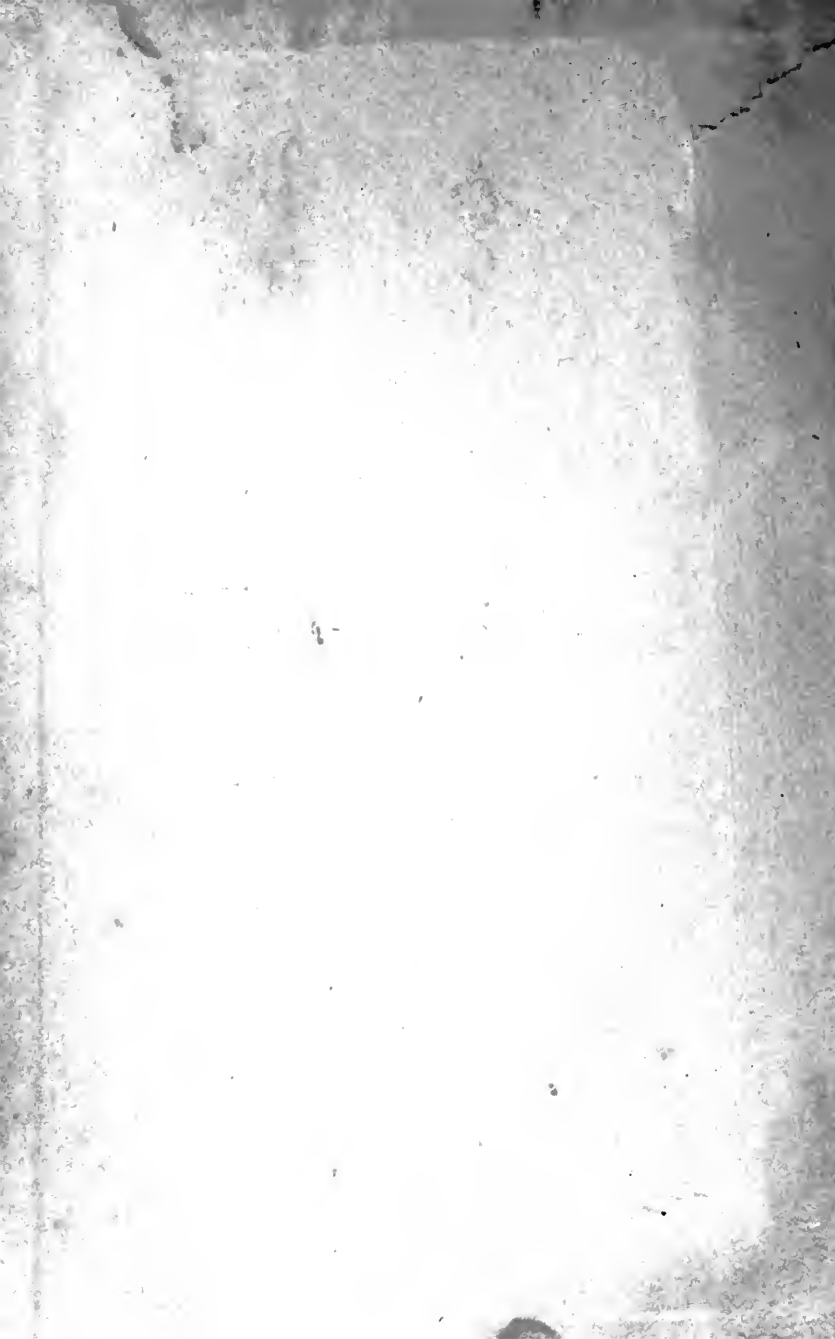


the YELLOW DOVE
GEORGE GIBBS



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THE YELLOW DOVE



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"His blond hair disheveled, his shoulders coatless, Cyril emerged."

THE YELLOW DOVE

BY
GEORGE GIBBS

ILLUSTRATED
BY THE AUTHOR



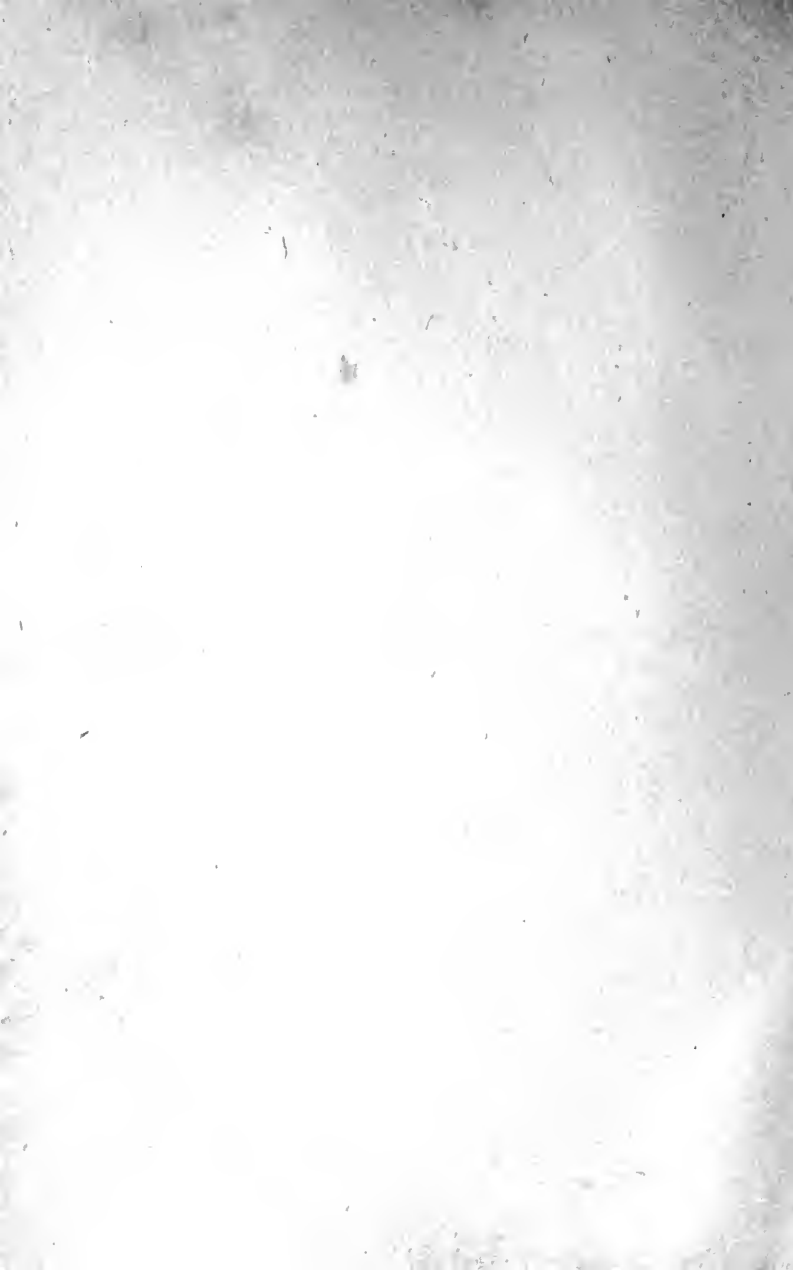
NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

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Printed in the United States of America

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PRELUDE

RIFTS of sullen gray in the dirty veil of vapor beyond the reaches of dunes, where the sea in long lines of white, like the ghostly hosts of lost regiments, clamored along the sand . . .

A souging wind, a shrieking of sea-birds, audible in pauses between the faraway crackle of rifle-fire and the deep reverberations of artillery—familiar music to ears trained by long listening. A shrill scream of flying shrapnel, a distant crash and then a tense hush . . .

Silence—nearly, but not quite. A sound so small as to be almost lost in the echoes of the clamor, an impact upon the air like the tapping of the wings of an insect against one's ear-drum, a persistent staccato note which no other noise could still, borne with curious distinctness upon some aërial current of the fog bank.

And yet this tiny sound had a strange effect upon the desolate scene, for in a moment, as if they had been sown with dragon's teeth, the sand dunes suddenly vomited forth armed men who ran hither and thither, their hands to their ears, peering aloft as though trying to pierce the mystery of the skies.

“The blighter! It's *'im* agayn.”

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"'Im! 'Oo's 'im, I'd like to arsk?"

"Stow yer jaw, cawn't yer 'ear? Ole Yaller-belly, agayn."

The sounds were now clearly audible and to the south a series of rapid detonations shivered the air.

"There goes 'Johnny look in the air.' Cawn't get 'im, though. 'Strewth! 'E's a cool one—'e is!"

A hoarse order rang out from the trenches behind them—and the men ran for cover. The fog lifted a little and a shaft of light touched the leaden gray of the sea like the sheen on a dirty gun-barrel. The nearer high-angle guns were speaking now—fruitlessly, for the sounds seemed to come from directly overhead. The fog lifted again and a shaft of pale sunlight shot across the line of entrenchments.

"There 'e is, not wastin' no time—'e ayn't."

"Yus. But they're arfter 'im. There comes hyvia-shun. O 'ell!"

The expletive in a final tone of disgust for the fog had fallen again, completely obliterating the air-craft and its pursuers.

"'Oo's Yaller-belly?" asked a smooth-faced youth who still wore the sallow of London under his coat of windburn.

"You're one of the new lot, ayn't yer? You'll know b——y soon 'oo Yaller-belly is, won't 'e, Bill? Pow! That's 'im—them sharp ones."

"Garn!" said the one called Bill. "'E never 'its anythink but the dirt an' 'e cawn't 'elp that."

"'Tayn't 'cos 'e don't try. 'Ear 'em? Nice drop-pin's fer a dove, ayn't they?"

"Dove?" said the newcomer.

"Yus. Tubs the swine calls 'em——"

"Tawb, yer blighter."

PRELUDE

"Tub, I says. Whenever troops is movin', 'e's always abaht—jus' drops dahn hinformal-like, out o' nowhere——"

"And cawn't they catch 'im?"

"Catch 'im—? Bly me—not they! A thousand 'orse-power, they say 'e 'as—flies circles round hour hair squad like they was a lot o' bloomink captivatin' balloons."

"But the 'igh-hangles——?"

"Moves too fast—'ere an' gone agayn, afore you can fill yer cutty. They do say 'as 'ow when Yaller-belly comes, there's sure to be big doin's along the front."

"Aye," said Bill. "When we was dahn at Copenhagen——"

"Compayn, gran'pop——"

"Aw! Wot's the hodds? Dahn at Copenhagen, 'e flew abaht same as 'e's doin' now."

Bill paused.

"And what happened?"

"You'll 'ave to arsk Sir John abaht that, me son," finished the other dryly.

"We was drillin' rear-guard actions, wasn't we, Bill?"

"Aye. We was drilled, right, left, an' a bit in the middle." Bill rose and spat down the wind. "Tyke it from me," he finished, with a glance aloft through the mist, "there'll be somethin' happen between 'ere an' Wipers afore the week is hout——"

"Aye—the 'earse, Bill."

"Wot 'earse?" asked the newcomer again.

"The larst time 'e kyme—down Wipers-way. There was a lull in the firin' an' 'tween the lines o' trenches where the dead Dutchies was, comes a 'earse—a real

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'earse with black 'orses, plumes an' all. We thought 'twas some general they'd come to fetch and hup we stands hout o' the trenches, comp'ny after comp'ny, caps off, all respec'ful-like. This 'ere 'earse comes along slow an' mournful, black curt'ins an' all flappin' in the wind an' six of the blighters a-marchin' heads down behind it. They wheels up abreast of our comp'ny near a mound o' earth and stops, an' while we was lookin'—the front side of that there b——y vee-Hicle drops out an' a machine-gun begins slippin' it into us pretty as you please. 'Earse—that's wot it was—a 'earse! an' it jolly well made a funeral out o' B Company."

"Gawd!" said the newcomer. "And Yaller-belly——?"

"I ayn't sayin' nothin' abaht 'im. You wait, that's all."

The sounds of firing rose and fell again. The fog thickened and the last crashes of the high-angle guns echoed out to sea, but the rush of the flying planes continued. Three machines there were by the sound of them, but one grew ever more distinct until the sounds of the three were merged into one. Closer it came, until like the blast of a storm down a mountain-side, a huge shadow fell across the dunes and was gone amid a scattering of futile shots into the fog which might as well have been aimed at the moon.

Bill, the prescient, straightened and peered through the fog toward the flying plane.

"A 'earse," he muttered. "That's wot it was—a 'earse."

CHAPTER I

SHELTERED PEOPLE

LADY Betty Heathcote had a reputation in which she took pride for giving successful dinners in a neighborhood where successful dinners were a rule rather than an exception. Her prescription was simple and consisted solely in compounding her social elements by strenuous mixing. She had a faculty for discovering cubs with incipient manes and saw them safely grown without mishap. At her house in Park Lane, politics, art, literature, and science rubbed elbows. Here pictures had been born, plays had had their real *premières*, novels had been devised, and poems without number, not a few of which were indited to My Lady Betty's eyebrow, here first saw the light of day.

For all her dynamic energy in a variety of causes, most of them wise, all of them altruistic, Lady Betty had the rare faculty of knowing when to be restful. Tired Cabinet ministers, overworked lords of the Admiralty, leaders in all parties, knew that in Park Lane there would be no questions asked which it would not be possible to answer, that there was always an excellent dinner to be had without frills, a lounge in a quiet room, or, indeed, a pair of pyjamas and a bed if necessary.

But since the desperate character of the war with Germany had been driven home into the hearts of the

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people of London, a change had taken place in the complexion of many private entertainments and the same serious air which was to be noted in the mien of well-informed people of all classes upon the street was reflected in the faces of her guests. Her scientists were engrossed with utilitarian problems. Her literary men were sending vivid word-pictures of ruined Rheims and Louvain to their brothers across the Atlantic, and her Cabinet ministers conversed less than usual, addressing themselves with a greater particularity to her roasts or her spare bedrooms. Torn between many duties, as patroness to bazaars, as head of a variety of sewing guilds, as president of the new association for the training and equipment of nurses, Lady Heathcote herself showed signs of the wear and tear of an extraordinary situation, but she managed to meet it squarely by using every ounce of her abundant energy and every faculty of her resourceful mind.

Many secrets were hers, both political and departmental, but she kept them nobly, aware that she lived in parlous times, when an unconsidered word might do a damage irreparable. Agents of the enemy, she knew, had been discovered in every walk of life, and while she lived in London's innermost circle, she knew that even her own house might not have been immune from visitors whose secret motives were open to question. It was, therefore, with the desire to reassure herself as to the unadulterated loyalty of her intimates that she had carefully scrutinized her dinner lists, eliminating all uncertain quantities through whom or by whom the unreserved character of the conversation across her board might in any way be jeopardized. So it was that tonight's dinner-table had something of the complexion of a family party, in which John Riz-

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zio, the bright particular star in London's firmament of Art, was to lend his effulgence. John Rizzio, dean of collectors, whose wonderful house in Berkely Square rivaled the British Museum and the Wallace Collection combined, an Italian by birth, an Englishman by adoption, who because of his public benefactions had been offered a knighthood and had refused it; John Rizzio, who had been an intimate of King Edward, a friend of Cabinet ministers, who knew as much about the inner workings of the Government as majesty itself. Long a member of Lady Heathcote's circle, it had been her custom to give him a dinner on the anniversary of the day of the acquisition of the most famous picture in his collection, "The Conningsby Venus," which had, before the death of the old Earl, been the aim of collectors throughout the world.

As usual the selection of her guests had been left to Rizzio, whose variety of taste in friendships could have been no better shown than in the company which now graced Lady Heathcote's table. The Earl and Countess of Kipshaven, the one artistic, the other literary; their daughter the Honorable Jacqueline Morley; Captain Byfield, a retired cavalry officer now on special duty at the War Office; Lady Joyliffe, who had lost her Earl at Mons, an interesting widow, the bud of whose new affections was already emerging from her weeds; John Sandys, under-secretary for foreign affairs, the object of those affections; Miss Doris Mather, daughter of the American cotton king, who was known for doing unusual things, not the least of which was her recent refusal of the hand of John Rizzio, one of London's catches, and the acceptance of that of the Honorable Cyril Hammersley, the last to be mentioned member of this distinguished company, gentleman

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sportsman and man about town, who as everybody knew would never set the world afire.

No one knew how this miracle had happened, for Doris Mather's brains were above the ordinary; she had a discriminating taste in books and a knowledge of pictures, and just before dinner, upstairs in a burst of confidence she had given her surprised hostess an idea of what a man should be.

"He should be clever, Betty," she sighed, "a worker, a dreamer of great dreams, a firebrand in every good cause, a patriot willing to fight to the last drop of his blood——"

Lady Betty's laughter disconcerted her and she paused.

"And that is why you chose the Honorable Cyril?"

Miss Mather compressed her lips and frowned at her image in the mirror.

"Don't be nasty, Betty. I couldn't marry a man as old as John Rizzio."

Lady Betty only laughed again.

"Forgive me, dear, but it really is most curious. I wouldn't laugh if you hadn't been so careful to describe to me all the virtues that Cyril—hasn't."

Doris powdered the end of her nose thoughtfully.

"I suppose they're all a myth—men like that. They simply don't exist—that's all."

Lady Betty pinned a final jewel on her bodice.

"I'm sure John Rizzio is flattered at your choice. Cyril is an old dear. But to marry! I'd as soon take the automatic chess player. Why are you going to marry Cyril, Doris?" she asked.

A long pause and more powder.

"I'm not sure that I am. I don't even know why I

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thought him possible. I think it's the feeling of the potter for his clay. Something *might* be made of him. He seems so helpless somehow. Men of his sort always are. I'd like to mother him. Besides"—and she flashed around on her hostess brightly—"he does sit a horse like a centaur."

"He's also an excellent shot, a good chauffeur, a tolerable dancer and the best bat in England, all agreeable talents in a gentleman of fashion but—er—hardly——" Lady Betty burst into laughter. "Good Lord, Doris! Cyril a firebrand!"

Doris Mather eyed her hostess reproachfully and moved toward the door into the hallway.

"Come, Betty," she said with some dignity, "are you ready to go down?"

All of which goes to show that matches are not made in Heaven and that the motives of young women in making important decisions are actuated by the most unimportant details. Hammersley's good fortune was still a secret except to Miss Mather's most intimate friends, but the conviction was slowly growing in the mind of the girl that unless Cyril stopped sitting around in tweeds when everybody else was getting into khaki, the engagement would never be announced. As the foreign situation had grown more serious she had seen other men who weighed less than Cyril throw off the boredom of their London habits and go soldiering into France. But the desperate need of his country for able-bodied men had apparently made no impression upon the placid mind of the Honorable Cyril. It was as unruffled as a highland lake in mid-August. He had contributed liberally from his large means to Lady Heathcote's Ambulance Fund, but his manner had become, if anything, more bored than ever.

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Miss Mather entered the drawing-room thoughtfully with the helpless feeling of one who, having made a mistake, pauses between the alternatives of tenacity and recantation. And yet as soon as she saw him a little tremor of pleasure passed over her. In spite of his drooping pose, his vacant stare, his obvious inadequacy she was sure there was something about Cyril Hammersley that made him beyond doubt the most distinguished-looking person in the room—not even excepting Rizzio.

He came over to her at once, the monocle dropping from his eye.

“Aw’fly glad. Jolly good to see you, m’dear. Handsome no end.”

He took her hand and bent over her fingers. Such a broad back he had, such a finely shaped head, such shoulders, such strong hands that were capable of so much but had achieved so little. And were these all that she could have seen in him? Reason told her that it was her mind that demanded a mate. Could it be that she was in love with a beautiful body?

There was something pathetic in the way he looked at her. She felt very sorry for him, but Betty Heathcote’s laughter was still ringing in her ears.

“Thanks, Cyril,” she said coolly. “I’ve wanted to see you—tonight—to tell you that at last I’ve volunteered with the Red Cross.”

Hammersley peered at her blankly and then with a contortion set his eyeglass.

“Red Cross—you! Oh, I say now, Doris, that’s goin’ it rather thick on a chap——”

“It’s true. Father’s fitting out an ambulance corps and has promised to let me go.”

John Rizzio, tall, urbane, dark and cynical, who had

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joined them, heard her last words and broke into a shrug.

"It's the khaki, Hammersley. The women will follow it to the ends of the earth. Broadcloth and tweeds are not the fashion." He ran his arm through Hammersley's. "There's nothing for you and me but to volunteer."

The Honorable Cyril only stared at him blankly.

"Haw!" he said, which, as Lady Betty once expressed it, was half the note of a jackass.

Here the Kipshavens arrived and their hostess signaled the advance upon the dinner-table.

One of the secrets of the success of Lady Heathcote's dinners was the size and shape of her table, which seated no more than ten and was round. Her centerpieces were flat and her candelabra low so that any person at the table could see and converse with anyone else. It was thus possible delicately to remind those who insisted on completely appropriating their dinner partners that private matters could be much more safely discussed in the many corners of the house designed for the purpose. Doris sat between Rizzio and Byfield, Hammersley with Lady Joyliffe just opposite, and when Rizzio announced the American girl's decision to go to France as soon as her training was completed she became the immediate center of interest.

"That's neutrality of the right sort," said Kipshaven heartily. "I wish all of your countrymen felt as you do."

"I think most of them do," replied Doris, smiling slowly, "but you know, you haven't always been nice to us. There have been many times when we felt that as an older brother you treated us

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rather shabbily. I'm heaping coals of fire, you see."

"*Touché!*" said Rizzio, with a laugh.

"I bare my head," said the Earl.

"Ashes to ashes," from Lady Joyliffe.

Kipshaven smiled. "Once in England gray hairs were venerated, even among the frivolous. Now," he sighed, "they are only a reproach. *Peccavi*. Forgive me. I wish I could set the clock back."

"You'd go?" asked Doris.

"Tomorrow," said the old Earl with enthusiasm.

Miss Mather glanced at Hammersley who was enjoying his soup, a purée he liked particularly.

"But isn't there something you could do?"

"Yes. Write, for America—for Italy—for Sweden and Holland—for Spain. It's something, but it isn't enough. My fingers are itching for a sword."

The Honorable Cyril looked up.

"Pen mightier than sword," he quoted vacuously, and went on with his soup.

"You don't really mean that, Hammersley," said Kipshaven amid smiles.

"Well rather," drawled the other. "All silly rot—fightin'. What's the use. Spoiled my boar-shootin' in Hesse-Nassau—no season at Carlsbad—no season anywhere—everything the same—winter—summer——"

"You wouldn't think so if you were in the trenches, my boy," laughed Byfield.

"Beastly happy I'm not," said Hammersley. "Don't mind shootin' pheasant or boar. Bad form—shootin' men—not the sportin' thing, you know—pottin' a bird on the ground—specially Germans."

"*Boches!*" said Lady Betty contemptuously. She was inclined to be intolerant. For her Algy had al-

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ready been mentioned in dispatches. "I don't understand you, Cyril."

Hammersley regarded her gravely while Constance Joyliffe took up his cudgels.

"You forget Cyril's four years at Heidelberg."

"No I don't," said their hostess warmly, "and I could almost believe Cyril had German sympathies."

"I have, you know," said Hammersley calmly, sniffing at the rim of his wineglass.

"This is hardly the time to confess it," said Kips-haven dryly.

Doris sat silent, aware of a deep humiliation which seemed to envelop them both.

Rizzio laughed and produced a clipping from *Punch*. "Hammersley is merely stoically peaceful. Listen." And he read:

"I was playing golf one day when the Germans landed

All our troops had run away and all our ships were stranded

And the thought of England's shame nearly put me off my game."

Amid the laughter the Honorable Cyril straightened.

"Silly stuff, that," he said quite seriously, "to put a fellow off his game." And turning to Lady Joyliffe: "*Punch* a bit brackish lately. What?"

"Cyril, you're insular," from Lady Heathcote.

"No, insulated," said Doris with a flash of the eyes.

Rizzio laughed. "Highly potential but—er—not dangerous. Why should he be? He's your typical Briton—sport-loving, calm and nerveless in the most exacting situations—I was at Lords, you know, when

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Hammersley made that winning run for Marylebone—two minutes to play. Every bowler they put up——”

“It’s hardly a time for bats,” put in Kipshaven dryly. “What we need is fast bowlers—with rifles.”

The object of these remarks sat serenely, smiling blandly around the table, but made no reply. In the pause that followed Sandys was heard in a half whisper to Byfield.

“What’s this I hear of a leak at the War Office?”

Captain Byfield glanced down the table. “Have you heard that?”

“Yes. At the club.”

Captain Byfield touched the rim of his glass to his lips.

“I’ve heard nothing of it.”

“What?” from a chorus.

“Information is getting out somewhere. I violate no confidences in telling you. The War Office is perturbed.”

“How terrible!” said Lady Joyliffe. “And don’t they suspect?”

“That’s the worst of it. The Germans got wind of some of Lord Kitchener’s plans and some of the Admiralty’s—which nobody knew but those very near the men at the top.”

“A spy in that circle—unbelievable,” said Kipshaven.

“My authority is a man of importance. Fortunately no damage has been done. The story goes that we’re issuing false statements in certain channels to mislead the enemy and find the culprit.”

“But how does the news reach the Germans?” asked Rizzio.

“No one knows. By courier to the coast and then

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by fast motor-boat perhaps; or by aëroplane. It's very mysterious. A huge *Taube*, yellow in color, flying over the North Sea between England and the continent has been sighted and reported by English vessels again and again and each flight has coincided with some unexpected move on the part of the enemy. Once it was seen just before the raid at Falmouth, again before the Zeppelin visit to Sandringham."

"A yellow dove!" said Lady Kipshaven. "A bird of ill omen, surely."

"But how could such an aëroplane leave the shores of England without being remarked?" asked Kipshaven.

"Oh," laughed Sandys, "answer me that and we have the solution of the problem. A strict watch is being kept on the coasts, and the government employees—the postmen, police, secret-service men of every town and village from here to the Shetlands are on the lookout—but not a glimpse have they had of him, not a sign of his arrival or departure, but only last week he was reported by a destroyer flying toward the English coast."

"Most extraordinary!" from Lady Kipshaven.

"It's a large machine?" asked Rizzio.

"Larger than any aëroplane ever built in Europe. They say Curtis, the American, was building a thousand horsepower machine at Hammondsport—in the States. This one must be at least as large as that."

"But surely such a machine could not be hidden in England for any length of time without discovery."

"It would seem so—but there you are. The main point is that he hasn't been discovered and that its pilot is here in England—ready to fly across the sea with our military secrets when he gets them."

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“D—n him!” growled Kipshaven quite audibly, a sentiment which echoed so truly in the hearts of those present that it passed without comment.

“The captain of a merchant steamer who saw it quite plainly reported that the power of the machine was simply amazing—that it flew at about six thousand feet and was lost to sight in an incredibly brief time. In short, my friends, the Yellow Dove is one of the miracles of the day—and its pilot one of its mysteries.”

“But our aviation men—can they do nothing?”

“What? Chase rainbows? Where shall their voyage begin and where end? He’s over the North Sea one minute and in Belgium the next. Our troops in the trenches think he’s a phantom. They say even the bombs he drops are phantoms. They are heard to explode but nobody has ever been hit by them.”

“What will the War Office do?”

Sandys shrugged expressively. “What would *you* do?”

“Shoot the beggar,” said the Honorable Cyril impassively.

“Shoot the moon, sir,” roared the Earl angrily. “It’s no time for idiotic remarks. If this story is true, a danger hangs over England. No wholesome Briton,” here he glanced again at Hammersley, “ought to go to sleep until this menace is discovered and destroyed.”

“The Yellow Dove is occult,” said Sandys, “like a witch on a broomstick.”

“A Flying Dutchman,” returned Lady Joyliffe.

“There seems to be no joke about that,” said the Earl.

CHAPTER II

THE UNDERCURRENT

THEY were still discussing the strange story of Sandys when Lady Heathcote signaled her feminine guests and they retired to the drawing-room. Over the coffee the interest persisted and Lord Kipshaven was not to be denied. If, as it seemed probable, this German spy was making frequent flights between England and the continent, he must have some landing field, a hangar, a machine shop with supplies of oil and fuel. Where in this tight little island could a German airman descend with a thousand horsepower machine and not be discovered unless with the connivance of Englishmen? The thing looked bad. If there were Englishmen in high places in London who could be bought, there were others, many others, who helped to form the vicious chain which led to Germany.

“I tell you I believe we’re honeycombed with spies,” he growled. “For one that we’ve caught and imprisoned or shot, there are dozens in the very midst of us. If this thing keeps up we’ll all of us be suspecting one another. How do I know that you, Sandys, you, Rizzio, Byfield or even Hammersley here isn’t a secret agent of the Germans? What dinner-table in England is safe when spies are found in the official family at the War Office?”

Rizzio smiled.

“We, who are about to die, salute you,” he said,

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raising his liqueur glass. "And you, Lord Kipshaven, how can we be sure of you?"

"By this token," said the old man, rising and putting his back to the fire, "that if I even suspected, I'd shoot any one of you down here—now, with as little compunction as I'd kill a dog."

"I'll have my coffee first," laughed Byfield, "if you don't mind."

"Coffee—then coffin," said Rizzio.

"Jolly unpleasant conversation this," remarked Hammersley. "Makes a chap a bit fidgety."

"Fidgety!" roared the Earl. "We ought to be fidgety with the Germans winning east and west and the finest flower of our service already killed in battle. We need men and still more men. Any able-bodied fellow under forty who stays at home"—and he glanced meaningly at the Honorable Cyril—"ought to be put to work mending roads."

The object of these remarks turned the blank stare of his monocle but made no reply.

"Yes, I mean you, Cyril," went on the Earl steadily. "Your mother was born a Prussian. I knew her well and I think she learned to thank God that fortune had given her an Englishman for a husband. But the taint is in you. Your brother has been wounded at the front. His blood is cleansed. But what of yours? You went to a German university with your Prussian kinsmen and now openly flaunt your sympathies at a dinner of British patriots. Speak up. How do you stand? Your friends demand it."

Hammersley turned his cigarette carefully in its long amber holder.

"Oh, I say, Lord Kipshaven," he said with a slow smile, "you're not spoofing a chap, are you?"

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"I was never more in earnest in my life. How do you stand?"

"Haw!" said Hammersley with obvious effort. "I'm British, you know, and all that sort of thing. How can an Englishman be anything else? Silly rot—fightin'—that's what I say. That's all I say," he finished looking calmly for approval from one to the other.

Smiles from Sandys and Rizzio met this inadequacy, but the Earl, after glaring at him moodily for a moment, uttered a smothered, "Paugh," and shrugging a shoulder, turned to Rizzio and Sandys who were discussing a recent submarine raid.

Hammersley and Byfield sat near each other at the side of the table away from the others. There was a moment of silence—which Hammersley improved by blowing smoke rings toward the ceiling. Captain Byfield watched him a moment and then after a glance in the direction of the Earl leaned carelessly on an elbow toward Hammersley.

"Any shootin' at the North?" he asked.

Hammersley's monocle dropped and the eyes of the two men met.

"Yes. I'm shootin' the day after tomorrow," said Hammersley quietly. Byfield looked away and another long moment of silence followed. Then the Honorable Cyril after a puff or two took the long amber holder from his mouth, removed the cigarette and smudged the ash upon the receiver.

"Bally heady cigarettes, these of Algy's. Don't happen to have any 'baccy and papers about you, do you, Byfield?"

"Well, rather," replied the captain. And he pushed a pouch and a package of cigarette papers along the tablecloth. "It's a mix of my own. I hope you'll like it."

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Hammersley opened the bag and sniffed at its contents.

"Good stuff, that. Virginia, Perique and a bit of Turkish. What?"

Byfield nodded and watched Hammersley as he poured out the tobacco, rolled the paper and lighted it at the candelabra, inhaling luxuriously.

"Thanks," he sighed. "Jolly good of you," and he pushed the pouch back to Byfield along the table.

"You must come to Scotland some day, old chap," said the Honorable Cyril carelessly.

"Delighted. When the war is over," returned Byfield quietly. "Not until the war is over."

"Awf'ly glad to have you any time, you know—awf'ly glad."

"In case of furlough—I'll look you up."

"Do," said the Honorable Cyril.

Hammersley's rather bovine gaze passed slowly around the room, and just over Lord Kipshaven's head in the mirror over the mantel it met the dark gaze of John Rizzio. The fraction of a second it paused there and then he stretched his long legs and rose, stifling a yawn.

"Let's go in—what?" he said to Byfield.

Byfield got up and at the same time there was a movement at the mantel.

"Don't be too hard on the chap," Rizzio was saying in an undertone to Kipshaven. "You're singing the 'Hassgesang.' He's harmless—I tell you—positively harmless." And then as the others moved toward the door: "Come, Lady Heathcote won't mind our tobacco."

Hammersley led the way, with Byfield and Rizzio at his heels. Jacqueline Morley had been trying to

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play the piano, but there was no heart in the music until she struck up "Tipperary," when there was a generous chorus in which the men joined.

Hammersley found Doris with Constance Joyliffe in an alcove. At his approach Lady Joyliffe retired.

"Handsome, no end," he murmured to her as he sank beside her.

"Handsome is as handsome does, Cyril," she said slowly. "If you knew what I was thinking of, you wouldn't be so generous."

"What?"

"Just what everybody is thinking about you—that you've got to do something—enlist to fight—go to France, if only as a chauffeur. They'd let you do that tomorrow if you'd go."

"Chauffeur! Me! Not really!"

"Yes, that or something else," determinedly.

"Why?"

She hesitated a moment and then went on distinctly.

"Because I could never marry a man people talked about as people are talking about you."

"Not marry—?" The Honorable Cyril's face for the first time that evening showed an expression of concern. "Not marry—me? You can't mean that, Doris."

"I do mean it, Cyril," she said firmly. "I can't marry you."

"Why——?"

"Because to me love is a sacrament. Love of woman—love of country, but the last is the greater of the two. No man who isn't a patriot is fit to be a husband."

"A patriot——"

She broke in before he could protest. "Yes—a

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patriot. You're not a patriot—that is, if you're an Englishman. I don't know you, Cyril. You puzzle me. You're lukewarm. Day after day you've seen your friends and mine go off in uniform, but it doesn't mean anything to you. It doesn't mean anything to you that England is in danger and that she needs every man who can be spared at home to go to the front. You see them go and the only thing it means to you is that you're losing club-mates and sport-mates. Instead of taking the infection of fervor—you go to Scotland—to shoot—not Germans but—deer! Deer!" she repeated scathingly.

"But there aren't any Germans in Scotland—at least none that a chap could shoot," he said with a smile.

"Then go where there *are* Germans to shoot," she said impetuously. She put her face to her hands a moment. "Oh, don't you understand? You've got to prove yourself. You've got to make people stop speaking of you as I've heard them speak of you tonight. Here you are in the midst of friends, people who know you and like you, but what must other people who don't know you so well or care so much as we? What must they think and say of your indifference, of your openly expressed sympathy with England's enemies? Even Lady Betty, a kinswoman and one of your truest friends, has lost patience with you—I had almost said lost confidence in you."

Her voice trailed into silence. Hammersley was moving the toe of his varnished boot along the border of the Aubusson rug.

"I'm sorry," he said slowly. "Awf'ly sorry."

"Sorry! Are you? But what are you going to do about it?"

"Do?" he said vaguely. "I don't know, I'm sure."

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I'm no bally use, you know. Wouldn't be any bally use over there. Make some silly ass mistake probably. No end of trouble—all around."

"And you're willing to sacrifice the goodwill, the affection of your friends, the respect of the girl you say you love——"

"Oh, I say, Doris. Not that——"

"Yes. I've got to tell you. I can't be unfair to myself. I can't respect a man who sees others cheerfully carrying *his* burdens, doing *his* work, accepting *his* hardships in order that he may sleep soundly at home far away from the nightmare of shot and shell. *You, Cyril, you!* Is it that—the love of ease? Or is it something else—something to do with your German kinship—the memory of your mother. What is it? If you still want me, Cyril, it is my right to know——"

"Want you, Doris——" his voice went a little lower. "Yes, I want you. You might know that."

"Then you must tell me."

He hesitated and peered at the eyeglass in his fingers.

"I think—it's because I——" He paused and then crossed his hands and bowed his head with an air of relinquishment. "Because I think I must be a"—he almost whispered the word—"a coward."

Doris Mather gazed at him a long moment of mingled dismay and incredulity.

"You," she whispered, "the first sportsman of England—a—a coward."

He gave a short mirthless laugh.

"Queer, isn't it, the way a chap feels about such things? I always hated the idea of being mangled. Awful unpleasant idea that—'specially in the tummy. In India once I saw a chap——"

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"You—a coward!" Doris repeated, wide-eyed. "I don't believe you."

He bent his head again.

"I—I'm afraid you'd better," he said uncertainly.

She rose, still looking at him incredulously, another doubt, a more dreadful one, winging its flight to and fro across her inner vision.

"Come," she said in a tone she hardly recognized as her own, "come let us join the others."

He stood uncertainly and as she started to go,

"You'll let me take you home, Doris?" he asked.

She bent her head, and without replying made her way to the group beyond the alcove.

Hammersley stood a moment watching her diminishing back and then a curious expression, half of trouble, half of resolution, came into his eyes.

Then after a quick glance around the curtain he suddenly reached into his trousers pocket, took something out and scrutinized it carefully by the light of the lamp. He put it back quickly and setting his monocle sauntered forth into the room. As he moved to join the group at the piano John Rizzio met him in the middle of the room.

"Could I have a word with you, Hammersley?" he asked.

"Happy," said the Honorable Cyril. "Here?"

"In the smoking-room—if you don't mind?"

Hammersley hesitated a moment and then swung on his heels and led the way. At the smoking-room door from the hallway Rizzio paused, then quietly drew the heavy curtains behind them.

Hammersley, standing by the table, followed this action with a kind of bored curiosity, aware that Rizzio's dark gaze had never once left him since they had

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entered the room. Slowly Hammersley took his hands from his pockets, reached into his waistcoat for his cigarette case, and as Rizzio approached, opened and offered it to him.

"Smoke?" he asked carelessly.

"I don't mind if I do. But I've taken a curious liking for rolled cigarettes. Ah! I thought so." He opened the tobacco jar and sniffed at it, searched around the articles on the table, then, "How disappointing! Nothing but Algy's dreadful pipes. You don't happen to have any rice-papers do you?"

Hammersley was lighting his own cigarette at the brazier.

"No. Sorry," he replied laconically.

Rizzio leaned beside him against the edge of the table.

"Strange. I thought I saw you making a cigarette in the dining-room."

Hammersley's face brightened. "Oh, yes, Byfield. Byfield has rice-papers."

"I'd rather have yours," he said quietly.

The Honorable Cyril looked up.

"Mine, old chap? I thought I told you I hadn't any."

Rizzio smiled amiably.

"Then I must have misunderstood you," he said politely.

"Yes," said Hammersley and sank into an arm-chair.

Rizzio did not move and the Honorable Cyril, his head back, was already blowing smoke rings.

Rizzio suddenly relaxed with a laugh and put his legs over a small chair near Hammersley's and folded his arms along its back.

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“Do you know, Hammersley,” he said with a laugh, “I sometimes think that as I grow older my hearing is not as good as it used to be. Perhaps you’ll say that I cling to my vanishing youth with a fatuous desperation. I do. Rather silly, isn’t it, because I’m quite forty-five. But I’ve a curiosity, even in so small a matter, to learn whether things are as bad with me as I think they are. Now unless you’re going to add a few more gray hairs to my head by telling me that I’m losing my sight as well as my hearing, you’ll gratify my curiosity—an idle curiosity, if you like, but still strangely important to my peace of mind.”

He paused a moment and looked at Cyril, who was examining him with frank bewilderment.

“I don’t think I understand,” said Hammersley politely.

“I’ll try to make it clearer. Something has happened tonight that makes me think that I’m getting either blind or deaf or both. To begin with I thought you said you had no cigarette papers. If I heard you wrong, then the burden of proof rests upon my ears—if my eyes are at fault it’s high time I consulted a specialist, because you know, at the table in the dining-room when you were sitting with Byfield, quite distinctly I saw you put a package of Riz-la-Croix into your right-hand trousers pocket. The color as you know is yellow—a color to which my optic nerve is peculiarly sensitive.” He laughed again. “I know you’d hardly go out of your way to make a misstatement on so small a matter, and if you don’t mind satisfying a foible of my vanity, I wish you’d tell me whether or not I’m mistaken.”

He stopped and looked at Hammersley who was regarding him with polite, if puzzled tolerance. Then,

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as if realizing that something was required of him Hammersley leaned forward.

"I say, Rizzio. What the deuce is it all about? I'm sorry you're gettin' old an' all that sort of thing, but I can't help it. Now can I, old chap?"

Rizzio's smile slowly faded and his gaze passed Hammersley and rested on the brass fender of the fireplace.

"You don't care to tell me?" he asked.

"What?"

"About that package of rice-papers."

"Byfield has them."

"Not that package," put in Rizzio with a wave of the hand. And then, leaning forward, in a low tone, "The other."

Hammersley sat upright a moment, his hands on the chair-arms and then sank back in his chair with a laugh.

"I say. I can take a joke as well as the next, but—er—what's the answer?"

Rizzio rose, his graceful figure dominant.

"I don't think that sort of thing will do, Hammersley."

His demeanor was perfectly correct, his hand-wave easy and a well-bred smile flickered at his lips, but his tone masked a mystery. Hammersley rose, removing his cigarette with great deliberateness from its holder and throwing it into the fire.

"If there isn't anything else you want to see me about—" He took a step in the direction of the door.

"One moment, please."

Hammersley paused.

"I think we'd better drop subterfuge. I know

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why you were here tonight, why Byfield was here and perhaps you know now why I am here."

"Can't imagine, I'm sure," said Cyril.

"Perhaps you can guess, when I tell you that this party was of my own choosing—that my plans were made with a view to arranging your meeting with Captain Byfield in a place known to be above suspicion. I have been empowered to relieve you of any further responsibility in the matter in question—in short of the papers themselves."

"Oh, I say. Vanished youth, cigarette papers and all that. You're goin' it a bit thick, Rizzio, old boy."

Rizzio put a hand into the inside pocket of his evening coat and drew out a card-case, which he opened under Hammersley's eyes.

"Look, Hammersley," he whispered. "Maxwell gave me this! Perhaps you understand now."

The Honorable Cyril fixed his eyeglass carefully and stared at the card-case.

"By Jove," he muttered, with sudden interest.

"Now you understand?" said Rizzio.

"You!" whispered Hammersley, looking at him. The languor of a moment before had fallen from him with his dropping monocle.

"Yes, I. Now quick, the papers," muttered Rizzio, putting the card-case in his pocket. "Someone may come at any moment."

For a long space of time Hammersley stood uncertainly peering down at the pattern in the rug, then he straightened and, crossing the room, put his back to the fireplace.

"There may be a mistake," he said firmly. "I can't risk it."

Rizzio stood for a moment staring at him as though

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he had not heard correctly. Then he crossed over and faced the other man.

"You mean that?"

Hammersley put his hands in his trousers pockets.

"I fancy so."

"What are you going to do?"

"What I've been told to do."

"My orders supersede yours."

"H-m. I'm not sure."

"You can't doubt my credentials."

"Hardly that. Er—I think I know best, that's all."

Rizzio took a pace or two before the fireplace in front of him, his brows tangled, his fingers twitching behind his back. Then he stopped with the air of a man who has reached a decision.

"You understand what this refusal means?"

Hammersley shrugged.

"You realize that it makes you an object of suspicion?" asked the other.

"How? In doing what was expected of me?" said Hammersley easily.

"You are expected to give those papers to me."

"I can't."

Rizzio's fine face had gone a shade paler under the glossy black of his hair and his eyes gleamed dangerously under his shaggy brows. He measured the Honorable Cyril's six feet two against his own and then turned away.

"I think I understand," he said slowly. "Your action leaves me no other alternative."

Hammersley, his hands still deep in his pockets, seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that. Each man according to his lights. You have your orders. I have mine. They

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seem to conflict. I'm going to carry mine out. If that interferes with carrying out yours, I'm not to blame. It's what happens in the end that matters," he finished significantly.

Rizzio thought deeply for a moment.

"You'll at least let me see them?"

"No, I can't."

"Why?"

"I have my own reasons."

Another pause in which Rizzio gave every appearance of a baffled man.

"You realize that if I gave the alarm and those papers were found on you——"

"You wouldn't do that."

"Why not?"

"Because of your card-case."

"That signifies nothing to anyone but you and me."

Hammersley smiled.

"I'll take the risk, Rizzio," he said finally.

The two men had been so absorbed in their conversation that they had not heard the drawing of the curtains of the door, but a sound made them turn and there stood Doris Mather.

CHAPTER III

RICE-PAPERS

DORIS looked from the man whose hand she had accepted to the one she had refused. Their attitudes were eloquent of concealment and the few phrases which had reached her ears as she paused outside the curtain did nothing to relieve the sudden tension of her fears. She hesitated for a moment as Rizzio recovered himself with an effort.

“Do come in, Doris,” he said with a smile. “Hammersley and I were—er——”

“Discussing the scrap of paper. I’m sure of it,” she said coolly. “Nothing is so fruitful of argument. I shouldn’t have intruded, but Cyril was to take me home and I’m ready to go.”

A look passed between the men.

“By Jove—of course,” said Cyril with a glance at his watch. “If you’ll excuse me, Rizzio——”

“Betty is going to Scotland tomorrow early and I think she wants to go to bed.”

Rizzio laughed. “The war has made us virtuous. Eleven o’clock! We’re losing our beauty sleep.”

He followed them to the door, but pleading a desire for a night-cap, remained in the smoking-room.

“I promised that you should take me home,” said the girl to Hammersley as they passed along the hall. “But I’m sorry if I interrupted——”

“Awf’ly glad,” he murmured. “Nothing important, you know. Club matter. Personal.”

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Doris stopped just outside the drawing-room door and searched his face keenly, while she whispered:

“And the threats—of exposure. Oh, I heard that. I couldn’t help it—Cyril—”

He glanced down at her quickly.

“Hush, Doris.”

Something she saw in his expression changed her resolution to question him. The mystery which she had felt to hang about him since he had said he was a coward had deepened. Something told her that she had been treading on forbidden ground and that in obeying him she served his interests best, so she led the way into the drawing-room, where they made their adieux.

Byfield had already gone and Sandys and Lady Joyliffe were just getting into their wraps.

“You’ll meet me here at ten?” their hostess was asking of Constance Joyliffe.

“If I’m not demolished by a Zeppelin in the meanwhile,” laughed the widow.

“Or the Yellow Dove,” said Jacqueline Morley. “I’m *sure* he alights on the roofs of the Parliament Houses.”

“You’ll be safe in Scotland at any rate, Constance. We’re quite too unimportant up there to be visited by engines of destruction—” she laughed meaningly. “That is—always excepting Jack Sandys.”

Sandys looked self-conscious, but Lady Joyliffe merely beamed benignly.

“It will really be quite restful, I’m sure,” she said easily. “Is Cyril going to be at Ben-a-Chielt?”

Hammersley awoke from a fit of abstraction.

“Quite possible,” he murmured, “gettin’ to be a bit of a hermit lately. Like it though—rather.”

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"Cyril hasn't anyone to play with," said Betty Heathcote, "so he has taken to building chicken-houses."

"Fearfully absorbin'—chicken-houses. Workin' 'em out on a plan of my own. You'll see. Goin' in for hens to lay two eggs a day." And then to Kipshaven, "So the submarines can't starve us out, you know," he explained.

"I don't think you need worry about that," said the Earl dryly, moving toward the door.

Doris Mather went upstairs for her wraps and when she came down she found Hammersley in his topcoat awaiting her. As they went down the steps into the waiting limousine her companion offered her his arm. Was it only fancy that gave her the impression that his glance was searching the darkness of the Park beyond the lights of the waiting cars with a keenness which seemed uncalled for on so prosaic an occasion? He helped her in and gave the direction to the chauffeur.

"Ashwater Park, Stryker, by way of Hampstead—and hurry," she heard him say, which was surprising since the nearer way lay through Harlenden and Harrow-on-Hill. The orders to hurry, too, save in the stress of need, were under the circumstances hardly flattering to her self-esteem. But she remembered the urgent look in his eyes in the hall when he had silenced her questions and sank back in the seat, her gaze fixed on the gloom of Hyde Park to their left, waiting for him to speak. He sat rigidly beside her, his hands clasped about his stick, his eyes peering straight before him at the back of Stryker's head. She felt his restraint and a little bitterly remembered the cause of it, buoyed by a hope that since he had thought it

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fit to enact a lie, the whole tissue of doubts which assailed her might be based on misconception also. That he was no coward she knew. More than one instance of his physical courage came back to her, incidents of his life before fortune had thrown them together and she only too well remembered the time when he had jumped from her car and thrown himself in front of a runaway horse, saving the necks of the occupants of the vehicle. He had lied to her. But why—why?

She closed her eyes trying to shut out the darkness and seek the sanctuary of some inner light, but she failed to find it. It seemed as though the gloom which spread over London had fallen over her spirit.

“The City of Dreadful Night,” she murmured at last. “I can’t ever seem to get used to it.”

She heard his light laugh and the sound of it comforted her.

“Jolly murky, isn’t it? I miss that fireworks Johnny pourin’ whiskey over by Waterloo Bridge—and Big Ben. Doesn’t seem like London. All rot anyway.”

“You don’t think there’s danger,” she asked cautiously.

He hesitated a moment before replying. And then, “No,” he said, “not now.”

Silence fell over them again. It was as though a shape sat between, a phantom of her dead hopes and his, something so cold and tangible that she drew away in her own corner and looked out at the meaningless blur of the sleeping city. Her lips were tightly closed. She had given him his chance to speak, but he had not spoken and every foot of road that they traversed seemed to carry them further apart. The end of their journey—! Was it to be the end . . . of everything between them?

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After a while that seemed interminable she heard his voice again.

“I suppose you think I’m an awful rotter.”

She turned her head and tried to read his face, but he kept it away from her, toward the opposite window. The feeling that she had voiced to Betty Heathcote of wanting to “mother” him came over her in a warm effusion.

“Nothing that you can *say* to me will make me think you one, Cyril,” she said gently.

“Thanks awf’ly,” he murmured. And after a pause, “I am though, you know.”

She leaned forward impulsively and laid a hand on his knee.

“No. You’re acting strangely, but I know that there’s a reason for it. As for your being a coward”—she laughed softly—“it’s impossible—quite impossible to make me believe that.”

He laid his fingers over hers for a moment.

“Nice of you to have confidence in a chap and all that, but appearances are against me—that’s the difficulty.”

“Why are they against you? Why should they be against you? Because you—” She stopped, for here she felt that she was approaching dangerous ground. Instead of parleying longer, she used her woman’s weapons frankly and leaning toward him put an arm around his neck and compelled him to turn his face to hers. “Oh, Cyril, won’t you tell me what this mystery is that is coming between us? Won’t you let me help you? I want to be in the sunlight with you again. It can’t go on this way, one of us in the dark and the other in the light. I have felt it for weeks. When I spoke to you tonight about going to France it

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was in the hope that you might give me some explanation that would satisfy me. My heart is wrapped up in the cause of England, but if the German blood in you is calling you away from your duties as an Englishman, tell me frankly and I will try to forgive you, but don't let the shadow stay over us any longer, Cyril. I must know the truth. What is the mystery that hangs over you and makes——”

“Mystery?” he put in quickly. “You're a bit seedy, Doris. Thinkin' too much about the war. Nothin' mysterious about me.” He turned his head away from her again. “People don't like my sittin' tight—here in England,” he said more slowly, “when all the chaps I know are off to the front. I—I can't help it. That's all.”

“But it's so unlike you,” she pleaded. “It's the sporting thing, Cyril.”

“I want you to believe,” he put in slowly, “it isn't the kind of sport I care for.”

“I won't believe it. I can't. I know you better than that.”

“That's the trouble,” he insisted. “I'm afraid you don't know me at all.”

“I don't know you tonight,” she said sadly. “It almost seems as though you were trying to get rid of me.”

He clasped her tightly in his arms and kissed her gently.

“God forbid,” he muttered.

“Then tell me what it is that is worrying you,” she whispered. “Not a living soul shall ever know. What were the threats of exposure that passed between you and Rizzio. He can't bear you any illwill because I chose you instead of him. I didn't mean to listen but

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I couldn't help it. What was the menace in his tone to you? What is the danger that hangs over you that puts you in his power? It's my right to know. Tell me, Cyril. Tell me."

She felt the pressure of the arm around her relax and the sudden rigidity of his whole body as he drew away.

"I think you must have been mistaken in what you say you heard," he said evenly. "I told you that it was a personal matter—a club matter in which you couldn't possibly be interested."

They were speaking formally now, almost as strangers. She felt the indifference in his tone and couldn't restrain the bitterness that rose in hers.

"One gentleman doesn't threaten a club-mate with exposure in a club matter unless—unless he has done something discreditable—something dishonorable——"

The Honorable Cyril bent his head.

"You have guessed," he said. "He—he is jealous. He wants to humiliate me."

She laughed miserably. "Then why did you threaten him?"

"I had to defend myself."

"You! Dishonorable! I'll have to have proofs of that. What are the papers you have that he wants? And what is there incriminating in Rizzio's card-case? You see, I heard everything."

"What else did you hear?" he asked quickly.

She drew away from him and sank back heavily in her corner.

"Nothing," she muttered. "Isn't that enough?"

It seemed to the girl as though her companion's figure relaxed a little. And he turned toward her gently.

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“Don’t bother about me. I’m not worth bothering about. The worst of it is that I can’t make any explanation—at least any that will satisfy you. All I ask is that you have patience with me if you can, trust me if you can, and try to forget—try to forget what you have heard. If you should mention my conversation with Rizzio it might lead to grave consequences for him—for me.”

The girl listened as though in a nightmare, the suspicions that had been slowly gathering in her brain throughout the evening now focusing upon him from every incident with a persistence that was not to be denied. The shape sat between them again, more tangible, more cold and cruel than before. All his excuses, all his explanations gave it substance and reality. The phantom of their dead hopes it had been before—now it was something more sinister—something that put all thoughts of the Cyril she knew from her mind—the shade of Judas fawning for his pieces of silver—a pale Judas in a monocle . . . She closed her eyes again and tried to think. Cyril! It was unbelievable . . . And a moment ago he had kissed her. She felt again the touch of his lips on her forehead . . . It seemed as though she too were being betrayed.

“You ask something very difficult of me,” she stammered chokingly.

“I can only ask,” he said, “and only hope that you’ll take my word for its importance.”

She shivered in her corner. The sound of his voice was so impersonal, so different from the easy bantering tone to which she was accustomed, that it seemed that what he had said was true—that she did not know him.

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Another surprise awaited her, for he leaned forward, peering into the mirror beside the wind shield in front of Stryker and turned and looked quickly out of the rear window of the car. Then she heard his voice in quick peremptory notes through the speaking-tube.

"There's a car behind us. Lose it."

The driver touched his cap and she felt the machine leap forward. The thin stream of light far in front of them played on the gray road and danced on the dim façades of unlighted houses which emerged from the obscurity, slid by and were lost again as the car twisted and turned, rocking from side to side, moving ever more rapidly toward the open country to the north. The dark corners of cross streets menaced for a moment and were gone. A reflector gleamed from one, but they went by it without slowing, the signal shrieking. A flash full upon them, a sound of voices cursing in the darkness and the danger was passed! At the end of a long piece of straight road Cyril turned again and reached for the speaking-tube. But his voice was quite cool.

"They're coming on. Faster, Stryker."

And faster they went. They had reached the region of semi-detached villas and the going was good. The road was a narrow ribbon of light reeling in upon its spool with frightful rapidity. The machine was a fine one and its usual well-ordered purr had grown into a roar which seemed to threaten immediate disruption.

Doris sat rigidly, clutching at the door sill and seat trying to adjust her braced muscles to the task of keeping upright. But a jolt of the car tore her grasp loose and threw her into Cyril's arms and there he held her steadily. She was too disturbed to resist, and

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lay quietly, conscious of the strength of the long arms that enfolded her and aware in spite of herself of a sense of exhilaration and triumph. Triumph with Cyril! What triumph—over whom? It didn't seem to matter just then whom he was trying to escape. She seemed very safe in his arms and very contented though the car rocked ominously, while its headlight whirled drunkenly in a wild orbit of tossed shadows. The sportswoman in her responded to the call of speed, the chance of accident, the danger of capture—for she felt sure now that there was a danger to Cyril. Over her shoulder she saw the lights of the pursuing machine, glowing unblinkingly as though endowed with a persistence which couldn't know failure. Under the light of an incandescent she saw that its lines were those of a touring-car and realized the handicap of the heavy car with its limousine body. But Stryker was doing his best, running with a wide throttle picking his road with a skill which would have done credit to Cyril himself. The heath was already behind them. At Hendon, having gained a little, Stryker put out his lights and turned into a by-road hoping to slip away in the darkness, but as luck would have it the moon was bright and in a moment they saw the long spoke of light swing in behind them.

“Good driver, that Johnny,” she heard her companion say in a note of admiration to Stryker. “Have to run for it again.”

The road was not so good here and they lost time without the searchlights, so Stryker turned them on again. This evasion of the straight issue of speed had been a confession of weakness and the other car seemed to realize it, for it came on at increased speed which shortened the distance so that the figures of the occu-

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pants of the other were plainly discernible, five men in all, huddled low.

A good piece of road widened the distance. The limousine, now thoroughly warmed, was doing the best that she was capable of and the tires Cyril told her were all new. Her question seemed to give him an idea, for he reached for the flower vase and, thrusting out a hand, jerked it back into the road.

"A torn tire might help a little," he said.

But the fellow behind swerved and came faster.

It was now a test of metal. Their pursuer lagged a little on the levels but caught them on the grades and, barring an accident, it was doubtful whether they would reach the gates of Ashwater Park safely. She heard a reflection of this in Cyril's voice as he shouted through the open front window.

"How far by the road, Stryker?"

"Five miles, I'd say, sir."

"Give her all she can take."

Stryker nodded and from a hill crest they seemed to soar into space. The car shivered and groaned like a stricken thing, but kept on down the hill without the touch of a brake. They crossed a bridge, rattled from side to side. Cyril steadied the girl in his arms and held her tight.

"Are you frightened?" he asked her.

"No. But what is it all about?"

Her companion glanced back to where the long beams of light were searching their dust. When he turned toward her his face was grave. He held her closely for a moment, peering into her eyes.

"Will you help me, Doris?" she heard him say.

"But how? What can I do, Cyril?"

He hesitated again, glancing over his shoulder.

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"Bally nuisance to have to drive you like this. Wouldn't do it if it wasn't most important——"

"Yes——"

"They want something I've got——"

"Papers?"

"You'll laugh when I tell you. Most amusin'—cigarette papers!"

"Cigarette——"

"That's all. I give you my word. Here they are." And reaching down into his trousers pocket he produced a little yellow packet. "Cigarette papers, that's all. These chaps must be perishin' for a smoke. What?" he laughed.

"But I don't understand."

"It isn't necessary that you should. Take my word for it, won't you? It's what they want. And I'm jolly determined they're not goin' to get it."

"You want me to help you? How?"

He looked back again and the lights behind them found a reflection in his eyes. If, earlier in the evening she had hoped to see him fully awake, she had her wish now. He was quite cool and ready to take an amused view of things, but in his coolness she felt a new power, an inventiveness, a readiness to resort to extremes to baffle his pursuers. Her apprehension had grown with the moments. Who were these men in the touring-car? Special agents of Scotland Yard? She had never been so doubtful nor so proud of him. Weighed in the balance of emotion the woman in her decided it. She caught at his hand impulsively.

"Yes, I'll help—if I can—whatever comes."

He raised her fingers to his lips and kissed them gently.

"Thank God," he muttered. "I knew you would."

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He looked over his shoulder and then peered out in search of familiar land-marks. They had passed Canons Hill and swung into the main road to Watford. If they reached there safely they would get to Ashwater Park which was but a short distance beyond.

She heard him speaking again and felt something thrust into the palm of her hand.

"Take this," he said. "It's what they want. They mustn't get it."

"But who are *they*?"

"I don't know. Except that they've been sent by Rizzio."

"Rizzio!"

"Yes. He's not with them. This sort of game requires chaps of a different type."

"You mean that they——"

"Oh, don't be alarmed. They won't hurt me and of course they won't hurt you. I'm going to get you out of the way—with this. My success depends on you. We'll drive past the Park entrance close to wicket gate in the hedge near the house. Just as we stop, jump out, run through and hide among the shrubbery. Your cloak is dark. They won't see you. When they're gone, make your way to the house. It's a chance, but I've got to take it."

"And you?" she faltered.

"I'll get away. Don't worry. But the packet. Whatever happens don't let them get the packet."

"No," she said in a daze, "I won't."

"Keep it for me, until I come. But don't examine it. It's quite unimportant to anybody but me——" he laughed, "that is, anybody but Rizzio."

She stared straight in front of her trying to think, but thought seemed impossible. The speed had got

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into her blood and she was mastered by a spirit stronger than her own. He held her in his arms again and she gloried in the thought that she could help him. Whatever his cause, her heart and soul were in it.

They roared into Watford and, turning sharp to the left, took the road to Croxley Green. The machine hadn't missed a spark but the touring-car was creeping up—was so close that its lights were blinding them. Hammersley leaned forward and gave a hurried order to Stryker. They passed the Park gates at full speed—the wicket gate was a quarter of a mile beyond. Would they make it? The touring-car was roaring up alongside but Stryker jockeyed it into the gutter. Voices were shouting and Doris got the gleam of something in the hand of a tall figure standing up in the other car. There followed shots—four of them—and an ominous sound came from somewhere underneath as the limousine limped forward.

“It's our right rear tire,” said Stryker.

“Have we a spare wheel,” she heard Cyril say.

“Yes, sir.”

“When we stop put it on as quick as you can. A hundred yards. Easy—so and we're there, Stryker. Now. Over to the left and give 'em the road. Quick! Now stop!”

The other machine came alongside at their right and the men jumped down just as Cyril threw open the left-hand door and Doris leaped out and went through the gate in the hedge.

CHAPTER IV

DANGEROUS SECRETS

ONCE within the borders of her father's estate and hidden in a clump of bushes near the hedge, all idea of flight left Doris's head. She was home and the familiar scene gave her confidence. From the middle of her clump of bushes grew a spruce tree, and into it she quickly climbed until she reached a point where she could see the figures in the road beside the quivering machines. She had not been followed. The five men were gathered around Cyril, who was protesting violently at the outrage. They had not missed her yet. Stryker was on his knees beside the stricken wheel.

"Come, now," she heard the leader saying, "you're not to be hurt if you'll give 'em up."

"Why, old chap, you're mad," Cyril was saying coolly. "I was thinkin' you wanted my watch. You chase me twenty miles in the dead of night and then ask me for cigarette papers. You're chaffin'—what?"

"You'll find out soon enough," said the tall man gruffly. "Off with his coat, Jim . . . Now search him."

Cyril made no resistance. Doris could see his face quite plainly. He was smiling.

"Rum go, this," he said with a puzzled air. "I only smoke made cigarettes, you know."

But they searched him thoroughly, even taking off his shoes.

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"I say, stop it," she heard him laugh. "You're ticklin'."

"Shut up, d—n you," said the tall man, with a scowl.

"Right-o!" said Cyril, cheerfully. "But you're wastin' time."

They found that out in a while and the leader of the men straightened. Suddenly he gave a sound of triumph.

"The girl!" he cried and, rushing to the limousine, threw open the door.

"Gone!" he shouted excitedly. "She can't be far. Find her."

He rushed around the rear wheels of the limousine and for the first time spied the gate in the hedge.

"Tricked, by God! In after her, some of you."

"It won't do a bit of good," remarked Cyril. He was sitting in the dirt of the middle of the road near the front wheels of the machines. "She doesn't smoke, o' chap. Bad taste, I call it, gettin' a lady mixed up in a hunt for cigarettes. Besides she's almost home by this. The house isn't far. She lives there, you know."

In her tree Doris trembled. She was well screened by the branches and she heard the crackle of footsteps in the dry leaves as the searchers beat the bushes below her, but they passed on, following the path toward the house. As the sounds diminished in the distance she saw Cyril still seated on the ground leaning against the front wheels of the touring-car while he argued and cajoled the men nearest him. Helping himself by a wheel as he arose he faced the tall man who had come up waving his revolver and uttering wild threats.

"It won't help matters calling me a lot of names," said Cyril, brushing the dust from his clothes. "You

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want something I haven't got—that's flat. I hope you're satisfied."

"Not yet. They'll bring the girl in a minute. She can't have gone far."

Cyril glanced around him carelessly and brushed his clothes again.

He had discovered that Stryker had put on the spare wheel and was parleying with one of their captors.

"Oh, very well. Have your way. What more can I do for you? If you don't mind I'd like to be going on."

"You'll wait for the girl—here."

Doris watched Stryker skulking along in the shadow of the limousine. She saw him reach his seat, heard a grinding of the clutches and a confused scuffle out of which, his blond hair disheveled, his shoulders coatless, Cyril emerged and leaped for the running-board of the moving machine.

"You forgot to search the limousine," she heard him shout.

The tall man scrambled to his knees and fired at the retreating machine while the others jumped for the touring-car.

It had no sooner begun to move than there was a sound of escaping air and an oath from the chauffeur.

"A puncture," someone said. And Doris heard a volley of curses which spoke eloquently of the sharpness of Cyril's pocket-knife.

Doris in her hiding-place breathed a sigh of relief. Cyril had gotten safely off, and his last words had created a diversion in the camp of the enemy. They were working furiously at the tire, but she knew that the chance of coming up with Cyril again that night was

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gone. Now that the affair had resulted so favorably to Cyril she began to regret her imprudence in remaining to see the adventure to its end. Cyril had played for time, and if she had followed his instructions she could have gotten far enough away to have eluded her pursuers. By this time, in all probability, she would have been safe beneath the parental roof. The worst of it was that Cyril thought her safe. The packet in her glove burned in her hand. Beneath her, somewhere between her refuge and the house were two men, and how to pass them with her precious possession became now the sole object of her thoughts. Cyril had told her that the packet must under no circumstances fall into the hands of their pursuers and the desperation of his efforts to elude them gave her a renewed sense of her importance as an instrument for good or ill in Cyril's cause—whatever it might be. Now that Cyril had gone she felt singularly helpless and small in the face of such odds. For a moment she thought of hiding the packet in the crotch of one of the branches where she might come and reclaim it at her leisure and go down and run the chance of being taken without it. But the unpleasantness which might result from such an encounter deterred her, and so she sat, her chilly ankles depending, awaiting she knew not what. She had almost reconciled herself to the thought of spending several hours in this uncomfortable position when the tall man in the road blew a blast on a sporting whistle and soon the passing of footsteps through the gate advised her that the men inside the grounds had returned.

This was her opportunity, and without waiting to listen she dropped quietly down on the side of the tree away from the gate and, stealing furtively along in

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the shadow of the hedge, made her way as quickly as possible in the direction of the house. Out of breath with exercise and excitement, when she reached a patch of trees at the edge of the lawn, she stopped and looked behind her. Then she blessed her luck in coming down when she did, for she saw the thin ray of a pocket light gleaming like a will-o'-the-wisp in her place of concealment and knew that the search for her was still on.

Fear lent her caution. She skirted the edge of the wide lawn in the shadow of the trees, running like a deer across the moonlit spaces, always keeping the masses of evergreens between her and the wicket gate until she reached the flower garden, where she paused a moment to get her breath. A patch of moonlight lay between her and the entrance and the hedge was impenetrable. There was no other way. She bent low and hurried forward, trusting to the good fortune that had so far aided her. Halfway across the open she heard a shout and knew that she had been seen.

There was nothing for it but to run straight for the house. So catching her skirts up above her knees and scorning the garden path which would have taken her a longer way, she made straight for the terrace, the main door of which she knew had been left open for her return. Across the wide lawn in the bright moonlight she ran, her heart throbbing madly, the precious yellow packet clutched tightly against her palm. Out of the tail of her eye she saw dark forms emerge from the bushes and run diagonally for the terrace steps in the hope of intercepting her. But she was fast, and she blessed her tennis for the wind and muscle to stand the strain. She was much nearer her goal than her pursuers, but they came rapidly, their bulk looming

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larger every moment. She saw the lights and knew that servants were at hand. Her father, too, was in the library, for she saw the glow of his reading-lamp. She had only to shout for help now and someone would hear her. She tried to, but not a sound came from her parching throat. With a last effort she raced up the terrace steps, pushed open the heavy door and shut and bolted it quickly behind her. Then sank into the nearest piece of furniture in a state of physical collapse.

Doris Mather did not faint, an act which might readily have been forgiven her under the circumstances. Her nerves were shaken by the violence of her exercise and the narrowness of her escape, and it was some moments before she could reply to the anxious questions that were put to her. Then she answered evasively, peering through the windows at the moonlit lawn and seeing no sign of her pursuers. In a few moments she drank a glass of water and took the arm of Wilson, her maid, up the stairway to her rooms, after giving orders to the servants that her father was not to be told anything except that she had come in very tired and had gone directly to bed.

For the present at least Cyril's packet was safe. In her dressing-room Wilson took off her cloak and helped her into bedroom slippers, not, however, without a comment on the bedraggled state of her dinner dress and the shocking condition of her slippers. But Doris explained with some care that Mr. Hammersley's machine had had a blow-out near the wicket gate, that she had become frightened and had run all the way across the lawn. All of which was true. It didn't explain Mr. Hammersley's deficiencies as an escort, but Wilson was too well trained to presume further.

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A little sherry and a biscuit and Doris revived rapidly. While the maid drew her bath she locked Cyril's cigarette papers in the drawer of the desk in her bedroom, and when she was bathed and ready for the night she dismissed Wilson to her dressing-room to wait within call until she had gone to bed.

Alone with her thoughts, her first act was to turn out her lights and kneel in the window where she could peer out through the hangings. It was inconceivable that her pursuers would dare to make any attempt upon the house, but even now she wondered whether it would not have been wiser if she had taken her father into her confidence and had the gardeners out to keep an eye open for suspicious characters. But the motives that had kept her silent downstairs in the hall were even stronger with her now. She could not have borne to discuss with her father, who had an extraordinary talent for getting at the root of difficulties, the subject of Cyril's questionable packet of cigarette papers. She was quite sure, from the adventure which had befallen them tonight, and the mystery with which Cyril had chosen to invest the article committed to her care, that Cyril himself would not have approved of any course which would have brought the packet or his own actions into the light of publicity.

The packet of cigarette papers! With a last scrutiny of the landscape she pulled the shades and hangings so that no ray of light could reach the outside of the house, then groped her way across the room. A thin line of light beneath the door of her dressing-room showed that Wilson was still there. So she took the precaution of locking that door as well as the others leading to the upstairs hall, then went to her desk and turned on her lamp. She unlocked the drawer of

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the desk and taking the small object gingerly in her fingers, scrutinized it carefully. It was yellow in color, quite new, bound with a small rubber band, a very prosaic, a very harmless looking object to have caused so much excitement and trouble to all who had been concerned about it. She turned it over and stretched its rubber band, snapping it thoughtfully two or three times. Now for the first time since Cyril had given it to her did she permit herself to think of the hidden meanings the thing might possess. In the machine, during the chase Cyril had won her unreservedly to his side. As against the mysterious men of John Rizzio Cyril's cause had been the only one to be considered. She had been carried off her feet and there hadn't been time to think of anything but the real necessity of acceding to Cyril's wishes in getting the small object to a place of safety. Then it had only been a packet of cigarette papers—a mere package of Riz-la-Croix which everybody, for some reason or other, seemed to want. Now, weighed lightly in her hand, the seclusion of her room gave it a different character. She recalled Cyril's bantering tone at having been chased twenty miles for a cigarette. But his attitude deceived Doris no more than it had his pursuers. There was material here for something more deadly than cigarettes. She took the yellow packet in both hands and pressed it to her temples as though by this act she could pass its secrets into her own brain. In spite of herself she was frightfully curious and frightfully afraid.

She got up and paced the floor rapidly. No—it couldn't go on. She must know the truth. As the key of the one unopened room fascinated Blue Beard's wife, as the box fascinated Pandora, so this unopened yellow

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packet plagued and fascinated Doris Mather. She hesitated another long moment and then slipped off the rubber band and opened it, trembling so that the first leaf of paper came out in her fingers and fell to the floor. She picked the paper up and examined it minutely, holding it up to the light. There was nothing unusual about it, no mark, no sign of any kind that might indicate a secret mission. Leaf by leaf, slowly at first and then more rapidly she went through the leaves, examining each page back and front, without success. It was not until she was almost half through it that she came upon the writing—four pages written lengthways in ink with a line too fine almost for legibility.

She put the packet down for a moment, her heart throbbing with excitement and incredulity, too apprehensive to read, in mortal dread of a revelation which was to change the whole course of her life and Cyril's. There was still time to close the book and go to bed. Why did she sit there holding the thing open, stupidly gazing at nothing? If Cyril——

Yes, if Cyril was the unspeakable thing of her doubts, it was time that she knew it and no compunctions of honor should hold her with such a man. Besides she had promised him nothing. Hesitating no longer, she held the leaves under the light of her lamp and slowly deciphered the thin script.

At first she could make little of it, as it seemed to consist of numerals which she couldn't understand, but here and there she made out the names of towns, the names of regiments familiar to her and a series of dates, beginning in March and ending in May. As the meaning of the writing grew clearer to her, she read on, her eyes distended with horror. Even a child could

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have seen that this was a list of the British forces under arms, the proposed dates for the completion of their equipment, training and departure for France. When she had finished reading the written pages, her inert fingers slowly turned the blank papers over to the end. There was nothing more. God knows it was enough! Cyril—the Honorable Cyril—a spy of the Germans!

She sank low in her armchair, her senses numb from the horror of the revelation. Her thoughts became confused like those of a sick person awaking from a nightmare to a half consciousness, peopled with strange beautiful images doing the dark things of dreams. Cyril—*her* Cyril—a spy!

What would happen now. And which way did duty lie? Toward England or toward Cyril? She sat crouched on the floor in an agony of misery at the thought of Cyril's baseness, the package of paper clenched in her hand, trying to think clearly for England, for Cyril, for herself, but the longer she battled the deeper became her desperation and despair.

The world seemed to be slipping away from her, the orderly arrangement of her thoughts was twisted and distorted so that wrong had become right and right wrong. She had lost her standard of judgment. She did not know which way to turn, so she bent her head forward into her hands and silently prayed. There seemed to be nothing else to do. For a long while she remained prostrate by the window, her brain tortured, her body stiff with weariness, until she could think no more. Then slowly and painfully she rose and, still clutching the yellow packet, groped her way to bed, into which she fell exhausted in mind and body.

CHAPTER V

THE PURSUIT CONTINUES

AT eight o'clock Doris was awakened by a loud knocking on the door leading to her dressing-room. She had slept the sleep of utter exhaustion and aroused herself with difficulty, a little bewildered at the unusual sounds. Then she dimly remembered locking the door and got quickly out of bed, put the yellow packet in the drawer of her desk and pushed back the bolt of the door.

To her surprise her father confronted her and behind him were other members of the family in various stages of their morning toilets.

"Thank the Lord," said David Mather with a sigh of relief.

"What on earth is the matter?" asked the girl, glancing from one to the other in alarm.

Her father laughed. "Oh, nothing, now that you're all right. Burglars, that's all."

Doris's heart stopped beating as in a flash of reviving memory the incidents of the night before came quickly back to her.

"Burglars!" she stammered.

"Yes, they got in here—came up the water spout," pointing to the dressing-room window, "and a fine mess they made of things. You'll have to take account of stock, child, and see how you stand."

She glanced around the disordered room, very much alarmed. The drawers of her cupboards were all

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pulled out and their contents scattered about on the floor.

"When did—did it happen?" she asked timorously, more because she had to say something than because that was what she wanted to know.

"Some time before dawn," said her father. "Wilson was here until three thinking that you might want her and then went out to her own room in the wing."

"Yes, I remember," said the girl, passing her hand across her eyes. "I wasn't feeling very well—so I asked her to stay here for a while. But I can't understand why I didn't wake."

"That's what frightened us," Cousin Tom broke in. "We were afraid the snoozers might have got in to you——"

"It's lucky you had your door locked."

"They were at my library desk, too," she heard her father saying. "Must have gone down the hall from here. But so far as I can see, they didn't get anything."

Her Aunt Sophia gasped a sigh.

"Thank the Lord," she put in reverently. "At least we're all safe and sound."

Stunned at the daring of Rizzio's men and bewildered by the persistence with which they had followed their quest while she was sleeping, Doris managed to formulate a quick plan to hide the meaning of this intrusion from the members of her family.

She had been examining the disordered contents of the upper drawers of a bureau.

"My jewel case, fortunately, I keep in my bedroom," she said, "but there was an emerald brooch to be repaired which I put in this drawer yesterday. It's gone."

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She saw a puzzled look come into the eyes of Wilson, who stood near the window, and a glance passed between them.

"Oh, well," her father said as he turned toward the door, "we're lucky it wasn't worse. I'm 'phoning to Watford for a constable."

This was what Doris had feared and yet she could not protest. So she shut her lips firmly and let them go out of the room, leaving her alone with Wilson.

She knew that the woman was devoted to her and that she was not in the habit of talking belowstairs, but her mistress had seen the look of incredulity in the woman's eyes last night and the puzzled expression a moment ago which indicated a suspicion connecting Doris's arrival in the Hall with the mysterious entrance of the dressing-room. Doris knew that she must tell her something that would satisfy her curiosity.

"My bath please, Wilson," she said coolly in order to gain time. "And say nothing, you understand."

"Of course, Miss Mather," said Wilson, with her broad Kentish smile. "I wouldn't ha' dreamed of it."

The cool water refreshed and invigorated the girl, and she planned skillfully. By the time Wilson brought her breakfast tray she had already wrapped the yellow packet of cigarette papers and her Cousin Tom's tobacco pouch in a pair of silk stockings surrounded by many thicknesses of paper and in a disguised handwriting had addressed it to Lady Heathcote at her place in Scotland. She had also written a note to Betty advising her of a change in plans and of her intention to come to her upon the following day, asking in a postscript twice underlined to keep a certain package addressed to her and carefully described

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safely under lock and key for her without opening until her arrival. She would explain later.

A gleam of hope had penetrated to her through the gloom that encompassed her thoughts—only a gleam at the best, but it was enough to give her courage to go on with her efforts to save Cyril from immediate danger. And this was the belief born of the forcible and secret entry of the house that the men who were in pursuit of the fateful packet were not in any way connected with Scotland Yard or the War Office. Otherwise if they believed the papers to be in her possession they would have come boldly in the light of day and demanded of her father the right to search the house. These were not times when the War Office hesitated in matters which concerned the public interest. John Rizzio, for some reason which she could not fathom, was acting upon his own initiative with a desire as urgent as Cyril's to keep his object secret.

She pondered those things for a long while and then with a sigh of uncertainty dismissed them from her thoughts, which were too full of the immediate necessity to carry out her carefully formulated plans. First she called Wilson and after assuring herself that she was making no mistake, took her partially into confidence, telling her of the important paper intrusted by Mr. Hammersley to her care which it was to the interest of other persons to possess and the necessity for getting them safely out of the house. Her mistress's confidences flattered the maid and she entered very willingly into the affair, concealing the emerald brooch which Doris produced from her jewel box, in a trunk containing old clothes which had long stood neglected in a dusty corner of the attic.

After the visit of the man from Watford, who went

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over the situation with a puzzled brow and departed still puzzled, she confided to her father the letter and package which were to be mailed from London, the letter in the morning, the package not until night.

"Don't fail me, daddy. It's *very* important——" she said as she kissed him. "It's a surprise for Betty, but it mustn't get to Scotland until tomorrow night at the earliest. And good-by——" And she kissed him again. "I'm going with it."

"Tonight?"

"Tomorrow."

Mr. Mather smiled and pinched her cheeks. He was quite accustomed to sudden changes of plan on the part of his daughter and would as soon have thought of questioning them as he would the changes in the weather. He hadn't liked the idea of her hunting or playing polo, but she had done them both and cajoled him into approving of her. He had objected fearfully when she went in for aviation, but had learned to watch the flights of her little Nieuport with growing confidence and had even erected a shed for her machines in the meadow behind the stables.

"Take care of yourself," he said lightly. "You're looking a little peaky lately. If you don't get rosier I'll withdraw my ambulance corps."

She laughed. "Don't forget!" she flung after him as he got into the car.

With the departure of the yellow packet a weight had been lifted from Doris's mind. John Rizzio's men might come now if they liked—and she would invite them to search the place. She was not in the least afraid of herself, and she knew that the danger to Cyril had passed—at least for the present.

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She hoped that Cyril wouldn't come today—or telephone her. She wanted time to think of what she should say to him. At moments it even seemed as though she didn't care if she ever saw him again. But as the day passed and she had no word from him, she grew anxious. What if Rizzio had told the War Office!

That night men from Watford kept a watch upon the house, but there was no disturbance. Her watchers had evidently taken the alarm. But it was in no very certain or very happy state that Doris drove her machine out of the gate of the Park in the later afternoon of the next day with her cousin Tom beside her and Wilson and the luggage in the rear seat. The main road to London was empty of vehicles except for a man on a motor-cycle just ahead of her bound in the same direction. At least, she was no longer to be watched. There was plenty of time, so she drove leisurely, reaching Euston Station with twenty minutes to spare. She sent a wire to Lady Heathcote and then Tom saw her safely into her carriage.

The movement of the train soothed her and she closed her eyes and slept, Wilson like a watchful Gorgon, guarding against intrusion.

There was but one incident which destroyed the peace of the journey. Toward morning, Wilson, who slept with one eye open, wakened her suddenly and asked her quietly to look out of the window. Her train had stopped at a large station, the platform of which was well lighted. From the darkness of their compartment she followed the direction of Wilson's figure. Outside, pacing the platform and smoking cigarettes, were two men.

“What is it?” asked Doris, half asleep.

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"The big one," whispered Wilson excitedly. "It was him that was ridin' the motor-cycle."

Doris remembered passing and repassing the vehicle on the road to London, and the face of its driver came back to her. She peered out at him eagerly and as the man turned she saw the face and figure of the larger man clearly. It was the motor-cycle man, and in a rush the thought came to her that his figure and bearing were strangely familiar.

"It's true," she whispered, her fingers on Wilson's arm. "We're followed. It's the same man. Last night, too."

"Last night?"

"Yes. It's the man called Jim, who searched Mr. Hammersley in the road."

"No," said Wilson, her eyes brightening. "You don't say so, Miss Mather. Of all the brazen——"

"Sh——" said Doris.

But there was no more sleep for either of them that night. Bolt upright, side by side, they watched the dawn grow into sunrise and the sunrise into broad day. They saw no more of the motor-cycle man and Doris reassured herself that there was nothing to be feared now that the packet was— She started in affright. The packet at Betty Heathcote's! Perhaps at this very moment lying innocently in Betty's post-box or in the careless hands of some stupid Scotch gardener, or worse yet inviting curiosity on Betty's desk or library table. Her heart sank within her as she realized that her brave plans might yet miscarry.

It was with a sense of joyous relief that the train pulled at last into Innerwick Station. When she got down she saw Betty Heathcote's yellow brake, the four chestnuts restive in the keen moorland air, and look-

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ing very youthful and handsome in a brown coat which made the symphony complete, the lady herself, the wind in her cheeks and in her cheery greeting.

“Of course, Doris, you’re to be trusted to do something surprising. Oh, here’s Jack Sandys—you didn’t know, of course.”

The sight of these familiar faces gave Doris renewed confidence, and when from the box seat she glanced around in search of her pursuer he had disappeared.

Sandys clambered up behind them. Wilson got into the back seat with the grooms, the boxes went in between, and they were off.

“Constance was tired, Jack. At least she said she was. I really think that all she wanted was to disappoint you. Nothing like disappointment. It breeds aspiration. But,” she added mischievously, “I’m sure she’s *dying* to see you. Awf’ly sad—especially since it’s not quite forty-eight hours since you were waving a tearful good-by in Euston Station.”

“Did you get my package?” whispered Doris in her ear, at the first opportunity.

“What package? Oh, yes, the stockings. It was torn and awf’ly muddy. Higgins dropped it from the dog-cart on the way over and had to go back for it. Lucky he found it—in the middle of the road. What a silly thing to make such a mystery of. And the cigarette papers—you might be sure I’d have something to smoke at Kilmorack House. I can’t understand. You really *could* smoke here if you want to without so much secrecy about it.”

“I—I didn’t know,” stammered the girl. “I—I’ve just taken it up and I thought you mightn’t approve.”

Betty glanced at her narrowly.

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"Whatever ails you, child? *I* disapprove! You know I smoke when I feel like it—which isn't often."

The subject fortunately was turned when they passed the road to Ben-a-Chielt.

"I always envied Cyril his cliffs. I love the sea and Cyril hates it. 'So jolly restless,'" she mimicked him. "Makes one 'quiggledy.' And there I am—away inland—five miles to the firth at the very nearest. But I suppose," she sighed, "one has to overlook the deficiencies of one's grandfather. If he had known I'd have liked the sea, Cyril, of course, would have come into *my* place."

With this kind of light chatter, of which Lady Heathcote possessed a fund, their whip drove them upon their way, her own fine spirits oblivious of the silence of her companions. But at last she glanced at them suspiciously. "If I didn't know that you were both hopelessly in love with other persons, I'd think you were *épris* of each other."

Doris laughed.

"We are. That's why we chose opposite ends of the train."

But Sandys only smiled.

"Nothing that's happening makes a chap happy nowadays. I bring bad news."

Lady Heathcote relaxed the reins so that one of her leaders plunged madly, while her face went white.

"Not Algy——"

"No, no—forgive me. He's safe. I've kept watch of the bulletins."

"Thank God!" said Lady Heathcote, and sent her whiplash swirling over the ears of the erring leader.

"Not Algy—Byfield——"

"Byfield—not dead——?"

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"No. Worse."

"What——?"

"In prison. He was taken into custody yesterday afternoon as he was leaving the War Office. Orders from 'K.'"

"You can't mean that Richard Byfield is——"

Sandys nodded quickly.

"Yes. He was one of the leaks—a spy."

"A spy!" Betty Heathcote whispered in awestricken tones. "A spy—Dick! Horrible! I can't—I won't——"

"Unfortunately there's not the least doubt about it. They found incriminating evidence at his rooms."

"My God!" said Lady Heathcote. "What are we coming to? Dick Byfield—why, two nights ago he was a guest at my table—with you, and you——"

Doris nodded faintly, the landscape swimming in a dark mist before her eyes. Byfield—Cyril—Rizzio—all three had been at Lady Heathcote's dinner. Something had happened that night—only a part of which she knew. Byfield was arrested—and Cyril—— She clutched desperately at the edge of the seat and set her jaw to keep herself from speaking Cyril's name.

"Were there—any others?" she asked, with an effort.

"None so far. But there must have been others. God help them! They won't get any mercy."

"But what made him do such a thing?" asked Betty. "I could have sworn——"

"Money—lots of it. He wasn't very well off, you know."

They were swinging over the ridge towards Kilmo-

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rack House in a tragic silence mocked by the high jubilant notes of the coach horn which the groom was winding to announce their approach.

Doris got down swiftly, summoning her courage to be silent and wait. In the drawing-room when the news was told, Constance Joyliffe added another note of gloom.

"We're going to be a lively party," said Lady Heathcote bitterly. "Thank the Lord, John Rizzio is coming."

"Rizzio!"

Doris flashed around, her terror written so plainly that anyone might read.

"Yes. I had his wire at Innerwick when I was waiting for you." And then catching the girl by the arm, "Why, dear, what is the matter?"

"I—I think I'll go up to my room if you don't mind, Betty. I won't have any luncheon. A cup of tea is all." She moved toward the door, her hand in Lady Heathcote's. "And Betty—the package, please—I—I think it may soothe me to smoke."

Betty examined her quizzically but made no comment, though she couldn't understand such a strange proceeding in a girl who was accustomed to do exactly as she pleased. She got the package from her desk in the library and handed Doris the silk stockings, tobacco, and the yellow packet. The wrapping paper which had been soiled had been relegated to the scrap-basket.

"And Betty——" pleaded Doris as she quickly took them, "promise me that you won't tell John Rizzio."

Lady Heathcote glanced at her quickly and then laughed.

"I suppose I'm the least curious woman in Scot-

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land," she laughed, "but I would really like to know——"

"Don't ask me, Betty," Doris pleaded. "I've a reason—a silly one, perhaps, but I ask you—not to speak of this—to anyone."

"Oh, very well," said Lady Heathcote, "I won't. But don't be mysterious. All mysteries nowadays are looked on with suspicion. Even such an innocent little mystery"—and she laughed—"as a package of cigarette papers."

Doris made some light reply and went to her room, where, with the doors locked, she quickly examined the packet to be sure that it had not been tampered with. Nothing seemed to have been changed and she gave a sigh of relief to think that thus far her secret had escaped detection. It was very clear to her now that John Rizzio had decided that the secret information was in her possession and that his visit was planned with the object of getting it away from her. This should never be. By the light of the window she read and re-read the thin script until the lines were etched upon her memory. She would burn the papers if they were in danger. If Cyril was to meet Captain Byfield's fate, it would be upon other evidence than this. Her hands, at least with regard to Cyril, must be clean.

A knock upon the door and she hurriedly thrust the packet under a table cover and answered. It was the maid with her tea, and upon the tray lay a note in an unfamiliar handwriting. When the maid had gone she tore the flap and read:

Mr. Hammersley begs that Miss Mather will not be unduly alarmed upon his account. Business of

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an urgent nature has detained him but he assures her that he will join her at the earliest possible moment. He begs that she will be careful.

There was no signature and the handwriting was curious—like none to which she was accustomed, but the message seemed somehow to sound like Cyril. She rang for the maid, questioned her, and found that the note had just come over by messenger from Ben-a-Chielt.

When the maid went down, Doris re-read the message thankfully. Cyril was safe—at least for the present. And her relief in the knowledge was the true measure of her relation to him. Whatever else he was, he was the man she had promised to marry—the man who a little later would have been hers for better or for worse. And between Cyril and John Rizzio it had not been difficult to choose. It did not seem difficult now.

She took up the packet of papers and paused before the open fire, a smile playing for the first time at the corners of her lips. John Rizzio! He was clever, as she knew, but there was more than one way of playing the game. Perhaps with her John Rizzio might be at a disadvantage. She hesitated a moment and then—pulled up her skirts and slipped the yellow packet into her stocking.

CHAPTER VI

RIZZIO TAKES CHARGE

RIZZIO was to arrive that night. Meanwhile, with the papers hidden about her and bright fires burning in all the living-rooms of the house in which they could in a moment be destroyed, Doris thought herself well placed upon the defensive. Cyril's note had cheered her, and after removing the dust of her journey she went down into the library, where she joined the other members of the house party assembled. Black seemed to be the prevailing color, for, in addition to the weeds of Lady Constance, there was Wilfred Hammersley, Cyril's uncle, who had lost an only son at La Bassée, and the Heatherington girls, who had lost a brother.

"Ugh!" Lady Betty was saying. "I came to Scotland to try and forget, but the war follows me. Dick Byfield a traitor! Who next? Let's not even speak of it. Come, I've ordered the brake, Doris. We're going out for a spin. You and I and Angeline. Constance of course has a headache, and Jack will be having another for sympathy."

The air outside was life-giving, and when she returned later Doris felt that her brain had been swept clear of its cobwebs of perplexity. She found Wilson standing in her room gazing with a puzzled expression at the tray of her unpacked box, the contents of which were in a state of confusion.

"It's strange, Miss Mather. Someone has been at

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your things while I was down in the servants' hall at luncheon."

"You're sure?"

"Yes, Miss Mather, sure. Quite positive, in fact. Those waists were lying flat when I left."

"The window wasn't open?" asked Doris with a glance around.

"Oh, no, Miss." She looked about and lowered her voice. "It's somebody inside."

"Curious," said Doris thoughtfully. "Nothing has been taken? Is the jewel box there?"

Together they examined the things and found that nothing was missing.

"Say nothing about this, Wilson," said Doris thoughtfully. "Unless something is taken, I shouldn't care to disturb Lady Heathcote."

"It can't be——" Wilson paused, her voice hushed.

"The papers are safe, Wilson—as long as I am safe," replied the girl, and told the maid of her place of concealment.

Wilson looked dubious. "I wish you'd give them to me, Miss Mather."

But the girl shook her head—she was thoroughly alive now to the perils which hung about her, here within the very doors of Lady Heathcote's house, but she had determined that if she could not find it possible to keep the papers until Cyril appeared she would destroy them. She was not frightened, for however clumsy John Rizzio's agents might be she was in no danger from himself. Whatever the interests which made the possession of the yellow packet so vital, she knew the man well enough to be sure that if there came an issue between them, he would act with her as he had always acted—the part of a gentleman.

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Instead of apprehension at his approaching visit she now felt only interest and a kind of suppressed exhilaration as at the prospect of a flight in a new plane or the trying out of a green hunter—excitement like that which preceded all her sportive ventures.

So that when she met John Rizzio in the drawing-room after dinner—he had not been able to manage a more opportune train—she gave him a warm hand-clasp of greeting and a smile which caused him some surprise and not a little regret—surprise that she was carrying off a difficult situation with consummate ease; regret that such self-possession and artistry were not to be added to the ornaments of his house in Berkley Square. Perhaps still——

“How agreeable,” she was saying charmingly. “The great man actually condescends to come to the land of Calvin, oatcake and sulphur, when there are truffles and old Madeira still to be had in London.”

He laughed, his dark eyes appraising her slender blond beauty eagerly.

“I have no quarrel with Calvin. Oatcake—by all means. Sulphur—er—I suppose the sulphur will come in time.”

“Not if you’re polite,” said the girl coolly, “and tell me what brought you so unexpectedly to Scotland.”

They were standing near the fire apart from the others, Doris with one slipper on the fender, which she was regarding approvingly, her head upon one side. He admired her careless tone. She was quite wonderful.

“Perhaps you will not believe me,” he said suavely, “if I were to tell you that I came to see you.”

“Me? I *am* flattered. I thought that great col-

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lectors were always deterred by fear of the spurious."

She was carrying the war into his camp. He met the issue squarely. "They are *only* deterred by the spurious. Therefore I am here. The inference is obvious."

He had always showed the slightest trace of his foreign accent. It went admirably with his shrug and mobile fingers.

"I am genuine in this," she laughed, "that however much you know about pictures, about *objets de vertu*—women must remain for you and for all other men an unknown quantity."

"Not when they are both," he said gallantly.

"There are good and bad pictures—objects of virtue, excessively ugly——"

"Objects of virtue are usually excessively ugly, especially if they are women."

"Thanks," said Doris. "You're most flattering. There's something in the air of Scotland that makes one tell the truth."

He laughed. "If Scotland is as merciless as that, I shall be off in the morning. I could imagine no worse purgatory than a place in which one always tells the truth. Lying is one of the highest arts of a mature civilization. I haven't the slightest notion, nor have you, that either of us means a thing he says. We were all born to deceive—some of us do it in one way, some in another, but we all do it to the very best of our bent. For instance, you said a while ago that it was agreeable for you to see me. But I'm quite sure, you know, that it wasn't."

"It isn't agreeable if you're going to be horrid and cynical. Why *shouldn't* I be glad to see you? You

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always stimulate my intelligence even if you don't flatter it."

The others had moved on to the library and they had the room to themselves.

"I don't see how I could flatter it more than I have already done," he said in a low tone of voice.

She raised her chin a trifle and peered at him slantwise.

"Do you think that you flatter it now when you recall the mistakes of my past?"

He searched her face keenly but her blue eyes met his gaze steadily. She was smiling up at him guilelessly.

"A mistake—of course," he said slowly. "You are young enough to afford to make mistakes. But I am old enough to wish that it hadn't been made at my expense."

"You still care?" she asked.

"I do."

"If I hadn't thought that you wanted me for your collection——"

"You are cruel——"

"No. I know. You wanted me for your portrait harem, and I should have been frightfully jealous of the Coningsby Venus. I couldn't compete with that sort of thing, you know."

He smiled at her admiringly and went on in a low tone.

"You know why I wanted you then, and why I want you now—because you're the cleverest woman in England, and the most courageous."

"It took courage to refuse the hand of John Rizzio."

"It takes more courage in John Rizzio to hear those words from the lips that refused him."

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She laid her hand gently on his arm.

"I am sorry," she said.

He bent his head and kissed her fingers.

"It is not the Coningsby Venus who is essential to my happiness," he whispered. "It's the Doris Diana."

She laughed.

"That's the disillusionment of possession."

"No. The only disillusionments of life are its failures—I got the Venus by infinite patience. The Diana——" He paused and drew in his breath.

"You think that you may get the Diana by patience also?" she asked quietly.

He looked at her with a gaze that seemed to pierce all her subterfuges.

"I waited for the Coningsby Venus," he said in measured tones, "until the man who possessed her— was dead."

She started, and the color left her cheeks.

"You mean—Cyril?" she stammered.

"I mean," he replied urbanely, "precisely nothing— except that I will never give you up."

She recovered her poise with an effort, and when she replied she was smiling gayly.

"I'm not at all sure that I want to be given up," she said, with a laugh that was meant to relax the tension. "You are, after all, one of the best friends I have."

"I hope that nothing may ever happen to make you think otherwise."

Was this a threat? She glanced at him keenly as she quoted:

"'Friendship is constant in all other things save in the office and affairs of love.' May I trust you?"

"Try me."

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"No, I might put you to a test that would be difficult."

"Try me."

"Very well, I will. Go back to London in the morning."

He looked at her and laughed.

"Why?"

"It will be easier for you to be patient there than here——"

"When Hammersley comes?"

"Oh," she said quickly, "then he *is* coming?"

"I don't know why he shouldn't," he said slowly.

There was a pause.

"Shall you go?"

"To London? I'll think about it."

"There! You see? You refuse my first request."

"I would like to know your purpose."

"I think you know it already," she put in quickly.

"You want something that I cannot give you—something that is not mine to give."

She had come out into the open defiantly and he met her challenge with a laugh.

"Because it is Hammersley's?" he said. "You think so and Hammersley thinks so, and possession is nine points of the law. But I will contest."

"Your visit is vain. Go back to London, my friend."

"I find it pleasanter here."

"Then you refuse?"

"I must."

"Then it is war between us."

"If you will have it so," he said, with an inclination of the head. Doris put her foot on the fender and leaned with her hands upon her knee for a moment as

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though in deep thought. Then she turned toward the door.

"Come," she said coolly. "Let us join the others."

There was a relief in the thought that at least they had come to an understanding and that the matter of the possession of the papers had at last become a private contest between them. She had brought the interview to an end not because she was afraid to continue it but because she wanted to think of a plan to disarm him. She felt that she was moving in the dark but she trusted to her delicate woman's sense of touch to stumble upon some chance, some slip of his tongue, which might lead her into the light.

In the drawing-room by common consent all talk of war had been abolished. She sat in at a hand of auction, but playing badly, she was gladly relinquished by her partner at the end of the rubber. John Rizzio, who disliked the game, had gone off for a quiet smoke, but when she got up from the card table he was there waiting for her.

"Cyril shall know of this," laughed Betty, as they went toward the door. "They say that absence makes the heart grow fonder—of the other fellow."

Doris led the way to the gun-room, a place used by Algie Heathcote for his sporting implements and trophies of the chase. It was comfortably furnished in leather and oak and a cheerful fire was burning in the grate. Doris sank into the davenport and motioned to her companion to the place at her side. She was thoroughly alive to her danger, but the sports-woman in her made her keen to put it to the test.

"We are quite alone here," she said coolly. "The others are not even within call. Now what do you want of me?"

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Her audacity rather startled him, but he folded his arms and leaned back smiling.

"The papers of Riz-la-Croix, of course," he said amiably.

"And how do you know they're in my possession?" He shrugged.

"Because they couldn't possibly be anywhere else."

"How do you know?"

"Because I have exhausted every other resource."

"You're frank at least—including the burglary at Ashwater Park and the messing in my box upstairs?"

"And since you must know the full truth," he continued politely, "the careful search of your room in your absence this evening—including the removal of the rugs and bedding. Oh, don't be disturbed, I beg of you," as she made a movement of alarm, "they have all been replaced with a nice care for detail."

"And if I told Lady Heathcote of this——"

"I am quite sure that the best interests of all," he said politely, "are conserved—by silence."

She meditated a moment, her gaze on the coals.

"Yes," she said slowly, "you're clever—more than ordinarily clever. I can't understand how I could ever have refused you. But don't you think your methods have been a little—er—unchivalrous?"

"The importance of my objects admitted of no delay. I hope you have not been inconvenienced——"

"Not in the least," calmly. "My recollection of your many civilities merely made me think that your agents were overzealous."

"I am sorry," he said genuinely. "It could not be helped. You and I are merely pawns in a game greater than anything the world has ever known."

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"I didn't want you to apologize. I merely thought in order to avoid comment that you might have come to me yourself."

"I thought I might save you the unpleasantness of a controversy which can only have one end."

"You mean—that you will win."

"I do."

"How?"

"You will give me the papers—here, tonight."

"And if I told you that I had destroyed them?"

"That would be manifestly untrue, since at the present moment in the position of your body their outline is quite clearly defined on the inside of your right knee."

Doris put both slippers upon the ground, her feet together, her face flushing warmly.

"I hope you will forgive my frankness," she heard him say gently, "but the method of your challenge—is—unusual."

She clasped her hands around her knees and frowned into the fire.

"You mistake, I think, my friend. It is not a challenge. It is merely a method of defense—the safest, I am sure, against John Rizzio."

He bowed low with deep ceremony.

"Of course, I am helpless." And then, "I can only rely on your good sense and"—here his voice sunk a note lower—"and on your loyalty to the cause of England."

This was the opening that she had been waiting for. She thrust quickly.

"And if the cause is England's why didn't Scotland Yard come to Ashwater Park?"

"Dunsinane to Burnam Wood!" he shrugged. "They

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would have made asinine mistakes as they always do—the chief of which would have been that of denouncing Miss Doris Mather as an agent of England's enemies."

The girl tapped her toe reflectively upon the rug.

"I won't attempt subterfuge. Of course, I know the contents of that packet."

"You wouldn't be a woman if you didn't."

"And how it was passed from Captain Byfield to Cyril Hammersley." This was a random shot but it hit the mark. Rizzio's eyes dilated slightly, but she saw them.

"Byfield! Impossible."

"Not at all. Cyril told me," she lied.

"He told you——?" he paused aghast, for now she was laughing at him.

"No—but you have."

His brow tangled and he folded his arms again.

"Of course, you know the importance to Cyril and Captain Byfield of keeping such a matter secret."

He had not heard! He did not know! She remembered that the subject of the dreadful news from London had not been reopened and Jack Sandys' sources of information were probably semiofficial.

She controlled her voice with an effort.

"I would hardly be the one to mention names under the circumstances—since my own fortunes seem to be involved in the matter, but as for Captain Byfield, I'm afraid that further secrecy will hardly help him."

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that he was arrested late yesterday afternoon as he was leaving the War Office."

She had not counted on the effect she created. She

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knew that her last thrust had put him more carefully on guard, but he could not hide the sudden intake of breath and the quick searching glance his dark eyes shot at her.

"What is your source of information?"

"Jack Sandys. He came here directly from Downing Street."

She saw Rizzio's lips meet under his mustache in a thin line.

"So. It has come sooner—than I expected."

He got up and paced the floor, his fingers twitching behind his back. She said nothing, waiting for him to rejoin her. When he did, it was with a serious expression.

"I suppose you know what this means to—to Hammersley," he said in a low voice.

Doris sat without moving, but her brain was busy weighing Rizzio.

"No," she replied calmly, "I don't. Won't you tell me?"

He leaned forward toward her along the back of their seat, his look and voice concentrated upon her.

"Is it possible," he continued, "that you haven't realized by this time exactly what Cyril Hammersley is?"

"No," she said staunchly. "I will believe nothing of him unless he tells it to me himself."

He waited a moment, watching her, and fancied that he saw her lips tremble slightly. Her loyalty to Hammersley inflamed him. He followed up his advantage quickly.

"There are reasons why I should dislike to give you pain, greater reasons why I should be generous with a successful rival, and I have done what I can

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to take this matter out of your hands. There is still time. Will you give me that packet?"

She shook her head.

"Then I must speak," he went on. "My duty demands it, whatever happens to him—whatever happens to you. Don't make me go to extremes with you. I cannot bear to do it. Hammersley is a German spy. Those papers were to be forwarded to Germany. You are saving them for him, that he may betray England."

"That is not true," she said chokingly, "I do not believe it."

"You must. Isn't there proof enough in what you have read?"

"There is some mistake."

"No. There can't be. Your sentiments are blinding you."

"One moment, please." Doris had risen and faced him across the hearth, a new fire of resolution in her eyes. To Rizzio, the lover of beauty, she was a mockery of lost happiness. She was Diana, not the huntress but the hunted.

"You have told me what Cyril Hammersley is. Now if you please I would like to know what *you* are!"

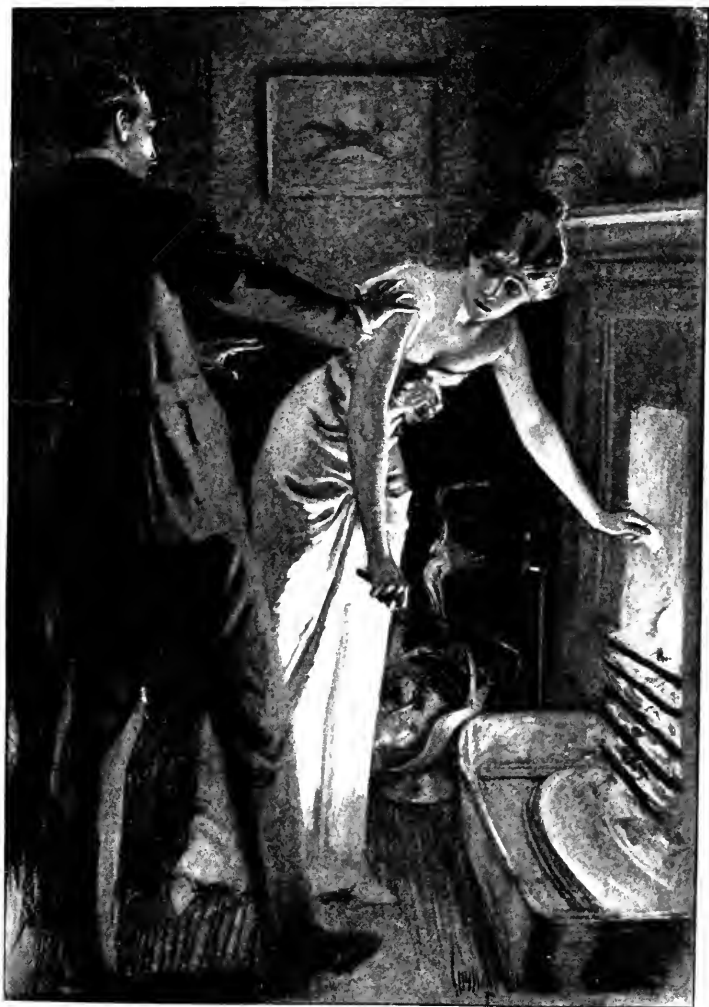
He paused a moment and then with a step toward her said gently:

"I think my interests should be fairly obvious. I am acting for the English Government."

"I have only your word for it. Have you any papers that would prove it—in your card-case, for instance?"

He started back, his fingers instinctively reaching upward. Then he shrugged and laughed.

"You are surely the most amazing person. Un-



“‘Not that,’ he whispered hoarsely, ‘for God’s sake—not that.’”



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fortunately I have no documents. I am only doing my duty as a private citizen—a loyal resident of the Empire.”

“But not a Briton. Neither am I. We meet on equal terms.”

“Then you refuse me—definitely, finally.”

“Yes, I must.”

“I beg that you will consider carefully the alternatives. If you give me the papers—silence on my part—safety for Hammersley. If you refuse to give them up——” he paused.

“Then what will you do?” she defied him.

“It would be the most terrible moment of my life—but I will denounce him—here tonight—tomorrow in London. Those papers must not reach Germany—even if I have to denounce you, too.”

“And if I promise that the papers will not reach Germany?”

He hesitated a moment.

“There is too much at stake. I can’t take the risk. No woman can be trusted——”

“Not even the woman John Rizzio would have made his wife?”

He moved his shoulders expressively. Her youth and cleverness were bewildering him.

“No, that will not do,” he said in desperation. “You must give me the papers.”

“I will not. You shall have to take them from me.”

He leaned toward her along the mantel aware of her dominant loveliness.

“You would not drive me to that!”

“Yes. It *is* a challenge. I offer it. I will fight you, and I am strong. I have a voice and I will raise

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an outcry. They will come and I will tell them. Then you can denounce me? Will you dare?"

He came toward her while she fled around the davenport, eluding him with ease. She was swifter of foot than he. He stopped a moment near the gun-rack to plead. She kept the huge oak lounge between them and listened by the fire. Something she saw in his eyes decided her, for as he came forward to leap over the davenport she threw something yellow toward him.

He gave a gasp of relief, picked the object up and made a cry of dismay.

"The cover! I must have the papers," he cried, coming forward again.

By this time the girl was standing upright, a poker in one hand, the thin cigarette papers cramped in the fingers of the other, over the open fire.

Rizzio paused in the very act of leaping.

"Not that," he whispered hoarsely, "for God's sake—not that."

"Stay where you are, then," said the girl in a low resolute tone.

Rizzio straightened. Doris still bent over the fire.

"Give it to me," he said again.

"No. England's secrets shall be safe."

"Don't you understand?" he whispered wildly. "I've got to prove that they are."

"I can prove that as well as you——"

"But you won't. Hammersley is——"

He paused and both of them straightened, listening. Outside in the hall there was a commotion and a familiar voice as the Honorable Cyril, his face and fur coat spattered with mud, came into the room.

CHAPTER VII

AN INTRUDER

HE looked from one to the other with a quickly appraising eye. The girl was fingering the lace of her bodice. Rizzio had turned toward the newcomer recovering his poise.

"Hope I'm not intrudin'," said Hammersley, with a laugh.

"Well, hardly. You've come in a hurry."

"Yes," drawled Hammersley. "I missed your train, I think. Too bad. Jolly slow work travelin' alone. Stryker picked me up at Edinburgh and we came on by motor."

He took off his fur coat in leisurely fashion and crossing to the fireplace took Doris's proffered hand. "You had my note?" he asked carelessly.

The girl nodded. "I was glad," she said.

"Well, I'm here. Jolly happy, too. Had a narrow squeak of it, though. Some bally idiot stretched rope across the road over by Saltham Rocks, but we saw it in time, and went around. Fired a few shots at us, too. Must have taken me for Rizzio. What?" he laughed.

Thus directly appealed to, Rizzio smiled grudgingly.

"You don't ask me to believe that story, Hammersley," he said dryly.

"You don't have to, Rizzio."

The girl's look was fixed on Hammersley's face. Suddenly she broke in with a voice of alarm.

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"Cyril—you're hurt—and there's blood on your coat——"

"Is there? By Jove, so there is—it doesn't matter. I wouldn't mind a peg though—and a cigarette."

Doris had started for the door in alarm.

"Wait!" Hammersley's voice came sharply. And as she paused, "Ring, Doris."

She understood and touched the button beside the door.

"We might as well have an understanding before they come, Rizzio," put in Hammersley quickly. "Do you prefer to believe my story—or would you like to invent one of your own?"

Rizzio shrugged. "As you please," he said. "It seems that I am *de trop* here." At the door he paused and finished distinctly. "I hope that your explanations will prove satisfactory."

Doris had helped Cyril off with his coat and by the time the maid brought Betty Heathcote, had cut away the sleeve of his shirt with Cyril's pocket knife. It was merely a gash across the upper arm, which a bandage and some old-fashioned remedies would set right.

Lady Heathcote heard the story (from which Hammersley eliminated the rope) with amazement, and was for sending at once for the local constabulary.

"Oh, it's hardly worth while," said the Honorable Cyril, sipping his whiskey and water, comfortably. "Poor devils—out of work, I fancy. Wanted my money. If they'd come to Ben-a-Chielt tomorrow I'd give it to 'em. But I wouldn't mind, Betty, if you could put me up for the night. I'm not keen to be dodgin' bullets in the dark."

"Of course," said Lady Heathcote. "How extraor-

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dinary! I can't understand—Saltham Rocks—that's on my place. Something must be done, Cyril."

Hammersley yawned. "Oh, tomorrow will do. Couldn't catch the beggars in the dark. Besides, it's late. Do me a favor, Betty. Don't let those people come in here again. I want a word with Doris."

He had stretched himself out comfortably on the Davenport, his eyes on the girl, who still stood uncertainly beside him.

Lady Betty shrugged, and taking up her basin and lotion moved toward the door.

"It's most mysterious. Are you sure we're quite safe?"

"Quite. But I think it might be better if I had the room between yours and Doris's."

"I was putting John Rizzio there."

"Well, change—there's a dear. And say nothing about it. I—I might need a new dressing on this thing in the night."

She examined him curiously, but he was looking lazily into the fire, having already taken her acquiescence for granted.

When she went out, Hammersley sat up and threw his cigarette into the fire.

"You have it still?" he whispered anxiously, taking Doris by both hands.

She nodded.

"Thank God for that. I seemed to have arrived at the proper moment."

"I was about to burn them."

He drew a long breath of relief.

"You know what they are?"

"Yes. I read them."

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"I was afraid you would. You have spoken to no one."

"No," proudly. "Hardly. After what I went through." And, with an air of restraint, she told him everything.

He listened, a serious look in his eyes.

"It was my fault. I should have left them in the machine. I got away scot free."

"Yes, I know. I saw you."

"You poor child," he said softly. "I was desperate. I thought it necessary. How can I ever thank you?"

"You can't." The tones of her voice were strange.

"I'd jolly well give my life for you, Doris. You know that," he said earnestly.

"It's something less than that that I want, and something more—your word of honor."

"My word——?"

"Yes," she went on quietly. "To forswear your German kinship and give me an oath of loyalty to England. Difficult as it is, I'll believe you."

"Sh—!" He glanced toward the door. All the windows of the room were closed. "He told you that I was a German spy?" he whispered anxiously.

"You forget that I had proof of that already."

He sat up and looked into the fire. "I hoped you wouldn't read 'em. It has done no good."

"I have no regrets. I will not betray England, Cyril, even for you."

He rose and paced the rug in front of her for a moment. Then he spoke incredulously in a whisper.

"You mean that you won't give 'em to me?"

"I mean that—precisely."

"But that is impossible," he went on, with greater

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signs of excitement than she had ever seen in him. "Don't you realize now that every moment the things are in your possession you're in danger—great danger? Isn't what you've gone through—isn't this"—and he indicated his arm—"the proof of it?"

"Yes," she said firmly. "But I would rather suffer injury myself than see you share the fate of Captain Byfield."

He started. "Oh, you heard that?"

"Yes. Jack Sandys is here." She put her face in her hands in the throes of her doubts of him and then suddenly thrust out her hands and laced her fingers around his arm.

"Oh, give it up, Cyril, for my sake give it all up. Can't you see the terrible position you've placed me in? If I give these papers to Jack Sandys they'll come and take you as they took Captain Byfield. I've kept them for you, because I promised. But I cannot let this information get to Germany. I would die first. What shall I do?" she wailed. "What on earth *can* I do?"

His reply made her gasp.

"There's a fire," he said quietly. "Burn 'em."

Her fingers went to her corsage and her eyes gleamed with a new hope. She took the crumpled rice-papers out and looked at them. Then in a flash the thought came to her.

"You know the information contained in these papers?" she asked in an accent of deprecation.

"No," he replied shortly. "I merely glanced at them."

"You hadn't the chance to study them?"

"No."

Still she hesitated. "But what—what is Rizzio?"

He walked to the door of the room, opening it sud-

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denly. Then he shut it quietly and coming back to the fire took the poker and made a hole between the glowing coals.

“Burn ’em!” he commanded.

She obeyed him wonderingly and together they watched the package of rice-papers flame into a live coal and then turn to ashes. When the last vestige of them had disappeared, they sat together on the davenport, Cyril thoughtful, the girl bewildered.

“What is Rizzio?” she repeated. “He told me that he was an agent of the English Government.”

“I can’t tell you,” he whispered hoarsely. “I can’t tell you anything—even you. Don’t you understand?”

“No, I don’t. It’s your word against his. I would rather believe you than him. I want to, Cyril. God knows I want to.”

“Didn’t I ask you to burn the papers? Didn’t he try to prevent it?”

“Yes.”

“Can’t you see? If he were acting for England, it wouldn’t matter what became of ’em if they didn’t reach Germany.”

“Oh, I thought of that—but what you have told me bewilders me. Why should you run away with secrets of England—given you by a traitor who is about to pay the penalty with—with death? What does it mean? Why didn’t you take those papers at once to the War Office? Why did Captain Byfield give them to you? He—a traitor—to you—Cyril! It is all so horrible. I am frightened. Your danger—Rizzio’s men, here—tonight—all about us.”

“If they were English secret service men,” Cyril put in quietly, “wouldn’t they come here to this house and arrest me in the name of the law?”

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"Yes. There must be other reasons why they can't. What is the contest between you and Rizzio? Tell me. Tell me everything! I will believe you. Haven't I kept your trust? If I could do that—for your sake—do you not think that I could keep silent for England's sake?"

Her arms were about his neck, and her lips very close to his, but he turned his head away so that the temptation might not be too strong for him.

"I can't," he muttered, "I cannot speak—even to you. I am sworn to secrecy."

She drooped upon his arms and then moved away despairingly. It was the failure of the appeal of her femininity that condemned him.

"Oh, you won't let me believe in you. You won't let me. It's too great a test you're asking of me. Everything is against you—but the worst witness is your silence!"

He stood by the mantel, his head lowered.

"It is hard for you—hard for us both," he said softly, "but I can't tell you anythin'—anythin'." He raised his head and looked at her with pity. She had sunk upon the divan, her head upon her arms in a despair too deep for tears.

He crossed and laid his hand gently upon her shoulder.

"You must trust in me if you can. I will try to be worthy of it. That's all I can say." He paused. "And now you must go to bed. You're a bit fagged. Perhaps in the mornin' you'll pull up a bit and see things differently."

She straightened slowly and their eyes met for a moment. His never wavered, and she saw that they were very kind, but she rose silently and without offer-

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ing him her lips or even her hand, moved slowly toward the door.

He reached it in a stride before her and put his hand upon the knob.

"There's one thing more I've got to ask."

Her look questioned.

"You must sleep in my room tonight, next to Betty's. I shall sleep in yours."

Her weary eyes sought his with an effort.

"You mean you think Rizzio—would still——?"

She paused.

"Yes, he thinks you would not give them to me."

And then, with a laugh, "You wouldn't, you know."

"And if I tell him I have burned them——"

"He will not believe you."

"He would not believe me," she repeated in a daze.

"You must do what I ask," Cyril went on quietly. "I know what is best. I'll arrange it with Betty." He glanced at his watch. "One o'clock. By Jove! It's time even for auction players."

She promised him at last after a protest on his own account.

"Nothin' to worry about," he laughed. "They may not try anythin', and when they find I'm there they'll bundle out in a hurry."

Thus reassured she went out to the drawing-room where the card players were just rising. Rizzio was nowhere to be seen. Cyril at once took their hostess aside and told her that Doris was a little upset by the shooting, asking if Betty would mind letting her take the room next to her own, so that she could open the door between.

"Don't say anything about it, Betty," he urged. "Just ask her in, won't you, when you get upstairs."

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“And you?”

“I could do a turn on steel spikes,” he laughed.

“Your arm?”

“Right as rain. It’s nothing at all.”

Doris accepted the situation without a word. Indeed she was numbed with the fatigue of strained nerves. The swift rush of incident since Betty’s London dinner, with its rapid alternations of hope and fear, had left her bewildered and helpless. But it was the interview with Cyril tonight that had plunged her into the dark abyss of despair. She had tried so hard to believe in him, but he would do nothing to take away the weight that had been dragging her down further and further from the light. A new kind of love had come to her, born of the new Cyril who had won her over by the sheer force of a personality, the existence of which she had not dreamed. A short time ago she had wanted to see him awake—a firebrand—and she had had her wish, for she had kindled to his touch like tinder. But tonight, in her utter weariness, it seemed as though her spirit was charred, burnt to a cinder, like the package of papers in the grate in the gun-room, destroyed, as the secret message had been, in the great game that Cyril was playing.

She undressed slowly, listening for any sounds that might come from the room next door, but the only sign she had of him was the familiar smell of his pipe tobacco which came through the cracks and key-hole. A little later Betty Heathcote came in prepared for what she called a “back hair talk,” but found her guest so unresponsive that at last she went into her own room and bed. Doris lay for a while watching the line of light under Cyril’s door, wondering what he was doing and what the night was to bring forth. One memory

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persisted in the chaos of the night's events. Cyril didn't know the contents of the papers and yet he had commanded her to burn them. The thought quieted her, and at last she saw the light in his room go out, then, after a time, in spite of her weariness, she slept.

* * * * *

She awakened, trembling with terror, listening for she knew not what. And then as her wits slowly came to her, she was aware of the sounds which had awakened her. They were suppressed, secret, and strange, but none the less terrible, the shuffling of feet, hoarse whispers, and the creaking of straining furniture. She sat upright, slipped to the floor quickly, and, getting into the dressing-gown at the foot of the bed, stood for a moment in the middle of the room, her heart beating wildly. Then with quick resolution she moved swiftly to Betty Heathcote's room and, after assuring herself that her hostess still slept, closed the door softly and passed the bolt.

Again she hesitated. The sounds from Cyril's room continued, the hard breathing of men who seemed with one accord to be trying to keep their struggles silent. Aware of her danger, but considering it less than the physical need for immediate action, with trembling fingers she turned the key and quickly opened the door.

At first, silence, utter and profound, but full of a terror which a breath might reveal.

"Cyril! What is it?" she managed to whisper.

"Sh—" she heard. And dimly, in the pale moonlight, she made out the dark blur of figures upon the floor in the corner of the room.

"Cyril!" she repeated.

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"It's all right," she heard in a breathless whisper. "Go back to your room. It's nothin'."

But having ventured thus far she did not hesitate, and closing the door behind her came forward. Upon the floor, half against the wall, was the figure of a man. Cyril was sitting on his legs and holding him with one hand by the neck cloth.

"You're safe?" she whispered.

"Yes. Go back to bed. Don't you understand—if anyone came——?"

"I don't care." Her curiosity had triumphed. She leaned forward and saw that it was John Rizzio.

"Rizzio!" she whispered. "My room!"

"I ought to kill him, Doris," said Cyril savagely, "but I've only choked him a little. He'll come around in a minute." And then more quietly: "Get me a glass of water, but don't make a fuss, and don't make a light. There are men outside."

She obeyed, and in a moment Rizzio revived and sat up, Cyril standing over him, his fist clenched.

"Oh, let him go, Cyril, please," Doris pleaded.

At the sound of the girl's voice Rizzio started and with Cyril's help struggled to his feet.

"Yes, he's going the way he came—by the window," growled Hammersley. "Head first, if I have my way."

Rizzio succeeded in a smile, though he was still struggling for breath.

"I suppose—I—I must thank you for your generosity, Hammersley," he said with as fine a return of his composure as his throat permitted. "I have been guilty of—of an error in judgment——"

"I'm sorry you think it's only that," said Cyril dryly. "Now go," he whispered threateningly, pointing to the window.

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"In a moment—with your permission," he said, recovering his suavity with his breath. "In extenuation of this visit, terrible as it seems to Miss Mather, I—I can only say that if I had succeeded I would have saved her from remembering some day that she had given England's secrets into the hands of the enemy."

"You're mistaken," said Doris quietly. "I have burned them."

"You—you burned them?"

"Yes—tonight."

Rizzio peered at her in silence for a long moment and then shrugged. "Oh," he said, "in that case, I have made two errors in judgment——"

"You'll make a third, if you're not out of that window in half a second," said Cyril.

But Rizzio laughed at him.

"I don't think it would be wise to make a disturbance——" he said coolly. "I think Miss Mather will admit my generosity to herself and to you when I say that I've only to raise my voice and have half a dozen men up here in a moment."

Doris clutched him fearfully by the arm, thinking of Cyril.

"You'd not do that——?"

Hammersley laughed dryly.

"There's no danger," he said.

"No," returned Rizzio with a touch of his old magnificence. "There is no danger of that—the reasons are obvious."

As he moved toward the window Hammersley touched him lightly on the arm.

"I warn you, Rizzio," he said in a low concentrated tone, "that you're playing a dangerous hand. I should punish you—but other agencies——"

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Rizzio halted. "Yes, other agencies——" he replied significantly. He bowed in the girl's direction and sitting on the window-sill he threw his feet outside. "I bid you good night." And carefully feeling for his footing he slowly descended.

Cyril Hammersley followed him to the window, and Doris took a step in his direction, when her thinly slippered foot touched something in the wooden floor—something which slid upon the polished surface from the shadow into the moonlight. Instinctively she glanced down and then started—scarcely restraining a gasp. There, unmistakable in the shape and color for so many hours graven on her mind, was a yellow packet of Riz-la-Croix cigarette papers. She glanced at Cyril, who was closing the casement window, then stooped and, picking up the packet, fled noiselessly into her room and quickly locked the door.

CHAPTER VIII

EVIDENCE

INSIDE her own room she stood for a moment tremulously in the dark, fingering the guilty thing in her hands as she had fingered the other one—the one she had destroyed. Or hadn't she destroyed it? For a moment the thought came to her that Cyril had practiced some trick upon her when they had knelt before the fire, substituting other papers for the ones that were to be burned. But that was impossible. The papers had not touched his fingers. He it was who had made a hole for them in the fire, but her fingers had thrust the original papers into the glowing coals. She turned the packet over and over in her fingers, glancing at the closed door that separated her from Cyril. Another message! It must be.

She pulled the curtains at the window and then moving quietly to the bed, lit the candle on the nightstand. Another packet of Riz-la-Croix, new like the other, with its tiny thin rubber band. She opened it quickly and scanned its pages, finding what she sought without difficulty. The writing was not in the same hand. It was rounder and less minute, covering in all seven pages, and it was written carelessly as if the writer had been in a hurry. Cyril's own handwriting it seemed. The purport of its message was the same.

No. She remembered the dates. These were some-

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what different. The names of the regiments were the same, but the dates instead of days in April and May gave days in the months of June and July. And the numerals which at first had puzzled her were smaller. For instance, among "Highland Regiments Foot" the numerals of which she remembered particularly, instead of 120,000 she saw the numerals 42,000. It was the same under other headings in the remainder of the items. Under "shrapnel" there were changes, and under "artillery"——

She closed the packet in icy fingers, for the figures swam before her eyes. They were all true—all the horrible things that she had thought of Cyril! This was later and more accurate information—the exact reason for which she did not pretend to understand—and was intended to follow the previous message—perhaps to be used as a code in connection with it. Cyril was—— Oh, the dishonor of it! And she had gone to sleep almost ready to believe in him again—because he had let her burn the other papers. What did it matter to him whether she burned the papers when he had other messages to send and had committed to memory the facts he had let her destroy? He had lied to her. He was false as Judas and more dangerous, for now she knew that he was desperate as well as cunning, stooping to any means, no matter how ignoble, to gain his ends. She had been a mere bauble in his hands, a child upon whose credulity he had played without scruple. He had used her, the woman he had said he loved, for his own unworthy ends as he used Betty Heathcote and her house. She was filled with shame for him and for herself, who could love something shameful.

And John Rizzio! Rizzio, Cyril's enemy, stood for

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England and right, and she had permitted herself to see through Cyril's eyes just as Cyril had wanted her to see.

It seemed as she compared them that Rizzio's nobility attained a firmer contour. He had come to her room to save her from her own ignorance and wilfulness, from committing a crime, the greatest of all crimes against England. Rizzio knew what Cyril was and on her account had refrained from giving Cyril up to the officers of the law, although they were within call—even when he felt himself yielding to the fury of Cyril's superior physical strength. Not even the spirit of revenge for the punishment Cyril had given him, not even the humiliation he had suffered before her eyes had been enough to make him forget his intention to save, if he could, for the woman who loved him, a successful rival. And she, Doris, had stood by Cyril's side warm in Cyril's cause, against the one man who held Cyril's fate as the bearer of treacherous messages, in his hand.

There was still danger in the air. The last words of the two men to each other had been hidden threats of "other agencies," whatever they were, and she found herself praying in a whisper that the agency of England, even if it meant Cyril's danger, might conquer. O God! It would have been better, it seemed, if the bullet at Saltham Rocks that had grazed Cyril's arm had killed him. That death would at least have been free from the shame of that which awaited Captain Byfield.

She gazed with wide eyes at her guttering candle. She was wishing for Cyril's death! She shivered with pity for herself and for him and huddled down in the bed, a very small, very miserable object, seeking in

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vain some hope, some rest for her mind amid the torture of her thoughts.

Suddenly she started up and sat clutching the yellow packet to her breast, her gaze fixed on the door into Cyril's room. Had she heard a knock? Or was it only imagination? Yes. There it was again. She leaned over hurriedly and blew out the candle and lay very still, her teeth chattering with the cold, her body trembling. He was knocking again, a little louder this time, and she heard his voice through the keyhole whispering her name. She made no response and feigned sleep. He knocked again still louder and she heard her name spoken quite distinctly. He would awaken the house if this went on. When he knocked again she got up and went over to the door.

"Doris!" he was saying.

She answered him.

"Will you open the door—just a crack?"

"No," she whispered.

"I want to speak to you."

"You cannot."

"Please."

"I'm listening. What do you want to say?"

"I've lost something—something that must have fallen from my pocket."

She was silent.

And then in quick anxious tones:

"You didn't see—anythin'—on the floor by the door?"

"No," she lied, trembling. "I didn't."

She heard him mutter.

"You're sure?" came his voice again.

"Yes."

And then in dubious tones:

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"Oh, very well then. Sorry to have troubled you. Good night."

She didn't reply and stole back through the darkness to her bed, into which she crept, like some thin wraith of vengeance, biding her time.

Into bed, but not to sleep. She watched the moonlight grow pale into the west and saw the first gray streaks of dawn paint the wooded slopes of Ben Darrah across the valley of the Dorth. In pity for herself and Cyril she watched the new day born, a new day, bleak and cheerless, which seemed by its very aspect to pronounce a sentence upon them; the new day which was to mark the passing of all the things growing womanhood holds most dear, her first faith, her first tenderness, her first passion.

Doris kept to her room until Betty came in, awakening her from a heavy sleep into which she had fallen just before sunrise. Lady Heathcote rang for Wilson and then retired to the ministrations of her own maid, leaving Doris to dress for the morning at her leisure. And when the girl got downstairs to breakfast she found that the other guests had preceded her. But Betty Heathcote was still in the breakfast room picking with dainty fingers at the various dishes upon the sideboard and making sparkling comment as was her custom on men and things. She found the disappearance of John Rizzio, bag, baggage and man, from Kilmareck House without even a line to his hostess both unusual and surprising, since her guest was a man who made much of the amenities and forms of proper behavior. Doris commented in a desultory way, trying to put on an air of cheerfulness, aware of Cyril Hammersley somewhere in the background awaiting the chance to speak to her alone. She did not hurry, and

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when Betty arose sauntered into the library where the other guests were waiting for the horses to come around. Twice Cyril tried to speak to her, but she avoided him skillfully, contriving to be a part of a group where personal topics were not to be discussed. That kind of maneuvering she knew was a game at which any woman is more than a match for any man. But she saw by the cloud that was growing in Cyril's eyes that he was not in the mood to be put off with excuses, and realized that the sooner the pain of their interview was over, the better it would be for both of them. She was dressed in the long coat and breeches which she wore in the hunting field, and in her waistcoat pocket was the yellow packet.

"I've got to see you for half an hour alone," he said at last, taking the bull by the horns.

"I shall miss my ride."

"They're taking the long road to Ben-a-Chielt. I'll take you there in the motor and send your mount on by a groom."

She acquiesced with a cool shrug which put him at once upon his guard, but Doris had reached a pass when all she wanted was to bring their relations to an end as speedily and with as little pain as possible. So that when the others had gone she sank into a chair before the fire, coldly asking him what he wanted. He stood with his back to the hearth, his hands clasped behind him, in a long moment of silence as though trying to find the words to begin.

"Well?" she asked insolently.

"What has happened since last night to change you so, Doris?"

"I've had a chance to think."

"Of what?"

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"That it was time you and I had an understanding."

"I don't see——"

"Wait!" she commanded, with a wave of the hand.

"There isn't anything that you can say that will make me change my mind. Therefore the sooner this talk is over the better for both of us. I've told you and you know already that my whole soul is wrapped in the cause of England in this war. I can have nothing but pity and contempt for any Englishman——"

She paused, for at this moment, the parlor maid appeared and, gathering up some brasses on Lady Heathcote's desk, went out of the room.

"I beg that you will be more careful, Doris," Cyril whispered.

She was silent a moment, and then after a glance at the dining-room door, went on with more restraint.

"Pity and contempt are hardly the kind of ingredients that love can live on. They've poisoned mine. It's dead. I don't want to see you again," she finished coldly—"ever. I hope you understand."

He bowed his head and for a moment made no reply.

"I asked——" he said slowly, "I hoped—that you would be willin' to trust me—that you'd wait until I was able to speak to you—to explain the—the things you do not understand."

"Unfortunately," she put in distinctly, "there is nothing that I do not understand. I know—God help you!—what you are. I have done what I can to save you from the fate you're courting—and I shall still do so, for the sake of—of what once was—was between us. But I do not want to see you again. I have put you out of my life—completely—as though you never had been in it. And now," she rose, "will you let me go?"

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"One moment, please," he said calmly. "You found those papers last night?"

"Yes," she said coolly. "And if I did?"

He seemed to breathe more freely.

"I have nothing to say," he muttered.

"Oh," she said quickly, "I'm glad of that. You don't deny——?"

"I deny nothing," he said with a shrug. "I see that it would be useless."

"I'm glad you give me credit for that much intelligence," she said scathingly. "You haven't done so before."

"It was not your intelligence," he said gently, "so much as your heart that I had relied upon."

"Oh, you thought I was a fool that you could use— indefinitely——"

"No. I thought you were a woman that I could count on indefinitely."

Something in the tone of his own voice made her turn and look at him.

"A woman—yes, but not an enemy of England."

He was silent again, and when he spoke it was not to argue. His voice was subdued—shamed even it seemed.

"And now—I suppose you will give the—the papers to Sandys," he said.

She examined him closely and pity for him seemed even stronger than shame.

"It is a part of our misunderstanding," she said coolly, "that you should think so little of me. I have told you that I shall protect you. My hands shall be clean, if my heart isn't."

"What will you do with the papers?" he asked.

"This," and she turned toward him—"burn them."

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She put her hand into her pocket, drew out the papers and went toward the hearth. Her hand was even extended toward the fire when, with a quick movement, he snatched the yellow packet from her fingers.

She fell away from him in dismay, as if she had been touched by something poisonous, touching her wrist and the fingers into which her rings had been driven. Then she hid her face in her hands and closed her eyes.

"Oh!" she gasped. "You'd pay my generosity—with *this!*"

He had examined the papers coolly and had put them into his pocket.

"I? I don't count in a game like this—nor do you. I'm sorry. They were mine. You took them. I had to have them."

"Then *this*——" she stammered, "*this* was what you kept me here for?"

"I had to have them," he repeated dully. That was all. Her wrist and fingers burned where he had hurt them. A brute—a coward—as well as a traitor. She straightened proudly and with a look at his bowed head, she went by him and out of the room.

Hammersley stood as she had left him for a moment and only raised his head when the parlor maid came in again and replaced the brasses on Lady Heathcote's desk. In his eyes there came a keen look and he took a step forward.

"Do you always clean Lady Heathcote's brasses on Friday?" he asked the maid.

She turned around with a startled air.

"Oh, yes, sir," she replied demurely. "Friday, sir."

"Oh!" said Hammersley. "Thanks."

She stood a moment as if awaiting further questions and then went out.

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Hammersley followed her with his gaze and then with a last look around the room went into the hall, put on his fur coat and cap and quickly made his way toward the garage.

Upstairs Doris paced her room in an agony of rage and humiliation. She had meant to give him his dismissal kindly, but it was his abjectness that had made her scornful—abjectness worn as she now knew with an object that was indifferent to scorn. It was only with the purpose of getting the papers from her that he had kept her there, and the contempt that she had shown for him seemed but a piteous thing beside the enormity of his brutality. He had not cared what she thought of him. He had not cared. He had said so himself. Their love was a trifle beside the greater matter that concerned him.

He had led her on under the guise of a shame he did not feel, from one revelation to another, playing upon her emotions, upon things which should have been sacred even to him in such an hour until with infinite cunning he had made her bring out the papers—and then——

Rage possessed her. She felt that she had been tricked—with weapons that he should have scorned to use. She hated him at that moment, not as she hated the secrecy and dishonor of his cause, but as a man who could take advantage of a woman, as a hypocrite, a coward, a bully.

She knew the fury of Dido, but she felt the pain of Ariadne too. She heard the sound of his roadster and ran to the window, peering dark-eyed through the muslin curtains, and saw him go by under her windows, low down in his seat, his gaze fixed on the road ahead, driving fast, Stryker beside him. He passed without

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even a glance upward or back—out of her life. It seemed to her that if he had turned his head just then and given one look at the house even, she could have forgiven him much, but she watched him until he turned the angle of the road and was gone.

Their interview had seemed so brief—in all it seemed scarcely more than a moment—to have made such a horrible change in her way of looking at things. If he had protested innocence, fought, if even so weakly, against her evidence, fought with a man's strength against odds the danger of losing the woman he wanted, she could have seen him go with a calmness born of woman's inherent right to dismiss. But this—! Death surely was no worse than for a woman to be spurned by such a man.

After a while tears came, and they helped her, tears of anger, if you will, but tears, soft and humid, in which to a woman there is always a kind of bitter sweetness, too. She threw herself on her bed in her riding togs, her mannish coat and mannish boots, eloquent of their own pretensions. In spite of them and the things they typified she was merely a very tired little girl, weeping her heart out as other little girls had done before and will again, because her lover had gone away from her.

Toward luncheon time when the others were expected to return she got up, bathed her eyes and, summoning Wilson, changed into a dress for the afternoon. Pride came to her rescue now, and with the help of her maid and the mysterious process with which maids are familiar she managed to make herself presentable enough to avoid notice from so keen an observer as her hostess. Doris found herself smiling, and doing her share of conversation in a mechanical way which left a ques-

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tion in her mind as to the depth of her own emotions. But the weight about her heart, the dull echo of reiterated thoughts pervaded all and she knew that it was merely that her spirit was dulled, her heart numb, like a nerve from the shock of a blow. She stole away when she could with a book to the gun-room, where she could sit alone and try to put her thoughts in order.

CHAPTER IX

THE VIKING'S TOWER

THERE in the middle of the afternoon the butler brought her a note. For a moment before she read the superscription, a wild rush of something which might have been joy yet could not be, sent a pale flush of color into her cheek. But she glanced at the envelope carelessly, and when the man had gone, quickly opened it.

It was from John Rizzio, signed with the familiar initials and begun without either name or qualification:

You will think it strange, perhaps, that I should write to you after the events of last night, because the modesty of a woman is the last thing that forgives. My action is beyond apology and I offer none for fear that it may be construed into a hope—a selfish hope of an unimaginable forgiveness. Hope has passed—that with the others, but something else remains, something less selfish than hope and more vital than self-interest and that is a whole-hearted wish that your honor may be kept free from the taint of the dark and furtive things with which it has come into contact.

I am not a man, as you know, to boast of disinterestedness. I have lived a life in which my own affairs were always paramount, my own aims always most important. I am telling you this to warn you that my generosity to Hammersley is not actuated by any love of a man who has spoiled my dearest

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ambition, but by the continued esteem with which I still regard yourself. I do not love him; and my own wish, my duty, my own honor, my loyalty to England all acclaim that he should be delivered at once to those in authority. And yet I have refrained—for you, Doris. But I have learned that H—— is in communication with G—— and that Crenshaw of Scotland Yard is on the alert. I may not be able to save him.

This is an appeal to the one person who has the most influence with him and I ask that you use whatever power over him you possess to bring him to a sense of the impossibility of his mad plans. If you still have doubt as to the character of the work he has undertaken, I ask that you go to Ben-a-Chielt tonight and listen secretly to convincing proof of what he is. For tonight at one o'clock on the cliffs near the old Viking's Tower, he will meet a personal messenger from G——.

I appeal to you for England—but more than for England, for—yourself.

Yours,

J. R.

Doris read the note through again and again, her thoughts blurring unpleasantly, like a photograph out of focus. It seemed impossible that she could do what he asked of her. Every instinct, wounded and sore from her last encounter, revolted at the thought of meeting Cyril again under the conditions presented. It was impossible that she should go. Cyril would only laugh at her or, what would be worse, show her the callousness and brutality that he had done this morning. Rizzio asked her to do what she could. Why should she save him? What had he done to merit such a sacrifice of pride on her part. The past?

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That was dead and Cyril buried with it. England? She put her head forward into her hands and pressed her fingers to her temples. England!

As the afternoon faded into night the conviction grew in Doris's mind that the situation made personal considerations unimportant. After dinner she excused herself and, dressing warmly, toward twelve o'clock went downstairs past the library door and out to the stables. She found a sleepy groom and, giving him a liberal fee as the price of his silence, had a side-saddle put on a good horse and made her way in the direction of Ben-a-Chielt. She knew the road well, for she had traveled it many times with Cyril and Betty during the previous summer when all the world was gay and she and Cyril were lovers. She was a little nervous at being alone on the moor in the darkness, but not frightened. She gave herself greater hardihood by trying to remember that Cyril and Rizzio were gentlemen, one of whom she had thought she could have trusted with her life, the other a friend who wanted to be trusted with it—and now protested he held her honor dearer than his own. Not her enemies surely; and the thought of physical harm from either of them, the only thing that could have deterred her from this midnight venture, did not occur to her. But as she came to Saltham Rocks, the scene of Cyril's last night's encounter, she pressed forward more rapidly with a keen eye upon the gray blur of the road. She reached the cross-roads, her breath coming a little more rapidly, pulled her horse down to a walk and turned in upon Cyril's property, going forward more slowly. Until the present moment she had formulated no plan of action, nor had counted upon the possibilities of discovery, so she rode cautiously, making a long de-

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tour across the moor to avoid the lights of one of the keepers' houses which stood upon the road. She found that she had to choose her way among the rocks and whins, but her horse was sure-footed, and at a walk there was little danger of a cropper. She kept the road in sight and by the fitful light of the stars, between the rack of mist and clouds that were coming in from the sea, she made her way in the general direction of the Lodge. On her right she had glimpses of the sea beyond the cliffs and heard the pounding of the surf upon the rocks and shingle. The Viking's Tower was up among the rocks near Beaufort Head, half a mile beyond the house. She had been there with Cyril many times, and from the ruined wall had sat with him and looked out over the North Sea, while he had told her in his sportive vernacular the story of the tower and of the "Johnnies" who had built it. It was difficult to identify that Cyril now with the man of mystery lurking out here somewhere in the dark, his mind set on the odious business of betraying his country.

The Lodge was set inland from the sea in a valley between two ridges which narrowed down to a fissure in the rocks that fell away to Beaufort Cove, a small harbor almost land-locked where Cyril kept his motor-boats and sloop. As the girl approached the Lodge, she turned far to the left and made a wide circle among the hills, so that there could be no chance of inquisitive eyes discovering the bold silhouette of her horse against the sky. Slowly she climbed the lower ridges of Ben-a-Chielt until she reached a level spot, high above the house, garage, stables and hangar, where she stopped for a moment to rest her winded horse.

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Below her a wild panorama of land and wind-blown sky, the ragged profile of black rocks etched deep into the sullen gray of the sea. Seen from this height the contours were unfamiliar to her and the purpose of her grim visit gave the grim vista a dramatic significance that was almost theatrical. Long lines emerged from the dark blur of sea and sky and roared in upon the rocks that guarded the harbor upon which they were shivered into foam. Inside the rim of rocks the placid cove calmly reflected the sky. She saw the motor-boats near the landing, made out the specter lines of Cyril's sloop, the *Windbird*, and in the shadow of the cliffs saw another vessel, the lines of which were unfamiliar. This craft was long and slender with a wireless mast and two large smoke-stacks. No lights showed aboard of her, but there were signs of activity, for while the girl looked a small boat was lowered and was pulled for the landing; and suddenly the real meaning of this dark vessel was borne to her. There was no mistaking the grim profile of the thing that projected from the forward superstructure and the curving decks which met the water in such slender lines. It was a war-vessel, a destroyer, and the man who was putting out for the shore was the German messenger who was to meet Cyril Hammersley at Ben-a-Chielt. She trembled and clung to the pommel of her saddle. The brief joyous moments that had come to her at intervals during the evening as she thought of the inflections of Cyril's voice, of the weary look she had seen in his eyes, and hoped that even tonight he might be able to justify himself in her own thoughts at least were engulfed in the damning conviction of what she saw before her. John Rizzio had told her the truth. How he had learned what was to happen, she did not

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know or care, but the accuracy of his information was no longer a matter to doubt.

She looked around her in the darkness toward the way by which she had come, really frightened for the first time that evening as at the palpable presence of sin. For a moment she hesitated in her intention to go forward. She had seen enough to convince her. There was no need of more. But the real object of her mission nerved her to her task. She must go on at once if she wished to reach the Tower in time to conceal herself. So she pressed her horse along the hill, and when she had crossed the ridge rode down in a path parallel to the edge of the cliffs, which brought her after a while into a line with Beaufort Head, where she could see the dim mass of the ruin rising above the chaos of rock that surrounded it.

When she reached a spot not too far distant, she dismounted in a clump of bushes and fastening the bridle of her horse to the gnarled limb of a stunted tree, crept forward on foot. The excitement of the venture and its possible consequences now gave her renewed strength and caution. Moving to the left, toward the northern side of the Tower, she clambered over the rocks toward the sea. There should be plenty of time to reach a place of concealment before the occupant of the boat had time to climb the steep and tortuous path from the landing, and peering from side to side, pausing from time to time to listen, she reached the shadow of Table Rock, a huge slab of granite which had been tossed by some convulsion of Nature upon the very summit of the Head. The physical contours of the place made her approach an easy one, for the cliffs were strewn with bowlders and it was easy to slip from one to another without detection.

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Assured that the spot that she had reached was as near the Tower as she dared approach for the present, she wedged herself into a crevice between two rocks, into which she might pass and go out by the other side, and sank down upon her knees and waited. The moments passed slowly. Where was John Rizzio? Would Cyril never come? She had a moment of horror in the thought that the German messenger might come and discover her before Cyril arrived. What would he do to her? Kill her, of course. And in a panic of sinking nerves she thought of getting to her feet and fleeing into the friendly darkness from which she had come. She had even risen and her head was just below the level of the top of her refuge when she heard footsteps close by and got the odor of a cigarette. So she sank back, her hand at her heart to quiet its throbbings.

The footsteps passed her, returned and then went toward the Tower and she bared her head and peered cautiously out. A tall figure in a long coat and deer-stalker cap was standing watching the path to the landing. She could not see his features, but she knew that it was Cyril. For one moment she thought of running to him and throwing herself at his feet and pleading with him while there was still time to go away into the darkness—with her—anywhere before this stranger should reach him. But her courage failed her and she sank back into her corner. And when she straightened again her moment had passed, for she heard other footsteps to her right of a man as he clambered up the rocks. He passed quite near her, a burly man in a naval cap and coat, out of breath from his exertions.

Cyril came forward to meet him, and she heard the short words of their greeting.

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"Herr Hammersley?"

"Ja."

She peered out and saw the burly man straighten, his heels together, and touch his fingers to the rim of his cap. Cyril bowed and asked a question and the other replied in a sentence that contained the word "*Hochheit*," which was the only word she understood. She crept a little closer so that she could hear more distinctly, hoping that her slight knowledge of German might aid her. She watched Cyril to see if he passed anything to the German officer. Instead of this the German took a letter from an inside pocket and handed it to Cyril, and she heard the words "*Hochheit*" again and "*Excellenz*"—a message it seemed from some prince, or from some general or high official of the German Government. Cyril appeared to offer apologies and broke the seal of the envelope, bringing from the pocket of his overcoat an electric torch, by the aid of which he read the letter. Doris could see his face quite plainly in the reflected light from the page, and marked the deep lines at his brows and the stern look at his mouth and chin. He went over the document twice very carefully, and then as he turned to his companion she heard his voice saying quite distinctly in German:

"You know the purport of this paper?"

"No, Herr Hammersley," said the officer. "My orders are merely to deliver this letter which was to receive your acceptance."

Cyril paused for a long moment, tapping the document lightly with his finger and then taking a pencil from his pocket bent over and upon the nearest rock wrote something. Then he slipped the letter into its envelope and handed it to the other, who put it into

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his pocket, saluted again and with a hurried farewell turned down the path and was gone.

That was all. The interview had not lasted more than five minutes, but Doris knew by the look she had seen on Cyril's face that danger threatened. The letter had contained a command, a command from a German officer of high rank to Cyril Hammersley—a spy receiving his orders from the government he served. If he had gone back to the Lodge at this moment she would have let him go past her without a word, for the bitterness came back into her heart and engulfed all purpose. She sat in her place of concealment, peering out at him, fascinated. He moved nearer and then stood, his feet braced on the rocks, gazing down the path by which his midnight visitor had disappeared. How long he stood there motionless she could not know, but as the moments passed and he did not move, she rose from her cranny, her trembling nerves seeking an outlet in motion or speech. Why didn't he move?

At last her overtaxed nerves could no longer endure and she came out of the shadow and spoke his name. Still he made no motion, and she realized that her lips had made no sound. But her foot touched a small stone, which fell among the rocks, and she saw him wheel around and face her quickly, something glittering in his hand, while his voice rang sharply.

"Stand where you are!"

He took a few threatening steps toward her, his look studying her small bulk.

"It's I, Cyril," she said faintly, "Doris."

"You!" He glanced to right and left, putting the thing in his pocket and faced her, incredulous. "What are you doing here, Doris?"

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"I came to—to see you again——"

His eyes were still searching the darkness around them.

"Who told you to come here?"

"No one," she lied. "I followed you."

"Who saw you come? You heard?"

"Yes——" slowly. "O Cyril—I can't let you go from me like this——"

She put her face to her hands and felt his arms enfold her. She trembled, but in this weakness a new kind of strength came to her. "I want you to come with me away—away from all this—for me—for England. It's my last appeal—you must not refuse it. I—I want you so, Cyril, as it used to be."

She felt his lips gently touch her brow and heard his whisper,

"God bless you!"

She clung to him desperately, to his caress, the one sure symbol of his purity——

"I love you, Cyril," she murmured, "I can't help it. I've tried not to. But you couldn't kiss me like this, reverently, if you did not love me well enough to forget everything else. Say you do, dear."

"I love you," he whispered again. "But you must not stay here. You must——"

"Doesn't it mean something to you that I came," she went on breathlessly, "that I could forget—what happened—that the love that was in my heart for you was greater than my hatred of what you are? I came so that you could know it by the difficulty, the danger that I ran. I don't care what others may think of me. The only thing that matters is to have you again. You don't know what it cost me to come. I am not the kind to be held so lightly, Cyril. I have forgotten my

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pride, even my sense of what is fitting for a girl to do, in the hope that you will listen to me."

"Yes," he murmured, "but not now, Doris. You must go back."

"Not yet——" she protested.

"I—I have much to do——" he said.

"That messenger—O Cyril—you mustn't. Come back with me—tonight—now——"

"I can't," he muttered. "It—it is important for me to stay here——"

She loosened his arms and stood away from him, peering down into the cove where clouds of black smoke were belching from the funnels of the black vessel. The water of the cove was churning in its wake and its prow was turning toward the harbor mouth.

Suddenly she saw Cyril start and peer around him in the darkness.

"Who sent you here?" she heard his voice in a strangled whisper at her ear.

"No one," she denied again, "I followed you."

"That isn't possible, Doris," he said quickly. "I have reasons for knowing. You were here before I came. Rizzio told you—— He knew what was to happen—he was the only one who could have known."

"Why?" Her curiosity sent all subterfuge flying. She could see his pale face in the moonlight.

"Because it was Rizzio who sent this messenger to meet me."

"Rizzio!" The mystery was deepening. "I can't understand."

He hesitated a long moment before replying, as though weighing something in his mind.

"I'll tell you this much," he said at last. "You've a right to know. Rizzio told you that he was an agent

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of the English Government. It's my word against his. You can believe me or not if you like. Rizzio is a spy of Germany!"

"Impossible! John Rizzio——" she whispered aghast.

He laughed.

"The pot callin' the kettle black—what? It's the truth."

"But Rizzio! What object would he have in betraying England? A man of his position!"

"That's the kind of men England's enemies want," put in Cyril dryly.

"But he has no need of money. Not money. Impossible!"

"No, not money. There are other things that John Rizzio values more than money."

"What?"

He caught her by the arm impressively to make his meaning clear. "You don't know the passion of collectors. They would sell their souls for the things they want. The things that seem impossible are the things they want the most."

"But I don't understand."

"After the war Rizzio is to be permitted to 'buy' Rubens's 'Descent from the Cross' from the German Government."

"Oh!" she gasped in horror. A new idea of the terrible possibilities of duplicity was borne to her. But she couldn't believe.

"How do you know this?" she asked.

He laughed.

"It's one of the things I stopped in London to find out."

"Then you——"

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"I am a German spy."

"I don't believe you," she cried proudly. There was a note of joy in her voice, a momentary note which seemed to trail off into one of terror. "Cyril!" she whispered. "Rizzio! He wrote me to come here."

"I knew it."

"But he said he——" she hesitated. "Why did he want me to come? There must have been some other reasons besides wanting me to see—he's here, Cyril—somewhere——"

Hammersley started and turned, his hand in his pocket, and Doris followed his look. Three men had risen from among the rocks toward the Tower.

"Don't move, Hammersley," said Rizzio's voice. "You're in danger, Doris."

But the girl was clinging to Cyril's arm. "No, no," she was crying. Several shots rang out as Cyril threw her aside, dashing forward. One of the men seemed to stumble among the rocks and fall heavily. The other came in toward Cyril, his arm raised, but another shot from behind the rocks made him pause, twist half around, his hand to his shoulder as Cyril caught him a blow which sent him reeling to the edge of the cliff, over which he hung for a moment, peering downwards in horror, and then disappeared from view.

"Well done, Stryker," she heard Cyril cry. "The other—this way. Don't let him get off."

And Stryker disappeared after Rizzio.

CHAPTER X

THE YELLOW DOVE

IN a daze Doris saw Cyril bend over the prostrate figure and then come toward her.

“Dead?” she whispered in horror.

But he didn't seem to hear her. He caught her by the arm and forcibly led her inland.

“Dead!” she whispered again. “It might have been you.”

“Or you,” she heard him say sharply.

“Me?”

“Yes. But it's my fault. I should have guessed.”

“John Rizzio would kill *me*. Oh, it's unbelievable!”

“You know too much.” He gave a short laugh. “Far too much for your own good—or mine.” He caught her suddenly by both arms and made her look straight into his eyes. “Doris, you've seen nothing, you've heard nothing tonight. Do you understand?”

His grasp on her arms hurt her but she bore it without a murmur.

“Yes,” she said.

“You swear it?”

“Yes,” faintly, “I do.”

“I've got to go away from Ben-a-Chielt tonight. I can't tell you why. You've got to go straight to Kil-morack House now. You rode over. Take the short cut by Horsham Hill. It's not so well known. I would go with you but I haven't a moment to spare. Don't trust anyone—not even the maids at the house.

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Go back to London tomorrow with Jack Sandys and don't let him leave you until you're safe at Ashwater Park. Where's your horse?"

She told him and followed blindly.

"Where are you going, Cyril?" she pleaded.

"It doesn't matter."

He found the horse and untied the bridle.

"Tell me, Cyril. I've earned the right to know."

"Something has happened," he said quietly, "which has put all my plans in danger——"

"And you?"

"Yes. The thing I've been trying to do may fail. It hangs or falls by this issue."

"But what—what?"

"You can't know that," he said quickly. "Don't ask me anything more. I can't answer. But trust in me if you can. Trust in me, Doris, and if you love me—*silence!*"

He gave her a lift into the saddle and kissed her hand. Then he looked around him and gave a parting injunction.

"Now cut sharp off to the right in the darkness until you strike the old sheep trail. You can see it quite plainly in the heather. Follow it to the head of the ridge, then take the road to Horsham Hill. Good-by and God bless you."

A sob rose in her throat and she could only wave a hand in reply. And so she left him standing there alone gazing after her with bared head in the darkness. The strain on her nerves had told on her and she sat her side-saddle listlessly holding on by the pommel, and peering into the darkness before her, with eyes that saw nothing but pictures of death. She could not forget the wounded man grasping at space as he

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tottered on the rim of the rocks. Cyril had killed a man. War! She had thought war a more glorious thing. This seemed very like murder. She blessed God for Stryker who had come so opportunely. Rizzio had tried to kill Cyril. In horror she had seen him raise his pistol and aim, but at her cry he had missed his shot and with the disabling of his confederates he had fled.

Rizzio was a German spy. Then since they were enemies of course Cyril was loyal—playing a part to deceive the enemy—learning its secrets that England might profit by them. The message! What was the message that the German naval officer had brought which had so disturbed Cyril? What was this mysterious duty of Cyril's which meant so much to his cause, the success or failure of which hung by a thread? She tried to think what Cyril could do in England and after a time the thing began to come to her. Cyril was acting for England. He had succeeded, in the guise of a German secret agent, in finding the traitor in the War Office, and it was Cyril who had caused the arrest of Captain Byfield. Rizzio, too, was a German spy who for some reason or other had been sent—O God—that was it. The Germans suspected Cyril and had used John Rizzio to put him to the test—had set a thief to catch a thief. Cyril had found that the message was a dangerous one—and had refused to give it up to Rizzio. That seemed to explain everything—Cyril's willingness to have her burn the papers, Rizzio's anxiety to save them, that he might send them to his employers. The second packet of papers? A false message, prepared for a purpose which Cyril was to fulfill. The German naval officer! His message—what was it? Imagination refused to aid her.

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She could not understand. He brought a command—a test of Cyril's loyalty to Germany perhaps? Was that it? And if so, what? A test which meant victory or defeat—that was what Cyril's last words had meant. Victory or defeat—life or death. It was a desperate game that he was playing. And what was he going to do tonight that made it necessary for him to leave her to ride to Kilmorack House alone?

Bewildered and weary with excitement and much thinking, she gave it up, and as in a daze set her mind to the task of finding the way to Horsham Hill. She rode on inland searching for the old sheep trail as Cyril had described it to her, but as the minutes went by and she did not find it she began to think that she must have passed it in the darkness. She had ridden at a walk for hours it seemed, keeping as she thought in a direction which would surely lead her to a road toward the Hill, but she realized now that she was lost on the moor and that it might be morning before she would find her way to Betty Heathcote's. She stopped her horse and peered in every direction. Nothing but the undulations of the moor, hill and dale, a dead tree outlined against the sky, masses of rock uncouth in form, bushes which whispered in the wind, the babble of a tarn somewhere behind her, though she had not remembered passing it. There were no lights in any direction, none even from the heavens, for the stars had gone out. After a long while she wondered vaguely what time it was. She had no watch, but it seemed that a paleness like that which precedes the dawn had spread along the sky—though it hardly seemed possible it could be so late as that. Three—four o'clock she thought it might be—perhaps later. The one thing that now seemed to persist in her mind

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was the hope that Wilson had obeyed orders and kept Lady Heathcote in ignorance of her absence.

She was startled by her horse which, without moving, had stretched his neck and whinnied loudly. He, too, had realized the aimlessness of their wanderings and wanted the warm stalls at the Kilmorack stables. Doris tried to think what was best to do. All sense of direction was gone and she was beyond even the sound of the sea. At last she decided to try a slight eminence and see if she could make out the bulk of Ben-a-Chielt, but a mist had fallen, and when she reached the height she was no wiser than before. Fortunately, it was not cold, and if she did not fall from the saddle in utter weariness, daylight would show her a way. She got down from her horse and, fastening him to a bush, walked to and fro to keep awake, waiting for the day, for at sunrise she could make her way toward the east until she reached the coast, after which by following the cliffs to the right she would reach the Lodge, and from there the way to Kilmorack House.

She had grown accustomed to the silences and now and then paused in her pacing to stop and listen. She thought she heard a sound different from the others—behind her it seemed, a subdued murmur, which, as she listened, grew in intensity until she clearly made it out to be the quick reverberations of a motor, running with its cut-out open. It was coming fast, and in a moment a long fan of light shot across the sky from below the brow of a distant hill and then fell suddenly to earth, where it picked out the shapes of trees and bushes along what appeared to be its road. The motor was not traveling toward her, but at an angle which would make it pass near her, but

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quickly as she mounted and rode toward it she was unable even to come within earshot before the machine had passed and was lost to sight in the distance. It had not gone by so rapidly that Doris had not been able to make out on a rise of ground against the sky the profile of a roadster and the shapes of two men. Cyril and Stryker! There could be no doubt of it, for the body of Cyril's car was familiar to her and the chances of any other machine being abroad in this locality at this hour were remote indeed. Where were they going? In which direction? Toward Saltham Rocks or northward? She did not know, but decided to take the chance and follow. She reached the road without difficulty—a trail it appeared to be with well-defined wheel tracks and the marks of hoofs. She pressed her horse onward in the wake of the speeding machine, not to overtake it, but to reach a destination of some sort which would be better than the utter loneliness of the desolate moor, the silence and inaction of which made her a prey to unhappy thoughts. Her horse was willing, and as the going was good broke into a brisk trot which for a while kept the glow of the swinging searchlight of the machine in sight. But presently that, too, disappeared and all was as before. And glancing above she understood. To her right a pale streak of light was showing along the horizon, and above her between patches of dark clouds she caught a faint reflection of violet light. It was the beginning of the dawn.

Dawn on her right—that meant the east. She was riding north, then. North—and to what destination? She had ridden this road with Cyril, but never to its end, which as she knew was among the unhospitable crags of Rudha Mor, a wild spot unfrequented by any

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except Cyril's gamekeepers. What was Cyril's errand in the night to such a place when everything that had happened would seem to indicate the necessity for his immediate return to London? The same kind of curiosity that had made her open the package of cigarette papers against Cyril's wishes, stimulated her to follow this quest to its end. She forgot that she had had no sleep all night, and little the night before. Of physical weariness now she seemed to have none, and in the growing light she urged her tired horse forward into a hand gallop which covered the miles swiftly. She came to the cliffs and saw the sea, passed inland again. The going was rougher here, less turf and more rocks and whins, while to her left the hills were split by crags which protruded in fantastic shapes, like heads of prisoned monsters of the underworld which had forced their way up through the crust of the earth to the light of day. It was curious. The trail was well worn here as it had been before, and there were signs of much hauling. What was going on at Rudha Mor? The place could not be far distant, for she saw that the road wound up the rocks and fell away rapidly into a deep gorge, the further side of which she could see, dimly colored with the opalescent tint of the East. This she thought must be nearly the end of her ride. She did not know what was in store for her and was doubtful as to her wisdom, but she was eaten with curiosity, and dismounted, led her horse slowly to the lip of the gorge and peered over. What she saw made her gasp. She drew quickly back, tethered her horse to a bush and came forward again. Near by, under a shed built on the brink of the cliff, was Cyril's roadster, but of Cyril and Stryker she saw no sign. Beneath her feet the cliffs fell away rap-

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idly by easy steps, down which she marked a well-worn footpath. The bottom of the gorge was of rock and sand shelving gradually toward the sea and fairly in its middle, built strongly of rough lumber, she saw a shed with wide doors which even now were open—a large hangar from which as she looked several figures wheeled forth a huge *aéroplane*—to a platform of planks which extended for a long way toward the sea. From a distance it was difficult to judge its measurements, but by comparison with the heights of the men Doris knew that she had never seen a machine so large. As the east grew lighter she could see Cyril plainly. He came out of the hangar dressed in leather, gave some orders which made the other figures hurry and a series of deafening explosions from the engine as they “tuned it up,” gave Doris a sense of immediate departure. For a while she watched, fascinated, her interest in the size of this huge toy and its possibilities making a separate mind-picture which superseded all those that had gone before. But as the light grew stronger and she made out the color of the wide yellow planes, she started up with a cry which would have been heard by the men below her had it not been for the racket that the engine was making. “A huge machine with yellow wings,” she remembered Jack Sandys’ description, “a thousand horsepower at least.” The Yellow Dove—this was the Yellow Dove and the man of mystery, its driver, was—Cyril.

Spellbound and trembling with excitement, she watched Cyril climb up into one of the seats. Cyril was going to fly to the Germans, she knew it now, to obey the commands which had been brought last night by the German officer, commands to come to Germany and explain his failure to deliver his secret message to



“Her lips . . . were whispering words that she hoped could follow him into the distance.”



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Rizzio. They suspected him and yet he was going to face them. It was desperate, foolhardy, insane. He would never come back. Not victory, but death—that was what it meant. She ran out to the very edge of the rocks, shrieking his name, but the sounds were lost in the fearful din of the motor below. The explosions echoed and reëchoed in the gorge which seemed to quiver with the volume of sound. Not a head from below was turned up to look at her and she had a sense of her own unimportance in the immensity of Cyril's viewpoint. She saw the yellow machine start slowly down the incline, gathering momentum as it ran until it left the runway and rose magnificently, its engine roaring steadily, clearing the surf and rocks and heading straight into the growing day.

O God! That she should have suspected him of anything base and dishonorable—a man who could face death as he was doing, as he had been doing for months. Cyril—the Yellow Dove. There could be no doubt of it, for she had seen with her own eyes. She understood now many things that had been a mystery before; why he could not speak to her; the reasons for his occasional absences, for his air of indifference, for his coolness in the face of adverse criticism. She understood about John Rizzio and the reasons why Cyril had wanted her to take such precautions in getting safely back to Ashwater Park, precautions which she had disregarded. But what mattered about her when Cyril every day, every hour for months had taken chances against death, the most ignominious death of all!

Her heart was big with pride in him and she followed the Yellow Dove with her gaze, now rising high and diminishing rapidly in the mist, her soul in her

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moist eyes and on her lips which were whispering words that she hoped could follow him into the distance. Her Cyril, still hers, and England's—the Honorable Cyril whom the world had come to know as the Yellow Dove.

She stood in the shelter of the rocks, for she knew now in which way her duty to Cyril lay, and waited until the aëroplane was but a speck against the sky, when she turned with a sigh which was almost a gasp of weariness and walked slowly toward her horse. The ride before her was long, but by good riding she might still reach Kilmarock House before Lady Betty's guests were up. Otherwise her reputation was gone. She knew that, for she could make no explanation of any kind. On that she was——

Quick footsteps behind her—her arms caught from behind—a glimpse of a strange face and then something white over her head—a pungent odor and—unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XI

VON STROMBERG

IN the Taunus range north of the Schwartzwald, lies the village of Windenberg, on the slopes of the well-wooded hills that lead by slow stages to higher elevations of the Grosser Feldberg. In the valleys are vineyards, orchards, chestnut and almond-groves and in times of peace, the people are contented, well-to-do and industrious. The schloss of the Counts von Winden stands upon an eminence and looks down upon a rolling country of velvety woods extending for miles along the slope of the range. In this region of firs and beech trees one might walk for miles off the roads without coming upon a sign of human habitation, or indeed without passing the boundaries of the von Winden estate.

But three miles from Winden Schloss well hidden among the hills was a spot of cleared land containing perhaps two hundred acres which had been once used by the von Winden family as a farm, but had been taken since the beginning of the war by the State for purposes of its own. A good road led to Windenberg five miles away through the forest, but much secrecy attached to Blaufelden, as the place was called. Men of the Imperial Forest Service kept guard upon all the roads, and no one but those having official permission were allowed to come within two miles of the place.

A visit would have soon explained the reasons for this extraordinary care on the part of the men in uni-

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form, for not far from the house and stables, unobtrusive buildings of brick and stone, were aviation sheds, a well-supplied garage and storage houses, which indicated at almost any hour of the day or night a military activity.

Within the farmhouse of Blaufelden, rather late in a night in March a tall iron-gray figure, slender, buttoned to the neck in a close-fitting uniform coat, paced slowly up and down. A plain wooden table stood in the center of the room. It was lighted by a lamp with a green shade and covered with papers arranged in orderly piles. There were chairs, strongly but simply made, and a sad-colored rug, and the walls were decorated with pictures of hunting scenes, while over the stone fireplace in which the pine logs intermittently blazed, there was a colored lithograph of the Emperor of Germany. It was the kind of room, and the kind of furniture one would expect to find in any of the rural districts of the great empire, with the one difference that nowhere was there visible the touch of a woman's hand. Whatever its original purpose the room at the present moment contained only the essentials of the barest comfort. And the figure of the man in uniform, erect, silent and austere, completed the impression which the barrack-like simplicity of his surroundings created—order, cleanliness, efficiency expressed in the simplest terms.

The German officer stopped pacing the room and touched a bell upon the table. His brows were furrowed and his broad capable hands tapped impatiently among the documents. His summons was answered almost immediately by a man in the uniform of the 'Jägers, the Imperial Forest Service, who stood silently his heels together awaiting orders.

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"There has been no word?" asked the officer in German.

"None, Excellenz."

"You stationed your men as I directed?"

"Yes, Excellenz——"

The officer paused. And then, "Send Herr Hauptmann von Winden the moment he arrives."

The man saluted, wheeled and went out, closing the door noiselessly behind him. The tall figure regarded the door fixedly for a moment in deep thought, and then tapped the back of his left hand with the fingers of his right, a habit he had when things were not going to his liking. General Graf von Stromberg, Privy Councilor to the German Emperor and head of the military sections of the Secret Service, was not a person accustomed to have things go wrong, and delay of any kind annoyed him exceedingly.

But the door of the room opened and a young officer in uniform appeared and stood awaiting the will of his superior. He was blond, ruddy and well set up and bore all the marks of the army training—a member beyond doubt of the military caste with something in the clearly cut, if somewhat arrogant, features of his face which suggested good blood and lineage.

"Ah, Herr Hauptmann!" said the General, frowning. "You have heard?"

"Yes, Excellenz. He should be here by midnight."

"What was the cause of the delay?"

"He was forced to come down at Ostend, yesterday. It has taken him all day to make repairs. He is on the way now."

Von Stromberg grunted and sank into his chair at the table, motioning the younger officer into one beside him.

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"Come, sit down. Let's forget that we are parts of the intricate machinery of State. Here is a cigar. Smoke. It will do you good."

Von Winden, flattered by this mark of condescension, obeyed.

"You are glad?" von Stromberg asked.

"Yes, Excellenz. I am glad. It is not the kind of thing one wants to be worried about—one's own flesh and blood. But I knew there must have been a mistake."

General von Stromberg puffed his smoke toward the ceiling and stretched his long legs upon the floor.

"It is very curious. I am not sure that I understand. Herr Rizzio is a careful man and he has much at stake. Why should your cousin Hammersley have refused to take cognizance of his credentials?"

"He had doubtless good reasons of his own. But since he will soon be here he will answer your questions himself. The fact that he comes at all, Excellenz, should be proof of his loyalty."

"Yes," said the General thoughtfully. "That should be true. One doesn't thrust one's head into the lion's mouth for the mere pleasure of examining his teeth. Who sent this message?"

"General von Betzdorf."

"There were no other wireless communications?"

"None, Excellenz. But Stammer should reach Wilhelmshaven tonight."

The General smoked silently for a moment, and then:

"Herr Hammersley's mother was a Prussian?"

"Yes, Excellenz, a sister of my mother——"

"Yes, I remember now. Von Eppingen——" the

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General muttered, his brows wrinkled. And then, "You saw much of your cousin?"

"For a while he went with me to the gymnasium, then to the University of Heidelberg. He has come over each year and shot with me here at Windenberg."

"You are fond of him?"

Von Winden shrugged.

"He is my relative. We have always got along. I should not have cared to find that he was a traitor."

The General smoked silently, his gaze on the fire.

"But his father was an Englishman, Graf von Winden. We can't forget that. Tell me. You have known him always. What was his attitude at the University? Did he show a real affection for German life and customs? In short was he ever able to forget that half of him was English?"

Udo von Winden pulled at his small blond mustache thoughtfully.

"I can only say that he was quieter than most of us. But he was popular. He was a member of the Saxe-Borussia and represented the Corps on the Mensurboden against Suevia and Guestphalia. A Prussian for all that any of us knew— Prussian of Prussians."

"His father died when he was quite young, I believe?"

"Yes, Excellenz. But his father, too, had lived much in Germany. He was a diplomat and scholar and enjoyed the friendship of the Iron Chancellor. That was before the 'Hassgesang,' Excellenz."

"Or before the 'Tag,'" growled the General. "Your loyalty to your cousin is natural, but loyalty to the Vaterland——"

Udo von Winden rose quickly.

"You would not suggest, Excellenz——?"

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"*Quatch!* Sit down, Captain. I suggest nothing. There are merely some phases of the question which puzzle me. Perhaps when he arrives he can explain them."

"He will explain. I will stake my honor on it."

"I trust so. This is hardly a time when my department can afford to make mistakes in the character of those in its employ."

"But, Excellenz, you surely have no cause to doubt the exactness of the information he has furnished you!"

"It depends upon what you mean by exactness. Our information, as you know, comes from a number of sources. Some of it has proven valuable—some useless. Herr Hammersley's has been neither the one nor the other."

"But the British fleet at Cuxhaven——"

"Yes, he gave us that, but they came two days earlier than we expected. It cost us the *Blücher*."

"But you knew that the orders were changed—and he sent a wireless——"

"The morning the *Blücher* was sunk," said von Stromberg dryly.

"But, Excellenz, he gave us a clear sea for the raid on Falmouth!"

General von Stromberg rose and laid his hand on von Winden's shoulder.

"You are younger than I, Graf von Winden. The Secret Service makes a maxim to believe everyone guilty until he proves his innocence."

"But Herr Hammersley?"

"We have reason to believe that the British Government permitted the raid on Falmouth, as a means of increasing the enlistments." He slowly paced the floor

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and then said reassuringly, "Oh, I merely question—I merely question——"

His words trailed off and Udo von Winden stood silently until he spoke again. "Oh, very well. We shall see—we shall see."

A knock at the door and an orderly entered.

"Well?"

"Dispatches, Excellenz."

Udo von Winden watched his superior officer as he dismissed the man and broke the seal of a large envelope and read, the lamplight playing on his long bony features, giving his sharp nose a peculiarly vulture-like avidity. The importance of the communication was obvious, for the small eyes under the heavy thatch of brows flamed in sudden interest. The General read the paper through quickly and then slipped it between the buttons of his coat.

"That will be all, Herr Hauptmann——" he said, with a return of his military abruptness. "You will go at once to the hangar and await the arrival of Herr Hammersley." And as the officer moved toward the door: "Also, you will first tell Herr Hauptmann Wentz that I wish to see him at once."

Von Winden clapped his heels together, saluted and went out while the General paced the floor of the room again tapping the back of his left hand with his right. "It is curious," he muttered to himself. "A coincidence perhaps, but strange. And yet—possible."

While he was reading the document again Captain Wentz entered. He was short, thickly set and dark with a blue chin and heavy eyebrows, the type of a man who rises in the service from sheer ability. He waited at the door, immovable, in the presence of the great man until ordered to approach.

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"An important message has come from the Wilhelmstrasse, which indicates a mission of peculiar importance." The General paused a moment, his keen eyes searching Captain Wentz with a terrible tensity, but the face of the younger man remained expressionless. He was merely a piece of machinery—excellent machinery.

"You may have thought it curious, Herr Hauptmann Wentz, that I should have come from the Wilhelmstrasse to Blaufelden. Is it not so?"

"It is not my duty to think, Excellenz, unless ordered to do so," said the other briefly.

The General smiled. The answer pleased him.

"I wished to see Herr Hammersley, as you know. That is important, and the Yellow Dove cannot go to Berlin." He stopped and then went on quickly: "Herr Hauptmann, you have been attached to the Secret Service Department three years?"

"Yes, Excellenz."

"You have performed several important duties and have won promotion. I am now about to commit to your care, a——"

At a gesture of von Stromberg's thumb the officer went on tiptoe to the door and opened it quickly.

"No one, Excellenz."

"Good. Now sit. First, you speak French without accent."

"That was a part of my qualification for this service."

"Yes. It is in my mind to give you an important mission—one which will require great skill and fortitude."

Wentz listened attentively, but he made no comment.

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“It is unnecessary of course to warn you to hold what I tell you in the strictest confidence.”

“I do not talk, Excellenz.”

“This is a matter of grave importance to the Empire, a matter which concerns one of the enemies of the Vaterland. The safe delivery of certain dispatches which I am to receive may mean a readjustment of the European situation—perhaps the end of the war with Germany victorious and England humiliated.”

The eyes of Captain Wentz grew a little rounder and sparkled ever so slightly, but he said nothing.

“I am telling you this that you may know the importance of the duty I am giving you. It is an honor which I hope you will appreciate, an honor that may lead to greater favors than you have hitherto received.”

“I hope I may deserve them, Excellenz.”

General von Stromberg took the paper from his breast and glanced over it again.

“You will remember,” he continued, “the affair of the Socialist, Gottschalk?”

“I knew nothing of the details, Excellenz. That matter came in the duty of Oberlieutenant von Weringrade.”

“This much then, only, I need tell you. Herr Gottschalk, who lived at Schöndorf near here, came into the possession, in a manner which need not be described, of certain important papers. He kept them for some time, not aware of their importance, and then realizing their value and being a good German, though opposed to the war, two weeks ago communicated with the Government. The result of this correspondence was a summons from Berlin and the delivery of these

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papers into the hands of the Emperor. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, Excellenz."

"This letter which I have just received by special messenger informs me that His Majesty has decided to act at once, and gives me three days in which to make arrangements to have these papers, which will be forwarded tomorrow, delivered to General Dalmier, commanding at Verdun, to be handed before a certain date, to the President of the French Republic. You are to be the bearer of those letters. They must be delivered personally. You will be provided with the proper passes and facilities, including an armed escort to the French lines. From there you must trust to your own resources. The important matter is that no one, not even Captain von Winden, shall suspect your mission. Perhaps now you will realize the confidence I am reposing."

"I am honored, Excellenz. These papers will arrive tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow night by automobile at eleven, by the Schöndorf road."

"And until then——?"

"You will have time to make your arrangements."

"I shall prepare, Excellenz."

Captain Wentz rose, but the General halted him.

"One thing more. Herr Hammersley is returning tonight from England with dispatches. He is to be carefully watched tonight and tomorrow, though I shall let him believe that he moves in perfect freedom. You will give the necessary orders. Also I would like you to keep watch outside the door when he is brought to this room, which may be at any moment."

"*Zu befehl, Excellenz.*"

“That is all. You may go.”

Left alone, General von Stromberg took a chair facing the fire, and lighted another cigar. For many years he had been engaged in deciphering interesting problems and in preparing problems for other persons to decipher. Therefore it may be truly said that his was the analytical mind, the mind of the chemist, of the mathematician, and the philosopher, with so complete a schooling in the trade of deception that all things and all persons in the cosmic scheme except himself were objects of suspicion. For him the obvious was the negligible and by converse the negligible of prime importance. As he had said to von Winden, every man was guilty until he was proven innocent. He had a rare nose for scenting unsuspected odors, and a fine hand for finding the weak links in the armor of those he used as well as of those who sought to use him. He had a faculty for appearing at places where he was least expected and a prescience almost miraculous in forestalling the moves of his adversaries. He ruled by fear and by admiration and there was not a man in the Empire with a skeleton in his closet, no matter how high his station, who did not live without a terror of von Stromberg in his heart.

But the habit of mind of suspecting everybody, while it had placed him upon the safe side of every equation, had also resulted, through the elimination of the sentimental, in eliminating the more direct contacts with human nature. To judge a man by his possibilities for venality is like judging a rose by the sharpness of its thorn. Something of the weakness of this cynicism had been apparent to the keen intellect of von Stromberg and he had been finding of late a rare pleasure in trifling with his convictions, admitting

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into the stored cavern of his mind for experimental purposes, an occasional ray of optimism. At the present moment he was analyzing the result of his summons to Herr Hammersley to come to Germany at once and the communication from Herr Rizzio which impugned Herr Hammersley's loyalty to Germany. Von Stromberg had known Herr Rizzio for years and had done him more than one service in finding ways to cater to his passion for collecting objects of art. It was German social influence secretly exerted that had helped to make easy Rizzio's rise in favor at the court of St. James. There had been a possibility that some day John Rizzio might be of service to von Stromberg and to Germany. And von Stromberg had long been laying the plans which had made his system of espionage the most perfect in Europe. Von Stromberg had found Rizzio's weakness and had traded on it, saving his most tempting bait for his greatest service, the betrayal of the home of his adoption. He weighed Rizzio contentedly sure of his own power over him and despising him for having been so easily bought. Rubens's "Descent from the Cross"! There were fortunately other Rubenses in conquered territory—some very good ones that John Rizzio might like. Von Stromberg had made a list of them. He had learned that it was as necessary to be provided with bribes as with threats. Fortunately Rizzio himself had given him material for the latter. Racially, the great Councilor did not like Latins, and he was quite sure he cared less for Italians now than he did before the proclamation of neutrality. They were not to be trusted by good Germans. If Rizzio had played false to the country of his adoption for the sake of a paltry picture, it was within the bounds of possibility that

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he could be false to Germany if the necessity arose for an even smaller consideration. Yesterday morning before leaving Berlin for Windenberg, von Stromberg had received a dispatch from Rizzio which told of his departure on his yacht from Scotland for Bremen. This was curious—also interesting. Rizzio was needed in England and was useless in Germany. Why was he coming? Had something been learned of him at Scotland Yard? Or had his departure to do with the case of Herr Hammersley? Whatever the visit meant, it was necessary, very necessary, to have Rizzio and Hammersley together at once, so he had deemed it wise to send orders to Bremen to have Rizzio caught on the wireless and when he reached port sent through at once to Windenberg.

Von Stromberg smiled in self-gratulation. There would be no loose ends about this affair. Merely as a precaution in so important a matter he had set one agent to watch another. Byfield had been watched by Hammersley, who in turn had been watched by Rizzio, who had been watched by Herr Maxwell, an agent long in von Stromberg's service. Rizzio had been given the power and credentials to use his discretion with Hammersley. Why had not Hammersley relinquished the cigarette papers to Rizzio? Hammersley should have good reasons for his refusal. Was there reason for Hammersley to suspect Rizzio? Herr Maxwell, who had been set to watch Rizzio, was silent. This was puzzling. What had happened to Herr Maxwell?

General von Stromberg threw his finished cigar into the fire and got up, rubbing his hands together. Oh, it was very interesting—very. The situation was rapidly approaching culmination. In a short while all the threads of this pretty tangle would be within reach of

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his long fingers. And all that he, von Stromberg, had to do was to catch them by the ends and hold. What would Herr Hammersley bring?

General von Stromberg straightened, listening. The sound of voices and men outside. So. He was here already. There had been no sound from the machine. Of course, he had planed down. A knock on the door and von Winden, Wentz and Hammersley entered.

CHAPTER XII

HAMMERSLEY EXPLAINS

AT the sight of the tall figure of von Stromberg, Hammersley halted for the fraction of a second and then came forward into the room. He still wore his leather jacket and cap, but the wind burn on his cheeks gave his eyes, which had been protected by goggles, a singular grayness. He had had no sleep and his face was drawn in haggard lines, but his greeting showed no signs of uneasiness.

“Had I known you were awaiting me, Excellenz, I should perhaps have made quicker repairs.”

“It does not matter that you are late,” said von Stromberg quickly. “The thing of main importance is that you are here.” The General turned and made a motion to the door of the room. “I wish to be alone with Herr Hammersley. Herr Hauptmann von Winden, you are relieved from duty for the night. Herr Hauptmann Wentz, you will remain within call.”

The two officers saluted and retired and the General motioned Hammersley to approach.

“You have it?” he asked briefly.

“Yes, Excellenz. Here.”

He produced from an inner pocket a small package wrapped in oiled paper and handed it to von Stromberg.

“Ah!” He went quickly over to the table and tearing off the wrapper of the bundle opened the packet of Riz-la-Croix and found the hidden message which he

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scanned quickly, with muttered ejaculations of satisfaction and surprise. Hammersley by the fireplace was warming his hands.

"*Ganz gut!*" said the General, straightening and turning. "You had difficulties?"

"More than usual, Excellenz. Captain Byfield is in prison."

"Caught!"

Hammersley nodded.

"They found letters at his rooms."

"*Schafskopf!* Were there no fires?"

Hammersley shrugged.

"He is to be tried by court-martial. He will be shot."

Von Stromberg deliberated a moment.

"And were you suspected?"

"Yes. They followed me to Scotland, but fortunately the Yellow Dove is still a mystery—at least it was yesterday morning, and I got safely away."

Von Stromberg was scrutinizing him keenly.

"H—m. What makes you think that you were followed?"

"I left London by night train but got off at Edinburgh where my motor met me. But the wire was faster, and they had sent word to stop me. They stretched a rope across the road, but I saw it and went around. They fired at me——"

"When was this?"

"Three nights ago."

"They didn't hit you——"

"A mere scratch across the arm——"

"Let me see it."

Hammersley looked into von Stromberg's face and laughed.

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“Really?” he asked.

“Yes.”

Rather stiffly Hammersley took off his leather jacket and sweater and rolled up the sleeve of his flannel shirt. Von Stromberg examined the wound with interest.

“So——” he said. “Put on your coat. And after that?”

“I kept away from Ben-a-Chielt and put up for the night at my cousin’s.”

“Who is that?”

“Lady Heathcote——”

“Oh, yes. It was at her house in London that the message passed to you.”

“Yes, Excellenz.”

Von Stromberg paused a moment and then spoke abruptly.

“Why did you not give the papers to Rizzio?”

Hammersley’s gaze met the General’s squarely.

“They were too important. I could not take the risk.”

“But his orders superseded yours.”

“I saw—but I could not take the risk.”

“Why?”

“Because I had reason to believe that Rizzio was acting for the English Government.”

Von Stromberg’s burning gaze flickered and went out. He took a few paces across the room, his right hand tapping the back of his left. At last he came and stood before Hammersley, his hands behind his back.

“What were your reasons for believing that?”

“Maxwell learned it from Byfield.”

“Maxwell! You saw Maxwell—when?”

“The night I left London.”

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"Has anything happened to him?" quickly.

"I do not know."

The General frowned into the fire.

"It is strange," he muttered. "Very strange. You did not realize then that I suspected you?"

Hammersley laughed.

"Not at once. I did later. That is your privilege, Excellenz. But I refused to be caught under the circumstances. I preferred to take the risk of failure. After all, you see, I succeeded."

General von Stromberg was not immune from the frankness of Hammersley's smile. He turned toward the table and scrutinized the papers with great care.

"These are the very papers you got from Herr Captain Byfield?"

Hammersley's reply was startling.

"Unfortunately, no. The original papers were burned——"

"Burned!" cried the General, turning in his chair.

"But not before I had made this copy, which I put in a safe place."

"Explain."

"I was followed, leaving Lady Heathcote's dinner party in an automobile, by agents of Scotland Yard. I had the slower machine and they caught me. But not before I had passed the original papers to my companion——"

"Your companion—a woman?"

"Yes, Excellenz, there was nothing else to do. She escaped while they were searching me and kept the papers——"

"Who was this woman?"

"My fiancée."

"Her name?"

HAMMERSLEY EXPLAINS

"Doris Mather."

"English?"

"No, American."

"And what happened then?"

"Excellenz, she read them. She is devoted to the English cause. I could do nothing. She learned that I was acting for Germany and, rather than let them fall into my hands, she burned them. It makes no difference to you or to the Vaterland, since I have brought the message here, except that my own utility in England is gone."

"I should be sorry to be obliged to believe you."

"I am afraid, Excellenz, that there is nothing left for you to do."

General von Stromberg was again busy examining the cigarette papers. Suddenly he raised his head, his gaze boring into Hammersley's face.

"You say this is a copy of the original message?"

"Yes, Excellenz."

"And where did you make it?"

"In the library upstairs at Lady Heathcote's in Park Lane."

"When?"

"After my interview with Herr Rizzio. It is written hurriedly, as you will observe."

"It is written with a pen finer than those usually employed by ladies."

"I took what offered, Excellenz," said Hammersley.

"What was your thought when you made the copy?"

"That Rizzio or his agents would attempt to get it away from me. It seems that I was right."

"Are you sure that he was acting for England and not for me?" asked von Stromberg quickly.

"For *you*, Excellenz?"

THE YELLOW DOVE

“Did it not occur to you that your failure to accede to his request might have given Herr Rizzio the idea that you were saving this document from him in order that you might deliver it to the War Office?”

“How could such an idea occur to me when I already knew what his object was?”

“Oh! You are convinced that he is for the English cause?”

“Naturally. I can conceive of no reason why Rizzio should be for Germany.”

Von Stromberg smiled. If this were skill in parry, he rejoiced in having met his match. If it were merely ingenuousness, he was equally at a loss. He had often admitted to himself that there were but two kinds of people in the world that he could not cope with—those who never lost their tempers and those who told the truth. He had taken advantage of Hammersley’s physical condition to provoke him into irritation, but the man was quite unruffled. The piercing eye, the threatening tone and the dominant air of authority which von Stromberg had so frequently found effective with others had been of no avail here. Herr Hammersley stood by the fire, erect and unperturbed, calmly awaiting his dismissal. If he had told the truth, then Rizzio——

“Herr Rizzio has advised me that you are disloyal to Germany,” said the General at last. “You inform me that he is loyal to England.”

Hammersley shrugged and laughed.

“If I were disloyal to Germany, surely I had proof enough of your suspicions in your secret summons, to remain at Ben-a-Chielt. It is unnecessary for me to say that I should have come without that summons, because it was dangerous for me to stay.”

HAMMERSLEY EXPLAINS

"You would, then, have me disregard the message from Herr Rizzio?"

"No. I merely ask that you wait until you hear from Herr Maxwell."

"And if Herr Maxwell be dead?" asked von Stromberg quietly.

Hammersley's face became grave.

"In that case, Excellenz, I must rely on your keenness to decide the issue between us."

Von Stromberg slipped the packet of papers into an inner pocket and rose with a laugh. He covered the distance between himself and Hammersley in three paces with extended hands.

"I was only trying you, Herr Hammersley. It is a habit of mine. It amuses me. You will forgive me, *nicht wahr?*"

"Willingly, Excellenz, if you will provide me with food and a bed. Failing those, you may have me shot at once."

"Food you shall have, and a bed is prepared in your room upstairs. As for the shooting, perhaps we may as well postpone that until morning."

He laughed jovially, showing a very fine set of teeth, and, touching a bell which was answered by Captain Wentz, directed that food and coffee be prepared at once.

"One word more," he went on, when Wentz went out, "where did you put this copy after leaving Lady Heathcote's in London?"

"I slipped it down the window sash in my automobile. They did not even search for it. I got away by a ruse."

"No one saw it?"

"No one. The message is the same."

THE YELLOW DOVE

"H—m! You have a good memory?"

"Excellent."

"Are you sure that the War Office knew of your movements?"

"Positive. I know of no one who would try to kill me——"

"Rizzio?"

"Acting for England, yes."

"And if he were acting for Germany?"

"Then he is a fool."

Von Stromberg folded his long arms, and gazed at the lamp.

"You do not feel that it would be possible to return at once?"

"Not unless I wished to be shot as a spy."

"What will you do?"

"Take whatever service you will give me. Failing that I will volunteer for aviation."

The General, without pursuing the subject further, motioned Hammersley to the door.

"You will find food ready. After eating you had better get to bed. I will talk with you further in the morning."

As the door closed behind his visitor von Stromberg sank into the chair by the fire and lighted a third cigar, upon which he pulled steadily for some moments, rehearsing by question and reply almost every word of Hammersley's story. By every rule of the game as he knew it Herr Hammersley should be a liar. And yet his story from first to last held water. There was not a flaw in its texture from beginning to end. If Hammersley had not told the truth he was the most skillful liar in Europe, a man who gave the appearance of truthfulness to the last hair of his head. And yet

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it was much more easy to lie if one knew that there was no man to oppose him. Hammersley did not know that Rizzio was on the way. Tomorrow they would meet. It would be interesting to watch that meeting. For, as to this thing, the mind of the General was clear. One of these men was false to Germany, the other true, but which? Both had come willingly, or was it by necessity? And Herr Maxwell! It was strange that Maxwell should have failed in his report at this crucial moment. And if Maxwell were dead—who had betrayed him? General von Stromberg's thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door and the entrance of the orderly.

“A telegram, Excellenz, by motorcycle from Windenberg.”

The General opened the paper. It was in code and he translated it rapidly.

VON STROMBERG:

Withhold judgment until my arrival. Will be at Bremen tomorrow early with Miss Mather, who possesses valuable information.

RIZZIO.

General von Stromberg sank deeper into his chair, the paper in his fingers, a smile broadening upon his features. The woman! It was almost too good to be true. Miss Doris Mather, the American girl, Hammersley's fiancée, coming to Germany with Rizzio. And Hammersley obviously did not know it. Intrigue, mystery and now romance. Tomorrow——

The man still stood awaiting orders. Von Stromberg rose with a yawn.

“Is my room prepared?”

“Yes, Excellenz.”

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"Which one?"

"The same as before—next to that of Herr Hammersley."

"Well, move it into the wing. And when I go up you will set a watch upon my door—also one outside my windows."

"*Zu befehl, Excellenz.*"

"In the meanwhile send Herr Hauptmann Wentz to me here."

The man went out and Captain Wentz entered immediately closing the door behind him.

"What time does the northern express leave Bremen in the morning?"

"At seven."

General von Stromberg sat and wrote out a message.

"Have this message sent at once." And then, "That train reaches Windenberg at what hour?"

"Twelve."

"Good. This mountain air is excellent for the nerves. I shall sleep late tomorrow and do not wish to be called. You will go personally to Windenberg at eleven o'clock with a closed carriage. You will meet Herr Rizzio, whom you will recognize by his tall, distinguished appearance and excellent clothing. He will be accompanied by a young lady. It is my wish that they be brought to this house and given separate rooms on the upper story and placed under guard until I summon them. No one must see them enter this house. To accomplish this purpose, Herr Hammersley must go to the hangar. The means I leave to you. Captain von Winden will be of service. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

HAMMERSLEY EXPLAINS

“For the present that is all. I shall go to my room. Good night.”

“Good night, Excellenz.”

Meanwhile, upstairs in his room, Hammersley, after having eaten, was preparing for bed. For a tired man he went about it in a very leisurely way, smoking a cigarette, and wandering about the room stretching his long limbs and yawning between whiles. Then, after a time, he took off his clothes and bathed. It was perhaps an hour before he blew out his candle, and even then he did not get immediately into bed. He sat on the edge of the couch for a while, listening and watching the cold moonlight outside his dormer window, or the dim line of light that came from beneath the door into the hall. Then, apparently satisfied that he was to be quite free from interruption, he straightened and stood up, waiting again. Still no sound. He reached for the table, where he had put his watch and the things from his pockets, and picked up a large pocket-knife, carefully opening the large blade. Then, with quick, noiseless footsteps, he crossed the room to the fireplace and felt with the fingers of one hand carefully along the edge of the chimney breast. His fingers reached a spot where there was an unevenness, and feeling carefully, thrust the knife-blade its full length beneath the paper, slowly withdrawing it. Something protruded which was quickly taken into the palm of his left hand. With great care he smoothed the broken wallpaper back into its place and noiselessly closing the knife got softly into bed.

He lay on his back for a while, his eyes wide open, watching the window and the door and then, pulling

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the heavy blankets up, slipped lower and lower under the covers until he disappeared from view. In the room all was dark, but under the blankets he read by the light of an electric pocket torch some writing in German upon a thin slip of paper.

Papers arrive tomorrow night, eleven—from Berlin—automobile—by Schöndorf road.

CHAPTER XIII

THE UNWILLING GUEST

AFTER the light of dawn went out upon the cliffs of Rhuda Mor, Doris Mather hung for a long while upon the brink of an abyss, below her darkness, above her light. She strove upward, but in the dim moments of half-consciousness was aware of a force restraining her and a recurrence of the odor in which the darkness had first come. She had a sense of motion and of jolting, the feeling of arms about her, a descent, the sound of water and the rocking of a boat. Brief glimpses she had of sunlight, which revealed outlines dimly, like the glow of summer lightning upon familiar objects, making them curiously unfamiliar. John Rizzio's face persisted in these visions, a fantastic Rizzio, much larger than the man she knew, deferential and punctilious as ever, and strangely grave. A stout man with a swarthy face in a cap and brass buttons, just above her, darkly outlined against white clouds which seemed to be whirling rapidly past him. Dully she found herself wondering where the clouds were going so rapidly and why they didn't come back. . . . Later, darkness and peace, where there were no visions and the sky no longer whirled . . . a steady vibration which soothed her, and she blissfully slept.

When she awoke the visions were gone, and as her senses returned she started up, but her head swam and she sank back again. As she had risen a woman

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emerged from the shadows of the room and came forward. And then slowly, as full consciousness returned, the girl realized that she was on an ocean-going vessel in a cabin or stateroom very beautifully appointed. She started up in her bed and looked out of the port-hole to see the amber crests of waves leaping rapidly past. Then she heard the woman's voice speaking.

"You are feeling better?"

Doris turned and looked at her, a woman of middle age, with a kindly face, dressed in white linen.

"What yacht is this?" she asked.

"The *Sylph*, miss—Mr. Rizzio's," she replied.

Doris thought for a moment. The last thing her waking consciousness remembered were the cliffs of Rhuda Mor.

"How did I come here?" she asked again.

The woman shook her head. "I don't know, miss."

Her manner was kind and most respectful but her tone was decisive. She was obeying instructions.

"Is Mr. Rizzio aboard?" Doris asked again.

"Yes, miss. And he asked me to tell you that when you felt sufficiently recovered he would be glad to wait upon you in the saloon."

"Oh, I understand."

When Doris rose and put her feet to the swaying deck, nausea overcame her. But the woman, who was prepared for this emergency, offered a glass filled with cloudy liquid.

"Drink this," she said. "It will make you feel better."

Doris looked into the woman's face, and recognizing the aromatic odor, took the draught.

The nausea passed after a moment and she managed to get up and make her way to the bathroom. As

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she bathed her face, memory returned, full memory of the events of the previous night, the scene upon the cliffs, with Cyril, the destroyer, Rizzio, Stryker, Rudha Mor, the Yellow Dove and then unconsciousness. Chloroform! There were vestiges of it upon her clothing still. They had drugged her. When she took off her shirtwaist something fell to the floor. A paper. She picked it up and looked at it. It was Rizzio's note to her at Kilmorack House asking her to come to Ben-a-Chielt—so that he might make her prisoner! She remembered now that she had thrust it into her waist when she went out. She folded the letter carefully and put it in her stays. After the other indignity she had suffered, it seemed strange that they had not searched her, too. She would keep the letter. Perhaps later she would find use for it.

John Rizzio! It was difficult for her mind to associate him with the villainy of abduction. And yet, as her brain grew clearer, she became quite sure that there was no other answer to the problem. Indeed, from the replies of the stewardess she knew that John Rizzio had chosen that she should know it was to be a problem no longer. The *Sylph*, that was his yacht. She had been on the boat before, two years ago, during the races in the Solent. Abduction! He had dared! She was not frightened yet. Fury at his temerity blinded her to all sense of danger. A phrase of Cyril's came back to her, illuminating the chaos of her thoughts. "You know too much—too much for your own good—or mine." Cyril's cigarette papers! She was the only one beside Cyril who had read their contents! Rizzio had carried her off, had brought her to the *Sylph*, which was out of sight of land, speeding for—Germany! What was he going to do with her?

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Fury passed and weakness followed. She did not know what time of day it was, but she was aware that it had been long since she had eaten. In the cabin she found a tray set with food and coffee which the stewardess insisted upon serving her. She sank into an armchair, refusing to eat, but the woman persisted and the odor of the coffee was tempting. It was luncheon, she found, and remembered that she had had no appetite for dinner at Lady Heathcote's and that it must be quite twenty-four hours since she had broken bread. The coffee gave her courage, and in spite of herself she found that she was eating heartily with a genuine relish. She was a good sailor and the nausea, which she now knew was the effect of the drug, had passed. The stewardess stood beside her and to the other questions Doris put to her answered politely, but volunteered nothing further than she had already told. In spite of the woman's care and attention the girl could not get rid of the idea that the stewardess had been sent as a guardian as well as a maid. She was a prisoner of John Rizzio, of Germany, whither he was bringing her as fast as the yacht could take them.

Finding at last that her attempts to extract information from her stolid servitress were fruitless, and feeling strengthened by the food she had taken, she got up and told the woman that she was going on deck, asking that Mr. Rizzio be informed that she would see him. As she emerged upon deck the crisp wintry air sent the color slowly into her pallid cheeks. The yacht was bowling along with the wind and sea quartering and the foam-crests leaped alongside, sending an occasional spurt of spray into the air, where the wind caught it and blew it across the decks in a

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feathery mist of rainbows. The sunlight glinted on polished wood and brasswork and at the stern caught in the cross of St. George where the flag of England flapped in the breeze. The flag of England sheltering John Rizzio! She scanned the horizon anxiously. Perhaps an English cruiser or destroyer might come to whom she might be able to tell the real character of the owner of the vessel. But there was no vessel in sight. A sailor passed her and touched his cap. The deference encouraged her. It reminded her that this was the same deck upon which she had stood when John Rizzio was suing for her hand, an honorable host when she had been an honored guest. A loud crackling came to her ears from the wireless room. He was there, already in communication with his employers in Germany. Even now, with Cyril's words still ringing in her ears, she found it difficult to believe that John Rizzio was England's enemy; and the price of his treachery a picture, "The Descent from the Cross"! What a mockery that a man who would stoop to such dishonor could make its price a picture which typified the conquest of sublime virtue even over death!

The wind was searching and the maid brought a heavy coat with brass buttons from below and put it on her with the word that Mr. Rizzio had sent it and would come to her in a few moments. She sat in a deckchair in the lee of the deckhouse, her lips firmly compressed, trying to think what his ulterior purpose might be, planning a defense which might make her invulnerable, an attack which might search his intentions and discover the true relation that was to exist between them.

He came toward her from forward, muffled in a

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greatcoat, and carrying a rug. He took off his cap with an air of deference, which answered at once some of her questions. She rose and faced him, her color high.

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked, trying to keep her lips from trembling.

He smiled and pulled at his mustache.

"First, I hope you'll give me a chance to explain."

"What?" she cried hotly. "What can you explain? Don't you suppose I know what you are? A German spy, a traitor to England, and worse than that—a woman-baiter and a coward, Mr. Rizzio."

He bent his head.

"I make no defense," he said, "except necessity." And then gravely indicating the chair from which she had risen. "Won't you sit down? The voyage may be long."

But she still stood.

"I am a prisoner, not a guest."

"Then I command you to sit," he said with a laugh. "Won't you?"

A sound of exasperation came from her throat and she obeyed him, her gaze on the sea, while with some ostentation he covered her with a rug.

"What are you going to do with me in Germany?" she repeated dully.

He sank into the chair beside her. "As I have often told you, you are a woman of rare intelligence. In reply I can only say that, unfortunately, I do not know."

"A coward who is also a—liar," she said bitterly.

"A coward is usually a liar, but a liar isn't always a coward. I am a liar, Doris, if you will, but a courageous one."

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“My name is Mather,” she said distinctly.

He shrugged and turned his gaze on the sea.

“You hate me, of course. We are enemies. I am sorry. I warned you that you were entangled in an affair that was leading you into dangerous paths. I would have saved you, if I could, but you had learned too much.”

“And so you had me chloroformed. It was a pity that you didn’t complete your work.”

“I merely did what was required of me. Through a most unfortunate combination of circumstances you came into possession of a secret known to but one person in England; and you are the only person with English sympathies who knows my exact political status——”

“A spy!” contemptuously.

“What you will—a spy if you like—but a strong friend of Germany who resents an attempt by a nation jealous of her growing commercial supremacy to wipe her out of existence. I have lived in England long, and I have known many of the men who have made her what she is, but never in all those years has England ever given me one token of the high nobility she preaches. I have passed for many years as an Englishman. I am not English. I am cosmopolitan and to a cosmopolitan, residence is but an accident.”

“Pray spare me the details of your treachery.”

He laughed easily.

“I’m afraid you’re at my mercy. I shall try to be lenient. You are an American, I am an Italian. To call me a traitor to England because I happen to have a liking for Germany would be much like my calling you a traitor to Germany because you happen to have a liking for England.”

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"I have never eaten the bread and salt of Germany, or wormed my way into the hearts of its people."

"I'm sure you flatter me. The people of my set in London are agreeable, but——"

Doris had straightened in the act of rising.

"I did not come on deck to discuss your ideals or Germany's. I hope that you will excuse——"

"You will not listen?"

"No. I care nothing for your political views. I am your prisoner. I want to know without further words the worst that I am to expect from you."

"You have been upon the *Sylph* before. What was proper for you then is proper for you now. You are quite safe in my hands. I shall try to make you comfortable. Does that answer your question?"

"And after——"

"You are to be delivered to the head of the Secret Service Department of the German Empire."

The girl paled and sank back into her chair.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because you are in possession of information that he wants."

"What information? It isn't true. I know nothing."

"I am sorry," he apologized again. "The cigarette papers. You read them."

"No—no."

"You forget that you have already admitted that. You have also read the second message which was to take the place of the first."

"You are dreaming. A second message? I know nothing of a second message."

"Pardon me, if I remind you of it. You would have burned it in the drawing-room at Kilmorack

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House if Mr. Hammersley hadn't taken it from your hand."

She stared at him bewildered at his astounding omniscience, his devilish ingenuity. It frightened her, his cleverness and his pursuit of her. It seemed that she had never had a chance to get away from him. And yet his manner was so carefully studied, his attitude toward her so coldly impersonal that as a man once a lover she no longer feared him. If love of her had ever been in his heart, a greater passion had burned it out. She was grateful for this and prepared to measure her woman's wit to his, thinking of Cyril. What would Cyril have her do?

"You mean that you will let them—the Germans—question me?"

"If they wish to do so."

"But how will it benefit them, if the papers are already in their possession?"

"You will forgive me if I find it possible to doubt."

She turned away from him and studied the lines of foam that streamed across the green troughs of the sea.

"I suppose that conversation between us two is superfluous. You distrust me and I——"

"I think perhaps," he said gravely, "that it would be pleasanter for both of us not to hear your sentiments toward me. Since the night of Lady Heathcote's dinner in London you ceased to be Miss Doris Mather and became merely an official document. It is my duty to preserve it and deliver it safely."

"I hope you may succeed. Otherwise the American Ambassador in Berlin may——"

"Unfortunately," he went on quietly, "the American Ambassador cannot be informed."

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She laughed with a greater confidence than she felt.

“You surely can’t believe that my absence from England will pass unnoticed. Do you think that my father—that Lady Heathcote——”

She paused bewildered.

“They will merely know that you rode late at night to Ben-a-Chielt and that your horse was found riderless on the moor.”

She buried her face in her hands and a sob broke from her throat. It was true. They would think her dead. For the first time she really was able to think of things in their true aspect.

“It’s cruel,” she gasped. “How could you!”

He was too wise to touch her or even by his manner to show too deep a sympathy.

“I am sorry,” he said coolly, “awfully sorry. As you know, I would have had things different. You may still doubt me when I say that what I have done is the hardest task that I ever undertook in my life. But that is true. You were the only person in England who jeopardized my existence there. I had to take you away. I regret the necessity of having to use force. I shall do what I can here upon the *Sylph* to counteract the unpleasant impression of my brutality. I am not a bully and a woman-baiter. I am a spoke in the wheel of destiny which you had clogged. By all the rules of the game you should have died. Reasons which I need not mention made your death at my hands an impossibility. So I merely removed you to a place of safety. No harm shall come to you, I pledge my honor.”

“Thanks,” she said dully, struggling up, her face away from him. And then dauntlessly, “Small a thing as it is, I must be content with that.” She had risen

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and turned, "And now, if you don't mind, I will go below. I would prefer to be alone. If, as you protest, you would do me kindness, you will not ask to see me."

He bowed.

"I have given instructions that you shall be allowed to do as you please. Mrs. Madden will furnish you with all that you require both I think of linen and toilet articles. I shall not try to see you again until we land."

She bowed her head and went down. Rizzio watched her until she disappeared and then walked over to the rail and peered out over the sea. It had taken some self-command to go through this interview as he had planned it, and in conquering himself he had succeeded in establishing a relation between them which made his presence at least bearable to her. The impersonal tone which he had used through the interview was the one most calculated to put her at her ease with him and the perfect frankness of his confession had made her understand at once that sentimentally at least she had nothing to fear from him. John Rizzio was wise in the ways of women and the particular woman now thrown upon his mercy, even though she was the one woman in the world he had thought the most desirable, was to be treated with the delicate consideration due to her unfortunate dependence upon him. A flash of sentiment, a breath of revelation of his ultimate purposes toward her, and the woman would be lost to him. Her misfortunes if anything had made her more desirable than ever, especially since he had been the cause of them. For one mad moment, he had thought this morning of turning the *Sylph* toward the waters of the South Atlantic, forgetting the quarrels of the nations in which he had become involved, and of seek-

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ing a new world where he could begin again, trusting to time and opportunity and his own patience and tact to bring a sentimental victory out of what had already been defeat. A mad moment but a tempting one. But the time was not yet. He must be patient. With Hammersley gone——

He straightened and slowly strolled forward to the wireless room. Toward evening he was given confirmation of the wisdom of his course, for as he was pacing the deck aft she came up from below and joined him. She was looking rather white, but she smiled at him brightly and matched her steps to his.

“I was lonely below,” she said. “You don’t mind?”

He had never thought her lovelier. Her face, if anything, had always needed just those shadows of pain to make it perfect.

“I hadn’t hoped for such a kindness. You are feeling better?”

“Yes, thanks. And since we must meet I am willing to try to be friendly.”

“I’m sure you’ll find that I’ll meet you more than halfway,” he said politely.

They talked far into the evening and at her request they dined together in the saloon. He was reserved but not cautious, and when the evening was over remembered hazily that she had succeeded in learning something from him of General von Stromberg, the head of the German Secret Service Department, of the aviation field at Windenberg and of the frequent flights of the Yellow Dove since the beginning of the winter.

The next morning passed quietly. Doris did not appear until noon. But just before luncheon a smudge of smoke appeared upon the horizon, which rapidly grew larger, and in a little while she made out the lines

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of a war vessel steaming in a direction which would intercept the yacht. The *Sylph* did not slow down until a solid shot from a gun in the forecastle of the destroyer went ricochetting across her bows, when the engine was stopped and John Rizzio made slowly aft to where she stood.

"Miss Mather," he said briefly, "I must ask you to go below to your cabin at once."

A glance at his face showed that her protests would have been useless and she went below to her own stateroom, the door of which was locked upon her. Through the heavy glass of her port-hole she saw the vessel approach until within hailing distance when a boat dropped from her side into which a boat's crew and an officer clambered and rowed alongside. The vessel bore no flag, but the girl clearly heard the hail of the boarding officer and realized that the destroyer was an English vessel. Her hopes rose. Perhaps even now the Englishman would find something irregular in the yacht's papers and would take charge, conveying her back to England. She waited for a long time and then heard the clatter of oars and saw the boat push off from the side of the yacht, while the officer, young, slender and windburned, stood up in the stern sheets of his boat.

"All right," she heard him say, "sorry to have troubled you. Pleasant voyage. Good-by."

Never had English sounded so good to her. But it was with a sigh of despair that she saw the boat reach the side of the war vessel and felt the steadily increasing rhythm of the engines of the yacht as she drove once more upon her way.

When the two vessels were at a distance from each other the key turned in the lock of the door and in

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reply to a knock, she found John Rizzio himself, standing hat in hand in the gangway.

"I seem to be in a continual state of apology. But of course you realize the necessity for my action."

"I am in your power," she said helplessly.

"I hope you will believe that I shall not abuse it."

She shrugged her shoulders and followed him to luncheon, managing to preserve at table a cheerfulness which she was far from feeling. Throughout the morning she had been thinking hard. And the only course that was open to her if her courage did not fail was the one that she was following. If she was to be able in any way to help Cyril, she must try to learn what she could, accept the situation with good grace and perhaps by some turn of good fortune find a way to disarm John Rizzio and profit by an inadvertence or mistake. But as the second day wore on she found her task increasingly difficult. At luncheon Mr. Rizzio was more reserved and during the afternoon as they approached waters in which German warships were more likely to be found he spent much time in the wireless room, where a repetition of the crackling noises advised her that he was again in communication with the land of her enemies.

After dinner, at which Rizzio had been very quiet, he requested politely that she go at once to her cabin, which she did to hear the sound of the key again turned in the lock of her door. Despair came over her and at last she cried herself to sleep, awakening during the night at the glare of a searchlight which pierced her window port. She got up and looked out to see a dark bulk looming alongside, the flashing of lanterns, and heard the sound of voices speaking German. At last all was quiet again, and the steady

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hammer of the vessel's propeller told her that the *Sylph* was again on her way.

She must have slept again, for the silver of dawn was already modifying the gloom of her cabin when there was a knock upon her door and she rose. The stewardess fully dressed was outside.

"Mr. Rizzio asks me to request you to please dress at once, as breakfast will be served in half an hour."

She obeyed blindly aware that there was no motion to the deck of her cabin and that the *Sylph* was now riding on an even keel. She verified her guess at the nearness of their destination by a glance through the port-hole, which showed her that the vessel had reached the quieter waters of a bay or river in which she slipped smoothly onward. There were vessels at anchor, large and small, and beyond them she made out the lines of a shore, upon which at intervals buildings loomed.

Mrs. Madden, the stewardess, would not talk and it was not until she reached the breakfast table that Doris learned where they were.

"We shall reach Bremen shortly," said Rizzio. "I do not know how you feel about the matter, but I would suggest that it would save you much trouble and anxiety to trust yourself entirely into my hands."

"I know of nothing else," she said quietly. "What are you going to do?"

"I shall confer with certain officials when we reach the city, which will be in a few moments. After that we will take the seven o'clock train for Windenberg."

CHAPTER XIV

VON STROMBERG CATECHISES

TO the girl the way from Bremen to Windenberg seemed interminable. She shared with John Rizzio a private compartment in the train. He was still ceremoniously polite and inclined to conversation, but now, thoroughly realizing the danger which faced her as well as Cyril, Doris had decided upon a policy of silence. She would wait until she learned what they required of her and then perhaps some instinct or inspiration would direct her. Of one thing she was certain, that nothing could make her speak if she did not think it wise to do so.

When Rizzio commented upon the beauty of the passing landscape she assented with a smile and then returned to her own thoughts. Cyril, she knew, would be at Windenberg, for it was to Windenberg that the Yellow Dove had made its flights. She had succeeded in eliciting that much information from her captor the other night at dinner when he was attempting by frankness and hospitality to minimize the brutality of his actions. She had many reasons to believe that he had already regretted that frankness for at every subsequent attempt of hers to get more information about von Stromberg, John Rizzio had turned the subject adroitly or had remained obstinately silent.

She tried to put together the scraps of information she possessed in order to understand just what Cyril's

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position at Windenberg might be. He had answered the summons of the secret messenger willingly and at once. That much was in his favor. If they had suspected him before, this immediate obedience must have disarmed them. In the mind of General von Stromberg there could be no possible reason why Cyril should put himself at his mercy. General von Stromberg could not know as she knew that Cyril had another mission to perform. She looked up quickly to find John Rizzio's dark eyes gazing at her. He frightened her at that moment, for it almost seemed from the expression of his face that he had succeeded in reading her thoughts—and in the light of his previous omniscience even that psychic feat seemed within the realm of possibility. But he merely smiled at her and looked out of the window.

That mission of Cyril's! What was it? The obtaining of some information necessary to England? Some military secret such as the machinery of ordnance or the chemical mixture of explosive shells? Or was it something more personal, more sinister and dreadful—the death of some high official—perhaps the Emperor himself? She shuddered and shut her eyes, her mind painting unimaginable horrors. Not murder—even for Cyril she could not connive at that. But she must be prepared to do something for him, to help him, if she could by false testimony or if necessary, no matter what they did to her, by silence. If they suspected Cyril, of course he would be kept in ignorance of her arrival. Of all these things and others she thought with ever-growing doubt and timidity. And all the while in the back of her head was the idea of her possible appeal to the American Ambassador at Berlin.

THE YELLOW DOVE

But if she had any hopes that an opportunity would be given her to use the post, or even to be free from surveillance, their arrival at Windenberg speedily diminished them. For upon the platform of the small station a German officer met them and conducted them at once to a closed carriage which started off through the village immediately. The officer and Mr. Rizzio exchanged a few commonplaces which politely included her, but as to the real meaning of her visit and their possible intentions—nothing. So she sank back in her seat and looked out through a small window at the forest into which the road almost immediately passed, reaching their destination in apparent calmness, the high tension of her nerves resolutely schooled to obedience.

A farmhouse in the midst of meadows surrounded by forests, with a broad hospitable door in which they entered, seeing no one. The German officer who directed them showed her the way to a room upstairs and when she was in the room locked the door. She was in the dark, for the shutters of the windows were closed. Her first impulse at reaching a haven of privacy even though a prison was to seek the line of least resistance and give her nerves the relaxation they needed in tears. But she fought the weakness down, going to the windows and peering out through a crack in the shutters. When she tried to open them, she discovered that they were locked or nailed from the outside. She had been a prisoner she knew, upon the yacht, but the firmness with which the hard wood and iron resisted her efforts gave her for the first time the grim reality of her predicament. A prisoner in the heart of a German forest with no way to turn for help! Where was Cyril? Perhaps after all, her sur-

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mises had been incorrect. They had sent him away to Berlin. Or perhaps he had gone back in freedom to England. Grave fears assailed her as to Rizzio and his intentions. Once a friend, but after that an unsuccessful lover! What did she know of him or of these people into whose hands he was committing her? Germans! She was ready to believe anything of them after Belgium—the worst! Had Rizzio's story about bringing her to the head of the Secret Service of Germany been a mere invention to serve other ends? He had told her at Kilmorack House that he would never give her up. Was this what he had meant? A blind terror seized her which seemed for the moment to deaden all her faculties for analysis. The room, though chill, seemed to stifle her, its walls and ceiling to be closing in to crush her. She stumbled to the bed upon which she fell and lay for a long while exhausted and at last the blessing of tears came to her and then, sleep.

How long Doris slept she did not know, but she realized that it could not have been long, for strange ugly figures came into her dreams and strange ugly events followed each other with lightning swiftness. But a knock upon the door brought her back to the terrors of her predicament and she answered it, wondering what was to happen. It was a tall man in the Jäger uniform bearing a tray of food—some toast, eggs and a cup of chocolate. He entered with a smile and a polite greeting in German, putting the tray upon the table and then forcing open the shutters a little so that a narrow bar of sunlight came into the room and lay upon the bright drugget upon the floor. By its light she examined the man. He was tall, grizzled at the temples and walked with a slight limp. He smiled

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at her again and she could not refrain from answering the smile in kind.

"I hope the Fräulein will enjoy her lunch," he said. "The toast especially, for I have made it myself. I trust that the Fräulein prefers dry toast."

"Thanks, anything will do. I am not hungry.

"I am sorry," said the Forester, bowing and then continuing in a lower tone: "The Fräulein will not forget that the toast is excellent and that I made it myself."

She examined him curiously, wondering whether he were not perhaps a little demented. But at the door he bowed and disappeared and she heard the key turn in the lock. He was apparently not too demented to forget that she was a prisoner.

She was not hungry but she knew that she must eat something to keep up her strength for any ordeal that was in store for her, so she drew a chair to the table and sat, pouring out the chocolate in the cup and helping herself to the eggs.

All the while she thought of the strange behavior of her servitor. Why did he lay such stress upon the excellence of the dry toast? And why because it was dry? She raised a piece of it with her fingers and examined it, lifted the second piece, when a gasp of surprise escaped her. Above the third piece of toast, folded neatly, was a thin strip of paper. She glanced toward the door and window and then getting up from the table and going to a spot where observation of her actions was impossible, opened the slip of paper. It was in Cyril's hand.

Don't be frightened [she read]. You are to be questioned. Follow these instructions. I made copy of message in Heathcote library night of dinner

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while waiting for you to get wraps. I hid it in right sash of motor. Copy and original of message the same. You and I are enemies. Therefore ignore me. Rizzio acted for Scotland Yard. As to the rest tell truth exactly and no harm can come to me. I will find means later to communicate. Burn this immediately.

Her heart beating high, she read the paper through twice to familiarize herself with the instructions which she perfectly understood. Then she found a match-box on the candlestick, put the paper in the hearth and burned it. After that she sat at the table and ate. It was there that Captain von Winden found her some moments later when he came to request her presence in the room on the ground floor.

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During the time that Doris slept, in the living-room downstairs General von Stromberg sat with John Rizzio. A peaceful winter landscape looked in at the windows, the sun slanted in a yellow rhomboid upon the floor, a cheerful fire was burning upon the hearth and General von Stromberg, his left hand tapping gently upon the back of his right, was gravely listening to John Rizzio's story. All of the pieces of the little game were upon the board. He was now about to move them skillfully from one square to another until only one piece remained, and that one piece, the victor in all such games, was—himself.

“And what was his manner,” went on von Stromberg, “when you showed your credentials?”

“He was surprised—very much surprised—and I think alarmed.”

“And what arguments did you use to make him give the packet up?”

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"I threatened him with serious consequences."

"Which meant *me*," said von Stromberg grimly.

"Yes, Excellenz. But he refused without other grounds than his own judgment."

"And then——"

"Excellenz, Fräulein Mather came in. She heard something from behind the curtain—but she gave no sign."

"Oh! She is clever?"

"Exceptionally so. I have brought her here of my own volition and she will speak if properly approached, but I hope Excellenz will be pleased to make the interview as easy for her as possible. If any harm should come to her——"

"It is not the practice of my department to do hurt to women," said the General quickly. Then he laughed. "I suspect, Herr Rizzio, that you have a tenderness in that quarter."

"It is true. I hope, therefore, that you will be patient with her."

Von Stromberg waved his hand impatiently.

"And what happened then?"

"Hammersley and Miss Mather went out. I remained in the smoking-room and then telephoned to Maxwell to send his men at once. They came. I met them outside the house before Hammersley emerged and gave them my instructions to follow Hammersley's machine and get the papers."

The older man started forward, his long acquisitive nose eagerly scenting a clue.

"And how long was it after they left the smoking-room for the machine?"

Rizzio pulled at his mustache a moment thoughtfully.

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"I could not say exactly," he said after a time. "A matter of half an hour perhaps."

"Did you know what Herr Hammersley was doing in the meanwhile?"

"No. I could not say. I telephoned first and then went out. The guests were all in the drawing-room."

"Did you go up to the library?"

Rizzio showed surprise. "No, Excellenz."

"Are you sure that Herr Hammersley was in the drawing-room with the others when you went out?"

"Yes, Excellenz. I am sure of it. There was no reason for him to be anywhere else."

"There was no chance of his going upstairs to the library for ten—fifteen minutes—without your seeing him?"

Rizzio straightened and pulled at his mustache. "Excellenz, I think I understand the object of your questions. It is not possible that Herr Hammersley could have made a copy of the papers at Lady Heathcote's house."

Von Stromberg paused a moment, then he asked:

"How long after you left the door of the house before he came out with the lady?"

"Scarcely more than ten minutes."

The General's fingers tapped more rapidly.

"Oh," he growled, "I see." And then, "Tell me how the matter was arranged that Captain Byfield should deliver those papers."

"Maxwell managed it through a cipher. The War Office had grown suspicious and all the usual channels were closed. Byfield was frightened and refused to deliver further messages. So Maxwell hit upon the scheme of the cigarette papers to be delivered to Hammersley. I could not receive them from Byfield be-

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cause of your instructions not to let my interests be known to anyone in England but Maxwell—you thought the time was not ripe for me to play my *coup*.”

“Yes,” said von Stromberg dryly, “but the time is ripe now and you are not there to play it.”

“But this affair was of such importance——”

“Yes, yes,” the general broke in quickly, “go on.”

“It was the day of an anniversary always celebrated for me by Lady Heathcote, whose house, as you know, is one of the most exclusive in England and above suspicion. I invited the guests and Maxwell communicated with Hammersley, arranging the manner of the exchange which was accomplished. My demand upon Hammersley was made in accordance with your orders. It was a test of his loyalty. He failed.”

“Do you think he had an opportunity to glance at the papers, I mean between the time he received them and the time of your demand of him?”

“Yes. He studied them for a moment behind the curtains of an alcove in the drawing-room. I was watching. I saw his shadow as he bent over to the light of the lamp.”

“By that you mean he had a hope that they might be spurious?”

“Yes, Excellenz. When it was discovered that there was a leak, false orders were issued to test the different departments of the War Office.”

“H—m. And then, Maxwell’s men followed him, and when he was on the point of capture he turned the papers over to the lady, who escaped through the hedge?”

“As I have said before, Excellenz, the lady is clever. She read the papers, but her loyalty to Hammersley

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kept her silent, though at that time she suspected that he was a German agent."

"I see," said von Stromberg, manifesting a sudden activity with his fingers. "The lady is interested in Herr Hammersley?"

"Yes, Excellenz."

"More interested in him, perhaps, than she is in you?"

Rizzio bowed in silence.

"*Gut*," said von Stromberg rising. "That perhaps makes matters more amusing for us—perhaps a little more amusing for Herr Hammersley."

He paced the floor with long strides while Rizzio watched him until he stopped before the fire and spoke again.

"Herr Rizzio, you have told me about the events in Scotland when, as you say, Hammersley, acting as an Englishman, warned the lady against you as an agent of Germany. What I would like very much to know is why, when you were sure he was acting for England, you did not have him killed at once."

"I tried, Excellenz, but he was too well prepared for me. My men shot at him on the road and wounded him slightly—but on the cliffs at Ben-a-Chielt he had a confederate who killed one of my men. The other, as I have related, fell over the cliffs."

"But you"—put in the officer harshly—"what were *you* doing all the while?"

"I shot at him and missed."

"That was unfortunate—from our point of view. It is not the custom of agents of my department to miss—at anything, Herr Rizzio. But since Hammersley is here, the damage, if damage there is, can be repaired. What did you do after that?"

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“I had reason to suspect that Hammersley was the cause of the arrest of Captain Byfield. I had also reason to suspect that he had informed, or would inform, the War Office as to my connection with Germany. Accordingly I had made arrangements to have my boat within easy reaching distance of Ben-a-Chielt. With the help of two other men who had been set to watch the roads in case of surprises I kept watch on Hammersley. Miss Mather we lost in the darkness of the moor. This was unfortunate, as I had planned to take her, too. But we followed Hammersley on horses to Rudha Mor to be sure that he would obey your summons and fortune aided us, for Doris Mather had followed him, too, and we managed to take her without difficulty—and brought her aboard the yacht. Hammersley’s departure for Germany, of course, relieved me of all responsibility on his behalf.”

Von Stromberg paused before the fireplace, his brows puckering.

“On the whole, Herr Rizzio, you have done well. I shall not complain. But if your story is true, I should like you to tell me two things. The first is, why should Herr Hammersley return to Germany to face certain death at my hands?”

Rizzio shrugged his fine shoulders.

“Excellenz, I do not know. I did not think he would come when I sent you my request to summon him. The knowledge he possessed was dangerous to me and I had made every possible plan to kill him at Rudha Mor. Nothing that could have happened surprised me more than when I saw him fly out in obedience to your message. It has puzzled me. I do not know why he came unless it was to learn something in Germany and return to England.”

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Von Stromberg gave a dry chuckle.

"The supposition does not flatter his intelligence or mine. Aside from the difficulties of his position at present, if he were seeking information as to the plans of the Empire, he would have about as much chance of getting away from here alive as you would have, Herr Rizzio, in the same circumstances."

The old man towered to his full height and brought his huge fist down with a crash upon the table which startled Rizzio, who fingered his mustache, his face a shade paler.

"I am glad, Excellenz," he said with a laugh, "that I am not in Hammersley's shoes."

Disregarding Rizzio's comment, the old man paced the floor again, storming.

"The other question that I would like to ask you is, what has become of Herr Maxwell?"

Rizzio started up, now in genuine concern.

"Have you not heard from him, Excellenz?"

"No," roared the other. "Why haven't I? You should know."

"I do not know. I saw him the day I left London for Scotland. He was fully informed of all that had happened. Could it be that——"

Rizzio paused with a deep frown.

"Where is he? Why has he not reported? Could anything have happened to him? What were you thinking?"

"That Hammersley perhaps—but that could hardly be—since he always moved under cover——"

"*Du lieber Jesu!* Speak out! Will you?"

"I thought that Hammersley might have been the cause of his arrest."

"Oh, you think that? Why?"

THE YELLOW DOVE

“Because it was Hammersley who told the War Office of Byfield——”

“What proof have you of that?”

“No one knew of Byfield’s connection with us but Hammersley, Maxwell and myself.”

“Those were my orders. How do I know that they were obeyed?”

“One doesn’t disobey orders, Excellenz, with one’s head in a noose.”

“H—m. There are many necks in nooses at Windenberg. And one of the nooses will be tightened.”

He had stopped before Rizzio and was scowling at him with eyes that shot malevolence. Rizzio knew something of von Stromberg’s methods and was sure that he was merely trying to intimidate him, to reduce him to a consistency which would reveal hidden weaknesses in texture; yet, knowing this, Rizzio felt most uncomfortable. He twirled his mustache and looked out of the window, but his glance came back to von Stromberg’s eyes, which never wavered or changed in intensity, as though under the influence of some strange hypnotic attraction.

“You know, of course,” the old man’s harsh voice snapped at him, “what Herr Hammersley accuses you of?”

“I can imagine, Excellenz.”

“He says that you have been acting for the English Government.”

Rizzio started up in alarm.

“You do not for a moment believe——”

“Don’t get excited. I believe nothing—which I do not wish to believe. But he tells a very pretty story, Herr Rizzio.”

“He would,” said Rizzio easily. “I will do him the

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credit of saying that he is skillful. But a lie will discover itself in the end."

"Exactly. I am glad you agree with me. What I now propose to do is to set the lie in motion. The easiest way to provoke a liar is to put him upon the defensive. You and Hammersley shall debate the matter. I shall be the judge of the debate. We shall see what we shall see."

He strode to the table and was about to touch the bell when Rizzio broke in.

"One moment, Excellenz. I should like to know on what he bases his accusation."

"Humph! Not weakening, Rizzio?"

"Hardly, Excellenz," the other smiled. "It will not be difficult for me to verify my statements if Hammersley will only talk."

"You need not fear. He will talk."

"What I wanted to know, Excellenz, was the nature of the information received in the yellow packet. Would you permit——?"

"Not yet, Herr Rizzio, not yet. The contents of the message will come in time. For the present there is quite enough to occupy Herr Hammersley's mind—and yours."

Rizzio shrugged. "As you please. I would like to know, however, before you summon him, whether his accusation is based on my attempt upon his life."

Von Stromberg chuckled. "Is not that enough to prejudice a man—if he were honest?"

"Yes, if he were honest," said Rizzio. "Did he have any authority for his belief?"

"Yes, Herr Rizzio," said the General, fixing Rizzio with his stare. "He told me that Maxwell had learned it from Byfield."

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"Byfield!" Rizzio started forward quickly. "Hammersley is a fool. Have I not told Excellenz that Byfield knew nothing whatever of my connection with the affair?"

Von Stromberg stretched his long arms impatiently.

"Herr Maxwell, unfortunately, is silent. Captain Byfield is in a position where the only questions that can be put to him will be those at the Gates of Heaven by his Maker."

He gave the bell on the table a resounding blow and grinned mischievously at Rizzio.

"You say that Herr Hammersley is a fool. He asserts that you are one. I shall now smoke a cigar and decide for myself which of you is correct."

And, as the soldier entered, "Tell Herr Hammersley that I wish to see him here at once."

"I can only say, Excellenz," said Rizzio, when the man went out, "that I am willing to abide by your verdict."

"Even though it should be unfavorable to yourself?" growled von Stromberg.

"That, Excellenz, is quite impossible."

"I have known stranger things to happen. The worst aspect of your case is that Herr Hammersley is here. There was no need for him to come. You yourself admit that. He had only to stay in England to devote his talents to a more congenial occupation." Von Stromberg puffed on his cigar and leaned across the table. "Can you tell me why Herr Hammersley came to Germany? Answer me correctly, Rizzio, and I will give you every masterpiece in Belgium."

Rizzio frowned into the fire.

"I cannot say," he replied. "I have admitted that he has puzzled me. I can only think of one thing.

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Hammersley is a type of man who under the guise of inefficiency does all things well. He is a sportsman. He would do such a thing for the love of adventure, because the danger, the excitement, appealed to him—because it was the ‘sporting thing.’”

“A reason, Rizzio,” muttered von Stromberg, “but not the real reason.”

Rizzio started and a smile broke at the corners of his lips.

“Oh! You realize, then, that there is something else—something——?” He paused.

“I realize nothing,” growled the General. “Realization, Rizzio, is the one banality of existence! Uncertainty is the only thing worth while. When one is certain of anything it ceases to be interesting. That is why Herr Hammersley, whom you call a fool in one breath and a genius in the next, excites my profound attention. Come, I think you will agree with me that he is worth it.”

“I do not like Hammersley, Excellenz.”

“*Natürlich!* But that need not prevent your interest in him, even though your interest is largely in his death.”

The phrase was significant, delivered significantly, and in spite of himself Rizzio felt the gaze of the General piercing his veneer.

“I could feel no happiness in such a misfortune,” he said gravely, “notwithstanding my dislike of him.”

A knock at the door interrupted further conversation and, at a command from the General, Hammersley entered.

CHAPTER XV

THE INQUISITION

IF General von Stromberg had counted upon playing a trump card in producing Rizzio at this interview, Herr Hammersley's demeanor must have disappointed him. For he entered the room with cheerful composure, noted Rizzio, stared at him in sudden seriousness, and then turned to von Stromberg with the air of a man briskly intent.

"You wanted to see me, Excellenz?" he asked quietly.

He had evinced a mild surprise at Rizzio's presence, but no discomposure. If anything, his manner now had a kind of sober eagerness as at the imminence of an issue in which a necessary if painful duty must be performed.

General von Stromberg from his armchair regarded him through a cloud of tobacco smoke.

"Yes, Herr Hammersley," said von Stromberg. "As you will observe, Herr Rizzio has just arrived from England. He followed you almost immediately upon his yacht. It is most fortunate that he is here, for there are several matters which we can discuss in privacy together."

"I am at your service, Excellenz," said Hammersley. "If there are any facts which I can add to my report I shall be glad."

His idiom was Hanoverian. Rizzio, quite cool, faced him, upright, with folded arms.

"To begin with, *meine Herren*, we will sit. To stand

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is the attitude of discomposure. One thinks more calmly sitting down. You have my permission. So—Now we will proceed. I will outline in the briefest words the situation. Herr Hammersley, an agent of the Secret Service Department of the Imperial Government, is intrusted with the receipt and delivery of certain secret messages. He receives them, but is requested by Herr Rizzio, also an agent of the Secret Service Department of the Imperial Government, on authority of indubitable credentials, to relinquish the message to Herr Rizzio. It is not necessary to state the reasons of the Imperial Secret Service Department in desiring the transfer of this message. It is sufficient that Herr Hammersley refused to obey the orders. He has given explanations which, on their face, seem adequate. Upon the side of Herr Rizzio it may be said that, failing in his object, he came to a certain conclusion most unflattering to the loyalty of Herr Hammersley. We will now proceed in orderly fashion to hear the cause of Herr Hammersley's refusal and the subsequent acts of Herr Rizzio which have created so great a misunderstanding. Herr Hammersley, *bitte*, you will tell us the facts as you have related them."

"I learned from Herr Maxwell that Herr Rizzio was playing a double game. Captain Byfield had furnished him with full proofs of it, one of which was a letter he had seen from Herr Rizzio to a military officer high in the councils of the War Office. This was an additional reason, Excellenz, why Herr Maxwell arranged with Captain Byfield that the cigarette papers should be delivered to me."

Rizzio leaned quickly forward, his face dark with passion. "Excellenz," he began, "that could not possi-

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bly be true. The real reason for the delivery of the message to Herr Hammersley Excellenz well knows. And Herr Maxwell would hardly send men to follow Herr Hammersley at my request if he disbelieved in my loyalty."

"Quite so. He would not and did not," said Hammersley. "The men were not Herr Maxwell's. They were men of Scotland Yard. It is quite obvious by the way they bungled matters."

The General smiled delightedly. It was the sort of joke he liked. "That is one point in your favor, Hammersley."

Rizzio shrugged.

"Excellenz well knows," he said, "why those men were sent. They had instructions to get the papers for Maxwell."

"That is strange," said Hammersley. "If Maxwell had asked me personally for the papers, I should have given them to him. Maxwell would have known better than to intrust those papers to a third person. It is not likely that I should have given them up to any man, even if Maxwell had sent him."

"It is unfortunate that Herr Maxwell is not here to——"

"One moment, Herr Rizzio," broke in the General. Then to Hammersley, "What was the nature of the letter which you say was sent by Herr Rizzio to a high official of the War Office?"

"It was a statement in regard to the case of Carl Hüber, who, as you know, was shot last week in the Tower of London."

"Ach!" Von Stromberg frowned. "We are killing our evidence too fast, *mein herr*, a little too fast for convenience. *Bitte*, we will kill no more German agents

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in the Tower until they have had an opportunity to testify."

Hammersley smiled.

"Unfortunately, Excellenz, I have no means of restoring him to life," he said. "He was an excellent man, and leaves, I believe, a wife and six children."

Von Stromberg tapped his fingers slowly.

"We will go on, if you please, with the discussion of the general facts. You claim that Herr Maxwell, distrusting Rizzio, arranged that the papers should be handed from Captain Byfield to you. I have told you that Maxwell had orders from me to put you to this test?"

"Pardon, Excellenz. I did not know that at the time. I only know that Herr Maxwell chose to disregard your orders to him and Rizzio, instructing me not to deliver the papers to Rizzio under any circumstances."

"When did Herr Maxwell make the discovery of Herr Rizzio's—er—treachery?"

"It was the evening of Lady Heathcote's dinner. Captain Byfield had learned the truth that afternoon."

"One moment!" Rizzio rose, his face pale with anger. "It is easy to manufacture evidence of this kind, where both of the witnesses mentioned are beyond reach. I will not even deny the truth of their charges. They are too absurd. If I was acting for England, will Herr Hammersley tell me why the agents of Scotland Yard, whom he says I sent for, did not surround the house at Ashwater Park and boldly demand the papers from Miss Mather, in the name of the Government and the law?"

"The reasons are obvious," replied Hammersley. "I will give Herr Rizzio the credit for that much delicacy.

THE YELLOW DOVE

If his men had found the papers at Ashwater Park, Fräulein Mather, whom Herr Rizzio esteems most highly and who was quite innocent, would have eventually been imprisoned by the Government as a spy. At his orders the house was therefore secretly searched by night, I am happy to say, unsuccessfully. Herr Rizzio will surely not deny the kindness of his motives upon that occasion?"

"Excellenz will take that reply for what it is worth. Scotland Yard has never permitted sentimental considerations to interfere with the performance of its duties."

Hammersley went on stolidly: "I cannot conceive of any agents of Germany attempting to kill me. This my pursuers did at Saltham Rocks and again in the person of Rizzio himself on the cliffs at Beaufort Head—even, Excellenz"—Hammersley leaned forward, smiling blandly—"even after he knew that I had met Captain Stammer and conveyed my acceptance of Excellenz's invitation to return to Germany."

"I was not sure that he would go."

"If not for any other reasons, Excellenz, the pursuit of the agents of Scotland Yard would have been sufficient. Fortunately, however, I had intended going as the bearer of the Byfield message. And I carried it. You can't deny that."

"He brought a message, Excellenz," put in Rizzio quickly. "But what message? There were two messages. One prepared by Captain Byfield—the other prepared by Hammersley."

"I do not deny that. When I discovered that I was likely to have an interesting evening I made a copy of the papers in a package of Riz-la-Croix which I had in my——"

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Rizzio broke in quickly. "That copy was made not at Lady Heathcote's that night, but at the War Office or elsewhere the following day. It was prepared for the emergency of capture and, escaping that, for delivery to General von Stromberg."

"General von Stromberg has been told about those papers. I have told him where and when I made the copy."

"And where was that?" asked Rizzio keenly.

"In the library at Lady Heathcote's while you were telephoning to Scotland Yard."

Rizzio struggled for control, and then with dignity to von Stromberg, "I was telephoning to Herr Maxwell, Excellenz." He turned to Hammersley with a confident smile. "Assuming for the moment that what you say about copying the papers is true, what did you do with the copy?"

"I took it out to the motor, where I slipped it down the window sash," Hammersley laughed. "Surely, Rizzio, the tall man from Scotland Yard must have told you that when I escaped I shouted to him that he had not searched the motor."

General von Stromberg broke in suddenly.

"Why did you say that?"

Hammersley shrugged. "I had injured their motor, and I knew that I should escape. The bravado of triumph, Excellenz. I was rather happy, for, as a fact, they had given me an uncomfortable evening."

Rizzio leaned across the table.

"Excellenz, it was to draw attention from the girl, who had the original message and who had concealed herself in a tree."

General von Stromberg took a small object from his pocket and weighed it lightly in the fingers of one

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hand. It was the package of Riz-la-Croix. As Hammersley was about to speak, he held up the other hand in demand for silence.

"We are not getting very far, *meine Herren*," he said. "Both of you tell excellent stories of your adventures worthy of the best traditions of the Secret Service Department. If, as Herr Rizzio alleges, Herr Hammersley has substituted other papers for the original ones burned by Miss Doris Mather, Herr Hammersley will be shot. If, as Herr Hammersley alleges, Herr Rizzio was in communication with Scotland Yard, the officers of which attempted the life of Herr Hammersley while he bore dispatches for me, Herr Rizzio will be shot. It is a very delicate matter, *meine Herren*, one which will require much thought, since the one man who could settle the question is in an English prison."

Hammersley started a pace forward. "Oh, then he *is* taken!"

Rizzio glanced quickly at Hammersley.

"Excellenz, the same person who caused the arrest of Captain Byfield gave Maxwell to the police."

Von Stromberg's gaze followed Rizzio's to Hammersley.

"And you, Herr Hammersley. What do you suggest?"

"If the report is true, Excellenz, I quite agree with Herr Rizzio," he said easily.

Von Stromberg showed his teeth in a wolfish smile.

"And each of you contends that it was the other, *nicht wahr?*"

Hammersley merely nodded, but Rizzio was by this time in a state which made self-control an impossibility. "Excellenz," he cried hotly, "is it conceivable

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that I should have come to Germany if I had been guilty of the crime of which this man accuses me? I have served Germany against——”

“You forget, Herr Rizzio,” said the General blandly, “that Herr Hammersley has also come to Germany.”

“And while he is here Germany is in danger. He is a spy of England, Excellenz.”

Hammersley only laughed.

“If I had been a spy of England, Excellenz, I surely had many chances to serve England’s cause. Why should I have even met Captain Stammer at Beaufort Cove? It would have been quite easy to have informed the artillery officer at Innerwick and blown his destroyer out of the water while she lay at anchor? Herr Rizzio forgets that honesty is always provided with proof. In reply to this accusation, I would ask Herr Rizzio how he managed to pass through the cordon of British destroyers which guard the coast?”

Rizzio hesitated and von Stromberg spoke.

“That is a fair question. Answer.”

“I had English papers as well as German. I came away before the War Office had time to act upon Herr Hammersley’s information as to my services to Germany.”

Hammersley shrugged. “I make no reply.”

Von Stromberg frowned at the opposite wall, snapping the papers of the package in his fingers impatiently.

“An *impasse!* I suspected as much. We will now resort to other means. The only possible solution of this case, barring the unpleasant alternative of shooting both of you gentlemen in the garden this afternoon lies in the nature of the dispatches themselves and in the production of a material witness.”

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He brought his broad palm down on the bell upon the table and said to Captain von Winden, who answered it:

"You will bring Fräulein Doris Mather down to this room at once." As Captain von Winden went out, the eyes of both men were turned to Hammersley. He started in surprise, and leaned forward toward von Stromberg, slowly turning with a frown to Rizzio.

"Doris—Miss Mather—here!" he muttered. "She came—with—with Herr Rizzio?"

Von Stromberg nodded.

"Herr Rizzio persuaded her to come with him."

"Persuaded! It is impossible." He rose and took a pace toward Rizzio. "What could have been his object? I do not understand. It will be very cruel for her to—to see me—since she knows that I am an enemy of England, Excellenz. She it was who read the papers and burned them. If Herr Rizzio supposes that Fräulein Mather's evidence will——" He paused, his brow knitting in thought.

"Her evidence is important," said von Stromberg. "Under the circumstances you should be glad to have such an enemy to testify against you. Sit down, Herr Hammersley. I regret that the necessities of the case require this witness."

Hammersley sat and, frowning at the wall opposite, folded his arms. "I am at your orders, Excellenz. I need not remind you that she will tell the truth."

"That," said von Stromberg, with a wide wave of the hand, "is precisely what we are here for."

There was a silence, grim and amusing on von Stromberg's part, self-restrained on Rizzio's. Hammersley still sat staring at the wall, thoughtful and

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apparently in no great enjoyment of the prospect.

When the door opened and Doris Mather entered the three men rose. Her face was pale and lines of care were at her eyes and lips, but there was no denying the proud poise of her head, the firmness of her mouth and the steady look from her eyes as her glance passed Rizzio and Hammersley and sought the figure of the man in uniform. She measured him with a look that neglected nothing, her gaze finally meeting the dark shadow under the gray thatch of brows where his small eyes gleamed at her. The General bowed, clicked his heels together and brought forward a chair, which he indicated with a polite gesture.

"I offer apologies, Fräulein, for the unfortunate situation in which Destiny has placed you," he said in excellent English. "Will you be seated?"

The girl sat and faced him, her gaze still fixed upon his face. It was as though she meant to ignore the presence of the other two men. General von Stromberg stared at her for a moment in silence, and then, finding that his frown was only met by a look of calm inquiry, smiled at her instead.

"You know, of course, Fräulein, the situation with which you are confronted. Herr Rizzio has brought you to Germany to shed what light you can upon the mystery of these cigarette papers. Herr Hammersley says that Herr Rizzio has been acting as an agent of the English Government while professedly in the service of Germany. Herr Rizzio says that Herr Hammersley is an English spy. Your position is a difficult one, but circumstances have woven you into a piece of international politics. Your testimony is of the utmost importance—to one—perhaps both of these gentlemen."

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"I—I will do what I can to enlighten you," she said haltingly. "What do you wish to know?"

General von Stromberg beamed on her.

"*Ach*, I am glad you take the sensible view of things." He waved the package of cigarette papers in his fingers. "You have seen this object before?"

"Yes, I think so. Will you let me look at it?"

The General moved his chair closer and put the papers in her fingers. She opened the papers and finding the message, scanned it closely, reading the writing with deliberateness and then looking up into von Stromberg's face.

"You have seen this before?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At Lady Heathcote's house in Scotland."

"How did it come into your hands?"

"I found it on the floor of Mr. Hammersley's room."

"The night Herr Rizzio entered it, thinking it was yours?"

"Yes. That was the time."

"You are quite sure?"

"Quite."

"How did you identify it?"

"By certain peculiar characteristics of the handwriting, with which I am familiar."

"Mr. Hammersley's, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And how did this package of papers go out of your possession?"

"Mr.—Mr. Hammersley took them from me."

"By force?"

She raised her chin proudly and looked at her questioner and then lowered her eyes, replying quietly:

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“Yes.”

“There was another package of cigarette papers of the same make as these?”

“There was.”

“You read them?”

“I did.”

“Was this before or after you found the second package—these which I now have in my hand?”

“Before.”

“How long before?”

“It was the night of Lady Heathcote’s dinner in London—the night Mr. Hammersley took me home in the machine.”

“The night you were followed by men in another machine?”

“Yes.”

“You escaped to Ashwater Park with the package of papers which Herr Hammersley had given you and, after hiding in a tree, in the privacy of your room read these papers?”

“I did.”

“Were the contents of the papers you read at Ashwater Park the same as those you hold in your hand?”

“As nearly as I can remember, they were, exactly.”

“Word for word?”

“I cannot say that. There were certain names and certain figures that I remember very clearly as being exactly the same. I—I——” she hesitated. “There were reasons why, in the state of mind that I was in, what I saw remained impressed upon my memory.”

Hammersley throughout had sat immovable. But Rizzio, who had shown signs of anxiety, now interrupted.

“Excellenz, I beg——”

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Von Stromberg silenced him with a gesture.

"If you will be pleased to continue, Fräulein. Do you remember the numerals?"

"Some of them."

"And the towns and dates?"

"Some of them."

"And are they, the ones that you remember, identical in both packets?"

"As far as I can remember."

Von Stromberg took the packet from her hands and turned it over in his fingers.

"There is nothing about this packet, no distinguishing mark that would make it different from the other, the one that was burned?"

"None, except the handwriting."

"H-m." General von Stromberg put the packet into an inside pocket and buttoned his coat carefully.

"So far—so good. You are an intelligent witness, Fräulein."

"Thank you." If the words of her questioner contained an ulterior suggestion, the girl gave every indication of being oblivious to it, listening with a grave calmness to his next question.

"When you escaped into the tree, were you in a position to hear what went on in the road?"

"I was."

"The men in the road searched Herr Hammersley?"

"They did."

"And at last he escaped?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember hearing him shout anything as his motor moved away?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

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"That they hadn't searched the machine or words to that effect."

Von Stromberg glanced at Rizzio, who was leaning forward in his chair, eager to speak.

"Well, Herr Rizzio?" he asked.

"That was a diversion—intended to give Miss Mather more time in which to escape. The second package was not in the motor. At that time there was no second package."

Doris Mather's voice was raised just a trifle, but for the moment it dominated.

"There was. Mr. Hammersley put it into the window sash, when he was in danger of capture."

"Then why didn't he put them both there?"

"I suppose because he wanted to be sure that one of them would reach its destination."

Von Stromberg grunted. "I see. But why did you help Mr. Hammersley to save those papers when you knew that they were dangerous to England?"

"I didn't know what they were. I did what he asked me to do because—because——"

She faltered.

Von Stromberg waved his hand.

"Oh, very well. It does not matter. Who did you think was pursuing Mr. Hammersley?"

"Agents of Mr. Rizzio."

"Why did you think that?"

"Because I heard part of what happened between Mr. Rizzio and Mr. Hammersley in the smoking-room at Lady Heathcote's and I knew that Mr. Rizzio had threatened Mr. Hammersley."

"Did you think the men who followed you in the other machine were German agents?"

Doris answered quickly.

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"Oh, no. I was sure that they were men of Scotland Yard."

"Are you sure now?"

"Oh, yes. Subsequent events have proved it to me conclusively."

"Oh! What events?"

"The things that Mr. Rizzio did and what he wrote."

"He wrote—to you?"

"Yes."

Rizzio was swallowing uneasily, his face pale, his hands trembling.

"Excellenz, I can explain at another time."

Von Stromberg regarded him coolly.

"I will hear you at another time. For the present, Fräulein Mather will speak. What did Mr. Rizzio write to you that led you to think that Mr. Rizzio was in communication with Scotland Yard?"

"This letter, Excellenz." She put her fingers into her waist and handed a crumpled paper to the General. Rizzio had risen again and would have interposed but von Stromberg waved him aside.

"You will all keep silence until questioned," he said abruptly, and then smoothing the letter upon his knee, read it with great care and deliberateness. Rizzio made an effort at composure but only succeeded in bringing out a handkerchief and wiping his brows. Hammersley watched von Stromberg intently. He was not aware of the contents of this letter but the attitude of the girl was distinctly reassuring. Von Stromberg's brow puckered disagreeably and his long nose neared the paper while his eyes peered at the sheet as though his fiery gaze would burn into it.

He read the paper through twice and then brought his hand down upon the table with a crash while his

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voice thundered at Rizzio, toward whom he extended the note.

"It is signed with your initials. Did you write this?"

Rizzio bent and examined the letter.

"Excellenz, I did, but it was with the object of bringing Miss Mather to——"

"Silence! Perhaps you do not recall its terms. I will refresh your memory."

"Excellenz, if I had not written that letter Miss Mather would not have——"

"Be quiet. Sit down. Please listen. 'I am telling you this,' " he read, "to warn you that my generosity to Hammersley is not actuated by any love of a man who has spoiled my dearest ambition, but by the continued esteem with which I still regard yourself. I do not love him; and my own wish, my duty, my own honor, my loyalty to England all acclaim that he should be delivered at once to those in authority. And yet I have refrained—for you, Doris. But I have learned that H—— is in communication with G—— and that Crenshaw of Scotland Yard is on the alert. I may not be able to save him.' "

Von Stromberg paused and laid the letter upon the table. "I could read more," he said, "but that is enough. When did you receive this letter, Fräulein?"

"The day after Mr. Hammersley was shot——"

"And, acting upon it, you went to Ben-a-Chielt to try to persuade him from the cause of Germany."

"Yes," she said clearly.

"You failed?"

"I did."

"H—m." The General paused and turned to Rizzio.

"What have you to say?"

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"Merely, Excellenz, that I thought Miss Mather knew too much for Germany's good and I chose this means of getting her to Ben-a-Chielt."

"Where she could witness a secret meeting between two officers of my department? Bah! Herr Rizzio, your story leaks like a sieve. It is full of holes." He touched the bell at his elbow and von Winden appeared. "You will convey Herr Rizzio to the room on the third floor. Put a guard over him."

Rizzio started to his feet, his face ghastly, while beads of moisture stood out upon his forehead.

"You will not give me a chance to explain?" he protested huskily.

"You will be given a hearing tomorrow."

"But, Excellenz——"

"Take him away!"

As the door closed behind the two men, General von Stromberg came forward and took Hammersley by the hand.

"I am glad, *mein Herr*, that there is no longer any suspicion upon you. I have always liked you, Herr Hammersley, and you have done the Vaterland excellent service. I am sorry that this investigation was necessary, but in times like these I am not in a position to take chances."

"I understand, Excellenz. But it hasn't discommoded me in the least."

Von Stromberg laughed.

"I can readily believe it. You are always as cool as a morning in May. As for Fräulein Mather," and he turned ceremoniously to Doris and bowed deeply, "it has all been a mistake. If the efforts of a councilor of the Empire in undoing the wrong done you, by sending you with every comfort and dispatch to

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England, are any sign of regret, you shall be safely on the way tomorrow. But I am sure that in your heart you are glad to have had the opportunity to clear Herr Hammersley of an unjust suspicion."

"Yes," she murmured, turning away toward the window.

"But you still wish that the part of Herr Hammersley which is English had been the greater part of him instead of the lesser, *nicht wahr?*"

She bowed her head but did not reply.

"Perhaps it would be better if I left you two alone together. There is doubtless much that you would say which would be only interesting to yourselves."

And then he went out, closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GENERAL PLAYS TO WIN

WHEN General von Stromberg went out of the room Doris turned toward Cyril, her happiness in her eyes where he could read it if he wished. But instead of coming to her he made a warning gesture and then walked slowly around the room, peering out of the windows and listening at the doors until satisfied that they were unobserved. Then he beckoned her to a spot out of the line of vision of the door into the adjoining room. She obeyed it wonderingly while he caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

“Thank God,” he whispered, “you understood.”

“Oh, Cyril,” she gasped, “if anything had happened to you——”

“We must be careful,” he went on, whispering hastily. “My success hangs by a hair. Tonight—the thing that I came for will be within my reach. I must have it.”

“There will be danger?”

“I hope not. But you must not trust his promises to send you away. You must get away from here tonight before eleven. I will help you. Before then I must see you alone. It is not safe to talk here.”

He pressed her hand hurriedly and moved slowly across the room close to the wall and door, which he examined as he passed.

“But, Cyril——”

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A warning finger stopped her.

"There is no use in your trying to persuade me, old girl," he said, his voice raised to a tone which seemed louder than necessary. "I am only doing my duty as I see it. But whatever happens I can at least remember that you told the truth."

What did he mean? She couldn't understand. She followed him with her gaze. The fingers of one hand were tracing the flowers of the wallpaper upon one side of the room, and as she looked he glanced out of the window and then got quickly upon a chair and peered into an aperture in the cornice.

"I am not sorry for Rizzio," he said again, dusting off the chair and replacing it. "He only gets what he deserved. What did he do to you? How did he find you?"

A glance at his face showed her that he expected her to reply.

"I was lost on the moor," she faltered. "I followed you to Rudha Mor and saw you leave in the Yellow Dove. When I turned to go back, a cloth was thrown over my head. They chloroformed me——"

He muttered an imprecation. "And on the yacht——"

"I—I had nothing to complain of. He did everything he could for my comfort."

She watched him again moving around the room. At the chimney he paused and, reaching swiftly upward, lifted the clock and then put it into its place again, the expression in his face still strained and anxious.

"I am not sorry for him," he said again. Suddenly he came to her saying in such a low whisper that she could hardly hear him,

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"I'm not satisfied. There's something dangerous in von Stromberg's sudden kindness. *Act*, Doris. We are overheard." And then in louder tones, "If anything had happened to you——"

She glanced around her timidly, her initiative suddenly at a loss.

"N-nothing happened to me," she repeated bewildered.

"I would have made another death for him—a man's death at least."

"It is terrible," she managed to say, "and I will have been the cause of it."

He came closer and took her by the hand, speaking distinctly.

"And do you regret that it is Rizzio instead of me?"

"No, no," she stammered. Her accents of horror were genuine, but it seemed more horrible that she should be making a farce of her genuine emotions. Yet Cyril's eyes impelled her. "It is terrible. I can't believe——"

"General von Stromberg is not a man to make idle threats. I am glad that I am not in Rizzio's shoes."

She saw him pause, his mouth open, gazing upward at the lithograph of Emperor William. To Doris the picture merely typified power, ambition, intolerance of any ideals but those of military glory. But it was not at the portrait that Cyril was looking. He was examining the frame, which was swung a little to one side, revealing a patch of unfaded wallpaper. He looked down into the fireplace thoughtfully and while the girl wondered what he was going to do next, he whirled suddenly and moved quickly toward the door into the hall, which he opened swiftly straight into the face

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of Captain Wentz, who managed to step back only in time to avoid it.

But the officer was equal to the occasion.

"I was seeking General von Stromberg," he said coolly.

"He isn't here," Doris heard Cyril say quietly. And then, "I wanted a glass of water. Fräulein Mather is feeling ill."

"Ah! I will have it brought at once." As he disappeared in the passage to the kitchen, Cyril closed the door and came in three strides to the fireplace, reached up and raised the picture from the wall, peering under it, and touched the surface of the wallpaper with the tips of his fingers. Then with great care he put the picture back in its place and bent over Doris close to her ear, whispering: "They suspect. Everything we have said has been overheard. A microphone! I knew it was here somewhere."

The pallor of her face when the man from the kitchen brought the water was almost convincing proof of the truth of Hammersley's statement. She did look ill, for terror of the situation that confronted them had driven the blood back to her heart. A moment ago the room had seemed so friendly, and now every object in it was a menace. And above the mantel the Emperor of Germany with his upturned mustaches glared down at her austerely, eloquent of the relentless forces that held them in their thrall. Behind her she heard Cyril whispering with the man who had brought the water and realized that it was the tall soldier with the lame leg who had brought her toast and eggs upstairs.

"*Danke sehr*, Lindberg," Cyril said aloud. "She is tired from the journey."

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"Perhaps, Herr Hammersley, a little fresh air will help. A stroll in the kitchen garden."

Doris got up in sudden relief as she understood.

"Yes," she said. "Perhaps I will feel better in the air."

Cyril led the way to the door and together they went out. They heard sounds of heavy footsteps in the hallway above but did not pause, making their way along the path which led around the house. Cyril did not turn toward her, but she heard him speaking.

"They will call us back. Do not be frightened. If von Stromberg questions again, answer to the best of your ability. I will find a means of reaching your room tonight. In the meanwhile keep up your courage."

She did not reply for she heard steps behind her, and turning, found Captain Wentz, who bowed, taking off his cap.

"General von Stromberg requests me to ask," he said in very good English, "if Miss Mather will not give him the pleasure of joining him in a cup of chocolate."

"He is very kind," she said slowly with a glance at Cyril. "Of course—I shall be very glad."

The officer replaced his cap and, turning to Hammersley, spoke in German.

"His Excellenz also requests that Herr Hammersley will remain within call."

Hammersley bowed.

"Tell his Excellenz with my compliments that with his permission I will smoke my pipe here in the kitchen garden."

Doris followed the officer into the room they had just left and von Stromberg joined her almost immediately.

"*Ach, gnädiges Fräulein,*" he said with his blandest

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manner, "you will forgive me for calling you back from your contemplation of the beauties of this lovely afternoon, but there are certain questions, merely trifling ones, which have to do with the fate of Herr Rizzio which I neglected to ask you. You will not begrudge an old man the privilege of a few words over a cup of chocolate?"

She smiled at him bravely, as a woman can do, even in a last extremity, and told him that she was flattered by this mark of his condescension.

A wave of the hand and Wentz disappeared, while Lindberg, the lame man, entered with the chocolate. The General had the tray put upon the table before her and asked her to serve it, standing erect and watching her with open admiration. Doris was frightened, for she had already seen the power that this old man possessed. But with an effort she found her composure and made up her mind that if she was alarmed von Stromberg at least should not be aware of it. The safest defense against such a man was audacity.

"You were feeling ill," he said, suavely sympathetic. "The long morning in the train and the strain of your ordeal. It is but natural. A little cup of chocolate and a biscuit should revive you wonderfully. *Nicht wahr?*" His English, though excellent, had a slight German accent and his tone the quality of a lullaby.

"It is very good," said Doris. "I have often heard it said that nowhere in the world is chocolate so excellent as in Germany."

"I trust that you may find it so. There are many things beside chocolate that are excellent in Germany, Fräulein Mather."

"I am sure that must be true," she said politely, touching the cup to her lips.

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"Then why do you dislike us so much?" he asked with a smile.

"It is not your people that I dislike so much, General von Stromberg. Many of the most charming people I have ever known have been Germans. It is not what you are, but what you want to be, that I dislike; not your habits or your tastes, but your intolerance of any civilization which happens to differ from yours."

She paused, a little frightened at her temerity, but von Stromberg still smiled.

"Go on," he chuckled, "you speak very prettily."

"I am an American, General von Stromberg, from the United States, where people are accustomed to speak what they feel, without fear of *lèse majesté*. If the President of the United States did something that I didn't like I would write him a letter."

"And would he answer it?" he purred.

"If he had time, yes. If anyone wrote such a letter to your Emperor, he would be boiled in oil."

Von Stromberg roared with delight. "Boiled in oil!" he repeated.

"Yes—or perhaps some more exquisite cruelty that your ingenious people have devised," she said coolly. "To prosaic minds like mine, Excellenz, you Germans are the wonders of the age. You are both godlike and Saturnian; a nation of military fanatics, a nation of silly sentimentalists; a nation trained to scientific brutality, which shares the sorrows of the dying rose. Which is it that you want us to think you, the god or the satyr?"

"We know that we are the god," he said, showing his teeth, "but we want you to think us the satyr."

"You have succeeded, Excellenz," she replied calmly.

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"It is very pleasant to be sitting here drinking chocolate with a *Geheimrath*—a councilor of the Empire—but you'll pardon me if I say that the peculiarly social pleasure of the occasion is somewhat marred by the fact that if the whim happened to strike you you could have me strung up by the thumbs."

"You think that I am cruel? *Ach*, no, *Fräulein*. You are mistaken," in his blandest tones. "I have a daughter in East Prussia of just your age. For that reason I would like to have you think of me a little as the sentimentalist rather than as the—the brute—as you have been pleased to suggest. I am not cruel and I shall prove it to you."

"In America, *Excellenz*, we do not make war upon women."

"Nor do I make war upon you," he put in quickly. "I did not bring you to Germany, *Fräulein*. Herr Rizzio acted upon his own responsibility. Even yet, if he is an English agent, I cannot understand his purpose in bringing such an incriminating document."

He smiled as he spoke, but she felt the question and its threat. For a moment the directness of his attack bewildered her and so she sipped her chocolate to gain a moment of time.

"General von Stromberg," she said at last, as the idea came to her, "I am told that you have one of the keenest intellects in the Empire of Germany. I feel much like a child before you, who should see matters much more clearly than I. There were two reasons why he brought me, one of which bears upon our personal relations, the other upon his relation to England. I knew that he possessed your confidence, otherwise he would not have been in possession of a document which empowered Mr. Hammersley to give up the

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secret message of Captain Byfield. I knew too much. If I had told my friends in England what I knew, his utility to England would have been gone."

"Why? It seems to me that having my confidence would have made his utility to England the greater."

"He would have been suspected of double dealing, would he not?"

"As a friend of England you would have let him be suspected?" he asked quietly. "Given evidence against a man whom you knew to be acting in England's interests?"

"There were other—other—interests," she faltered, "more important to me than England's—Mr. Hammersley's. You have a daughter, Excellenz. Perhaps you would try to think of me as you would think of her in a similar situation. When I read those papers at Ashwater Park I knew that the man to whom I was promised and of whom I had always thought as an Englishman was acting as a secret agent—a spy of Germany. He was pursued by agents of the English War Office. I knew that if his connection with Germany were discovered he would be shot. I was frightened. I did not know what to do. John Rizzio followed me to Scotland and tried to get the papers. I refused to give them to him. And then when—when Mr. Hammersley came I burned them. There was nothing left for me to do—for England—for him. If there were no papers there could be no evidence against him."

She paused to get her breath, aware that her companion was listening intently, and fearfully afraid that she was saying too much.

"And then—?" he asked.

"And then," she went on more slowly, "I found the

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other papers. When I wouldn't give them to him, Mr. Hammersley took them away from me. We quarreled, Excellenz, and I gave him up."

"And after that—"

"After that came Mr. Rizzio's note asking me to go to Ben-a-Chielt and see the meeting between Cyr—between Mr. Hammersley and your messenger in the last hope that I could make Mr. Hammersley give up his plans to deliver the message to you. As you know I failed. It was there—after that—that Mr. Rizzio, who had overheard our conversation, tried to kill Mr. Hammersley, knowing that he had resolved to deliver the message." She got up and paced the floor. "Oh, it is so clear, what Rizzio was, that I wonder that it should be necessary for me to tell it to you."

"Yes, I see. And the other—the personal reasons you mentioned."

She hesitated. "It is difficult to speak of them—but I will tell you. Mr. Rizzio has forfeited all right to my loyalty. He offered to marry me. I refused him. He told me he would never give me up. In Scotland he threatened Cyril—Mr. Hammersley's life. I know now what he meant."

"Yes, but in his letter to you he does not threaten. He urges that he is doing what he can to save Hammersley!"

"I did not believe him. I was right. Events have proved it. He would have been glad to see Mr. Hammersley out of the way." She covered her face with her hands and sank into her chair again. "Oh," she whispered, "it is horrible—horrible. And it is I who must be the instrument of justice."

Von Stromberg waited for a moment, tapping one

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finger of his left hand very slowly upon the back of his right.

“Try to compose yourself, *liebes Fräulein*,” he urged calmly, and, as she looked up at him: “You say he wanted to be rid of Herr Hammersley. Can you tell me then, why his men did not shoot him when they had him prisoner at Ashwater Park gates?”

“I do not know. Perhaps they would have done so if he hadn’t escaped.”

Von Stromberg paused again, and then, gently:

“You love Herr Hammersley a great deal, *Fräulein*?”

She bent her gaze upon him appealingly.

“Would I now be here, Excellenz?” she asked.

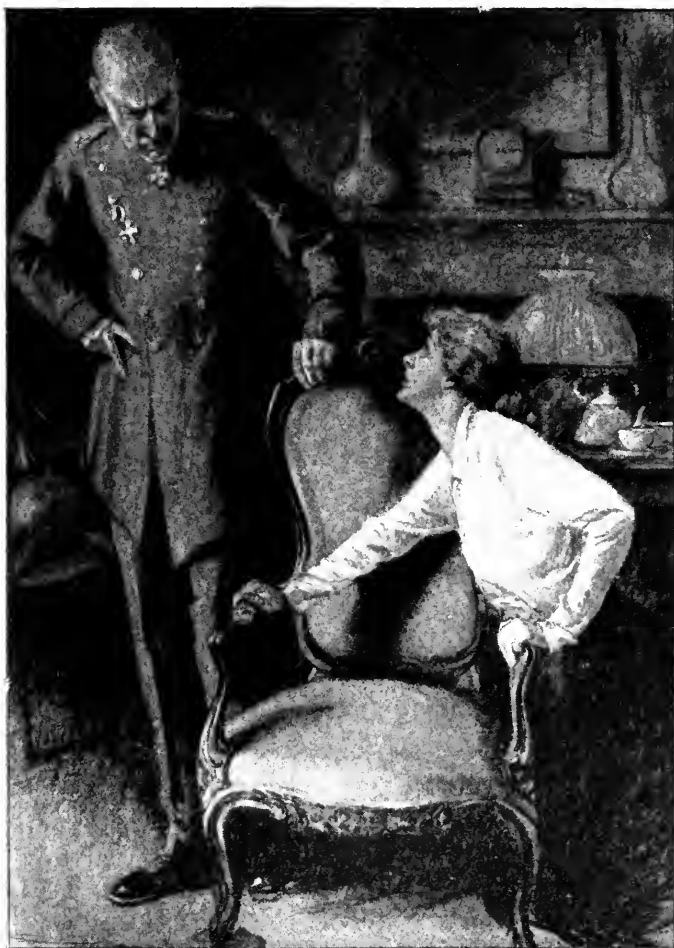
Von Stromberg bent his head and then got up and slowly paced the length of the room. When he returned there was another note in his voice. It was still quiet but the legato note had gone, and it was ice-cold.

“You do well to tell your story through the medium of sentiment which you well understand, rather than through the medium of logic, which you do not understand, which no woman understands.”

At his change of tone she glanced up. He was leering at her unpleasantly.

“I do not know what you mean,” she murmured.

“You are very clever, *Fräulein*, but your story has a great many holes in it—little holes which might grow into big ones, if one were disposed to enlarge them. There are several things which are not at all clear to me. Of course it must be as apparent to you as it is to me that if Herr Rizzio was an English agent, by remaining in England he had nothing to fear from you or anyone else. His object, too, in bringing you



“The truth, and he becomes an honorable prisoner of war.
Silence, and he is shot tomorrow. Speak.”



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to Germany is clear. As you say, you knew too much, not about his connection with the English War Office, which, of course, would not matter in the least, but about Herr Rizzio's connection with *me*, which would have mattered a great deal."

He tapped his long forefinger upon his breast significantly and leaned forward ominously across the table. He dominated, hypnotized her. She closed her eyes, trembling violently.

"Do you mean that you do not believe? His letter, Excellenz—surely you believe that to be genuine?"

"Bait, Fräulein—that is all. Excellent bait. You swallowed it. Herr Hammersley very cleverly prepared himself against surprise. Only the fortunate accident of your losing yourself upon the moor saved Herr Rizzio from failure."

"Oh, you are all wrong. You are willfully making me suffer. I have told the truth."

Von Stromberg straightened and drew from his pocket a military telegraph form which he smoothed out gently with his long, bony fingers.

"Unfortunately for Herr Hammersley I have just received a message from another agent in London—in whom I have implicit faith. You read German a little. Would you care to see it?"

He laid it upon the table before her eyes and she looked, her eyes distended with terror of she knew now what.

Hammersley caused arrest of Byfield. Has informed on Rizzio and myself. Am in hiding in Kent. Will reach Germany by usual methods. MAXWELL.

Doris sat immovable, petrified with horror. Von Stromberg's voice crackled harshly at her ear.

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"Well? And what have you to say?"

"It is a lie!" she managed to stammer. "He lies—lies, I tell you!"

"*Ach!* If I could believe you! Why should he lie? Unlike the case of Rizzio, Herr Hammersley has not robbed Herr Maxwell of a bride."

"There is a mistake——"

"I fear not."

"But why should Mr. Hammersley have come? He would have been safe in England——"

"He himself says to the contrary——"

She was breaking fast and he sought further to involve her.

"He did not have to come. Why should he have come?" she asked wildly, rising to her feet and laying her hands upon his arm. "Answer me that, Excellenz."

For reply he turned away from her abruptly and walked the length of the room to an end window, where he stood for a moment looking out.

"Come, Fräulein, and I will show you something."

She approached him blindly and followed his gaze around the corner of the building. Upon a tree stump in the kitchen garden, looking out across the fields toward the wooded hills sat Hammersley, calmly smoking.

"Half of his blood is English, half Prussian, Fräulein, but it is the English in him that dominates. Is there anything that is Prussian about him? Tell me. From the crown of his head to the sole of his foot—his pipe, his bent shoulders, his careless air—he is English, all English. He knows that at this moment I am weighing his fate in the balance and yet he smokes his short wooden pipe. If he has Prussian blood it is a pity, for Germany needs all the Prussian

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blood that flows red in the veins of men." He paused and then abruptly, "But the Prussian blood must be sacrificed with the English——"

She fell back from him, deathly white, groping for a chair to support her.

"You mean——" she whispered.

"That I can take no chances. He will be shot tomorrow."

"O God! He is loyal to Germany. I swear it." Her utterance was choked. Her breath came with difficulty. The room darkened suddenly and she seemed about to swoon. She dropped to her knees beside the armchair, clinging to it, trying to speak, but no words would come. She was aware of his hawk-like face bending over her as though in the act of striking its prey and she heard his voice at her ear.

"There is one chance to save him."

She reached his hand and clung to it.

"A chance—what——"

"Tell me the truth," he said sternly.

"I—I have told you the truth. He is innocent."

He loosened her fingers and stood away.

"*Quatsch!*" he muttered, leaning forward. "The truth, girl!"

"I—I——"

She fell against the chair and clung to it for support.

"The truth, and he becomes an honorable prisoner of war. Silence, and he is shot tomorrow. Speak."

"He is——" The words choked her. "He is——"

"Bah!" he growled, moving toward the table. "You have already convicted him!"

She struggled to her feet and followed him. He was about to touch the bell when she caught his arm.

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"Wait!" she whispered. "What guarantee have I that he will not be injured?"

He shrugged and laughed. "I need give no guarantee now, Fräulein. This is not a court of law! I am the judge of what constitutes proof. You have testified."

He shook her off and sounded the bell, which was immediately answered by Udo von Winden.

"You will conduct Fräulein Mather to her room upstairs. Lock the door and bring me the key. Then tell Herr Hammersley that I am waiting to see him."

CHAPTER XVII

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WHEN Hammersley entered the house with von Winden he was immediately aware that a crisis had come in his affairs, for in the hall leading to the living-room stood Captain Wentz and two soldiers, and when he was shown into von Stromberg's presence, the Councilor stood with his back to the hearth, his long legs wide apart, his hands behind his back and the expression of his long, bony face was not pleasant to see. He smiled and frowned at the same time—a smile which possessed so few of the ingredients of humor that the tangled brows even seemed less ominous. Doris was nowhere to be seen. Hammersley made no sign of his prescience of trouble. He put his pipe in the pocket of his leather jacket, strolled forward into the room and stood at attention. "Search him!" snapped von Stromberg. And when von Winden had finished, "Leave us," he said to the officer, "and keep within call, I shall need you presently." He waited until the door was closed and then turned to Hammersley somberly.

"Your jig is danced, Herr Hammersley, Fräulein Mather has confessed."

"Confessed what, Excellenz?" questioned Hammersley calmly.

"She has told the truth."

"Of course, that was to be expected of her."

"Bah!" roared the General. "There's no need of

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more of that. She told me that you were an English spy."

Hammersley started forward, the only expression on his face one of complete incredulity. "Fräulein Mather told you that? Impossible!"

"Do you mean to say that you don't believe me?"

Hammersley managed a smile.

"It would hardly be good ethics for me to say that. I simply repeat that it is impossible."

"Why?" Von Stromberg sneered.

"Because it is morally impossible for her to tell an untruth."

"*Ach*, so. But it is *physically* impossible for her to keep from *not* doing so." He leaned forward, grinning craftily. "In the small games of life, in the things which amount to nothing, women lie with a careless skill that is amazing, but in a game of life and death, their little tricks are negligible. *Pouf!* Herr Hammersley, did you expect to match mere falsehood and such a tissue of flimsy evidence against a man of my experience? It was a desperate game from the beginning—one which could have had only one end. You have been clever—very, very clever. In time, perhaps, under proper guidance and with the necessary political opinions, you could have succeeded in becoming a very useful helper of the Universe, through the medium of the Secret Service Department of the German Empire. But such cleverness is superficial and quickly burns out in the hotter fire of genius. I would like you to know—"

"One moment, Excellenz," put in Hammersley coolly. "Am I to understand from your attitude that you believe I am false to the Vaterland?"

Von Stromberg laughed.

"You still insist on acting out the part?"

Hammersley did not answer the question. Instead he asked, "Will you be good enough to tell me upon what new evidence you base your present position?"

The Councilor strode to the table and thrust the telegraphic message he had shown to the girl under Hammersley's nose.

"This," he growled. "I will read it to you. 'Hammersley caused arrest of Byfield. Has informed on Rizzio and myself——' It's signed 'Maxwell.' What do you think of my evidence?" He grinned, "Convincing, *nicht wahr?*"

Hammersley looked up into von Stromberg's face with a smile.

"Not even in code, Excellenz? It is a pity you did not write it in English. But under the circumstances you can't expect me to take any interest in such a trick."

"Not you, Herr Hammersley," he chuckled. "It is not necessary that you should believe in it. In fact there are reasons why you shouldn't believe in it, the most important reason being that Herr Maxwell is dead."

"Dead!"

"Obviously. You condemned him and he was put in prison. If he is not dead it is through no fault of yours."

Hammersley smiled. "You cannot get me to acquiesce in such strange statements."

"I do not ask you to acquiesce. I could not expect to catch Herr Hammersley by a trick. But Miss Mather was less difficult."

Hammersley's jaws set. "I understand. But do you mean to say that I can be incriminated by a con-

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fession made under the stress of a terror artificially produced?"

"That is a clever turn of phrase, Herr Hammersley, worthy of the high regard with which I hold your abilities. In reply I can only say that in time of war my deductions in all matters connected with my department are final. You are an English spy, Herr Hammersley, and you are quite aware of the penalty."

Hammersley raised his head and folded his arms. "Quite," he replied, "if you choose to take that action. I can only say that the time will come when you will regret it."

"I must take that chance, for there will be no trial."

Hammersley shrugged his shoulders and turned aside. His face was white and the muscles at his jaws worked for a moment, but otherwise he gave no sign of emotion. General von Stromberg had gone back to his favorite pose by the mantel and Hammersley again heard his voice.

"It seems a pity, Herr Hammersley, that after all it should be you instead of Herr Rizzio who is the culprit. You are a type of young man very much to my liking, and the position of the young lady is unpleasant in the extreme. She has served her purpose here and I shall, of course, take immediate steps to have her returned to her own people."

"Thanks," said Hammersley dryly.

"But the thing that has interested me in your case from the first," he continued with a return of his mastodonic playfulness, "and indeed still continues to interest me, is why you should choose to return to Germany when you knew that you were under suspicion. Surely you did not come here to pick cowslips in March? Come now, I could have you shot this after-

noon if I chose. Tell me the truth and I will promise to postpone the affair until tomorrow."

Hammersley studied the pattern in the rug thoughtfully for a moment, and at last he straightened and shrugged again.

"I don't suppose there is any use playing the game further. Since I am to go, it doesn't matter if I tell you. I have planned for some time to be able to get plans of the recent additions to the fortifications of Strassburg."

"*Ach, so.* Strassburg! And what, may I ask, were to be your means of procuring them?"

"That, of course, since my utility has ceased, cannot possibly be of interest to you."

Von Stromberg studied him narrowly for a long moment and then wagged his head sagely. It was an unnecessary suspicion that he had cherished. This had been a case with interesting aspects, but after all it was not much out of the usual way. An English spy betrayed by the simplest of tricks upon the credulity and affection of a woman. He thought that Hammersley had been after bigger game. Plans, fortifications—the same objects, the same methods. Von Stromberg had tried to puzzle out in the mazes of his wonderful brain the possible chance that this man could have had of learning of the whereabouts of Herr Gottschalk's memoranda and of the momentous decision which had been reached in the Wilhelmstrasse with regard to them. He studied Hammersley closely, with something approaching regret that the contest between them could not have been waged at greater length and for higher stakes. He felt a genuine human sorrow at this moment over the impending fate of this handsome young man who was only doing his duty for the fatu-

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ous English. It was too bad. But there was much else to do. Tomorrow his mission in this part of the Empire would be ended and the Wilhelmstrasse was calling. He touched the bell upon the table and Captain Wentz entered.

“Herr Hammersley is to be taken to the room on the third floor. Tonight you will see that he is securely bound and a guard set over him, within the room. You will place another guard outside below his window. If he tries to escape, shoot him.”

Wentz spoke to the man in the hall and Hammersley, between them, was led to the foot of the steps, and followed his captors to the upper story. He knew, in view of the instructions that he had overheard, that any effort to escape would be fruitless. He sat on the edge of the bed submitting calmly while his feet and hands were bound under the direction of Captain Wentz; after which the officers went out, leaving a man to guard him, and locked the door. Hammersley rolled over on the bed and lay for a long while staring at the wall. The day was fading into dusk. Five o'clock, it might be, Hammersley guessed. Six hours or less remained to him in which to act. Six hours in which he must lie helpless while the one chance of intercepting the messenger from Berlin came and passed. He lay perfectly still as he had fallen, but his spirit writhed in agony.

Doris was in a room near him, likewise a prisoner, aware of the fate in store for him and able to do nothing but wait as he would wait until the shots were fired below there in the garden, which would be the end of all things for him. He found that he was thinking little of himself. It was Doris and what she must be suffering that occupied the moments of his thoughts

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which were not given to the remote chances of escape.

His bonds were tightly drawn—a rope tied with German thoroughness. He moved his hands behind him and tried to gain a little room for his present ease. If he was to be shot tomorrow morning it would have seemed indeed a small charity to have permitted him to pass his last night in some degree of comfort. Could it be that, after all, von Stromberg suspected the real object of his return? That hardly seemed possible; for his informant in Berlin, a woman close to those in high authority, had made every move with the utmost discretion and his own relations to Lindberg could not possibly be suspected.

Lindberg! Hammersley turned and looked at his guard who was standing motionless by the window, gazing out at the fading landscape. Lindberg was his one, his last desperate hope. Udo von Winden, his cousin—It was too much to hope that Udo would be of service to him. He had caught a glimpse of Udo's face in the hallway downstairs when von Stromberg's orders were given. He had gone pale and stared at him in pity and horror as Hammersley had gone up the stairs, but Hammersley knew that the ties of kinship, the memories of their boyhood together, were nothing beside the iron will and indomitable authority of the great man who had condemned him. Udo would suffer when Hammersley died, for there had been a time when the two had been much to each other, but he would do his duty, however painful, as a small unit of the relentless machine which Hammersley had had the temerity to oppose. What else could be expected?

A word, a sign, the slightest aid to such a prisoner, and he would be as guilty as his cousin. Hammersley knew that he did Udo no injustice in supposing that

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any help from such a source was out of the question. If Udo had been caught in England as Hammersley was caught in Germany, Hammersley knew that he could do nothing to save him.

But Lindberg! Here the case was different. It was Lindberg whose life Hammersley had saved three years ago in this very forest, when the Forester had stumbled and fallen in the path of an angry boar who would have gored him to death, if Hammersley had not shot the beast. Lindberg the Forester it was, who, in his hours off duty, had been Hammersley's chosen companion in many a hunt up through the rocky gorges of these very mountains, every stick and stone of which he knew as he knew his own rugged face in the mirror. It was Lindberg who had been so useful in keeping him informed of the exact state of affairs at Blaufen. It was Lindberg who had learned of the microphone that von Stromberg had installed and it was Lindberg who had listened at the receiver upstairs in von Stromberg's room to the conversation when the Councilor had told Captain Wentz the nature of the documents from Berlin and the hour of their arrival.

Already Lindberg had repaid a hundredfold the debt of Hammersley's service and it was quite possible, now that Hammersley's actual mission had been discovered, that he would take to cover, his mind clear in the thought that he had done all that could be expected of him. But there was a warm affection between the two, born of many a long day in the open and many a night by the campfire where the old man had taught him the Foresters' secrets of the trees, the birds in their branches and of the many four-legged things that scurried beneath them. They had often talked, too, of many other things, and Hammersley had

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learned that Lindberg's politics were those that one learns under the open sky—the eternal peace of Nature, before which war and men, its armed instruments, were a blasphemy.

Perhaps Lindberg would find a way. But what way? How? Udo von Winden, too, was aware of the woodcraft fellowship, for often he had made their duet a trio. Hammersley knew that Udo von Winden as yet suspected nothing of the services Lindberg had rendered him and he wondered whether in this pass the ties of kinship would be strong enough to keep him silent as to the possible capabilities of the old Forester for mischief in Hammersley's behalf.

Hammersley hoped. He clung to the thought of Lindberg's fidelity and affection as a dying man clings to the hope of Heaven. He tried to analyze the old man's capacities for sympathy and courage. To help a man in his position seemed to require larger stores of both of these qualities than human clay was molded for. Lindberg did not fear death, he knew, but the death he courted was the kind of death Hammersley had saved him from, a good death in a fair game with a noble enemy, not the kind of death that awaited Hammersley, a cold, machine-made death against a kitchen wall. And he must know as Hammersley knew that this was what would follow.

The dusk faded into dark and the soldier lit a candle. Hammersley turned his head and examined him attentively. His face was unfamiliar at Blaufelden, one of the men probably sent down at von Stromberg's orders from the upper district to be useful in just this emergency. Von Stromberg would make no mistakes, of course. He never did make mistakes. He had enough men about him to cope with the situation safely. He

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would leave no opportunity for his plans to miscarry. Any opportunity, should there be one, must be created. Hammersley managed to wriggle into a sitting posture on the bed and spoke to his captor in German.

"You wouldn't mind my having a smoke, would you?" he asked.

The man looked at him, debating the matter.

"Just get into the side pocket of my jacket and fish out my pipe and tobacco, *mein junger*. I need a smoke badly. And so would you if you were going to be shot in the morning."

"*Ach, wohl*. I see no harm in that, *mein Herr*. You cannot smoke yourself away."

He came over, brought out Hammersley's short pipe, filled it from the pouch and stuck it between his lips. Then he got out a match and lighted it while Hammersley puffed.

"Ah!" said Hammersley contentedly. "You are a good fellow. Tomorrow morning I will give you my blessing."

The man paced stolidly up and down beside the bed.

"I am sorry for you, *mein Herr*. But it is life. It is all decided for us beforehand. We are here a moment and then we are gone."

Hammersley smiled.

"A fatalist! Then perhaps you can tell me if there is any chance of my escape."

He was stopped abruptly.

"I can tell you that there is not," he said severely.

"I would have said as much. But it was a pardonable curiosity, *nicht wahr?*"

"Pardonable, *ja wohl*," the man replied, "but most unseemly under the circumstances."

"You have a deep sense of your responsibilities."

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"*Ja*. I obey my orders, that is all. I do not care what others do."

"Therefore you will shoot me tomorrow."

"Perhaps," he shrugged. "I am but an instrument of Providence." He waved his hand. "But I talk too much, and so do you. It is not seemly in a soldier and a prisoner."

Hammersley laughed. "You have a fine sense of the fitness of things."

"*Ja*. It was so written."

He relapsed into silence and in spite of efforts on Hammersley's part refused to speak further. It was only after Hammersley badgered him for his unsociability that he spoke with some asperity.

"I will trouble you to be quiet. When I am relieved, my successor may let you speak and laugh as much as you please. But it is unnatural in a man at the point of death. It would be better if you were saying your prayers."

"I am sure that you are right. But I still have a few hours. Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me the hour at which you are to be relieved—the hour when we are both of us to be relieved?"

The man gazed at him uncomprehendingly.

"After supper." He finished indifferently, "Eight o'clock, perhaps."

Hammersley was silent. Two hours or more to wait before a change of guards, and then only a chance that Lindberg would be able to do something. Even then if he managed to get loose, there was left little more than an hour in which to reach the road by which the machine would come from Berlin, and even then what should he do without Doris? His case was desperate. Only a miracle it seemed could make a success

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of what had been a pitiful failure; only an act of Providence could save him from the discreditable end that awaited him.

He drew up his knees and studied the knots at his ankles. His guardian was the one who had tied them.

"You tie a good square knot, my friend. You were once a sailor?"

But nothing would induce the soldier to talk.

As the supper hour approached, Hammersley could hear the rattle of pans and dishes downstairs and noticed the odor of coffee. They would not starve him, of course. In a little while someone would come with food. After a while, which seemed interminable, the noise of the rattling dishes ceased and there was a sound at the door into the hall as the key turned in the lock and Captain Wentz entered. His sturdy back had never seemed so ugly nor so welcome, for the silence and the inaction were getting on Hammersley's nerves. The officer came over to the bed and gravely examined the knots of the rope that bound the prisoner. Then, satisfied with the results of his inspection, he straightened and glanced around the room.

"*Gut,*" he muttered. And then to the soldier: "You will go down and tell Lindberg to bring Herr Hammersley's supper. I will stay here in the meanwhile. You will then relieve the man at the door of his Excellenz."

The man saluted and departed. They still trusted Lindberg. Then Udo had suspected nothing, or if he had suspected, had kept his thoughts to himself. Hammersley lay back on the pillow preparing a stolid indifference for Lindberg's entrance. And when the meal was brought, Wentz untied his hands and stood over him with an automatic while he ate.

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"Your weapon makes a poor relish, Herr Hauptmann," said Hammersley with a laugh.

"I greatly regret its necessity," replied Wentz with his machine-made politeness.

Hammersley ventured nothing further, eating silently, and with a surprising appetite, for good Lindberg's face in the background had given him new courage. When the meal was done, he asked for his pipe again and Wentz ordered the Forester to fill it. Hammersley inhaled the smoke and exhaled a sigh.

"So far as I am concerned, Herr Hauptmann," he said with a smile, "when this pipe is finished you may kill me at once."

He extended his wrists behind him in silence while Captain Wentz took half a dozen turns of the rope and made it fast. Hammersley sat up in bed puffing at his pipe and wondering whether some miracle might not be induced that would kill Wentz. But he was quickly disillusioned, for when Lindberg took the dishes and moved toward the door, he heard Wentz's crisp orders:

"You will send Max Senf to take the first night watch upon the prisoner. He is awaiting my orders in the guard room. *Schnell.*"

Without even a glance at the prisoner Lindberg saluted and went out and Hammersley's spirits fell. Help from Lindberg was impossible. Von Stromberg was taking every precaution. There was no way out of it. Hammersley was doomed. But while Wentz was in the room he kept a cheerful countenance, though for the first time in his life that he could remember his pipe was acrid. He saw the new guard enter and heard the last orders of the officer.

"You will watch until one o'clock when your relief

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will be sent. The prisoner is to be allowed no privileges. Under no circumstances are his hands to be untied. If he wants water, you will give it to him with your own hands. *Verstehen sie?*"

The man stood erect and saluted. "*Zu befehl, Herr Hauptmann,*" he said.

Hammersley saw the door close and heard the key turn in the lock while Senf came forward into the room and stood by the foot of the bed. Hammersley studied him closely: a tall, loosely jointed man in his early thirties with the heavy brows and high cheekbones of the East Prussian, the face of a Slav, almost, with something of the thoughtful intensity of the South German mystic. His eyes were large, his nose thin and his face was bearded, but the lines of his mouth had a sensitive curve, belied by the big bony hands and broad shoulders. A sentimentalist, perhaps!

Hammersley determined to try him, for a plan had been forming in his mind. He had noticed with a glance which had included everything in the room when he entered, a Bible upon the mantelshelf, and in a tone which had in it a solemn sense of the doom which awaited him in the morning, he addressed his guardian quietly:

"Senf, you have a kind face. There is a small favor that you may do me."

"If it does not conflict with my orders."

"Not at all. Tomorrow morning I am to be shot. All I ask is that you will allow me to read for a while the Bible upon the chimneypiece."

"*Ach!* I see no harm in that."

He went over and got the book, opening the pages and looking through them.

"It is little enough for a dying man to ask," he said.

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“*Danke*,” said Hammersley quietly, his face solemn but his mind working rapidly. “It is but right to make one’s peace with the world at a time like this.”

“I am sorry, *mein Herr*,” said the man mournfully. “It is not good for a man to die in the first flush of youth.”

“If it could only have been in the open, Senf, a soldier’s death, but this—*Ach, wohl*—we can only go once. It doesn’t matter.” He gave a deep sigh and asked his guardian to light his pipe again and open the Book at the Psalms of David.

“I cannot turn the pages, my friend. It is a pity. But propped upon one elbow I can see quite well if you will but put the candle here upon the bed.”

The man did as requested and Hammersley thanked him.

“You are a kind fellow. It is bread upon the waters. You will find it after many days.”

“It is nothing. I would expect as much from another.”

“Now, if you will permit, I would prefer the solitude of my thoughts.”

The soldier turned slowly away and Hammersley bent his gaze upon the open page, but he did not read. He was thinking, planning, watching the movements of Max Senf. Eight o’clock was long past. It must be nearly nine. But two hours remained before the arrival of the messenger from Berlin. His guardian paced slowly up and down the room between the door and window, and Hammersley felt, if he did not see, his deep bovine gaze fixed upon him from time to time. Eight or ten times the man took the length of the room and then with a deep sigh he sank into the chair at the

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foot of the bed. Hammersley did not move his head, which remained bent forward over the book, but from the tail of his eye he noted that the tall footboard of the old-fashioned bed partially concealed him. Propped up as he was he could see the man's head as far down as the tip of his nose, but all of his head was in shadow. Arguing from this, everything upon the bed below the line of the flame of the candle was invisible to him. But a quick glance showed Hammersley that the man was not looking at him. His dark eyes were peering straight before him at the opposite wall and his mind was wrapped in some gloomy vision.

The plan he had in mind required subtlety. He marked the shadows upon the ceiling and moved up in the bed so that his own shadow would be thrown behind the line of sight of his guardian. Then he paused again, his eyes fixed on the pages, waiting for Senf to look at him again. He heard the man move in his chair, which creaked as he settled more comfortably into it. And when Hammersley looked again, only his eyes were visible, their gaze fixed darkly ahead of him.

Hammersley now puffed a volume of smoke from his pipe and slowly wriggled his left arm forward under him, so that he could see the knot that tied his wrists. It was a large knot, but vulnerable. He puffed more smoke, meanwhile watching the top of the head of Senf. As it did not move, he lay over half upon his back, and, taking care not to disturb the book, slowly advanced his arms behind him toward the blaze of the candle. The knot of the rope caught and blazed, but the candle sputtered, and he quickly withdrew his hands, sending a volume of smoke from his pipe to neutralize the odor. Senf sniffed the air curiously.

"Something is burning," Hammersley heard him mutter.

"My pipe," he explained carefully. "It is a vile tobacco. . . But it will go out of the crack at the window."

"Will you not try mine, Herr Hammersley? Perhaps it is better."

"No, thanks. Nothing much matters to a dead man."

His guardian settled back in his chair, and Hammersley repeated his maneuver more daringly, his own pipe seething like a furnace.

"You are a furious smoker, Herr Hammersley," said Senf again.

"It is the way one smokes, *mein Junger*, when one smokes for the last time," he replied.

But the fellow got up, sniffing and walking around the room.

"It is a most curious tobacco," he muttered.

Hammersley's wrists pained him where his bonds had cut, but he kept his gaze upon the page of the book, and Senf sat in his chair again. A strong pull of his arms and Hammersley felt the tension relax. His bonds came looser and after a few more efforts his wrists were free. His heart was jumping and he feared a stray glance of the watcher might see the throbbing of the blood at his temples, but he clasped his hands behind him and waited, slipping the sundered rope beneath a fold of the blanket.

Two—three minutes passed and Senf did not move. The untying of his feet might prove a difficult matter, but he made the venture, working slowly and patiently, his gaze on Senf's head. Then, as the knot yielded a little to his prying fingers, his gaze quickly concen-

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trated on it. In his efforts he must have made a sound or a suspicious movement of the shoulders, for when he looked up he saw the head of Max Senf projecting above the tailboard of the bed, his large eyes protruding with amazement. They gazed at each other for a tense fraction of a second and then sprang upright. Hammersley threw his feet out upon the floor and leaped for the man, catching him around the waist so that he could not draw a weapon. His legs were useless and the only chance he had, a desperate one at best, was to drag the man to the floor by sheer weight and there perhaps throttle him. Senf beat with his heavy fists on Hammersley's head and shoulders, and finally forced him backwards upon the floor, falling with him, but Hammersley still clung with frantic grip which the man could not shake off. But at last he managed to get his fingers around Hammersley's throat and tried to force his head back.

Hammersley gasped for breath, but still struggled gamely, though he realized that he had played his last card. Things got dark, and dimly he saw the door of the room open and someone enter. Wentz, of course. His game was up.

Senf was panting heavily. "He burnt the rope," Hammersley heard him say. "Come and help me. He has a grip of iron."

The figure from the door moved quickly around the squirming figures, and Hammersley saw the reflection of the candle on something bright. A knife. He heard a blow, and the mass of struggling flesh above him suddenly collapsed and smothered him with its weight. With an effort he struggled free and rolled aside, looking up into the grim face of Lindberg.

LINDBERG

"Sh—" the man whispered. "I had to do it. There was no other way. I've been waiting outside."

Hammersley tried to speak, but his throat closed, and while he struggled for his breath, he saw Lindberg go to the door and stand, his ear to the keyhole, listening. In a moment he came back.

"*Ganz gut!* They have heard nothing."

"Are you sure?" Hammersley managed to gasp, as Lindberg cut the rope that bound his ankles.

"Yes. He was so sure of himself that he did not shout."

He helped the prisoner to his feet and they clasped hands.

"Good Lindberg! My friend! I had given up."

"I have waited until the beer was served. It is well. And now——" He looked around the room quickly. "You shall go."

Hammersley had a sudden thought.

"Captain von Winden sent you?"

"No. He knows nothing. But he has not spoken. It is now after nine o'clock. By half past nine you must go."

"*Ja doch!* But you——!"

"I shall remain."

"No, no; I will not consent to that."

"Yes, I have thought out a plan."

"But they will suspect. They will shoot you."

"No, they will not. Have I not told you that I have thought out a plan?"

"I will listen to it."

Lindberg meanwhile had been unstrapping his pistol holster and put it on a chair.

Hammersley glanced over his shoulder at the door. "But they may come again," he whispered.

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"I think not. There is little time to lose. We will have to take the chance."

"But if they return and find me free it will only cause your death and do me no good."

"Herr Hammersley, you should know by this time that I do not waste words. Have I not told you that I have made a plan? Listen. This is my story for Herr Hauptmann Wentz. I happen to be in the hallway without, carrying a pitcher of water to the room of Miss Mather—the pitcher is outside on the table—when I hear the sounds of a commotion in this room. Fearing that the prisoner has by some miracle gotten free, I unlock the door with my pass-key and enter. You have burned your bonds and killed Senf. You spring on me and make me a prisoner——" He paused.

"And you——" Hammersley broke in. "You will be left here? No, I won't leave you—not to that fate. I will not go unless you go with me. We will contrive a way to get out of the country."

"*Ach, nein!* Will you not listen? Have I not told you that I have thought of everything? I have communicated with the lady. She is ready to go with you. Her room has a dormer window around the corner of the building, and there is a ledge along the roof. You will go to her. The distance to the roof of the kitchen is thirty feet. It will require four sheets, yours and hers. They are new ones and if well twisted will hold. If you get away safely you can reach the cave in the Thorwald. No one will ever find you there——"

"Yes, Lindberg—but you—what will you say to them?"

"It is no time to waste words. Even now the lady

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is waiting for you. Come, you must get ready at once."

He walked to the bed and quickly stripped off the blankets, twisting the sheets and tying them together. Then he took his pistol belt and fastened it around Hammersley's waist, slipping a handful of loose cartridges into the side pocket of his leather jacket.

Hammersley, bewildered by the devotion of his old friend and tossed between alternatives of duty, stood helplessly. At the moment when he needed resolution most he was supine. But the minutes were passing. The thought of his mission suddenly brought him to life, and his face grew hard, his eyes brilliant with purpose.

"Come, Lindberg. You must go with me."

"No," the man insisted. "My plan is the best."

"No. You must come with me."

"I have made other plans, Herr Hammersley," he whispered gently. "You will go alone. I will give you a reason." And before Hammersley could know what he meant to do, he drew his hunting-knife from its sheath in Hammersley's belt and plunged it into his own shoulder.

Hammersley could scarcely restrain a cry, but Lindberg smiled at him and plucking the weapon out, put it in Hammersley's outstretched hand.

"It is nothing," he said. "It will bleed a little. The more it bleeds the better my case with Excellenz. They will be here in three hours, if not before. Now bind and gag me—quick. There is no time to lose."

He lay flat upon the floor and as in a dream Hammersley obeyed him, tying his arms and legs. When he had finished, Hammersley bent over the man and touched his hand gently.

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“Good-by, old friend. Whatever happens I will not forget. God bless you.”

There was a bright, keen look in the small gray eyes upturned to his.

That was all Hammersley could see of the swathed head, but it gave him a new idea of self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XVIII

SUCCESS

HAMMERSLEY'S first act was to take off his shoes and slip one into each pocket of his jacket. They were soled with rubber, but even that he feared would make a sound. Then he put the box of matches in his pocket and blew out the candle, overturning it on the floor. The shutters of the window were closed, and if they were opened carefully the man in the garden below might not notice any change in the appearance of the window. Hammersley buttoned his jacket and, carefully pushing back the shutter, peered out. Fortunately the night had fallen darkly, and overhead black clouds were lowering, and while he hesitated, searching the paths below for the figure of the guard, there was a patter of rain upon the roof. The gods were propitious.

At last he made out a dark bulk moving to and fro along the garden path toward the toolhouse. Hammersley watched, waiting until the man's back was turned, when he opened the shutter wider and threw the rope of sheets out upon the ledge. Closing the shutter again, he came toward the house. So far so good, for the whiteness of the sheets would have been plainly visible had the guard been looking. The next stage of his escape was more difficult, and he let the fellow go and come twice along his path as he timed his new move. He tried the shutter carefully to see that it did not creak and measured with his eye the distance

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to the living-room chimney, which he must reach, during the twenty paces the soldier would take toward the toolhouse. A wind was blowing in the treetops and somewhere below him a young oak was rustling its last year's leaves. The shutter fortunately opened in the direction in which he must go, so he sat upon the window-sill, doubled up, and when the time came, without looking again at the guard, moved quickly, slipping out noiselessly, closing the shutter behind him and, gathering up the sheet as he went, crept like a cat on a wall along the narrow ledge. It creaked with his weight, and some small object that his foot had touched grated along the roof and fell to the ground below. A tiny sound at best, but magnified in Hammersley's ears a hundred times. He had reached the wide chimney and waited above it, listening for the footsteps of the man below.

There was no sound. The man had stopped walking. Hammersley did not dare look out from his hiding-place, but he knew that in that moment his fate was hanging in a balance. Just then a heavier gust of wind than usual dislodged a broken branch from a tree nearby, which fell to the ground. Still the man below did not move and Hammersley blessed his wisdom in closing the shutter, for he knew that the guard must be peering upward, searching for a sign of anything unusual in its appearance.

Hammersley held his breath, straining his ears for the sound that would tell him that he had not failed. In a while, which seemed interminable, it began again, the slow crunch of gravel under a heavy foot—ceased, and began again, as though uncertainly, so he waited until the sounds were regular as before, then advancing his head cautiously, he waited for the proper time,

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and keeping the chimney between himself and the garden, ran straight up the roof to the gable and crouched quickly upon the other side. He was more fortunate this time for the roof gave forth no sound.

Once beyond the protection of the gables he could for the moment disregard the danger of the guard, for his orders had been to watch but one window, and Hammersley knew enough of the German character to be sure that the soldier below would not leave that side of the house. As he slid carefully down the roof upon the other side, he saw that there were two dormers, and for a moment could not think which of them let into the room in which Doris was imprisoned. He reached the ledge and paused. The shutters of both windows were closed. Lindberg had told him this, but he swore mildly to himself because he hadn't paid closer attention to the Forester's instructions, for while one of the rooms was Doris's, the other he knew was to be occupied by John Rizzio. It was while he hesitated that he heard a whisper at his left, and crawling along the ledge, in a moment had reached the window.

"Is it you, Cyril?" he heard.

"Yes," he whispered. "Let me in."

Lindberg had opened the shutter in the afternoon, but it was still stubborn, and when Cyril put his strength to Doris's, it creaked abominably. It was not really a loud noise, but to the sensitive ears of the fugitives it seemed as if discovery must be inevitable. At last they managed to open it wide enough to admit Cyril's long legs and his body speedily followed. Inside the room they stood, their hands clasped, fearful of discovery, listening for sounds without or within which would tell them of the approach of the dreaded Wentz. Nothing but the sighing of the wind in the

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treetops and the patter of the rain. As hope returned, Hammersley questioned quickly:

"You are ready to go?"

"Yes," she replied eagerly.

"The sheets?"

"Here. I have prepared."

It was dark and he could not see, but he followed the sheet to its end with his hand and found that it was fastened to the bedpost. How she had managed to move the heavy bed across the room he did not know, and it was unnecessary to question, for there it was. He reassured himself as to the knot that she had made and then fastened his own sheets to the other end.

"Do you think you can manage it alone? It will not hold us both."

"Try me," she whispered bravely.

"The rope will reach almost to the kitchen roof."

"Yes, it is just below. I could see the edge of it through the shutter this afternoon."

He caught her in his arms and their lips met.

"I will go first. Then when the tension relaxes, you follow."

She pressed his hand as he slid his feet out of the window and paused crouching on the ledge listening. Then he waved his hand and slowly went down. He knew that the angle of the building quite hid him from the garden path, and he slid down the improvised rope as quickly as he could until his feet dangled in space. He looked below him, but in the darkness the distance was uncertain. Had Lindberg miscalculated? Or had Doris used too much of the sheet at the upper end? He let himself down until his hands groped the end of the sheet while he felt for a landing with his toes.

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He touched nothing, and still swayed and spun in the air like an apple on a string at All Hallowe'en, a fine mark for an automatic from any of the windows that stared blankly at him from the second story. There was nothing for it but to drop, stretching his toes down to meet the impact. Fortunately it was not far, but he lost his balance and toppled sideways, catching himself upon an arm and knee. Here again the wind saved him from discovery, but he drew his weapon and kept a look on the corner of the garden, meanwhile watching for Doris.

She came at once, slowly but fearlessly, and in a moment he had her safely in his arms, drawing her back near the bulk of the building to crouch and wait and listen again. They did not dare to speak, but Hammersley's blood was surging madly with hope. If they had not been discovered now, the chances were that some time would elapse, enough at least to enable the fugitives to get a good start of their pursuers. But the dangling sheet warned Hammersley that they must move quickly. He peered over the edge of the roof. A light was burning in the kitchen, but whether the room was occupied or not, he could not tell. He did not dare risk a sprained ankle by jumping, but found that by lowering himself he could easily reach the fuel box that stood near the kitchen door. In a moment they were on the ground and moving along in the shelter of the hedge toward the hangar.

Hammersley exulted. It was something to have brought Doris away, but it was something more to have circumvented von Stromberg. The bundled figure of Lindberg, lying up there bleeding in the dark, shot a pain through his heart, but in action, moving toward

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the goal of his hopes, even Lindberg was put behind him. He had no fear for the wound in Lindberg's shoulder. The old man was as tough as a pine knot and would survive the loss of blood. It was Lindberg's ordeal with von Stromberg that bothered him.

When they reached the shelter of the woods the tension relaxed.

"We're going to get off, Doris," he said joyously. "I know every stick of these woods, and they can never find us. But I'm afraid the strain has been too much for you. How are you feeling?"

"Never better," she said bravely. "Which way now?"

Hammersley had paused a moment to slip on his shoes, and as he got to his feet,

"Follow me," he said. "If I go too fast for you, let me know."

He cut into the woods and presently struck a path which led to the left, and for a while they followed this rapidly. Thanks to a fine physique and a vigorous life out-of-doors, the girl was in good condition, and though breathing hard upon the slopes, made no murmur. Hammersley knew that he had little time to spare, and Doris followed blindly, asking no questions. She was aware from what Cyril had said in the afternoon that his objective in coming to Germany was now within reach, and she could only judge of its importance to England by the desperate chances he had taken. When it was time that she should know he would tell her. She judged that Cyril knew that she had been tricked into betraying him, and she made up her mind that, whatever happened now, she would stay with him until the end. She owed him that.

After a while, when they had been moving for per-

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haps twenty minutes, they reached an opening in the trees where she could see gray patches of sky through the branches overhead, and her feet emerging from the dry leaves and moss felt a firmer contact.

"The Schöndorf road," he said. "We can follow it side by side. Are you tired?"

"No."

They went on more rapidly, while Hammersley explained:

"The documents I came to Germany for are to be brought along this road tonight in an automobile. The hour they are due to reach Blaufelden is eleven, and if I know anything of the infallibility of the German secret messenger, they will be here on time. It is now after ten. I have an hour or less to make my preparations."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Get them. First, I'm going to take you to a spot where you will be as safe as if you were at home in Ashwater Park."

"No," she said firmly, "I'm going with you."

"But that's impossible. I don't know what may happen. My plans are of the vaguest——"

"I will share them. No, you sha'n't refuse me. I will follow you. I can help. I must. I would die in those roads alone. Don't you understand?"

"But if I fail and they take you, you will be as guilty as I. It's an act of war, Doris."

"Then all the more reason why I should be committed to it. They made war on me."

"But there will be danger. I can't let you take the risk."

"I don't know how you are going to stop me," she said defiantly.

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He paused, then stopped and caught her by the elbows, peering down into her eyes. Then he laughed.

"Mated!" he cried. "This is the greatest moment of my life."

"And mine," her voice answered him.

Her lips met his in a quick caress, like those the wives of the Spartans gave when they sent their men to battle.

He caught her hand in his and they moved forward more quickly. Along this path Death was riding toward them, but they strode eagerly to meet it, to defy it, to defeat it. Cyril planned rapidly, casting anxious glances along the road behind them. Every foot they traveled took them further from pursuers, if pursuers there were. Every foot they traveled took them nearer the advancing messenger. So that the farther they went the longer would be the while before they were overtaken, but the shorter the time for preparation to stop the automobile. Murder was not in Hammersley's line. They passed many places, difficult spots in the road where the machine must almost stop and go into low gear to climb declivities, places where projecting rocks jutted rough faces up to the very ruts of the road. It would not be difficult to kill with an automatic at a distance of two paces, but Hammersley could not play the game that way. He was a spy, if the laws of war called him so, but he would not, even in this extremity, use the spy's weapons. If the other man fought, it would be different. The desperate nature of the undertaking was beginning to come to him. Two men, perhaps three or even four! And yet he must win. He *must*. Slowly but surely a plan was forming and he made up his mind to put it into practice.

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"Not tired yet?" he asked.

"No. I could go on forever."

"Then listen. We are nearing the Thorwald. It is just beyond here, less than half a mile away."

"The Thorwald?"

"It's a favorite place of mine, known only to Lindberg and Udo, a cave high up in the rocks, safe as a church, unless Udo happens to hunt for us there."

"And will he?"

"I hope not. At the foot of the crags this road runs. We must get there first. Can you run?"

"I'll try."

He gave her his hand again, and they settled into a jog trot. She was breathing fast in a moment, but she was game and did not falter, though her lungs seemed to be bursting. But as they neared the spot, Cyril slowed down to a walk again.

"At the foot of the glen there's a dry bed of a stream full of rocks. There used to be a bridge here, but it was washed away. It's an awkward spot, even for a good motor. I'm going to make it worse."

He left her, dashing on ahead, while she followed, and when she reached the stream she saw him dragging one of the bridge timbers across the road. She wanted to help, but he told her to watch, until he got another and then another timber into place. And in another moment it was evident that the barricade was formidable enough to deter any machine from crossing. And there was no way to go around, for upon one side rose the crags and upon the other the gully fell away into a dark pit filled with rocks and tangled branches.

There was nothing for it now but to wait. And yet it seemed a desperate thing to do. Weary and

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blown as Doris was, it would have seemed better to have gone on and on—anything to put distance between Cyril and the death that surely awaited them back there. It seemed impossible that so long a time as this could have elapsed before the tell-tale rope of sheets should have been discovered. Already she was sure that Wentz and his men must be on the way in a machine or on horses, perhaps which would cover the distance they had traveled in less than a quarter of the time. She thought that she heard the sound of a machine in the distance and the voices of men. She pleaded with him to go on, but he only smiled at her.

“You must do what I say, Doris,” he said, and then paused, listening. “They’re coming,” he whispered.

She *had* heard the sound of a machine. “From which direction?” she gasped.

“There,” and he pointed across the gully.

“They’ll be here in a moment. Listen to me! Walk quickly to your right, across the road to that large stone. Stop!” She obeyed wonderingly. “Now cross the road again, using those rocks as stepping stones.” She did it, bewildered, pausing on a ledge of rocks that formed a part of the crag. “Now follow the line of the rocks into the bushes. Fifty feet from the road, hidden among the shrubbery, you’ll find a cleft in the rocks. Climb it and you’ll come out here,” and he pointed upward just above the road. “Wait for me there. I’ll come in a moment.”

And as she hesitated, he caught her by the elbows and shoved her along the ledge backwards. “Go! Do you hear? I’ll have no refusal.”

There was no denying the accent of command in his voice or the quick flash of his eye. Never until von

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Stromberg had badgered her today had a man spoken to her in this tone before. But she loved him for it, rejoiced in his strength—the primitive instinct of woman to obey.

When she had gone, Hammersley quickly crossed the stream and took a position behind a thick bush, listening to the exhaust of the approaching machine, but listening and looking, too, in the opposite direction for sounds of his pursuers. A searchlight made fantastic shapes among the leaves and long shadows suddenly shot out along the road.

Hammersley had drawn his automatic from his pocket and was fingering it coolly. He put his fingers over his eyes, so that the light would not mar his familiarity with the darkness. He did not know how many men opposed him and did not seem to care. The main thing now was to keep his eye undimmed and his hand steady. The machine came, slowed down and stopped while a guttural exclamation came from the driver. The searchlight focused downward into the rocks of the gully. Screening his eyes from its light with a hand, Hammersley peered out at the occupants of the car. There were two men—better than three, but not so good as one. The man at the wheel rose and got down just beside him, moving forward to remove the obstacles.

Hammersley wasted no time. He leveled his automatic at the broad back of the driver and his voice rang sharply in German:

“I have come here for the dispatches intended for Herr General von Stromberg. You will give them to me at once.”

The man who was just bending over toward the timber straightened quickly and turned, reaching for his

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holster, but the man in the seat of the car, who wore a military cap, was quicker, for there was a report, and a bullet sang close to Hammersley's ear.

A stream of fire came from Hammersley's automatic; three shots in quick succession, and the man in the car pitched forward in his seat and slid to the floor. And by the time the other man had drawn his pistol, Hammersley had leaped behind a tree and came out of some bushes beyond. The chauffeur fired, but not in Hammersley's direction. The continuous glare of the light in their eyes had made their vision in the darkness uncertain.

"Do you surrender?" shouted Hammersley.

The German's reply was to fire at him again and miss. He still stood in the reflection of the headlight, a bulky silhouette, which made too fair a mark, while Hammersley stood in the shadows of the bushes. Hammersley pitied him.

"Surrender!" he repeated.

The man was not a coward and rushed blindly toward the voice, shooting again, too close for comfort.

"Well, then——" Hammersley said, and fired again.

The man stumbled to his knees and then fell prone, his fingers clutching among the leaves. The whole incident had taken less than a minute, and a deathly silence seemed to fall, following the reverberations of the shots. Hammersley stood tensely, listening and peering along the road toward Blaufelden. There was a glow of light at a distance and he could now hear the sound of another machine. Von Stromberg had learned of his escape and with a perfect intuition was coming here directly and fast. The sound of the shots had been heard. There was no time to lose. Ham-

mersley bent over the man on the ground and searched his pockets rapidly. Gloves, matches, a spark plug, tobacco, but no papers. The chauffeur, of course. By main strength he lifted the dead weight of the man in the car and carried him down into the glare of the searchlight. It was a dangerous thing to do, for the lights of the machine from Blaufelden were already swinging through the tree-trunks. But he worked quickly and skillfully, tearing open the officer's gray overcoat and searching his pockets. In the inside pocket of his uniform he found them, a bulky package, and other papers. He read the superscription quickly, "*Sein Excellenz General Graf von Stromberg.*" Then sprang aside out of the glare of the lights at the very moment when the other machine came swinging rapidly around the turn in the road.

"The papers are safe?" roared a voice which Hammersley recognized.

"Ja," Hammersley replied in a rough tone. "A man tried to stop me and I shot him."

"*Ganz gut!*"

"He is here," shouted Hammersley again.

All the while he had been moving out of the glare of the searchlights, and as the men from the other car tumbled out and came forward, he turned into the darkness, and abandoning all caution, took to his heels and ran at top speed in the opposite direction.

Behind him he heard shouts as his trick was discovered, but he knew that in the matter of speed he had nothing to fear afoot from any German at Windenberg. The thing that bothered him now was a way to hide the marks of his footsteps, for in places the mud was soft and he knew that in the morning light they would follow him; so he picked his way

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carefully, running at top speed for a mile at least, to lead the pursuit away from the Thorwald and then at the banks of a small stream paused a moment and listened. He had eluded them. Then without hesitation, though puffing fearfully from his exertions, he stepped down into the cold waters of the stream and waded up it, avoiding the ledges and making sure that he left no mark behind him. As he climbed higher up the mountain, he could see in the distance the glow of the lights of the machines and when he reached a mossy bank which would not betray him, he clambered out of the water and turned, doubling like a fox, upon his trail, turning back in the general direction from which he had come.

Doris worried him. He could imagine her crouching there two hundred feet in the air just above the two machines, half dead with fear of capture and terror for him. Had she seen what had happened and understood it? Would she have the kind of silent endurance to crouch there and wait? He hurried on into the maze of rocks and deep woods, finding at last a deer trail that he knew. There were but two means of ingress to the cave of the Thorwald, one by the secret path in the bushes up the rocks which Doris had taken, the other from the upper side which he was now rapidly approaching.

He ran along the deer trail, reloading his automatic as he went, his eyes peering ahead for familiar landmarks, cutting in at last to the left at a great rock around which the deer trail led. He now proceeded with great caution. Far below him he could see the reflections of the lights of the two cars and heard the voices of men. He went down a way toward the wall of rocks, clambering over huge boulders, haul-

ing himself here and there by the aid of tree limbs, reaching at last the dry bed of the old stream which down in the road had been of such assistance to him.

Now the wall of rock rose sheer before him. He stole cautiously along its face, feeling with his hands and peering upward. In a moment he found what he was looking for, a small projecting ledge which he mounted, and followed to his right for a way, then mounting again by easy stages to a fissure wider than his body which he entered and followed quickly. It led downward it seemed into the bowels of the crag, but came out suddenly into an open space, a kind of amphitheater, with a ridge of rock upon one side, and upon the other what appeared to be a solid wall. He crossed this space quickly and peered over.

Below him the crag jutted out over the road and upon it somewhere was Doris. He strained his gaze downward but could not see her. What if they had found her footsteps and followed? No, that was hardly possible, for the ridge of rock began immediately at the road, and thanks to his precautions, she would leave no footprints.

Slowly he descended, choosing his footing with quick deliberation, for the slightest sound, the dislodging of a twig or a sliver of crumbled stone and the crag of the Thorwald would become in a moment a hornet's nest. Fortunately the back of the rock screened him from the road, and unless von Stromberg had sent men into the woods to left and right, there was no chance of discovery. At last he reached the level and a dark shadow rose at his very feet and silently clasped his hand. He took her in his arms for a moment in devout thankfulness. If the true moment of their mating had been back there in the road while danger

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threatened them before and behind, this place of security was the beginning of its consummation. He did not speak and only motioned her to sit while he crouched beside her, waiting.

Below in the road he heard the rasping voice of His Excellenz, speaking in no gentle tones to the wounded chauffeur of the messenger's machine, asking question after question which were answered feebly enough. After a while the men who had followed Hammersley returned and made their reports—the dull boom of the voice of Wentz and the harsh crackle of von Stromberg's in rage and mortification.

"He got away, Excellenz," said Wentz. "For a moment only I saw him, and followed fast as I could, but my legs are too short."

"Bah! You are an imbecile, Herr Hauptmann. And the other men, are not their legs longer?"

"Yes, but Herr Hammersley has the legs of a deer. They are following, but it is like hunting for a grain of barley in a coal scuttle. He may have taken to the woods anywhere."

"Ja—but the Fräulein. She could not have run as fast as he!"

"It is my opinion," said Wentz with some temerity, "that they had a *rendezvous* somewhere beyond. He has known these mountains since his boyhood."

"*Esel!* But she hasn't, and how should she find it in the dark?"

"Perhaps, the matter being so important, he would have deserted her."

"*Quatsch!* Find me the girl and I will find you Hammersley."

Hammersley felt Doris's clasp tighten on his own.

"She cannot have gotten far away. Search for her,

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schafskopf. Search the woods and rocks until morning. Take the other machine and follow his footsteps until you see them no more. Then follow his trail in the woods. Take the two *Försters* with you. I will go back to Blaufelden to send for more men and question the guards who permitted his escape. Go!"

The fugitives sat silently listening to the sounds below them, heard the orders to put the wounded man and the dead messenger into the machine and presently the commotion of departure as the machines were backed away from the gully, turned, in available spots, and then departed in opposite directions, General von Stromberg's at full speed, the other slowly, while Captain Wentz walked on before, his shoulders bent, trying to follow the signs of Hammersley's rubber soles in the road. But it had begun to rain steadily again and Hammersley was thankful, for it would not be long before all marks of his footsteps would be erased.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CAVE ON THE THORWALD

SAFE?" he heard her whisper.

"Yes, for the present."

"You have what you came for?"

"I think so."

"And what shall we do now?"

"Sleep. You're dead beat. Come."

He rose and helped her to her feet, then after another pause, turned toward the wall of rocks behind them.

"Do you think you can make it? It's a difficult climb."

"Yes. I've that much left in me. You lead the way and I'll follow." Her teeth were chattering.

As he touched her sleeve he found it soaked with moisture.

"Poor child. You're nearly frozen." He had not been conscious of the occasional spatter of rain, for his leather jacket had kept him dry. "But I'll have you warm and snug before you can say knife."

And when she questioned, "A fire——" he replied, "Isn't that what one uses to get warm with?"

"But here—tonight——?"

"Oh, don't bother. You'll see."

They were climbing up the face of the slippery rocks, Hammersley pausing from time to time to let her rest, pulling her from above when he reached the

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ledges, and at last they came out into the amphitheater of boulders from which he had descended.

She was almost too weary for comment and followed blindly as he led her to the wall of the rock where he seemed to disappear in its very face. She followed him inside a dark opening and when they were well within he relinquished her hand and struck a match. A brief glimpse she had of a small chamber in the cliff not twenty feet square when the match went out. He struck another and shading it with his hand went forward. She saw him find what he was looking for and in a moment a candle, after faintly sputtering for a moment, sent forth a steady glow of light.

"Sit here on this stool. I'll have you right in a jiffy."

She obeyed him and looked around her. At one side was a bed of pine needles, at another a small table and in the middle of the rocky floor the gray embers of what had been a fire.

"A bit roughish, but not so bad?"

She nodded while he busied himself in building the fire. There were dry leaves, twigs and logs in the corner, and soon a blaze was leaping cheerfully upward. And while she wondered at the signs of occupancy he answered her thought.

"It's Lindberg's. He comes here often. It was here that he and I always slept when we went on hunting trips. You see there's a natural chimney overhead in the rocks where the bally smoke goes out. They might observe the smoke by day, but at night we're quite safe. I've been all around the place when the fire was goin' and there isn't a sign of it outside."

He helped her put her coat off and made her com-

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fortable close to the fire, after which he quickly took the package of papers out of his pocket and examined them. The single papers were military orders of no importance to one Lieutenant Orstmann, obviously the dead messenger. Hammersley put them aside, breaking the seal of the heavy envelope and examining its contents carefully. First a letter of instructions to His Excellency von Stromberg, signed in the bold hand of the Emperor of Germany himself. He showed her the signature and explained its contents and all thought of weariness went from her mind.

"It is—it's what you came for?"

"Yes," he replied, smiling grimly. "I've got it."

"Is it—it isn't so important that you can't tell me?" she asked timidly.

He laughed, put his arm around her and held her for a moment tenderly. She had endured where a man might have flinched, and yet at this moment she was all woman—timid, weary unto death, but still curious. It was the master impulse.

"No," he smiled. "You've jolly well earned the right to know. I'll tell you."

He was so big, so strong, so certain of himself that she wondered how, for a moment even, she could have thought him other than he was. With a sudden impulse of pride and tenderness, she rose, put her arms around his neck and bending his head down to hers kissed him upon the lips. He caught her to him and held her in his arms.

"O Cyril," she murmured, "that I could ever have failed in my belief in you, that I could ever have thought that you were false! Why didn't you tell me the truth? I would have kept your secret."

"It was impossible, dear. It was too big a thing

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and I was sworn to silence. But since you found out——”

“Did you think me curious——” she asked naïvely, “because I read the cigarette papers?”

“Curious!” he laughed. “Well rather! The mistake I made was in tellin’ you *not* to read them. If I——”

“Don’t laugh at me,” she whispered. “I can’t stand that. The only retribution for what I did this afternoon is a blow. If you struck me, Cyril, I should not care.”

“But I won’t, you know, old girl. But I’m going to kiss you again if you don’t mind.”

And he did, while a shadow darkened her eyes. “It seems terrible to be happy, even in our moment of security, with the shadow of death hanging so closely over us. I know you had to kill him, Cyril, but——” She paused.

“It was either that or he would have killed *me*. As it was, it was too jolly close a thing for comfort. I gave the other man his chance, but he wouldn’t take it. Lucky he didn’t, for I might have missed the papers.”

She clung to him more closely.

“And if you had been killed?” she whispered. “I saw it all. At first I thought you had fallen. O Cyril, the agony of it! And then you came out from behind the tree and I knew that you were unharmed. I had seen a man die, as I had, there upon the rocks at Ben-a-Chielt, but when the other one came at you I wanted you to kill him. I *wanted* it. I prayed that you would. It was murder—in my heart. I can’t understand how I have changed. And I’ve always thought death such a fearsome thing!”

She hid her face in his shoulder and clung to him,

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trembling. She had passed through danger valiantly, carelessly even, but now that for the moment danger had passed, woman-like, she yielded to the reaction. He kissed her gently.

"Sh—child. Don't let it work on you. No bally use. We're safe now."

"Yes—safe for the present. That ought to be enough for me. But if anything had happened to you—!" She shuddered.

"But it didn't——"

"Oh, I'm thankful," she whispered. "Thankful for that—and for you—the trouble I've passed through—the pain of my thoughts of you—I'm thankful for those too, because without them I never should have known you—the real *you*, Cyril. I sometimes think that life deals too easily with most of us to bring out the best that's in us. I never would have known you in England, Cyril, doing the things you always did."

He smiled at her.

"I'm the same chap, though. Can't tell what a fellow will do when he has to."

"But you didn't have to. You might have gone to France and sat in a trench. Instead of that you did what was harder—let them distrust you—hold you in contempt—keeping silent and cheerful, while you were doing such splendid things for England." She paused while she caressed him and said in a proud whisper, "The Honorable Cyril!"

"Honorable!" he smiled. "You'd hardly get von Stromberg to think that."

"That terrible old man!" she went on clinging to him. "I can see his vulture face now. He would have shot you—tomorrow!"

"But we fooled him—what? Poor Lindberg!"

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She questioned him and he told her of the devotion of his old friend.

"And what will von Stromberg do to Lindberg?" she asked anxiously.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "Nothin' perhaps, unless Udo tells." He paused and looked into the fire. "Wish I knew about Udo," he said thoughtfully. "We were very good pals last year."

"But he wouldn't see you shot!"

"He couldn't do anythin'. I am betrayin' his country."

"But not *your* country, Cyril," she said.

"No, thank God. Not mine. I love Germany—the Germany of my mother—and the men like Lindberg. But the Germany of von Stromberg—that's not Germany to me."

"Do you think we will get away?"

"Yes," he said quickly.

She read the anxiety in his voice and knew that he was thinking of her, and in that moment a new idea of her duty came to her.

"You mean," she said quickly, "that you could get away if it wasn't for me. O Cyril, I know. Don't try to deceive me. You could disguise yourself and get away to the Swiss border. It would not be difficult for you. I am a weight around your neck which may destroy you."

"Hush, child."

"No. I am not too stupid to see that. You ought to be going now." She clung to his arms and looked up into his face as her duty came more clearly to her, while her voice trembled with earnestness. "I want you to go, Cyril. Your life is valuable to England. They are on a false scent down there. You could get

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away in the darkness and by morning you can be miles away. I'm not afraid. Tomorrow I can go and give myself up. I am only a girl—an American. They will not dare to harm me. Don't smile. I am in deadly earnest. You must go, Cyril—now—now——”

But he only patted her gently.

“You think that I am a child,” she went on, “that I cannot be trusted to get along alone. Haven't I proved it to you that I am not afraid? Look at me, Cyril. I am only a little tired now but tomorrow I will go to von Stromberg and say, ‘Here I am—now what can you do to me?’ He may threaten and bluster and rage, but that will not frighten me—when you are safe. What can he reply? What *could* he do? My nation is not at war with his. He would not *dare!* O Cyril, say that you'll go—say that you'll go——”

She looked up into his face and saw that its expression had not changed. He was still smiling at her softly while she felt the touch of his fingers gently petting her.

“Oh—you won't go—you wont!” she cried, and then without further warning burst into a passion of tears.

“Don't, Doris, for God's sake,” he whispered. “Don't break now. I need all your courage and your strength. You've been so brave—so strong. Keep up your spirits, there's a dear. We'll pull through, don't you worry.”

“They'll take you—if you stay here.”

“No. They won't find us. I'm not afraid of that, and there are water and biscuits here. We'll take things easy for a while and then slip off. Do you think I could go and leave you in the lurch? Pretty sort of a Johnny I'd be to do a thing like that! Not for twenty Englands, Doris,” he whispered, kissing

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her tenderly. "Not for twenty Englands, I wouldn't." His touch soothed her and she grew more quiet.

"Of—of course you w-wouldn't," she murmured. "But I w-wish you would."

Her hands met around his neck and he raised her chin and kissed her on the mouth. It was a kiss of plighted troth, of tenderness, faith and the exalted passion that comes with tears.

"Mated?" he whispered.

"Yes—yes," she murmured faintly.

They did not move for a long moment when Doris slowly disengaged her arms from around his neck and moved slightly away. Her hair had fallen and hung in golden disorder about her shoulders. She put up her arm, trying to catch the escaping pins, and then she smiled at him, dimpling adorably.

"Come," he said gently. "You must get to bed. Your coat is nearly dry, but I'll cover you with my jacket. You must sleep, too. No shammin', you know. Can't tell what may happen tomorrow."

"I'll try," she murmured obediently, while he led her to the couch of boughs and made her lie on it. But as he knelt beside her, covering her with his jacket, she caught his hands and would not relinquish them. He raised hers to his lips and kissed them again and again: small, muscular hands they were, but now very brown and dirty. "Are you comfortable? Sorry I haven't a tub."

She was silent a moment and then straightened and asked him:

"You promised to tell me about the papers. Won't you?"

He laughed.

"Not now. It must be nearly morning."

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"Yes, now. I'm not tired now. I will sleep afterwards. I like to hear your voice, Cyril. Perhaps it will soothe me to sleep."

"Are you sure?" he asked doubtfully—and she nodded.

He saw that she was still nervous and wakeful and sank beside her couch, taking her hand in his.

"It is really quite interestin'," he began slowly. "Three years ago, at the invitation of the Emperor of Germany, when Europe was at peace and there was no cloud upon the horizon bigger than a chap's hand, there met in a shootin' lodge near Schöndorf, not ten miles from here, six men. It was a secret conference, arranged by the Emperor of Germany through His Excellency Graf von Stromberg. The six men were His Highness Prince von Waldheim, at one time Germany's ambassador to France; Admiral von Frankenhäusen, head and front of the Imperial German Navy; General von Sandersdorf, the brains of the German General Staff; His Excellency Moritz von Komarom, minister of war of the Austrian Empire; Viscount Melbourne, English Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and Harlow-Gorden, of the British Admiralty."

She was listening avidly, wide-eyed, the array of well-known names telling her as nothing else could have done the importance of the conference.

"This meetin' was a secret," he went on. "These men all traveled incognito, without servants, and were met by an agent of General von Stromberg at Schöndorf and conducted in automobiles to the huntin' lodge I have spoken of. These men remained there for two days and two nights and then went home. But while they were there they were makin' new history for

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Europe." He paused to fill his pipe but her curiosity could not be restrained.

"And what were they doing there, Cyril? I can't understand."

Hammersley got up and held his pipe to the candle, for matches were scarce, and then, with maddening calmness, sat beside her again.

"That secret meetin' of these chaps had to do with nothin' less than the ruin of France——"

"France!" she cried. "England had nothing against France and now she is her ally."

"Three years ago the political conditions were different," he answered. "Those representatives of England came and sat with representatives of Germany and Austria while they plotted the destruction of France."

"But how do you know this, Cyril? I can't understand."

"No more do I, but it's a fact. Let me go on. At the table in the lodge where this conference was held, Viscount Melbourne made notes of what was goin' on, includin' the combinations of land and naval forces that could be made against France and Russia, and the plans to break the Russian Federation in the Balkans. When the meetin' was over all the scraps of paper these chaps had scribbled on were destroyed by fire before the eyes of the men who had made 'em, except those of Viscount Melbourne, who put 'em in his pocket, and with them a pencil copy of this secret treaty in his own handwriting. The original copy of the treaty was entrusted to Harlow-Gorden, who put it in his dispatch-box. It was not until the next day when the Englishmen, in the train on the way to Paris, discovered that Viscount Melbourne's private papers

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were missin'. Jolly fine mess—what? They got off at the next stop, went back to Schöndorf and looked for the papers, but neither there nor at the lodge was there hair or hide of 'em. So they went back to England hopin' that by some fortunate accident the papers had been destroyed."

"And these—" asked the girl, "are they?"

He nodded. "To make the story short, I found out where they had gone. My flights to Germany have been made for this purpose. Don't you see? The papers came into the hands of the Emperor of Germany and he was plannin' to have 'em sent to the President of the French Republic—England's ally. It wouldn't do, you know, to have such papers at such a time fall into the hands of France. Hardly a credit to English diplomacy. What? Might even result in a new *entente*."

"But where were the papers in the meanwhile?" she asked.

"That is what took me so bally long to find out. After many hunts away from Windenberg at night, I traced 'em to a Socialist by the name of Gottschalk at Schöndorf, who had received 'em from a pensioner of the Imperial Forest Service, one of the attendants at the huntin' lodge where the conference was held. Whether he found 'em or stole 'em I don't know, but I frightened him and he confessed. I was on the very point of stealing 'em from Gottschalk when I found out that he had been writin' to the Wilhelmstrasse, and when I tried to get 'em they were gone. If I'd got 'em then, you would not be here, Doris, and I——"

"But how did you learn what the Wilhelmstrasse proposed to do with them?"

"Oh, that was quite clear. The English Foreign

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Office has been badly frightened and has used every effort with its secret agents in Berlin to get that information. It reached London the other day. And just before I left Scotland I knew the job was to be given to General von Stromberg. The rest was Kismet—the fortune of war—a jolly good piece of luck! Lindberg overheard through the microphone von Stromberg givin' instructions to Wentz—so that His Excellency's own weapons were turned against him. I was goin' to waylay Wentz on the way to France, but circumstances prevented——”

“It was I, Cyril,” she broke in pleadingly. “I didn't know. I betrayed you.”

“A trick,” he laughed, “invented in the Rameses family—but still useful.”

“He frightened me,” she stammered. “I believed the message signed ‘Maxwell’ genuine.”

“Not Maxwell,” he said gravely, “for Maxwell—a sore spot since the war began in the side of the War Office—Maxwell is dead.”

“You——?” she exclaimed fearfully.

“Yes,” he replied. “I told and they caught him. I couldn't do so before. It's war, Doris. It is a fair game. I ask no favors—nor do I give any.”

She was silent a moment looking into the fire.

“Yes, I understand—a terrible game with odds against——” And then, after a pause, “You say that we will get away. Won't you tell me your plan?”

He rose with a confident laugh.

“Yes, I have a plan, but I'm not going to tell it now. You are going to sleep.”

She laughed wearily and sat up.

“And you? Where will you sleep?”

“By the fire. I've got some thinkin' to do. I'm not

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sleepy. I had eight hours last night. I'm going to watch."

He bent over her and gently made her lie down. "I will talk to you no more. You must go to sleep."

She sighed and stretched herself out while he covered her with his coat. Then he put a fresh log on the fire and sat beside her again. In a moment he heard her voice.

"I hope you don't mind my telling you, Cyril, that I love you a great deal."

"Not in the least," he whispered. "I wouldn't mind listenin' while you said it all night. But——"

"There. You're going to insist on my sleeping again!"

"Won't you?"

"I don't seem to feel as if I could ever sleep again. You're so cool, so calm, Cyril. How *can* you be?"

"No bally use gettin' excited. Here we are snug as two bugs in a rug. We'll slip through them some way."

"But where will we go?"

He smiled.

"I have a notion of goin' to England." His kind of quiet humor always put her on her mettle.

"To England—?" She started up.

"There won't be much chance of your doin' anythin' tomorrow if you don't get your sleep," he insisted gently. "Do what I ask, Doris. Sleep you must."

"I'll try. Good night, Cyril."

"Good night." He kissed her on the forehead and drew his jacket over her again, then sat beside her, her hand in his, watching. Gradually her nerves grew quiet and weariness mastered her. He waited until

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her breathing indicated sleep, when he carefully relinquished her hand and moved to the fire, where he carefully studied the papers by the light of his candle, after which he slipped them into the pocket of his trousers and moved softly across the cave into a corner, where he opened the lid of a tin box and examined its contents, taking out a fresh candle to replace the other one, which was on the point of expiring.

Then he filled his pipe with great deliberateness and, returning to the stool by the fire, crossed his knees and bent forward, gazing into the blaze, his brows tangled in deep thought. He had succeeded in getting what he came for. So far, the secret of the meeting in the shooting lodge was safe. But for how long? By this time a description of the two of them had, of course, been telegraphed to every village and military station in Germany. That wouldn't do at all. Alone it might be managed, with a German officer's uniform and Herr Lieutenant Orstmann's military orders, but with Doris—it wasn't to be thought of.

The other alternative appealed to him more strongly. He had matched his wits against von Stromberg's so far and had won, and success made him hopeful. Where carefulness failed, audacity sometimes succeeded. The more he thought of his plan, the deeper became his conviction that it was the only one possible under the circumstances. There was continued danger for the papers and he deliberated for a long while upon the wisdom of destroying them at once, finally rejecting that idea except as a last alternative. His word that he had destroyed them would perhaps be sufficient to ease the minds of the gentlemen at the Foreign Office, but there were certain memoranda about the promises of Germany to England

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signed with the initials of Prince von Waldheim which should at all costs be saved. But aside from this consideration, Hammersley, having carried his affairs thus far successfully, had a pride in finishing it as he had planned. It could be done—he would do it.

He got up and put another log on the fire and then stretched himself out at full length upon the rocks, gazing into the flame. In the corner where the bed was he heard the steady breathing of the girl. What a trump she was—What a tr——

He nodded and then dozed. Troubled visions flitted across his mind. Once he thought he heard the sound of a footstep on the rocks and started up. It was broad daylight. He listened for a while and then slowly sank back and slept again. How long he did not know, for something awakened him and he sat up, reaching instinctively for the holster lying at his side, to look straight into the muzzle of an automatic, behind which was the handsome blond head of Udo von Winden.

CHAPTER XX

THE FIGHT IN THE CAVERN

UDO loomed against the light and the uniform he wore seemed to give the projecting weapon a new significance. He was not Udo, the kinsman and companion who had so often shared this refuge with Hammersley in the hunting days. He was Germany. Hammersley could never remember the time when the muzzle of a weapon had seemed so large. It was much better to sit without moving, and Udo's quick instructions were not wasted.

"Don't move, Cyril," he said coolly in German. "Up with your hands! So. Now get up, leaving your belt where it is, and sit on the stool yonder. Quickly! I will shoot—to kill."

Hammersley read in his expression a determination to put the threat into practice and, watching narrowly, silently obeyed. Von Winden, still covering him carefully, picked up the belt and transferred Lindberg's pistol to his own holster. He was a dead shot with any firearm, as Hammersley knew, and his own chances at three paces even in a rush were small. It was decidedly a case for discretion.

"I suppose there's nothing to be said," Hammersley muttered. "You outguessed me, Udo." And then, to gain a moment of time, "I thought that your memory might be quite good enough to forget the Thorwald." Von Winden frowned down the barrel of the automatic.

"It is too much to expect even from me," he said

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crisply. "I am your kinsman but I am first of all—a German. And not even for you will I be a traitor."

"*Natürlich!*" smiled Cyril.

Udo von Winden's look was grave, his voice sober, and the muzzle of his automatic did not waver.

"I have already had a bad memory, my cousin. This afternoon I forgot that Lindberg, who served your meals, was a good friend of yours and mine and that he might be counted on to help you out of your difficulties. I also forgot that there was such a place as the Cave of the Thorwald until I learned from Excellenz last night, the price Germany was to pay for my indifference. If you had failed to capture the documents of His Majesty, I might have remained silent. As you took them, there remained nothing but to act. I came here, for I knew it would be the one place where I should find you." Hammersley bent his head. "I understand." And then quickly, "Would you mind telling me if you have spoken—if you have told what Lindberg—?"

"No," von Winden broke in, "I have told nothing. Lindberg is safe. I have come here alone——"

Hammersley gave a gasp of relief and leaned forward, peering into the fire.

"I came for one purpose, Cyril," Udo went on quietly. "I have no personal desire for your death, but I would kill you as you sit rather than see Germany suffer the loss of the documents in your possession. I came for them and I intend that you shall give them to me."

Hammersley looked up into his cousin's face and their eyes met. Von Winden's tone was cool and his manner as calm as on the days last year when they were hunting together, but Hammersley knew that

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when Udo von Winden was most calm he was also most dangerous. So he slowly reached into the pocket of his trousers and handed his cousin the papers he had taken from the German messenger.

"*Danke*," said Udo, backing to the light of the entrance of the cave to examine them. "You are sure they are all here?"

"My word on it, Udo," said Hammersley frankly. He watched his cousin examine the documents and heard him give an exclamation of satisfaction, but Hammersley saw that his eyes neglected no detail of the cavern and was aware that the muzzle of the weapon in Udo's hand still bore directly upon him. In the shadows Hammersley saw the face of Doris, who was sitting up, pallid and dark-eyed as though awakened from one nightmare into another. As Udo saw her the muzzle of his weapon wavered and went out of alignment, but Hammersley did not move or even appear to notice the girl.

There was a note of embarrassment in the German's officer's voice as he spoke again.

"I am sorry, my cousin, that your father's blood called you to be false to Germany. You had been suspected by Excellenz, but I would have sworn that he was mistaken. You owe me nothing, of course, but——"

"It's war, Udo," said Hammersley quietly. "You will remember that I did not seek duty in the Imperial Secret Service. It was the Herr General who thought it valuable to use our kinship for his own purposes."

Udo shrugged. "Yes, I know," he said quietly. "You have done your duty—but you must now be aware of the fact that you can ask no favors of me."

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"I don't. I am in your power. Shoot me if you like."

Udo smiled.

"I can hardly be expected to do that. I do not love you now, my cousin. I cannot love anyone who is false to my country, but I cannot forget that once, not a year ago, we were brothers. No, I cannot shoot you, Cyril, though perhaps that would be a better death than that other—yonder."

Hammersley shrugged. "It is the fortune of war. From your point of view I deserve it. I can only thank you again, for myself and for Miss Mather, for your generosity."

A sound from the girl and Udo acknowledged her presence by a bow.

"Under other circumstances," he said with stiff politeness, "I should be glad to extend the hospitalities of Winden Schloss. But, of course, as Miss Mather can see, my mother and sisters are away and I——"

"Of course, Graf von Winden, it is understood," she said haltingly in German.

"I can do nothing, Fräulein. I am powerless—at the orders of General von Stromberg, who arranges the coming and the going of all at Windenberg."

"The coming, Udo," said Hammersley dryly. "Not the going."

"I am sorry, I have done what I could. You have done well to give me the papers. I shall now go back to Blaufelden and return them to Excellenz."

Hammersley started up.

"You mean that you will leave us here?"

"*Natürlich*. I do not wish to see you killed against the kitchen wall. It is not the death for the blood of von Eppingen. Even if you are shot while escaping

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it would be better." He shrugged. "My position is this. You can do Germany no further harm. I shall tell a likely story. I have the papers—they are what I came for. If you had not given them to me I would have killed you, but now I shall go away alone as I came."

"Good old Udo!" said Hammersley impulsively, taking a pace toward him, his hand outstretched.

But von Winden's automatic came quickly into line and Hammersley halted.

"One moment, my cousin," said von Winden coolly. "I am quite willing to accept your expressions of gratitude from a distance. I may not wish to see you killed by others, and I would regret the necessity of killing you myself. I shall consider you my prisoner until I go. After that"—and he shrugged expressively—"you can go where you like."

Hammersley folded his arms and frowned.

"Where I like!" he muttered. "With every village in Hesse-Nassau on the lookout for me." There was a pause, after which von Winden spoke with quiet earnestness. "Unfortunately I may not help you further. Since there is food, to wait here is safer. Alone, traveling by night, a man might reach Basel safely. As for the Fräulein, if she will return to Blaufelden and give herself up, imprisonment for a time is perhaps the worst that she need fear."

Doris had risen, the white light from the door of the cavern searching her face pitilessly.

"It is what I would do," she said haltingly. "What I have pleaded with him to let me do. Cyril," she implored in English, "you must let me."

"I will think about it," he muttered. "You are sure that no harm will come to her?" The muzzle of

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the automatic had wavered out of line again and Hammersley was carefully measuring with his eye the distance that separated him from his cousin.

"The bark of Excellenz is much worse than his bite. He will bluster and storm. But eventually he will return Miss Mather to her own people."

Hammersley was shaking his head in indecision.

"I am not so sure that I agree with you about the bite of Excellenz. I shall think of what I will do. I'm sure of one thing, Udo," he said with sincerity, "that I am deeply grateful for what you have done. The war has made us enemies, and you have now prevented the success of my great venture. But I bear you no illwill. The debt is still mine on account of your silence, back there—a debt made deeper by the presence of Fräulein Mather." He paused to give his words effect. "I had not told you, Udo, for at Windenburg one has no time to think of the gentler things of life. But just before the war broke out Fräulein Mather had promised me to become my wife."

Hammersley watched von Winden as he turned toward Doris with a smile, bowing deeply, his sense of the situation lost for a second in the obligations of civility, as he murmured a phrase of congratulations. "I am much honored by your confidences," he said formally, "and I deeply regret——"

He got no further, for Hammersley had sprung in suddenly toward him, risking Udo's shot, which was fired quickly, without aim.

A furious struggle followed. Hammersley caught at von Winden's wrist and his weight bore him back against the rock, while both of them fought for the possession of the weapon. The German officer was smaller than his cousin but his wrists were good and

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he was quicker than Hammersley. They bore only friendship for each other but the incentive of each was greater even than hatred could have been. They struggled in silence, the thought of the possession of the papers uppermost in the minds of both. The struggle was not that of kinsman against kinsman, but of England against Germany. Realizing the desperateness of Hammersley's attack and the purpose of it, von Winden knew that a victory for Hammersley meant the loss of the papers and so he was bent on killing his cousin if he could, Hammersley on preventing him from doing so. They swayed from side to side, breathing hard, while Doris crouched against the side of the cavern, dumb with terror. Twice she saw the weapon in the German officer's hand point downward toward Cyril's back and then, before it could be used, saw Cyril's arm quickly push it upward. She knew that she was in danger, but she did not know what to do. At one moment von Winden seemed to have the advantage and in another Cyril. Udo's back was against the wall and one of Cyril's arms was around him, while their legs were intertwined as each tried to get the other off his balance. Suddenly with an effort Hammersley managed to wrench the pistol from von Winden's hand and he tossed it into the corner of the cavern.

Von Winden had every ethical right to kill Hammersley if he could, but after what his cousin had done for him, Hammersley could not kill Udo. That was impossible. He must succeed without that. This generosity nearly proved fatal to him for the German managed to reach Hammersley's automatic in his own holster and had almost disengaged it when Hammersley caught his hand again, and the struggle was re-

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newed. But Doris, whose senses and initiative had slowly returned to her, now crept around the walls of the cave and when von Winden's outstretched hand came within her reach she seized his forearm in both of her hands and clung to it desperately, keeping the muzzle pointed away from Cyril. She was swayed to and fro with the struggling men, who finally toppled sideways and fell to the floor, dragging her with them, but von Winden's grasp of the weapon, never quite secure, was loosened and, as they dropped, it went flying under the table.

The fight was soon out of the German, for Hammersley's weight had fallen on him heavily, and in a moment the officer was flat on his back and Hammersley was sitting on him. Doris, who had meanwhile picked up the pistol, now heard Hammersley gasping jerkily.

"Quick, Doris—something to tie with—your stay-strings!"

She understood and disappeared outside the cavern, returning presently with the bonds, helping Cyril while he made the wrists and ankles of von Winden fast.

"I might have killed you—but I didn't," Hammersley was gasping. "You saw that, Udo, didn't you?"

"You needn't make apologies. I would have killed you. I tried to. It's too bad—too bad," he panted.

"I'm sorry," Hammersley repeated. "Those papers—they're England's, Udo. They're my property. I've got to take them."

And without further words he put his hand inside the breast of the officer's coat and took the papers out.

"I wish it were anybody but you," he said.

"I don't think you can get away with them."

"I'm going to try."

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"I'll prevent you if I can."

"How?"

"I'll show you." And with the remnants of his breath he shouted lustily for help. Hammersley threw him back, none too gently, and clapped a handkerchief in his mouth, while he directed Doris to tear her underskirt and make bandages for a gag. They worked quickly and in a moment the German officer was silent and helpless. Then for a long moment Hammersley sat by the prostrate man, slowly recovering his breath. Doris, ash-gray with fear, crouched beside him, obedient to his look and action. At last with a laugh he got up.

"Close thing, that!" he said. "My word! He nearly got me." And then with a look at the prostrate man, "Poor old Udo!"

In a moment, with a word to Doris, he went outside the cave and listened intently. He peered cautiously over the ridge of rocks. The road was deserted. The sound of the shot, while it had seemed deafening, would have been muffled at the entrance of the cavern and could not have been heard from a distance. And when Hammersley returned, he reassured Doris as to the immediate danger of discovery.

"There is no hurry, Doris. I must think," he said, filling his pipe. He stood upright for a while, puffing rapidly, peering down at the captive, his expression struggling between a frown and a smile. Herr Graf Udo von Winden looked so very much like a mummy! The eyes of his cousin, the only visible part of his face, followed Hammersley intently.

"I could have done for you, Udo," Hammersley repeated. "I want to be sure that you understand that."

Von Winden's head moved ever so slightly. Doris

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had sunk upon the stool, her face buried in her hands.

"Oh, it's cruel!" she murmured. "Let him go, Cyril."

"Hardly," said Hammersley coolly. "He'd raise a rumpus. Wouldn't you, Udo?"

The officer's head did not move.

"You see?" said Hammersley. "But I'm going to make him as comfortable as possible." And taking him by the armpits he dragged his cousin over to the corner and laid him gently on the bed of balsam, and then stood beside the bed looking down at him thoughtfully, addressing him impersonally in English, as though thinking aloud.

"What's to become of you, when we go, old chap—that's what's bothering me now."

The German's shoulders moved slightly.

"Oh, that's all very well, but I can't leave you up here to rot, my cousin. No one knows the way to the Crag of the Thorwald. You might be here a thousand years if Lindberg shouldn't come."

Von Winden made no sign. It was obvious that he had no further intention of helping in the solution of the difficulty.

"Let me stay here with him, Cyril," Doris was pleading again. "It can do me no harm, and when you are well on your way, I will release him and go back to Blaufelden."

"I can't take that chance. You're going with me."

"Where?"

"To England."

"But how?"

"Leave that to me. At present we must have breakfast. Do you know it's almost ten o'clock?"

Bewildered, she watched him go to the large tin

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box in the corner of the cavern, from which he brought forth some dry salt biscuit and several pieces of chocolate.

"It isn't much, but it's the best I can do. There's tea, too, but I don't dare light the fire."

She ate, slowly at first, for the food seemed to choke her, but she recalled the fact that except for two pieces of toast and the chocolate of von Stromberg she had eaten nothing since yesterday morning. Cyril, who never seemed at a loss for anything, produced a metal pitcher and going outside the cave for a moment returned with it full of water.

"Lindberg's," he said in reply to her question. "His food, too. Good old Lindberg."

He frowned and then went over to the prisoner.

"You needn't tell me if you don't care to, Udo, but I'd like to know how Lindberg is. Will you answer me?"

Von Winden nodded.

"He is able to be about?"

He nodded again.

"Did His Excellency suspect?"

He shook his head.

"Thank God. Then Lindberg is at liberty?"

Udo replied in the affirmative.

Hammersley gave a gasp of relief.

"That is well. I need not worry. He will come and release you."

Von Winden only frowned.

"Listen, Udo," went on Hammersley quickly, "Fräulein Mather and I are going down from here, leaving you alone. It can't be helped. You've stumbled up here and you've got to take your chance. In time you may wear the strings through against a

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rock. If you don't return to Blaufelden by tomorrow, Lindberg will find you."

"But suppose anything happened to Lindberg," Doris was whispering. "Ah, Cyril, it would be terrible to leave him here. I should dream of it every night of my life."

Udo's eyes smiled at her.

"There is little danger. Graf von Winden is not a man to be so easily beaten. He will get away by tonight. But in the meanwhile we will have gone far enough to be out of his reach."

"Where are we going?"

"To England, child—in the Yellow Dove," he laughed.

Doris started away from him, her eyes suddenly brilliant with excitement, and the prisoner, who had lain without movement, showed sudden signs of activity, his eyes frowning and his head wagging in anxiety.

"He wants to speak," said Doris.

Hammersley bent over his cousin.

"Will you promise not to shout?"

Von Winden nodded quickly. So Hammersley untied the bandages that held the handkerchief in the prisoner's mouth and helped him to a sitting posture.

"You must not go," he stammered quickly in German. "It is impossible. You will fail. I warn you."

"Why do you think so?"

"The machines are guarded, and the spark-plugs of your Taube have been removed and hidden."

"H'm," said Hammersley thoughtfully. "Excellenz neglects nothing."

"You would go to your death."

"Perhaps. Thanks for the warning," said Hammersley bluntly. "I'm going just the same."

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Von Winden looked at him in amazement. "You do not believe me?" he asked. "It is the truth, I tell you."

"I shall find a way."

"But there is no way. You think that I am trying to persuade you to escape by the mountains so that you may be captured with the papers?"

"Yes. I could not escape that way now. You know it."

"Perhaps not, but what you plan is insane."

"Fortune favors the fool. I've made up my mind."

"Then you deserve to be shot," said Udo. "In the forest at least you would have a chance—*Ach—!*" He gave a guttural exclamation and then: "Bind me and leave me then—quickly. It's good-by."

"Good-by, Udo," said Hammersley with a smile. "We'll meet again, when Hesse-Nassau is an English province."

"Bah, Cyril," said von Winden. "I have always said that you were a fool."

Hammersley replaced the gag and bound it into place with great care, smiling the while. Then he removed the belt which contained his cousin's supply of cartridges and fastened it around his own body above Lindberg's, loading the two weapons with care and placing them in their holsters.

Doris watched these preparations anxiously, but Hammersley made her eat her fill of chocolate and biscuits and when they had finished, he went to the corner of the cavern and brought forth a large and heavy parcel which he put on the table and opened. Doris saw that Captain von Winden was straightening on the couch trying to see what it contained. Hammersley did not even glance in his direction. He seemed

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to know by instinct that Udo's curiosity had gotten the better of his dignity. He opened the package deliberately and spread the contents out upon the table.

"Spare parts of the Taube, Udo. I've had them here for weeks. I'll let you have a peep at 'em if you like. A socket-wrench, spark-plugs, bolts, nuts and wire—by Jove—we might have used that on Udo."

"You are afraid that what he says is true," whispered Doris anxiously. "Von Stromberg is prepared for you."

"I wonder," he said.

CHAPTER XXI

HARE AND HOUNDS

FOR two hours or more, Hammersley and the girl, taking turn and turn, watched the road and forest from the amphitheater of rocks. The road in times of peace was a short route from Windenberg to Schöndorf and popular with the market-folk. But the restrictions put upon visits to Blaufelden had resulted in the diversion of traffic from the south slope of the mountains to the longer road in the valley upon the other side. The few who appeared were men in uniform. From his lofty perch Hammersley espied Captain Wentz as he hurried by with several men in an automobile. Just beyond the crag the automobile was stopped and the men dismounted and went on afoot. Clearly they meant to continue the search abroad. Hammersley chuckled.

“Hare and hounds!” he muttered to himself. “The more men to the eastward, the fewer to the west. By Jove!”

The expletive was not unusual with Hammersley but the manner of its utterance gave it importance. He crossed the level quickly and peered again at the vanishing figures of the men. A new idea had been born. Hare and hounds! A game he had played at Eton—a game as old as sport, as old as hunting! And for such a prize!

He hurried into the cave, glancing hurriedly at his watch. It was noon. Doris sat upon the stool near

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Udo von Winden. Hammersley went over to their captive and examined his bonds and then gave the girl a few hasty instructions.

"I am going down below to be gone two—perhaps three hours."

A quick intake of the breath escaped her but she caught her under lip in her teeth and said nothing.

"Don't worry," he went on cheerfully, "I'm coming back. I'll promise you that. I've got a plan," he whispered, "a new plan, a noble plan, a plan that will make our game an easy one. It will be harder for you than for me, Doris, because you've only got to sit and wait and try to be patient."

While he was talking he had taken off the belts that contained the two pistols, fastening one around Doris. Then he took off his leather jacket and put it on the table, fastening the other belt containing Udo's cartridges and automatic over his gray sweater. She watched him timidly.

"But suppose Graf von Winden should get his arms free," she protested. "I cannot shoot him, Cyril—I cannot—not that——"

"He won't trouble you. I'll arrange that." He took from his coat pocket the documents captured from the Emperor's messenger and held them up so that Udo von Winden could see them.

"I must leave you for a while, Udo. Awfully sorry, but it's most urgent." He laughed. "You won't mind, will you? Or try to make things difficult?"

He turned quickly and while both the girl and the prisoner wondered what he was about to do, he went to the tin box in the corner, brought out a new candle, lighted it and held the papers so that the prisoner could see them.

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“Do you observe what I am doing, Udo? Miss Mather will sit here upon the opposite side of the cave. If you attempt to get up from your bed, she will burn the papers. Simple, isn't it? Also quite effective. She doesn't want to shoot you, Udo—nor do I. And of course if the papers were burned, it wouldn't hurt England a great deal. As long as the papers are in Germany, my capture may throw them into German hands, *nicht wahr?*”

Udo von Winden's head moved slightly from left to right.

With an *auf wiedersehen* thrown over his shoulder at Udo, Hammersley went outside the cave, where Doris followed him. She was on the point of tears, but she succeeded in a smile.

“Don't worry, Doris, old girl. Just going down for a stroll about.”

“But why, Cyril?”

“Goin' to throw 'em off the scent,” he whispered.

“But they're already off the scent.”

For answer he kissed her gently and bade her keep up her courage. Then he gave her the papers, saw her inside the cave again and in a moment was gone.

The more Hammersley thought of his plan the better it seemed to him. The day was still young. In three hours he could do much. He crossed the amphitheater of rocks and followed the rocky gorge by which he had entered last night and when he emerged upon the farther side, paused and watched for a while to be sure that Wentz and his men were not in sight and then descended the face of the rocks skillfully and in a moment was creeping on all fours through the underbrush up the side of the mountain. It was steep here and rugged, but in a while he reached the old

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deer trail over which he had passed when he had doubled on his pursuers last night. But instead of following it, he halted a moment to listen and then crossed into the undergrowth which at this point was so thick that at twenty paces even he was not visible. He slipped among the tree-trunks and evergreens, moving rapidly, making a wide circle up the mountainside almost to its top, descending then by easy stages, until he had covered four miles at least when he bore slowly down toward the Schöndorf road.

Hare and hounds! An exciting game even in the old days when it meant athletic honors, but now, with the alternatives of death as the penalty of capture and a great triumph as the reward of escape, it made his blood run madly. A good game—a fair game, with success as the reward of intelligence.

He planned carefully. He must be sure to come down into the open at a spot beyond where Wentz and his men were searching. He knew the country well. There was a village on the hillside, half a mile below. It was midway between Schöndorf and the farm house at Blaufelden. The families of some of the foresters lived there and there was telephonic connection both with the farm and Windenberg. All of the men of Mittelwald who were not in the Forest Service were off at the front and the chances were that unless Wentz and his men were there, Hammersley would see only women and children. But he knew that von Stromberg had neglected nothing that would give an inkling of his whereabouts and his presence would be at once reported and the chase begin. He was in excellent condition, trained a little too fine perhaps for an Englishman, but fit. He had done little running since leaving the University, and though he had lost some of his old

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speed, he could rely upon the thought of his danger and Doris's to provide the incentive for extraordinary effort.

Mittelwald lay in a clearing similar to that at Blaufelden, and its farms, if farms they could be called, clambered up the hillside and straggled over beyond the road where they were merged into the undergrowth of young oaks. The Schöndorf road, curving this way and that, passed between the houses, which were set at irregular intervals, like the strips on the tail of a kite. He went on through the underbrush, coming out into the open upon the road at the point where it entered the woods upon the Schöndorf side. Then he settled his automatic loosely in its sheath, and went forward boldly. His eye had marked the line of the telephone wire and followed it to the gable of one of the largest houses in the village. It was to this house that he made his way. A young woman was working in the garden and he approached her quietly and politely, but with an air of a man not to be trifled with, asked for food. He was aware that he was unshorn, covered with mud, and that his face was streaked with dirt and perspiration, but he knew that his appearance alone could not have accounted for the sudden blanching of the woman's face and the air of alarm with which she regarded him. She straightened and fell back two or three paces toward the house, unable to speak a word in reply. So he repeated his request, while her mouth gaped at him and her eyes grew rounder. At last she managed to stammer,

"Food! You are hungry?"

"Yes. Potato bread—anything, but quickly. I will go with you to the house." And he indicated the way.

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She stumbled on before him, her head jerking anxiously this way and that over her shoulder as though she feared at any moment to receive a blow or a shot in the back. But he followed her indoors and noted with satisfaction that she appeared after all to be a woman of some intelligence. A thing that pleased him further was the telephone instrument in the corner.

"Milk, if you please, and quickly. I will take the bread with me." And while she timorously brought them out, "Who lives here?"

"F-Förster Habermehl."

"Where is he?" peremptorily.

"At Windenberg."

"Oh! There are no men here?"

"No."

"That is well, then." He drank a glass of milk greedily and tore off a piece of the loaf. "You are a good girl. Heaven will reward you." He made his way to the door, looking out cautiously, and then turned and put his hand in his pocket, bringing out a piece of money. "See," he laughed, "I have concluded to reward you myself. Cash. Much better than hopes, *nicht wahr?*"

She fetched a timorous smile and bobbed shyly.

"You will do me a favor," he said in a whisper as he went out of the door, "if you will tell no one of my visit."

And with that, chuckling to himself, went down the road again in the direction of Schöndorf, watching the turn in the road below the village for a glimpse of Wentz and his men. Before he reached the edge of the open country he paused and listened. From the house that he had visited came the faint tinkle of a bell. Frau Habermehl had lost no time. She had notified

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the master of the hounds who was clamoring for the scent.

Hammersley walked around the turn in the road, which hid him from the house, and then went into the bushes where he sat on a fallen log, peeping through the leaves toward the further side of the clearing, where General von Stromberg's men must appear. He did not know how long he would have to wait. Half an hour, perhaps longer. If he knew anything of von Stromberg, they would come in every sort of available vehicle, from a high-powered machine to a donkey cart, picking up the misguided Wentz and his men upon the way to follow this new scent. It was difficult to sit still and wait. Hammersley wanted a smoke awfully, but he chewed a twig instead, for he needed to keep his wind in good condition and had purposely left his pipe at the Thorwald. He did not want to get too far away from Doris. By the way he intended to return he was now at least six miles from the cavern and with the mile or so he must go toward Schöndorf before he turned, a good eight miles of rough going lay between himself and safety.

Under other circumstances, he would have greatly enjoyed the chance for a rest. With a cooler wind from the northeast the weather had cleared and the period of higher temperatures through which they had passed seemed to be drawing to a close. In spite of the doubts that hung about his plan, he couldn't help saying to himself that he felt jolly fit.

Twenty minutes—twenty-five. He got up and stretched his long limbs luxuriously. The hare was ready. It was time they cast forward the hounds. A peep through the bushes showed him Frau Habermehl standing near her home watching the road to Winden-

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berg. So he came out of his place of concealment and stood in the open again until he was sure that she saw him, when he turned and went slowly toward Schöndorf. He had planned his moment nicely for before he was out of sight of the clearing, an automobile came into view—paused a moment before Frau Habermehl and then came on rapidly.

Hammersley waited until they had “viewed” him and then cut into the woods to his left, slipping from tree to tree not fifty yards in the cover when the machine came to a stop and the men jumped down and came after him. He did not know who was in command and did not care, but just to show them that he was the man they were after, he risked a shot with his automatic and then sped along rapidly, working up the mountainside, following in a general way the direction of Schöndorf. He heard them plunging after him in full cry and the sound of their footsteps made him move at a rare pace. He knew well this piece of woods, and in a moment came to a path which curved to the right, leading straight up the mountain. When he reached it he paused to look over his shoulder. It was difficult to see the green uniforms, but there was a flash of light from a patch of fir trees and a twig just above his head fell across his path. His curiosity was satisfied. He shut his mouth and, breathing through his nostrils, went off with a burst of speed which put him around a turn in the path before any of the green uniforms had come into sight. He had them coming now, two—three men—one little one and two big ones. He caught a glimpse of them in a moment when the path came into a glade of rocks and barrens. There was his danger. A chance shot might get him when they emerged, before he found the cover again. But

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leaping from rock to rock he managed to reach the path upon the other side, and their shots went wild.

When he reached cover he halted a moment for a breath, firing a shot in the direction of the advancing men, who promptly dropped to cover. And when they came on again, he had gained a clear lead of a hundred yards or more.

He had foreseen his greatest danger—of being caught in thick underbrush and surrounded—so he kept to the main path, only leaving it for a smaller and more tortuous one, when the other turned down the mountain toward the road again. Since the exchange of shots his pursuers had become more cautious and when they reached the fork of the paths they stopped, sweating in their heavy coats and cursing lustily, while they debated upon the question as to which path he had taken. The hounds were at fault. From a point above, he could see them quite clearly and one of them was the Fatalist who had been his jailor last evening. Just to discover whether he was sincere in his philosophy, Hammersley sent a bullet skipping above his head. He ducked and Hammersley laughed.

“Silly ass!” he muttered. “Fatalist! Fatality if I’d aimed at him!”

And he was off again, for other men had joined the leaders and the scent was hot. He carried them fast, up to the bald top of the mountain where the going was faster, and down in the valley to the right. They had gained nothing on him and Hammersley with his second wind was breathing more easily, but it was almost time to double. Here was as good a place as another for the pack of them to spend the afternoon and he made up his mind to lose them without further ado. There was only one runner in the lot and he was the Fatalist,

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though how he had ever happened to learn to run in the Imperial Navy, Hammersley had not the time or inclination to decide. If his philosophy limped, his legs at least were strong and he came on rapidly leaping like a young buck toward the opening over the crest of the knob into which Hammersley had disappeared. A short way down was a spur of rock, the beginnings of a ridge which cut out into the hills, the watershed of two rills which leaped from rock to rock to the valleys below. Hammersley chose the right-hand valley for the going was better, and went down it at top speed for a quarter of a mile or more, pausing where the path led into the underbrush and pines until the Fatalist should view him when he disappeared, and then turning into the thicket circled quickly to the left, and taking advantage of every cover, slowly and carefully climbed the ridge to a place of vantage where he crouched and waited, to have the satisfaction a moment later of seeing his ex-jailor, weapon in hand, go plunging down the path past his place of concealment.

Hammersley listened a moment to the sounds of crashing feet in front of him and behind, and then, creeping slowly and making what speed he could, crossed the ridge and in a while was out of sight and hearing of them. He feared little in crossing the other valley, for his pursuers were strung out in a line, each in sight of the other, and would follow the leader like a flock of sheep. But there was little time to waste and the greatest test of Hammersley's endurance and Doris's was to come. For two, perhaps three hours, these men would search for him, and more would come. The Fatalist would bear the brunt of their failure, but in the meanwhile Hammersley must reach the cave in

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the Thorwald and take Doris to Blaufelden. The first part of the return run must be done at top speed to save time which would be needed later. So when he crossed the second valley in safety and had reached the mountaintop, Hammersley abandoned all caution, risking the chance of meeting Wentz and his men, and with a sharp lookout ahead of him went as fast as he could along the ridge, finding at last the trail by which he had come earlier in the day, down which he ran with a long stride which covered the four miles in less than half an hour. He reached the upper passage to the cave in safety and in a moment was safe behind the projecting boulders of the amphitheater. He was breathing heavily, and the sweat was pouring from him. Doris was watching for him.

"They're following you? They're coming?" she asked nervously.

He quieted her and led her inside the cave, where he dropped for a moment of rest upon the stool. Doris watched him anxiously. In a moment he was laughing.

"Oh, I led 'em a rippin' run straight for Schöndorf," he gasped. "They're pattin' me out—six miles from here—on the top of the Schmalzberg. Lord!" he grinned, "but that was a breather."

She brought him the pitcher of water but he only rinsed his mouth.

"How are you feelin'? Fit?"

She nodded.

"Right-o. Come along. We're off."

He went over to the prisoner and examined his bonds carefully.

"Poor old Udo!" he muttered in German. "I've got to go. You might worry through those strings. It's the only way, because I'm not leaving any matches."

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He leaned over and patted his cousin on the shoulder. "Good-by, Udo," he said. "We'll meet again, some day, as friends, my cousin—as friends."

Von Winden's eyes met Hammersley's and then he lowered his head upon the balsam boughs.

There was no time for amenities. Hammersley slipped on his leather jacket and cap, fastening his belt outside, reloaded his automatic, filled the pockets of Doris's coat with biscuit and chocolate, then made a bundle of the tools and spare parts, which he selected carefully, and in a moment he and Doris were outside on the ridge, peering over toward the road below. All was quiet, and they descended carefully to the projecting rock, pausing there to listen again. The machine of Wentz, which had been left near the crag, had gone on toward Mittelwald. Hammersley smiled. The plan had worked. It was working. They *must* succeed.

Down in the bushes at the foot of the crag by the road they paused again, listening, and then Hammersley went forward, peering out, up and down the road. Silence. Solitude. Leading the way, with the hand of the girl in his, he quickly crossed and plunged into the undergrowth silently until they had reached a distance which would defy detection from the road. Then Hammersley bore to the right and went on rapidly.

Doris's heart was beating high with excitement and hope. The Yellow Dove! Could they reach the hangar safely, and when there could they tune up undetected? The success of the venture seemed impossible for there must still be men on guard at Blaufelden—someone! But as they went on through the wood, she found some of the contagion of Cyril's audacity. He

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seemed tireless. When they reached a trail which led in the desired direction, without speaking to her, he set forward into a steady jog trot which put them well upon their way. He turned around from time to time and watched her, and when he saw that she was nearly blown he slowed down to a walk and explained his plan.

“Jolly flyin’ weather this. Once we’re in the air they can’t stop us, Doris. She’s armored around the cockpit and engines, and they haven’t anything heavier than a rifle at Blaufelden. We’ll go up the Rhine to the sea, flyin’ high. Then cut to the left along the coast, as far as the French line, and then go in to Ypres and from there to General French’s headquarters. You can easily tell by the lines of trenches. I want you to listen carefully. I’ve got two seats and double control. The arrangement is just the same as on your Nieuport, only she answers her control much more slowly. The wheel is on a universal joint; the gas, on your wheel, the spark to your left, the magneto, a button in front of you. She starts by compressed air.”

“But the exhaust, Cyril,” she gasped, “before we go—it’s only a few hundred yards from the shed to the house!”

“We’re going to risk that. With luck we’ll be movin’ in three minutes, and then——” He paused grimly.

“And then——?”

“I’d like to see a dozen stop us.”

He had such perfect assurance that all doubt left her. Indeed, to Doris, he seemed endowed with some hidden fount of initiative and inspiration, and she was willing to believe anything he told her. They went on rapidly, while he answered all her questions and gave

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her final instructions, until at last they reached a path, the same, he told her, by which they had come from the farm last night. They started up a frightened deer, which fled away from them, but they didn't pause until the path cut sharply to the right and through the bushes they could see the buildings of Blaufelden. There they stopped and Hammersley went forward to investigate.

In the direction of the farmhouse was no sign of animation except the thread of smoke that rose from the kitchen chimney. The back of the hangar was just in front of them, a bare wall of wood, a hundred and fifty feet long. The opening was upon the other side, to the west, a huge canvas flap, toggled at the bottom to rings in the sill. Hammersley came back and whispered to Doris to follow him. Until the starting of the engine, this was the most hazardous part of the proceeding, for, if they were seen from the house, there would be no time for Hammersley to put the engines in order. He led her south to a point in the woods where the storehouse hid them from the main buildings, when, crouching low to avoid possible detection from the Windenberg road, they covered the fifty yards to the storehouse and waited again, completely hidden from all points except the forest behind them, while Cyril looked around the edge of the building, and then beckoned to her to follow. In a moment they had slipped between the end of the canvas flap and the door, and were within the dusky interior of the shed.

Before them stretched the wide expanse of the Yellow Dove, a huge biplane with a spread, as nearly as Doris could figure it, of a hundred and twenty feet from tip to tip. She stood before it in wonder and awe, admiring its fine lines and sturdy appearance. A

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dragon-fly her Nieuport was beside this great eagle of the air. The other machine, an Etrich monoplane, which was used by Udo von Winden, seemed lost in the shadows of the larger wings. Doris stood quite still, as Cyril had directed, while he moved off noiselessly in the dim light. She saw him slipping from one spot to another, quickly examining this and that, and at last saw him climb up into the machine with his kit of tools. She came nearer as he whispered down to her:

"They've taken out some plugs. I'll have 'em in shortly." And then: "Go around the lower plane and tell me if the guys are all taut."

She did as he asked, while she heard him above working over the engines.

"How long will it take?" she whispered.

"I can't tell—twenty minutes, perhaps. The petrol tanks are empty, too."

"I want to help."

"Are the wires all fast?"

"Yes."

"Good. Then bring me the hose from the petrol tank. It's there beside you in the corner. You can run it in while I'm workin'."

She did as she was bid, climbing up with a feeling of exultation into the tall machine beside him.

"The reserve tank first—" he whispered. "Up here between the planes. Here's a wrench. The opening is on the top."

They worked side by side, noiselessly and efficiently, Hammersley fitting the missing spark-plugs and connecting a new coil wire which had been removed. He looked over the machine carefully, but could find nothing else missing, or even needing adjustment, for he

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had taken care yesterday morning, as was his custom, to go over the engine with his own hands. The impairment of the engine was of no serious consequence, and intended only to delay. Von Stromberg had not counted on such a chance for readjustment as this, or upon Hammersley's reserve supply of necessary material. And unless they had done something else that he could not discover—but what? While he worked Hammersley tried to think, casting between times anxious glances at the gears, the propellers and the control wires. The reserve tank of petrol was filled and the hose was steadily pouring the stuff into the one under the forward cockpit, which was full by the time the plugs and wires were all adjusted.

“That will be enough, Doris,” he whispered. “We only need to get to the English lines. There's no time for more.”

She saw him try the wheel, watching the connecting gear keenly, and, when he ordered it, she climbed down into the rear seat. He gave her a leather coat, gloves and helmet, and buckled her into her seat. Then, in a state of nervous tension, they waited. She saw Cyril climb down, coolly wiping his hands with a piece of waste, restore the hose to its place, and then peer out from a slit in the canvas door. Then he bent over, and running quickly along the flap from side to side, one after another quickly unfastened the toggles which held it in place.

“We've got to chance it now,” he whispered up to her. “If she doesn't work—God help us——”

“But the canvas——”

“The machine will——”

He stopped abruptly, for Doris's eyes were staring in panic at something behind him. Hammersley whirled

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quickly toward the slit in the canvas, his automatic in his hand. There, not four paces away, blinking into the dusk, stood the tall figure of His Excellency, General Graf von Stromberg.

CHAPTER XXII

FROM THE HEIGHTS

HAMMERSLEY had him covered, and the General made no move to defend himself. He bent his head and folded his arms, peering into Hammersley's eyes like a short-sighted man trying to adjust his vision to an unaccustomed task. But his frown relaxed almost immediately and his lips separated, showing a gleam of teeth.

"My compliments, Herr Hammersley," he said. "You have done well. It pleases me to meet at last——"

"Move your right hand again the fraction of an inch and I will shoot, Excellenz," said Hammersley, in the sharp, quick accents of a resolute man.

Von Stromberg only smiled more broadly. But he did not move. He had seen enough of Herr Hammersley to respect his sincerity.

"I have staked my professional reputation upon your presence elsewhere, Herr Hammersley. Instinct, perhaps, led me here. I do not know what else. But I came alone. I am not armed."

Hammersley was in no mood for trifling and time was flying. Better to shoot the man and be done with it, but he couldn't, somehow. Instead he searched him quickly for weapons.

"You're too late, Excellenz. I am sorry, but I have no time for conversation."

"You will at least let me pay you the compliment of

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saying that the Prussian blood in you has made you the most brilliant Englishman I have ever met."

"I have no time to match phrases with you——"

"*Ach*, but you match what is much more important—a genius for dissimulation. Yesterday you disappointed me, Herr Hammersley, with your talk of plans—of fortifications—of Strassburg. I had been hoping that you were playing a deeper game, something that would relieve the flat monotony of my routine. You were to save me from utter boredom. It is true. I had hoped that. I was disappointed when I thought that you were like the others. Disappointed! I should have known——"

"And now that I have the papers—what are you going to do about it?" asked Hammersley with a touch of bravado.

Von Stromberg shrugged.

"I confess that I am so rapt in admiration of your genius that I am at a loss—I must yield to the inevitable. But I am happy in the knowledge that only a person of the skill of Herr Hammersley could have succeeded in outwitting the head of the Secret Service Department of the Empire."

"Enough of this!" Hammersley broke in. "I should kill you, General von Stromberg, but I won't if you obey me promptly. Stand aside—over there—against the wall. If you move, I'll shoot. I'm going out of here."

Von Stromberg did as he was bidden, and his long strides and erect carriage had lost none of their dignity. When he reached the wall he turned with a smile. Then he said suavely:

"I fear, Herr Hammersley, that you will not go forth as rapidly as you like."

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Hammersley only laughed at him.

"We'll see about that." He took a stride to the canvas curtain and had a quick look outside. And then to the girl: "Crank her, Doris! The compressed air—the button to the left beside the wheel!"

There was a long pause when Doris reached forward in her seat. A pause filled with meanings for Hammersley, in which his fate and hers, was hanging in the balance. Von Stromberg seemed to read his thoughts, and the wolfish smile spread again over his face.

"It is just possible," he said blandly, "that someone may have been tinkering with the machinery."

There was another long silence—a moment of agony for Hammersley.

"Yes, *I* have," roared Hammersley exultantly.

For just then there was a violent explosion, deafening in the enclosed space, like the roar of a giant cracker would have been—another—and then more rapidly another, followed by a number of concussions, like a pack of giant crackers catching intermittently and then in quick succession.

General von Stromberg's smile faded—then vanished in a look of inefficacy and dismay. He was senile. Hammersley's grin derided him. Speech was impossible, but the muzzle of the automatic was as eloquent as before. One more explosion or six, for that matter, would add little to the din. Von Stromberg's life hung by a hair at that moment and he knew it. Still covering His Excellency, who was now glancing at the slit in the curtain beside him, Hammersley climbed up to the seat in front of Doris in the cockpit of the machine. And just as he was putting a leg over, His Excellency took a quick glance upward, which had in it a world of expression—and bolted.

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Hammersley's shot must have missed. He looked around at Doris and laughed, and she saw the light of triumph that rode in his eyes. The exhaust was roaring steadily now, but with one hand on the wheel and in the other his automatic, Hammersley sat motionless, watching the slits in the canvas for the men that he knew must come in a moment. At a gesture of his, Doris sank low in the cockpit, her hands on the wheel, watching, too, and ready to do her share as Cyril had directed. One—two minutes passed—she seemed to be counting the seconds. The body of the machine was trembling as though with the excitement of the moment and the explosions had blended into one continuous roar. Cyril threw the clutch in and the note lowered as the propellers began to whirr. The huge fabric jumped forward, gathering momentum as it went, until by the time it reached the canvas curtain in front of it, it was going as fast as a man would run. The weight of the heavy flap retarded it for a moment, but it went steadily on, and the canvas was pushed outward—then rose—it seemed to Doris like the curtain on a melodrama. Men were running up, shooting as they ran. They clutched at the toggles and swung off their feet, falling in a heap upon the ground. She saw a man, the only one not in uniform, take hold of the lower plane and try to stop the momentum. It was John Rizzio. She saw his face for a second, dark, handsome, smiling. Cyril rose in his seat and their weapons streamed fire. Rizzio moved backward with the machine, still clinging to the lower plane, and then disappeared, passing under it, just where the blades of the right-hand propeller were.

A slight shock and a shapeless mass went rolling over and over until it brought up motionless against

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the jamb of the door. Two other men, Foresters, warned by Rizzio's fate, sprang aside with horror in their eyes. Doris sank lower in her seat, her cheeks bloodless, grasping her wheel with icy hands, filled with horror. Cyril had sunk down in his seat, clutching at the side of the cockpit, his weapon falling from his fingers. With an effort she steadied her hold on the wheel. The canvas curtain had passed over their heads. They were in the open. To the right, coming from the Windenberg road, a machine filled with men was dashing across the field before them at a diagonal which would intercept them. She heard shots near at hand. Cyril did not move. She had a glimpse of General von Stromberg, who had snatched a pistol from the hand of the nearest soldier and fired.

They were moving fast. But the automobile in the field before them seemed to be moving faster—Captain Wentz and four men! She saw Cyril's hand rise in front of her, pointing to the left to avoid them, but Wentz came on. The Yellow Dove was still running on its wheels. She saw the danger. Wentz was aiming at a collision. She pulled her wheel toward her instinctively and the Yellow Dove rose, skimming the ground. She felt it lifting, slowly, now rapidly. The automobile seemed about to strike them. Another jerk on the wheel and the skids of the Yellow Dove just grazed the wind-shield of the machine, and a soldier leaped into the air, trying to catch a hold, missed and tumbled to the ground. In the car men were shouting like demons, and a volley of pistol bullets pierced the planes. She felt them strike the armored body, but she sank lower, clutching her wheel.

Clear? They must be. A second of agonized suspense and she saw Cyril turn his head and look down

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behind them. His face was white but his eye flashed triumph. His lips moved, but she heard nothing. Safe? They must be. The Yellow Dove, mounting easily, had cleared the trees at the border of the farm and before the eyes of the girl stretched only undulating surfaces of gray and green.

In front of her Cyril lay back in his seat. His hands clutched the sides of the cockpit. O God! She had not been sure before what his sudden lassitude had meant. He had been hit! John Rizzio! He turned around and smiled at her and one hand, stretched before him, pointed up and to the right. Her throat closed and her heart seemed to stop its beating and the Dove for a moment swung and tossed like a drunken thing, but with an effort she inclined her wheel and met it. Cyril again raised his fingers and pointed upwards. Higher! She tipped the wheel further toward her. His gesture was like an appeal to Heaven—a symbol of his faith in her and in the God of both. She set her lips and obeyed. Broken and helpless—perhaps dying, he was putting his faith in her. She must not fail him now.

She kept her gaze before her over Cyril's head, trying to gain strength for what she had to do, thinking that she was in England—at Ashwater Park—and that the wheel she held was that of her own little Nieuport. There seemed to be little difference between them, except that the Yellow Dove was easier to manage. It responded to the slightest touch, and had a magnificent steadiness that reassured Doris as to her ability to do the thing that was required of her.

The mountains had fallen below them and the horizon had widened until it blurred into the haze of the distance. She looked down on what seemed to her a

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plain of purple velvet touched with lighter patches of orange and violet. Before her the sun was setting blood red in a sea of amber. She mounted above it into the clear empyrean of azure, higher—higher yet. She felt the exhilaration of large spaces, the joy of conquest over all material things. Death even did not dismay her—Cyril's—her own. She seemed to have crossed at a bound, from the realm of substance into that of immateriality. Her soul already sang in accord with the angels. They were mated. She and Cyril—mated! And even Death should not separate them.

Dusk fell slowly below them, like a black giant striding across the face of the earth, but all was still bright and clear about her. The red ball of the sun would not set. She was going upward—upward into the realm of continuous and perfect day. Below her a thread of silk, thrown carelessly upon a purple carpet. The Rhine! She saw Cyril's hand come up and move feebly to the right. She turned slowly and followed its direction. The Rhine—she remembered Cyril's words back there in the woods. She must follow the Rhine to the sea and then turn to the westward along the coast. She would do it. She must.

Cyril was hurt—but perhaps not badly. His gestures reassured her. He moved his hand in a level line in front of him and she understood. They had mounted high enough. The barograph showed four thousand feet. She brought the wheel up to normal and held it there. The wind burned her cheeks and she knew from the changes in the river below her that the speed of the Yellow Dove was terrific—ninety miles—a hundred—a hundred and twenty—an hour—perhaps much more—she did not know. The speed got into her

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blood. Faster, faster, was the song her pulses sung. She was a part of the Yellow Dove now, and it was a part of herself. Its wings were her wings and its instinct was in her own fingertips.

Night fell slowly, a luminous night full of stars. She seemed to be hanging among them—to be one of them—watching the earth pass under her. Two of them gleamed like St. Elmo's lights at the tips of the planes. The sky was clear and bright, of a deep bluish purple, like the skies she remembered high up on the plains of the great West in her own country. The air was bitter cold upon her face and she blessed Cyril's foresight for the helmet, gloves and old leather jacket that he had put on her in the hangar. In front of her Cyril leaned slightly to one side and his right hand touched a button, throwing an electric light in a hood in front of the wheel upon the face of the compass and barograph. She glanced at them quickly—four thousand feet—the direction north-northwest. She longed to speak to him and shouted his name. But in the roar of the engines she could not hear her own voice.

He still sat up, the fingers of his right hand moving from time to time as he gave her the direction. She thanked God for that—he was alive—he would live until they reached Ypres. He *must* live. He *must*. She set her teeth upon the words and *willed* it, praying at last aloud with lips that screamed yet made no sound.

Below her moved the lights of a city. She did not know what it was. Cologne, perhaps. She had passed it yesterday morning in the train with John Rizzio. Yesterday! It seemed a year ago. Cologne—then Dusseldorf. The river was not difficult to follow. She

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lost it once and then moving at a lower altitude she found it quickly. But the old terror was gripping her now. Cyril! His fingers no longer moved directing her. He had sunk lower in his seat and his head had fallen back upon one side, his face upturned to the stars. Was he——?

She put the thought from her. It was impossible. She had prayed. Not that . . . He had only fainted from pain, from sickness. Not dead—she would not—could not believe it. She longed to reach forward—to let him feel her hand upon his neck—that he might know her pity and her pain. It almost seemed better that death should come to them both now than that he should die and not know the comforting touch of her hand. She leaned forward and one hand left the wheel, but she lost her touch of the air and the planes tipped drunkenly, threatening the destruction she courted.

The madness passed—and with its passing came a calm, ice-cold. She was no longer a sentient being. She was merely an instinct with wings, flying as the eagle flies straight for its goal. She kept her glance on the compass and followed the river. North-north-west. The silver thread had become a ribbon now, reflecting the starlight. She passed over other towns. She could see their lights, but her gaze was fixed most often on the distant horizon, where after a while she would find the sea.

A yellowish light, painting the under side of the plane above her head, bewildered her. She could not understand. It was like a reflection of a candle inside a tent. Low as it was, it blinded her eyes, accustomed to the soft light of the stars. There was a crash nearby, in the very air beside her it seemed, a blind-

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ing flash of light, and the Yellow Dove toppled sideways. Instinctively she caught it, turning as she went and rose higher—higher—as a bird flies at the sound of a shot below. She knew now what it meant—a searchlight! They were firing at her with the high-angle guns. She had come fast, but the wire from Windenberg had been faster. She put the light behind her and long arms of light still groped for her, but she rose still higher, five—six thousand feet her barograph told her. Below, to her right, a small thing, shaped like a dragon-fly, was spitting fire—to her left another, but she sank lower in her seat laughing at them. Something of Cyril's joyous bravado possessed her. She defied them, rising far above them—higher—seven thousand feet—eight, until she could see them no more.

North-northwest! She found her course again and flew on into the night. She had lost the river, but that did not matter now. She knew that after a time—an hour or more—she must come to the sea. And when all signs of danger were gone she went down again where she could more plainly see the earth. The moon had come up and bathed the scene below with its soft light, and far ahead of her she saw irregular streaks of pale gray against long lines of purplish black. The sea? She had lost all idea of time and distance. How far the sea was from Windenberg she did not know, and if she had known it, the passage of time was a blank to her—a continuous roar, the music of the spheres which took no thought of time or space. The flight had lasted but a minute—and an eternity.

To her left the gray streaks were nearer—west by north her compass said, and she steered for them. Soon she made out distinctly contours of large masses

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of gray against the black—water and land. The air was milder and she sniffed the salt. She went down to three thousand feet to get her bearings, ever watchful for the dragon-flies and ready to soar again at the first flash of a searchlight. She had already learned to avoid the planes where the lights were grouped—the colonies of glow-worms that here meant danger.

Had she crossed the Belgian line? She had been to Antwerp, to Brussels, and tried to remember what they had looked like on the map. There was water near Antwerp—she remembered that, inland bodies of water which led to the sea. Now she could see beyond the bodies of inland water to a wide expanse of gray beyond the dark—uninterrupted gray—the ocean! She bore to her left until her course was due west. A searchlight flashed upon her for a second and was gone. By the way the contours were changing she knew that her speed was terrific. And slowly but more and more certainly as she neared the sea, a problem presented itself—her goal! Where was it, and how to find it in the dark? Cyril had said that they must land back of Ypres. But where was Ypres? Beyond Ostend and inland—thirty—forty miles. She knew that much from the war maps that she had pored over with her father. But how to find it?

She was over the sea now. The Yellow Dove felt a new breeze and the wheel tugged under her hand, but the machine lifted at the touch and wheeled like a gull to speed down the coast. Ostend! The Kursaal! If she could get a sight of it! It was dangerous, but she must go lower—three—two hundred feet from the sea, where she might make out familiar profiles against the sky.

The waves rose to meet her, reflecting the starlight,

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and just below her to the left the surf rolled in lines of white upon the beach. Dunes, dunes interminably, with here and there a collection of huts. A dark shape moved in the water ahead of her, another—— Warships? Destroyers. She wheeled out to sea and flew above them, but before they had time even to get their searchlights ranged upon her, the danger was past. She would win now. The Yellow Dove was invincible.

A dark irregular mass ahead of her rose above the monotony of dunes, buildings, and a bulk she seemed to recognize—a round dome iridescent like a soap bubble in the moonlight. The Kursaal! Ostend! She was nearing her destination—the end of the German lines. Friends were near—Belgians, French, and English. Twenty—thirty miles beyond Ostend and then inland somewhere back of Ypres she would find the English. The English lines were thirty or forty miles long, she remembered. It should not be difficult to find them. She must be sure to go far enough—but not too far—not to where the French army joined the British forces. Cyril's papers must go to the English, to General French himself. He had said so.

She had no way of judging distance except by the passage of the minutes. At the speed she was flying she must turn inland in fifteen minutes. She had no watch and she tried counting the seconds. She had counted sixty—four times—when a battery hidden among the dunes along the shore opened fire on her. She was half a mile from shore, flying low, but the flash of light startled her and the shell burst beyond. She rose quickly, moving further out to sea, frightened, but still self-possessed. It would not do to fail now with the goal in sight.

The compass gave her course southwest by west.

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She counted again, guessing at the time she had lost, and then, making a wide spiral out to sea and rising to three thousand feet, she drove the Yellow Dove inland. Searchlights were turned on her and shots fired, but she went higher, trying to make out if she could the lines of the opposing armies. Red and yellow lights were displayed below to her left, and far to her right were tiny clusters of lights, but there seemed to be no order in their arrangement—no lines that she could distinguish even at this height. Her keen eyes, now inured to the darkness, made out a monoplane against the starlight ahead of her—but she swerved to the right, the greater power of the Yellow Dove enabling her to rise and elude it. She flew for what seemed ten or fifteen minutes, going steadily to the south and west, when she drove for a spot where there were no lights and then shut off the throttle and dove.

She knew that this was perhaps the greatest moment of her great adventure. A landing place in the dark in a country she did not know, where a church steeple, a telegraph wire, the limb of a tree, would bring her and her precious freight to disaster. With the sudden shutting off of the power, a silence that bewildered her, a silence broken only by the whirr of the wind against the planes. Her ears ached from the change of pressure in her swift descent. She eased her wheel back gently, trying to make out objects below. Dark patches—woods—to be avoided, the roof of a house—another—lights here and there, small, obscure, which she had not seen. She avoided them all, planing down in a spiral toward what seemed to be unobstructed space.

She breathed a prayer as the earth came up to meet her. Death——? Whatever came—Cyril, too. . . .

FROM THE HEIGHTS

She stared straight before her, feeling out the wind pressure on the planes, gliding as near the horizontal as she dared. An open field! Thank God! A gentle shock and the springs responded. The Yellow Dove rebounded slightly and ran along the ground smoothly upon its wheels—then stopped. She tried to get up, but could not. Her hands seemed fastened to the wheel. She heard the sound of men's voices shouting and saw lights, but she could not seem to make a sound. She was shivering violently, also laughing a little, but she had no sense of being cold. She seemed very weak somehow, and very helpless. And then, just as the lights grew brighter—they went out.

CHAPTER XXIII

HEADQUARTERS

A WOMAN!" she heard a man's voice say at her ear. She was lying upon the ground, and strange faces were bending over her. "Well, I'm damned!"

English!

"And the other?" she heard again. "Dead as a 'errin'!"

Doris sat up, staring at them wildly.

"Wait! There's a flutter 'ere yet." She heard the other man say. "Come, Bill. Let's have 'im over to the 'ouse."

Doris managed to find a whisper. "A surgeon—for *him*," she said to the man supporting her. "He will not die. He is only wounded."

It was her obsession. It would not leave her.

She saw them carrying Cyril toward the house, and when they wanted to take her, too, she said that she would walk. Though deathly weak, she managed to reach the house where they had carried Cyril. They gave her a drink of something and she revived.

It was a Red Cross station, they told her, and the doctor would be here in a moment. But in the meanwhile first aid was administered, and at her place at his bedside she saw Cyril struggling faintly back to life.

"He will not die," she repeated quietly when the surgeon had examined him gravely.

"I hope not—but he's bled a good deal. We'll see."

HEADQUARTERS

They cut away his coat and wanted to send her away, but she pleaded to remain and in a moment she heard Cyril's voice whispering hoarsely—"Papers—coat pocket—Sir John French."

"All right," said the surgeon cheerfully. "We'll see to that."

"Doris."

"Here, Cyril."

"Rippin' fine—of you—no mistake—old girl——"

His whisper trailed off into silence and at the surgeon's orders they led her away from his cot, but she would not leave the room until she got the papers out of the pocket of his jacket. An orderly led her to a young officer with his arm in a sling who sat at a table in another part of the building. He listened to her story attentively and read the documents carefully, his lips as he read emitting a thin whistle. He glanced at his watch and for a moment left the room.

"It is arranged. You shall go," he said when he came back. "A machine will be here in a moment." He paused, examining her doubtfully. She was spattered with grease and oil, but the pallor of her face beneath its grime showed that her strength was near its end. "Wouldn't you trust those dispatches to me? It's ten miles to headquarters and rough."

"No—no, I will go. I promised."

But he ordered some hot coffee and bread, and thus fortified, when the motor came around she was driven upon her way. The young officer sat beside her, eagerly listening, while she gave him a brief outline of their adventures.

"Amazin'!" he said from time to time. "Most amazin'!"

And then as she went on, he said quietly:

THE YELLOW DOVE

"You're goin' on your nerve, I think. Better save your strength until we get to headquarters. It isn't far now."

She tried to keep silent, but it seemed as though she must go on talking. That seemed to give her strength to complete her task, for when she sank back in her seat and tried to relax she only grew weak thinking of Cyril lying back there, hovering between life and death. And then she heard herself saying aloud, "He will not die. He has gone through too much to die now."

The man beside her glanced down at her and smiled gently.

"No, he isn't going to die. Bullets don't kill nowadays—unless they kill at once."

"Yes—yes," she assented. "That's it. If he had been going to die, he would have been dead now, wouldn't he?"

She laid her hand eagerly on the young officer's arm and he put his hand over hers.

"Palmerston is the best surgeon along this part of the line. He'll pull him through. Don't you worry."

"I won't—I'll try not to—you're awfully kind. Would you mind telling me your name?"

"Jackson. Second Leinster Dragoons. And yours?"

"Mather—Doris Mather. I—I don't want to forget your name. You've been very good to understand everything so perfectly."

"Oh, it's nothing. There are reasons—I'm on Headquarters Staff, you know."

That was one reason. But another one was that there was a girl at home just as much worried over his wound as Miss Mather was over Hammersley's.

They passed from the rough roads between gates into a smoother one which was bordered with poplars.

HEADQUARTERS

At the end in front of her she saw lights and reached a doorway, where an orderly opened the door of the machine and saluted her companion. Their arrival, it seemed, was expected. Captain Jackson took her by the arm and led her indoors, for her courage or her nerves seemed to be failing her again, down a quiet hall into a room where an officer with a gray mustache sat before a lighted lamp at a table covered with papers. She recognized him at once from the many portraits that had appeared in the weekly papers. He spoke to her and she tried to reply, but she could not. She seemed only to have strength enough to thrust the papers forward into his hand, when her knees gave way under her and she sank in a heap upon the floor.

Gentle hands lifted her and laid her upon a couch in the corner of the room. She tried to get up, but could not. She heard the voices of the officers in the room as from a great distance, and then a woman came and two men carried her upstairs and put her to bed. She realized that she was talking incoherently of Cyril, of the Yellow Dove. They gave her something to drink and her nerves grew mysteriously quiet. She seemed to be sailing smoothly through the air—higher, higher—Cyril's fingers were pointing upward. She was tipping the wheel toward her—ever toward her, and they rose higher. They had reached the region of continuous and perfect day. Cyril turned his head and looked at her, and then he smiled.

.

It was broad daylight when she awoke, for the sunshine was streaming in at the window. A woman sat near her, knitting. She was an old woman of many wrinkles, kindly wrinkles which seemed to vie with one another to express placidity. As Doris rose in her

THE YELLOW DOVE

bed the old woman rose, too, and came forward briskly, speaking in French.

“Ah, Mademoiselle is awake. *Bon*. She is feeling better?”

“Yes, better—but a little tired.” And then, as she realized where she was, “Could you tell me——? General French—could I see him?”

“All is well, mademoiselle. Monsieur le General—he is not here now. But he will be back after a while. He will see you, then, but first it is proper that you have breakfast and a bath. Mademoiselle needs a bath—I think.”

Doris glanced at her hand, which lay upon the white coverlid. It was black. “Yes, I will bathe. But first will you tell me——?”

The old woman smiled as she interrupted, “I was to tell you that Monsieur yonder is better. That is what Mademoiselle wished to know, is it not?”

Doris sank back upon her pillow in a silence which gave the full measure of her joy. Cyril would recover. She had been sure of it. She had told them last night. God was good.

The news gave her strength, and the coffee and eggs that were brought revived her rapidly. Her nerves still trembled in memory of what they had passed through, but when she was bathed and dressed in clean linen garments, much too large for her, a surgeon brought her medicine, and what was better than medicine, news that Cyril was conscious and was asking for her.

But they would not let her go to him. Tomorrow perhaps. Meanwhile the doctor would be glad to take a message. Doris colored gently. The message that she would have liked to send was not to be transmitted by this means.

HEADQUARTERS

"Tell him," she said at last quietly, "that I am well—and that I will see him when I have permission to do so."

The officer smiled, gave some directions to the old woman and went out.

It was not until late in the afternoon, when dressed in her own garments, which had been carefully cleansed and brushed by her nurse, that she was admitted to the office of the Field Marshal. She was shown into his room and he greeted her with unmistakable cordiality, offering her the chair next his own and congratulating her warmly upon the success of her achievement and Cyril's.

"You know," he asked quietly, "the contents of these documents?"

"Yes. Their importance made it necessary that I should."

"Then of course you realize the necessity for the utmost secrecy?"

"I do."

The General smiled at her and brought forward a copy of a recent issue of the *London Times*.

"Did you know that for the past three days England has actually stopped criticizing me to talk about you?"

"About *me*?" she asked.

"Yes, read," he said smiling, and she took the paper from him, skimming the headings of a news item he pointed out to her:

MISS MATHER STILL MISSING.

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR.

LADY HEATHCOTE TELLS STRANGE STORY.

JOHN RIZZIO, THE FAMOUS COLLECTOR, A GERMAN SPY.

THE YELLOW DOVE

And then in the news item below:

Allison Mather, of Ashwater Park, believing that his daughter is still alive, today offered a reward of five thousand pounds to anyone——

She stopped reading and put the paper down.

"Poor Daddy!" she whispered. "O Sir John, will you let him know——?"

"I have already done so, child. He knows that you are safe." And then with a laugh, "The five thousand pounds—I think are mine. I need a new hospital corps."

"Oh, he'll give it, I'm sure."

"You promise?"

"Yes."

He took her hand and rose in the act of dismissal. "We have supper at six. I hope you will be able to join us."

"But, General——" She paused at the door.

He smiled at her softly.

"If all goes well—you shall see him tomorrow."

She colored prettily. Everyone seemed to know, but she didn't care. The world, in spite of its terrors, was a garden of roses to Doris.

.

She did not see Cyril the next day or the one following. His temperature had risen, and while the danger of a relapse was not acute, they thought it safer that she be kept away. She had worried, fearing the worst, but the frankness of the head surgeon reassured her. The bullet had drilled through him, just scraping the lung. He would recover. But why take a chance of complication when all was going well? There was no

HEADQUARTERS

reply to that, so Doris waited at headquarters, thankful and trying to be patient, sending two penciled scrawls which were delivered to the wounded man.

It was not until three days later that she received word that she would be permitted to see him. His cot had been carried into a small room at the front of the building, and she entered it timidly, the nurse, with a smile and a glance at her watch, both of which were eloquent, withdrawing. He was propped up on pillows, and though pale from the loss of blood, greeted her with his old careless smile. She sank into the chair by the side of the bed and caught his hand to her lips.

"O Cyril," she murmured. "Cyril, I'm so glad. But I knew you wouldn't die—you couldn't after getting safely through everything else."

"Die! Well, hardly. I'm right as rain. Jolly close shootin' that of Rizzio's, though. Pity he had to go—that way."

She hid her face in her hands.

"Don't! Let's forget him." And then, "Have you suffered much?"

"No. The bally thing burns a bit now and then—but the worst of it is, they won't let a chap smoke."

She laughed and he caught her hand closer.

"How did you do it, Doris? How did you?" he questioned.

"I had to, Cyril," she said. "It wasn't anything—except knowing where to come down. That bothered me. I guessed at Ypres. The rest was luck."

"More than luck, old girl. Just courage and intelligence. I felt myself failin', up there, but I saw you knew your way about and then I—I seemed to go to sleep. Silly of me, wasn't it?"

THE YELLOW DOVE

"Silly! You fainted, Cyril."

"Rotten time to faint."

"You might have died up there. Once I thought you had died. Oh, that dreadful moment! I wanted to go, too—with you. I was a little mad, I think. I wanted to take you in my arms and go with you—down—down. My hands even left the wheel. The Yellow Dove toppled—but I caught her."

"Poor child!"

"After that I seemed to grow all cold with reason and skill. I forgot you. I looked beyond, over your poor head. I had to succeed, Cyril—that was all."

His hand pressed hers tenderly.

"You're the only girl in the world who could do it. I'm glad—proud——" He broke off. "My word, Doris! There's no use tryin' to tell you what I think of you. I'm no good at that sort of thing."

"I understand. You're just—yourself. That's enough for me."

"You were a trump up there in the Thorwald—to stay with poor old Udo, but I had to go. It was the only way. I never thought we'd make it."

"But we did."

"*You* did. It was the Dove, Doris—the good old Dove. Isn't she a ripper?"

"I never had a fear—once she rose. How did you happen——"

He laughed.

"It was to be a surprise. I'd been workin' on her for a year—tryin' her out on the moors. Nobody knew—until the war came—and then I told Udo, who told von Stromberg. I tried a flight to Windenberg and made it comfortably. Awf'ly easy thing. I stayed at

HEADQUARTERS

Windenberg in October, flyin' over the English lines, droppin' bombs."

"That was where you were——!"

"But I never hit anythin'. Wouldn't do, you know. Then when I came back I told the War Office. They sent me for the papers. You know the rest."

"O Cyril, I'm so glad it's all over. You'll go to England now and rest."

"For a while." And then, "Will you marry me, Doris? Soon?"

"Yes," she said softly. "Whenever you want me."

"Here? Now?"

"But, Cyril——"

"There's a parson chap about here somewhere. I saw him browsin' in here the other day."

"Isn't it a little——"

"Say you will, there's a dear."

"Yes, if you wish it. But——"

"What?"

"Clothes."

"Nonsense. You're jolly handsome in those togs—— handsome no end," he repeated. "Marry me tomorrow, Doris. There's a dear."

She leaned her face down upon his hand.

"We're already married, Cyril. Up there I felt it. Even death couldn't have separated us."

"Thank God! Kiss me, Doris." She obeyed.

"I'll see Jackson," he whispered. "He'll manage it. Resourceful chap, Jackson. He'll get us a chaplain like pullin' a rabbit out of a hat."

She laughed.

"I don't suppose I'd ever have known you, Cyril, over there in England. You always did wonderful things carelessly, Cyril."

THE YELLOW DOVE

“But not this wonderful thing——” and he kissed her.

“It is a wonderful thing,” she whispered. “So wonderful that I wonder if it can be true.”

“I’ll prove it to you——”

But she had straightened and kissed his hand.

“No more now—I mustn’t stay. I hear them in the hall.”

“Tomorrow?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Jackson?”

“Yes.”

The nurse knocked discreetly and entered. “Five minutes. I’m sorry.”

“So am I,” said Hammersley, with a sigh.

.

Three weeks later they stood side by side at the rail of the Channel boat on the way to Ashwater Park for the parental blessing. The shores of France were already purple in the distance. They had looked upon Death with eyes that did not fear, but the sight of it together had made the bond of their fealty and tenderness the stronger. There was a sadness in his look and she knew instinctively of what he was thinking.

“Germany, Cyril,” she said aloud. “I love it because a part of it is you. But I love England more, because it is you.”

Hammersley watched the receding shores beyond the vessel’s wake, her hand in his.

“They’re followin’ false gods, Doris. Gods of steel and brass——!”

“They *must* fall, Cyril.”

“They will.” And then, “But you can’t help admirin’ the beggars! Poor old Udo!”

HEADQUARTERS

"I think about him, Cyril. Do you think he got away?"

"Well, rather! I cut his bonds with a huntin' knife before we went down."

She looked up into his face in amazement. "You dared do that?" He laughed.

"You wouldn't have let him be more generous than me."

"And he let us go?"

"He didn't think we *could* go. He left things to Destiny."

"Good old Udo!" she repeated. And then dreamily, "Destiny! You were not meant to die, Cyril."

"Not yet." He said slowly: "But I must go back—over there, Doris."

She shivered a little and drew closer to him.

"Yes, I know," she said. "But you've earned——"

"I couldn't ever earn what I've got," he broke in quickly.

"Nor I——"

"I'm not much of a chap at pretty speeches and all that sort of thing, but you're a rare one, you know, the rummiest sort of a rare one—the kind a chap dreams about but never gets—and yet I've got you—Oh, hang it all, Doris," he broke off helplessly. "You know——"

She smiled at him and slipped her arm through his.

"Yes, I know," she said.

"Good old Doris," he muttered. "Silly ass, aren't I?"

But she wouldn't admit that.



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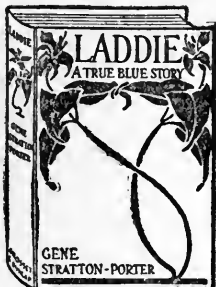
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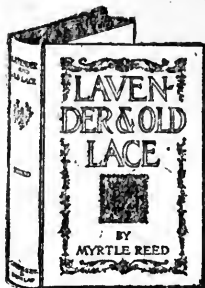
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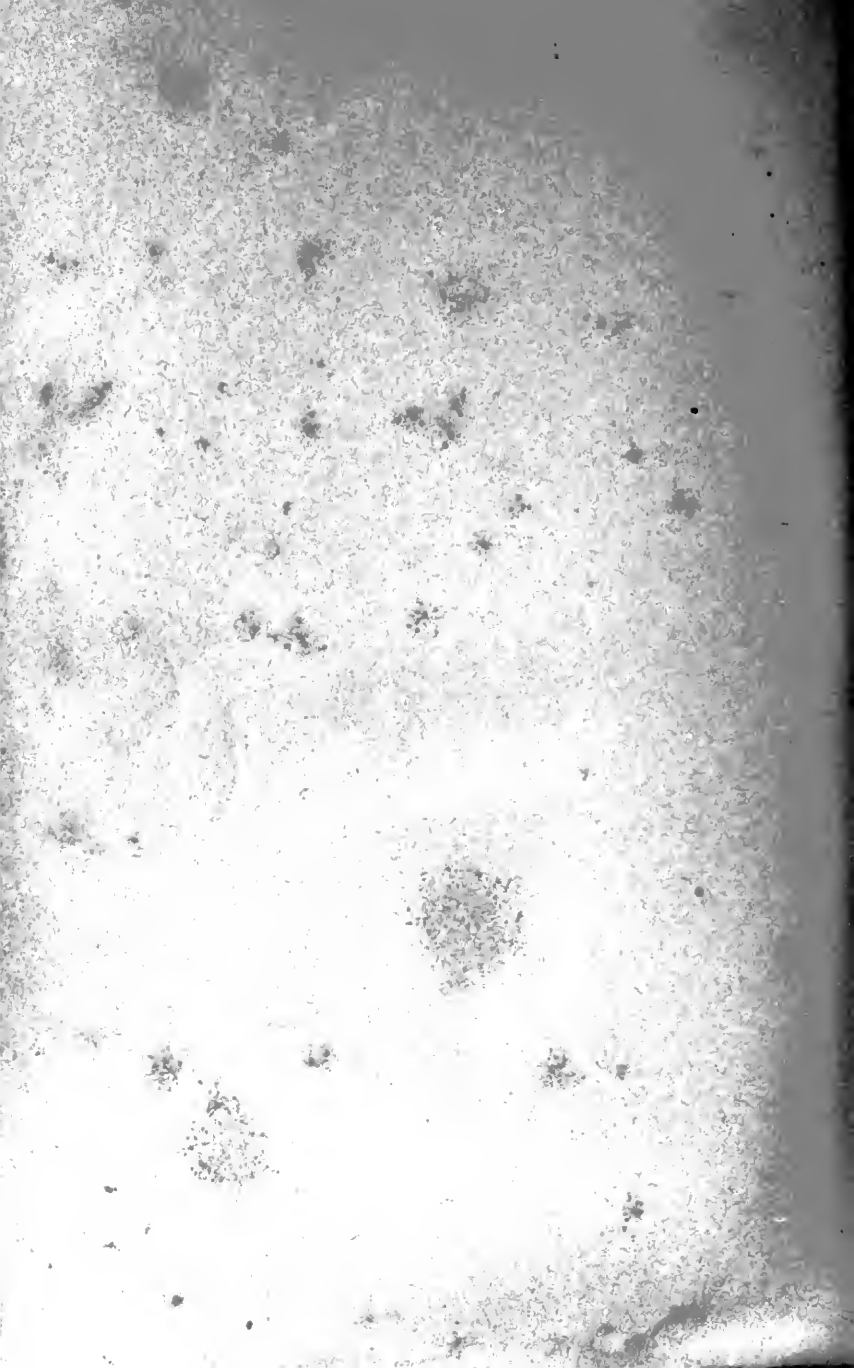
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