belgium. The wording of her passport, the contents of her suitcase and the story she had told compelled that. She registered "Montgomery and Mrs. Fargo," took two rooms, and said that her husband might turn up at any moment. Upstairs, she tidied herself; then, laughing at the thought of Geoffrey safe in Holland, she laid out his clothes as she had seen his valet lay them out. If the room should be searched in her absence there was proof of her story.

She went out in the early winter twilight to do the shopping necessary when a woman travels with a suitcase filled with men's clothing. She turned the corner of the Avenue de Keyser and stood astonished, shocked. The wide boulevard was a brilliant flood of light, its sidewalks thronged, its street cars filled; its broad roadway somewhat empty, but enlivened by rushing automobiles, all in a reckless, careless hurry. Peggy thought of darkened London as a capital in mourning of nights for a sister city; and all the while that sister city was holding high revel. She

had heard the Bruxellois called volatile and pleasure loving, and she knew that Antwerp loved masks and pageants; but this callous levity was beyond belief. She walked on in high scorn for a city to which her brother had so gladly offered his life.

Twenty yards' progress showed her that the people walked silently or spoke in hushed tones; that their eyes were downcast; that if they passed a German they swerved lest they touch a sleeve. The laughter, the chatter, all came from German soldiers. The distant general effect of a well-dressed crowd came from trim grey overcoats, with sharply contrasting black or mauve or magenta velvet collars, all worn by German officers, who were taller than the Belgians and conspicuous. The stores emitted their bright floods of light; but Peggy saw no one enter. The street cars were crowded with soldiers, and she heard afterward that soldiers paid no fares. She understood now—a sham brilliancy, organized, commanded; the proud city must make festival on its great avenue to cheer its conquerors.

She stopped often, pretending to look in at windows, but watching the people. Pausing thus, she saw a rare and exquisite face—that of a girl about her own age—a chiselled profile; a

nose slightly aquiline; fine dark hair, brushed quaintly down from a middle parting and covering the ears. This grandmother's way suited the long oval face as none else would, Peggy thought. The girl was in dead black and slender to thinness, but extraordinarily graceful in the little gestures she made as she talked. She turned her head and Peggy looked into what seemed to her the most impressive and expressive eyes she had ever seen. They radiated so unique a personality that Peggy felt almost that they carried a direct message intended for her. They were dark and melancholy at the first glance, but the girl's lips trembled to a faint smile and the eyes seemed suddenly to come alertly alive.

She turned away. That vivid speaking glance expressed a nation's gratitude to the United States, of course. Peggy felt suddenly ashamed, and looked down at the Stars and Stripes in her lapel in silent apology.

She looked again at the little group. She saw an elderly granddame, grey-haired, haughty of head, and dressed, like the girl, in deep mourning. And these two were talking and laughing with a tall blond German officer. Belgians walking past stared, and moved aside with sombre glances

and lowered brows. An elderly gentlewoman on the arm of an old aristocrat checked him directly in front of Peggy, and the couple turned their backs in a direct and ostentatious cut.

Their eyes swept over Peggy and their stony faces instantly softened. Peggy entered the store lest they should speak. She could not silently accept spoken tribute. She made her purchases, learned from a pale and lonely girl that the lights were compulsory, that no one came to buy except swaggering German officers, and that they had only autumn goods.

Going out she saw that a man was watching her intently through the doorway; a tallish man in a long, sumptuous fur coat, the collar of which was turned up so that only his nose and eyes were visible. The eyes—but she was used to strained eyes now; only these told her plainly that he meant to speak to her. She turned quickly, but instantly he was at her side.

"Pardon me," he began. He paused while two German officers passed.

Peggy was a little anxious. The man was American unmistakably; why should he have eyes like the Belgians, and why should his voice sound so weary, and why should he approach her in this guarded, suspicious way?

"I'll leave you at the next corner," he went on; "but please let me go that far. I am a stranger in Antwerp. I want the name and address of some Belgian, some important Belgian —a true Belgian. I must see him to-night."

Peggy paused and looked back.

"The consulate is there," she said, nodding across the street. "I saw the coat of arms."

The girl with the wonderful eyes and the old lady were close behind, and the girl came straight to her, holding out a hand. Her smile thrilled the astonished and alarmed Peggy.

"My dear Mrs. Fargo!" she said in French, in a voice that seemed to have the quality of love in it; "we have been searching for you. We have found you and you must come straight home with us."

Dumfounded, Peggy was conscious that the elder lady had greeted the stranger as Monsieur Fargo and was extending the same warm invitation.

"Prenez garde!" said the girl in a low voice, glancing into the roadway; and then she turned and welcomed Monsieur Fargo as an old friend.

The elderly lady now shook Peggy's hand and told her that marriage had not changed her a bit.

"Pschutt!" murmured the girl; and Peggy heard a voice from the curb and saw an automobile drawn up and that a young German officer had sprung out.

"My dear Yvonne," he said in German to the girl; "what luck! What are you doing here among this rabble?"

He bent over and kissed the elder lady's gloved hand.

"My old friends, Monsieur and Madame Fargo," said the girl—"Leutnant von Schmiedell. Americans, as you see."

"How jolly!" said the young officer gaily in English as he shook hands with the two. "Now you shall all come and dine with me at the hotel."

"Not I, Otto," the elder lady promptly declined; "your dinners are too bad." She glanced at the girl, who smiled and nodded. "If you wish, Yvonne, I will trust you to Madame Fargo."

"I should like it," said the girl softly; and her eyes rested for an instant on the young officer, who beamed delight.

"Very well. You shall send me home, Otto." She moved toward the car.

"Yes, yes, madame; that's it." The young

officer helped her in and tucked a fur robe about her.

"I shall see you soon, Madame Fargo," she called out. "You and your husband are to come with Yvonne and stay with us. How glad we shall be!"

She beckoned imperiously to Peggy, who went to her, dazed.

"These tyrant Germans make us keep early hours," she said, smiling at the young officer, who laughed cheerily. "Remember, you must bring Yvonne back by half-past eight o'clock."

Did she, too, breathe *Prenez garde!* Peggy thought so, and that she had been summoned to hear that.

Madame waved and kissed her hand to Peggy; then the German soldier chauffeur drove off. Peggy turned; the young officer led the way with the girl; the American and Peggy dropped behind.

"Charming people," he said offhandedly; then he bent and whispered: "Don't be alarmed. I can fix it up—two ways. What if I disappear at the next corner?"

"Aren't they delightful?" she answered; then, lower: "Impossible! If you go I am investigated. I am English, with a false passport."

She felt his start as their arms touched in the crowd. He slipped his hand through her arm and held her firmly.

"French aviation corps," he murmured, bending over; "bombed aërodrome beyond Brussels last night and had to come down afterward."

Peggy quivered. He held her closer.

"Yes," he said; "fine old avenue and people good sports." Then: "I'm very sorry. I don't understand what's happened."

"Nor I."

"But it'll be all right. Remember, when they question you, stick to the cold truth."

"You must not give yourself up."

"Of course I can, and must. I shall be only a prisoner of war."

"With that coat on—is that true?"

He forced a laugh as they passed a knot of German officers, and Peggy joined in it and glanced about as though this was a casual stroll.

"I have the flying uniform underneath," he said.

"Your clothes are waiting—in your room."

"I have not shaved since yesterday."

"Your razor is on the dressing-table."

"Foolhardy—I have no papers."

"I have your passport."

"This is no time for joking," he said, with the testy anger of a man almost done up.

"Nor for explanations," she answered. "My way is the only way."

"But this girl—who is she?"

"I don't know—a German spy, I think; but you and I can only carry on. You must do it."

"I will carry on," he answered.

"Right!" said Peggy cheerfully. They were turning the corner near by the hotel and fewer people were about. "I am sorry," she said gravely, "that this was forced on me. I think—I hope that I should have done the same if I had had a chance to choose. I owe a debt to your flag—and to you. You have fought for France and England. . . . Come, Monty!" She lifted her voice.

The other couple waited. The four went together into the hotel.

IV

The entrance lounge of the hotel was so narrow as to be hardly more than a hall. On each side were little tables and at each of these two or three German officers were seated, chatting, sipping beer, waiting for dinner. A lifting of heads; a few seconds of inquisitive silence; fifty pairs of focused eyes. Peggy, confronting all this with outward calm, was subconsciously proud of the airman. He was probably starving and certainly dead weary; yet the arm on which her hand still lingered was firm and his tired eyes swept over the hall with composure.

"Come, Monty!" she said in English. "You must hurry." She turned with him to the desk.

"Monsieur Fargo is found," she said to the clerk. "The key, please."

It was not on its hook and there was an instant's delay. Peggy was mad with impatience, for the place was steam-heated, and the airman's sumptuous turned-up fur collar seemed to shout that it half hid its wearer's face for special reasons.

She glanced about and saw that the laughing, mercurial young cosmopolite, this Leutnant von Schmiedell, was extraordinarily popular, and that the Belgian girl had several acquaintances among the officers. Some of these patted the lieutenant almost affectionately and addressed the girl with marked deference. Others passed, to catch her eye, and bent at the middle, recovering as though a hinged ramrod had been sharply straightened. With an eye trained to class distinctions, Peggy saw that only those of the highest caste were intimate with the young lieutenant, and she inferred that the girl was a member of an important Belgian family. She turned as the key was found.

"Pack everything, Monty," she ordered, with emphasis, "everything in both rooms." She handed him her purse. "Lock the suitcase. The key is in the purse. Bring everything down. Then we can go straight off with mademoiselle."

The airman nodded. Peggy turned to the clerk, an elderly Belgian.

"Monsieur Fargo has had no proper luncheon," she said. "Can you send up some bouillon and a biscuit? He can eat as he changes."

"But yes, madame. We are very short-handed; but for an American we do everything."

The hall porter, overhearing, nodded, and the two looked at her from the national grateful eyes.

"God!" muttered the airman. "You think of everything."

"Carry on," she murmured, "and trust the hall porter if the clothes don't fit."

He turned, and was in the elevator before the young lieutenant came up, breathless.

"I could not get him a cocktail—worse luck!" he cried. "But a gin and bitters—yes. Where is he?"

Peggy shook her head.

"No time," she said, smiling. "He will be late as it is. I said he must shave. You must not wait dinner for him."

She walked over with the officer to the girl. Oberst von und zu Borgheim was presented to her, and his iron cross hung like a pendulum, he bent over so far.

Oberleutnant von Bahrheit lost his monocle as he bowed. Peggy heard cheerful, unabashed compliments on the kindness of her supposed nation to these unhappy Belgians.

"You soften the hard fortune of war," said the general, stroking a bristly black moustache.

"You do a generous work," announced Ober-

leutnant von Bahrheit. "We are grateful. The Belgians are grateful. Some day, when all is over, the Belgians will understand us Germans and be grateful to us too. Is it not so, Mademoiselle Duberges?"

Peggy was relieved that, at least, she now knew the name of this girl.

"It is to be hoped so, Herr Oberleutnant," answered mademoiselle, nodding and darting a glance from her wonderful melancholy eyes.

"We Germans, Frau Fargo," the general said, "are misunderstood in many places—in your country, too, by some. But you will see our organization, and how we bring order and——"

But their host came hustling. He had secured a table. It would be a bad dinner. There were no flowers. There were not half enough waiters. But it would be awfully jolly, nevertheless. They must come now. Monsieur Fargo would excuse their not waiting.

A hundred German officers half rose and bent as they entered the dining-room, and the young lieutenant bowed right, left and center before he led the way to the one empty, distant table. Peggy had only one conscious thought as she took that enfiladed walk down the room. Would Geoffrey's clothes fit? A man, dead-tired, pick-

ing his way among tables where sat a hundred watching enemies! What if the sleeves should be two inches too short or too long?

The lieutenant pulled out her chair for her and she sat facing the room and the entrance. She was startled—the door seemed so far away; even an airman, jaded, half starved, might lose his nerve and bolt. She willed to forget him, and not to think back an hour or forward a minute. Her social training steeled her; helped her to outward ease; helped her to concentrate and listen. She quickly learned that Leutnant von Schmiedell's grandfather had been a secretary in the German Legation at Washington and had married an American woman; that his father, an attaché at London, had married an Englishwoman; that he had been at a public school in England and had visited relatives in Massachusetts. So his cosmopolitanism was accounted for. If only the girl would talk as freely about herself! But mademoiselle was content to smile and listen, and gave no clues.

Peggy topped the bits of American slang of which the lieutenant was boyishly proud, modelling her language on that of Humber Honest. She explained in French to mademoiselle what it meant to "Put it over," and how "I should

worry!" was to be understood. Laughter rang at that table, but nowhere else in the room; and many Germans watched, and some smiled sometimes. The lieutenant made no secret of the pleasure he felt at the sensation his impromptu dinner was creating. Impromptu? The trap had been skilfully hidden, but Peggy began to feel its pinch as it closed.

The lieutenant chided Mademoiselle Duberges for having gone to the Avenue de Keyser at the hour of the common people. He was nettled; slightly arrogant. She should not expose herself to such contamination.

"But I told you," said Mademoiselle Duberges, "I was looking for my friends."

Her eyes lingered on Peggy's with a tenderness so profound that Peggy felt a warm, pleasant glow. But the eyes swept on, and the young lieutenant held his spoon in midair, as he took a deep breath and sat for an instant as one under a spell. Which was this amazing actress deceiving? Peggy asked herself. The answer was obvious. Those wonderful smiles were sincere when they flashed on the young officer.

When he asked, with a little constraint, how Mademoiselle Duberges had known of the arrival of her friends, Peggy saw reproach in the

expressive eyes and offended dignity in the upturned oval chin.

"You wrote to me, of course, Madame Fargo —didn't you?"

"If I had," Peggy answered, "would you have received the letter?"

A glance of triumph, a head held high, and, exclusion of the offending lieutenant from the conversation; this tiny quarrel seemed real to Peggy. The girl was so black a traitress to her people that she resented a charge of breaking a cruel German regulation that no Belgian should write a letter!

But the conversation from which the lieutenant was excluded required all Peggy's attention. A gush of enthusiastic words about that never-to-be-forgotten week in the Château of the Comtesse de Beaufort, near Blois—"When a friendship so charming to me, and I hope to you, dear Madame Fargo, was so deeply founded"—and as Peggy knew no such comtesse and had never been near Blois, her invention was taxed to the utmost. The memories she invented appeared to delight the Belgian girl, who recalled, in her turn, pleasant happenings that had never happened.

Peggy, not knowing the game, played it, nev-

ertheless; and played it well. Mademoiselle laughed, and showed a relenting spirit toward the officer. She turned to him.

"Clothilde, my maid, was with me at the château," she explained with condescension; "and so she knew Mademoiselle. She saw her go into the hotel to-day. She came home and told me. I rush to find a Monsieur and Madame Fargo have arrived. I describe her, beautiful, chic, with the air of distinction. Yes; it is she—my friend, who is married. She has gone out. So I search; and I find."

The lieutenant, humble, pleaded for forgiveness, and the couple were absorbed in one another for half a minute. Peggy had time to think. These two—this bubbling young officer and this girl in black—were in love with each other. He made no secret of it. His every glance told it. The inflection of his voice said it. And the girl—well, her exquisite simplicity was the product of an inherited and a cultivated artifice, and so not easy to read; but Peggy read. And this young gentlewoman, a fine flower of Belgium's highest culture, had become an open renegade and a self-admitted traitress to her nation and her people through love for this German. She had not been content passively to side with

her country's oppressors. She had sunk to espionage for them.

Peggy was sure now that she had been sought and captured by intention. How perfectly it had been managed! How beautifully done! There was a plain reason for such extreme care. An important American woman justly entitled to her country's protection, if treated as Peggy had been, had nothing to complain of; she would not even know she had been suspected. She would have denied mademoiselle's acquaintance; have told her she had made a mistake; would, no doubt, have been carefully cultivated by these two distinguished-looking Belgian women in deep mourning; and within an hour would have disclosed any secrets she might have to these representatives of a distressed and broken people. An effective trap; Peggy wasted no regrets for having walked into it. She had had no choice. It would be sprung as neatly, as quickly, as it had been set. The end would come quickly and courteously after dinner.

The airman and herself would be asked to enter an auto that they might go to the home of this affectionate and pressing hostess. But this hostess would not get into the car; and presently they would find themselves at head-

quarters. And, then, what? Prison for her—no more Peggy thought. . . . But for him? She did not know whether a fur coat or a civilian suit changed a prisoner of war into a spy.

She attacked her fish with real hunger. She was safe for an hour. Dinner was assured for that day; the last decent meal, perhaps, for months! Waiters were so few and service so slow that half an hour had elapsed. Peggy glanced so often toward the distant door that the lieutenant chuckled.

"Herr Fargo," he said in German—all languages seemed the same to him—"is going to swagger. If he comes in evening clothes he will blind us. A starched shirt——"

"He brought none," Peggy laughed; "but his bristly chin——" She stopped short, for the airman had entered.

Her lips parted and her eyes widened as she saw him quietly bow right and left, while he calmly looked about the room. She watched his easy, deliberate progress with an exultant pride. Geoffrey himself could hardly do it better. Geoffrey would not have bowed; it was not the English custom. Geoff would have looked and acted as though there was no one else in the room. It was the English way. This American

might not hope to approach the splendid English nonchalance; but he had a fine, simple dignity. As he came near she had a confused vision of eyes following him.

The uplifted faces of the German officers formed a composite picture for her and she was surprised at the complete absence of antagonism. When Geoffrey had walked like that, down a foreign dining-room, she had been proud that foreigners were jealous and showed it. She was startled at the thought that this American's way might be better after all—but only among German officers.

As he came near she frankly watched his face, and her lips parted in a smile as conviction came that it matched his bearing. He saw and answered so gaily, so spontaneously, that Peggy thrilled to it, for it seemed to say that her mood was his; that this hour was theirs, anyhow—this dinner and this last chance to laugh. He paused by the lieutenant's side and apologized for his tardiness; and his eyes were bent down on her over the lieutenant's shoulder and looked straight into hers. They were deep and calm and steady, with the vision in them that the world has since come to know as that of the man who looks out at peril from above the clouds. Peggy felt as

one fighting a forlorn hope to whom strong help unexpectedly comes.

"Did you find everything, Monty?" she asked, with a laugh so merry-hearted that the lieutenant and the girl looked at each other and smiled.

"Of course. You packed."

He took his seat and stretched out a hand for the bread beside his plate. Peggy thought the hand was trembling with eagerness, and she saw that Geoffrey's sleeve was a little too long. She insisted that he should begin at the beginning. She was sure the Herr Leutnant would not mind waiting.

"Not I!" the latter exclaimed jovially. "I congratulate Herr Fargo! Don't you, Yvonne?"

The Belgian girl nodded and glanced across at Peggy.

"There are so many things to congratulate me about," the airman said. "Which one?"

"There is only one," Mademoiselle Duberges corrected softly. "We saw madame's eyes as you came in—and her smile—and how she watched you——"

"She always looks like that when I am late for dinner. Don't you, Peggy?" Mischief gleamed in his blue-grey eyes as they twinkled on her.

Yes; he was genuinely carefree. She felt a high elation; and his eyes could fit the passport description. It did not matter, of course. They would never have a chance to use it. Still, how absurd that passport descriptions fitted everybody.

"I've never known you to be late, Monty."

"But of course not," the lieutenant exclaimed —"with such a welcome to come home to!"

He uttered a little exclamation of satisfaction as he glanced down the room, and Peggy saw the airman's lips move as though something pleasant passed between them. A waiter was coming, bearing a tiny cradle with tender care. She was glad the airman was to have good wine. Only good, red, still wine would be brought like that, in a basket lying down lest the crust be broken. It was just what an exhausted man needed.

"I presume to guess," said mademoiselle with a demure look, "that Monsieur Fargo has not had many chances of being late."

"I refuse," laughed Peggy, "to admit that there is any rice in our luggage."

The dust-covered bottle was laid gently on the table.

"Ah," Mademoiselle Duberges mocked slyly, "but the careful search that was made—and you,

dear Madame Fargo, pecking about like a radiant, hungry pigeon to find every single grain of rice!"

"It's no use our pretending, Monty. Everybody finds us out," Peggy said. "The fish for monsieur, waiter—and some more bread. Pardon, Herr Leutnant."

"*Chère madame,* but you are the perfect wife! Do look after him."

The lieutenant was busy with a corkscrew, and showed the pride of expert connoisseurship often so naïvely displayed by those too young to have formed accurate palates.

Peggy watched the airman eat with glowing satisfaction. She was passionately eager that he should have enough; that he should enjoy that brief hour. His vitality came back bounding, like a flood-tide in a narrowing gulf. Each time he looked up she seemed to see one line the fewer about his eyes; that the eyes themselves were brighter; that the lips were less pallid. As he bent over his plate she saw that his fine dark hair was a little too long and that his scalp was white in the perfect parting. He had made that parting with her brush, of course; for she had brought only one. His long head and his long fine face were as unlike Geoffrey's and Jack's as could be;

and yet that description on the passport—nose, prominent; chin, square. Of course it fitted.

"The Belgians," the lieutenant cried, "have the best Burgundies in the world. I sent to my room for this." He glanced about for joyous sympathy. "It is from a cellar in Louvain," he explained. "I managed to get a dozen."

Peggy's eyes met those of the airman, and the glance lingered perceptibly. She seemed to be looking into cool, steel-blue depths, made transparent as though by intention for her; and the message was that she would not be the only one who should refuse to drink that wine.

Peggy looked across the table. Mademoiselle Duberges was smiling at the lieutenant's enthusiasm over this shameless loot from the hapless city. Peggy now believed the worst that could be believed about this girl who looked like a saint and smiled like an angel.

"We'll follow the English custom," said the lieutenant after he had poured a little into his glass. "We'll pass it round as the sun goes." He took up the basket in both hands and laid it softly before Peggy. "The German custom," he cried—"the world will call it that—after the war. For the German drumbeat—not the English—will roll round the world with the sun."

"The English custom?" Peggy said, half choking. "I do not understand. And I do not touch wine."

"Oh, bother!" said the lieutenant in English, with a good-humored smile. "I had forgotten what a nation of Puritans you Americans are. . . . But you, Mr. Fargo."

"A glass of water, Herr Leutnant," he said, "would taste mighty good to me at this minute."

"Water! At my table?"

The lieutenant shrugged resignedly and gave the order. He showed the annoyance the young host always feels when he has provided an unappreciated treasure.

"Monsieur and Madame Fargo," said Mademoiselle Duberges, "have their customs. Why should they change, Otto? One glass for me, please." Her wonderful smile banished the cloud.

"Pardon!" he said, beaming on the offending Americans. He half rose and, with tender solicitude, filled the glass of the Belgian girl, and then his own. "It is Romanée," he said, holding his glass to his nose and inhaling the bouquet. "There are only four acres in the vineyard. Who would have thought of finding it in the cel-

lar of a Belgian burgher? It is of the great vintage of 1865. . . . And now—a toast——"

"But, Otto, Monsieur and Madame Fargo are neutrals, and I—I am Belgian; and——"

"But of course!" the young man cried. "How stupid of me! We will each drink our own——"

He held out his glass. The airman and Peggy and Mademoiselle Duberges did the same. Two tumblers of water clinked against two glasses of wine and four people sipped. The Belgian girl turned her great eyes on Peggy and they seemed to plead for forgiveness.

"Deutschland über Alles?" Peggy wondered. Had the girl murmured those words before she touched the glass to her lips! Mistress of tact, exquisite in courtesy, flowerlike, had love so conquered—— But what mattered her thought? She had drunk the blood of Louvain!

There was a momentary silence; a slight shadow stole over the table; Peggy broke into vivacious chatter and soon again had complete command of them all. She rallied all her powers, fenced with the lieutenant, chaffed him—strafed him, as he said, with a laugh—received graceful co-operation from the supple finesse of Mademoiselle Duberges, and rested like a rock on the imperturbable airman. His answering glance

always gave her support every time she looked.

He never failed in his replies to embarrassing questions. He was deliberate of speech, and so never appeared to hesitate. These questions from the lieutenant seemed perfectly casual and natural to Peggy. He showed that he liked them both; that their presence was a welcome relief from monotony; and that he considered his dinner a brilliant success. Peggy believed now that he regarded the airman and herself as all they claimed to be. The Belgian girl would tell him after dinner that this American woman had accepted, without demur or explanation, an invented previous friendship; then the bomb would fall. The explosion would be much more severe because of this dinner. German arrogance would be ruffled. German spite would be vindictive. The airman would be shot. It was no far-fetched fear.

She stopped the waiter who was removing the airman's plate.

"Some more beef, please, for monsieur," she ordered. If this should prove his last dinner he should have enough; and he should remember it as cheerful.

"As long as he likes, Madame Fargo." But the lieutenant glanced secretly at his watch.

Even he could not protect a Belgian who dared to be on the street after the prescribed hour. He ordered coffee to be served there. "I will send you all home in my auto," he said. "Plenty of time."

"You think of everything, Otto," murmured the girl.

"Only of you!" he answered in a low voice.

"Monsieur is of the Commission, of course?" he asked, turning to Peggy.

"Oh, no," she answered. "We are taking four little girls from a convent to their English mothers."

"Oh, Mr. Fargo," he laughed; "a ready-made family!"

"Mrs. Fargo," said the airman, smiling, "mothers everybody."

"And am I included, oh, brilliant matron of all the world?" cried the lieutenant in laughing appeal.

"Do keep him in order!" pleaded Mademoiselle Duberges demurely. "Insist that he comes to lunch with us at Brussels."

Peggy started visibly. The lieutenant stared, surprised.

"But, of course, I am going with them," the girl continued. "Shall I trust my dear American

friends all alone to your Landwehr sentinels and dunderheaded pickets?"

Peggy was now sure that her suitcase had been searched and the letters to the Mother Superior read. And she believed she knew why.

"We shall drive all the way," mademoiselle continued. "That is your fault. You will not let a poor Belgian or American use an auto." She tossed back her head in resentment, which would have been very pretty if it had been about a trifle.

"You might be away several days," the lieutenant grumbled.

"It is certainly not an affair of a day," was her answer. She added with a coaxing appeal: "You will come to us at Brussels, won't you?"

"Of course he will!" the airman said heartily.

"Oh, please come!" Peggy cried, as though it was her dearest wish.

"Ah, if you ask!" said the lieutenant.

"I do not ask; I insist, Herr Leutnant."

"Rather jolly! I should like it," he said, restored to good humor. "Thanks awfully—that is, of course, if you are not staying with friends?"

"No, Otto; at the hotel—you know—on the Avenue Louise."

"Yes, yes; a jolly place. Expect me at one, Sunday. I'll motor over. What convent is it?"

The girl lifted her eyes to Peggy's, but Peggy did not seem to see the glance. After a slight pause Mademoiselle Duberges named the convent. This was a confession that the suitcase had been searched.

"Going to Louvain?" the lieutenant asked.

"Perhaps," said the airman; "if there's time."

The lieutenant sat up very straight.

"If you do," he said, "you will see how Germany was forced to teach war lessons to civilians who shot our brave soldiers in the back. The world criticizes. Perhaps you do. But we Germans do our duty. And in peace days—when the world is less prejudiced—we shall be understood. Isn't that your view, Mr. Fargo?"

The airman nodded.

"When the sun goes round a German world," he said, "and the wine goes round the German way——"

"Aha! Precisely!" The lieutenant laughed cheerily.

He held his glass cupped in his hands to warm the wine. An exquisite aroma, as of autumn leaves, hovered over the table from that single glass and the uncorked bottle. Peggy inhaled

the fragrance with unconscious pleasure while she watched a bullet-headed, short-cropped officer at the next table. This Prussian had heard the airman's words and had turned in an intent frowning scrutiny of the airman's back. The airman had clearly made an enemy. Peggy laughed. What difference? One or a dozen or a hundred?

She would not touch her pudding. The airman finished his.

"Take mine, Monty," she said. "I don't want it." She turned to the girl. "I seldom eat sweets," she said, continuing in English.

The lieutenant lifted a chiding finger.

"You've been a lot in England," he laughed. "Do you know how I know?"

"Wrong, Herr Leutnant," said the airman as he looked up from Peggy's pudding. "In our state we always call dessert sweets."

"Why, certainly!" Peggy agreed.

"My trap for an Englishwoman did not spring, Fargo." In the genial camaraderie inspired by the wine he dropped the Monsieur. "I must help you with your passes to-morrow," he added.

Peggy fancied a glance of triumph from the Belgian girl.

The coffee came and was hurriedly drunk. They rose, the last to go.

Peggy saw that the lieutenant, as he helped the girl on with her cloak, clasped her throat with a little caress as he adjusted the collar from behind. She saw the girl smile and droop her eyes, as if at a whispered word. She, too, heard a whisper as the airman held her moleskin.

"What next?" he whispered.

"Search me!" she answered. She heard his suppressed chuckle.

She lingered, fastening her cloak. The other couple walked toward the door.

"She suspects something at the convent," she murmured. "Tell some Belgian priest to-morrow to get word there. The nuns must not talk —must not trust us—when we come."

"It's my job," the airman said as they followed. "Look out for mademoiselle. The hall porter warned me."

Peggy nodded.

"Your name?" she asked.

"My mother's—Mrs. Emily Stoneman, Pasadena, California. You'll let her know if anything happens? And yours?"

"Margaret Travers—Miss Travers—Tootholme Manor, Churwell, Berks."

Their eyes met as he held the door open for her.

"Thank you!" he murmured.

"Carry on!" she whispered, with a smile. "Did you pack everything, Monty?" she asked.

"Not a shoestring forgotten."

"And the bag is down here?"

"It is down here."

"Good boy! Pay the bill."

She looked him over as he walked away. The clothes hung loose, but fitted well enough to pass for his. He carried himself more erectly than Geoffrey, but his footsteps flagged. He limped, she saw, sometimes.

The lieutenant came with them in his car, which otherwise would have been stopped. He was boyishly gay at the success of his dinner and renewed his promise of help with passes. As they drove through the silent dark streets he told them of a big hole in the new aërodrome near Schaarbeek.

"It's no military secret," he said; "for you'll see it as you drive out of Brussels."

"What did it?" asked the airman in his deliberate voice.

"Bombed last night. The beggar flew low

and dropped two bull's-eyes. Good pluck! Good shot!"

"I hope," said the airman politely, "that the aërodrome was empty."

"We wish," came through the darkness, "that it had been."

"An English plane, of course?"

"Oh, no; French. He had to come down. Blew his machine up—and escaped. Bah! that is, for the moment. These traitor Belgian peasants are hiding him."

The car drew up before a shuttered house. The door flew open to a voluble welcome from a Belgian maid.

They entered a salon, all yellow brocade and gilt spindle-furniture legs. It was warm and bright there; but the brightest thing was the face of the Flemish woman. From the broad dark face peered honest eyes that were filled with tears, and she laughed almost hysterically as she closed the door.

Peggy, absorbed, paid no attention to the woman, to the growing surprise and indignation of the latter. She drew herself up at length and said coldly:

"Monsieur Geoffrey's compliments, madame."

"Monsieur Geoffrey's!" Peggy repeated, running over. "Monsieur Geoffrey, you said?"

"But yes, madame. Surely Mademoiselle Yvonne has told you?"

"No, no! What is it?" cried breathless Peggy.

"At Esschen, madame. He saw you. He whispered it to me—to me, madame. He said: 'Tell her I owe my escape to Mademoiselle Yvonne. Tell her to come out—quick! Tell her——' But a German soldier came near. That was all."

The door opened. Mademoiselle Duberges came in. Peggy held out her arms. They clasped in a close embrace.

"Come!" Yvonne said.

They left the room with arms entwined.

V

Roderick Stoneman, forgotten in this room of yellow sheen, dropped wearily into a chair, but quickly stumbled to his feet lest he go to sleep. He walked backward and forward half the length of the room, his head bent low, his hands resting on each fragile gilded chair or table as he passed. He was footsore. Until he had changed into Geoffrey's boots at the hotel he had worn small stolen shoes. He was badly bruised, for he had had rough falls. The dry warmth scorched his face and ears, touched by frost. All these physical troubles had been and could still be borne with outward indifference. He had still a store of vital force and will power. He could not use them. That was the trouble. He was tied fast, helpless.

From the inner salon came Madame Campion in soft satin slippers, which made no sound on the polished floor. She stood at the top of the three steps, which were as wide as the room and divided the two apartments, and looked with surprise at the bent back of this jaded man. He was

holding on to a chair and staring at the floor in obvious profound lassitude of mind and body. She had had a dozen words with her niece and had learned that all had gone well at the dinner; otherwise anxiety must have forced her to question. Instead, she backed quietly away and sent Clothilde in to him with a bottle of champagne.

Stoneman drained a glass. The wine was sweet; but it helped him to think.

This girl, this wonderful, fearless English girl, whom he had so deeply involved, had had a message which proved that she could trust the Belgian girl. Mademoiselle Duberges, after all, was no spy; had had no previous knowledge of Miss Travers; and mutual confidence had been established. Somebody—somebody in whom Miss Travers was deeply interested, had escaped from Belgium with the help of Mademoiselle Duberges; and the two young ladies were thus bound in a common dangerous secret. But this tie could hardly be such that Miss Travers would dare to explain. How could she admit that one whom she had introduced as a husband was a stranger—a stranger who brought deadly danger with him?

He drained another glass. He must keep up until Miss Travers made a chance to talk with

him. All he could say, all he could tell her, was to get back; to get out of Belgium—quick! She might leave on the morrow, perhaps. He could hide somehow, somewhere, until she was past the frontier. Then it did not matter. If he said he was ill, if he pretended to be, would they let him stay hidden here? Across the frontier! Safe! Miss Travers safe, how gladly he would give himself up! Ah!

But it came to him sharply that the one practicable plan would almost certainly bring ruin to this Belgian girl. All her friendships with German officers, all the love that one spoiled pet of the regiment felt for her, could not save her. How bitter they would be—those hundred German officers who had watched him dine among them! How vindictive would be the punishment inflicted on everybody connected with the affair. His position crystallized in a sentence: The safety of both girls hung on his. That was the blunt, pitiable truth. That was the result of speaking a cowardly word to a young lady in a crowded street. Stoneman buried his face in his hands and surrendered for a moment to bitter self-reproaches.

This young man, quick of decision, fire-quick in execution, resolute of will, iron-nerved, had

always said that he could find a way out from anywhere; he knew better now. He had held in contempt the man who sat still and let things happen; he was humbled now. He had cherished an exalted ideal of woman; now he had involved two—probably more—in irretrievable disaster. He remembered the idle dreams of extreme youth; dreams of chivalry, in which he was the rescuer and the hero. Now a girl was in extreme peril through his folly, and he must sit helpless, with no higher task than to guard his tongue. He must await her commands. He must be Montgomery Fargo until told he was not; a husband until otherwise ordered.

It was on this thought that Madame Campion came again, and this time she signalled her approach. He went over to the wide steps, which she was descending. Her dead-black dress amid all this yellow haze seemed to him to announce death like a trumpet. She took his two hands in hers and pressed them warmly.

"Any American is welcome," she said; "but Geoffrey's brother-in-law—may I say it?—is almost as a son to me."

He looked at her in helpless misery, the only moment in which he failed.

"I thank you, madame!" he stammered.

She glanced from him to the bottle. This unaccountably tired man had taken only two glasses.

"Sit there. . . . No; I insist!" This stately lady herself put a small table in front of him and poured two glasses. Then she placed a tortoise-shell box, inlaid with gold and lined with cedar, in front of him and lighted a match. "Geoffrey said they were good," she told him as he puffed at the cigarette. "My nephew imported them from Cairo. They are dry, of course. He was killed at Liège. Do not speak, monsieur. Lean back and rest at ease. We Belgians will grieve after the war; until then we have no tears. And now, our little toast. You must empty your glass. Our Belgian toast: *Le Roi et Victoire!*"

"Le Roi et Victoire," he murmured, and drank.

She seated herself at his side, and he rallied all his forces to carry on. Everything he said must almost certainly be contradicted by everything Miss Travers was probably telling Mademoiselle Duberges; but he must not hesitate.

"The dinner? All was well? Ah, but what a trial for Peggy! I may call her Peggy, may I not? We have heard so much of her. It was a desperate chance for Yvonne to take, but such

a help to you to know the young lieutenant. You are neutral, of course. It was easy for you; but *là là!*—Peggy among the Germans! Yvonne is too daring. And there was no contretemps?"

"None, Madame Campion. We have the promise of the lieutenant to help with passes."

"Oh, but that is splendid! I was thunderstruck when I saw Yvonne wished to accept. It is well, now that it ends well. Your Peggy must be as brave as Geoffrey."

The strong face had not been wont to express tenderness, but it expressed more than tenderness now. The voice lingered affectionately on the name of Geoffrey.

"She is the bravest woman in the world!" he said. "Do not call me neutral, madame."

"Of course not. I know that, or you could never have won your beautiful wife. Still, it is not quite the same. And did you see Geoffrey at Esschen?"

"No, madame."

"As well, perhaps. If Peggy had recognized him she must have cried out, I think. She is very like him, don't you think?"

"Very, madame." He laid down the end of the cigarette he had fiercely smoked.

"Light another, please. They do you good.

And fill your glass. You were very tired, monsieur, and you are getting rested now. And how soon did Yvonne get a chance to whisper the splendid news?"

"No chance, madame. We did not know until we came into this house."

"*Mon Dieu!* But how it would have cheered Peggy! And Yvonne bursting with it too!" She smiled. "It was a good ending. It took away a bad taste from the mouth, perhaps. I came home trembling. Yes; it is true. I am of granite, they say; but when an earthquake comes—— I could not think how you and Peggy knew us. Ah, but you were quick and splendid! It was so unlucky that the lieutenant came just one minute too soon. But I guessed, after all. I saw that Mère St. Ursule had written of us. Why, I could not think. But it was very lucky."

"No one wrote about you, madame. We did not know at all who you were."

Madame Campion's lineaments had been modelled on patrician bones by a lifetime of haughty repression; but five months of war had taught those hard lines how to relax. Her look of astonishment was as naïve as would have been that of Clothilde.

"Anything might happen in Belgium," he said.

"How did we know that you had not some warning, some message for us?"

She eyed him shrewdly with a sombre smile. The truth was dragged from him.

"And when did you know," she asked, "that Yvonne was not a German spy?"

"When we entered this house, madame."

"Oh!" she cried, flinging up her hands; "but that is not possible! But, of course—— Ah, Peggy is brave! And she sat through that dinner! Poor Yvonne! There are many who think as you thought."

An instant of silence, a heavy cloud; then madame rallied.

"Mon Dieu!" she cried. "We were so astonished. We could not believe it. Clothilde came back, exploding. Mademoiselle was in Belgium. Monsieur Geoffrey had seen her in Esschen. Yes; it was true. Monsieur Geoffrey was sure. We could not think how she had got a passport. The last thing we guessed was that she had married a lucky neutral, who gets a charming bride, and can bring her to her brother in unhappy Belgium. You see, Clothilde came down in the train with you; but she did not see you, and so we had no clue."

"Of course not, madame. You must have been puzzled."

"I should think so! We flew in search." Madame smiled. "The hotel register told us."

His wandering eyes fell on a crape-bound photograph of a young officer in the Belgian uniform.

"Yes; Yvonne's brother," said madame; "two years older. She is all alone now, except for me. . . . But smoke again, monsieur. And how long have you been married?"

"Just two weeks to-day, madame, in London."

"Aha! And you bring her to Geoffrey. And she is so delighted to have missed him, of course. What a honeymoon! How happy you must be."

"Very happy, madame."

"But, my dear young man, you should exult in words of great enthusiasm over your beautiful bride," she protested, with a laugh.

"Does she not speak for herself?" he asked, with an answering laugh.

"Ah, with many beautiful tongues! But we women are so that the one we wish to hear is the husband's."

"She is the most wonderful woman who ever lived!" he cried with conviction.

"Ah, that is better! That is right. Geoffrey thinks the world of her. We found him just in time. It was accident—just that; and how lucky! Yvonne has a château near the convent; all dead and locked up, of course, but not looted, and only one chimney gone, from a shell. We went there. The doctor told us of an English soldier, wounded and no longer safe in the convent cellar; for a Bavarian patrol had been quartered in the village. We carried him that night——"

"We, madame?"

Madame laughed.

"Five women, in the dark midnight, and two men. He was not even jarred, he said; and it was three miles. We had to leave him for five days with Clothilde until we got passes. He came as footman on our carriage. We brought him here nearly five weeks ago; and he got better so fast. Did you know him well, monsieur?"

"No, madame. You see, I came to England on a visit and met Miss Travers."

Madame patted his hand. She was pleased with the tonic effect of her talk and the champagne and the cigarettes. The truth is that her queries had keyed him to feverish tension, lest he contradict himself.

"Tell me," she asked; "What is that white

horse? I could not understand. Geoffrey spoke of a white horse, a great white horse."

Stoneman forced a laugh.

"In America," he said, "we have a saying: Where there's a white horse, there's a red-haired girl."

"Ungallant!" she said; "Peggy has the beautiful auburn hair."

"Oh, I was not thinking of her, madame."

"But the white horse, monsieur, that lies on its side always on the hill above the house?"

Fortunately the author of "Tom Brown at Rugby" had written "The Scouring of the White Horse," and Stoneman had read the book. He told the tale, and it fitted; and, even in his desperate plight, he could not but chuckle at the ludicrous association of this gigantic chalk-carved monument with Miss Travers' burnished hair. Madame heard this chuckle with beaming pleasure. Decidedly she was doing him good!

"We photographed Geoffrey," she said, "in his peasant's dress, with his rough beard and a bandaged chin. We sent it out by our secret post. Our friends ransacked the refugee camps of Holland until they found a peasant who looked something like the picture. They got a pass for him and another man to come down and return.

They came—our servants, we said—and we sent Geoffrey's double to our estate, where he slipped across the lines, we hope. Away went Geoffrey on his pass this morning, with the other man to speak Flemish if they were questioned, and Clothilde to help. It succeeded. Simple, wasn't it? Yvonne's idea."

"Is it as easy as that?" Stoneman said ungraciously.

"Easy?" repeated madame, a little surprised. "It was achieving the impossible."

"Pardon, madame; but you tell of your great efforts so lightly——"

Hard or easy, he reflected, that way was not for him; for his mysterious disappearance would involve everybody as deeply as his discovery. He turned as the door opened. He hoped Miss Travers was coming, that he might hint to her what he had been saying. But it was only Clothilde, who said quietly, "Pardon, monsieur," and then addressed madame in Flemish.

"Mademoiselle Yvonne's compliments to madame," she said; "and madame will please not be alarmed or surprised."

"Go on, Clothilde. What has happened?"

"The young ladies desire to spare the feelings of a brave and gallant gentleman who has fought

for France and Belgium, and is in deep misfortune."

"The young ladies, Clothilde?"

"It is so, madame."

"Have a care, Clothilde. You speak with a growing excitement. Moderate yourself."

"Yes, madame; pardon. He is not the husband of the young lady."

"Repeat it, if you please, Clothilde."

"It is true, madame. Prepare yourself, madame. He is of the war birds of the French."

"Pardon, monsieur," madame said, smiling. "It is of to-morrow's déjeuner that we speak. It seems that some eggs have been broken; and eggs are eggs in Antwerp to-day."

"I am sorry, madame." He laughed with her.

"Go on, Clothilde."

"Monsieur attacked the Zeppelin house beyond Brussels from the sky last night, and afterward he had to descend. He got safely into the city and addressed a question to the English young lady; and then you spoke to her. There was no time for denials. It is thought that monsieur is deeply mortified; but I am to say that the passport mademoiselle has for her brother will do for him."

"Careful, Clothilde; you have had months of

training, and yet you steal a glance at monsieur! Is his room ready?"

"I have been occupied with mademoiselle."

"He and I will arrange it. You are too busy. Is there plenty of hot water for his bath?"

"Yes, madame."

"The finest silk pyjamas of Monsieur Jaques —put them on the radiator."

"The new ones? Ah, madame, they came from London after Monsieur Jaques' death."

"Those, Clothilde. I thank you. You have done well."

"Thank you, madame." The maid closed the door softly behind her.

Stoneman had hoped that the dreadful farce was ended; but this quiet dialogue could only be as madame said, about the kitchen or the bed linen. He rose, because madame rose, and moved to open the door for her. An extraordinary movement on her part checked him. It seemed to him that she floated down, down; and it was not until that grey, stately head was almost on a level with his knee that it dawned on him that she was curtsying to him; curtsying deep, in the homage of courts. He burst into a strangled sob as she drew herself up with a noble dignity.

"I had thought, monsieur," she said, "never to do that until my king came home. But it is your due. You are the first of our Allies to come in arms to our captured city. You fight for us. Your nation feeds our poor. Monsieur, we are all deeply grateful."

"Madame," he answered in a broken voice, "I bring great trouble to you and you receive me as a conqueror!"

Tears were in her eyes—eyes that had once been hard and repellent, but tender, almost affectionate, now, after five months of national and personal suffering. She put her hands on his shoulders and drew him to her and kissed him on the forehead.

"Come!" she said, taking his arm. "You were not in bed last night and I have been taxing your poor tired brains. Our servants have all gone, and you and I must get your room ready."

Upstairs, two girls looked into each other's eyes and smiled, for a genuine laugh, a man's laugh, echoed from below. Madame was making good fun about the ridiculous idea of a white horse and a red-haired girl, and an exhausted man was being mothered.

VI

Peggy lay back, deliciously resting on a sofa. She wore a silk dressing-gown of Yvonne's, and her bare feet were thrust into a pair of Japanese slippers of plaited straw. A little smile was on her lips as her eyes roved indolently, but with a purpose. This large, warm room in cool grey and pale blue, and here and there a touch of old rose, was an exquisite product of individual taste. She had been pleased, soothed, when she had first come in, an hour before. As she had subconsciously noted details, she had divined that it was little more than a beautiful empty shell. A casual comment from Yvonne had told her that most of the valuables of the house had been sent to The Hague before the bombardment. Peggy, half dreaming, looked from the mirror over the dressing-table to the canopied bed, and then to the bureau; and after that to the chiffonier, with its curved and swelling fronts to each drawer.

She was looking in vain for a straight line. Everything was in curves, graceful, winding—

she thought it excessive. Everything was French, and obviously original Louis-Quinze; and Peggy rightly guessed that it had come direct from the artist cabinetmaker to an ancestor of Yvonne. She contrasted her own simple, breeze-swept bedroom with this and smiled again; and then she looked at the blank wall, where at home a grate would be, and where a jolly ruddy fire would be glowing.

She pictured Yvonne at the manor, a daughter of luxury and warmth, shivering in the great gusty hall, nursing the fire, looking askance at the collie and the fox terrier, that shared the tiger skin, lifting widened eyes when asked to visit the stables; staring when a ten-mile run over the downs was suggested. All this half-conscious reverie came as the result of a word here and there, a gesture, a glance now and again from those eyes of Yvonne, which expressed so much and yet sometimes told so little.

Peggy hoped—yet hated to hope. She was on fire with gratitude and love for the girl who had nursed and saved her brother; yet, to share Geoffrey, to give him up, the other half of her—the thought stabbed her. She was in a glow of admiration for the grace, the tenderness with which her revelation of the airman had been re-

ceived. Yvonne had never flinched from the added burden. So far from blaming, she had praised. Yet Peggy feared that this hothouse flower would fade on the open downs of Berkshire; and wondered whether the complex product of intensive Belgian culture could make simple outdoor Geoffrey happy.

Geoffrey safe, the airman in bed, the room warm and reticently fragrant, the sofa comfortable, a delightful hour with a delightful girl; it is no wonder Peggy felt that the day's work was well done and that she let both mind and body relax. Her vagrant thoughts about Yvonne and Geoffrey, hardly registered in her brain, were pleasant dreaming, founded on little more than nothing, tinged with romance and touched with humor.

It was funny that upright and downright Geoffrey, with his blunt ways, could have seriously interested Yvonne, all finesse and sweet artifice, which had become natural. She wondered, smiling, what Geoffrey thought. He never flirted or philandered; but then, he had never been rescued and hidden and nursed by a girl; and this girl had a quaint, rare beauty. If it should be that these little signs really were signs; and if dear old blind Geoffrey, as was

most likely the case, had never seen one of them, and was only grateful, and very, very friendly—— Peggy closed her eyes on the lazy thought that, in that case, something must be done; there was a heavy debt to be paid, and Geoffrey always paid in full. She was nearly asleep, and she thought that Geoffrey, in bounding health, would fear rather than love this girl; he avoided girls who did not know how to be "just pally," and who knew a lot about art and music, and nothing about horses and dogs and the countryside in winter.

But Peggy came suddenly wide awake, for she thought of the fresh, boyish arrogant face of Leutnant von Schmiedell and how his merry eyes had softened as he looked at Yvonne; looked open love, careless who saw. Peggy had forgotten him, had forgotten the dinner; had unconsciously, as it were, taken ten minutes' vacation between difficulties. His manner, so confident, so assured, was that of an engaged man; or at least of one who has a definite understanding. Yvonne's answering smiles; Yvonne's glances from charming, provocative eyes; her deference to his wishes, yet dextrous management of him; her unprotesting acceptance of his brutally tactless comments about Belgians; the touch of her

beautifully curved lip to the glass that held the blood-red wine from Louvain——

Peggy pondered over that incident. The man was born and bred a gentleman. He had the most engaging natural manner. He was cosmopolitan, old in experience, young in heart, and had associated all his life with cultured people in many countries. And yet, with a buoyant good will, and as a special compliment to his guests—one of whom was a Belgian girl whom he obviously hoped and expected to marry—he had produced a bottle of wine from Louvain and proudly told where it came from. With complacent obtuseness, he had grossly insulted where he had meant to do honor.

The incident typified, crystallized all that Peggy had read and heard, all that France and England had learned, and that the United States was beginning to learn of the appalling congenital and acquired egotism of the Prussian; an egotism that stultified his diplomacy, made ludicrous his splutter about his civilization, and justified to him his ravages and ravishments, his brutalities and his murders. It shed a further bright light for Peggy: The lieutenant had a boyish, not unpleasing vanity. He had the egomania of his people, especially rabid in the class to which

he belonged. Such a man was easy to deceive. Yvonne, then, was a secret agent for the Belgians.

Peggy sat up, put her elbows on her knees, cupped her chin on her hands, and looked at the place where the fire ought to be. The thought was revolting. However noble the cause, a girl like Yvonne, so dainty, sweet through and through—that had been proved in an hour of intimacy—pretending love for a German! Oh, there were others to do such things; others who, with lure of body and eyes—— There came recollections of a sentence, the one sentence Yvonne had uttered about the delicate relation that accident and necessity had fixed between two strangers of opposite sex: "It is nothing to save a brave man's life by pretending to be his wife," Yvonne had said; "there are pretendings that scorch the soul; but this is not one." It had passed unheeded; there had been so much to hear about Geoffrey, so much to tell about the airman. But it came back now, and, with it, recollection of a sombre face, a sudden dropping of the eyes, a break in the voice.

It was recalled the more vividly because it was the one and only moment in which Yvonne's blithe fortitude had been shaken. Peggy sprang

to her feet and stood with hands clenched, frowning heavily. A spy? And by this spying health and freedom to Geoffrey! Eyes of allure, and smiles of invitation! But for these, the airman would be in prison. Love, pretended love, for a vain, arrogant boy? What great thing had this pretence that scorched the soul wrought for Belgium? For Geoffrey and the airman must be but incidents. Peggy asked herself if she would make a like pretence for Geoffrey or for England. There was only one answer: Of course! Of course!

Her forehead came unknotted and a smile flashed across her dry lips. She had dared to censure Yvonne! And who was she to criticize? She had gone farther. In one hour she herself had gone farther; and for a stranger! There was humor in that revolt against the word "spy." What was she herself? Ridiculous old prejudices died hard, she thought, and she must not blame herself if their ghosts stalked near her when she was half asleep.

What a burden must this girl, delicate to fragility, be bearing; what cares, hidden beneath those luminous eyes, which must be kept bright for a German lover; what sorrows, mocked by those brilliant smiles, which must flash at will to

keep an enemy tame! Grieving for an adored brother—Yvonne had told her how he had died; openly insulted by patrician Belgians—Peggy remembered the incident of the Avenue de Keyser; daily, hourly, at sharpest tension and on guard, with never a chance to relax! Peggy's tears were near, but they did not come; for that was not Peggy's way. In all that long hour Yvonne had not uttered one word about herself, except that indirect reference to pretences that scorched; had not had one thing done for her; and everybody else had been arranged for, and planned for, and cared for. . . .

Yvonne came, still in her black dress, carrying a suitcase.

"I am so sorry," she said; "but we have been ripping to pieces an aviator's costume. It is not safe to have it about. He is sound asleep. Aunt Maria tucked him in."

"And why should I not have helped?" Peggy reproached as she opened the suitcase.

"You are tired. You should rest."

Peggy laughed.

"Mr. Stoneman is very orderly," she said; she was looking at little parcels all neatly wrapped in tissue paper.

"Sponge bag," she inventoried, feeling the

parcels; "hairbrush; slippers." She unwrapped one and her night-dress hung down. "He folded it," she cried, "in the same folds—an old maid!"

"Do you know," Yvonne said, "I think that a man in danger like that—— He wants to get his uniform locked up quick—and he is in a great hurry. Well, he is very cool and calm, isn't he? And he pays great respect to your belongings, doesn't he?"

Peggy looked at Yvonne.

"I was thinking just that," she admitted.

"But you are English and you didn't say it."

"Do you really think," Peggy laughed, "that you are more frank than I am?"

Yvonne smiled.

"Do you think that Geoffrey is frank?" she asked.

Peggy looked into her eyes. Yvonne's dropped.

"He tells me everything," Peggy answered, with a significant stress on the last word. But the only response was a demure shake of the head.

Within ten minutes Peggy was brushing Yvonne's long dark hair, silky fine, and listening to a pitiful story.

Otto von Schmiedell, it appeared, had lived

for a time in Antwerp, and had been the intimate friend of Yvonne's brother and all but engaged to Yvonne.

"I was fond of him," Yvonne said. "His family, in Berlin, were pleased. Jaques was happy about it. Otto went suddenly in July; called to Berlin, he said. He would be back soon, he told us. He knew then, I think, how he was coming back."

She told how one October day, shortly after the city had surrendered, Madame von Stilen had come, crying. Her husband, a lifelong friend of Yvonne's dead father, short-tempered through ill-health, had been goaded into uttering defiant truths and was to be sent a prisoner to Germany. Yvonne might save him.

There was a chance. Herr von Schmiedell had come. Herr von Stilen had seen him at headquarters, a private secretary, treated almost as a son. Surely Yvonne would beg, implore! . . . Yvonne, astonished, indignant, had reminded her of a brother, dead, and of the resolve of Antwerp ladies to speak to no German officers, to recognize no former ties; Madame von Stilen had pleaded the harder. Then the servant had come. Could Madame Campion and mademoiselle receive the Herr Leutnant von Schmiedell?

It was the hand of God, madame had said, clasping Yvonne's knees, and she had nodded to the man and run away weeping, murmuring that she would wait in the house for the good news.

"And so," Yvonne said, "he came in. I was crying. I was shaking. I was a child then, a frightened child—and it is not two months ago. So it began. 'It is war,' he said; 'but war is between nations; not between us—not between you and me, Yvonne.' And I was sure that Madame von Stilen was listening, and her cries were still in my ears. I did not turn my back. I did not order him out. And so I lost my chance. So it began. Of course he misread my tears, my agitation. He cried, too—for his friend; his dear friend Jaques."

"Lean back," said Peggy softly. "I can do it better." She kept on steadily brushing, soothing but not caressing, steadying and upholding the girl, who was beginning to shiver. "That's right. Shut your eyes and try to go to sleep."

"No. Let me talk. It is good to talk. I have talked to no one but Aunt Maria, and she—she is beautiful and brave; but she thinks you must never let go. It is such a relief." She drew a long breath. "Monsieur von Stilen was saved,"

she said; "but I was lost. I had not foreseen, of course—there was no turning back."

"Nor standing still," Peggy murmured.

"You see that, of course—no standing still. He came every day, and every day I had some new favor to ask. We have five old servants in five deserted houses in the city. Their owners are friends, safe in England; and soldiers would be billeted, and their beautiful things ruined and stolen if they had not a friend at court. Other things were more important—one day something very important: I went to a Belgian, Monsieur Chartier, and told him of the night when five submarines would leave Zeebrugge. The news was with the British Consul at Rotterdam within twelve hours."

"Yes, yes——" Peggy stopped brushing.

"I don't know what happened," Yvonne went on. "One never does. After that I was just plain spy, of course. My Government asked; that was enough."

"Of course!" Peggy was plaiting the hair now.

"My king—yes, I have had a message from him. He knows." She lifted her head proudly. "A few others know. All the rest of Belgium calls me traitor."

"But the king," Peggy cried, "will put that right."

"Yes." She added with a mournful pathos: "But it is hard to wait. Monsieur and Madame von Stilen cut me in the Avenue to-day."

"Oh!" indignant Peggy panted.

"Yes. They say now that they would not have accepted his liberty at my hands if they had known I was so shameless. How can you blame them? I cannot defend myself. No one can defend me. I must flaunt my treachery. The common people sometimes say vile words in my ear. A woman said: 'Only the street women and Mademoiselle Duberges speak to German officers."

"There!" Peggy said, patting the bows she had tied on the two plaits, which hung below the waist. "Now lie down on the sofa. Yes; that's it." She got a footstool and sat by Yvonne's side and held her hand. "And you only a wisp of a girl!" she said.

"I was, five months ago. *Intrigante* and *aventurière* now—hard as flint."

Peggy laughed.

"You! Oh, yes; flint—flint for your country; but all tenderness and love and kindness for your

lucky friends. You have done enough, Yvonne; more than your share."

"I am a political person; an international person," Yvonne cried, with a bitter tang in her voice.

"But, of course, you are!"

"Oh, I mean much more than you think. Poor little me—dragged one step after another; not blind, but helpless. I am part of German policy." She pursed up her lips and said, with charming childish *gaminerie:* "I am German propaganda for neutrals."

Her laugh came clear as a little bell. Then she sighed, smiling, and pressed Peggy's hand.

"It is so delicious to have you. I have not laughed like that since July. I could not think how Otto had such power. I could not think why I never asked in vain. Well, here's the reason. Monsieur Chartier told me. My family is not unimportant. My father was of the *bourgeoisie,* but he was very rich and had many associations with the aristocracy. My mother was of the court and of a distinguished family. Her friends were mostly German. It was so with many of our aristocracy. My father's ships were everywhere known. His name in commerce was world-spread. Now do you see?"

"I am not good at conundrums; but a light glimmers."

Yvonne nodded.

"Propaganda for Germans too," she said. "They say there are some Germans who do not approve of the way my country has been treated. But a marriage——"

Peggy jumped up.

"Of course! Such a marriage shows how kind and affectionate is the German rule in Antwerp."

"Yes—to Germans and to the United States. That's it. The Germans have conquered by love."

Peggy was startled. She had not thought such bitter irony could be conveyed in a human voice.

"I cannot put him off any longer," Yvonne continued; "I must escape. I can perhaps get a passport to go with you for a week at The Hague."

"Yes, yes," Peggy cried. "Oh, splendid!"

Yvonne rose to her feet and stood looking up at Peggy, her two hands resting on Peggy's arms.

"But it is necessary to tell you," Yvonne murmured, glancing down: "Monsieur Geoffrey——"

"Yes?" Peggy was smiling now.

"He did me a great honor; but I——" She shook her head.

"You refused him?" Peggy demanded, drawing back.

"Ah," said Yvonne, "I was afraid so." She flung up her hands in a pathetic little hopeless gesture. "I do not love him," she confessed.

Peggy, astonished, resentful, had a sudden wild suspicion. Yvonne read it. "You saw tonight," she cried, with a flaming passion, "what a German lover can do, and you wonder whether I secretly still love him. The wine came from the altar of my country as the communion wine comes from the altar of God."

She broke into wild sobbing and Peggy held her close.

VII

Peggy stood alone in the sun-flooded salon, eying the button on the wall, which she had twice stretched out a finger to touch. She must meet the man. She must have an understanding with him that morning. She must put up with him, stand by him, rely partly on him, whether he was what he seemed to be or proved to be the most objectionable and offensive of individuals. The freedom, perhaps the lives, of everybody in this house hung on his safety. He and she had arrived in a crisis; and this stranger had become the pivot on which all depended. The long war council of three women that morning had made that clear; had made it clear that there was only one path of escape. Yvonne's danger was greatest, Yvonne's duty was hardest; yet the Belgian girl had brilliantly and steadily planned, and that wonderful heartening smile and glance had not once failed or faltered. Peggy, with high-held head, had gallantly accepted her part, and had never dreamed of tremors in its perform-

ance. But now she could not send for the man. And yet there could be no turning back.

She told herself that she was acting like a child; worse, like a coward. Was he "the right sort"? Quick of wit, steady nerved, plucky; but was he the right sort? Her brain said he was. Her heart asked how she could know; how be certain from one crowded nightmare hour. All the maidenhood of her was in sudden, fierce revolt. She was agitated as she had never been before. Her heart was beating fast. Her face was flushed. She sat down, clasped her hands, shut her teeth, and fought for self-control. This stranger must not find a quaking schoolgirl, stammering, embarrassed. She jumped up as the door opened.

"The photographer, madame," Clothilde announced. "The best light is in this room. I will tell monsieur."

Peggy started to bolt, checked herself, responded mechanically to a voluble greeting, and watched a hand camera drawn from a basket filled with groceries. Her head was bent and an intently listening ear seemed to catch the sound of footsteps. She burst into a flood of talk, her utterance doubly rapid, her voice pitched high.

At her first word the airman, outside in the

hall, had stopped short. The emotion of fear, inherited by man, produces two instinctive impulses, also part of man's inheritance—one to crouch and hide; the other to fly. Sometimes the impulses conflict and paralyze; and thus a rabbit may sit up motionless and accept death. Stoneman had faced and fought four enemy machines without a quickened pulse; but he was a frightened rabbit now for a full half minute. He had expected a formal summons, time to prepare, a grave consultation; and, instead, he was confronted with a casual, accidental meeting. He had imagined a troubled and anxious girl, pitifully eager to escape quickly from him and the humiliation he had brought her. He heard a blithe, eager voice pleasantly chatting about negatives and developing. He, too, thought of flight. He, too, knew that there could be no turning back. He went in, a fixed, unnatural smile on his lips, a glassy stare from his eyes.

"Come on!" he heard. "We're waiting for you."

He nodded in the direction of the voice, mechanically shook hands with the photographer, stammered a greeting, and stood stiffly, staring at the camera.

Peggy became instantly more mistress of her-

self. He was more embarrassed than she. Her thought flashed to his fine entering of the hotel dining-room. He was more afraid of her than of a hundred German officers. If only he was English! she wished. An Englishman of the right sort would not be embarrassed; but how could she tell with these Americans?

"There, monsieur, please! No; a little this way. I might be seen from without. It is prison for a burgher of Antwerp to have a camera in his own city."

Peggy did not hear, for she was eying a side face with tremulous eagerness. A sudden hot burst of antagonism flamed against this interloper, who had thrust himself so intimately into her aloof, fastidious life. She looked from critical, unfriendly eyes; but they honestly told her that the blurred, whirling impressions of the night before were rightly remembered. He looked "fairly decent"; that was her grudging verdict. His chin swept in a fine strong curve. What if it jutted like Humbert Honest's, and his eyes were a horrid sentimental brown? He might be worse, much worse. She dropped her eyes as he turned for a second position—a superfluous precaution, for he never looked at her.

She studied him again. His skin was clear

and fresh. He looked wholesome and vital. She must not hate him. She must be friendly. She must make him her friend. She fought her resentment against him. The photographer had finished. She was panic-stricken again. Remember, she was only twenty-three years old. She forgot her plans, her opening words. She sat silent when the door had closed behind the photographer.

She heard the airman coming toward her. He was speaking in jerks, nervously.

"From my mother—the last letter; must be burned, of course."

He was standing in front of her and holding it out.

"From your mother!" she faltered. "But——"

He thrust it into her hand.

"Read it," he said abruptly—"right through. It's the only thing I can show you. The best woman I know trusts me."

He turned, crossed the room and looked out of the window. She was younger, much younger, than he had thought; a girl—no more; and prettier, far prettier. Englishwomen kept so young; he had even hoped to see a grey hair or two in the daylight, without a hat; her finished manner,

her perfect ease, had encouraged that hope. Not a line in her face—not a crow's-foot; smooth, vital, young—so young; typical English; like some of the apricots in his mother's garden in Pasadena just when they begin to shade from pink to crimson. So young, and caught like this, through him!

He turned; but she had not finished. That was good of her, that careful slow reading, when she was—the letter was shaking in her hands—nervous and unstrung. Her hair was ruddy in the bright sunshine—lots of it, noticeable, marked; not a head to slip through German lines and be forgotten, or to slip out of complications without consequences. And her slim figure—so young—marked, too, a personality individual; one that stamped itself on memory.

She glanced up. Her eyelids moved like quick shutters. It might have been the sun—she was looking straight at the window; but he believed she was holding back tears. Her head was quickly bent again, and she was reading the letter over again. That was fine of her! No nervous skimming, no pretence at reading; that was a real mother's letter—a mother's heart. She would have confidence in him after reading that letter twice over like that. Pretty? Absurd! She was

beautiful—stamped, unforgetable! Her foot and ankle fine-boned; the foot arched, full of spring —just as she was, all through.

Stoneman looked her over, thus, as he had never before inventoried a woman—impersonally, detached. He had a dreadful reason. It was that which had unnerved him. He had only thought of it an hour before. If they were detected and held, her punishment would be worse than imprisonment or death. No woman travelling under a passport that falsely described her as a wife would be respected by the Germans, Stoneman knew. And he found her young and beautiful, and brimming with energy and health. His anxiety was profoundly increased; but perfect self-mastery was restored. He went to a seat by her side as she turned the last page.

"It's easy for me now. Thank you." Her voice was not quite steady. "I'm more proud and glad than ever," she continued, "that you spoke to me last night. Have they wired yet, do you suppose, that you haven't come back? How awful for her! But your message—that will go as soon as we get across. And how happy she will be!"

"Perhaps to-morrow evening, from Rozen-

daal!" he cried quickly. "We can get out to-morrow, can't we?"

She glanced at him, smiled, and shook her head.

"Madame Campion says not. She tells me, too, that I could never have got a pass without a husband"—she never flinched as she said the word—"unless the American Legation at Brussels explained his absence. I couldn't go there. They'd make me wait, she says, until they proved my story. I couldn't prove it, and my passport would be forfeited. You see, you are as necessary to me as I am to you. We're partners."

He nodded, calm, offhandedly, just as she would have it; but he was not acting. He was precisely as he would be in going over his machine with his mechanic before a flight—alert, concentrated, detached. Her unselfish thought for his mother; her consideration for him, in pretending that he was as necessary to her as she to him, were impressions stored away to be felt and appreciated later.

"Geoffrey and I are twins," she continued—"twins and pals. And his friends have been mine; jolly good friends, some of them. And a girl with that bringing-up—we were nine when father and mother died—she's different, isn't she?"

She was at absolute ease, friendly, companionable; plans and conditions forgotten; just talking as she felt to a man whose mother could write to him like that.

"I like you," she continued, looking frankly at him. "I did last night. I do more now. I can give friendship."

His eyes answered. She felt their quiet force, as she had the night before. She leaned back, relaxed, comfortably resting after supreme tension.

"I am very curious," she said. "Tell me how you got here, and why."

He protested, surprised. There were plans, vital plans, to be made.

"There's plenty of time," she said. She would have his story.

He rushed through it, speaking twice as fast as usual, inwardly impatient.

"Everything was lucky till the job was done," he said. "A good job. A new Zeppelin, not there two weeks. Oh, it shot up like a volcano! Then—quick—a half gale from the southeast, and a blinding drizzle, half rain, half sleet. Engine stopped; blown miles in half minutes; lucky landing; machine smashed; no harm to me. No one about; but I ran. I never ran so fast, I

reckon. A good road, leading north. I could see the stars now. Just a chance, you see; friendly Belgians, if luck served, and into Holland by the underground. I never met or saw a soul. Dead, deserted country; shuttered houses, black, gaunt, ghostly. A river—I was done! All bridges guarded, of course——"

"Yes, yes, go on," she murmured as he paused breathless.

He took a deep breath and ran on:

"Skirted banks for boat; none. Got chilled, of course. Slipped back to a big house and burgled the second story——"

"The second story?" she asked.

"Oh, of course, you English call it the first floor. Anyway, I climbed the porch and forced the shutters. Searched for food—not a scrap; but clothes, perhaps. Forced a chest at last in a likely bedroom. A fur coat—— Don't look startled. I have the address, and the thermometer marked twenty-two in the hall. I saw it. And varnished boots, pointed, narrow; but mine would have given me away. And a hat—oh, a monstrous head; but I put paper in the lining. Then off again.

"I walked that river bank—canalized, you see, with a towing-path—until it was nearly light.

The Rupel. I knew where I was now—from memory of the map; and before long I should come to the Scheldt. I popped into a canal-boat, slipped down a hatchway and hid, half standing, in a cubbyhole. I heard the family snoring. Of course I should be found; but you never know—I wasn't. We were in Antwerp by three o'clock."

"And you stood, cramped, in tight patent leathers, for seven or eight hours?"

"Forgot it quickly," he answered, "when I walked ashore, later. The coat did it, of course, and my American accent. The dock guards no doubt took me for one of the agents of the Relief Commission. Their boats come there. One of those lucky chances. Happens sometimes. It was nearly dusk and I went straight to the lightest street and looked for the friendliest face. It was yours. *Voilà!* Now about your plans?"

Peggy stared at him.

"And you carried off that dinner after that?" she breathed.

"If you'd only known how hungry I was! That's history. The future——"

"Yes, the future," she mocked pleasantly; "there's a lot to be said for it. I have a story too. Oh, nothing so wonderful as yours; but there was a fur coat and an American accent in it too."

She told it well and with a purpose. A friend, a trusted friend of her brother and herself, had posed as husband. That fact, incidentally and casually brought out, would show him, she thought, how wartime and war needs had changed all standards and permitted many things. Its only effect was to bring secret abuse of this Jack Daintry, who had helped to such a folly; but she did not know that. She brought in the mothers of the children, too, and her pledges, and their anxieties.

He listened calmly, perceiving her drift, deeply concerned about her blind courage; preparing for a clash of wills. Madness for her to cross half of Belgium! She should not go to that convent. When she had finished he told her so bluntly.

She bent forward, very grave, her eyes fixed on his.

"Others could get the children," she said. "That isn't it. But we dare not change our plans. We dare not seem to hurry out of Belgium."

"You hurry out," he interrupted. "I'll stay and get the children."

"And your passport?" she questioned.

"I'll take ours to the Consulate and get a separate one."

"You know you can't," she answered. "You

cannot tell the truth, for you would be refused one because you have fought for another country. You cannot deceive them, for you can't prove how you entered Belgium."

"How do you know all this?" he said.

"Madame Campion—she has it all. There is an underground line here too. That photographer, the engraver who is going to imitate the seal, they're all in it."

"I can take this route, or the other under the live wire."

"You could, perhaps. You might get through. But your disappearance—— What about madame and Yvonne?"

He nodded, beaten. The safety of all depended on his getting away openly.

"Their position is desperate," she continued. "They are going to the convent with us."

"Us?" he broke in, startled.

"We've talked it over," she said, "and we all think that safest. You cannot stay in Antwerp, madame says. Any foreigner is a marked man here. You can't go near the Relief Commission or your own officials. That would be noticed immediately. They would have you up."

"I will mix with the commission fellows," he said.

"Think!" she said gently. His eyes dropped before hers. "You know you wouldn't," she pursued. "The man who bombed this new aërodrome, who destroyed their new Zeppelin, who was their guest at dinner the next night, protected by the commission, even innocently—— What would happen to the commission?"

"I give in," he said.

"Thank you," she said, with an accent of relief. "It's hard for you, perhaps, to let Madame Campion do all the planning; but she's had months of experience." She flung up her hands. "The things she's been through—and Yvonne! Our troubles are slight. We get passes to-morrow. We leave on Saturday morning. Sunday at Brussels."

"A day lost. Why?"

"To keep the lieutenant in good humor," she said, smiling. "He is coming to lunch here, remember." She glanced at her wrist watch. "And to-day, too, perhaps. You see, we had to break an appointment, as the passport wasn't ready; and so he must be invited. If he comes, you—I'm afraid it's necessary"—she smiled at him—"must be ill. He might ask for your papers, just to see how he could help you best."

"I shall be ill."

"Now you see what we must do," she said, with grave friendliness. "You and I have to travel for several days in a family party—well, under difficulties. And the slightest mistake, the least hesitation——"

"Yes; of course."

"Well, we must be the same always; now, indoors, outdoors; always the same—just ourselves, natural, friends."

"That is the only way."

"It's Peggy and Monty, then. . . . Now Yvonne and I are going shopping this afternoon. You must be *perdu,* madame insists, until the papers are ready. You make a list of the things you need—and please, Monty, give me some francs."

Her handbag lay between them. She pushed it toward him. He opened it, without a word. A great roll of bills lay inside. He took it out and saw some German money.

"You'd better have some marks too," he said calmly.

"If you think I'll need them."

"Five hundred of each," he said, counting them out. "Can you make that do?"

"Oh, yes—that is, if your list is short."

"Want your handbag?"

"Of course!"

He put the roll of bills into his pocket.

"Don't forget a pocketbook," he said; "large, with a strap. I can't carry this stuff loose."

"I'll remember." She rose. "You've made it very easy for me," she said gratefully.

"Easy! For you?" he cried eagerly, thunderstruck at such humility after the courtly splendor of her consideration for him. "I——"

"Now, now, old boy!" she gibed, as she moved toward the door. "Have your list ready. . . . Oh, I forgot something!" He came over and stood facing her. "I've learned a lot this morning," she said. "They never let themselves down —these two. Yvonne did, last night; and it's done her a world of good. But it's the first time, she says. They keep smiling even when they're alone. They seem to frivol sometimes. Now we are going to see lots of things that'll hit us hard; and——"

"I get you, Peggy," he interrupted—"Hard neutral hearts until we are across the border. Alone or together, with friends or enemies, just surface and smiles."

"You have it to a T," she said. Then suddenly her manner changed. She held out her hand and he grasped it. "Geoff will like you," she

said, with a catch in her breath. "Dear old Geoff! He always likes my friends." Then she turned and went out.

He picked up his mother's letter and went slowly, with bent head, to his room. Peggy thought she had taught him friendship. She had taught him love.

Half an hour later he opened his door to a flushed and angry Clothilde. Her words buzzed out with r's rolling like a drum.

"Monsieur will please come to *déjeuner,*" she said.

"The Herr Leutnant has not come, then?" he asked.

"No, monsieur; he has not come," Clothilde exploded. "He has sent a brother officer; but monsieur is to come, all the same. Oh, *le chien canaille!*"

"Officer, Clothilde?"

"Monsieur will see." She turned on her heel.

He went to the door of the salon and stood on the threshold watching three absorbed women who silently stared at a basket on the table. In it, on a blue silk cushion, stood a silent, inquisitive toy terrier. It wore a coat—it was shaped and fitted and must be called a coat—of German grey, bound and piped with mauve. The mauve

was of the precise shade of the collar of Leutnant von Schmiedell's uniform.

Stoneman burst into irresistible laughter. Three women turned challenging heads and glowered. Peggy caught the infection first; and then came such a burst of merriment as that house had not heard in many a month.

"It's not the dog's fault," said Peggy, "that he was born in Berlin."

"Monsieur Geoffrey," Yvonne murmured, "was fond of all dogs." She caressed the tiny intelligent head, while Peggy eyed her.

"A little gift," madame said, pointing to a note on the table. "Ah, the beautiful, the delicate tact! And his name——"

"To be perfect," the airman said, "it should be Kaiser."

The dog yapped. Stoneman looked incredulously from one silent girl to the other; but he had guessed right.

"Madame est servie," Clothilde announced from the door.

They went into the breakfast-room, the dog dancing about and tinkling a sleigh-bell on his collar. An incredible meal, gay to frivolity, with easy laughter at little things, light badinage, frivolous chatter; Peggy's spirits bounded, after

a dreaded task had ended so well; Yvonne had at last a friend and confidante; the lieutenant had not come and there was hope of escape; she, too, had reason for joy. Madame gaily explained the extraordinary meal. Stoneman had never seen, even at a banquet, such a profusion of hors d'œuvres—anchovies, sardines, lax, caviar, pâté de foie gras.

"Eat as much of these as you dare," she challenged him. "They are from our storeroom—from before the war. There is only macaroni au gratin to follow."

They pressed him for homely details. He gave himself once again a clean bill of health—no sprains, no cuts; livid bruises on his leg, but nothing serious—no doctor needed, no bandages, no lotions. Had he found the new toothbrush? Madame had forgotten to mention it. Yes, that and everything necessary. He had not had such a bed in months; it was like heaven! He proclaimed himself in the pink.

After the meal Madame Campion appeared in a long housemaid's apron, and she wore on her stately head a blue silk bandanna. Monsieur must help her to pack. There were still beautiful things in the house, and perhaps these would not be smashed to bits by the German sol-

diers. If they all got safely to Holland, soldiers would be billeted there. There was little hope of saving anything, as Germans were like naughty passionate children. In a temper they broke up toys.

She hummed the Brabançonne as she worked. She teased her admiring helper about the wonderful inventions of his memory. She shrugged her shoulders as she left a large Rubens to its fate. Indomitable old lady, she showed him a great box of old lace, inherited, as dear to her as it had been to her grandmother. The little terrier jumped into the box and nestled down.

"A true German!" she said, laughing. "They will wipe their boots with it."

At four she brought the passport.

"Voilà, monsieur!" she said. "They will pass the store we met in front of at half-past four. If you are there they will accept the lieutenant's invitation to tea. They cannot arrive at the hotel alone. It is well that he should not be twice disappointed in one day. *Vite, monsieur! Vite!"*

"There is plenty of time," he said, glancing at a clock.

"You forget," she answered. "When a German writes it is German time—an hour earlier."

He was there at the hour named; but they

did not come. Stoneman wandered up and down, watching the crowds in the gathering dusk, thinking of that meeting the night before; growing anxious, of course. He saw people stop. He saw Germans straighten and smile, Belgians bend forward with saddened eyes. Two German soldiers marched by in the street, one behind the other, and at the right hand of the first, who carried his rifle on his shoulder, bayonet fixed, walked a civilian.

"Poor devil! Under military arrest—here in Antwerp!" Stoneman's eyes were as the Belgians'; but the expression changed as conviction came that he knew the man. He racked his memory. "He sold me a car in New York. Honest! Humber Honest! Poor devil!"

Down the avenue, a hundred yards away, Peggy and Yvonne were walking with Oberleutnant von Bahrheit, who had just joined them.

"We are scandalously late," said Yvonne, smiling; "but I got confused, as I always do. It is your dreadful German time."

"Where Germans rule, mademoiselle," he said, "it is German time."

"Oh, of course!" Peggy bantered. "We know the sun rises and sets at Potsdam."

Then Humbert Honest was led past, chin flung out, looking straight ahead.

Peggy saw, paused, stared; then added a quick, dangerous gibe:

"But you have yet to make your place in it, Herr Oberleutnant."

"Even Yankee guns and munitions shall not prevent that, madame."

"I was stupid!" Yvonne cried quickly. "The lieutenant's note said half past four."

"And you thought a German officer would make an appointment by German time?"

"What I forgot, Herr Oberleutnant," Yvonne said, with her disarming smile, "was that Germans are always an hour in front of the rest of the world. Isn't that so, Peggy?"

Peggy nodded as though she heard.

Humbert Honest, so straight about passports, so careful about his neutrality, must have been arrested for helping her. Such was Peggy's conviction. The Germans had discovered that no husband of hers had left The Hague for Brussels.

"Oh, Monty!" she cried. "Sorry we're late. Mr. Fargo—Herr Oberleutnant von Bahrheit."

"Glad to meet you, Herr Oberleutnant."

"The honor is mine, Herr Fargo."

VIII

Yvonne Duberges, sipping coffee at this afternoon tea, glanced sidewise at Herr Leutnant von Schmiedell, as he murmured: *"Je t'aime!"* Her bowed lips moved almost imperceptibly, as though she was saying the same words. He was demonstrative, more openly in love than he had ever been in public before. His manner was possessory; in effect, it announced an engagement. He looked about the room, much brighter than that of the hotel where they had dined the night before, and nodded joyously to brother officers he knew, who smiled in return, with significant glances at Yvonne. But she did not glance about.

A few Belgian ladies were there, most of them in mourning. Sombre-eyed, they watched this table, waiting for a chance to stare unwinking at this one-time friend; but she did not give them the chance. Her eyes seemed only for the lieutenant. Intent watchers were sure now that the impossible was to happen—a German officer and a Belgian girl were going to be married.

They were flaunting their happiness, the German officers thought. She was flaunting her shame, the Belgian ladies agreed.

The watchers were premature. At the dinner the night before Yvonne had perceived a chance, the first that had come, of escape from Belgium. She had seized it with the courage of despair. She might, perhaps, secure a pass to accompany her friend, Madame Fargo, for a week's visit at The Hague, accompanied by her aunt and Clothilde, who could not be left to the bitter punishment which must follow when it was found that Yvonne did not return. That was the trouble—a passport for three; and the plan had matured as the dinner progressed. There was one reason, one only, why her aunt and herself should go—to buy a trousseau. That was why she had lingered on her doorstep the night before, murmuring intoxicating words which had transformed Brussels into a gilded city of hope to the ardent young officer.

He had left her, assured that at last she would surrender. Sweet, elusive Yvonne, with her charming fads and naïve fancies and quaint moods, would capitulate at Brussels. The treaty would be signed there, in the gay little capital where he and she and Jaques had had such jolly

times. He had laughed, as he had driven away, that he thought of love in terms of war; the treaty would be signed and sealed with a kiss. He had never kissed her adorable lips; he had been on fire at the thought.

Brussels had rung in his ear all day, was ringing now at this little tea party; and his eager proffer of aid with passes is easily to be understood. He did not notice that Peggy was a little distrait; that Monsieur Fargo was rather quiet.

Peggy expected immediate arrest. If Humbert Honest had been apprehended for indorsing her at the Rotterdam Consulate—and what other fault could a man so scrupulous about passports have committed?—they were searching for her now. The airman was covertly watching her with eyes that confessed his solicitude; for he, too, had reason to fear detection. Though this man who knew him, and probably knew that he had joined the French Flying Corps, was under arrest, yet that might be temporary and they might meet.

Stoneman, deeply anxious about Peggy, followed her suddenly widened eyes to find himself looking straight at Humbert Honest, who stood, with mouth agape, staring at him.

"Monty!" Peggy cried sharply. "Our old friend, Humbert Honest! What a surprise!"

Humbert Honest, who had not seen her, started at the sound of her voice, grinned mechanically, and thrust out a hand to Stoneman.

"Well," he cried, "if this don't beat the world! How are you, old son? When did you cross? And how are all the folks at home?"

Stoneman rose and seized the offered hand.

"Honest, I'm glad to see you," he said, with his usual deliberation. "I hope you are well."

"My husband," came Peggy's clear voice, "is always glad to see you."

Humbert glanced from one to the other, trying to behave naturally but obviously nervous and excited. He pulled Peggy's arm up and down as though it was a pump handle. "Glad to see you. Mighty glad!" he said. "And how are things in Kankakee?"

"The oranges are blossoming," Peggy said.

He laughed uproariously, much too loudly; altogether a most difficult acquaintance at such a moment. Introduced to the lieutenant, who found his surprise at meeting American friends most natural, he became instantly pugnacious.

"I'm dead sore on you Germans, Herr Leut-

nant," he said as he accepted an invitation to sit down.

His prognathous jaw was thrust outward and his big brown eyes were flashing as he flung a silky square of paper on the table and pointed to its spidery shorthand marks. It was a letter from Constantinople, he explained, written in Turkish, which he had received that morning. It was about his automobiles there; perfectly innocent, of course—only a fool would carry explosive stuff openly like that; yet the tin-horn fakers at the Station Centrale had marched him under guard through all Antwerp to Lazard, head of the Secret Service.

"The beggar knows me," Honest flamed indignantly, "yet he made me translate it word by word. I told him how they'd lemonaded a man well known in Antwerp down the boulevards. Sympathy from him? An apology? Nix! That got my goat. I told him I was an older resident of Antwerp than he was and would be here when he was gone."

The lieutenant listened, with a smile. He disliked Oberleutnant Lazard, who was only a professor turned soldier, not a gentleman. Honest, simmering down, broke into a broad grin.

"I got what was coming to me, all right," he

continued. "The laugh is on me. He said he'd prove I was wrong. I am under arrest in this hotel and have to go out to-morrow. He won!"

The lieutenant flung back his head and roared with laughter.

"Yes; he won!" he exclaimed. "But, I say, you're a good loser."

Honest grinned again.

"Nothing left to lose," he said; "you fellows have taken my last automobile."

"In a good cause, my dear fellow. Tea, coffee, whisky?"

"Coffee for mine—thanks! I say, Herr Leutnant, must I stay in this hotel?"

"For your own sake, dear boy," the lieutenant said genially; "you have a free tongue."

"And wouldn't you just up and howl if you were a neutral and all your cars were stolen?"

A hard glint came into the lieutenant's eyes.

"Madame Fargo," he said, "your friend comes, I think, from the free and boundless West, where bluntness is perhaps an exaggerated virtue."

Humbert Honest, scowling, became silent. He sipped, watched and wondered. This was a Midsummer Night's Dream to him, mad, incomprehensible; and his reflections were something like this: A German officer, plumb daffy over a beau-

tiful, speaking Belgian doll, with real hair like his grandmother's, eyes like a Madonna's, and a smile that would warm a polar bear—and she daffy over him in return; an American, in the French Flying Corps, wearing mufti and an assumed name, dropping in for afternoon tea with the enemy; his English wife, with an angel's hair, pep in her starry eyes, punch in her sweet English voice, and the nerve of the devil inside her brilliant skin, drifting in to join her husband in this little innocent talkfest.

Honest was the more bewildered the longer he sat. These were dangerous folk to meddle with; he was glad that he was to be off in the morning. Mrs. Stoneman had fooled him, after all; had turned him inside out, and yet had been absolutely truthful. She had omitted to mention the trifling fact that her American husband was in the French service—that was all: but rather an important item, all things considered. He looked glum reproach; but when he caught her eye he grinned. It was funny after all. She had won too; he had been done all the way round; yes, even about the diamonds. He was not free to get them for the Brazilian.

At the final parting, and he was glad when it came, he looked with meaning at her and said:

"I should have liked another look round the town, another squint at the shell-shocked shebangs." He did not know whether she understood this hint about the diamonds or not. It was not a good time for confidential glances and whispers. "We shall soon meet in Rotterdam," he added.

"I hope so," Peggy answered. "I want to explain a good many things," she murmured, smiling.

"They need it," he answered, flinging out his chin.

They were prompt at the commander's office the next day; a protected party of four, with a German private at the head roughly forcing a way for them through a jostling throng. These were poor Belgians who must struggle for hours and pay five francs for a permit to travel in their own country; and their eyes sullenly followed these two countrywomen in black. Peggy heard muttered words in Flemish, and she saw that Yvonne's downbent face was flushed and that madame's head was even more haughtily erect than usual. One, two hours they waited in the lieutenant's private office while their papers were being prepared without; even influence could not more than halve the usual delay. Perspiring

clerks came and went; bells rung; officers hustled in and out. The passport finally came back with a memorandum in German: "Appears to be in order, but no indorsement showing how Herr Fargo left London for Holland or how he arrived in Belgium."

That was expected—a relief. The false impression of the seal on his photograph, made by hand, minute stroke by stroke, had not been detected. Answer went back: "American journalist. Left London before wife on Home Office permit. Left The Hague before wife in auto, with Dutch notary's declaration and special letter from German Legation. Permit from General Headquarters, Brussels, for Antwerp. Carelessly destroyed all these on arriving at Antwerp, thinking passport in wife's hands sufficient credentials."

Another hour; another memorandum: "Passport detained, pending inquiries."

Now came the critical moment. The busy lieutenant was approached at his littered desk by a suppliant Yvonne.

"Our little lunch is postponed—perhaps forever," she said sadly. "Inquiries will take days."

He read the memoranda.

"Bother!" he said in English. He came over

to Stoneman. "You destroyed papers?" he asked incredulously. "In these times?"

Stoneman laughed.

"I thought I was all right when I got to my passport and my wife," he answered.

The lieutenant turned away. Another half hour passed before he returned.

"I have personally guaranteed you by carriage, railway or canal-boat," he said, laughing.

Three people drew deep breaths, but madame eyed the green papers.

"Where is the fourth?" she asked, with sudden intuition.

"I'm awfully sorry, dear Madame Campion. I can't get one for you. They say the house should not be left with a servant only. Do you mind very much? I have done my best."

"It is an indignity, Otto!" she said proudly.

"If I were only the commander," he replied with humility.

The first tightening of the velvet-gloved hand; she had feared it. What prospect, after this hint, of their getting out of Belgium? She and Yvonne had not been separated since the war opened. She must let Yvonne go; go deep into that enemy-ruled country under conditions justly described as desperate. It was the hardest

moment of an incredible five months. For the first time she could not pretend. Her haughty head was bowed and her voice quavered as she said to Peggy:

"I must trust her to you, my dear."

"I am grieved, dear madame," murmured the lieutenant. "Let me call to-morrow afternoon and cheer you up."

"You are always thoughtful, Otto," madame answered, as though she meant it. "Do come."

As they left, Yvonne murmured:

"Come to Brussels as early as you can, Otto."

Her almost whispered words, her glance, left him in rapture.

Again at his work, he smiled at the success of his audacious manœuvre. He alone, by a hint about an unprotected house to the head of the passport bureau, had held madame in Antwerp. Thus, without a stiff formal request, he secured an appointment with madame at which to present his letter from his mother, and make proposals in the customary conventional way for the hand of Yvonne.

But that was a detail. Yvonne would have only one chaperon at Brussels—a young just-married chaperon, brimming with love—had he not seen how Madame Fargo looked at her hus-

band at the dinner; and, therefore, sympathetic with love and lovers. He would have stolen not minutes but hours alone with Yvonne. He was grinning now. War was wonderful! He—he alone—had held up this domineering old lady who in the past more than once had boxed his ears. He laughed outloud. The haughty Madame Campion, not such a bad sort, but with lots of frills, caged up by him—him alone! He felt a thrill of humorous pride. War was most amusing.

At eleven the next morning Madame Campion kissed Yvonne as though the latter was going for a day in the country, for pleasure. "Tell the comtesse," she whispered; and afterward she waved a cheerful hand to the three people in the carriage. It was perhaps a final parting. At best, no one ever knew in Belgium; but if papers were forged, and all kinds of unavoidable clews left behind, such an expedition could fairly be called a forlorn hope.

"Have you telegraphed for rooms?" Stoneman asked.

The two girls laughed. The notion of Belgians or neutrals telegraphing in Belgium seemed ludicrous. They were eager, excited by hope and danger. Peggy's cheeks were deli-

cately flushed by exhilaration and the frosty air. Yvonne was a ball of fur—coat, muff, cap and ear tippets; and her face was heavily veiled.

"Things seem so easy and natural," Stoneman explained, "that I forgot for a moment."

But now they were in the Chaussée de Berchem and one could no longer forget. Peggy was shocked, absorbed, by the ruin shells had wrought. It was her first glimpse of real war. She had missed its ravages coming down from Esschen, for she had been thinking of Geoffrey. Stoneman watched her covertly. He had become so inured to a world in ruins that he saw, with a soldier's indifference, what made Peggy flame; but her fire kindled him anew. He saw afresh though her eager eyes, not knowing that he had become subtly responsive to her moods or realizing that he was no longer a human machine of unusual perfection.

When an airman knows that he has nerves his fighting career is finished. When an airman, come to earth, starts on a journey of peril, not understanding that his head is in the clouds, he is courting danger. He will need quick thought, a detached mind, a cool, watchful brain. When these have been his in the past, unsummoned and unthought of, how can he know, if an overwhelm-

ing new emotion comes to him, that he may be greatly changed?

Stoneman in any moment of danger had never thought of his mother; he had mechanically pulled the right lever. Would he swiftly, quietly, do the right thing now, when something infinitely more precious than his own life hung on his prompt right action? Would the quick right word come under sharp questioning from a suspicious German officer? Or should he pause to think of the consequence of a mistake to the woman he loved?

These questions never came to Stoneman's mind. He only watched her and wondered at her beauty and her courage, and was vaguely oppressed by the consciousness that he was different, somehow. The main difference was that he was anxious. He had never known anxiety, and he entertained this new visitor unawares.

When they passed the Porte de Malines he identified Forts Three, Four and Five, and told them, with intimate detail, the story of the British Naval Division. Peggy was surprised that he knew more of it than herself, and at the quick certainty with which his trained eye identified places.

"Your brother's brigade," he said, "was over

there, far to the left. Only seventy of the Benbow Brigade ever reported back."

"Seventy-one now—thanks to you, Yvonne!" Peggy said.

"Thanks to himself," Yvonne corrected. "He was sent down to Lierre with a message; and he got through."

"There were British marines at Fort Lierre," Stoneman said.

He told how they fought, with an enthusiasm that fixed Peggy's glowing eyes on him. He ended by saying that Geoffrey, after being wounded, was lucky to have been found and hidden by Belgians. Yvonne would have nothing of luck. Monsieur Geoffrey had been saved, she said, because he saved himself. He was very brave and never gave up. She was a little indignant. Peggy peered curiously into the veiled face, but could see nothing.

They passed several graves in a field by a dune.

"German," Yvonne said bitterly. "So neat, aren't they, with their prim little crosses? But see Belgian graves now; tumbled, heaped anyhow. It is Belgian land and those dead are at home; but only their poor caps on a stick, like a scarecrow, mark them! A cap has fallen there. And see—a civilian hat. The brim gapes al-

ready. They would not let me go to Jaques' grave at Liège." Her voice trailed to a whisper; Peggy clasped her hand.

They went on in silence amid a green and peaceful country. It was green from tiny heads of winter rye; it was peaceful, for the reason that no human beings or horses or cattle were on the land. Women and old men passed. They glanced, but dropped their eyes too soon to see Peggy's waving hand.

She took her American flag from her pocket. Stoneman raised his hat slightly, quite simply, as he saw it. She liked that. She felt that she had a right to display the flag now; it was protecting one who owed it allegiance. Her heart warmed to it as she saw that passers-by stopped and smiled and nodded. She glanced across to meet eyes fixed on hers with an intensity that seemed odd to her; but she thought she understood when he said quietly that he loved to see her with the flag in her hand. She should look at him in the same way, she thought, if he held a Union Jack.

After Contich, pale green fields gave place to desolation, for the crops had been reaped by shells and all the land was mud. There were many ice-covered pools where missiles had burst,

and most of the trees were smashed or gashed. All the houses were battered ruins; but now and again, from beneath a tumbled heap of bricks, an old woman or a child would come out. Somehow, somewhere in these wrecked homes people were living. A chimney lifted its high, unscathed head from the ruins of the Antwerp waterworks.

Stoneman eyed it with a peculiar interest, but he said nothing. He was almost sure he had marked it from the air in that swirling gale which had driven his machine toward Antwerp. They crossed the Nethe by a military bridge built on the ruins of the war-shattered one. Yvonne pressed Peggy's hand.

"Monsieur Geoffrey crossed this river," she murmured. "Lierre is up that way."

Their papers were, for the first time, examined here. Stoneman gave the private a copy of the *Tageblatt* and a Dutch cigar, and was eagerly thanked. They passed a shapeless mass of tumbled earth and steel and concrete—what was left of Waelhem Fort. Near Malines they saw the first occupied country house. Its windows were unshuttered, its garden cared for, its shrubs wrapped in coverings against frost.

"The Château de Belleville," Yvonne said.

"Madame has a German son-in-law of importance and is protected. It is a station on the underground road. She hides them over the day, and—Ah, there she is!"

A shapeless bundle, bending over a frozen flower plot, lifted itself as the carriage stopped. The girl called out. Madame pushed back her cowl-like head covering and came to them.

"It is I—Yvonne."

The eyes in the dark, brooding face grew brighter. Yvonne lifted her veil. They looked at each other for a long instant, and then Yvonne presented her friends.

"The American flag," madame said, "is next to the Belgian in my heart."

"I have a basket for you," Yvonne said. "And auntie sends her love."

"Both are welcome. I have twelve to feed today."

"Let me take it in," Stoneman offered.

"No, monsieur—thanks!" Madame looked this way and that. "It is well that you go on before any German automobile passes."

"It is good-bye," Yvonne announced. "We hope to get out next week."

"Have you passes?" asked madame, startled.

"We think we see a way."

"You have done much, borne much, for Belgium, Yvonne. To my friends of the outside world tell that I say, every day: *Le Roi et Victoire!* . . . Go! quick! A car comes."

She held up her hand. Peggy felt that it was hard, calloused, chapped. She bent over and kissed it; and so did Yvonne. They looked back as they drove away. Madame La Comtesse de Belleville, once an imperious and elegant patrician, patrician still, was staggering with the heavy basket along the drive up to the house. Yvonne told of the killing of her two sons; of her refusal to receive a daughter who declined to leave the German court; of her unending labors; of the surrender of most of her fortune. "And in July," Yvonne ended by saying, "they said that she was as haughty and iron-hearted as Auntie Maria."

Yvonne laughed in a swiftly changing mood.

"You are fortunate," she exclaimed, with a droll look, "that you did not know them then! The underground? The men collect at the château from the south and west. They steal in one by one. Then they are led in little parties of ten or twelve toward the north, toward Ghere, and they spend the night there; and another near Rethy."

Stoneman, greatly interested, took out the map he had brought from the house.

"Careful, Monsieur Monty!" Yvonne cautioned. "Neutrals must not seem too curious."

They were nearing Malines now and more autos were passing or overtaking them. The airman held the map low and followed carefully her account of the underground route to freedom.

"It is hard to cross the railway," Yvonne said. "It is heavily guarded and some are caught there. Then there is the wood, and the charcoal-burner beyond there." She pointed to the spot on the map. "He watches and hides them as they come. Then, when the night is dark they steal to the wire of death. Perhaps the sentry is paid. It is a fortune to him. He wants to be paid. All do.

"They count heads literally—in the dark sometimes—that he may get all his due; twenty francs for each one. But sometimes there are patrols and officers; then it is a rush, and perhaps a flash like lightning and a man killed, and a bell set ringing. But if all goes well it is a human trestle, Monsieur Monty. Men bend as at leapfrog and boards are stretched from back to back, and other boards pushed out over the barbed wire. Then they cross as over a pond, but the

boards sway and bend, and sometimes one falls; and perhaps they must leave him—on his bed of barbed wire. Or perhaps they must tunnel and burrow beneath. That is the way, monsieur, free Belgians must leave their own country now."

They were stopped by a sentry and again produced their passes; and a civilian collected a toll of a franc. He explained that the toll had been established by the burgomaster of Mechlin—he must not say Malines now, the Germans had so ordered—for the aid of the town; but the Germans were not asked to pay.

Stoneman gave a hundred francs, and Peggy smiled approval. She was pleased at the readiness with which the airman spent her money. They clattered over cobbled streets, past shrapnel-marked houses, houses with fronts torn out, homes without windows, buildings without cornices; past the beautiful cathedral, with intact front but shell-pierced in its transept and roof; past the mediæval town hall, now a public kitchen where a long queue stood holding jugs for soup; past an ecclesiastic of pallid, ascetic face.

"Son Eminence," Yvonne murmured. Peggy turned to look again at Cardinal Mercier.

The lunch at the inn was perfect. The tablecloth was spotless, the table well appointed; the

menu included soup, cutlets, roast beef, dessert and coffee. The sabots of Belgian girls clattered on the stones of the courtyard, and they chattered and sang at their washing. The elaborate printed wine list excited curiosity. Fifty wines and vintages were named, but each name was lightly scratched through with a pen. The landlady shrugged.

"It shows what the Germans left in the cellar," she explained.

After Malines, traffic each way was a steady stream. The stone-flagged middle was tacitly left to swift automobiles, all filled with German officers. A spring cart behind the carriage, drawn by a fine Flemish mare, drew out of the slow procession on to the pave. An officer in a passing motor stood up and lashed the driver in the face with a long whip. Peggy jumped up with a cry.

"Sit down!" Stoneman ordered sternly.

She obeyed instantly. She turned and saw blood running down the driver's face. He was staring straight ahead and continued to puff at his pipe.

"He dare not protest," she breathed, "even by wiping the blood from his face! I am sorry,"

she added. "I forgot. I should not have jumped up."

"They did not notice," Stoneman assured her.

Yvonne began to talk quietly about the underground road again. The charcoal-burner's wife had been on her brother's estate, she said. Once, when she had been in Turnhout to collect Mechlin laces, which the Germans had promised might be sold in the United States for the benefit of the Belgian poor, Marie Koort had come to see her and told her all about their perilous patriotic labors. The couple had themselves got over six hundred young men across the border—"all going to their king on the Yser, by way of England, to join his army."

It was quite dark now, and the coachman stopped and lighted the carriage lamps. They were in Vilvorde, and street cars from Brussels were coming and going, and the flare of the capital shone in the sky. A long silence followed as they unconsciously braced themselves for new encounters and prepared to evade new difficulties. Yvonne thought of the day in May when she had come to the merry city and danced all night in the ballroom in the great mansion of the Comtesse de Belleville—five dances with Otto, and how she had enjoyed them; and her aunt had

rebuked him austerely for stealing her away for a few minutes; and Jaques—how he had flirted with Hedvig von Hohlen that night!

Now Jaques was dead, and Hedvig's father had commanded a German battalion at Liège when Jaques had given up his life, and her aunt had been refused permission to come home to her own city. Yvonne lingered on the past that she might not think of to-morrow. For months she had been so perfectly trained in a cruel school, that she came from her reverie without a start, with a smile, as Peggy spoke.

"I asked too much of myself," Peggy said. "I have not behaved well to-day. I am sorry. I shall do better after this."

"A whiplash in the face," Yvonne said, with one of her sudden bitter flashes, "is so slight a thing that a Belgian thinks it a compliment. You said you would smile and laugh and talk. I thank you that you did not. Now that you have seen a little—— Now you must laugh with our conquerors."

They were crossing a square now, brilliantly lighted, thronged.

"Did you hear that?" Yvonne cried. "They laugh, themselves—the Bruxellois. They have never been under fire, so they hold their heads

higher than in Antwerp. Watch them as they look through the German soldiers. They do not see them. It is as though the conquerors in grey were not here; grey ghosts who wind their way among my people unseen, unheard. That group laughs; you hear it? Poor Monsieur Max! He made them laugh too much; and so he goes to a German prison."

They turned into a stately avenue and drew up at their hotel; so bright within, so peaceful, that Peggy wondered. Not a German in sight; not one in the hotel, the porter said—"frozen out," he explained in English, having been a bellhop in New York. Some officers had once come, he said; but no one spoke in the whole dining-room when they were there.

Stoneman lingered in the rear, silent, confident in the tact of these two girls. He heard Yvonne explain that they should return with four children on Monday or Tuesday; that they should take rooms for all now to save trouble. The rooms should be inexpensive and high up, and she and Madame Fargo would go there, too, to keep these children in order. Monsieur would wish quiet. Monsieur must not be troubled with a noisy family. Monsieur must be accommodated

in the entresol or on the second floor. And so it was arranged.

An exquisite dinner, with several courses and many entrées; people openly reading the forbidden London *Times;* a four-paged, typewritten, secret local daily paper freely passed about; a dinner party of twelve at one table, from which came unrestrained laughter—South Americans and Spaniards, they thought; an Englishman, too old to be interned, grumbling over his food, just as he had in peacetime; it was bizarre and unreal to Peggy, and distressing to Yvonne.

"Otto must not come here," she said in a low voice. "Terrible things might happen."

Yvonne caught a name.

"Is it Monsieur von Brock, of the Bank?" she asked the waiter.

"Yes, mademoiselle."

With guarded care, she gave Stoneman a message for this Monsieur von Brock. He listened, surprised to learn that Yvonne was concerned with high matters of state and finance.

"I overheard a sentence at the dinner with you; another at tea yesterday," she murmured. "I could piece them together. It is sure."

Later the banker came, summoned by a waiter. He bowed courteously. He was a small,

pale man, and Stoneman thought he looked more normal than any Belgian he had seen. His eyes were calm, his manner almost placid, his jaws firmly locked; he had, in fact, been transformed by daily German browbeatings and insolences into a human machine which mechanically fought on and on, and yielded not a single inch. What the Germans did with the great bank and its accounts and its revenues, they did, but with never a helping hand from him.

"I am a mere messenger, monsieur," Stoneman said; "a friendly neutral. I have no credentials to give. I ask that you do not inquire about me at my legation or elsewhere. I am told that my information is correct. I am asked to give it to you in confidence."

"Proceed, monsieur."

"I am to say that a proclamation will be issued on the twenty-second suspending the bank's right to issue bank-notes."

The banker quietly sat down and ordered coffee for Stoneman and himself, watching Stoneman openly all the time. It was a long time before he spoke, and when he did it was only casually to remark that Belgians read "Quentin Durward" because of the lively descriptions of the burghers of Ghent and Bruges.

The astonished listener murmured politely that he was glad to hear that Sir Walter Scott was familiar to Belgians.

"That book," the banker continued, "led me to others. I read in 'Ivanhoe' that the Normans forced gold from Isaac of York. They were merciful. They drew only his teeth. These Germans pull the teeth; and then they extract the living nerve. . . . Sugar, monsieur? A liqueur? . . . Are you quite sure? This news is vital. I had not expected such violation of our charter. It gives me two business days to prepare, monsieur. . . . I will not ask where it comes from. I will not ask who you are. I trust you, monsieur. I shall act immediately."

He drained his coffee and rose.

"When Belgium is once more free," he said, "the bank will search you out and you shall see that it is not ungrateful."

"A mere messenger, monsieur."

The banker shook his head:

"Perhaps," he said, "you will tell us, then, whom else our king shall honor. Till that day, monsieur—*au revoir.*"

Stoneman sauntered to the single public drawing-room. The South American party had settled to cards. The Englishman sat reading his

newspaper. Belgian ladies, in black, sat silently knitting. They started and bent their heads lower every time the neutrals laughed. The Englishman came over and spoke. He railed at the Germans in his loud voice, as he had complained of his dinner—a tired, lonely, old man, almost senile, who had lived fifty years in Brussels, and could not understand why these "filthy brutes" had closed his club. Was it wise to talk thus? Stoneman asked. The old man answered that he did not care; of course there were spies in the hotel—he had not spotted them definitely; but he suspected one neutral waiter, the ginger-haired fellow who pretended to be a Swiss.

Stoneman thought it prudent to move. In the lounge he found Peggy, with her hat and cloak on. He approached her with eager, open pleasure, which any cynical old observer would have described as unmarital. But Peggy quickly set him in his part.

"I thought you were never coming," she said a little crossly. "Run along and get your coat. I must have a stroll. I'm cramped with that long drive."

As he humbly obeyed he heard her order a *café complet* for monsieur at nine in the morning sharp.

Outside, in the wide dark avenue, where the cold crisp air pleasantly flipped them to deep inhalation, she laughed and cried gaily:

"You may not want the coffee; but I had to pretend some interest in you."

"Any pretence from you," he said, as he thrust his arm through hers, "is better than reality."

"I must think that out," she responded as she set a stiff pace.

"Reality would be indifference," he explained. "I like anything better than that."

Peggy's gaiety had been a sham, but the fast walk and the moment's respite from strain made her spirits bound. The touch of gallantry in his speech amused her.

"Indifference?" she said in her frank, friendly way. "Oh, no; I am too grateful."

"Grateful! For what, please?"

She would not explain that it was because he was one of the right sort. For half hours together during the day she had actually forgotten that the passport said he was her husband. This unbelievable truth had flashed to her after dinner; and she had reflected that she must have seen this thing through even if the man had been the most shameless offender against decency or good taste.

"Everything is unreal here," she said, glancing up and down the dark, almost deserted avenue. "These black-shuttered houses are not empty. There is a man creeping into his own home as if he was a burglar. It's only nine o'clock and it's like London when you're going home from a ball. It's more peaceful than in peacetime. In that hot hotel it's like that too. A great box of lilacs, white and mauve, has come for Yvonne. Could you believe that? Hothouse blooms in this captured city, and florists open!"

"It's weird," Stoneman agreed.

He was buoyant because she was, and because he had her for half an hour all to himself. The high spirits of youth flamed in the two, as it will in intervals between perils. They saw no policeman, no patrol, no German uniform, and only now and again were they compelled to silence by the appearance of some passer-by. They heard always the distant hum of rushing automobiles and now and again the rumbling of a train of heavy motor cars. The only light was that of the moon, which shone sometimes from rifts between high white clouds. It made fantastic sparkling cornices along the tops of houses where icicles hung.

As they turned, after a rushing half mile, Peggy slackened her pace.

"I haven't played the game to-day," she said, with a winning seriousness. She looked a plea for pardon. She felt humble toward this man. As such a feeling was an entire novelty it is not surprising that she did not recognize it. She was humble because she was so grateful. "I've let you down. I shan't fail you again," she added.

He was too eager to assure her that she had been perfect, that he had been in fault; but she would not have it so. She had even depressed Yvonne—unconquerable, staunch Yvonne, who faced a dreadful to-morrow.

"Her only passport is an engagement ring," she said. "She must accept it. Poor Yvonne!" Peggy dropped her head and sighed. The moon came out and she raised her head and looked up into Stoneman's face with vivid interest. "You don't blame her at all, do you?" she asked, a little breathlessly, as though she gave great weight to his answer.

Stoneman, a lover whose first love had flamed in an hour under strange intimacies forced by unique circumstances, and who, as a natural consequence, was passionately ardent in defence of the sanctity of love, held a very definite opinion

about Yvonne, which he felt to be too shameless to admit, even to himself. Surprised by the question and perturbed by an earnestness that seemed to demand utter frankness, he parried lamely:

"Could I criticize?" he asked; "I, who owe so much to her?"

She looked away, as though disappointed; then, hesitating a little, she said:

"Yes; you could—for her sake."

"For her sake?" he repeated; but she did not explain.

"She may get a passport," she said, "if she is engaged to him—if there is that much of a tie. The trousseau, you see, cannot be bought in Belgium, and so on. But if she does not get the passport she must marry him—or, else, a German prison. You see that, don't you?"

"Yes; I see," he admitted. "But why should we——"

"Please!" she interrupted, pleading. "I have a reason. If you had a sister, which would you have her choose?"

"My sister," he answered, "would never put herself in the position to have to make such a choice. . . . And you would not. You know you would not."

She stopped. They stood in the silent street.

"You evade," she said in a lowered but level voice. "And you do not know whether I would or not. If anybody had told me a week ago that I should be travelling in Belgium as your wife I should have thought it a deadly insult. Yet I find it easy—thanks to you."

He looked down into her moonlit eyes, which met his unflinchingly.

"You had no choice," he said quietly. "I forced myself on you. And it isn't the same thing, anyhow. You are deceiving the enemy. She is duping a man."

"An enemy."

"One enemy—that's the point. But God forgive me for censuring her. Peggy, please stop it!"

He caught her arm and she walked with him. Though they had arranged for it, it was the first time he had called her Peggy when they were alone. Neither thought of it.

"She was forced to it," she said. "She had an instant to choose. She saved her dead father's friend from prison by welcoming the lieutenant as a friend. The inevitable followed—more fellow-country people to help; more things to do for her king and her country. Geoffrey, a

stranger, not even a Belgian, to be nursed at great risk, and rescued. You and I, strangers."

"I know," he broke in; "but please——"

"I must go on!" she cried. "You must change. Not in being silent; not covering it up. In your heart, your brain, through and through, you must feel that she is splendid—a real heroine. Her best—she has given that, with never a word or thought of sacrifice."

Intense feeling was in the restrained voice. Her face was pale and her eyes were pleading. Stoneman firmly held in check emotion responsive to hers.

"I'll always owe her gratitude," he said.

"Gratitude!" she echoed contemptuously. "What I'm asking is justice. She is strong and true. She has never wavered in the higher loyalty; never faltered in the nobler duty."

He was thrilled by the passion in her voice.

"I'm sorry for her," he answered. "I own up. I'm sorry for him too."

"Sorry for him?" A fine scorn rang in her voice. "His delicate little attentions—his fine courtesy—his wine of Louvain—his little German dog——"

"He loves her."

"She does not love him."

"He trusts her."

"She has a higher trust—her country."

"What will he think of woman—of all women—when he finds out?"

"We already know what Germans think of women!"

Her tense voice vibrated. She wished to draw away from his arm, but he held her close. That answer silenced him. They were close to the hotel now.

"Do you mind turning back?" she asked, with a sudden change of manner. She was very gentle and appealing now. "I'll tell you in a minute," she said, "why I persist. It seems very horrid of me, of course; but it isn't, really. Leave her out of it for a minute, and please—please be quite straight. If you loved a girl, and you knew that she had let a German propose, and perhaps put his arms round her, and perhaps kiss her, and she hadn't tried to strike him dead; and you knew why she hadn't, and all the wonderful things she did for her country—— Well, what would you do?" She stopped, breathless; but he did not speak.

He looked into her upturned face and her eyes dragged from him the reluctant truth.

"I should always wonder," he said slowly,

"whether so wonderful an actress was acting with me."

"Oh!" she said, and her exclamation was a little stifled wail. "I never thought of that. You mean you wouldn't believe in her?"

"How could I? She had been a traitor to love."

She nodded.

"Thank you for your frankness," she said. "You would stop loving her. She would be repugnant to you. You wouldn't believe in her. She would lose you in the end—the last sacrifice for her flag and her land."

Her note was sad, not sarcastic. Stoneman looked sidewise at her and thought of her in Yvonne's place, as, of course, he had all through the conversation. Dark anxiety pressed.

"If you have to choose," he commanded in a voice suddenly sharp, "choose prison."

"Oh, of course!" She tried to cover the slip. "Yvonne had no chance to choose," she began.

"Yvonne's way and your way will always be different," he interrupted again.

"Her way must lead to Geoffrey," she said quietly. "Yes; that's what it's all about. That's why I've worried you. You would think as he would. She cares a lot for him. I suspected it.

To-night her locket dropped. Out came his identification tag. That settles it."

"God!" he cried, staring at Peggy. "How can she ogle this German to-morrow?"

Peggy stopped again and faced him once more; and she answered, in a choked voice:

"If it was only herself I do not think she would; but it's her aunt and Clothilde; and it's you and it's me. We must shelter her as much as we can to-morrow. We go to the Café de la Monnaie to lunch. Then, St. Gudule's——"

"To church?"

"There's no service on then. She chooses it. She will not be alone with him."

They retraced their steps. Near the door she said:

"Let Yvonne tell her own story to Geoffrey."

"Oh, that—of course!"

She paused at the entrance and looked at him wistfully.

"I'm trying so hard to be fair," she murmured; "to be fair to both—to her and to my brother. Good night."

IX

Inside the great Cathedral Church of St. Gudule, Stoneman stood breathing the incense-laden air and peering through twilight that would have been darkness but for many candles flickering before many altars like twinkling stars. Before some of these altars he saw German privates and Belgian peasants touching shoulders as they stood with their eyes fixed in religious awe. He found at last what he had come to see—the one Belgian flag permitted in the conquered land. He lifted his arm in a guarded salute. Two dim figures stood before the shrine over which the flag hung and he was almost certain one was that of the young German officer. He knew now why Yvonne had come to the cathedral. He stole out silently, feeling like one who had committed sacrilege.

Outside, in the bright daylight, he stood absorbed. This girl whom he had dared to criticize had led her lover to the shadow of her country's flag. It could no longer protect; but it could fortify, could justify, could almost sanctify her

hard choice between two loyalties. He dismissed this thought. There was no second choice for a Belgian. All obligations were swept away in the national ruin except one: Duty to flag and to country—that was the only thing. He was ashamed he had told Peggy that Yvonne was a traitor to love. Inevitably his absorbed thought turned to Peggy. What if she were the one inside? What if her safety and his, and that of others, hung on her pretended acceptance of a German's love?

He woke with a start to the consciousness that he was looking straight into Peggy's eyes. Confused, he stammered that she had been right not to go in.

"There they come," Peggy said, eying him aslant as they walked on together. "They will follow. Yvonne and I have arranged our route."

He nodded, though he did not hear. He was profoundly troubled. How long had he been staring at her? A long time; for the other couple had had time to go down the nave and come out by the other door. What had his unguarded eyes told her?

They passed down the Place de la Monnaie, skirting the crowd, which was reading proclamations in the windows of the general post office.

The rays of the setting sun glittered on the bayonets of the German sentries who stood at the entrance. In the Grand Place a German band was playing in front of the Hôtel de Ville. In this heart of Brussels, with its old Brood Huis and its touch of Spain, flocked by silently the once merriest population of all the world, more subdued here always than elsewhere in the city. Streams of people jostled, but no one touched a German, and no one seemed to see a German soldier, of whom there were many.

They came at length to the park. Inside the locked gates a great fir tree had been set up. Little children stared at it with noses pushed through the iron railings. Peggy asked in French whether the Christmas tree was for them. One understood.

"It's for the German soldiers, madame," he said; "and they've stolen our place too." He pointed to the gate and Peggy read the sign: This Park is Reserved for Children.

They walked on. Stoneman was almost sure he had given himself away, staring at Peggy like a moonstruck fool. Her preoccupied silence certainly did not mean that she had read aright, for she had been very quiet as they had walked from the restaurant to the church; yet he thought he

perceived constraint in her manner. Was she thinking only of Yvonne as he ought to be thinking? Was she worrying herself about a cad who had let her know that he loved her? Was she saying to herself that every consideration of honor and chivalry should have hidden this from her at such a time?

He was so troubled that he was unstrung; and yet a difficult hour was coming. No ingenuity had availed to keep the lieutenant out of the hotel. He must come there to "five o'clock"; and, of course, he would announce the engagement, and they must all be merry and bright. At the hotel entrance Peggy spoke.

"I'll wait for them here," she said. "Hadn't you better warn them inside that a German is coming?" She looked at him with engaging candor. "We mustn't sympathize with her—not for an hour, at least. We must carry on."

Stoneman went in, relieved, and sure that she had been worrying about real troubles, not about his absent-minded scrutiny.

Sharp orders and scurryings followed his warning to the hall porter. English papers were tucked away. Tea and coffee cups were left half emptied. Belgian guests fled to their rooms. The old Englishman sauntered to the elevator,

grumbling. The porter himself retreated. When the lieutenant came only Stoneman and a Swiss waiter were in the lounge, and the drawing-room was deserted.

A jolly hour, if one might judge by laughter; a young German officer in the height of spirits; an American couple, voluble, cheerful; a Belgian girl in mourning, a little quiet but smiling and bright-eyed, wearing a great bunch of white and mauve lilac in her belt; congratulations; felicitations—finally all planning a little holiday in Holland. Madame Fargo had kindly invited Yvonne to a week at that glittering little Hôtel des Indes, at The Hague; and it fitted in perfectly, for the Herr Leutnant had received unexpected Christmas leave and was going to Berlin on Thursday.

But there was a capital If. If passports—— The lieutenant said these must be procured in Brussels and he suggested that Herr Fargo should go now with him; and if they were lucky in finding certain officials at their hotels all might be arranged. He smiled at Madame Fargo and almost winked; but she was unexpectedly obtuse and he got no moment alone with Yvonne. He would pay madame out for that, he thought, as he buttoned his overcoat round his slim waist.

The old Englishman, toddling out, made a half circuit about him. The lieutenant called to Herr Fargo that some German soldiers would be billeted in this hotel to teach people manners. He swaggered off, hatching an ingenious plan. He must not be robbed of his sweetheart for three days even by "these rather decent Yankees."

Yvonne and Peggy, alone together, never stopped pretending during those hard hours of suspense. The gate to freedom for Yvonne and her aunt would swing ajar that night; if not that night, not at all. Yet no intimate glance flashed; no confidential word was exchanged. Yvonne went to a hot bath, Peggy for a sharp scamper up and down the avenue—their different ways of carrying on. Peggy reflected for a few minutes over a new anxiety. She had refused some offers of marriage, had evaded others; and the men refused or evaded had looked at her as Roderick Stoneman had looked at her outside the cathedral. This was unexpected, vexatious. It must be stopped.

When she came in, glowing, breathless, she received a faint hint of what it means to be sent to Coventry. She was not cut, for she knew no one; but she was ostentatiously avoided. She got a glimmer of what Yvonne had endured.

She was spared the worst ordeal, for the dining-room was empty when she and Yvonne sat down to a belated dinner.

"They hear distant guns to-night," the Swiss waiter said; "the first in six weeks. Everybody believes the French are coming nearer. They say the Germans have mined all the big buildings, to blow them up; and the officers are packing." That was the way everybody talked in Brussels in December, 1914.

The two men returned at nine and it was a great relief to hear that they had had dinner. The lieutenant was in tearing spirits. How splendid a game war was! How jolly to bend its laws to the needs of love. To lock one chaperon up in Antwerp, to send another off about her business, to commandeer a sweetheart—these were heady triumphs for a love-struck youth.

The passports had been promised, he told them gleefully. A special permit had also been given to Herr and Frau Fargo to return to Antwerp direct from the convent. That would save two days, and they could be in Antwerp for to-morrow's late dinner. . . . Tuesday to photograph the children and get passes. . . . Wednesday, off for The Hague. Splendid, wasn't it, to get to

The Hague two days before Christmas Eve? He beamed on the smiling Peggy.

As for Belgian subjects, their passports could not be arranged in a day or in their absence. He flung a laughing look of triumph at Yvonne. A great piece of luck; Oberst von Schwabe and Frau von Schwabe were returning to Antwerp with him in his auto. A special permit had been obtained for Yvonne. Splendid, wasn't it? Yvonne would go with him now. She must get ready quickly. Madame von Schwabe was waiting at her hotel. An instant of frozen silence; then:

"But this is charming!" from unconquerable Yvonne; she nodded gaily to Peggy and the two rose from the table.

At half-past ten, Peggy, by the auto outside the hotel, was introduced to Frau von Schwabe, while Stoneman tucked Yvonne in the front seat. The auto glided away, with laughter from Yvonne.

"I feel as though I had flung her to the wolves," Stoneman said as they turned down the avenue for a walk.

"The pack will soon be yelping behind their own barbed wire," Peggy encouraged him.

She would not let him see how sorry she was

for Yvonne; how sorry for him, that he must stand by helpless, while conquerors moved him and his party about like pawns. He told her, with hot indignation, of the visits he had made that night on military and civil officials, some swaggering, some blustering, some coldly suspicious or austere, but all amused and pleased to hear of an approaching marriage between a German and a Belgian.

She learned that Yvonne had promised to go on from The Hague to Berlin and, after a day with the lieutenant's people, return to Belgium with the lieutenant by way of Aix-la-Chapelle. His mother and himself would meet Yvonne at the Dutch frontier.

Peggy laughed at the idea of a haughty German lady and a fuming young officer waiting in vain.

"It will be our turn then," she cried. "I'd like to go to the border and gloat. I'd stand just inside the Dutch line and make horrid faces at them. I'd act just like a cantankerous, ill-bred kid, and laugh at a raving mother and a mad son."

Peggy let her indignation effervesce by talking amusing, half-bitter nonsense. When she was no more than simmering over the abduction

of Yvonne she proceeded, with deft twists of the talk, to place blue spectacles over the too-expressive eyes of Roderick Stoneman. She spoke of Jack Daintry. Her voice trailed in melancholy cadences and dropped into confidential murmurs. She did not say that she adored Jack Daintry or that they were engaged; but she might as well have shouted both untruths. She described him with fluttering breaths and analyzed him in quavering superlatives.

She applied her antidote strongly, for Stoneman's gaze had been of startling intensity. She felt, as she went on talking, that she was doing more than nip Roderick Stoneman's sentiment in the bud. Jack Daintry became to her a kind of invisible policeman, taking the place of Yvonne. She saw him always at his post on the morrow, a shadowy but effective shield against further unguarded glances. She was surprised and indignant when Stoneman calmly said that in his country they did not approve of *mariages de convenance.*

"He does not care for you," he explained, "or he never would have let you come here, much less have helped you to it."

"If he had refused," Peggy said haughtily, her head flung back, "we should have been strangers.

But I did not need to say that. He was glad—yes, glad—to do what I wanted. He always would be. He always will be."

Roderick Stoneman knew a great deal about internal-combustion engines and automobiles and aëroplanes, and very little about women. But he was learning very fast. It so chanced that Peggy had pitched on the wrong man. Stoneman, railing to Yvonne about the madman who had helped Peggy come to Belgium, had been told all about Jack Daintry and all about his engagement to another girl. It was easy to see why Peggy had invented a lover, and natural for a lover to draw glowing inferences. Stoneman gravely gave confidence for confidence, invented a girl in California, and closely followed Peggy's methods in talking of her.

He did it so well that Peggy never dreamed that he was no more than following her lead. It could not easily occur to her that this somewhat silent, very earnest and straightforward young American could suddenly develop a subtlety that matched her own; nor could she suppose that his heart was singing or that laughter was deeply hidden as he murmured throbbing sentences about his California sweetheart.

"This is very interesting," Peggy said, a little

dryly. "I thought your only anxiety was about your mother's anxiety."

"There are some things," the sententious Roderick answered, "which one does not speak of until—well, you know—to a sister, you might say, that you think a lot of."

"I'm glad you feel that way about me," Peggy assured him; but there was a lack of earnest conviction in her utterance.

"Oh, from the first," he said, patting her hand with a brotherly touch; "and it grows."

Peggy's vexation grew as she reflected on that long, long look outside the cathedral. He had been staring at California and she had merely happened to be in range. She became almost indignant as he continued to expand about this California girl who rode and shot and fished and lassoed, and yet kept a beautiful complexion and always tidy hair; yellow too.

The parting in the hotel lounge was cool. The elderly Englishman cut Roderick dead and a Belgian lady turned her back on Peggy.

As midnight bells struck, Peggy looked down, from the little balcony outside her window, on white-frosted roofs far below, exquisitely silvered by the rays of the moon; on a shining, brilliant capital, which seemed lightly resting between

pleasures. Entranced, she slightly lifted wide eyes to glittering pinnacles and lustrous domes crowning the fantastic fairy city. Smiling and dreaming fairy dreams it seemed to her, as though waiting for the coming of its king in that merry pageant which it calls *La Joyeuse Entrée.* She stood rapt, as motionless as all she saw.

She became conscious of a vague vibration, featherlight, as though handfuls of soft falling snow faintly jarred the balcony. She held her breath, intently expectant, and knew that some spent, recurrent whisper was dying at her ear. It became a ghostly, far-off tolling, ominous in its measured minutes, menacing in its flat, sullen note. Nature knew no such sinister precision, and she was aware that she had heard the report of a heavy gun, miles away. Though no cloud had spread, it seemed to Peggy that a dark shadow hung over pinnacle and dome and home; and she crept in, chilled.

She slept badly, starting up now and again to listen for that morose, murmured thump of the air; sometimes she heard it and sometimes she only thought she did.

She was called in the early morning by a chambermaid, whose manner was as cold as the coffee and the radiator; and these penalties for

having been pleasant to a German brought on others. Numbed fingers snapped a bootlace and could not quickly fasten buttons; so she was slow in dressing. The result of these discomforts was a bright hour for Roderick Stoneman; for she was so cross that she knew it, guarded against it, and forced cheerfulness on so high a note that she brought brightness to a sky of lead and a dreary, thawing landscape.

Sentries saluted, but did not stop them, as they drove past the suburbs into the garden heart of Belgium, where intensive culture was most intensely practised and where little frames of glass dotted the small rich fields. Man had fought with Nature here through long generations, not to wring a bare subsistence for himself from a reluctant soil, but to tickle the palates of the epicures of Europe with products out of season. Luscious Argenteuil asparagus, grown a month before its time by bent peasants who worked from dawn to sunset, and drawn to market by the wife and the dog, brought two francs a day to its grower and sold for four dollars a portion in London hotels.

At last a sentry stopped them and Stoneman handed out his special pass. He glanced at a new little toy village composed of new little toy

huts, all fronted by new little toy gardens, in some of which grew trim little evergreen shrubs. This prim German order brought a grin; for these toy huts held no toy soldiers. Grim figures in grey lounged in heavy overcoats, or worked, or moved heavily about. There was ludicrous incongruity between this Noah's Ark village and its purposes and dwellers.

Stoneman half rose, rudely, suddenly, to block Peggy's view. He hoped she would not see that great, gashed, round-roofed building beyond. He examined the jagged rent in the roof and the gaping hole in the wall with professional, unenthusiastic eyes. The sun came out in just the right place, and he caught the glint of what seemed scrap iron through the ragged gap in the wall. A good job, thoroughly done; immense luck; but——

"Please! Please!"

She had seen then; and she knew. He was compelled to make way for her and he resumed his seat. She glanced out; then shot him a look from kindled eyes that made him feel as though the Croix de Guerre was being pinned on his breast. But he was only the more depressed, as though it was bestowed without having been earned.

He heard Peggy pour out questions in German; then saw the sentry glance furtively about and bring out a little piece of aluminum tubing as long and a third as thick as a slender finger. For this, at Peggy's command, he handed over twenty marks from what she called the family purse.

A unique experience in all the history of war probably—to achieve something really worth while, something big, that counted, that showed for itself; and then, as a casual, unsuspected traveller, to pass the scene of the achievement with the one woman in the world; and to see her eyes as she looked out; and to hear her voice throbbing, thrilling, as she tells what the sentry has said—a new Zeppelin, the latest model, injured beyond repair. The effect on Roderick was to bring a flat sinking of the spirits.

"Smashing up, destroying," he flamed in sudden anger; "and proud of it! We're like madmen. We snatch axes and break up the furniture of the world. To see it, in cold blood, like this——"

"In cold blood!" Peggy broke in indignantly. "And is that all you see? I see more; lots more. I see a man up there in the air, alone, risking his life, spurts of smoke all about him; calm,

cool, flying straight, shooting straight, hitting; hitting a death machine that but for him might have come over my country, killing my people. . . . Oh, I have no patience with you!"

She scolded him roundly, with a fierce, proud pleasure, glad that he felt just as he did. She was glad, because he was a hero to her, and she knew that she would grovel if his mood were different.

"I've made things all my life," he said. "I'm an engineer; a constructive person. I'm sick, just dead sick, of all the ruin and waste and destruction. Men construct; children, madmen and fools destroy. That roof was cleverly trussed. A real man did that. There are brains, skill, ingenuity, there, and I come along——"

"You are perverse, hopeless!" she interrupted.

She railed at him. She had seen pictures of English babies murdered by machines like that, she told him. The more she railed the more she wanted to kneel and kiss his hand. She was so grateful to him for preventing this that she wanted to kiss it in gratitude.

Her eyes gave the lie to her lips, of course, and her voice was traitor to her tongue. Roderick, intoxicated by love, looked owlishly sober and talked matter-of-fact nonsense. Only thus

could he keep control of himself and of a girl high-keyed to emotion and aflame with patriotic ardor and—yes—with admiration for him.

The country changed almost as though they had crossed a marked line. They came on shell-torn fields, jagged ruins of small houses, and débris of war.

"The Belgian and German Armies fought backward and forward here," he said.

Peggy thrust the little tube into her handbag.

"I have that trophy for Jack," she said.

"I hoped," he answered in his deliberate way, "that you would spare it for California."

"She has the better claim," Peggy said, eying him—she had forgotten the girl in California—and she handed it over. "I should like to write to her and tell her what I have seen."

"I'll give you Jennie's address when we're over the border."

"Jennie! You said Millie——"

"She was christened Millicent Jane," he explained stolidly; and Peggy still believed in the existence of Millicent Jane.

An American girl would have known better; but, then, an American girl similarly placed would have been equally deceived by an Englishman. The Englishman would lie so lamely about

an invented sweetheart that the American girl would think the detached and guarded sentences the difficult efforts of a reticent nature to unbosom its cherished secret. Roderick had told his story with an apparent naïveté and wealth of detail that had instantly carried conviction. It was merely efficiency. He had wished to convince and he had done the best he knew how to achieve this.

Peggy reflected on the letter she should write to Millicent Jane. That girl, even if she was six thousand miles away and neutral, and did not really understand about the war and what war meant, should understand that she was engaged to a real man. Peggy closed her eyes and tried to make a mental picture of this girl on the Pacific Slope. She was very vague about the precise locality of the Slope, but not about the character of the girl; and she felt sorry for Roderick Stoneman and piously hoped that he would be happy with one who, even from his own description, was not worthy of him.

The carriage stopped. She lifted her eyes on open iron gates in a high brick wall.

"The Convent!" she said breathlessly. "Oh, I must tell them who I am. I must show them how splendid I think them. How can I help it?"

She turned appealing, troubled eyes on Roderick after she had stepped out of the carriage. "They will want to know that he is safe too."

"Say what you like to whom you will," answered Roderick; "but get the children out here in just half an hour. It's a long way to Antwerp."

She promised and went in, walking slowly along the side of the quadrangle, watching a ragged man greedily drinking hot soup under a covered archway, a queue of peasant women to whom a lay sister was giving small brown loaves, a line of little children each carrying an empty bowl. The soft wind whistled oddly as she stood on the glassed-in porch and she saw that it played its strange tune through many little round shrapnel holes in the panes. She rang the bell and turned, wondering whether these indomitable women had carried Geoffrey through the darkness out of this door or another. A lay sister opened to her, anxious in the first moment, but smiling when she heard Peggy's errand.

"Les pauvres petites!" she said. "I am so glad for them. Will madame enter?"

She led the way into an austere room, whose white walls were furrowed by a shell which had left great gaps in coming and going and had cut

away the lower half of the picture of the new Pope. Peggy sat looking through a glass door as at a moving picture. Nuns passed to and fro in silent heelless shoes. They were dressed in white and their faces were framed in white coifs, and long black veils drooped over them. She wondered which had nursed Geoffrey and whether she should dare to speak of him. She had been warned by Madame Campion that two German nuns were still in the Convent and that few knew Geoffrey had lain hidden there.

A frail, white-haired nun came, Mère St. Ursule, who explained that the Reverend Mother General was very old and too ill to receive even so welcome a visitor as Madame Fargo. The children—how excited they were! It was well that they were going. Food was getting scarce. But there was soup and a morsel of bread for madame and for monsieur, who had been asked to come in.

She was frankly glad when she heard that her visitors had a lunch basket. There were thirty children to feed, she said, and they must give to the villagers so long as anything was left. Yes, it had been a dreadful time; but they had much reason to thank the good God who had spared them such horrors as Aerschot. Two battles had

been fought about and over them, but the German Staff had made headquarters in the Convent and had protected them from excesses of drunken soldiery; but not so in the village. The serene soft voice suddenly faltered and the faded eyes filled with tears.

"We have not talked about it," the thin lips quavered; "and I find that I cannot——"

Mère St. Ursule's head sank on her breast and the shaking fingers fumbled with her beads.

"You took care of some wounded?" said Peggy cautiously.

"Yes; we had many Belgian wounded when the Germans came," answered the nun. "The Germans said that a shot had been fired from here and the order came to burn the house. Our Mother General pleaded while the officer's pistol was pointed at her breast. She saved the building, but she was forced to promise that she would receive no more Belgian wounded."

"Reverend Mother General," Peggy murmured, "made no promises about English wounded?"

Mère St. Ursule only looked blank.

"Geoffrey is my brother," Peggy ventured.

"Not—not Peggy?"

"Yes, yes!"

"But, oh, I have heard so much of you!"

Peggy caught the hand of the nun and pressed her lips to the fingers, hardened and cracked with manual labor.

"He is safe!" she said, breathlessly. "May I see the cellar, do you think, Mère St. Ursule?"

"But certainly. Be careful what you say in the hall."

Peggy sprang to her feet.

"Ah," Mère St. Ursule said, eying her, "it is splendid to see you! There are no young here any more; heads and shoulders are bowed, and all is age and sorrow. Come!"

They were stopped by a lay sister.

"Monseiur Stoneman is gone," she said. "The coachman says a German private came and took him away to the lieutenant. The lieutenant sent for him."

"Monsieur Stoneman?" repeated Peggy in a choked voice. "Where did you get that name, sister?"

"From the coachman, madame. It is the name the private spoke," she said.

"Was monsieur arrested?" Peggy asked from a dry throat.

The lay sister looked down and then glanced at Mère St. Ursule from troubled, bovine eyes.

"It is nothing," said the nun, obviously hiding anxiety. "A lieutenant is stationed in the village. He wished to look at the passport—that is all. Is it your husband, Madame Fargo?"

"Yes, Reverend Mother. They have made some mistake. Let us go and look at the cellar."

She pretended to look and listen; but neither deceived the other. Peggy was almost certain that the Germans had known all the time and had waited; had pounced suddenly, silently, in this hidden corner of Belgium. She was almost sure she should not see Roderick Stoneman again, and that her own arrest was imminent.

"This," said Mère St. Ursule after they had wound round dark, underground passages, "was the dungeon of Monsieur le Capitaine Geoffrey. It was once a wine cellar, when this was a château. It is dry and warm. His bed was there. Ah, he was fractious sometimes!" The nun held a candle high over her head and it threw shadows down over her, and she looked in the gloom like a sibyl. She peered at Peggy from anxious eyes. "He is safe, you say, my dear?"

"Yes, Mère St. Ursule; in Holland."

"And you helped him?"

"No; we crossed."

"But you came to help him?"

"Yes, Mère St. Ursule."

"I do not understand how you came; but I hope your papers are good papers."

"They are, Mère St. Ursule. If there is any trouble it is not about my brother, and nothing is known about him or the Convent. Be sure of that, please."

"The good Lord will protect the Convent, said the nun, leading the way to the light. "I think only of you. I did not understand that you were married."

"Geoffrey did not know, Mère St. Ursule."

A little girl met them in the hall, not at all shy, but very prim, very sedate, rosy-cheeked, with two swinging pigtails.

"Ah," said Mère St. Ursule, "*la petite* is ready first. And doesn't she look well? It is Ellen Bates."

With calm self-possession, Ellen said "Yes, ma'am" and "No, ma'am" with precise utterance, and frankly studied this lady who had come to take her to England.

"Could she show me the lieutenant's house?" asked Peggy, unable to bear suspense longer. "I will take the passport. It may be wanted."

"But certainly. Go with madame, Ellen."

Outside in the village street the sedate Ellen

became suddenly a bundle of wires. She clung to Peggy's hand, dancing, skipping.

"I'm so excited!" she cried. "Oh, all the girls are just dying of envy—Belgians and all. Look at my sleeves; they hardly cover my wrists, do they? But I can't help growing, can I? And I couldn't get anything from home. I can't get into my jacket at all. You'll be ashamed of me and I'll be cold; but that doesn't matter.

"Oh, it's been such fun playing hide-and-seek in the trenches! The Belgian trenches were most fun. They were better made. They had more time. See; there's a line of them out there, where those little boys are playing marbles. It was funny, wasn't it? The German trenches were full of little frogs, and there isn't one in the Belgian trenches.

"I think it is lovely of you to come for us. I've got a Belgian cap and a cartridge and lots of small cartridge shells; but we found so many things that we stopped collecting. I tried to get a German helmet; but I didn't like to take it off a grave, so I haven't one.

"The nuns wouldn't let us out of the grounds for six weeks. Wasn't it mean of them? The sky would be all red with burning houses and we used to sneak out of bed and watch the glow;

and we couldn't go out the next day to see which cottages had been burned. And we stayed in the cellars for thirteen days when the armies were fighting; but we had hot meals every day. Wasn't it good of the nuns? They cooked in the kitchen while the shells were flying over.

"An English shell fell in the curé's garden; but it didn't explode; and the Germans kicked it; but we English girls hugged and kissed it and sang 'God Save the King!' right under the German colonel's window. He looked out and laughed. He was rather a good sort, that man; and we called him uncle. That was when the Belgians came out of Antwerp on a *sauté*. We did laugh one day. They were bringing the German wounded in and one of the nuns wanted another mattress; and she went to a pile and there was a German soldier, hidden. He said he had a headache; but we all had headaches that day from the noise. We all prayed that day till our mouths were dry.

"A German officer came down while we were praying; and he said: 'That's right! Go on praying.' He looked so frightened; and so did we, I suppose. They wouldn't let us little girls help nurse. Some of the older girls helped, but they wouldn't tell us anything. It was rather horrid

going along the corridors, there was so much blood about. Oh, we did laugh, one day!"

Breathless, little Ellen danced away to a sentry who stood before a cottage that bore no mark of shot or fire. She saluted, with a laugh, and the sentry grinned.

"Headquarters!" little Ellen cried over her shoulder, and darted through the doorway; she came back with the word that the house was empty.

"I do not understand. I do not know." The sentry had no other answers for Peggy's questions.

A little Belgian girl, hardly older than Ellen, wheeling a barrow of manure, spoke only Flemish, and could only point to the north; an old crone did the same; the little boys, playing marbles, stretched thin arms up the road.

The two coachmen, for a second carriage had followed the first to hold the children, had not seen what had become of monsieur. Did they think that monsieur had been arrested?

"A soldier came and took him away," said one.

Three more little Ellens came, pigtailed, prim, out of the Convent gates, sizzling with bottled excitement, hugging small bundles, all dressed in black, all with sleeves too short, two

without cloaks. Behind them came the nuns, half a dozen of them, all smiling, all glad at the escape of the last of the English, some blinking back tears as they kissed chubby faces; all proud of the round red cheeks of the children.

Peggy, despite preoccupations, was struck by the contrasting lean pallor of the nuns. She saw how they had denied themselves that the little ones should know no stint and that the villagers should have a bite. Of what use to them was the two thousand francs in the envelope in her hand?

"For your needy ones, dear Mère St. Ursule," she said, handing over the envelope; "and I brought a basket, too, exclusively for you and for the Reverend Mother. It is left on the sole condition that you keep it for yourselves."

Peggy was sure that unworldly, unselfish eyes gloated for a flashing instant as the coachman brought out a basket the weight of which bent him down. The children sighed happily at the sight of so much food, not knowing that their afternoon meal was thus lost to them.

"Where is monsieur?" Mère St. Ursule whispered.

Peggy pointed toward the north.

"I shall go that road," she said, "and find out."

The children all stood up and waved good-bye as the carriage drove off; and the nuns watched them out of sight.

"How awfully jolly!" said Ellen. "But must we leave Mr. Fargo?"

"I hope not," Peggy answered. "If we can't find out where he's gone we must turn back."

"Oh, that would be horrid!" Ellen said. "You're frightfully pale, Mrs. Fargo."

X

To San Francisco had come, in 1890, a ruined German officer, bringing with him his wife and an infant son. The child had become an orphan in his fifth year and had been taken into the home of a New-England-born lady, who had learned brilliant piano execution at Leipsic. Later he had been sent to a public school in which, at the taxpayers' expense, he had been taught German for one hour each day. In his rich American home his toys had been German, his first reading "Grimm's Fairy Tales" and, later, beautiful German folklore stories, lovely German legends, and dark, mysterious accounts of the doings of German gods and goddesses. At twelve the boy had joined a Turnverein, because the gymnasium had been so well equipped. At fifteen he had belonged to a German target-shooting club, where the discipline had been semi-military, and had played second violin in an amateur German musical organization founded by his American foster-mother.

At twenty-one he had become a naturalized

American citizen. Politically an enthusiastic American, he was emotionally, spiritually and in sentiment a German. He was grateful to his American foster-parents, and to American taxpayers and schools, for having fostered and encouraged his German culture. He often told his German friends over a tall glass of Culmbacher beer, of which he was very fond, that his good luck had been incredible. If things had gone a little differently he might not have known a word of German, or ever recalled that he was of German birth.

At twenty-four his American foster-father had died and left him a few thousand dollars, and he had promptly gone to Germany on a visit, hugging his American passport, proud of his American citizenship, romantically happy in the chance to see the home country of his dreams, and eagerly hoping for a friendly reception from grandparents who had ignored his existence. He had arrived in Hanover in June, 1914, and it was he who had summoned Roderick Stoneman and now walked with him in silence out of the village toward the north.

The German turned suddenly, looked nervously about, and then held out a hand that burned hot in Stoneman's grasp.

"Do you know me?" he demanded.

Stoneman looked at the haggard eyes, at the black pouches beneath, at the twitching mouth. The German broke into a harsh laugh.

"Think of a fat, blue-eyed boy," he said; "an American boy that American schools and American people made into a German—more German than the Germans, because I looked across half the world and saw only the romance and charm and heard only the music of it. They caught me in the glow and ardor of my first visit to the homeland." He repeated the word with a curling lip. "I went faint, Stoneman. The drums beat; the bugles sounded. I jumped at the chance of a commission."

"Tiedermann," said the surprised and relieved Stoneman.

They came to the top of a little hill, and the German looked all about him again and saw that there could be no hidden listeners. He caught Stoneman's arm.

"Look here!" he burst out. "It's good to see a white man. You must help me. You must get me out of this. It's up to you. It's the United States or the firing squad for me. See the senators from California. See the State Department. It may work. I was naturalized in Superior

Court Number One on the twelfth of April, 1911. Stick that date in your brain. I'll give you three months. If your ambassador hasn't got me out by then—March the thirty-first; that's the date—I'm done! I can't herd with barbarians longer than that. My God!" He flung out his hands.

"Of course, Tiedermann; of course! I'll do what I can. I'm not going straight back; but I'll set the wires working as soon as I get into Holland."

They discussed details. Hope sprang up in the heart of the despairing man. He looked at Stoneman from eyes less haunted and said eagerly as they turned:

"We must come in, Stoneman; we must help to save the world. We don't understand. Our country must—before it is too late."

Stoneman agreed most heartily, and listened to impassioned words from an ardent American, who forgot for five minutes that he wore a German uniform. But the sight of two carriages in the distance brought the lieutenant sharply up.

"Your wife?" he asked.

Stoneman nodded.

"I can't meet her, Stoneman. I wouldn't dare to shake hands with her."

"She, too, will want to help you," Stoneman said, trying to soothe him.

The man was staring down the road and the muscles of his jaws were twitching.

"I can never look an American woman in the face again." His voice trailed away.

Stoneman put a steadying hand on his shoulder; but Tiedermann shook it off.

"I told you I went faint," he ran on. "When I came to myself my sword was stuck in my scabbard. I pulled it out, rusty red, moist, oozing still by the hilt—and stuck to the blade was a woman's hair—a long white hair!"

He stopped and looked into Stoneman's face; then turned suddenly and, without even a nod, muttering, walked off into a field path. Five minutes later, little Ellen cried with obvious disappointment:

"Oh, that's him, I suppose!" She was disappointed at so tame an ending of a mystery.

Stoneman came sauntering up, smoking a cigarette.

"Hello, little girls! I'm Uncle Monty. Remember that, all of you. Now can I trust you to ride by yourselves for five miles and not fall out,

and not try to climb up by the driver, and not sing 'Yankee Doodle'?"

"We don't know it, thank you!" said Ellen with dignity.

"Oh, of course not! I beg your pardon."

"But you can trust us," said Ellen. "We have been rather well brought up, you know."

Stoneman laughed and looked at Peggy. Her eyes, against her will, told how anxious she had been.

"Everything is all right," he said quickly.

She bent forward, looking as directly at him as she had on the night he had entered the dining-room at Antwerp. His eyes answered as they had then; and Peggy settled back, sure that he told the truth. She hid a smile at his change of expression when she told Ellen to go with him to the other carriage. She said they could not leave the children by themselves, and that Ellen was sure to interest him. The child was on the ground before Peggy had finished speaking and danced down the road to the other carriage. She snuggled into his fur coat with a murmur of content. He exclaimed at her frozen hands and clasped them.

"It doesn't matter," she said. "It's just living a fairy story and I don't know I'm cold. It's so

splendid to wake up every morning and never know what's going to happen; not like it used to be when everything was just so, and I had bread and butter for breakfast, and then a music lesson—I rather liked my music teacher, if she did rap my knuckles—and then recitations and study and dinner, and a walk, and everything always just the same, till every day seemed like yesterday and I didn't care whether to-morrow ever came, because it was just to-day over again. It's such fun; and two horses in the carriage, too, and a fur coat like a soft bear. She looked round everywhere, and she was frightfully pale; and when she saw you she just leaned back and did like this"—the child drew a deep long breath—"and she put her hands up to her face; and when she took it down she wasn't pale any more; and I think she was very anxious before, but not anxious any more now. But everybody is, of course, most of the time in war. I know all us girls felt it very much. You are her husband, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then why do they call you Mr. Stoneman and not Mr. Fargo?"

"My name is Montague Stoneman Fargo."

"Rather funny—that coachman calling you by

your middle name, isn't it? Mrs. Fargo is very beautiful. Her eyes are luminous."

"They are, Ellen. Where did you get that word?"

"Oh, one of the older girls had a story-book and read me a chapter one day in the cellar when I was off my feed and gave her my soup. She was rather a greedy girl. She wasn't supposed to have a story-book; but she read it on the sly and cried so much that the nuns pitied her a bit. They thought she was frightened by the shells. She was a bit silly, I think; but I loved hearing her read, for she put so much feeling into it. Mrs. Fargo loves you very much, doesn't she?"

"She is what is called reticent, Ellen. Do you know what that means?"

"Oh, yes. I must say she doesn't look it. Nuns are reticent; very reticent, aren't they? Mrs. Fargo doesn't act like a nun, does she? But that's silly of me, isn't it? Because nuns and ladies are different, aren't they? And that's silly, too, because nuns are ladies, aren't they? Most of them. But ladies are not nuns. I get hopelessly mixed up sometimes, because words are so funny and don't mean what I mean; but you understand, don't you, Uncle Monty? I say, you won't mind my asking, will you? But

I simply can't help it. I suppose it was speaking of the soup; but do you know where we are going to get dinner?"

There was such eager effort to repress eagerness in this inquiry that Stoneman quickly explained about the large lunch basket in the other carriage.

"Were there two baskets?" asked Ellen, sitting up.

"No; but the one held a lot. We'll stop now and find out what's in it."

"No, please; I'm not hungry. I was only asking." She nestled back into the soft fur.

"But it's one o'clock."

"I couldn't eat a mouthful," she declared. "They'll stop when they want it."

The front carriage did stop in every village and then went on again after a talk between the drivers and dwellers; but it was not until the fourth pause that Stoneman drove alongside and learned of the disappearance of the lunch basket. There was nothing for it but a dash to Malines and a combined lunch and tea there.

It was at Malines that Peggy was recognized by a German teacher of ten years before, who now appeared as a lieutenant of the *Landwehr,* short, stout, and as absent-minded as ever. Pre-

sented to Herr Fargo, he sent the children into fits of laughter by his congratulations to Frau Fargo on looking so young with such a fine-growing family. He took tea with them, telling of his own granddaughters in Munich, not noticing the stiff civility with which the little girls listened to the tale of a Christmas tree in preparation for German children. After the war, he said, he should come back to England and teach again; and his daughter and her children would come too, for they had lost their father in the war. The little girls looked at one another and Ellen tossed her head. The unfortunate struggle would soon be over, he said; and he hoped that Frau Fargo, "such a brilliant pupil," would give him support and patronage in establishing his connections again.

"She will be in the United States, with me," Stoneman explained calmly, not looking up.

Peggy shot a look at him.

"I am going to visit a lady in California," she said, a little tartly. "She is going to teach me to throw a lasso."

Herr Bolander looked wistfully at the children as they went out to the carriage. To Ellen he said: "You remind me of my little girl." He stooped to kiss her.

"Go away, you German!" she said, shrinking.

He looked pathetically at Peggy.

"But why?" he asked. "War is not for children."

"You Germans have made it so!" flamed Ellen.

As the carriage drove off he muttered to himself that English children were as ill-bred as ever.

Stoneman, exhausted by listening, had Eunice Milsom now, a blue-eyed dormouse who slept inside his arm all the way to Antwerp.

They found Clothilde alone. Madame Campion and Mademoiselle Yvonne, she said, had gone to a dinner party given by Frau von Schwabe in honor of the engagement of mademoiselle. Madame had left word that the Belgian passports were in order and that they were all to leave for Holland on Wednesday morning.

An hour later the children were having a ferocious pillow fight upstairs. Downstairs Peggy was telling Roderick about the diamonds of the Brazilian, hidden beneath the stones of a cellar floor.

"I'll get them," he said. "That's three things to do—passports, diamonds and return a stolen fur coat."

Peggy listened to the noise overhead.

"The children were only the excuse," she said. "I feel now as if they were the important thing." She laughed as the children's happy laughter floated down to them and the little German dog yapped joyously. "It has all been a perfect success," she said.

Roderick nodded and looked at her covertly. It would not be a perfect success for him unless he won something more than freedom.

On Wednesday morning, Leutnant von Schmiedell, dreaming of his Berlin holiday with Yvonne, received a message cancelling his leave. Christmas in Antwerp alone, without Yvonne! He banged his desk with a clenched fist. Leutnant Strobell, passing, saw it. This bitter-tongued brother officer, with a round head and a skin like an old boot, nodded and said:

"I should think so! You are trusting, my innocent youth. I was at the Station Centrale and saw that you opened the cage to all the birds at once. Suppose they don't come back? Is that why you hit the furniture?" His laugh was a sneer.

"Your tongue is always poison."

"Should it be honey for a Yankee who mocks the German?" Strobell asked. "I heard him talk

of the German drumbeat round the world and the wine circling the table in the German way. You—you got red, you were so pleased. I—I got red with just anger. His tongue was in his cheek."

"You blushed? Ah, wonderful!" Von Schmiedell stared at the other's dark skin. Strobell scowled and turned on his heel.

Christmas—Antwerp—no Yvonne! The lieutenant eyed the telephone. He thought of Frau Schwabe's silly little Christmas tree at the hotel; but how if Yvonne was there? He fingered the telephone stand; Yvonne among Germans, where she ought to be, under the wing of a blind, kind chaperon, and her tiresome aunt away off at The Hague; he pulled the stand toward him. Did he dare? Strobell's words—"all the birds at once"—that should be his excuse. He smiled; the commander would know he had no distrust of Yvonne, would understand the little trick, would be amused. He called up the station at Esschen.

Mademoiselle Duberge's passport was cancelled, he said. She was to be treated with high courtesy and told that Leutnant von Schmiedell was coming immediately in his car to bring her back to Frau von Schwabe's care. Yes, the others of the party were free to go. Leutnant

von Schmiedell greatly regretted the incident, but had not been able to prevent it.

He hung up the receiver with a joyous laugh. War was wonderful! How pleased Yvonne would be!—after the first five minutes. She would rather be with him than buy clothes, of course. What a jolly lark!

At Esschen happy Peggy marshalled her excited little flock into the train. She laughed as Madame Campion's hand was pressed firmly on the lips of little Ellen; as Clothilde muzzled Eunice Milsom. She closed the door on them in their crowded compartment and glanced along the shining rails toward freedom and the neutral zone, only a few yards away. She turned, with an exultant smile, and got into the next carriage. Yvonne would come in a minute; it was like Yvonne to linger for a last courteous word with the polite officer in command of the station.

Radiant Peggy thought of Geoffrey and of the meeting that evening. She had seen him last sitting in this very train in which she sat; and she remembered how bitterly she rebelled that she could not turn back. How glad she was now that she had been forced to go on! What great things she had been able to do in those few crowded days! Roderick Stoneman that morn-

ing had told her that she was Moses and Joshua in one; she was leading a people out of bondage and into a promised land. She drew a deep breath and opened her eyes to find him standing by the door, looking at her just as he had looked at her by the Church of St. Gudule. Her eyes dropped under his intense, significant scrutiny. He slammed the door between them.

"Sit still!" he ordered abruptly, but in a whisper. He thrust her handbag and a parcel through the open window. The train began to move. He stepped on the footboard. "Yvonne has been stopped by telephone!" he said hurriedly. "I'll see her through—outside Turnhout—to-night." He got off.

Startled Peggy leaped to the window. The parcel fell and broke, and her feet crunched on scattered diamonds. She saw him, standing, looking toward her. Beyond was Yvonne, and a handkerchief floated from her high upraised hand.

Something flung from the next carriage flew across Peggy's window—a dog's blanket, edged with mauve. She heard the dog yapping cheerily. She heard madame cry: *"Le Roi et Victoire!"* Exultant children's voices shouted: "God save the King!" Peggy sank back in grief too deep for tears.

XI

Behind, on the station platform, Yvonne stood gazing from still, wide eyes toward forbidden freedom. Stoneman came and thrust his arm through hers and walked her fast up and down the long stretch. She was so slight that he almost lifted her in turning, and she began to pant breathlessly, as a tired child might.

"That's good," he encouraged. "Pump blood into your cheeks and rage into your heart. You must be in a white-hot rage, you know, and make him do just what we've planned."

She answered, with a tang in her voice that reassured him:

"Oh, yes; I can be angry. I can be myself—at last."

"Fine!" he answered. "Now I'll wait on the other side, so you can have it out with him alone."

She nodded and released his arm. He looked into her face ere he turned, and she raised her head and smiled. He left her, sure that she would not fail in her part. He hummed a tune as

he crossed the rails—"Over the Border and Far Away." He was happy because Peggy was safe and because there was something, at last, for him to do. He was the alert, cool airman now. He smiled when a sentry, with diagonally crossed rifle, barred his egress from the station. He paced up and down, watching the road for an approaching motor car. Sometimes he looked across at that wonderful fur-clad girl. In the instant in which she had been told she was not to go she had planned that the rest should not know.

"My aunt would stay," she had said; "a useless sacrifice."

This was shining heroism. She was worthy of Peggy. They were a pair, he thought; amazing, splendid!

The auto came at last, and there was no chauffeur. So far, so good. Stoneman met the young lieutenant with a jovial greeting, which was coolly received. He could not leave mademoiselle alone, of course, he explained. He understood that these things must happen in wartime, and one must put up with them.

Now that the lieutenant had come in person he felt that mademoiselle was in safe hands. For himself, all he asked was a lift as far as Antwerp. He could not get a train. He could not

move a foot in any direction, because his wife had the passports. He must get new credentials and leave on the morrow. The auto was a dandy machine and he had enjoyed driving it in Brussels that Sunday evening. He should like to drive it again.

The lieutenant, watching Yvonne from the corner of his eye, said he would be pleased to take Herr Fargo to Antwerp, and hurried across. He was, in fact, relieved when Madame Campion had not remained and glad that he was to have a chauffeur. He rushed to Yvonne, with an eager cry, holding out both his hands. She drew herself up and did not take them.

"It is not my fault, my dear Yvonne," he cried. "I swear it is not. You must not be angry with me. Come! . . . Madame von Schwabe is honored that you go to her."

"No, Otto," she said, with grave decision in her manner. There was a note of finality in her voice that astonished and disconcerted the young officer. Her eyes, always so expressive, said more to him even than her words.

"But you must," he stammered. "Come!"

He thrust his arm through hers. She stood motionless. He glanced about, always self-conscious and fearful of anything like a scene.

"We cannot stand here, squabbling!" he cried. "And I cannot leave you here."

"You can call the guard," she suggested haughtily.

"Yvonne!" he said, starting back.

"You treat me as a prisoner," she said. "Very well; make me one!"

A deep flush reddened his fair skin.

"It is not my fault at all."

"I have been shamed, humiliated," she said, with high dignity. "It does not matter who has done it. It is done. I will not be dragged back to Antwerp by you. I will not have my shame advertised. I shall place myself under the care of the American."

"*Ach!*" he broke in, spluttering in his anger. "That Yankee——"

"He shall take me to the only place I will go," she said. "He shall take me if we have to walk! I shall go to the Convent. That is where I shall go. That is the only place I will go."

She turned to cross the rails. He could do nothing but walk by her side. He saw German privates watching; saw the lieutenant in command looking on. He forced a smile.

"The Convent?" he repeated. "It is a hundred miles away. You are mad, Yvonne!"

"It will hide the indignity that has been inflicted on a Belgian," she said. "On you, too, Otto. My world at Antwerp and your world there shall not see that you are unable to protect me."

He glanced at her, struck by this view. He said haughtily that no one would dare to criticize him. Then the officer commanding at this frontier station came and saluted, and the lieutenant tried to be amiable and calm, and paused for a few words; but Yvonne, all stately dignity in her small, straight, slim body, went outside.

Stoneman sat at the wheel in the car. Her eyes flashed a signal that the plan was going well. When the lieutenant came, a minute later, he could hardly continue to argue within the hearing of "this Yankee."

"I'm sorry, old chap!" he cried. "Mademoiselle Duberges wishes to go to the Convent. She has some matters to arrange at her château. I can't give you a lift."

"But you must go through Antwerp, Herr Leutnant," Stoneman pleaded. "Let me drive you that far."

"No!" Yvonne cried. "We are not going through Antwerp. We are going round. But you shall come, just the same, Monsieur Monty,

if it is convenient. He stayed with me, Otto." She turned to the impatient lieutenant. "He must not be left here. You can take him on to Antwerp afterward."

"Suits me all right—thanks!" Stoneman drawled.

Yvonne was already in the automobile. The lieutenant was helpless, and he was not displeased. He should have three hours with Yvonne all to himself, with no care of driving, and a sympathetic chauffeur who would not look round too often.

"Keep the main road to the southeast," he said. "You can't go wrong."

The car jumped away. So far, perfect! Stoneman, exhilarated, confident, drove as German officers drove. There were no speed limits for them. There were no cars on the roads but theirs and now and again one from which waved an American flag; a flag of mercy carrying its message of help and comfort from the Relief Commission.

Stoneman kept always toward the east, and did this the more boldly when he heard no protests from behind. The lieutenant was too much occupied in appeasing Yvonne to notice direction. He pleaded; he stormed. He got angry;

became cool again. Stoneman could not understand the German words, but from the inflections he thought Yvonne was carrying it off with too high a hand.

They were stopped at Turnhout by a sentinel. The lieutenant spoke harshly; but, with a civilian driver, he was forced to produce his Staff pass. This precious document Stoneman retained, without protest. He placed it in the map pocket in front of him. He went on more confidently. He had not been sure the lieutenant carried any pass, or that it would cover civilians.

He drove slowly now, recalling the map, which he had furtively studied in the carriage when Yvonne had talked of the underground road to freedom. His trained brain identified roads and places. He turned down a rough lane, sure that he was near the charcoal-burner's hut. Stopped here by a patrol, he produced the passport to receive a respectful salute. Farther on he checked as a peasant woman passed. Yvonne asked the way in Flemish.

Stoneman was sure a message had been given. The charcoal-burner would know a party must cross that night, even if there was a moon. He peered through the dusk, marking every object,

so that his return journey might be without hesitation. The lieutenant leaned forward.

"Did you see the aërodrome as you passed, Monday, Herr Fargo?"

"Yes," Stoneman answered.

"One of your fellow-countrymen did it," the lieutenant snapped.

"Ah, you've caught him, then?"

"No; he was drowned, we think, in escaping. We heard it from Berlin to-day. They got it from New York papers—Stoneman, of the French Service; perhaps he is a friend of yours?"

A rasping antagonism barked in the voice. Yvonne had not forgiven him and he had become angry.

"I must go to the château first, to get some things," she broke in. "Please keep to the right at the fork of the road."

Stoneman nodded, as though the request was news to him. The lieutenant heard it gladly. He should have her alone in her own house, for a few minutes at least. She should climb down from her high horse then.

They came to the gate. It hung, broken. They drove up a shattered avenue, avoiding fallen branches. The wide, sloping lawn was frozen mud. A great hole was in the centre

where a shell had burst. They drew up in front of the deserted house, dark and dreary in its shuttered isolation.

"The key," Yvonne said, "is beneath the seat in the summerhouse."

"You leave it there!" the lieutenant exclaimed, surprised, jumping out. "Is that safe?"

"No Belgian would use it," was the quick answer.

The lieutenant, who knew the place well, stalked angrily away with an electric torch. The accent on the Belgian had sharply pointed Yvonne's retort.

"Be careful!" Stoneman whispered.

"It was my home," she said, choking bitterly. "I cannot pretend always. I will not go alone into the house with him. Promise——"

"All right!" he promised, getting out.

"I shall run upstairs," she whispered. "I will put the key on the outside. I will come and ask both of you to move a heavy trunk for me. He must go first into the room. You have only to turn the key. There is no window. The skylight is high. He cannot be seen or heard."

And then the shining torch reappeared. The lieutenant handed it to Yvonne and took one of the automobile lamps.

"We shan't be long," he said to Stoneman.

The door was slammed; but Stoneman's foot had interposed. The lieutenant, not knowing this, sped after Yvonne. He called out to her. The only answer was a vanished light on the stairs.

"A fine old hall, Herr Leutnant," Stoneman said cheerfully.

The lieutenant, who had begun to ascend, swung round with a muttered execration, and the full light of the automobile lamp he carried shone on Stoneman. The latter blinked and looked about with innocent admiration.

The lieutenant put down the light and came toward Stoneman. His chafed vexation at Yvonne's attitude and the Yankee's intrusion had mounted now to an anger beyond control.

"It seems, Herr Fargo," he said in a voice of insupportable arrogance, "that you laugh at a German drumbeat which sounds round the world."

Stoneman threw back his head, grinning.

"I must laugh, Herr Leutnant," he said. "A drum that is not heard is a joke."

"Ach!"

The lieutenant craned his head forward, ludicrously astonished at open defiance from a de-

spised civilian of a despised nation. He could not believe it; it could not have been meant. He did not want to have to kill this fellow, who stood grinning like a fool. He came striding over with his best soldier's gait.

"Yankee humor and Yankee munitions are best kept at home," he said.

"They both explode where Yankees choose," was the quick retort.

The lieutenant's fingers flew to the button of his overcoat. His hand was sharply knocked away. He leaped backward, tugging at his button. His hand was sharply rapped again and again. He abandoned the effort to reach his pistol, so safely buttoned up, and snatched a chair. He got a stinging slap across his cheek from an open palm. That settled the weapons, of course. He was forced to the incredible indignity of defending himself with his fists. He knew nothing of such peasant's weapons and could only rush madly and strike out wildly.

Stoneman had not to wait a minute for his chance. The knock-out blow was precisely delivered. The lieutenant dropped quietly on a great tiger skin and lay without moving.

Yvonne came running down the stairs.

"Soldiers!" she cried.

Stoneman cocked his head sidewise. He heard a measured tramp.

"No—too late!" he cried, as Yvonne ran to close the open front door. He turned the tiger skin over the prostrate figure of the lieutenant. "Hide!" he ordered. "You may get to the Convent."

"No."

"Go!" he commanded sternly. She vanished as an officer appeared at the door.

"Ah, Herr Leutnant!" Stoneman exclaimed, extending a hand.

"You, Stoneman!" Tiedermann greeted. "I heard the automobile. Your passports are all right, of course. You are here by permission."

"Yes, yes; send your men away."

The lieutenant stared; then turned and gave the command. The two privates without marched heavily down the avenue.

"I am taking Mademoiselle Duberges, the owner of this château, across by the underground to-night," Stoneman said. "I have a car and a Staff pass, and we are expected at the border. You must come."

The broken man hesitated.

"We shall never do it," he stammered.

"Nonsense, man! I can't go to the frontier

without an officer in the car. Mademoiselle Duberges and I shall both be shot if you don't come. I am an American citizen. So are you. That settles it."

"That settles it," Tiedermann said; but there was no enthusiasm in his voice.

Stoneman spoke sharply.

"You polluted your sword," he said. "You have a chance to make it bright. You can save a helpless Belgian girl."

"Yes, yes!" Tiedermann straightened.

"You can leave for the night without rousing suspicion?"

"Oh, yes. But I must go and do it properly."

"Go, then; and we'll meet you where we parted Monday. Order your men to come here at nine to-morrow morning and search the house thoroughly. Be sure of this, Tiedermann. The key will be in this door. Be sure!"

"Yes; but why?"

Stoneman knew the chilling terror inspired by a Prussian Staff officer. He dared not explain.

"The house has been entered," he said. "Be sure!"

He shut the door on Tiedermann. Yvonne came again.

"I heard," she breathed. She looked at the rolled-up tiger skin. "Do you need me?"

"If he comes to, yes. I'll call. Go!"

She disappeared again.

He gagged and bound a man just fluttering back to consciousness. The leather bootlaces of the lieutenant and his scented handkerchief furnished the necessary means. Stoneman took the lamp and searched the rooms, deciding finally on the butler's pantry. It had iron-barred, iron-shuttered windows and a strong door, which he could lock on the outside. He dragged the tiger skin, with its burden, here, examined carefully the thongs and the gag, and then looked into the staring, upturned eyes.

"If you had let mademoiselle go on with her aunt," he said quietly, "you would have been spared this. I am Stoneman."

The lids fluttered down and two tears rolled out; tears of shame and humiliation.

"You will be released in the morning," Stoneman promised.

He hunted up a rug and covered the prone, helpless figure of this arrogant spoiled boy; then locked the door behind him. To Yvonne, in the hall, he said:

"He is not hurt. He is safely tied up. I have

left the key in the door. We must wait an hour. Tiedermann will take that time."

"This house will be stripped by to-morrow night," she said. "My mother's letters—— Please don't come; I shall burn them."

She took the lamp and opened a door. He saw her pause on the threshold and fling up her hands; then she went in. He sat in the semi-darkness and smoked cigarettes, watching her as she passed and repassed. He heard the pushing of drawers and the crashing of frail wood as she broke some open; and he caught the smell of burning papers.

With what cool, swift precision she moved about, wasting no moment, calmly accepting the vandal destruction of her home, undismayed by the coming desperate risks of the night! What heroines war had made of these finely bred, delicate Belgian gentlewomen! He went on planning. He had what no other fugitive had ever possessed—an automobile to waste and a German officer to help. Surely these advantages ought to be utilized; and he thought he saw the way.

He lighted a match and looked at his watch. It was time to go. He went to the brilliantly lighted room, but stopped short on the threshold,

staring at a scene of ruin. Half a dozen empty wine bottles stood on a polished table, now burned by cigars and scratched and hacked. Broken glass and chunks of dried clay from heavy boots lay on the delicate carpet, burned here and there by cigars flung down. Fragments of gilded chairs and of porcelain vases were scattered about. On the wall hung the portrait of a regal woman. It had been made a target and was defiled by lumps of now dry clay.

Yvonne, feeding an open porcelain stove with yellowed letters, turned and saw him.

"Yes; they have been here," she said quietly. "They forced that window."

He took out his knife and cut the portrait from the frame, carefully cleansing it.

"Your mother?"

She bent her head and whispered:

"Yes."

"It is too large to take," he said; "but I will hide it somewhere."

"There is no hiding place left in Belgium," she answered.

"We must go," he told her.

"I will follow," she said. He knew she meant to burn the portrait. The only way to save from

German defilement was to destroy. She did not keep him waiting two minutes. "I shall never see this house again," she said as they drove away.

"The war will end some day."

"This house will end to-morrow," was her quiet answer. "He will burn it." And then she bowed her head and was silent.

Tiedermann was waiting, to the American's great relief; there was good reason to fear nerves too broken to face action.

"My sergeant," he said, as he got in by Stoneman's side, "will search the house in the morning. My men suspect nothing." He laughed nervously as the car went on. "It is new to slip secretly out in an automobile that you can hear for ten miles."

"It will be easy because of your uniform," Stoneman answered confidently, turning so that Yvonne might hear. "It is you who must get us past the guard stations. I——"

He stopped short, for he saw a red spot in the direction of the château. He thought of the large oiled and varnished canvas thrust on a blazing fire. How had he come to permit that? How had he failed to foresee so obvious a danger? He hoped Yvonne would not turn. She

sat with bent head and face buried in her turned-up collar. He wondered, as he speeded up, what she would say and do if she knew. He set his teeth grimly and pushed madly ahead. He nudged Tiedermann and jerked a thumb backward.

"If it is the château," he whispered, "it was an accident."

Tiedermann turned and stared at the red spot.

"Château or not, accident or not," he muttered, "it will light the sky north to the frontier and south to the aërodrome. There are autos down there. They will come. Faster! Faster! I do not see it now." A little later he said: "My men are perhaps already there. Will they find clues?"

"Sure!" Stoneman said as the car skidded a quarter circle in turning a corner.

He told in whispered sentences of the cadet of a noble Prussian family, a Staff officer, bound and gagged. When he spoke the name of Von Schmiedell Tiedermann stood up, clinging perilously, and peered toward the south. They came near running down a patrol standing lined across the road; but it broke at sight of the uniform and the men presented arms. So he stood always when they saw lights, and never once was the car

stopped until it came to the barrier at the guard station beneath the railway. Tiedermann, insolently arrogant, ordered the gate opened, and soldiers ran to obey.

"The last! The last!" murmured Stoneman; it had been much easier than he had dared to hope.

"It is all dark back there," muttered Tiedermann, shaken to his seat as the automobile later whirled into the dark, lonely lane.

"We are in a hollow," Stoneman answered. "What now?" he asked of Yvonne.

"The charcoal-burner," she told him, "will be on the watch."

Stoneman drove slowly up what was hardly more than a cart track, and soon the lights fell on a Belgian peasant woman.

"It is Marie Koort!" Yvonne cried.

But the woman vanished in the dark belt of trees.

"It's the German uniform," Yvonne said, getting out and standing silent in the glare.

Stoneman shivered as he thought of this white, fragile girl thrusting her way through tangles of barbed wire. She always looked to the south. He turned. A faint rose color tinged the sky over the distant dark horizon. She did not see

it. She was an absorbed, concentrated listener. Presently she turned and vanished amid the trees.

"Patrols may come, because the noise of the automobile has stopped," Stoneman said.

He got out and pretended to be busy with the engine. Tiedermann said nothing. He stood silent, staring at the south, listening; listening always.

Ten minutes passed. No sounds came. Stoneman switched off the lights and they pushed the car into the shadow of the trees. Kind clouds hung blackly and the darkness was impenetrable. Stoneman shaded the torch and searched the tool box. He found a pair of wire nippers.

Yvonne came so silently that her whispering voice was the first announcement of her presence.

"Five young men are going," she said. "They will creep in front of us and all will cut. They say that I may hardly be scratched. They say that my fur will save me. So you must not worry about me. The charcoal-burner and Marie are going too."

"That," said Stoneman, "is because the automobile leads straight to them. I feared it."

"They were going next week, anyhow," she replied. "He will come last. Koort will hold

up the live wire," she replied. "We must wait two hours. Two sentries, paid to be blind, come on then."

"We cannot wait," Stoneman said. "Where is Koort?"

"Close by. He speaks a little French." She called softly.

"We cannot wait," Stoneman repeated sharply. "We must go now. All of you will go to the edge of the trees a hundred yards west of here. The wires I saw this afternoon run fifty yards to the right of those trees. The lieutenant will go down to the wires openly. He is a German officer. No one but an officer will stop him or question him. It is a quarter of a mile up the lane here to the top of the hill. I shall stand on the step and drive the car to the top. I shall get off there. The car will rush down the hillside. With luck it may go straight. It may even break the live wire. If it swerves or strikes a tree, no matter. It will crash. Every sentry on this side of the lieutenant will run to it. Those on the other side of him will run too. He will stop these. He will turn them sharply back. There will be a clear space for some minutes. There will be time for all to go——"

"Good! Good!" Tiedermann interrupted.

"But you?" Yvonne questioned eagerly.

"I shall run into the shadow of the trees," Stoneman answered. "I shall be there before the last one can have gone beneath the wires. I marked the place this afternoon."

"I will wait for you," Tiedermann promised. "I——"

He stopped short. They heard it, all of them, faint, far distant—the sound of an automobile!

"Where is Marie Koort?" Stoneman asked.

A hard hand, groping, touched his cheek.

"I am here, monsieur," he heard. "Your plan is good."

He tore off his fur coat and thrust it into her hands.

"Put it on," he commanded. "Go quick—all of you! Quick! I will wait five minutes; not longer."

He felt a light pressure on his arm. A hand slipped down into his fingers. It was small and soft, but its grasp was firm.

"It's only forty yards across the wires, Yvonne," he said. "When you're through, run. You will see village lights, I hope. They mean Holland and safety. If Peggy understood, somebody will be there, waiting. Tell her——"

The sound of a shot came from the south; an

answer from the north. The sentries were warned.

"Quick! Quick!" Stoneman ordered.

He pushed the car back into the track, put on the leather chauffeur's coat, which had been folded beneath the cushion, and placed the wire cutter in the pocket. He had a fair chance if there was no guard at the top of the lane, the one place where he could leave the car. If there was a guard, to jump off was to jump to death, probably immediate; at best, delayed only for hours. He listened always, his ear to the north. Faint sounds came; the clink of metal. A minute passed; the sounds did not diminish and he caught the echo of voices. There were men there, then, stationary.

He did not get on the step, but into the seat. He turned about. The southern sky was all a warm pink glow. Shots—warning shots—came. The automobile sounded anew. He was sure it had stopped for a moment at the guard station beneath the railway. It would arrive too late, for its driver would never think of using this cart track.

Stoneman thought of his mother in California. He breathed a farewell and murmured Peggy's name; then he pulled the starting lever. The

car leaped away. He peered ahead as the car rocked over the rough road. He accelerated, bending low, clinging to the wheel.

His lights flared on men lined across his path. They had barely time to scatter as he rushed by at sixty miles an hour and plunged down the hillside.

A blinding flash; a roar; the automobile leaped high in the air, sprang forward many yards, and crashed through wire, to rest, almost without a jar, on the ground.

Stoneman, insulated by the tires, was yet numbed by the shock; but he sneezed violently under acid fumes from burned rubber. The sneeze woke him to alert life. He threw a cushion in front, flung himself on it and cut and twisted in the darkness; then he dived under. Cutting, thrusting, wriggling, he won some yards before German soldiers gathered behind him. Their cries and the tramping of their feet drowned the snick of his cutter and the ripping of his leather coat. Their lights, the small torches of the private soldier, flashed; but the auto shielded and shadowed him.

Two shots were fired. He did not know that the cushion was the target and that it had been knocked end up and fallen as a dead man might.

They began to cut away to the car. Their noise drowned his. He was halfway across.

He heard a loud shout from the west and thought they had found the tunnel beneath the wires. He plunged and bored and snipped. His gloves were ribbons, his coat in rags, his legs and hands cut deeply, his face scratched and bleeding; but he knew nothing of all this. At last his thrust-out arm hit nothing. He was through! He struggled to his feet and staggered toward a light that shone like a beacon half a mile toward the north. He covered some hundreds of yards over the rough ground of No Man's Land, and then, spent utterly, stumbled over the root of a tree and fell heavily.

He lay prone, gasping. His ear, against the earth, was jarred lightly by the footsteps of men. He knew that Germans had crossed and were searching No Man's Land. He raised his head and saw that he was almost within the circle of light thrown by what he was sure were motor lamps. He saw a figure silhouetted, conspicuous, small and slight; and he was sure he was looking at Yvonne. That was good; Yvonne was safe!

He dropped his head as somebody ran past him, checked sharply, and stood outlined black

against the light. A right shoulder was suddenly broadened. A head was bent sidewise. The man was aiming. Stoneman leaped in hot anger. The rifle spit and dropped. Its surprised owner was violently thrust forward into the hands of running Dutch soldiers.

A joyous shout: "By heck, it's him!" Humbert Honest came running to Stoneman.

"Hike! Hike!" said Honest hurriedly. "I'll pick you up later. This is no five-cent affair. All Germany will howl at Holland for your internment."

Stoneman stepped into the darkness, but paused as he heard an astonished cry from Honest.

"Von Schmiedell!" Honest shouted. "He's made Von Schmiedell prisoner! Oh, Kalamazoo!"

Stoneman looked back. The young German and the girl he would have shot stood facing each other in front of the lights.

XII

At the Vieux Doelen, in The Hague, Peggy rose often from her sleepless bed and fed an insatiable stove in the private parlor that adjoined her bedroom. This hourly act was an excuse for moving about and helped her to maintain a pretence of hope. She told herself that the mission on which Humbert Honest had so promptly gone at her request might, after all, not prove fruitless, and that he might turn up with a chilled and starving couple. Sometimes she crossed the sitting-room and listened at the open door to the breathing of the children. They were a heavy but welcome responsibility, and their presence was a great comfort. Otherwise she was alone, for broken and unhappy Madame Campion had gone direct from the station to Belgian friends—to the friends who were sheltering Geoffrey. Peggy had not seen her brother, who it seemed, lest he be interned, was masquerading as the footman of the Van der Weydens.

She scurried through a bath in the early morning, listening always; for Humbert Honest

might come at any moment with his news of failure. She had barely finished dressing when they came and told her that a Belgian woman waited below, with a message.

"Send her up," Peggy ordered.

This Belgian woman came, wearing a heavy cloak, much too large, of dark-stained green. The dried mud of many days blotched its folds and yellowed its frayed edges. Its cumbrous hood shrouded the face, but could not hide those wonderful eyes of Yvonne. She curtsied deeply and spoke in Flemish; and Peggy nodded as though she understood. The door closed behind the hotel servant. Peggy's arms were opened wide. It was she, not Yvonne, who broke down. Proud English reticence could not check the stream of tears before it grew into a flood. That, indeed, was an achievement when hopeless misery was so swiftly transformed into joy.

"He is safe!" were Yvonne's first words. "He is hidden in Rotterdam."

She slipped from her clumsy wraps. Peggy hustled her to the stove, for she was pinched with cold. She told the story of the night in flashes —a piece here, a bit there; quietly, but with animation which proved that she had still reserves of vitality. An underglow of color came to her

cheeks and her eyes grew brighter. She was one of that slender and apparently fragile kind who have inexhaustible stores of nervous force and know no fatigue while need of action lasts. She refused breakfast; it would take too long; she must go to her aunt immediately. No; not even her cloak must be brushed. She must go out of that hotel as she had come in. This astounding Monsieur Stoneman had done such amazing things that Berlin would stop at nothing. There were ways of compelling Holland; there were ways of using Dutch courts—a charge of theft, for instance, against Madame Campion, brought by a German secret agent and supported by perjured German spies; such things had been successfully done.

What chance had a deserting German officer of escaping internment, or a French airman, or an English member of the Naval Division unless they all slipped away swiftly? There was a boat on the morrow, Christmas Eve. Mr. Honest was determined that all should catch it. He? Where was he? In Rotterdam, Yvonne thought. She had been dropped at the Refugee Camp at Rozendaal, with Marie Koort and the charcoal-burner. She had learned of a freight train com-

ing north, had taken Marie Koort's wraps, and had stolen on board.

"I am here," she said; "and now I go."

"You must not!" Peggy protested. "Let me send a message; and you shall have a bath and a rest—and we will get some clothes."

But Yvonne already had put on the mud-covered cloak.

"I must go as I came," Yvonne repeated, with her brilliant smile. "And what about my poor aunt? Should I keep her one minute in anxiety?"

"Geoffrey is there," Peggy said.

Yvonne looked down at her burst shoes, her ragged cloak.

A tap at the door, familiar to Peggy. She ran and opened it. A tall, liveried footman entered.

"Geoff! Geoff!"

Peggy's arms were about his neck, her head against his breast.

He did not speak. His arms did not clasp her. She looked up. He was staring across her shoulder. He was shaking all over. She felt it.

"Geoff," she whispered, "she loves you!"

She turned and went to the children, decisively shutting, almost slamming, the door. She hugged

the children to waking. That was because she felt miserably lonely. Her twin brother—she no longer counted for him.

"Quick! Quick!" she cried, with fierce energy.

She had them all jumping about in an instant. She was caught in a trap. She could not open the door, lest these sharp-eyed girls should learn secrets. She hustled them into their clothes and marshalled them down to breakfast. She ordered for them, then hurried back to find Humbert Honest the sole occupant of her parlor.

She went to him, both hands outstretched, her eyes glowing with the thanks that words could not express. He drew her to the window, laughing. A footman walked down the street, his arm through that of a Belgian peasant girl, the sun glinting on the black enamelled cockade of his shiny tall hat as he bent over her.

"I told him," Honest said, "that he must walk in front of her—that he must keep his place; and that's the way he does it! She was like a princess at a court, Mrs. Fargo." He checked at the name. "I reckon it had better go at that till you're out of the woods," he added, fixing his eyes on her. "When I came bouncing in, mad because she'd beaten me to it and brought you the great news, she drew herself up; and she

said: 'My preserver—Geoffrey!' That was me. 'Monsieur Honest—my fiancé, Monsieur le Capitaine Travers.' Can you beat it? Dressed in Marie Koort's old duds, and him a footman; and yet I felt as though I was being presented at court! And so they're engaged—those two."

"You've given me happy news," Peggy admitted.

"And you didn't know?"

"They didn't, themselves, half an hour ago."

Honest frowned. His enormous eyes loomed larger because of the dark lines underneath.

"She was face to face with Von Schmiedell for one minute last night." He almost whispered it. "On this side—in Holland. I'll never forget it. Neither flinched. And he had just tried to shoot her! In the hotel at Antwerp ——" She looked at him. "It was mighty different then. Oh, it's war, you'll say! But——"

"Drop it!" Peggy ordered. "We've all waked from a horrid dream."

Honest turned as the couple disappeared.

"What does a man know about women? About any woman?" he burst out, eying Peggy.

His jaw was thrust out. But she was still peering out of the window.

"Didn't he—didn't they leave any message?" she asked wistfully.

"You'll see them on the boat," he answered. "I hustled them off. Madame Campion must chase for passports. Oh, it's her busy day, all right!"

Peggy bent her head. It was all as she wished and hoped; and yet she had lost Geoffrey. She did not count any more with this twin brother, who had been her other self all her life; whom she had not seen for long dragging weeks; to whose aid she had flown in the very hour in which she had learned that he was alive. She felt very lonely.

Honest turned so abruptly that he sent a bag spinning from the table. For the second time in twenty-four hours, diamonds, cut and uncut, lay about like pebbles. He stared at Peggy with a kind of awe.

"And you got those too?" he muttered. He dropped to his knees; so did Peggy.

"I forgot them," she murmured penitently. "They've been lying on the table since I came. But who thinks of diamonds now?"

"Tell that to the Brazilian!" he snorted, stretched at full length and lighting matches under the sofa. His voice came muffled. "You

went into Belgium," he continued, "with a suitcase in your hand and a small hope in your heart. You have come out with more loot than a German could snatch—a bag of diamonds, a dog, four children, a Belgian maidservant, a Belgian great lady, a sweetheart for your brother, an American citizen dressed as a German lieutenant, a Prussian officer who will be interned for all the war because he tried to murder a girl—and an airman, an American-French airman; a wonder man!"

He stopped as he made a last intent search of a dark corner, and then sat up and looked at Peggy.

"Yvonne told you?" he asked. "He gave them their chance by heading for hell! But he landed in Holland. A real man!"

"She told me," Peggy breathed softly, her eyes shining. "A real man!"

They finished their search, both creeping on all-fours. Their heads bumped as they rose together. Peggy laughed, but Honest's melancholy eyes checked her moment's mirth. He picked up from a chair the once sumptuous fur coat that Roderick Stoneman had stolen from a Belgian château.

"Yvonne was the thin lamb," he said grimly.

"Her fleece was gently combed in the wire tunnel and she swears she hasn't a scratch." He spread out the coat. "Marie Koort was the fat ewe. Look! Bitten all over by a mad tiger. Looks just like that, doesn't it? But it saved Marie Koort's hide. I'm taking it to the owner. He's a refugee, living in Scheveningen. The Brazilian is there too. Shall I take the diamonds to him?" He chuckled, as an idea came: "The Belgian is hardly likely to take money for his ruined coat," he explained; "but if he does, the Brazilian shall give him a diamond. Oh, I'm the clever merchant!"

But Peggy did not hear. She was looking at the coat.

"And what did Mr. Stoneman wear?" she asked.

Honest looked at her just as he had when he put her on the witness stand about her passport.

"He's cut and scratched and hacked," he flung at her; "but he's bandaged and doctored. Uncomfortable, of course; nothing serious—and mighty glad of the chance. Oh, mighty glad! He knows he did too much. He knows the hue and cry that's coming. He's the hero, all right!"

"Chance! What chance?"

"The stokehole." Honest eyed her. "Beats

a Dutch internment camp all to pieces! He doesn't kick. He doesn't complain."

"No. He must not. He shall not."

"He must and shall. He's in a sailors' boarding house in Rotterdam. He's dressed in greasy overalls and he holds a fireman's permit to ship. His name is John Bunn and he was born in Stepney. He will get a berth to-day, I hope, and sail for New York."

"Cut, scratched, hacked?" Peggy's skin burned as she repeated the words. "And in the stokehole! Oh——"

"What should he do?" Honest asked in a hard voice. "He thinks of his job, doesn't he? He wants to get back to the Front as soon as he can, doesn't he?" He thrust out his jaw and half closed his eyes. "He's a hero, all right!" He forced the words ungraciously.

Peggy, puzzled, a little indignant, hurt that she had received no message from Roderick Stoneman, and anxious about him, was silent.

"Oh, you don't agree?" this strange young man said truculently. "He is a knight of chivalry. He——"

Peggy flushed at what sounded like sarcasm.

"Are you making fun of him?" she demanded indignantly.

"I say," Honest repeated, "he is a hero; a knight."

"Yes——"

"And what else—to you?"

She was so startled that it seemed to her the man thundered these words.

"You are preposterous!" she flamed.

"Never mind me." His mellow, lovely voice roughened. "What about him?"

"You are impertinent!" She drew herself up.

"Yes, yes; if you like. But what is he to you?"

"Impertinence," Peggy answered, with a stately dignity, "has risen to insolence."

"Bounder, cad—anything you like. Say American, and sum it all up. But answer. Remember, I saved him in the end."

She looked cool scorn; but she obeyed.

"Mr. Stoneman and I," she answered slowly, choosing her words, "were flung into closest intimacy. His behavior was perfect. I shall always be grateful. I shall always be his friend —and his wife's."

Honest's eyes were lakes of white. He stared at her.

"His wife's!" he repeated hoarsely. "Is he married?" An immense relief rang in the softened notes of his voice.

"He is going to be. He and I have talked much of his very charming fiancée in California."

Honest frowned, considered, eyed Peggy.

"Suppose he wasn't engaged?" he said, with a startling, fierce earnestness.

Reticent, self-controlled, puzzled Peggy was beaten for a sudden brief instant. Her lids dropped, to her chagrin and wonder; then flashed upward to disclose defiant eyes.

"Don't be absurd, Mr. Honest," she said, with a little laugh. "We have lots of things to arrange."

"You love him!" Humbert Honest announced, with conviction.

She darted a glance so angry that he winced visibly. He changed in an instant.

"I get you," he announced. "The séance is over. Your pardon, Miss Travers. You've put me in the brother class before you gave yourself a chance to grade me in another. All right! I stay put. I'm Humbert the Hustler now. Get a move on. Get to Rotterdam—quick! You can't have your passport viséed here. Get on board the boat to-night. Remember, your passport is a fraud. Slip away before they get too hot on the trail. I'm off. I've my job too. See you on the boat perhaps."

He picked up the diamonds as though they were peanuts and ran out of the room without looking at her again.

Peggy dropped listlessly into a chair; and great weariness came over her and bewildered wonder at the strange ways of American men. Mr. Stoneman was cut and scratched, and very uncomfortable, of course; but if he could shovel coal in the fireroom of a steamer he had strength to pencil a line. He had not even sent a verbal message. And this sentimental comedian with the saucer eyes, this Humbert Honest, had chosen this ridiculous moment to let his absurd eyes tell her that he thought he was in love with her—that is what it all meant, of course—and to force her tired eyelids to drop.

She had dropped them as the easiest way of stopping his fantastic advances; she told herself that. If these two men, to one of whom she owed so much, and the other of whom owed her so much, could only have been Englishmen of the right sort, how happy she should be now! They had spoiled her joy. She sprang to her feet and rushed to her forgotten family.

The crowded day ended at Flushing with a warm-cloaked lot of obstreperous children, restored to intense vigor by an immense dinner.

They had the hotel entirely to themselves, for Peggy had hired an automobile and preceded the train. Madame Campion and Yvonne were thus saved enthusiastic greetings from children, which might have drawn undesirable attention to a party that had strong reasons for unobtrusively slipping away from Dutch soil.

Peggy glanced about the room and thought of her meal there only a short week before. In the few intervening days she had lived more vividly, had experienced more happenings, than in all her life before. She knew she was not the same Peggy, and she thought she was a much kinder and gentler and humbler Peggy; but the one problem still remained unsolved. A smile flickered as she remembered how she speculated about the way to know whether American men were the right sort. Well, meantime she had pretended to be the wife of one and had had sisterhood thrust on her by another; and she knew less about them than ever.

Ellen Bates, with an excited little dog in her arms, gaily thrust aside the gangway sentinel who denied premature access to the boat; and the children were soon packed in their stateroom, with directions to undress. Peggy, alone on

deck, heard fierce squeals and shrieks and laughter, and ran below. She found a petticoated, half-undressed tribe playing a game in the corridor with life-preservers. She joined. It was a great game; and when it was over she kissed and tucked the children in.

Under pretence of play she had taught them how to put on their life-preservers. God grant that there be no need! was the prayer she breathed over each one. She went to the deck and watched the passengers as they came in groups along the dimly lighted gangway. She saw Humbert Honest arrive, but she did not move. She wanted nobody but Geoffrey, and she was awaiting her chance for a long talk with him in some shadowed corner.

Honest wandered forward among the second-class passengers and was hailed from a coil of rope. He seated himself by a man who lay wrapped in an old coat and a blanket. "Fine, Stoneman!" Honest said. "So it came off all right! How are you feeling?"

"Until I got your note, as if I was up to my neck in a beehive. But escape from a fireroom has cured me. Thanks, Honest! You work miracles."

"Easy enough," Honest answered. "Twenty

guldens—no more. I bought a fireman's permit to return to England as a passenger, and his continuous discharge book. Tiedermann?"

"Got a berth on a British ship and is off for New York, Sunday."

"Good! I made the Brazilian happy. Here." He handed over a small parcel. "I'll tell you what that is in a minute. I saw the owner of the coat. The old man cried. It had belonged to his son—killed; he was glad it had been of use to an American. He would not hear of payment. . . . I say, Stoneman, this permit of yours to travel to England is conditional."

"Conditional?"

"Yes. You're up against a tough proposition. It's got to be settled right now. I've seen Miss Travers."

"Yes? You gave her my note?"

"No. Here it is."

Stoneman's head rested on the rope and his dirty cap covered his face. He flipped the cap aside, moving his arm stiffly, and wincing, he stared into the hardly visible face of his companion.

"I didn't know," the latter continued, "whether it said the right thing. It's a very delicate matter, Stoneman; and I'm butting in be-

cause I am an American and so are you, and because we've got to do the right thing by Miss Travers."

"Speak freely."

The astonished Stoneman was slightly sarcastic. But he was very weary and he owed a heavy debt to this man; so the sarcasm was slight.

"I intend to," Honest continued firmly. "Miss Travers says you are engaged to a girl in California."

"She had it on my authority," Stoneman admitted.

"That engagement," Honest announced in low but decisive tones, "must be broken, old man."

The silence that followed was marked only by the sound of waves washing on the sandy beach.

Honest smoked so fast that his cigar glowed like a planet. He gently pressed Stoneman back as the latter gave signs of rising to a sitting posture.

"You're bound to do it, Stoneman," he urged, with melancholy earnestness. "It may be hard for the girl; it may be hard for you; but Miss Travers has the first claim."

Convulsive undulations of the blanket followed. Honest thought a worn and weakened

man was shaking in grief; but his affronted ears caught laughter.

"It's no joke," he commented bitterly. "I wish it was."

"Miss Travers," Stoneman said, "is not worried in the least because war and her courage put her and me on the same passport with the same name. She is not compromised."

"And that's true too," Honest agreed; "but that's not the point. If she wants you, hasn't she earned you?"

"Wants me?" the staggered Stoneman repeated. "Does she want me?"

"She does," Honest said sadly. "I don't know why; but she does. She almost said it in words. You're the lucky man, Stoneman."

"And how," asked the dazed listener, "did you come to talk about me?"

"These are unusual times, Stoneman," was the grave answer. "This had to be settled. She had been doing great stunts with you and for you. I went to her. I asked her straight out. Her lips didn't answer. How could they? You were engaged. But her eyes and her cheeks did. That settled it! No New York for you. I hustled and got you aboard here. It's up to you, Stoneman. You've got to cable to California and cut

that out; and you've got to propose to Miss Travers with such pep and ginger that she will believe you and accept you."

"And if I refuse?" Stoneman demanded, semi-delirious with happiness.

"As an American gentleman you cannot."

"The girl in California?" Stoneman expostulated, dizzy with suppressed laughter.

"There is only one girl in the world."

"If I refuse?" Stoneman persisted.

"You shall never land in England. I'll expose your false name and your bought permit. You'll be taken back to internment."

"But, Honest, I am a combatant; and you are pro-Ally."

"I am pro-Peggy in this; nothing else. She wants you. She must have you."

"Oh, very well!" Stoneman cried. "I agree. I agree to everything."

"Thanks, old man!" was the mournful answer. "And you'll make her happy?" Honest's voice was trembling.

"I'll do my best."

"That little parcel," he said, "is a diamond. I accepted one in your name from a wildly happy Brazilian. It is for an engagement ring."

"Thank you, Honest. When will she be coming over?"

"She is on board. You will hide from her, of course."

"Oh, of course!"

"Make her happy, Stoneman."

Honest turned and walked, with bowed head, along the dark deck. His great renunciation was achieved. His heart was heavy. He was tired out. He tumbled into his stateroom and his bed.

Roderick Stoneman lay, with closed eyes; chuckling sometimes at Honest's ludicrous mistaken intervention in his affairs; serious at moments in high respect for Honest's manly and unselfish course; more serious at others when he pictured Honest's conversation with astonished and, no doubt, indignant Peggy; most serious when he thought of Honest's blunt and convinced report of the state of Peggy's heart. He was just a trifle light-headed; his pulse was feverishly quick, and his throbbing brain ultimately throbbed to a ridiculous recurrent refrain, which sometimes he sang softly:

"And this is the thing I would explain:
There's no such girl as Millicent Jane."

Ellen Bates, too excited for sleep, had dressed and was sneaking, in delicious happiness, about places in which there was no danger of running against Mrs. Fargo. She caught these words, retreated from this unknown songster, and went aft repeating the tuneful pleasing lilt.

In a dark corner of the deck above, Peggy had just nestled close to a liveried footman.

"I'm a beast!" Geoffrey said. "I never said how-do this morning; never kissed you."

But Peggy jumped up. She leaned over and peered down. She could not see the singer; but the words came again—clear, distinct.

"It's tit for tat, Geoff!" she exclaimed. "You forgot me for a girl. Well, there's a man on board——"

He laughed.

"I'm hunting Yvonne!" he called after her.

She hurried below. A startled, mysterious figure fled from before her and disappeared. She wandered about, peering. There might be such a vaudeville song, of course; but the coincidence was most improbable. It must be a message and a summons; for, of course, the disguised fugitive could not come to her. And what was the message? It told more than of his presence on board. Peggy's heart beat faster to the rhythm of the

jingle as she wandered; and at last she came to the lonely bow.

She stood and looked out over the dark water and at the frowning blackness of the outlined Dutch war vessels anchored near. She recalled what Stoneman had said of Millie and of Jennie. She wondered now why she had believed for an instant in this double-named Wonder of the West, with her looped lasso. She smiled as she recalled this burlesque description. Where was he?

She was suddenly shot through with hot indignation. Humbert Honest, first, pressing his clumsy hand on her heart and spying into her soul with his effeminate eyes; and now this fantastic message, wounding to all dignity! These incredible, impossible American men, with their crude methods and manners—— Oh, yes; decent at heart—they meant well; but fancy an English huckster of motor cars daring to speak to her as this man Honest had spoken! Fancy an English flight commander descending to the vulgarity of a music-hall jingle message!

Peggy could not fancy such enormities. Indignation grew. She was astonished that she had meekly flown to this summons. She compared herself with a servant girl who runs to the cor-

ner at the butcher boy's whistle. She had run, eagerly, gladly, without hesitation, a smile on her lips, her heart beating quickly. Why? What difference to her whether there was a Millie or a Jennie, or any other girl?

She listened, her head a little on one side, her mind intently concentrated. It came again—that faint sinister sound which had come as she stood on the high balcony at Brussels. The booming of this far-distant gun did more than recall her to a world of war. It struck at her with a personal menace. Geoffrey was free now and would soon be well; and he must go. And Roderick Stoneman—— She turned, fleeing from her own thought—and saw the outline of a sleeping figure.

She lifted the greasy cap. She could make out a smudged, unshaven face, unrecognizable in the darkness. She lighted a match from her handbag. She uttered a little crooning cry as she saw deep scratches and lines of fatigue cut deeper still.

She sat down on the coil of rope and gently clasped her hands beneath his head. She lifted the head and slid herself beneath it. She twined and twisted until it lay in her lap against the soft fur of her coat. She heard a deep sigh of peace

as it nestled close. She pulled the blanket up and sheltered her arms about him, and smoothed his hot forehead with her cool palm.

A Dutch sailor came once and flashed a lantern; but Peggy gestured him away. The cold clutched her as with a palpable hand; but she would not even shiver, lest she disturb the sleeper.

Six bells struck close by, were repeated elsewhere, and sounded from dark hulls looming near. Stoneman sat up. Her arms clasped him and pressed him back.

"Peggy!" he whispered.

"Yes."

"I love you!"

"Yes; I know. I am happy. Go to sleep." She pressed a hand over his lips.

The great gun sounded its recurrent sombre menace.

She held him close to her breast. She was universal womanhood, sheltering, loving, mothering the fighting man between battles.