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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SECRET SERVICE SUBMARINE: A STORY OF THE PRESENT WAR ***

THE SECRET SERVICE SUBMARINE

A STORY OF THE PRESENT WAR

**BY
GUY THORNE**

**NEW YORK
SULLY & KLEINTEICH
1915**

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The verses used as preface appeared in the issue of *Truth* for 4th November 1914. They are reproduced here by special and courteous permission of the Editor. The verses were published anonymously, but the author has kindly allowed me to mention his

name. He is Mr. William Booth.

THE SONG OF THE SUBMARINE

This is the song of the submarine
Afloat on the waters wide.
Like a sleeping whale
In the starlight pale,
Just flush with the swirling tide.
The salt sea ripples against her plates
The salt wind is her breath,
Like the spear of fate
She lies in wait,
And her name is "Sudden Death."

I watch the swift destroyers come,
Like greyhounds lank and lean,
And their long hulks sleek
Play hide-and-seek
With me on the waters green.
I watch them with my single eye,
I see their funnels flame,
And I sing Ho! Ho!
As I sink below,
Ho! Ho! for a glorious game!

I roam the seas from Scapa Flow
To the Bight of Heligoland;
In the Dover Strait
I lie in wait
On the edge of Goodwin's Sand.
I am here and there and everywhere,
Like the phantom of a dream,
And I sing Ho! Ho!
Through the winds that blow,
The song of the submarine!

WILLIAM BOOTH.

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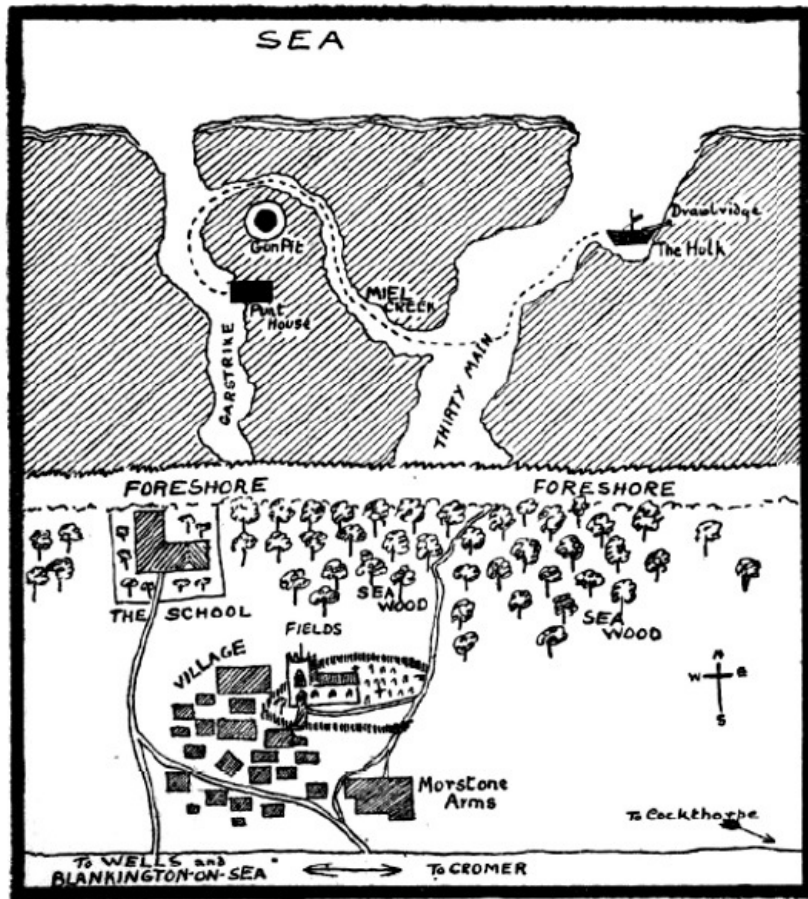
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THE SECRET SERVICE SUBMARINE

PART I

CHAPTER I

REJECTED FOR SERVICE. MR. JOHN CAREY'S EXPLANATION

On thinking it over, I date the extraordinary affairs which so thrilled England and brought me such undeserved good fortune from the day on which I tried to enlist.

The position was this. My father was an engineer with a small, but apparently thriving, foundry at Derby. My mother died and my father sent me to Oxford, my younger brother, Bernard Carey, being an officer in the Navy. At Oxford, I was one of that perennial tribe of young asses who play what used to be called the "Giddy Goat" in those days with the greatest aplomb and satisfaction to themselves. I was at a good college—Exeter—for originally we were west-country people, and all sons of Devon and Cornwall go to Exeter.

I was immensely strong and healthy. I did not row, but played Rugby football, being chosen to play in the Freshmen's match, and subsequently got my "Blue." I did no reading whatever. My father gave me a more than sufficient allowance, and in my second year, having sprained myself badly, I bought a motor car—an expensive Rolls-Royce—on credit, and became a "blood." I could not play games any more, though I was healthy enough, so I used to go constantly to London "to see my dentist," which, of course, meant dinner at the Café Royal, too many cocktails at the Empire, and a wild rush home in the car to get to College before twelve o'clock at night.

When any musical comedy company visited Oxford, I, in company with my friends, used to invite the ladies of the chorus to tea. I did all the silly things possible, got sent down for a term, and eventually only just managed to scrape through a pass degree, after being ploughed several times in this or that "Group."

Then my father died, and it was found that he had nothing whatever to leave us. His works were in the hands of his creditors—it seems that things had been going wrong for years—and there was I, with a game leg, an excellent taste in such dubious vintages as the Oxford wine merchants provide, a somewhat exact knowledge of ties, waist-coats, and socks, a smattering of engineering which I had picked up from my father purely from a liking of the subject, and, when my bills were paid, exactly £14, 7s. 3d.

Knowing nothing whatever of the slightest value to anybody, myself included, I naturally decided to devote my attention to the education of youth. My "Blue," short as the time was that I enjoyed it, would be an asset, I imagined; and, for the rest, to teach urchins their Latin grammar for a few hours a day could not be a very arduous occupation.

Accordingly, I went to see a suave gentleman in the Strand, who received me courteously, but without enthusiasm. This gentleman was one of the mediums by which those who would instruct the young find a field for their activities. I paid him a guinea, I think it was, and he then took down my qualifications.

When I mentioned my "Blue" with pride, he shook his head.

"My dear sir, 'Blues' are now a drug in the market," he said. "Surely you read the daily papers, especially the *Daily Wire*?"

"No," I replied, "I am no bookworm."

He coughed rather nastily and I began to get irritated with the fellow.

"Then I must explain," he continued, "that there has been a great outcry against over-athleticism in the public schools, in all schools, in fact, and I fear your 'Blue' is not worth ..."

"Quite so," I broke in; "'not worth a damn,' you were going to say."

"I was going to say no such thing, Mr. Carey," he replied stiffly. "At any rate, we will do our best for you. You cannot hope for more than a private school at first, and your success in the profession you have—er—chosen, will depend entirely upon your success in a comparatively humble sphere."

A week afterwards, I received two or three little forms telling me to apply to various headmasters.

Prospects were not cheering, and the salaries offered would about have kept me in cigarettes at Oxford. To cut a long story short, I eventually became third master—there were only three of us—in Morstone House School in Norfolk, at a salary of eighty pounds a year and all found—except washing.

Morstone House School was a sort of discreet modern edition of Dotheboys Hall. I do not mean to say, of course, in these enlightened days, that the boys were starved or ill-treated. But everything was cut down to the very margin—to the margarine, as my colleague Lockhart, who was a cripple, and a wit—the Head got him cheap for that—would occasionally remark.

For two years I remained at Morstone, a miserable enough life for an ex-blood, you will say—only there were consolations. One of them, and to me it was a very great one indeed, was that Morstone was situated in a remote village on the east coast, on the edge of vast saltings or sea marshes intersected by great creeks of sullen, tidal water. It was five miles to the nearest little town, Blankington-on-Sea, and as lonely a place as well could be conceived. Nevertheless, these vast marshes stretching for many miles on either side formed one of the finest wild-fowl districts in the whole of England. I was, and always had been, passionately fond of shooting. I had saved my guns from the wreck, and the whole of my leisure time in winter was taken up with perhaps the most fascinating of all sports.

The wild geese would fly at night over the lonely mud-flats with a noise like a pack of hounds in the sky. Duck of all sorts abounded, teal, widgeon, mallard, and the rarer pintail and even the crested grebe. There were plenty of snipe, stint, golden plover and shank—in short, it was a paradise for the sportsman. I kept fit and well from the first day of August to the last day of February. My work at the school was easy enough, and I had an absolutely absorbing pursuit to take me out of myself and make me forget what a very sorry part I was playing in the battle of life—for I think it only due to myself to remark that I was a young ass without being a fool. This is a nice distinction, but there are those who will understand my meaning.

The second consolation—I do not put it second because it was the lesser of the two, but from a somewhat natural reluctance to speak of it until the last necessary moment—was Doris.

This brings me to that extraordinary man, my chief. I am not going to discount the interest of this narrative by saying too much of this gentleman at the outset. His name is familiar enough to England now. I will merely describe him and his surroundings.

The Headmaster of Morstone House School was Doctor Upjelly. His qualifications for the position he held were, to say the least of it, peculiar. He was "Doctor" by virtue of a German degree obtained during what must have been a singularly misspent youth—they are coarse brutes at these German universities, or I should be the last to refer to early indiscretions!—at Heidelberg. Love of teaching he had none. Love of money seemed to be his predominating characteristic, though he was as keen on wild-fowling as I was myself. This was the only thing that made me

regard him as human—that is to say, at the beginning.

What Doctor Upjelly's early life had been, nobody knew. He had travelled much abroad, at any rate, and spoke French, German, and Italian fluently. He had been in England for a great many years, the last six of which he had spent at Morstone House. He had purchased the school from the decayed clergyman who ran it before him, and seemed to be perfectly contented with his life, though he often made visits to London and occasionally entertained visitors at Morstone. He had married an Englishwoman in Germany, we always understood, a lady with two daughters by a former marriage, Doris and Marjorie Joyce. Doris was twenty-two and Marjorie twenty-one. They lived at Morstone and kept house for their stepfather, supervised the school accounts, and generally did work which ought to have been done by the matron, a sinister old hag called Mrs. Gaunt, and apparently the only person in whom Doctor Upjelly ever confided.

To say that Doris and Marjorie hated their stepfather would be to put it with extreme mildness. They were both young and high-spirited girls, and they would have left him like a shot had it not been for some promise extorted from them by their dying mother, which they felt bound to observe. This was Mrs. Joyce's only bequest to her daughters, and, like most promises given to a semi-conscious person probably quite unaware of what she is saying, about as cruel and immoral a thing as ever bound quixotic inexperience.

Old Upjelly was a tyrant. He did not interfere in the affairs of the school much—that was to his daughters' and the masters' gain, to say nothing of the wretched boys. But the girls were forced to lead a semi-monastic life. They were not allowed to accept invitations to tennis parties at local rectories, or even to play duets at the nasty little schoolroom concerts which were always being got up by fussy parsons' wives. And most of all, they were not allowed to have anything to do with the assistant masters.

Now, as both Doris and Marjorie, of whom I naturally saw a great deal, confided to me, they had never wished to have anything to do with the assistant masters until my arrival. This did not make me vain, in view of my two other colleagues and of some who had preceded me and of whom I had heard.

The first master, who lived in a cottage in the village with a wife as senile and decrepit as himself, was the Reverend Albert Pugmire. In dim and distant days, he had held various curacies, from which he had been politely requested to retire owing to a somewhat excessive fondness for Old Tom Gin. I understand there had never been any actual inhibition on the part of a justly outraged bishop, but Mr. Pugmire, at any rate, had become chief drudge to Doctor Upjelly.

Pugmire was about sixty-two. In appearance he was exactly like one of those tapers with which one lights the gas, thin, white, ghostly, except for one vivid splash of colour, a nose resembling nothing so much as a piece of coral, which he averred was the result of indigestion. He really was a classical scholar of remarkable attainments. He would even teach a boy who wanted to learn, and once, when the son of a local clergyman with a taste for the classics wormed his way into the horrid old man's confidence, I remember with what a thunderclap of amazement it came upon us all when this young Philips gained an open scholarship at Magdalen. The event was so unprecedented that I saw Doctor Upjelly at a loss for the first time in his life. He did not know what to say, and that night old Pugmire had to be carried home. The affair, however, soon sank into oblivion and was never mentioned.

The second master, who taught such mathematics as each imp condescended to learn, was poor little Lockhart, a misshapen bundle of bones, as hollow and bitter as a dried lemon. When a baby, his nurse, during a heated altercation with the cook, had thrown him at the latter lady, and the poor chap had never known any happiness since. He had an income of his own of about a hundred a year and was able enough in his way, but he was too acid for ordinary intercourse—though, as will presently appear, he had unsuspected qualities.

Then I came, the ex-Blue with the game leg.

Having said so much, it will be fairly obvious that the second consolation I have mentioned in my life was Doris.

The Great War broke out and, in common with every other decent Englishman of my own age, I heard the call of the country. I am not going to sentimentalise about this—there is no necessity—but, of course, I was keen as mustard to go.

I was exactly six feet high; my eyesight was far above the average—the man who does most of his shooting at twilight, by moonlight, or in early dawn and at long ranges, has far keener sight than most men. My teeth were so good that I could eat Upjelly's mutton with ease, if not with satisfaction. As far as personal strength went, I was as strong as a bull—indeed, if the music halls had remained in their pristine simplicity and had not been given over to the elaborate spectacle, I could have earned a living as a weight-lifter in a leopard skin and pink tights; but, and here was the thing that made me lie awake at night grinding my teeth and cursing fate—not knowing what she had in store for me—there was my leg.

Now, I could walk and outwalk most men I knew on the marshes, the most difficult form of progression probably known to man, as anyone who has tramped the thick, black mud and the marrum grass well knows. No professional wild-fowler from Stiffkey or Cockthorpe could outdo me. Yet, when I went to Norwich and offered myself for the East Norfolk Territorial Battalion, a fool of a doctor in goggles, with whom I wouldn't have cleaned my ten-bore, rejected me at once,

despite all I could say or do—and, what is more, told me that I would have no possible chance elsewhere. I told him what I thought of him, and nearly cried. Then I went out into an adjacent pub, had some beer, and cursed bitterly, until the recruiting sergeant whom I had first interviewed, likewise in search of beer, happened to come into the private bar. He was a decent sort of Johnny and told me a few eye-opening things about doctors. He said that he would be proud to have me in his company, and he gave me an invaluable tip. Finding out that I knew something about engineering, he suggested that I should go to London and try and get into the Royal Naval Flying Corps. At that time, the great fleet of armoured motor cars was being got ready. I could drive a car with any man and I was a fairly good motor mechanic.

My brother, Bernard, was, as I said, in the Navy. He was, by this time, Lieutenant-Commander in the submarine section, and he was in London, having been shot in the arm during a little scrap off Heligoland.

I got leave from old Upjelly, who, for some queer reason or other, did not seem to take to the idea of my enlisting—though, heaven knows, he had never shown any appreciation of my services—and went up to town. I found Bernard just out of hospital. He had to rest for another month, and, as he had hardly any money beyond his pay and special allowances, he wanted to do it on the cheap. I suggested that he should come down to Morstone and stay in the village pub. He was as keen on shooting as I, and he hailed the idea with joy.

He took me to the then depôt of the R.N.F.C., at the big *Daily Mail* air-ship shed at Wormwood Scrubbs, and he used every possible bit of influence he had got to get me in.

The naval people were all awfully jolly, but regulations were strict, and though they moved heaven and earth for me, it could not be done.

I said good-bye to my brother, who was to come down to Morstone almost immediately, and one dull, bitter afternoon in the middle of December, I found myself in a third-class carriage going home—once more a hopeless failure.

I could see old Upjelly's mocking sneer, I could hear little Lockhart's titter; old Pugmire would say, "A gin and soda is clearly indicated in this crisis." And Doris—what would Doris say?

Well, Doris, poor Doris, would weep. She would know it was not my fault, dear little girl, but she would weep. And for many days I should read my newspaper, which arrived in the evening, over the fire in my sitting-room in the north wing at the end of the dormitory, and if I did not weep too, it would be because I was a man and not a girl. Other people would be doing glorious things. Two-thirds of the men of my own college were already either at the front or in training. Some smug, who could not get into the second fifteen at Exeter, would become D.S.O. or V.C. Morstone would be full of farm lads, who had gone out louts and come back wounded heroes. And for me, only what some priggish hymn or other describes as "the daily round, the common task," how damnably common, only I myself knew.

The afternoon, as I have said, was dark and lowering, and as I changed at Heacham for the local train, a bitter wind, which cut like a knife, swept over the vast flats, straight from Heligoland, the Kiel Canal, and the tossing wastes of the North Sea.

We crawled along slowly, stopping at half a dozen stations, until, with a groan, the train drew up in the God-forsaken little terminus of Blankington-on-Sea. The sea was two miles away over the mud flats, and Blankington consisted of an enormous church, five maltsters' yards, a few fly-blown shops, and seventeen public-houses, where the townspeople and labourers on the weekly market day defied the marsh fogs with ardent spirits.

Wordingham, the husband of the woman who kept the Morstone Inn, was waiting with his dog-cart. I hoisted in my kit-bag and jumped up beside him and we started off. It was pitch dark, and we had five miles to go along a level road.

On the right were huge fields of barley stubble, all in the great shoot of the Earl of Blankington, whose yearly head of "birds," as partridges are called in Norfolk, to say nothing of pheasants, was second only to that of Sandringham itself, not so very far away. To the left were a few more fields where some plovers wailed mysteriously, "it's dark and late," or "it's late and dark," and beyond, the vast creeks and saltings towards the ocean. Even as we got out of the little town, I heard the great boom of a double ten-bore far away. Well, I could at least go back to my wild-fowling, and Wordingham told me that the geese were working backwards and forwards in skeins of at least a hundred, right over the Morstone mires.

CHAPTER II

"THERE IS SOMETHING VERY WRONG ABOUT THIS HOUSE"

We bowled along through the night, and I turned up the collar of my thick ulster, for it was bitterly cold.

"Well," I said, "any news, Wordingham?"

Wordingham was a big, strong, nut-brown, silent man, who took time before he spoke. At last he did so, but without replying to my question.

"My missus," he said slowly, "has got the parlour behind the bar ready for your brother, sir. It is a snug, ship-shape little place, and we will do our best to make him comfortable. And if you and I can't show the Captain a bit of sport, well, there's no one in this part of the country who can."

"Good," I said. "My brother has still got a month to get thoroughly fit before he goes back to join the North Sea Squadron. I want him to have as much shooting as possible."

Wordingham nodded and flicked up his horse. He was a well-known wild-fowler in East Norfolk and, if report spoke true, a very skilful poacher too. The marshes were free to everyone, right up to where the sea came on rare spring tides. Wordingham had an excellent mahogany punt, with a long, black-powder gun, and he would often get as many as thirty brace of duck at a single shot after hours of cautious water-stalking.

But, apart from the wild birds of the saltings, Morstone was in the very heart of one of the most famous shoots in England. The villagers were poachers to a man, and it was well known that fast motor cars often made sudden appearances at night, whereby the poulterers of Leadenhall Market were greatly enriched next morning. Many and many were the "old things" that found their way into the capacious side-pockets of my friend—"old thing" being the local name for hare, a word which is never spoken aloud in a Norfolk village by those who find it "their delight of a moonlight night," &c. &c.

I thought none the worse of Sam Wordingham for that. I had no big shoot and no expensive machinery of game-keepers and night-watchers to keep up. I, myself, was a bit of an Ishmael, to say nothing of a lover of sport.

"I am sure we can do my brother very well," I said. "It is a fine fowling year with all this cold, and there are a lot of worthy fowl about, as many as I have ever seen. But has there been no news in the village since I left?"

"You will be surprised to hear as the Doctor himself dropped in to the private bar yesterday evening."

"Doctor Upjelly?"

Sam nodded. "It was about nine o'clock. Mr. Pugmire was settin' by the fire, not to say boozed, but as is usual about nine o'clock. 'Muzzy' is how I put it. Thinks I, 'Here's the Doctor come after Mr. Pugmire,' though I never knew such a thing in all these years before, and everyone knows Mr. Pugmire's little failings, the Doctor included."

"Was it that?"

"No, it weren't," and Sam turned his big, brown face toward me.

I knew Sam. Many and many a midnight had we spent together waiting for flighting time. I forbore in anticipation.

"'E sets himself down and 'e calls for a bottle of strong, old ale—fowlers' tippie. 'E nods quite pleasant to Mr. Pugmire, what was looking at him like a cat looks when you catch it stealin' cream. 'Pugmire,' says he, 'you will join me in a little refreshment?' But the old gentleman, he was too scart, and 'e mumbles something and shuffles off 'ome—and I'll lay that's the first time Mr. Pugmire has been 'ome partly sober this year. Then the Doctor, he makes 'imself very pleasant, 'e does. My missus comes in and he begins asking about—what do you think 'e arst about, sir?"

"I haven't an idea."

"About the Captain, about your brother."

I was startled. I hadn't told the Doctor that my brother was coming to stay in the village—it was no business of his, and we had few confidences on any subject. Lockhart knew and, of course, Doris and her sister, but they were not likely to have said anything.

"What did he want to know?" I asked.

"Where he was sleeping, and if we were going to make the gentleman comfortable, and if he had a taste for shooting, had I heard? Regular lot of questions!"

"Well, it's very kind of the Doctor to take an interest in my brother," I replied.

"Very, sir," Wordingham answered dryly. "Mr. Jones, he came down last night at ten o'clock, came down from London in his motor car, 'e did. He's at the school now, or leastways, with this tide and the moon getting up in an hour or so, he will be out on the marshes with the Doctor. I heard tell that they was to be out all night. Bill Jack Pearson, from the school, 'e told me."

Again there was silence, while I thought over this little bit of information, for anything is news in such a stagnant hole as Morstone. Mr. Jones was a friend of the Doctor's who often came to see him. He was a short, sturdy, red-faced man with bright blue eyes and a very reserved manner. We always understood that he was in business in the city, and well-to-do. Like the Doctor, he had a passion for wild-fowling, or that, at any rate, was supposed to be the reason for his visits,

though Doris had more than once hinted to me that she thought Marjorie, her younger sister, was a bit of an attraction too.

"Ever been out with Mr. Jones, sir?" Wordingham asked.

"Not I. Why, I've only been out with the Doctor once in all the time I've been at Morstone. He seems to prefer to be alone."

"Aye, he's a solitary man, is the Doctor. On that time you went out with him, did you get anything, sir?"

"I got a couple of brent geese, but the Doctor was not in form at all and missed his one chance when they came over."

"Now, would you be surprised, sir, if I was to tell you that the Doctor is one of the worst shots in the parish?"

"I should be very surprised indeed. Why? He gets awfully good bags night after night—whenever he goes out, in fact."

"You know Jim Long up at Cockthorpe?"—he was mentioning a famous professional wild-fowler who lived by supplying the markets with duck and taking out sportsmen from London over the difficult and intricate marshes at night.

"Of course I do. Been out with him lots of times."

"Well, sir, don't say as I told you, don't mention it to Jim and don't mention it to a living soul, but I found out only last month, accidental like, that Jim's been supplying the Doctor with teal and widgeon and grey geese and plover and what not for goodness knows 'ow long. 'E leaves a nice little bag in the Doctor's old hulk in Thirty Main Creek, and the Doctor finds 'em there and brings 'em home. And, what's more, Mr. Jones, 'e can't shoot for nuts, neither. I've see'd 'im firing off their guns, to get 'em dirty, from the deck of the hulk!"

At this I began to laugh, though the news was a bit of a shock to me, for I had always regarded the Doctor and his friend as true sportsmen. I saw no reason to disbelieve what Wordingham had said, for he was not a man who spoke rashly, and, comic though the business was, I could not help that sort of odd discomfort one feels when an illusion is shattered. The only good thing I knew of Upjelly was now a thing of the past. Of course, I had heard of the type of sportsman who buys a creel of trout at the fishmonger's on his way home, or gets his pheasants at the poulterer's—about the cheapest and nastiest form of vanity that exists, I should think. But I had never heard of anything of the sort in connection with wild-fowling; and indeed, a man who, night after night, will go through the extraordinary discomforts, the freezing cold, the occasional real danger, the weary hours of waiting in the dark, merely to get a reputation as a fowler, must be king and skipper of all the humbugs and pretenders since Mr. Pecksniff himself.

I had little more conversation with Sam, his news occupied all my thoughts and for a time I forgot my own troubles. I remember thinking, in a childish sort of way, what a rag it would be to stalk old Upjelly one night, and catch him in the very act. What a hold I should have over him afterwards!

We approached the village. The wind cried in the chimneys of the houses with a strange, wailing note. The moon just peeped out behind the gaunt church tower, amid the scud of ghostly clouds, and its light grew brighter as we turned to the left towards the school itself. At the same moment, the wind, smelling salt of the marshes and of the open sea a mile beyond, and carrying particles of sand, struck me with its full force, so that I had to bow my head.

In three minutes we were at Morstone House School. It was a long, low building of considerable extent, shaped like the letter L. The shorter arm was three storeys high and was the Doctor's own quarters, together with his cook, housemaid, and the old matron, Mrs. Gaunt. The longer wing contained the schoolrooms on the ground floor, a bare apartment known as the dining-hall, and two dormitories in each of which there were about fifteen boys, the whole school consisting of some fifty boys, thirty of whom were boarders. This part of the building was only two storeys high, save at one end, where there was a small tower. Just outside each dormitory was a master's sitting-room and bedroom. One of these was mine—the top one—the other, down below, that of Lockhart.

There were three main entrances to the school. One, the front door, in the middle of the longer portion of the building, another, a small door in the angle, used only by the masters, and the Doctor's private entrance, opening out into his garden on the other side of the block.

It was just ten o'clock as I drove through the playing fields and on to the gravel sweep in front of the house. Bill Jack Pearson, the school porter, opened the masters' door and took my bag. He was a pleasant, cheery fellow, who liked me.

"Well, Bill Jack," I said, "everything all right?"

"Everything all right, Mr. Carey. The Doctor and Mr. Jones, who came last night, have gone out towards Cockthorpe. The geese are working there, and they won't be back till dawn. There's some supper in your room, and I've lit the fire."

Then I asked a question which the porter quite understood.

"And Mrs. Gaunt?"

"The old cat's gone to bed, sir," he said in a lower voice. "I've just come from the Doctor's kitchen, and Cook told me."

I passed through the little paved lobby which led to the long corridor of class-rooms, and hurried up the bare, wooden stairs. There was a good fire in my room and the lamp was lit upon the supper-table, where a jug of beer flanked a cold wild goose—and ordinary mortals who have not tasted that delicacy have missed a lot.

I took off my coat, went into my bedroom and washed my hands, peeped into the dormitory, where only a single lamp was burning dimly and all the boys seemed asleep, and then returned.

As I closed the door and saw my own familiar things around me, the remembrance of what had happened came over me in a great flood. I groaned aloud. Upon the walls, washed with terracotta, were my college groups, reminding me of Oxford and happier days. There were some silver cups upon a shelf. In a glass-fronted cupboard by the side of the fireplace were my guns. Over the mirror on the mantelpiece was a faded blue cap, and on the writing-table was a pile of filthy, dogs-eared, little exercise books, in which reluctant urchins had been scribbling attempts at Latin prose.

I bit my lip hard and sat down to supper, which did not take more than five or six minutes. Then I prepared myself for something that was yet to come.

Against the wall by the window was a bookshelf containing the few volumes I possessed and such schoolbooks as I used in my work. I took down Smith's classical dictionary, and Liddell and Scott's Greek ditto, and, inserting my hand in the place this left, withdrew a pleasant little instrument which I had bought for twenty-seven-and-six—see advertisement in the *Strand Magazine*—from a scientific toy-shop in Holborn. This was known as "Our Portable House Telephone," and, not to elaborate the mystery, a little wire ran out of my window, through the ivy, and round the angle of the building to the Doctor's block, where it found unobtrusive entry through another window. At this end was an instrument exactly like the one I held in my hand, but which rested in a hole made in the plaster of the wall and was concealed by that touching engraving, "The Soul's Awakening." I had fixed up the whole thing myself some two months before, when the Doctor was away in London, Mrs. Gaunt at market in Blankington-on-Sea, and the boys engaged in a paper chase.

Doris was waiting, of course.

"Dearest, so you've got back—I heard the trap!"

"Yes; can you come?"

"In a minute. The connecting door to the school is locked, but I made Bill Jack lend me his key."

"Right-O!"—and I waited breathlessly for Doris.

I daresay such a proceeding as this may strike the ultra-proper with dismay. But we loved each other, there was no harm in it, and, besides, what the deuce were we to do? It was the only way we could meet at all, and even then, it only happened now and again.

The door of my sitting-room opened without a sound and Doris entered. Doris's hair is dark red, and, when it is down, it reaches almost to her heels. Titian red, I believe, is the right name for it, though I'm sure I don't know why. Her eyes are dark blue, like the blue on the wing of a freshly killed mallard—I am not good at this sort of thing, but she is a ripper. Directly she had closed the door, which she did noiselessly, she saw from my face what had happened. I felt a rotten tout, I can tell you, to stand there, chucked again.

"Well, here I am," I said, "returned empty, declined with thanks, His Majesty having no use for my services! Same old game, Doris dear, and if they lose the war now, they can't blame me!" I spoke bitterly, but lightly also; yet when Doris put her arms round my neck and I held her close, when I could feel warm tears upon my cheek, I was as near breaking down as I have ever been in my life.

"Never mind, Johnny darling, never mind," she whispered, "I love you just the same—you've always got me—and it isn't your fault. You've tried as hard as you possibly can to go."

She could only stay a quarter of an hour; it wasn't safe longer. Marjorie was keeping cave, for the sisters occupied the same room. I told her everything as shortly as I could, and with a sigh, we both agreed that we must make the best of it. She wanted me to go, she longed for me to go, I knew that. What patriotism there was in Morstone House School was confined to the boys and to the Doctor's stepdaughters. Upjelly himself seemed to take very little interest in the conflagration of the world, or, if he did, he never showed it. But I knew as well as I knew anything that Doris would rather have had me go to the Front and get a bullet through my head than that I should stay at home; which, I may remark, is the right sort of girl.

"Well," she said at length, "let us hope the Germans invade us—it will be somewhere about here, I suppose, if they do—and then you can have a smack at them with your single eight-bore, Johnny; that would be something, wouldn't it?"

She told me the news of the school, such as it was, and then, with a final kiss, we separated and I

was left alone.

The bitterness was still in my heart, a deep sort of fire at the bottom of everything which I can't put into words—like the gentlemen in the boys' historical novels, who always begin: "I am but a plain, unlettered yeoman, and more handy with the sword than with the pen"—you know what I mean. Still, I was a man and a strong one, and an Englishman whose brother was fighting for his King. I did not know before that life could hurt so badly as it was hurting now. For nearly an hour, I suppose, I walked up and down my room, until the fire grew low and the wailing of the wind outside seemed to speak of disaster and complete the innuendo of the time.

And then, quite suddenly, I do not know what it was, my spirits began to clear. It was like a thick sea-mist on the marshes, which hangs like a dull, grey blanket for hours, with the birds calling all round, only you cannot get a shot at them. Suddenly the sun, or a puff of wind, makes the whole thing roll up like a curtain, and you see a herd of curlew or a wisp of snipe quite close to you. That is how I felt. I caught sight of my face in the glass, and I was surprised. It was positively glowing—just as if I had been made Commander-in-Chief of the R.N.F.C. and Admiral Jellicoe had asked me to come and have a drink.

I am not used to analysing my feelings, which seem to me like chemicals—the more you analyse them, the worse they smell; so I could not account in the least for this sudden change.

Well, I was wondering at it and thinking that I had better turn in before I got the black dog on my shoulders again, when there was a tap at the door, and in shuffled little Lockhart. He had a bottle of whisky under one arm and a syphon under the other, and he looked, as usual, like a plucked spring chicken that had not been properly fed—bones sticking out everywhere.

"Thought perhaps you hadn't any whisky," he said—and then, "Hallo! pulled it off this time?" He was looking at my face.

I started, because there was something in his voice I had not heard before, and something in his eyes I had not seen.

"My dear chap," he went on, banging down the whisky on the table and holding out his hand. "I can't tell you how glad I am!"

Well, this made it rather hard. Of course, I had to tell him that I had got the kick out again, but I didn't feel the depression coming back, all the same. What I did feel, though, was a sudden liking for the odd little fellow who was my colleague. We had always got on well enough together, never had rows or anything of that sort, but he was too cynical for me as a rule. In five minutes, however, I found myself sitting on one side of the fire—which we made up—with Lockhart on the other, talking away as if we had been intimate friends for years.

By Jove, how the little fellow came out! If his body was maimed and crippled, he had a big soul, if ever a man had. I can recognise beautiful English when I hear it or read it. This man seemed inspired. His talk of England and what we were going through and of what we still had to go through was like that wonderful passage in Richard II which I had been trying to make my idiot boys learn for rep. He was so awfully kind and sympathetic, too. He said all that Doris had said, though in quite another way. It was like a wise man, who had known and done everything, comforting one.

When he had finished, and sat looking at the fire, I had to tell him what I felt.

"I'm awfully indebted to you, Lockhart," was what I said. "You've pulled me together and made a man of me again, and I can't thank you enough. I'm afraid we haven't been such friends as we ought to have been"—and I held out my hand. He took it and there was a strained smile upon his wizened little face.

"Carey," he said, "don't you be downhearted, for you are going to have your chance yet, unless I am very much mistaken."

"What do you mean?" I asked, for there was obviously something behind his words.

For answer, he did a curious thing. He slipped out of his arm-chair, hopped across the room like a sparrow, and as quietly, and opened the door, looking into the passage. Then he closed it and came back into the middle of the room.

"In the first place, John Carey," he said, "I mean that there is something very wrong about this house."

CHAPTER III

BERNARD CAREY, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER OF SUBMARINES

I had just finished my tub the next morning, and was about to shave, when there was a knock at my bedroom door. The school porter came in with a message—"the Doctor sends his compliments, sir, and will you give him the pleasure of your company at breakfast this morning?"

This was quite unusual on the part of my chief. He always breakfasted alone in his own house; even his daughters did not share the meal with him. Lockhart and myself breakfasted with the boys—that is to say, we sat at a table at one end of the room, while old Mrs. Gaunt, the matron, presided over the bread-and-scrape and the urn of wishy-washy tea which was all the boarders got, unless they provided delicacies for themselves.

About half-past eight, I went downstairs, round the rectangular wing, into the Doctor's garden, and knocked at his front door. I was almost immediately shown into the breakfast-room, a comfortable place, with a good many books and a fine view over the marshes.

Old Upjelly was standing upon the hearthrug as I entered, and I must describe for you a very remarkable personality indeed.

The Doctor was six feet high and proportionately broad. He was not only broad from shoulder to shoulder, but thick in the chest, a big, powerful man of fifty years of age. His face was enormous, as big as a ham almost, and it was of a uniform pallor, rather like badly-cooked tripe, as I once heard Lockhart describe it. A parrot-like nose projected in the centre of this fleshy expanse; small, but very bright eyes, sunk in caverns of flesh, looked out under bushy, black brows which squirted out—there is no other word. He was clean-shaved and his mouth was large, firm and curiously watchful, if I may so express it. Upjelly could make his eyes say anything he pleased, but I have always thought that the mouth is the feature in the human face which tells more than any other. And if Upjelly's mouth revealed anything, it was secretiveness, while there was a curious Chinese insensitiveness about it. Lockhart, who had rather a genius for description, used to say that he could conceive Doctor Upjelly locking himself up in his study and sitting down to spend a quiet and solitary afternoon torturing a cat.

He greeted me with his soft, rather guttural voice and with something meant for an expansive smile.

"Ah, here we are," he said, "and tell me at once, Mr. Carey, if you have been successful in your application."

Of course, I was quite prepared for this question and briefly related the facts of the case, explaining that even my brother's influence had failed to secure my entry into the Royal Naval Flying Corps.

"I am truly sorry," he said, with the unctuous manner he reserved for parents, "truly sorry; but you must remember, Mr. Carey, that 'they also serve who only stand and wait.'" And as he said it, or was it my fancy, there came a curious gleam into those little bits of glistening black glass he called his eyes.

A minute or two afterwards, and just as the maid was bringing in various hot dishes, the door opened and Mr. Jones entered.

I had been introduced to Mr. Jones some months before, though neither he nor Upjelly had ever invited me to shoot with them. I had only met him for a few minutes and had never formed a very definite opinion about him one way or the other.

He shook hands with me kindly enough, and I noticed how extremely firm and capable his grip was. It was not at all the sort of grip one would expect from the ordinary city man, though, of course, nowadays everybody plays golf or does something of the kind, even in business circles.

Mr. Jones' face was clean-shaved, too, and rather pleasant than otherwise, though it was somewhat heavy. His eyes were bright blue, his hair, thinning a little at the top, a light yellowish colour. He walked with a slight roll or, shall I say swagger?—I really hardly know how to describe it—which somehow or other seemed reminiscent, and he spoke almost pedantically good English. When I say good English, I mean to say that he chose his words with more care than most Englishmen do—almost as if he were writing it down.

We sat down to breakfast, and I saw at once that neither Doris nor her sister were to be there. The meal was elaborate; I had no idea Upjelly did himself in such style, for except at Oxford or Cambridge, or in big country houses, breakfast is not generally a very complicated affair in an ordinary English family. The coffee was excellent—there was no tea—and there was a succession of hot dishes. I noticed, however, that Mr. Jones took nothing but coffee, French rolls—I suppose the Doctor's cook knew how to make them—and a little butter. And I noticed also that, after all, he could not be of very great importance or good breeding, because he tucked his table-napkin into his collar round his chin, an odd proceeding enough!

We began about the war, of course. Upjelly asked me my impressions of London, and was most interested when I told him of all I had seen going on at the R.N.F.C. Depot at Wormwood Scrubbs, especially about the great Rolls-Royce cars and the guns they were mounting on them. I never thought the man took such an interest in anything outside his food and his shooting—if indeed he took an interest even in shooting, which Wordingham's story of last night led me to doubt.

Somehow or other, I was convinced that Upjelly did not care either way about my failure to enlist. He said the conventional things, but I knew he was inwardly indifferent. It was not the same with Mr. Jones, whom I began to like. He seemed genuinely sorry.

"I can understand, Mr. Carey," he said, "that you have been extremely disappointed. I can

sympathise with you most thoroughly. It is the duty and the privilege of every man who is capable of bearing arms to fight for the Fatherland which has given him birth."

Of course, this was a bit highfalutin, but he meant well.

"Thank you," I said, "it certainly has been pretty rotten, but perhaps I may get something to do yet. I would give anything just to have one go at those swines of Germans! You saw what they did yesterday at the little village of Oostcamp, in Belgium?"

"We must not believe all we read in the papers, Mr. Carey," Upjelly said, wagging his head and piling his plate with ham—the beast ate butter with his ham!

"I know," I replied; "of course, it is not all true, but there have been enough atrocities absolutely proved to show what utter soulless beasts the Germans are. It is a pity that we are not at war with a nation of gentlemen, like the French, if we have to be at war at all!"

The Doctor flushed a little. I suppose he thought I was too outspoken. "I have lived much in Germany in my youth," he said, "and always found them most hospitable and kind. You must not condemn a nation for the deeds of a few."

"Well, you may have been in Germany," I thought, "but you can't explain away Louvain, for instance, or lots of other places!"

Still, it was not my place to shove my oar in too much, and I turned to Jones.

"What do you think, Mr. Jones?" I asked.

He hesitated for two or three seconds, as if he was trying to make up his mind. "No one deplores certain incidents in Belgium more than I do," he said at length, "but we must hope that, as Doctor Upjelly says, there is a brighter side to the picture. You must remember that even a German probably loves his country just as much as an Englishman."

Well, of course I knew that was all rot. I had never been in Germany, but people who let a chap like the Kaiser rule them and who live on sausages and beer about as interesting as ditchwater, must be thorough blighters! However, I changed the subject.

"Now, the Navy," I said, "from all accounts, are quite a decent lot of chaps. What a sportsman von Müller was till we bagged the *Emden*. He behaved like a white man all through, and we let him keep his sword, which I think we were quite right in doing."

Mr. Jones smiled suddenly, revealing a row of very white and even teeth. "You," he began, "I mean we, are an arrogant people, we English!" and he chuckled as if he were amused at what I had said. "I quite agree with you, however," he went on, "that the German naval officer is a fine fellow. Your brother, by the way, is in our Navy, isn't he?"

"Yes," I said; "he was wounded in a little affair off Heligoland the other day. But he is getting fit now. Oh, by the way, Doctor, he is coming down here to get some shooting. He is going to stay at the Morstone Arms."

"So I heard," Upjelly answered—the old fox, I thought I was going to catch him out!—"I went in there last night, a thing I don't often do, in order to see if I could find old Mr. Pugmire, and I heard from Mrs. Wordingham. I shall hope to have the pleasure of making his acquaintance when I return."

"You are going away, Doctor?"

"Yes. That was one of the things I wanted to see you about. Mr. Jones is very kindly going to drive me up to town in his car this morning, and I shall be away for a couple of days. I want to leave you in charge as my representative."

"But Lockhart—" I began.

"Mr. Lockhart is not quite as capable of keeping discipline in the school as you are, Carey."

"Thank you very much, sir," I replied; "I will do my best."

The meal continued and we all got on very well. Upjelly seemed really interested in my brother and, after a cigarette, when I rose to go into school, both he and Jones shook me very cordially by the hand.

As I was leaving the room, I noticed one curious thing. There was a little writing-table by the door and on it I distinctly saw the Navy List for that month, obviously fresh from London. What old Upjelly could want with a Navy List, a book which, of course, I had upstairs, I could not conceive, and it gave me food for thought, especially in view of what I shall have to relate very shortly.

At the eleven o'clock break, when the boys had come out and were punting about a soccer ball in front of the school, I saw Mr. Jones' big green car, with himself at the wheel and the Doctor by his side, come round the house and start off for London.

I felt as if a great oppression was removed. My brother would arrive that afternoon; Upjelly was out of the way; I was in charge of the whole place. It would be hard if I did not see more of Doris than I had been able to do for months past.

We went into school again. I was taking what, in a pitiful attempt at persuading ourselves we were a public school, we called the Sixth Form, in Virgil. My boys, there were about ten of them, were a pleasant enough set of lads, ranging from fifteen to the two eldest boys, both of whom were seventeen. They were twins, Dickson max. and Dickson major, the sons of a poor clergyman near Norwich, who could not afford to send them to a better school. They had tried for entrance scholarships at Repton and at Denstone, but had failed, and at all that concerns books or learning were rather duffers. Yet they were clever boys in their way, good sportsmen and, despite a perfectly abnormal talent for mischief, could be depended on in the main. I liked them both and I was sorry for them. Their one hope was that the war would last long enough for them to enlist, for their father was too poor even to pay the necessary expenses to send them into the Public Schools Corps, where lads of such physique and cheery manners could have been sure of a welcome.

"*Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,*" droned out Dickson max., in painful endeavour to bury a dead language in the very stiff clay of his mind. "Through various causes ..."

"Now how can you say 'causes,' Dickson? You know perfectly well what it is that Aeneas is saying. He is exhorting his followers to press towards Rome against all sorts of bad luck. '*Casus*' should have been translated 'chances.' '*Per tot discrimina rerum*' is, of course, 'through so many changes of fortune.' Imagine Aeneas is Sir John French, pressing onwards to Berlin."

It was fatal; that gave the signal.

"Sir," said Dickson major instantly, "did you see any of the Royal Naval Flying Corps in London?"

Dickson max. put down his Virgil. "Is it true, sir, that they have got a hundred armoured motor cars, each one with a maxim gun on it?"—questions from eager faces were fired at me from all parts of the room.

I trust I am no precisian, as the people in Stevenson's stories are always saying, and I confess that, for the next quarter of an hour I held forth in an animated fashion about all that I had seen and done in London. After all, it is the duty of a schoolmaster to encourage patriotism, isn't it? I was just describing some of the new aerial guns that we are mounting on some of the principal London buildings for the defence of the city against Zeppelins, when there was a most appalling crash and howl outside in the corridor.

There was dead silence for an instant, then I jumped down from my desk and rushed out. An unpleasant, almost a terrifying spectacle met my eyes. Old Mrs. Gaunt, the matron, was rolling upon the flags of the corridor like a wounded ostrich, yelping, there is really no other word for it, as if in agony. Her face was pale as linen and her mouth was twisted. She was obviously in great pain.

"Whatever has happened?" I said, trying to help her, but as I lifted the old thing by the shoulder she shrieked loudly and I had to lay her down again.

"My leg's broken!" she cried, "my leg's broken! One of those filthy boys left his ball about, and I trod on it"—and indeed I saw, a few yards away, the white fives ball which had been the cause of her disaster.

The porter was summoned, we improvised an ambulance somehow, and took the poor old thing to her room in the Doctor's wing, Doris and Marjorie attending to her, while the porter rushed off on his bicycle for the nearest doctor.

In about an hour the doctor came. It was perfectly true, Mrs. Gaunt had broken her leg. It was a simple fracture and, as the Doctor told me afterwards, the woman was as tough as an old turkey, but she would be confined to her bed for a fortnight at least, and the injured limb was already encased in plaster of Paris.

It was strictly against the rules for any boy to leave a fives ball about. An accident had nearly happened once before for the same reason. At lunch, I conducted a stern inquisition as to the culprit's identity. It was Dickson max., who owned up at once, and I told him to come to my room after the meal.

I could not very well cane a boy of seventeen who would have been at Sandhurst if his people could have afforded. Besides, I was too inwardly grateful to him to have the slightest wish to do anything of the sort. I gave him a thousand Latin lines and told him to stay in that afternoon, which was a half-holiday, and on three subsequent halves, and I am sorry to say that he grinned in my face as I did so. It was not an impudent grin, or I should have known how to deal with it, but it was one of perfect comprehension, and I fear I blushed as I told the young beggar to clear out as quickly as possible.

Certainly the fates were working well for me, though I had, even then, not the least idea of what an eventful day this was to prove. Nothing came to tell me that I was already embarked upon the greatest enterprise of my life. I was to know more before night.

Now one of my most cherished possessions at that time was a motor bicycle. It was of an antiquated pattern and more often in the workshop than on the road. Fortunately, such engineering knowledge as I had enabled me to tinker at it for myself. To-day, though it had recently been running with a most horrid cacophony resembling the screams of a dying elephant and a machine gun alternately, it would still get along, and I mounted it for Blankington-on-Sea

to meet my brother Bernard.

I put it up at the hotel—I saw the yard attendant wink at the stable boy as he housed it—ordered a trap and went to the station. The train came in to time and my brother descended from a first-carriage. I had seen him in London only a day before, and despite his natural annoyance at the failure to get me into the R.N.F.C., he had been particularly cheery. As we shook hands and the porter took his kit-bags and gun-cases to the trap, I saw that he had something on his mind. He hardly even smiled. I jumped to a wrong conclusion.

"Bernard," I said, "would you like a whisky-soda before we start? You look as if you had been enjoying yourself too much last night."

He shook his head. "No peg for me, thanks; let us get on the road."

We went out of the station together and as we came into the yard he said in a low voice: "I have a deuce of a lot to tell you, but not now."

Then we started for Morstone.

Little more than an hour later we were seated in the parlour at the inn. A comfortable fire glowed upon the hearth and sent red reflections round the homely room, lighting up the stuffed pintail in its case, the old-fashioned, muzzle-loading marsh gun over the mantelpiece, the gleaming lustre ware upon a dresser of old oak, and an engraving of old Colonel Hawker himself, the king of wild-fowlers and a name to conjure with in East Anglia. Upon the table was a country tea, piping hot scones made by good Mrs. Wordingham, a regiment of eggs, a Gargantuan dish of blackberry jam.

"By Jove, this is a good place!" Bernard said. "Two lumps and lots of cream, please. Look at this egg! Upon my word, I would like to shake by the hand the fowl that laid it!"

We made an enormous meal and then, as he pulled out a blackened "B.B.B." and filled it with "John Cotton," my brother began to talk.

"We are quite safe here, I suppose?" he said; "nobody can overhear us?"

"Safe as houses."

"Very well, then; now look here, old chap, you noticed I seemed a bit off colour when you met me. Well, I'm not off colour, but I've had some very serious news and, what is more, a sort of commission in connection with it. After I saw you off yesterday I went to the Army and Navy Club. There I found a letter from Admiral Noyes, written at the Admiralty and asking me to call at once. I was shipmate with Noyes when he was captain of the old *Terrific*, and he has helped me a lot in my service career. It was he who got me transferred into Submarines—where, you know, I have made a bit of a hit. Well, now Noyes is Chief of the Naval Intelligence Department. He sent for me and asked me a lot of questions, specially about Kiel and the Frisian Islands. I was at Kiel for the manoeuvres two years ago and I know all that coast like my hat. I didn't quite see the drift of his questions until he told me what was going on. It seems"—and here Bernard's voice sank very low—"it seems that, recently, there has been a tremendous leakage of information to the enemy—Naval information, I mean. We have our people on the look-out, and there is no doubt whatever that, during the last two months, over and over again the German ships have got information about our movements."

"I know. There is a whole lot about it in the *Daily Wire*: flash signals from the Yorkshire coast at night, round about Whitby, and so on."

"Oh yes, I saw that too; but the leakage is not there, my boy. That's newspaper talk. The Admiralty know to a dead certainty that the leakage is going on in East Norfolk, round about here."

I whistled. "I don't see how that can be," I said. "There is no wireless station anywhere near. The few boats that come into Blankington-on-Sea are only small coasters and they are very carefully scrutinised; and as for flash signals, I am out on the marshes nearly every night, the foreshore is patrolled by sentries, and nothing of the sort has ever been hinted at."

"Exactly; that is the point. But that there is a leakage and that it is doing irreparable harm, you may take as an absolute certainty. Noyes knew that I was coming down to Norfolk for a rest and for some shooting. When I applied for leave, I had to state my destination and so forth. Noyes got hold of it by chance and sent for me, knowing he could trust me. The long and short of it is, Johnny, that I have got a roving commission to keep my eyes very wide open indeed, to see if I can't find something out. Don't mistake me. This is not a mere trifling matter. It is one of the gravest things and one of the most perfectly organised systems that has happened during the war. Why," he said, bringing his fist down upon the table so that the cups rattled, his face set and stern, "the safety of the whole of England may depend upon this being discovered and stopped!"

"But surely," I asked, "they have had people down here already?"

Bernard nodded. "Oh yes," he said, "the coastguards are specially warned, there have been thorough searches, quietly carried out, reports are constantly made from every village by accredited agents—and the Admiralty has not a single clue. Now, old chap, if you can help me, and if we can do anything together, well, here's our chance! There won't be any difficulty about your getting into the R.N.F.C., or any other corps you like, if we can only throw light upon this

dark spot."

I caught fire from his words. "By Jove!" I cried, "if only there was a chance! I would do anything! But I know every man, woman, and child in this village and the surrounding ones. There is not one of them capable of acting as a spy. There are no suspicious strangers. Even the wild-fowlers who come down here are all regular and known visitors, above suspicion." I said this in all good faith, and then, suddenly, a light came to me like a flash of lightning, and I rose slowly from my chair. Bernard told me afterwards that I had grown paper-white and was trembling.

"What is it?" he said quickly.

"I hardly dare say," I replied. "It seems wild foolishness and yet——"

He waited very patiently, and still I could not bring myself to speak. Then it was his turn to take away my breath. He leant forward on the table and pulled out a pocket-book.

"Supposing, John," he said, "that you have been living in a fool's paradise for months. Supposing that, by some means unknown to me and the Admiralty, unknown to anyone, you are actually living in the centre of a cunningly woven web of espionage, whose strands reach from Berlin to Wilhelmshaven, from Kiel to London!"

He took a piece of paper from his pocket-book. I saw that there were figures upon it, not letters, but he read it as if they were print.

"Paul Upjelly," he said, "'Paul Upjelly, Ph.D.; English subject; possessed of private means; has been for eight years headmaster of Morstone House School; habits'—h'm—h'm—you know all about his habits, John—'man whose past cannot be traced for more than ten years; known to have lived in Germany in youth; no suspicion at present attaches.'"

"What on earth does this mean?" I gasped.

"It only means that in this pocket-book I have lists of forty or fifty people round these coasts who might or might not be in the pay of Germany. There is not the slightest suspicion attaching to any one of them, but I saw you stand up suddenly and grow pale—well, I played into your strong suit, that was all. Was I right?"

"Last night," I said, "I had a very curious and significant talk with a brother-master of mine, whose name is Lockhart."

"Get him to come here and have a chat as soon as possible."

"That isn't necessary, because Upjelly is away in London and an old beast of a housekeeper he keeps, who tells him everything, is in bed with a broken leg. We can go up to the school all right, and I particularly want to introduce you to Miss Joyce, who is—er——"

He nodded. "I know," he said. "You bored me to tears about the young lady last time I saw you. Delighted to meet her. We will toddle up to the school as soon as ever you like and I will hear what Mr. Lockhart has got to say. I suppose you can trust him?"

"I am absolutely certain of it," and, with that, things began to fall together in my mind as the glass pieces in a kaleidoscope fall and make a pattern. I mentioned the Navy List that I had seen at breakfast that morning, and I told Bernard what Wordingham had told me concerning the Doctor's knowledge of his visit.

A gleam came into his eyes. "Ah!" he said, very softly, and that was all.

We got up to go, and as Bernard walked across the room to find his overcoat, for night had fallen and it was bitter cold, I exclaimed aloud. I knew what had puzzled me at breakfast when Mr. Jones came into the room. He walked exactly like my brother. If you go to Chatham, Portsmouth, or Plymouth, almost every other man in the street walks like that.

We went straight to the school, only a quarter of a mile away, and entered by the masters' door. I lit the lamp in my sitting-room, put on some coals, and rang a bell which communicated with the upper boys' room, where they were now at preparation. In a minute, there was a knock at the door and Dickson max. entered.

"Dickson," I said, "I want you to find Mr. Lockhart and ask him if he would be so very kind as to come to my room—oh and, by the way, this is my brother, Commander Carey, Dickson."

The boy grew pale for an instant and then flushed a deep, rosy red. He was a cool young wretch as a rule and I had never seen him so excited before. I loved him for it. The boys knew all about my brother. They had read of his exploits in the Submarine E8. I was always being pestered with questions about him.

Bernard shook hands. "I am glad to meet you," he said.

Dickson was tongue-tied, but he gazed with an almost painful reverence at Bernard.

"Oh, sir," he stammered, "oh, sir"—and then could get no further. In desperation he turned to me. "I've done five hundred of the lines, sir," he said.

"Oh well, you needn't do any more," I answered.

"And please, sir, I've taken some more snapshots which I think you might like"—and with that the lad pulled out a little bundle of recently developed and printed photographs—he had a small kodak—and laid them on the table. Then he bolted and we could hear him leaping downstairs, bursting with the great news.

"He's got it badly," I remarked—"hero worship."

"Jolly good thing," my brother answered. "Lord, I remember when I was a midshipman of signals, how I worshipped the flag-lieutenant. I ran after him like a little dog, and I thought he was God. Healthy!"

We sat without speaking, waiting for Lockhart. My brother took up the little bundle of snapshots and looked through them. Then we heard a shuffling footstep in the passage and Lockhart entered. I introduced him and we shut and locked the door. Bernard looked the little man up and down for a minute or two, talking on indifferent subjects. And then, as if satisfied, he plunged into business. He didn't tell my colleague all that he had told me, but he told him enough to set Lockhart quivering with eagerness and excitement.

"You shall hear all I know, Commander Carey," he said. "After all, it isn't much, though"—he hesitated for a moment and then began:

"This man, Upjelly, our chief, is absolutely unfitted to be a schoolmaster. He takes not the slightest interest in the school. John, here, has found out, what I long more than suspected, that the Doctor's wild-fowling is really a colossal pretence."

"Does the school pay?" my brother asked.

"Just about. There may be a small profit, but not enough to keep any man tied down here if he has the slightest ambition or is anybody at all. And, you haven't met the Doctor, but you may take it from me that he is no ordinary man. There has always been an air of mystery and secretiveness about him. He neither asks nor gives confidences. It struck me from the very first that he was a man with an absorbing mental interest of some sort or other. What was it?—that is what I asked myself.

"Three weeks ago, the Doctor had a guest. It was a Mr. Jones, who frequently visits him, apparently for the shooting. My bedroom is on the floor below this. As you see, I am a cripple and an invalid. I often pass nights of pain, when I cannot sleep. On one such night, three weeks ago, the window of my bedroom was open and I lay in the dark. About half-past three in the morning I heard footsteps on the gravel outside, and the Doctor's voice. The night was quite still, though pitch dark. Then I heard another voice which I recognised as that of the man Jones.

"The voices drew nearer until the men were almost underneath my window. They were coming back from the marshes. I only know a few words of German, but I recognise the language when I hear it. They were speaking German."

My brother nodded.

"That Jones," I put in, "I have already told you, Bernard, was here when I arrived last night. He left for London this morning, taking the Doctor up with him in his car."

"Four days ago," Lockhart continued, "I wanted some waste paper to wrap up a pair of boots I was sending to be mended. I was in my room and I told one of the boys of my dormitory to go downstairs and get some. It was about nine o'clock at night. The boy brought back two or three newspapers. One of them was the *Cologne Gazette*, very crumpled and torn, but with the date of only five days before. I have got it locked up in my writing-desk.

"To-day, being a half-holiday, I thought I would go out for a walk upon the foreshore. An overcoat rather impedes my movements, though I have to wear one sometimes. I thought I would take a scarf instead. I went into the hall, knowing that my scarf was in the pocket of my overcoat, and felt for it. The hall is rather dark and I could not see very well what I was doing. What I brought out of the pocket in which I felt was not my scarf, but—this!"

Lockhart quietly laid something upon the table, and we bent over to look at it. To me, at any rate, it was an extraordinary object. It was a sort of cross between a large watch and a compass, with a curious little handle. There were letters or figures, for a moment I could not say which, in a double row round the dial.

"Can you tell me what it is?"

My brother was shaken from his calm at last. He gave an exclamation.

"Yes, I can!" he said. "I know very well. But first, when was this photograph taken?"

With dramatic suddenness, he held out one of Dickson's prints. It was a picture of Mr. Jones' motor, with that gentleman at the wheel and the Doctor sitting on the far side, taken that very morning as they left for London.

"This morning," I said. "That is the Doctor and Mr. Jones going off to town."

"Mr. Jones at the wheel?" my brother asked.

"Yes, that is the fellow."

"Let me get it quite clear. The man, you say, walks like me?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" said my brother again, and his eyes had the look of a bloodhound on a leash. "And now I will proceed to explain to you the use of this pretty thing."

CHAPTER IV

DORIS AND MARJORIE GIVE A SUPPER PARTY. THE ARROW FLIES IN MORSTONE SEA WOOD

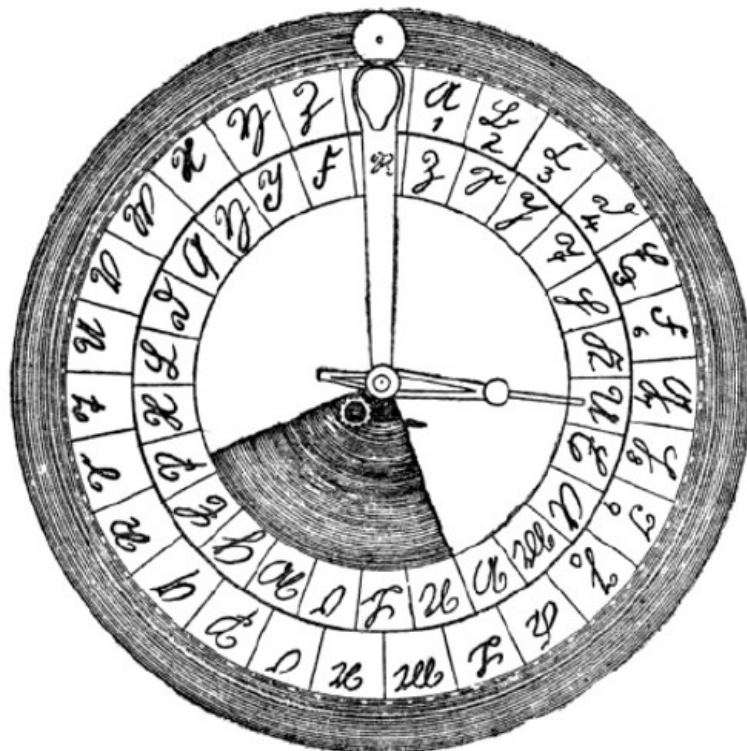
"This," said my brother, "is what is known as Charles Wheatstone's Cipher Instrument. It is a machine for writing in cipher. You see it has a sort of watch-face, which has the alphabet inscribed round its outer margin in the usual order, plus a blank space. A second alphabet is written on a card or paper and attached to the watch-face within the first alphabet. This has no blank space, and so there are but twenty-six divisions as against twenty-seven in the outer ring. Two hands are attached which travel at different speeds when the handle is turned. Accordingly, each time the long hand is carried forward to the blank space at the end of a word, the short hand will have moved forward one division on the inner ring of letters. Then a word is chosen as a key, written down in separate letters and the remaining letters of the alphabet are written in order beneath it. I'll show you. Suppose, for example, we choose the word 'English,' thus." He took a pencil and scribbled for a moment upon the back of one of Dickson's photographs:

ENGLISH
ABCDEFJK
MOPQRTU
VWXYZ.

"Now, if you read these letters downwards, you get this arrangement:

EAMVNBOWGCPXLDQYIFRZSJTHKU.

"This cryptographic alphabet is written on the inner card of the instrument, beginning at a point previously agreed on. Then, when a despatch is to be translated into cipher, the long hand is moved to that letter in the outer alphabet, and the letter to which the short hand points in the inner ring is written down. I need not go on, but I am sure the principle will be clear to you. These machines are in use in our Secret Service. But what I should like to point out to you in regard to this example is that the alphabet here *is in German*."



THE CIPHER MACHINE THAT MR. LOCKHART FOUND

We all looked at each other in silence.

"That is conclusive proof," I said at length. "Of course, you will have Doctor Upjelly arrested directly he comes back."

"*And* thank you!" said my brother. "So kind of you to put up your little turn, Johnny! Will you have a cigar or a cocoanut? My dear boy, if we had this man arrested, ten to one his tracks would be absolutely covered and we could prove nothing. Don't you see, what we want to do is to catch him in the act, to find out what he does and how he does it. No such rough and ready methods!"—his voice became very grave and stern.

"Quarter-deck!" I thought to myself.

"This has not got to be taken lightly," he went on. "I believe that fate has put my finger upon the very pulse of what has been puzzling the Admiralty for weeks. I honestly believe that here, in this lonely house, is hidden the intellect of the Master Spy of Germany. We are up against it. We must work in silence and in the dark. The slightest slip would be fatal. I cannot exaggerate the importance of this affair, nor," he concluded, looking keenly at Lockhart and myself, "nor the danger."

Little Lockhart's face positively brightened at this. "Danger!" he cried, as if someone had made him a present. "Then I shall be able to do something to help! We shall all be able to do something and——"

Lockhart started and broke off. At that moment, from behind Smith's classical dictionary and Liddell and Scott's Greek ditto there came a faint, muffled whirr.

"Good God, what's that?" said Lockhart.

"Oh, it's all right," I answered, and I expect I looked about as big an ass as I felt. "That is—er—a little contrivance of my own. By the way, you fellows must keep it absolutely dark."

To say that they watched me with interest is to put it mildly. I withdrew "Our House Telephone, Not a Toy, 27s. 6d. net" from its hiding place. Doris was speaking. She knew that my brother had come and she was dying to meet him. Old Mrs. Gaunt was sleeping peacefully; in fact I fear, so prone are all of us to error, that Doris had administered just twice the amount of opiate that the doctor had prescribed.

Doris suggested that she and Marjorie should come at once to my room. They also suggested that we should dine there, with the connivance of a friendly housemaid. I told her to hold the line for a minute, and explained.

My brother's face lost all preoccupation. He was a naval officer, you will remember, and, though a distinguished one, was as young gentlemen in that Service usually are in both age and inclination.

"Can a duck swim?" said my brother.

"Well, I'll go," Lockhart remarked, with just a trace of his old bitterness.

"You sit where you are, old soul," I told him. "Bernard, both the girls are only stepdaughters of the Doctor, who, they have told me, did not treat their mother very well and who is a perfect tyrant to them. They're as true as steel; I can answer for them. They will be of tremendous help."

"Leave it all to me," he replied. "I am skipper of this from now onwards. You follow my lead."

A minute or two afterwards the girls came in. Doris, as I have already explained, was as pretty as Venus, Cleopatra, and Gertie Millar all in one, and she only beat Marjorie by a short head. All the other girls I've ever met were simply "also ran."

Marjorie's hair was black. She was a brunette with olive-coloured skin and green eyes, like very dark, clear emeralds. She was extraordinarily lovely. Indeed, all three of us had seriously considered starting a picture postcard firm, with the girls as models and I to manage it, so that Doris and I could get married and have Marjorie to live with us. Rather a good scheme, only it would have needed at least two hundred pounds capital, which we hadn't got! Doris had on her engagement ring, which she generally wore on a string round her neck, underneath her blouse. I had put thirty shillings each way on "Baby Mine" for the Grand National and it had come off—hence the ring.

"Let me introduce you to my fiancée, Miss Joyce," I said to Bernard.

He took her hand and bowed over it, looking out of the corner of his eyes at Marjorie.

Little Lockhart gasped. "Babe that I am!" he said, "blind mole! To think that I have lived in this house with young John Carey for so long, the house honeycombed with secret wires, and an illicit engagement in progress under my nose, and I knew nothing of it!"

"Well, you are not the only person, Mr. Lockhart," Marjorie said. "And now I am going to fetch up dinner. Cook is out for the evening. Amy is in the plot. We've got soup—only tinned, but quite nice; there's a round of cold beef; and we will make an omelette on John's fire."

"I'll come and help you carry the things," said my brother, and they left the room as friendly as if they had known each other for years.

"Well, what do you think of my brother?" I asked Doris. I'm afraid my arm was round her waist and I had forgotten Lockhart.

"I'm decidedly of the opinion," she said, "that Commander Carey knows more than enough to come indoors when it rains."

Lockhart here revealed qualities of an unsuspected nature—I had never really appreciated Lockhart until the night before.

"I happen to have, locked up in the cupboard of my sitting-room," he said, "a bottle of claret wine and a bottle of sherry wine. I will go and fetch them to grace this feast."

"You nasty, horrid villain, so you drink in secret, do you?" I remarked.

"Only Bovril, but please don't let it be known," was the reply, and then Doris and I were alone.

I have never been one of those people who kiss and tell, so I will pass over the next minute; but after some business of no importance, she put her hands on my shoulders and looked me straight in the face.

"John," she said, "there is something up!"

"What do you mean?"

"I don't exactly know, but there is something up. I can feel it—and something has happened, too, that I have got to tell you about. Before the Doctor left this morning, he told Marjorie that Mr. Jones had fallen in love with her and that she would have to marry him after the war was over, when he has straightened out his business affairs."

"Good Lord!" I said, "that thing? Why——"

"What have you got against him?" she asked quickly. "He's wealthy, the Doctor says, he has got good manners; of course, he's older than Marjorie, but he's not an old man. I thought you said you rather liked him?"

"I did say so, and I liked him better than ever after meeting him this morning. You know I had breakfast with the Doctor?"

"I know, and there is something up. Something to do with your brother—I am certain of it. But why do you object to Mr. Jones for Marjorie?"

"What does Marjorie say herself?"

"She told the Doctor"—the girls would never call the Doctor "Father"—"that if Mr. Jones had a million a minute and was the last man left on earth after a second flood, she would rather spend her life in the garden eating worms than marry him!"

"Marjorie's plenty of pluck," I answered, "and is obviously of romantic temperament. Anyone else in the wind?"

"Anyone else?" she said, with a bitter note in her voice, "whom do we ever see? We live as prisoners here, as you very well know, Johnny, and if it were not for you I should long ago have jumped into Thirty Main Creek and ended it all."

I held her close to me. "Dear," I said, "it will all come right, I am certain. Somehow or other, we shall be able to be married soon, and then you need never see Morstone or the Doctor any more."

"I love Morstone," she replied. "I love the lonely marshes and the bird-noises and the great red dawns and the sweet salt air, but"—she shuddered—"that fiend who married my poor dear mother and drove her to death, I would see burnt to-morrow without a pang of remorse. He has been worse lately, John, far worse. Mrs. Gaunt has been put to watch us like a spy. I can't tell whether he suspects anything about you and me. He may or may not. At any rate, there is something going on which frightens me. I've no doubt you will think me quite hysterical, quite foolish, and I feel it rather than know it, but I am frightened. Only this morning, the Doctor said things to dear Marjorie which were awful. He caught her by the arm and twisted it when she defied him, and his voice was so ugly and cruel, it seemed so inhuman, that I felt as if someone had put ice to the back of my neck. Oh, take me away soon, take Marjorie away too!"

She clung to me in a passion of appeal, and then and there I resolved that, come what might, we would marry and leave this ill-omened and mysterious place.

"What a long time they are!" Doris said after a moment or two, when I had soothed her. "Oh, here they come!"

But it wasn't, it was only Lockhart, who knocked at the door loudly and waited for several seconds before coming in with his contribution to the dinner.

"I'll run down and hurry them up, as there is no one about," I said.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" she replied quickly. "Really, what a babe you are, John!"

I was just the least bit in the world offended, not seeing why I should not hurry up the truants, especially as I was extremely hungry again; but they came at last, carrying two piled trays of provisions. I had never seen Marjorie look prettier. Her eyes were brighter than ever, and she showed not the slightest trace of unhappiness. Obviously, she had quite forgotten the events of the morning.

I cannot tell you what fun the dinner was. The soup was top-hole—mock turtle, and one of Elizabeth Lazenby's finest efforts. Lockhart was a tremendous success as butler, and the "claret wine"—I should have thrown it at my scout's head at Oxford—tasted like "Château la Rose" at least.

Bernard and Marjorie made the omelette over my fire, while the rest of us sat waiting and Lockhart and I smoked a cigarette. Marjorie ordered my brother about most unmercifully. Suddenly, it was nearing a critical moment and both of them were crouching over the pan, I happened to turn my eyes in their direction. They were not looking at the omelette at all. They were looking at each other and their faces were almost solemn. Then it burst upon me and I fear I was indiscreet. I said aloud: "The very thing! Oh, my holy aunt, the very thing!"

They whipped round.

"What is?" Bernard asked.

"Why, the omelette, you blighter!" I replied, and kicked Doris under the table. She understood at once. Girls are so quick, aren't they?

When we had eaten the omelette and the round of cold beef had "ebbed some," as I once heard a Rhodes' Scholar say at Oxford, my brother rose, glass in hand.

"Mr. Vice," he said, "the King!"

I had dined in the wardroom with Bernard when he was on board the *Terrific*, and I knew what to do.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the King!" I said, and we drank that loyal toast in silence. Somehow it altered the mood of each individual. A gravity fell upon us, not sadness or boredom, but we stopped to think, as it were. Only two hundred miles away, over the marshes and over the sea, the great German battleships were waiting. Nearer than Penzance is to London, the armies of England at that moment were shivering in the trenches round Ostend. And in Morstone House School—what was there that hung undefined, but heavy and secret, like a miasma upon the air?

Then Bernard said: "Miss Joyce, I have taken the liberty to bring you a little present from London."

"Doris,' please," she answered.

"Very well then, Doris. It is a bracelet, a little affair of turquoises and pearls, to commemorate our meeting and in the hope that you will always be a good girl and love your brother-in-law."

"Oh, Commander Carey!"

"Bernard,' please!"

"Well then, Bernard, how sweet of you!"

Poor Doris, and Marjorie too, were not in the way of getting many presents. Upjelly saw to that!

My brother put his hand in his pocket, and then into another pocket, finally into a third. He hesitated, he stammered, and looked positively frightened. It was the first and last time I ever saw the old sport thoroughly done in.

"Damn!" he said, and then grew more embarrassed still. "I am the biggest fool in the Service. I remember now I left the case on my dressing-room table at the Morstone Arms."

Poor little Doris's face fell. She could not help it. But I had a bright idea.

"Oh, that's all right," I said. "There's a certain young imp of mine called Dickson max——"

"Dear boy!" Marjorie murmured, and my brother looked at her quickly.

"He's seventeen, and quite trustworthy," I went on. "He will be delighted to run and fetch it. Anything to be out of school at night!—and as I am headmaster of this East Anglian Eton, I can do as I like. I will ring for him."

Lockhart looked slightly upset, but I didn't care.

"But I thought," my brother remarked, "that this was somewhat in the nature of a—well, shall we say 'secure-from-observation' dinner party."

"Oh, Billy Dickson won't breathe a word," Marjorie said emphatically.

"Well, you command this ship," my brother said, "and it is up to you. Certainly I should like to send for the bracelet, and if you don't keep Whale Island discipline aboard, it's not my affair."

I rang for Dickson max. He arrived, knocked at the door, stepped in, and then his eyes grew very round indeed, but he said not a word. I told him what was wanted and asked him if he would go.

"Rather, sir," he said, "I would be only too delighted."

I gave him the key of the masters' door.

"It's a bitter cold night," my brother put in, "supposing you take my coat and this shooting hat. It'll keep you as warm as toast."

Of course Dickson max. would have scorned the idea of an overcoat under ordinary circumstances, though Bernard didn't know that. But the opportunity of wearing the ulster of a Wing-Commander of Submarines, who had been wounded off Heligoland, was too much for the youthful mind. He flushed with pleasure, and I won't swear that, as he went out into the passage, he didn't salute.

I went downstairs with him, helped him on with the big coat—he was the same height as Bernard and much the same figure—and pressed the heather-mixture shooting hat on his head.

"Now scoot as hard as you can go," I told him, opening the door, and he was gone like a flash into the dark night.

When I got back there was a curious silence. Somehow or other we none of us seemed to know what to say. I can't account for it, but there it was. It was then that my brother came in and I found a side of him I had only suspected but never seen before.

Leaning forward in his chair, he began to talk very quietly, but with great earnestness. I saw what he was up to. He was leading the conversation very near home indeed. It was astonishing how he dominated us all, how we hung on his words and how the sense of sinister surroundings grew and grew as he spoke.

It was the girls who responded. The skill with which he introduced the subject was enormous, but they were marvellously "quick in the uptake." It was Marjorie who leant forward, her great eyes flashing and her lips compressed to a thin line of scarlet.

"Commander Carey," she said, "don't think that I or my sister are entirely ignorant that there is something very wrong about this place. You have turned our thoughts into a new channel."

She was wearing a blouse with loose sleeves, ending in some filmy lace. Suddenly, with her right hand, she pulled up the left-arm sleeve. There were three dark purple marks upon her white arm.

"That was this morning," she said, nodding once or twice. "And now speak out, if you have anything to tell us, about the man who killed my mother as surely as if he did it with a gun, and who has done his best to ruin the lives of my sister and myself. Speak without fear!"

Then Bernard, in crisp, low sentences, told the girls and Lockhart exactly what he believed. The wind howled outside and hissing drops of rain fell upon the window-pane. The fire crackled on the hearth, the smoke of our cigarettes rose in grey spirals in the pleasant, lamp-lit room. It was a strange night, how fraught with consequences to England, the two beautiful girls, the little cripple, the third-rate schoolmaster, and even the young naval officer himself, did not know!

"It has long been suspected," my brother concluded, and his voice sank almost to a whisper, "that one master-mind has been behind all the German espionage, both before and during the war. There is in existence, our Intelligence Department has had indubitable evidence of it, a King of Spies, so subtle of brain, so fertile in resource, that, even now, we cannot find him. We do not know for certain, but it is rumoured that this man's real name is Graf Botho von Vedal, though what name he passes under now none can say."

Doris's eyes clouded. She seemed as if she was making an effort of memory.

"Was he once 'Wirklicher Geheimrat'—Privy Councillor to the German Emperor?" she asked.

Bernard stared at her. "So I am told," he said. "What do you know about him?"

"I can't tell you," she answered with a dazed look upon her face—"some childish memory. The name was familiar. My sister and I speak German as well as we speak English, you know."

"If I could put my finger upon that man," my brother continued, "then one of the gravest perils to which England lies open at the moment would be removed."

"Where is he?" Lockhart asked, speaking like a man in a dream.

We all looked at each other, and there was dawning consciousness and horror in every eye.

"Yes," came from my brother at length, and as he spoke he withdrew one of Dickson's little photographs from his pocket—I hadn't seen him put it there—"and also, what is Admiral Kiderlen-Waechter doing in England?"

We all knew that name. The papers had been full of it at the beginning of the war. Kiderlen-Waechter was the chief of the German Submarine Flotillas. It was owing to his ingenuity and resource that ship after ship of our gallant Navy had been torpedoed, even in the Straits of Dover themselves.

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"What I say, John. For, unless I am much mistaken—of course, I may easily be mistaken—the

gentleman who drove away with Doctor Upjelly to London this morning is that very man."

"Mr. Jones?" Marjorie cried. "The man the Doctor swore that I must marry when the war is over?"

Bernard's eyes blazed. "What?" he said quickly, "I heard nothing of that!"

The two were looking at each other very strangely when there was a knock at the door. It opened and Dickson max. came in.

He went up to my brother and put down a little case of red morocco by his side.

"There you are, sir," he said.

I looked up sharply. There was something unusual in the lad's voice. He caught hold of the back of Lockhart's chair and swayed as he stood. Then we saw that beneath the upturned collar of the overcoat one cheek was all red and bleeding. There was a line across it like the cut from a knife.

"What on earth is the matter?" I cried, in great alarm.

"Oh nothing, sir," he answered, "only as I was coming through the Sea Wood—I took the shorter way—I thought I heard someone behind me. I turned round, and just as I did so there was a noise like a banjo string, and something went past my head singing like a wasp. Then I found my cheek all cut."

"What did you do? Who was it?"

"I plunged into the bushes, sir, but could not find anyone. Then I pulled out my electric torch, and, sticking in the trunk of a tree, I found this."

The boy unbuttoned his coat and held out a long, slim shaft. It was an arrow, such as is used in archery competitions, but the edge had been filed sharp.

"Some silly blighter trying to frighten me," said Dickson max., and then, with a little sob, he fell in a faint upon the floor.

I bent over him and forced some wine between his lips. Bernard looked round the room with a set, stern face.

"They are not losing any time," he said quietly. "You see, they know that I am here, already."

NOTE.—For convenience sake I end the first portion of this narrative at this point. It divides itself into three parts quite naturally, as I think my readers will agree when they have read it all. At any rate, on this night was formed that oddly assorted, but famous, companionship which led to such great results. We swore no oaths, we made no protestations. There was no need for that.

END OF PART I

PART II

CHAPTER V

AT MIDNIGHT ON THE MARSHES. THE SECRET OF THE OLD HULK

Doctor Upjelly returned on the afternoon of the third day after he left for London. Directly I heard his trap drive away and knew that he was in his study, I went into his house and knocked at the door.

"I have very grave news to tell you, Doctor," I said.

He started. I distinctly saw him start and he flashed a quick look at me. One might almost have thought that he was frightened, but he swallowed something in his throat and his voice was calm and cold as ever when he answered.

"And what is that, Mr. Carey?"

"I am sorry, I am very sorry, to say that Dickson max. has run away."

There was a momentary silence. I could almost have sworn it was one of relief on the big man's part.

"What do you mean, Mr. Carey? Ran away from school?"

"Yes. He got out of his window on the very night you went. We did not discover it until the next morning. We scoured the country round, thinking it was merely a mischievous escapade, but found no traces of him. I then thought it my duty to acquaint his father at once, so I went to Norwich on my bicycle during the afternoon of the day after the discovery. To my immense surprise, I found the boy there. He had walked to Heacham station and taken the train. He stated that he was tired of school and it was his intention to enlist. His father seemed to concur in the view after we had had a long talk together. Of course, I endeavoured to get the boy back, for the sake of the school, but it was useless. Mr. Dickson seems a weak sort of man, and he says that he is going to do his best to get an equipment and pay what is necessary for Dickson to join the Public Schools Corps."

The Doctor, who was sitting down, his hand clutching a little brown travelling-bag on the table near him, did his best to show some concern. It was poorly done, however, and I could see that he did not care a rap one way or the other.

"I hope you don't blame me, sir?" I said, "but I could not have foreseen anything of the sort. It has never happened before."

"No, no. Not in the least, Mr. Carey. I am sure you acted most promptly and wisely in going at once to the boy's father. And his brother?"

"His brother is still here and steadfastly refuses to say anything about the affair. As far as I have been able to find out, he was quite in ignorance of his brother's intentions."

"Well, well. Of course, I am sorry to lose the boy, but I like his spirit," said Doctor Upjelly, without a gleam in his eyes or any warmth in his voice. "After all, perhaps he will be better employed in defending his country than in learning Latin grammar here—have a cigar, Mr. Carey."

He handed me his case, a most unusual proceeding.

"And how is your brother?" he said. "I trust he is benefiting by our pure air and that you have already been able to show him some sport."

I shook my head. "There is another strange thing I have got to tell you, Doctor," I replied, pretending to be busy with the lighting of my cigar, though I took very good care to watch his face reflected in the mirror over the mantelpiece. What I saw was significant. Now, indeed, the little black eyes gleamed for an instant, and the big, cruel mouth twitched—once. I felt, as surely as if I had been told, that Upjelly knew something of what had happened on the night of his departure.

"Yes," I said, "a most unfortunate affair! My brother was coming up to see me at the school during preparation and I had previously directed him to follow the short cut through the Sea Wood. It was quite dark, and as he was coming along, finding his way as well as he could, a most unprovoked attack was made upon him."

"An attack, Mr. Carey? You surprise me! Who could attack anyone on our marshes?"

"That is just what I cannot understand. He says he heard a sort of twanging noise, unlike anything he had ever heard before. Then something struck him on the cheek, cutting it deeply. He shouted and ran about in the dark, but could hear no sound, nor could he find anyone. He arrived at the school with a bad cut on his face, bleeding profusely. I bandaged it up as well as I could, gave him a little whisky-and-water, and then accompanied him home, taking my ten-bore with me, though we went by the road. Nothing happened, and the thing is a complete mystery. My brother is, of course, not in a very good state of health after his wound. He is confined to the inn, and will be so for some days, so I fear he will get very little shooting at present. He's afraid of the cold getting into his cheek."

"Dear me, dear me, what an extraordinary occurrence! Confined to the inn, you say?"

"For at least another week, if he is wise."

I could have sworn the great, fat face wrinkled with relief, and after we had discussed the incident for some little time, the Doctor advancing all sorts of ingenious theories, I turned to leave. Just as I was going, he asked me if I were going to shoot that night. I said that I should very much like to, as the geese were working well and there were reports of many widgeon about. Still, I thought it my duty to be with my brother; so that, after preparation, I was going down to the inn and should stay there for some time.

"Quite so, quite so," Upjelly replied. "I am sorry for both of you in losing your sport; but certainly you ought to be with your brother."

"I thought of staying till late, if you don't mind," I said. "He is rather feverish."

He swallowed the bait like a fat trout. "All night, if you wish," he said, "all night. You will certainly not be wanted here. Yes! A good idea! Why don't you get Mrs. Wordingham to put you up a bed?"

"If you really think I can be spared?"

"My dear Carey, on an occasion of this sort it is a pleasure for me to dispense with your services—not that they will be wanted in any way, for I don't suppose any more of my young ruffians are likely to run away to enlist."

"Then thank you very much; that is what I will do."

"Yes, by all means. And, for my part, I think I shall go out and try my luck. I must see if I can't shoot for both of you and bring back a goose or two."

Then I went away.

Lockhart and I had tea with the boys as usual. There was an air of suppressed excitement in the dining-hall. The exploit of Dickson max. had fired the imagination of everyone, though possibly a keener observer than was among his companions might have detected a suppressed and unholy joy in Dickson major, which was not entirely due to his brother's escapade. I had always thought that a weak spot in our plan. If the Doctor had known anything at all about the characters of his pupils, he would have realised that where Dickson max. went, Dickson major went too. Fortunately the Doctor did not.

At half-past eight I dressed in fowling kit, a grey sweater, a coat of nondescript colour, grey flannel trousers, and great thigh boots for the marsh. My headgear was an old, dun-coloured shooting hat, the lining of which could be pulled down to make a mask for the face, with two holes to see through; for it is essential to the wild-fowler to wear nothing too light or too dark, to show no glimpse of a pink face, because the wild goose, as even the greatest big-game hunters of the day allow, is the wariest of all created things. Then I took my heavy ten-bore, with its dulled barrels and oxydised furniture, slipped my three-inch brass "perfects" loaded with B.B. into my pockets, and telephoned to Doris.

It was all right. The Doctor was in his own room having supper, and Marjorie was with him. It was impossible that he could see me leave in fowling kit, and in a moment more I had wished my dear girl good-night and was out in the dark.

The wind cried in the chimneys of the old house with a strange and wailing note. The moon was not yet up, and the far-distant sea drummed like an army. As I turned towards the Sea Wood, some great night-bird passed overhead with an eerie cry, like a man in pain.

For myself, my heart was beating rapidly, my teeth were set and I felt nothing of the cold. To-night, if ever, we were to discover the secret of the marshes. My brother had taken the helm of the ship, and his decks were cleared for action. His foresight and resource were admirable. Nothing escaped him, and we were meeting the dark plot with another which allowed nothing to chance. This is what had happened.

We patched up Dickson max. as well as we could—the cut was not deep—and then my brother took him into Lockhart's room. What he said to the lad I did not know, even now I do not know, but they came back with the boy's eyes sparkling. He walked like a man—in those ten minutes something had transformed him from a laughing schoolboy into a different being. We took him at once to the Morstone Arms, and there my brother spent a long time with Sam Wordingham and his wife. They were as true as steel, this worthy couple. They were not told everything, but it was explained to them that this was "Government business" of the highest importance, and that in the King's name they must aid Bernard in every possible way.

It did me good to see Sam's nut-brown face hardening into resolve, and the excitement in his eyes. Dickson was put to bed in an attic of the rambling old inn and the door was locked.

Before it was light that morning my brother stole out, walked five miles in the opposite direction to Blankington-on-Sea, caught the fish train from a village in the neighbourhood of Cromer, and was in London at the Admiralty by mid-day. He returned in a fast motor car that night. The car was housed in the garage of the Lieutenant of Coastguards at Cockthorpe, four miles away. It was to be ready for any emergency, and by eleven o'clock my brother was back at the Morstone Arms.

On the morning of that day, I indeed went to Norwich on my snorter. She seemed to rise to the occasion, for she did the forty miles to Norwich in two hours and without any mishap. I interviewed the Rev. Harold Dickson and swore him to secrecy, and I never saw a parson more delighted. His sons were true chips of the old block, and after lunch at the "Maiden's Head" the clergyman almost cursed his age and cloth that he was not also available for the service of his country.

Finally, and this provision of my brother was extraordinarily wise, as it afterwards appeared—though he could have had no idea of what we were to discover at that moment—three of the crew of his own submarine, all recovering from wounds, but all taught and handy men, were, even now, upon their way from Harwich to lodge unobtrusively at the coastguard station at Cockthorpe, where they could await Bernard's orders.

I went through the Sea Wood, towards the inn. This was a place that had been planted to shelter the cultivated fields behind from the keen marsh winds. As one advanced into it from the coast side, the furze, among which innumerable rabbits played, gave way to elders and other hardy shrubs. It was about a quarter of a mile long and not more than two hundred yards in breadth. The timber was all stunted and bushy, the undergrowth was rank and thick. The trees led a life of conflict; they were accustomed to swing there all night long in fierce winter tempests; it was a remote and savage place, where even the pheasants of Lord Blankington hardly ever came.

I pressed through the narrow path until I came to a little open space, a cup or hollow through which a sluggish stream wound its way on to the marsh. Here, the bushes were thicker than ever

and the stream widened into a pool covered with innumerable water-hen that made cheeping noises in the night. It was covered with them as I came up noiselessly; one could see the little black dots upon the livid, leaden expanse.

I sat down, looked at my watch—I had a fowlers' watch with what is called the "radium dial" that showed the time in any darkness—and found it was just half-past nine. Waiting till a gust of wind had died away, I whistled the first three bars of "It's a long way to Tipperary." There was no response and I whistled again. The last note had hardly shivered away when I felt a hand upon my shoulder and I jumped like a shot man.

"It's only me, sir," sounded in my ear with a triumphant chuckle; "I stalked you pretty well, didn't I, sir?"

"You young devil!" I replied, "you nearly frightened me out of my life!"

"I thought I would try and see what I could do, sir," said Dickson max.

He was in a black suit. I fear it was his Sunday-best. He wore no collar and his face and hands were covered with burnt cork—a grimy, sooty apparition the young imp looked, but, nevertheless, one couldn't have seen him a yard away.

"You've done very well," I said. "Stick to it. The Doctor isn't such a marshman as I am, and if you come up to him like that—well, you won't have a difficult task. You know where I and my brother will be?"

"Yes, sir," he whispered—"in the gun-pit at the head of Garstrike."

"Right you are. Now out along as quickly as possible and bring us news by midnight if you can."

"I am going to lie in the rhododendrons in the Doctor's garden," he said. "He's sure to come out by his private door, and I'll follow him to Heligoland if necessary."

I gave him a pat on the back, and as I looked round he had already melted noiselessly into the dark and I was alone.

In the inn I found my brother. The kitchen was full of labourers drinking their last pint before closing hour at ten. In the private bar old Pugmire was babbling over his gin, but in the sitting-room beyond, with curtains drawn, Bernard was all ready for the enterprise, dressed just as I was.

"Well?" he asked.

"It's all serene. I've met Dickson and he is watching the Doctor now. In about three-quarters of an hour the inn will be closed and all the men gone home. Then we can set out."

Mrs. Wordingham came in with two bottles of that famous strong ale which is kept for twenty years and which is the best antidote against the cold of the marshes known to the wild-fowler—only an amateur takes spirits upon the saltings.

We drank it in silence.

"I don't know what is going to turn up to-night," said Bernard. "I trust to your knowledge of the marshes implicitly. But remember this, old soul, it is not a lark of any sort. We shall be in the gravest danger. I cannot exaggerate the importance of what we are doing. The Admiralty itself is waiting for news. I am not dramatic in any way, Heaven knows! but I'll let myself go for a minute. I believe, John, that it may well be that we two, and the others who are helping us, hold the destinies of England in our hands. God grant that we shall be successful!"

"I think we shall."

"I believe we are on the right track. But there is one thing I want to say. Supposing, just supposing, that one of us does not come back to-night, and assuming it is me"—here Bernard hesitated and looked at me rather ferociously.

"Well?"

"Well, just give this to Miss Marjorie Joyce, will you?" He pulled a signet-ring from his little finger, a ring that had been our governor's.

I told him to keep his hair on and that I would.

At a quarter past ten we slipped out of the big door of the inn, skirted the Sea Wood without entering it, and went down upon the foreshore. It is necessary that I should give you some idea of the famous Morstone marshes, and to the description I will add a rough-drawn map which will help to make things clear.^[1]

If you look at the map of England, you will see Wells marked at the top right-hand corner of the Wash. Then comes a long, blank space till you get to Sheringham and finally to Cromer. Blankington-on-Sea was the next town to Wells on the west. Then five miles east of it comes Morstone. So much for our geographical position.

Looking north, there was nothing between us and Iceland; looking a little north-east, we were only three hundred miles from Cuxhaven, about three hundred and twenty miles to Heligoland,

and nothing like that to the Frisian Islands just below the mouth of the Kiel Canal. So much for that, and now to be more local.

From the foreshore, it was about a mile and a half over the marshes to the sea at low tide. At ordinary high tide it was about a mile. With spring tides and a rare off-sea wind blowing due north, the marshes were covered right up to the foreshore. This happened about twice in the year, and then they were only covered for a depth of about five or six feet, if that. The foreshore, as it is called, is a somewhat misleading term. It did not in the least resemble what one generally associates with the word. It was simply a grassy bank covered with furze bushes and with a grass road going right along it. The coarse grass sloped down till the mud was met. Now this mud was a sort of turfy peat on the surface, covered with marrum grass. One could walk on it with perfect safety, it was as hard as an ordinary field, but it was everywhere intersected with creeks of varying depth. Some of these were little runnels a foot deep, some of them had steep sides of ten or twelve feet and were crossed by narrow planks in permanent position. The sides were of mud as black as a truffle—I have really no other simile which so exactly fits the case—and at the bottom was two or three feet of water covering softer and more dangerous mud.

At high tide these deeper creeks had seven or eight feet of water in them. Then, at various points upon the marsh, were creeks which were really like tidal rivers, only that they ended at the foreshore, as a railway line ends at a terminus. These were huge trenches, wider than the widest canal, some of them seventy or eighty yards across. The walls of mud were precipitous, twenty and even thirty feet high. The largest of these had many feet of water in them at all states of the ebb and flow, but when the tide was full they were almost brimming and could have floated a fair-sized ship.

Anything more utterly desolate and forlorn, even on a bright, sunlit day, than these sullen, winding waterways, so far from the habitations of man, can hardly be conceived. They were the haunt of innumerable fowl. Herons stood on the brink and transfixed flat-fish with their long, spear-like beaks. The wild duck gathered in the little bays and estuaries formed by their convolutions. The red-shank and the green-shank whistled over them at all hours.

The two largest creeks of all were known as Garstrike and Thirty Main. It was from the heads of these waters that the gun-punts started on their dangerous nightly mission, following this or that creek in and out, wherever there was water. Garstrike had always ten feet of water in it at low tide, but Thirty Main was the largest by far. It stretched straight away from the sea to the foreshore. There was always at least thirty feet of water in its black, evil-looking depths. At high tide, sixty would have been nearer the mark. It wound among the marsh, the centre of endless smaller creeks which ran into it, the great ganglion of the whole system of nerves.

It was the study of months to know the marsh. Death had come to many fowlers there who did not know its complexities and who omitted to carry an illuminated compass for night work. Many men had been cut off on an island of mud covered with the purple sea-thistles, the bronze-green marrum grass, and the rank vegetation of the saltings. And some had been waiting in a minor creek when the tide came fast and swift through all the intricate waterways, who were unable to climb the steep sides of slippery mud, and so met their fate.

We crossed the foreshore in a minute and a half and came down upon the mud. The frozen grass crackled under our boots like little rods of glass. The shallow pools were all frozen over as we made our way round the curving shore of Garstrike.

We were on the right bank, and here and there we had to go along some of the smaller creeks that flowed into it. It is no joke to walk over a twelve-inch plank in the pitch dark with a ten-foot ditch of mud and water below. As an old marshman, I was used to it, though I had known many new-comers give these bridges a miss at the first start off. But Bernard skipped over like a bird, and after a quarter of a mile or more of slow progress, aided by my illuminated compass and a faint, ghostly light from the rising moon, we got to the gun-pit marked upon the map.

Immediately to our left was a low punt-house dug into the steep mud-bank of Garstrike and entered at the shore end by a rough ladder. The pit was five feet deep; there was a rough board for a seat and there was about a foot of water in the bottom—rain-water, which had fallen during the last few days. This, however, was nothing, and we scrambled in and sat down.

I had taken my ten-bore to the Morstone Arms, but Bernard had told me to leave it there. He had given me a heavy Service pistol, which fired ten shots in as many seconds, together with an extra clip of cartridges for the magazine. He had another in the pocket of his coat.

So we sat and waited. Bent on more pleasant business, we should have had our guns ready in our hands, waiting for the sound of birds flying overhead as the moon rose, coming from the sand-banks out at sea inland to the stubbles. But now our ears were tuned to a different music, and I am not ashamed to say that I heard some artery within me beating like a drum.

It was a solemn hour and strange indeed was the business we were upon. The whole marsh was alive with voices. There was the long, hushed roar of the sea, the fiving of the wind, and then the countless cries of the night-birds. A great heron flapped away somewhere over Thirty Main, with its hoarse "frank, frank"; there was a rustling whistle far overhead as a company of widgeon flashed by at thirty miles an hour; a paddle of duck were quacking somewhere on the other side of the creek; and then, faint at first, but growing nearer and nearer, came that sound which, to the wild-fowler, is the finest in the world and which many and many a man and woman has said to be the strangest sound in nature.

The wild geese were coming. I can never think of that sound without a tightening of the muscles, almost a lump in the throat. It is like a vast pack of ghostly hounds up in the sky, which cuts into the night like nothing else can do, and instinctively I felt for my gun. But it was not to be that night. They passed over us not more than eighty yards high—well within the range of a heavy gun—and the noise was deafening in our ears as the great wedge-shaped formation sped by.

"By Jove, that's good!" I heard Bernard whisper.

It was the one chance of the night. No more geese worked our way, and for an hour we sat motionless, growing colder and colder, but patient still.

Then, at last, there was a low whistle and a crouching figure appeared on the edge of the pit.

"I've followed him, sir. He came out of the school with his gun and went straight on to the foreshore. He walked for nearly a mile towards Cockthorpe. I crouched behind the furze bushes and he never saw me. He was walking very fast. He passed the head of Thirty Main and then went down on to the mud, following the bank until he came to the Hulk. The bridge was out and he went on board. Then he pulled it up—and there he is now. I saw a light struck and a candle lit from one of the windows in the side. Then something was pulled over it, and I came away here as fast as I could."

"The Hulk!" I said. "Of course, I might have thought of that before!"

"What is it?" Bernard asked.

"It is the hulk of an old coaster of about eighty tons. It is permanently moored in Thirty Main Creek. Upjelly bought it for twenty pounds some two years ago and has had it fitted up. In the summer he sometimes camps out there. In the winter he uses it as a base for shooting on the marshes. There are three or four on the saltings between Wells and Cromer."

"Then we must go there at once. How can we approach it?"

"It is moored some three yards from the shore—there is deep water right up to the banks on either side of Thirty Main Creek. It's reached by a light bridge and a handrail, which anyone on board can pull up after him by means of a derrick on the stem of the old main-mast. If we were to approach over the mud, we should hear nothing, but we can go by water and get to the far side. Wordingham's punt is ready in the house close by. It will take us half an hour poling up to Garstrike and then back again down the long, winding creek of Morstone Miel. That brings us out into Thirty Main Creek—which we can cross and hug the opposite side. The Hulk lies in a little bay. When we get nearly there, we shall have to paddle, just as we 'set to birds.' We shan't make a sound, and we ought to hear something or see something if there is anything to be seen or heard."

"You'll let me come with you, sir?" Dickson asked eagerly.

I shook my head. "It's a two-handed punt," I said, "and there's no room for anybody else—you ought to know what a fowling punt is by this time. It's dangerous enough for two experts. No, Dickson, you've done very well indeed and I'm proud of you. You must cut home now as quietly as possible and go to bed at the Morstone Arms. Whatever you do, don't show your face at the window in the morning. I'll come and tell you everything."

I could see the boy was very disappointed, but a word from Bernard comforted him.

"You're a first-class scout, Dickson," he said; "I wish I had you on board my ship. If you obey orders as you have been doing and anything comes of this business, I'm not at all sure that I can't promise you a billet."

If Dickson flushed under his burnt cork, I did not see it, but his voice was tremulous with joy. There was no mistake about it this time. He saluted, and in a moment more was gone.

"Now," I said, "come along. You don't understand punt work, do you, Bernard?"

"No," he said, "only shore shooting. I've been in some queer craft in my time, but here 'you 'ave me,' as the cabman said. You must be skipper of this cruise!"

We hurried over the few yards separating the pit from the punt-shed. I went down the ladder first and unlocked the door. We found ourselves in a long, narrow shed with a little landing-stage along one side and some lockers above it fixed to the wall. In the middle lay the punt, painted a dull green-khaki over its mahogany, almost invisible at night. The big gun stretched out far over the bows; everything was ship-shape and in order, for Wordingham was a tidy man, and this punt, which with its gun had cost a hundred and fifty pounds, had been given him by a wealthy fowler, an officer in the Guards, who loved to come down in peace time for a week on the waterways of East Anglia.

"Now," I said, "be careful. You get forrard and lie down on your stomach. Yes, that's it; brace yourself against the recoil piece of the gun. Lie as if you were going to fire it when we come within shot of birds on the water. That'll trim the boat. I'll punt until we get near. Then I'll in-pole and paddle. Remember you mustn't move and you mustn't make a sound."

We glided out on to the black water of Garstrike Creek. The banks sheltered us somewhat from the wind, but it was nearly high tide and every now and again a freshet sent waves lapping against the low sides of the punt; and occasionally a cupful of water or a lash of spray came over.

My brother told me, long afterwards, that it was one of the strangest experiences of his life, and I suppose that the first night in a punt must indeed be that to the tyro. To me, it was ordinary enough, but my blood ran fast and free as I realised that we were out for bigger game than geese or duck to-night.

Our progress will be seen by the dotted line upon the map. We went up Garstrike, keeping close to the right bank. Then, quite suddenly, the smaller Miel opened out. We made a sharp turn, and now the banks were scarcely more than two yards from us on either side, while punting was easier owing to the shallow water. At low tide, it would have been almost impossible to go from Garstrike to Thirty Main. We followed the sinuous turnings of the small creek for some twenty minutes, in and out between the black walls, like people walking in some dark alley. Then Miel Creek opened out and we shot on to the broad waters of Thirty Main.

Here we were on what seemed a wide river. There was an immediate sense of space and freedom and the sea became more choppy. Punting was impossible. I knelt down and with infinite caution stretched myself upon my stomach, my head between my brother's legs. Then I got out the paddles, which were small implements held in the hand, in shape resembling nothing quite so much as a pair of large butter pats, or shall I say a couple of ladies' hand-mirrors. With my arms over the side, I gradually propelled the punt round the curve where, in a little bay, the Hulk was lying. It is thus one approaches the "paddle" of duck or geese upon the water for the last hundred and fifty yards. Progress is by inches. The long grey punt steals noiselessly towards its quarry until the supreme moment when the gunner pulls the lanyard, the pound and a half of shot speeds upon its mission, and the punt rears like a horse.

But there was to be no roar or concussion to-night.

The moon was now high, though it was obscured by driving clouds. There was only a faint and phosphorescent radiance. This was all the better for our purpose, and anyone upon the look-out could hardly have distinguished the grey thing creeping towards the Hulk with such infinite slowness.

We drew nearer and nearer. Thirty yards ... twenty ... ten. Then I stopped paddling. It was full high tide, absolutely dead; that moment when flow and ebb alike are suspended.

We came alongside the high walls of the old ship without a sound, our hands fending the punt from its curved, barnacle-studded timbers. Long swathes of green weed hung from the sternpost as we edged our way round to the port side.

Now I had never visited the Doctor's Hulk. When I first went to Morstone I thought it strange that he did not ask me, but he had never done so and the matter passed from my mind. I knew nothing, certainly, of its internal arrangements. At the same time, I had been over a similar hulk moored off Wells-next-to-Sea, which belonged to a wealthy maltster there, and I knew that the same carpenter had fitted up both boats. From what I remember, there was a cabin built out on deck with a glass roof, while the hold below had been fitted up partly as a winter smoking-room and dining-room, partly as berths for sportsmen who wished to sleep after their toil.

I was quite right. The old portholes of the boat had all been done away with, but a large square window, some four feet above our heads, bulged in the side of the Hulk. No light could be seen, but the top of the window was open, and, even as we glided up, a whiff of cigar smoke came out and we heard the murmur of voices.

The murmur of voices! The Doctor was not alone upon the old coaster. Something was brewing within its sea-worn timbers. We were nearing the heart of the mystery at last!

Instinctively, we both stood up. The punt rocked perilously, but we steadied it by holding on to the lower part of the window. Once, it nearly slipped away from beneath our feet and my brother crouched down again and caught at a great clump of barnacles, motioning me to listen.

For a moment or two I could hear nothing but a guarded rumble—it was like voices heard by chance through a telephone. Then the wind happened to drop and they became quite clear.

I started with surprise, for, though I could see nothing, I was certain that there were three people on board the Hulk. Upjelly's cool, incisive tones struck immediately upon the drum of the ear. Then came another voice, a hoarse, rough voice which I did not know; and finally a third that I did.

It was the voice of Mr. Jones, and I bent down and whispered to my brother.

Then, as I rose again and listened with my very soul, I shivered with disappointment.

The people within were speaking in a language I did not understand—save only a very few words. They were speaking in German!

It seemed that Upjelly was giving instructions of some sort or other. His voice had a ring of command in it that I had never heard before. It was like a hammer on an anvil, and unless I was much mistaken, it vibrated with excitement.

The answers came quickly enough.

"Ja, gnädiger Herr," or, *"Gewisz, das hab' ich gleich gethan."*

That presented no difficulties whatever. Upjelly was speaking to someone, obviously an inferior,

who replied, "Yes, sir," or, "Certainly, I have already done it."

Then Jones cut in, and here again I noticed an entire change in the quality of the man's voice. It was not Jones speaking now, it was the renowned Kiderlen-Waechter, of whom my brother had spoken three nights ago, or I would have eaten my hat. There was no mistaking the keen, arrogant note of command. The bland Mr. Jones never spoke like that, though the voice was the same. Then I distinctly heard the sound of a door either being shut or sliding in its grooves. There was the splutter of a match, the sound of a gurgling syphon, and, to my intense relief, Doctor Upjelly and his unseen companion began to speak in English.

"No, it's impossible. I have, in my safe at the school, all the plans. Our secret service on this coast has been working untiringly. For three days at least, after to-morrow night, the plans will hold good. In them is the station of every patrolling ship, full maps of this part of the coast, the disposition of forces—everything necessary for the Admiral. The tide to-morrow night will be even higher than it is now. The moon is waning; weather conditions point to a dark, tempestuous night to-morrow. She will come and take you away with the plans."

"Which I shall deliver to the Admiral within twenty-four hours, for the rendezvous is arranged, and I shall meet him in the middle of the North Sea."

"I shall be sorry to lose you, Admiral Kiderlen-Waechter."

"It will only be for a time. I shall soon return—as you know."

There was a sound of laughter, low, guttural, and strong.

"And what will you do, von Vedal?"

"To-morrow night I shall be with you, as you know, and see you go. Then I shall take my stepdaughter to London, to the house you know of, where I shall await you. The issue will not be long and you can claim your reward. I shall leave the school, ostensibly for a day or two, but it will never see me again, as you can understand. Fritz has put that meddling Commander Carey *hors de combat*—the arrow was a clever idea and no one suspects. As a matter of fact, I don't suppose for a moment that his visit was anything but just what it appeared to be—for purposes of rest and a little sport and to see his brother. *Gott im Himmel*, what fools these people are! Now, take for example that brawny young donkey, Mr. John Carey, my assistant-master. He fancies himself in love with my elder stepdaughter, Doris."

"And he may well be so, for she is a beautiful and charming young lady. Would I not do anything in the world for her sister?"

"Oh well, yes; I forgot, von Waechter. Love is not an event that has occurred to me. But this young Carey has actually rigged up a telephone between his room and Doris's. It is the most transparent device. I knew all about it twenty-four hours after it was done. I shall leave Doris behind at the school, and if this young lout cares to marry her and become headmaster of Morstone College, I'm sure he is very welcome—that is, provided there is any Morstone College left in three days from now."

"I will see to that. I rather like that boy, and a detachment of our marines shall guard the place and keep it from harm. That is all, I think."

"That is all."

"What time is it?"

"It's one o'clock—a little too early to go home. We must go upon the marshes and fire a few shots. I have already three ducks to carry home as the result of our labours. But let us have another cigar and wait for twenty minutes."

Again there was the striking of a match.

"Fritz will be all right, I suppose?" said Waechter.

"He will be perfectly all right. Not a soul suspects that there is anyone on board this Hulk, and he's well hidden in the fo'c'sle. A faithful fellow that!"

"You would say so if you had seen him as I have! He is the cleverest engineer in the whole of our Submarine Service, cunning as one of your own wild geese, and absolutely to be depended upon—unless ..."

"Unless?"

"Well, I'm a good judge of men, and we must take people as we find them. Chief-officer Fritz Schweitzer is a perfect spy and a first-class officer of submarines. Awash or under the surface, he knows no fear. But a little, able-bodied seaman, six weeks ago at Kiel, gave him a thrashing in a Bierhalle till he wept. One thing we must remember to-morrow—everything must be said in German. I like to talk English, as you know. It pleases me to be taken for a sedentary city gentleman, it's my little vanity, von Vedal, but, for safety's sake, to-morrow night, when She comes ..."

"Quite so. Have you finished your cigar? Then let us go up on deck and see what the night is like."

There was a slight grating sound and an almost imperceptible swish as the gun-punt swung away from the side of the Hulk, swept round the miniature headland and raced for the mouth of the Miel Creek.

[1] See Frontispiece.

CHAPTER VI

HOW JOHN CAREY FOUGHT WITH THE GERMAN GIANT IN THE SALOON, AND "MR. JONES" MET UNEXPECTED THINGS IN THE NIGHT

It was five o'clock, low tide in the marsh creeks, and snow was falling lightly.

At high tide, the Doctor's Hulk rose considerably *above* the bank of Thirty Main Creek. It was three yards from the solid mud of the salting, and when the bridge was dropped one went up an incline to reach the deck.

Now it was low tide. The deck of the hulk was a good five feet below the margin where I stood with my brother. It was still only three yards away—nine feet—nothing to a very moderate athlete.

By four o'clock the evening had come. By five it was dark as midnight. Bernard turned behind us to where two people were waiting.

"You quite understand?" he said in a low voice.

I did not turn round; for certain reasons I could not.

"Ready?" Bernard asked.

"Yes, old cock," I answered, "and I hope you can jump it!"

I was on my own ground. I had won a lot of pots in the long jump at Oxford. I thought I should rather snaffle Bernard on this job, which was wicked enough. We went back ten yards for the run. The snow was still falling softly and thickly. There was the deep ditch between the bank and the deck of the dim, desolate old Hulk. It looked very ugly, and as I held up my elbows and started the run off, I heard a stifled noise behind me. I knew what it meant, but I would not listen. This was no tune for sentiment.

I took off on the very edge of the yielding mud-bank, leapt downwards in a great curve, lighted full over the bulwark of the Hulk with a thud, slid forward on the ice-bound deck, and was brought up short against the cabin. I wheeled round as a man does after a long slant at Murren. The whole thing did not take more than a second or two.

Turning, I saw Bernard in the air. He lighted as I had done, but his foot slipped before he got his balance and he fell heavily, striking his head against the stump of the main-mast which, with a yard shipped, was used as a derrick to raise the bridge to the marsh.

He fell with a noise like a sack of potatoes. I went up to him, tried to raise him, and found that he was unconscious. Something like warm varnish was oozing out of his head. My fingers dabbled in it. What I thought does not matter. If he was dead, he was dead, though I was pretty certain a tough old bird like Bernard was only stunned. But I had my orders, and I left him where he lay.

I stood up upon that slippery deck and pulled out my magazine pistol. I looked round. There was nothing whatever to be seen but the softly falling snow. I tried a low whistle to the people on the bank, but there was no answer.

It is a good thing to be under discipline. I had my orders, I waited, listened, and heard nothing. Then I crept aft to where a big glass-roofed cabin had been built out on the deck. There was no light shining through the roof. The door was locked. I listened and there was no sound save the soft, falling noise of the snowflakes.

It was foward, then, that I must go; and, treading with the greatest caution, I crept towards the bows of the old ship. The fo'c'sle hatchway loomed up before me. With cold, tingling fingers I felt for the door. It opened in the middle, in the usual way, and the hinges swung back as if they had been well oiled. Before me was the companion ladder—a dark well. With my pistol in my hand, I went down the stairs as noiselessly as a cat. I had only got to the bottom when a warm, stuffy smell came to my nostrils. I was in a triangular space roofed by heavy bulkheads. It was not quite dark, for a long rod of yellow light came from behind the stairs, where there was a door. I went up to it and listened. Everything was perfectly silent.

Then I pushed open the door and entered. What I expected to see, I cannot say, but I was prepared for almost anything. What I did see was entirely unexpected.

I found myself in a long saloon lit by a swivel lamp hanging from the roof. Dark crimson curtains

were drawn over windows and possible portholes. The floor was covered with a faded Turkey carpet. Here and there a mirror was let into the wall. I saw a case of books and an excellent photogravure of the King, over a little grate in which glowed a fire of smouldering coke. There were two or three basket armchairs padded in cretonne. There was a central table, two little smoking-tables, and a sort of buffet at the side of a further door. Upon the buffet were glasses, syphons, and various bottles. There was a box of cigars upon the central table and a silver cigarette-box upon one of the smaller ones. I had come into a little, luxuriously furnished club-room, which struck upon the senses with an irresistibly homely and pleasant note as I looked round in wild amazement. There was even a brass kettle on a trivet by the fire, which was singing melodiously to itself. I stared round the place like a child, and caught sight of my face with open eyes and dropping jaws in one of the looking-glasses. What was I doing here? What had I tumbled into? What?...

I came back to myself just in time. There was a loud and sudden creak, the yawn of a partly open door. Then—Bang!

The gilt-framed mirror in which I had been gazing at myself smashed in the centre and starred all round, as something whizzed past my head with a ricochet.

Instinctively I crouched down upon the carpet, wheeling round as I did so.

The door at the opposite end of the saloon had been slid back. In the rather dim light from the hanging lamp, I saw a great, bearded, whiskered face, red, and framed in a fury of lint-coloured hair. It seemed just like a gorilla turned white and malevolent in a sudden ray of sunshine.

There was another deafening explosion: One! Two! Three! and the furious noise in the confined space of the cabin filled me with something of its own rage. I saw red. The warm and evil silence of this comfortable place had frightened me far more than this onslaught. Unharméd, I leapt to my feet.

As I did so, I saw that the man in the dark oblong beyond was feverishly pressing a clip into his magazine pistol. He would be at me again in a second, but I caught up one of the smoking-tables, heavy as it was, and charged him.

The table was iron, covered with beaten copper. I ran at the creature like a bull, and as he advanced a yard into the room I was on him with a frightful crash and down he went.

I fell also on to the tripod of the table and bruised myself badly, but I was too angry to think of that. I tore my shoulder from it and flung it to the other side of the saloon. The man growled like a mastiff, half rose from the floor, and then I had him by the throat.

I am a strong man; I think I said that at the beginning of this narrative. What I mean is that I could out almost any Sandow pup in no time. But as I caught this hairy-faced creature by the throat and felt his arms seeking for mine, then I knew that I was in for the time of my life. My hands sank into the great, muscular system of his neck. My thumbs were pressed on each side of the Adam's apple—Japanese fashion—and my fingers were feeling upwards for the final pressure on the jugular vein.

But, with all my weight upon him, he was so strong from the waist up, there was such a resilience in the massive torso, that he rose slowly, as if pressed by some hydraulic piston. As he rose, my legs slithered backwards. I tried to get some purchase with my toes to force him back, but it was useless. He came up almost to a sitting posture. Great hairy hands felt for my ears, and for a moment I thought it was all U.P.

Then I got my right leg under his left and heaved over.

We were upon our sides, the German uppermost, my hands still choking his life out of him. Naturally, in that position, my grip was bound to loosen. I could put no weight into it. But his arms were all sprawling. One was partly under himself and partly under me, the other beating me like a flail upon the ribs. I felt the sweat pouring from his face on to mine, and he smelt horribly of garlic. It was just touch and go.

Suddenly I whipped my numbed hands from the fellow's throat, slithered my arms down the front of his body, and gripped him round the lower ribs with a hug like a bear.

Of course, this was my long suit. There are not many people who can stand my affectionate embrace, especially when I am fighting for my life! I heard one rib crack, and I laughed aloud. I tightened the vice, and as the second went I knew it was all over. The brute made a noise exactly like the water running out of a bath, a sort of choked, trumpeting noise. His body grew limp. I disengaged myself and rose unsteadily to my feet.

Wow, but I had had it! The beastly smoking-room waltzed round me; I staggered to the buffet like a drunken man. My hands were dark crimson.

Old Upjelly and his confederates were accustomed to do themselves well. I realised it as my eye fell upon the row of bottles—therein was much balm in Gilead. There was a long-necked one with "Boulestin" upon the label. I pulled out the cork at a venture and drank deep. It was just what I wanted. It was cognac, and my eyes cleared and my arms stopped trembling.

I do not suppose the whole affair had lasted for more than three minutes, and as I came to myself I realised the necessity for instant action. My late adversary was lying at the other end of the

saloon, his head rocking in the open door which led to his own quarters. He was not unconscious. He frothed at the mouth like I once saw an old pike I caught with a spinner in the Broads. His eyes were red and glazed, and he breathed like a suction pump gone wrong. I saw he was harmless as far as further aggression went, but I thought it as well to make sure. I took the bottle and poured as much as I thought right into the chap's mouth. Then I snatched the cloth from the centre table, tore it into strips, rolled it up, and tied Master Fritz Schweitzer round the ankles. I pulled him to the wall and propped him up. I knew two of his ribs were broken, and I felt for his collar-bone. That, as it happened, was not broken. It did not matter much anyway if he died, though he was a long way from that. Still, we wanted him; so I took the cork out of the brandy bottle, wrapped it up in my handkerchief to make a sort of pad, shoved it in his mouth, and tied the end of the handkerchief round the back of his head. Then, when I had secured his hands, I felt we were getting on very well and I took a long breath.

I hurried up the companion-way to the deck. The keen night air, the still falling snow, made me sway for a moment like a drunken man. I heard a distant shout from the bank beyond, and with the shout was mingled a high, treble note. That pulled me together more than anything else, and I remembered what a perfect beast I had been not to let them know. Of course, they must have heard the shots and been in an agony of fright.

"Cheery-O!" I shouted. "Everything is all right, and I'll let down the bridge in a minute."

Then I stumbled aft to find my brother.

The fight in the cabin could not have been as long as I thought, for Bernard was just sitting up and rubbing his head. Incidentally, he was swearing sweet wardroom oaths to himself.

I forbear to reproduce them; they can only be indicated here.

"Help me up.... Have we made too much noise?... Have they heard us below?"

"That's all right, old soul," I said. "Feeling better now?"

"Don't talk so loud, you fool!" he hissed. "You'll spoil everything!"

"It's all right, old soul. I've said a few words to the crew. Now help me to lower this gangway."

Bernard never said a word of protest. He somehow felt it was all right, and in a minute more we had knocked the catch out of the toothed wheel which lowered the gangway and I let it gently down by the greased halliards.

Dickson max. came over first. Somebody followed him, so like Dickson max. as makes no matter. This someone, a slim boy in appearance, put its arms round my neck and nearly sobbed.

"It's all right, dear," I answered; "we've won the first trick. Now you and your knowledge of German come in. Remember you are on the King's service."

I do not know whether it was that or her relief at seeing me safe again—for both Doris and Dickson max. had heard the shots and the dulled noise of the fight below—but my girl pulled herself together in a moment.

Little sportswoman! she nipped down into the saloon quicker than Dickson max., whose Sunday suit she was wearing. Bernard and I would not have brought her into this business for anything had she not volunteered. But she *would* come when she knew the truth. Neither of us knew German. It was essential that we should have someone with us who did. And in the wild welter of those momentous three days, I am afraid our sense of proportion was lost. We were all young. We were all out to save England if we could. This is my apology for Doris being with us. I shall not repeat it. The end justified the means so unforgettably, so gloriously.

The man, Fritz Schweitzer, was still unconscious. He lay like a log, bound and gagged, and an unpleasant sight, too. I felt rather proud of my work as I looked at him, but Doris ran forward.

"Poor fellow!" she said, "I must do what I can for him."

"Not now, please," Bernard answered quickly. "The first thing to do is to search ship. Remember that you heard nothing of Kiderlen-Waechter, who is waiting till midnight for Upjelly. The presumption is that he was to stay on board, yet we have seen no sign of him. Up with the drawbridge at once, John and Dickson, and then come back to me."

We tumbled up the companion and in a minute had raised the creaking bridge. It was impossible for anyone lurking on the ship to have got off in the short time we had been.

"Now then," Bernard said, when we got back to the cabin, "get out your pistol, John, and you and Dickson search this Hulk thoroughly. Miss Joyce will stay here with me. I wish to speak to her. Report to me at once."

We went through the narrow door from which Schweitzer had fired at me, and found ourselves in a small compartment in the bows of the boat. There was a cooking-stove, some pots and pans, some shelves of groceries and tinned goods, and a berth with tumbled, frowsy blankets, where the German had obviously been sleeping. Nothing there; and again traversing the cabin, we went up on deck.

The deck-house, as I have said before, was locked, but my weight soon disposed of that obstacle

and, flashing my electric torch, with my pistol ready, I entered.

The place was simply a storeroom. There were eel spears, some leather cartridge magazines, a couple of old "cripple-stopper" guns, and so forth. Only one thing I noticed, and that was a new, stout rope-ladder, with bamboo rungs and zinc hooks at the top. Finally, we prised open an old hatchway and peered down into the musty darkness of the bottom part of the Hulk. Dickson ran and fetched the rope-ladder and I went down first. There was nothing whatever to be seen but the bare timbers of the ship. Everything had been gutted and there was a most horrible smell from a foot or two of bilge-water. It was certain that no one lurked unsuspected on board.

When we went down again to the cabin, I saw an extraordinary thing. My brother had picked up what remained of the table-cloth, had twisted it into bands, like what I had used on Schweitzer, and was tying up Doris! Her hair was down, too, flowing in a great mass below the shooting-hat she had worn.

"What on earth are you doing?" I asked.

"Shut up," he said, "you will see in a minute. Now, Miss Joyce!"

With her arms tied closely behind her, her feet free, Doris smiled and went out of the cabin.

"Now for this swine," said my brother, and taking the soda-water syphon from the table, he squirted it with great force and precision into the wretched Schweitzer's face, till his beard looked like the fur of a water-rat and his eyes opened slowly.

"Take off the gag," said my brother.

I did so.

"Now prop him up in a sitting position—yes, get one of those cushions—that's it."

Then Bernard put some brandy into a tumbler and held it to the fellow's lips. He sucked greedily and gave a great groan.

Suddenly, as we stood there, there was a slight thud and patter of feet upon the deck above. We all heard it distinctly, and the German's eyes gleamed. My brother turned and dashed out of the cabin, Dickson and I following him. There was a loud shriek, a girl's shriek, and a scuffle, and then my brother said in an angry voice:

"The Fräulein von Vedal—sent to warn these spies. Bring her down!"

Then I began to understand.

Doris fought like a cat. She was almost too realistic; but we hauled her down into the cabin.

"Tie her up," said my brother in a hoarse voice of command.

We tied her up, sitting her in an arm-chair, and reefing our ropes so that she could not stir.

Then Bernard took off his hat and made a low, ironic bow.

"Gute Nacht, gnädiges Fräulein!" he said—I believe it was all the German the fellow knew—and then, with a wave of his hand, summoned us to leave the cabin. We did so; he locked the door and ascended to the deck.

"Now then," he whispered, "let down the drawbridge with as much noise as possible and then go over it. Directly we are on the other side, we must take off our boots and creep back down to the cabin door."

"What a ruse!" I heard Dickson mutter to himself in an ecstasy of joy—he was given to using words from the more highly coloured adventure books he read—"Oh, my aunt!"

We managed it beautifully, and got into the little space at the foot of the companion, outside the cabin door, with hardly a sound.

Doris was sobbing bitterly and there was a low growl from the gigantic German, which resolved itself into words at last. Then the sobs ceased and Doris answered. We none of us could understand a word of the ensuing conversation, but I reconstruct it here from what was told me afterwards, and I am sure it is accurate enough.

"Who are you, Fräulein? What have they done to you?"

"Hush, they may hear!"

"Who are they?"

"They are the Police, the English Police. Everything is found out. I am the Fräulein von Vedal. My father has been arrested, but I slipped off in these clothes to try and warn you and Admiral Kiderlen-Waechter. He must not be taken if it can be helped. If he escapes, my father says there is yet a chance. He spoke to me in German until the police silenced him. They do not understand our tongue, these dogs of English."

"His Excellency has gone with his gun upon the marsh. He wished to pass the time until midnight, when the Graf von Vedal was to arrive with the papers. He will be back at seven. I was about to prepare his coffee, which takes a long time, for His Excellency is very particular. Now

what shall we do? Have they gone?"

"I think so. I heard them let down the bridge."

"And so did I. But they can't be far away. Do they know that the Admiral is here?"

"I can't tell, but I don't think so. If only I could get free!"

"Oh yes, Fräulein, if only you could! As for me, it matters nothing, but His Excellency must escape. Then he can meet Her to-night and warn Her—even though the precious papers are all lost. He could go off in Her and escape that way. You know all about Her, Fräulein?"

Doris shook her head. "No," she said. "Tell me."

"If they have not told you already, Fräulein, I must not do so. I am sworn. I thought perhaps you knew everything."

"You won't tell me? If I can get away it would be of help for me to know."

"No, Fräulein; I am sworn and I must obey orders...."

"And now I think," said my brother, unlocking the door and speaking in his usual voice, "we've heard as much as we are likely to."

We all trooped into the cabin and, taking out his pocket-knife, Dickson max. cut the cloth strands which held Doris in the chair.

The German's face grew dead white. His jaw dropped, his eyes blazed like flames; he gave a roar of baffled fury and strained at his fastenings with gigantic strength, the muscles at his temples standing out like blue cords. I never before or since saw such hideous rage.

"Stop that!" my brother said, whipping out his revolver and pointing it straight at the fellow.

It was of no use, however. Again that gigantic bellow swelled out into the night. Dickson saved the situation. There must be something in these boys' books after all, for I never saw a gag more quickly and deftly inserted.

"And now, tell us exactly what you have learnt, Miss Joyce," Bernard asked.

She did so in a very few sentences, putting up her hair at the same time, standing before the mirror which Schweitzer's pot-shot at me had cracked. Strange creatures girls are!

"Half-past six," said Bernard, looking at his watch. "Now for the Admiral. Get that drawbridge up again."

We did so, and shortly after my brother joined us.

"There will be some signal," he said; "one of us must personate that brute down below. You are the biggest, John, and the broadest."

"There's an oilskin and a sou'wester hanging in the man's bunk, sir," said Dickson.

"Just the thing. Cut along and fetch them."

I rigged myself up in these clothes as well as I could, and went down again into the cabin, from where I was to emerge at the signal.

"We must manage it as best we can," said my brother. "Dickson and I will go and hide behind the deck-house. When you hear the signal, whatever it is, he will whistle or something, then come up heavily and let down the bridge. He is sure not to speak loudly, so if he asks a question, just growl out something so that he can't hear it till he gets on deck. Remember he has got a gun, and grapple with him the moment you can. We will be with you in a second."

I sat and waited, smoking one of the Doctor's cigars and with a brandy-and-soda in front of me—I did not see why I shouldn't. My ears were wide open, but everything had gone so well up to the present that I did not remember any uneasiness or fear. I was just wondering whether I should light another cigar when I heard something so silvery sweet and unexpected that I jumped.

Somewhere out in the night, close by, came the silver pipe of a whistle. I never heard anyone whistle so musically before or since. It was the "Lorelei" that I heard, the sweet, plaintive music of the Rhine maiden. I cannot explain it, but it gave me a lump in my throat.

At the sound, the bound giant struggled violently, but he made little or no noise, and what he did was drowned by my heavy footsteps as I walked through the cabin and stumbled up the companion.

On the shore, three yards away, was a figure in fowler's kit, which I had no difficulty in recognising as that of my friend Mr. Jones. I heard him say something, but there was a good deal of wind all round and I ignored it, letting down the drawbridge slowly for him to come on board. It had hardly bridged the chasm when he stepped briskly on to it and came over like a flash. He had his gun on his left shoulder, and he handed it to me, saying something in German. I took it with my left hand, stepped aside for him to pass, and then kicked him smartly upon the shin. It is an invaluable dodge; a West-end Bobby told me of it; and down he went full length on his face with an oath.

Well, the rest was not difficult. My fourteen stone was on the small of his back in a minute. My brother, who had employed the interval of waiting in discovering a coil of wire, had his hands whipped round behind his back in no time, and Dickson max. sat on the wretched Admiral's head as if he had been a horse. We left his feet free, because we wanted to get him down into the cabin. I held him by the shoulder while my brother pressed the barrel of his Mauser pistol—one of the few good things that ever came out of Germany, by the way—into the nape of his neck. He came like a lamb and we sat him down in the same arm-chair that Doris had just occupied. The wire came in very handy indeed. We made a cocoon of it round him until he could not stir hand or foot.

"And now," my brother said, "our next guest will not be here for some little time. Supper is, I think, clearly indicated. Doris, supposing you and Dickson see what the galley has to offer—some tinned food, I think you said, and coffee? Excellent. Meanwhile, I and John will talk to this gentleman."

Von Waechter—I call him this for short; people should not have such beastly long names—von Waechter glanced slowly round the cabin, taking in everything. He saw Schweitzer lying gagged upon the floor, the smashed mirror, the bottle of cognac, everything, and I will do him the justice to say he never moved a muscle of his face.

"Well now, sir, you will understand that the game is up," said my brother quietly.

The man nodded in a meditative sort of way, as if he was considering whether that was true or not.

"Ah, my friend Mr. John Carey!" he said.

"Yes, Mr. Jones," I answered, "and this is my brother, Commander Carey, of His Majesty's Navy."

Von Waechter bowed as well as he was able. "Ah," he said, "I am a prisoner of war, I see."

My brother shook his head. "I'm afraid not, sir," he replied; "I'm afraid you are a captured spy."

CHAPTER VII

THE MURDER OF MR. LOCKHART

Doctor Upjelly, or the Graf von Vedal as my readers may choose to think of him, never came to the Hulk that night.

If this is not the most sensational part of my narrative, it is certainly the grimmest. It must be told quickly. It is too horrible to linger upon.

I was not there myself, but I put it down from the words of an eye-witness.

The reason that I was able to be out on the marsh at five o'clock without suspicion was that, early in the morning after my brother and I had overheard everything in the gun-punt, I went to the Doctor and asked for a day off. I said I was going to London to have a final shot at enlisting. I knew from what I had heard him say to Kiderlen-Waechter that it did not matter twopence to him either way, whether I went or stayed. He, himself, was making all preparations for flight. He gave me leave quite readily.

Before I pretended to go I told Lockhart everything. It was arranged that he and Dickson major, whom he was to take into his confidence to a certain extent, were to watch the Doctor with the utmost care.

I drove to Blankington-on-Sea in Wordingham's trap, went a station or two up the line, was met by the Admiralty motor car, made a great circuit of country, and got back to Cockthorpe within four hours.

Meanwhile Lockhart and Dickson major watched the Doctor. This is the story, the horrible story.

Doris slipped out without notice, dressed in Dickson max.'s clothes—that has already been explained. The late afternoon went on. The boys finished their work, played a dreary punt-about of football, and came in to tea. Lockhart was in charge.

After tea, 'prep.' began. Old Pugmire had shuffled off home. Old Mrs. Gaunt was still groaning in bed. At eight-thirty the younger boys went up to their dormitories, only four of the elder ones remaining downstairs. Lockhart left them to their own devices—they were roasting chestnuts, I heard—and waited in his own sitting-room.

At nine o'clock, Marjorie Joyce came hurriedly from the Doctor's wing and tapped at Lockhart's door. The Doctor had told Amy, the housemaid, to light a fire in his bedroom. He said that he would have much writing to do and that when it was finished he would go out upon the marshes to shoot, as usual.

I can picture the scene quite well. Pretty Marjorie, panting, with wide eyes, in the door of Lockhart's sitting-room; the staunch little man, keen as a ferret, wondering what this meant. He

knew from me, of course, that Upjelly was to go to the Hulk that night with his *dossier* of plans and betrayals.

They sent for Dickson major from the senior boys' room. They were closeted together for nearly ten minutes. Then Marjorie led them quietly from the school-wing into the Doctor's house.

The Doctor, at that moment, was having supper by himself. He would not be upstairs for quarter of an hour. Marjorie showed Lockhart and the lad to the big bedroom with the dancing fire upon the hearth. Dickson major had a nickel-plated revolver, of which he was very proud.

"If anything happens, sir," he said, "I can do him in with this."

Then Dickson major was put under the bed, where he lay, grasping his revolver, keen as mustard, glad to be in the mysterious business of which he had been told so little and in which his elder twin was so actively engaged.

A tear comes into my eye as I think of that quiet bedroom and those two poor conspirators waiting for von Vedal, doing their little best, such as it was.

There was a big, green curtain, running on rings, in an alcove of the bedroom. Behind this, the headmaster of Morstone kept a lot of clothes which he never wore and never even looked at. Here the ardent cripple, Lockhart, was ensconced.

There is something comic in the business—the schoolboy and the ferret-faced master hidden in this fashion. I think that all sinister tragedies have their bizarre element of comedy—comedy to change so swiftly into horror.

In twenty minutes the Doctor came up. He strode into the room with a firm step, carrying a brown leather bag, which he placed upon the table by the fire. Then he locked the door. He took off his coat, warmed his soft, pink hands at the fire, unlocked the bag, spread a mass of documents from it upon the table, and began to write steadily.

There was a round clock upon the mantelpiece which ticked incessantly. It was a quick and hurried tick that came from the clock, and sometimes it seemed to be accentuated, to be a race with Time; at others, it was slow as the death-watch.

The Doctor wrote on. He covered sheet after sheet with swift, easy writing. When each sheet was done, he blotted it and added it to the pile on his left hand.

He had written for three-quarters of an hour, and the hidden watchers had made no sound whatever, when the big man suddenly jumped up from the table. They heard his chair crush over the carpet; they heard him sigh deeply, as if with relief.

Then Dickson major, peeping under the valance of the bed, saw his headmaster go to the mantelpiece, open a box of cigars, select one and light it. It was a long, black, rank Hamburg weed, and the pungent smoke curled round the room as the man stood with his back to the fire, looking down upon the table.

The smoke went round and round. It grew thick. It curled and penetrated everywhere. It penetrated behind the green curtain where, in an agony of rheumatism and tortured bones, little Lockhart was standing.

Lockhart coughed.

The boy underneath the bed was watching all this. He saw the Doctor turn quietly and swiftly towards the alcove. He took three soft steps, pulled the curtain aside, and drew Lockhart out.

It was horrible. Von Vedal said nothing at all. His great hand descended upon the shoulder of the cripple and he drew him into the middle of the room—into the full light of the lamp—looking down at him with a still, evil scrutiny.

Lockhart spoke. He did not seem a bit afraid. His curious voice jarred into the quiet, firelit room with almost a note of triumph in it.

"You've found me, Doctor Upjelly; but you've lost everything, Graf von Vedal!"

Dickson said that the Doctor, bending lower, turned Lockhart's face upwards with his disengaged hand, pulling it towards the light. The boy was paralysed. The fingers of his right hand grew cold and dead. The revolver lay in them like a ton weight. He could not move or cry out. He could do nothing.

With the greatest deliberation, von Vedal took Lockhart by the throat. He felt in his trouser pocket and pulled out an ordinary penknife. Still clasping his prisoner, he opened the blade with his teeth; and then, without the slightest haste or sign of anger—I cannot go on, but there was a thud and the gallant little cripple lay writhing on the floor.

Von Vedal peered over the edge of the table at him for a moment, and then pushed him gently away with his foot. Then he sat down and began to write again.

It was as if he had brushed away a fly.

He wrote on, and the boy beneath the bed fainted dead away. When again the poor lad's eyes opened, he saw the great, white face bent over its papers, the firm hand moving steadily from left

to right, heard the resolute scratch and screech of the pen as it traversed the pages. But he saw also that the huddled heap upon the floor was moving slowly.

With infinite effort, though without a sound, the cripple's arm crept down the side of his dying body. With infinite effort, and with what agony none of us will ever know, Lockhart withdrew the pistol with which I had provided him. He could not lift his arm, but there was movement in his wrist. Slowly, very slowly, the hand rose from the floor.

The flash and crash were simultaneous. Upjelly's mouth opened wide. He tried to turn his head and could not. He coughed twice and then sank quietly forward upon the records of his treachery.

The shot broke the nervous bonds in which young Dickson had been held. He scrambled up from beneath the bed. He ran round the table with averted eyes and bent over Lockhart. There was a little hissing noise, like a faint escape of gas. Dickson bent his ear to the mouth of the dying man.

"Take Miss Marjorie to Wordingham—Inn—village. Gather up—all those papers. Put them in bag. After—Miss Marjorie—Inn—run—fast as you can—to—Doctor's—old Hulk—Thirty Main. Give everything—Mr. Carey. Good-bye, boy...."

One last gasp, and the word "England!" sighed out into the bedroom.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRUTH AT LAST, THE INCREDIBLE TRUTH! AND HOW THEY FOUGHT FOR THE SUBMARINE

Just after midnight, my brother and myself sat crouching behind the bulwarks of the Hulk.

It was the weirdest hour, the strangest scene, that my eyes had ever looked upon. Snow was falling fast, and yet, somewhere above, there was a moon. It was all white and ghostly-green, shifting, moving, unreal, as befitted the horrors which pressed us close. Yet we were exultant; I can testify to that. "The Judge was set, the doom begun"; in our hearts was the fiery certainty of success.

In the deck-house were Bernard's three men, Scarlett, Adams, and Bosustow—all of whom had served with him in his own ship. Below, in the saloon, Doris, old Lieutenant Murphy of the Coastguards, and the two Dickson boys were waiting.

Let me give the very briefest resumé of events up to the present.

Dickson major had fulfilled his trust. He had taken Marjorie Joyce to Mrs. Wordingham at the inn; then he had come to us with the bag of papers. He had told us everything. All we told Doris was that her sister had been taken to the inn and that her stepfather was arrested at the school. We had to keep Doris with us for a time, but old Lieutenant Murphy, who was now entirely in our confidence, would take her back to the village when the adventure of the night was over. His car was waiting there and Doris and Marjorie would both find refuge with Mrs. Murphy at Cockthorpe.

The prisoners, Kiderlen-Waechter and the German boatswain, had been moved into the galley, where one of the lads was watching them.

It was cold beyond thinking. The snow fell softly on us till we were blanketed with white. Bernard was whispering.

"You see, old John, I look at it this way. When we searched Kiderlen-Waechter an hour ago we found the signal. Doris translated it for us. The lamp is lit in that box they fitted up so carefully in the bows. It can only be seen straight up the Creek. They'll make for that."

"What do you think it is?"

"They've spoken of it as 'She'—it's a boat, of course. I should say either one of those wretched little coasters, or possibly even a fishing-smack. She'll stand a mile out at sea and they'll row into the Creek with a longboat, for the plans. There is a huge manœuvre on—what it is we can't tell yet, and it's touch and go to-night whether we snooker them or whether we don't. You are ready for anything?"

"Anything! So old Upjelly's dead, and poor little Lockhart!"

"He died for his country, as you and I may do to-night, old John. Shed the sentimental tear on some future occasion. What?"

His voice rose a little. Scarlett, who was on the look-out, had crept along the deck and touched Bernard on the shoulder.

"Come forrard, sir, if you please," the man said in a hoarse whisper. He could hardly get the words out, and at first I thought his teeth were chattering with cold, but it was not so.

We crept to the bows of the Hulk and peered over the broken, rotting taffrail. Two feet below was the beam of the signal lamp shining up the creek towards the sea. The snow had temporarily stopped in this part of the marsh and the moon was bright. Thirty Main stretched away ahead as far as we could see, two hundred yards long and a hundred wide, of black, gleaming steel. The tide was full at flood.

Scarlett handed my brother a pair of night-glasses. Bernard gazed through them for twenty seconds, and then they fell softly on the deck.

"Oh God!" he said in a low voice, "so it is *that*, and I never thought of it before! Fool! Fool!"

I stared out also, not daring to say a word. No man can see better at night than I. What *was* that? Something slowly floating down the centre of the creek, a black, oblong patch. Was it two or three duck swimming landwards with the tide?

Then the black patch lifted itself from the water. It seemed to have a long, narrow tail—the whole thing was curiously distinct in the moonlight. In a second I realised that something was *being pushed up from below*. I had never seen anything like it before. I experienced that hideous sensation in the pit of the stomach that comes to people who are face to face with the unknown and the unexpected for the first time in their lives. All this happened in half a minute. The black, oblong thing was now high in the air on the end of a pole which came straight up through the middle of the creek. Something else was rising, a black hump, which grew and grew, until a grey tower stood there;—stood there but moved slowly towards us—or did it begin to recede?

I heard Bernard's voice: "Stand by the lamp!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Scarlett was bending low over the bows of the Hulk. In the middle of the waterway something long and lean was showing. There was a soft, metallic clang, and then, from the centre of the dark, floating object, a light flashed quickly, three times. Immediately I heard the click of the shutter of our own lamp and saw the occulting beam below flash and disappear in answer.

I knew, I think in some subconscious way, I must have known from the very first. The whole thing, in its magnificent and unsuspected daring, its malevolent simplicity, struck me like a blow. This was a German submarine; this was the channel by which the Master-Spy, von Vedal, and his agents had been sending information to the enemy! On my own quiet marshes, in Thirty Main Creek!

"One of their 'D' class, sir; same as our 'E.' Crew of fifteen, no quick-firing gun, and probably wireless. Handy little craft, sir!"

"They'll be coming aboard in a minute, Scarlett."

"Aye, aye, sir. If you look, sir, you'll see they are getting one of those collapsible boats up. New thing, sir, and very handy. Holds six. Ah!"

I could see quiet and purposeful activity round the conning-tower of the submarine. A group of dark figures was silhouetted in the moonlight, and presently a little boat, like a bobbing cork, lay by her side.

Three men got into it and it pushed off. It went towards the other side of Thirty Main.

"Concealed moorings, sir," Scarlett whispered. "They've been here before. It's dead water, and the ship'd drift, if ..."

I heard no more. I watched breathlessly. The boat went to the far side of the creek and remained there for nearly two minutes. If there was a cable, I did not see it, but presently the boat turned and came rapidly towards the Hulk.

"John, take him quietly to the cabin and shove him in—it's the Commander coming aboard," my brother added. "Scarlett, get back into the deck-house and light that lamp. Mr. Carey is dressed like the German boatswain, and he will show the officer straight into the deck-house. It's ten to one the sailors won't come up. Remember to do your job without the slightest noise—you, Adams, and Bosustow."

"Out him, sir?"

"I'm afraid so. There is no other way. Directly it is over, take off his clothes and bring them down into the cabin. Mind the men in the boat hear nothing."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Then my brother turned to me. The boat was now almost by the side of the Hulk.

"You understand, John?" he said.

I touched his arm, afraid to speak.

"Then go and get the rope-ladder."

I stepped to the deck-cabin and saw the three sailors standing round it among the litter of shooting gear. A smoky lamp hung from the ceiling. Scarlett passed me the ladder. I took it and

went to the side—my brother had disappeared.

There was a low hiss seven feet below. I hissed, too, fixed the ladder hooks, and dropped the rest of it. One of the sailors caught it, while the other steadied the boat, and a slim man of just over middle height came up like a cat. He wore some sort of dark uniform, what it was I could not see. The collar was turned up round his face, which appeared to be clean-shaved.

I saluted and stepped towards the deck-house. He followed me without a sound.

Then I tapped on the door, which opened immediately, and as it did so I shot him in with a smart blow between the shoulder-blades. There was just one little gasping sound, and that was all. The door closed gently. The two sailors below in the boat sat quietly enough. I went down into the saloon.

Quick as I was, my brother was before me. He was talking earnestly to Doris in a low voice. I stood at the door at attention, and I think I never saw a stranger scene.

Old Lieutenant Murphy, in uniform, was seated at the table. His nostrils were opening and shutting in his tanned face. He was exactly like an old dog brought to the hunt for the last time. The door into the galley was half open. Dickson major stood there with a magazine pistol in his hand. Dickson max. sat opposite the lieutenant, his face a mask of determination and strength. It was wonderful.

"You quite understand, Doris? You can be brave?"

"I quite understand, Bernard."

"Then we will wait a minute. Sit down, John."

We all sat down—waiting. One minute—two minutes passed. Then came a light tap upon the door. It opened and Scarlett entered. His face was rather red, and he breathed heavily. On his right arm he carried a bundle of clothes.

My brother looked at him with a lift of the eyebrows, and Scarlett nodded, placing the clothes on the table.

"Go through these clothes, Lieutenant," Bernard said. Then he turned to Scarlett and whispered.

The man saluted and disappeared. A few seconds after, my brother beckoned to Doris.

"Now, then," he said, "be brave!"—and then, turning to me, "Stand out of sight on deck, John, and be ready to help."

We crept up on deck. To my unutterable surprise, Doris went to the side and leant over. She spoke in German and in a very low voice.

"She's telling them that they're to come up on board and have a drink," my brother said.

The two figures below rose with alacrity. The first one ascended the ladder as Doris whipped down the hatchway into the cabin. The second sailor followed his companion.

I was not called upon to help, thank Heaven! Scarlett, Adams, and Bosustow rose from nowhere.

"That accounts for three," said my brother, but I turned my head away not to see what was going on.

When we were again down in the cabin I was shaking like a leaf.

"Drink this," Bernard said sternly, "and pull yourself together. It is War, don't you understand that, man?"

Doris was leaning over the table by the side of Lieutenant Murphy. In front of her was a paper. The lovely face, oddly boyish under its cap, was wrinkled with scrutiny.

"It is special orders," she said at length, "addressed to Admiral Kiderlen-Waechter. The plans are to be taken on board the submarine at once." Her voice broke for the moment, but she made a great effort at control, and the next words came from her slowly and distinctly. To me, I think to all of us, they were like the strokes of a tolling bell.

"The German battleship, Friesland, has eluded our Fleet in the North Sea. Our Fleet has been decoyed towards the Scotch coast by a sortie of the enemy from Kiel. The battleship is approaching this part of England. She is attended by destroyers and submarines. She is convoying three troop-ships, each of which contains two thousand German troops. The rendezvous is for two o'clock to-morrow afternoon, when Captain von Benda is to deliver my stepfather's plans to the German Admiral. The landing of the raiding force is to be effected on these marshes some time during to-morrow night."

"To-night," said my brother, looking at his watch and snapping it into his pocket.

Then there was a dead silence.

Bernard sat down at the table and buried his head in his hands, motioning us to be silent. For fully five minutes he remained thus, and what was going on within his mind I could but faintly guess. I knew, at any rate, and so, I think, did old Lieutenant Murphy, how enormous and

incalculable were the issues that hung upon the decision of the young Commander, whose face was hidden from us.

When Bernard looked up again his eyes were very bright and he was smiling.

"Go on deck, John," he said, "and order the men to come down."

They came down, and Scarlett had upon his arm another bundle of clothes.

"Attention!" said my brother.

The three sailors stood stiffly by the door.

"Dickson major!"—Dickson major came out of the galley.

"Dickson max.!"—the elder brother sprang to attention also.

"John!"—I stood as stiffly as the rest.

"These men are under my orders, and they will go to death with me. You three are different. There is no time to explain everything now, but there is just a chance of saving this country from disaster. It is only a chance, mind. It is a forlorn hope. We may fail in half an hour: we may fail in twenty-four hours. In fact, it is almost certain that we shall. Still, are you coming?"

Well, of course there wasn't any palaver about that. It was settled in a minute. Then Bernard turned to old Murphy.

"Lieutenant," he said, "I am sorry that we are not going to have you with us, but you've got plenty to do ashore."

"I'm damned sorry too, sir, for, by George, I'd like to have a smack at 'em before I die!"

"You may yet. Now, please take your instructions. You know the marsh. Get off with Miss Joyce as quickly as possible. Take her to join her sister at the Morstone Arms. Then call up the coastguard for miles round. Come here to this Hulk—you won't see us in any case—and have the prisoners secured safely. Then send these despatches."

My brother sat down and began to write in cipher on leaves torn from his notebook. He looked up once.

"John," he said, "suppose you go up on deck with Doris. Make not the slightest noise, but make your adieux."

We stole up, and I held my girl in my arms for a minute. She did not see the dark stains which splashed the snow upon the boards.

"Good-bye, dear," I said. "Remember that I loved you more than anything else in the whole world!"

Oh, she was wonderful! "Of course, I shall always remember how you left me to-night," she whispered. "But you are coming back. Something tells me that. Yesterday I was a quiet girl living an ordinary life. To-night, nothing can disturb me, nothing can frighten me. I have supped too full of horrors, dear John, but I am glad, and proud and happy!"

It is hardly necessary to say more. Within five minutes the old lieutenant and my girl had passed away like ghosts from the near shore and I was down in the cabin again.

Bernard was taking off his clothes and putting on those of the dead captain of the submarine. Scarlett and Adams were already dressed in the uniform of the German sailors. Bosustow stood in his shirt and drawers, and so did my two school-boys.

"You see, it's like this, Johnny," Bernard said. "As far as we can judge, there are about twelve men in that submarine. We've got to kill them; there is no other way. We've got to take that submarine out into the North Sea and we have got to fight her ourselves. The Germans will be looking out for us. They will think us their despatch boat right enough. We may be able to stop them before our own supports get out of Harwich, for Lieutenant Murphy will be telegraphing all over the country within two hours. It is touch and go, but we've got to do it."

There was an odd, dual sound, instantly suppressed. I looked sternly towards the end of the saloon. It came from Dickson max. and Dickson major, and if it was not a chuckle of intense and supreme delight, it was a strangled "hooray." The three sailors standing at attention moved not an inch, but I caught Scarlett winking at his right-hand man.

Bernard smiled grimly for an instant. I knew the signs. He was really happy. Then he went on.

"Now, Scarlett and Adams will row the boat to the submarine. I shall sit in the stern impersonating the captain, who has recently been killed in action"—and, to my surprise, Bernard saluted. "You will be in the bows, John, and they may take you for that fellow, Schweitzer, in there. Bosustow, and Mr. Dickson, and Mr.—" he looked inquiringly at Dickson major.

"Harold," was the reply.

"Oh yes, Mr. Harold Dickson will swim in the wake of the boat. We have eight magazine pistols. Three will be in the sternsheets. The brevet-lieutenants and the petty officer"—you should have

seen my lads' faces as they were commissioned!—"will swim to the ladder on the submarine's quarter and follow us down. But be careful that, in the rough and tumble, you don't shoot any of the first attacking party. Is all clear?"

"Certainly, sir," said Dickson max., with a sublime and effective impudence I could never have compassed. Already, in his magnificent mind, Dickson max. trod the quarter-deck and wore a sword. And the curious thing was, as we all crept up to the deck, that those tried veterans, Scarlett, Adams, and Bosustow, accepted the situation without a doubt.

Then we started. My brother gripped me by the hand as I went down the ladder, and it was the only sign of emotion that he showed.

"Good old John!" he whispered. "I've sent Marjorie a message by Doris."

The submarine lay in the middle of the Creek, a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards away. As our boat drew near, the moonlight became obscured and there was a sudden drift of snow. We shot alongside, and there was a gleam from a lantern shining down upon us.

It showed me a curving steel ladder, which went up over the fish-back of the thing to a long, low deck with a light railing running round it. Two men were standing there, and as we made fast, one of them came half-way down the ladder and held out his hand to me. I took it, stumbled for an instant, and found myself upon the steel platform. At my back, the conning-tower rose eight feet high above me. Within three yards was an oblong hatchway, from which a faint, orange light came upwards, turning the snowflakes to dingy gold.

Scarlett was beside me in a second. I took the man nearest and caught him by the throat. He had no time to gasp or cry out. I pressed him back over the rail, which held—Krupp steel, I suppose. There was a slight "snick"—it was not that of breaking metal—and I shot the sailor over the far side, where he sank like a log.

Then I turned. A furious and silent fight was going on between Scarlett and the other seaman. They swayed and rocked this way and that. They panted just like the sound of a bellows blowing up a fire. I waited, trying to get in a grip. Figures moved past me and disappeared down the hatchway, but I hardly saw them. Scarlett swung his enemy towards the conning-tower, and then I got my chance. I "collared him low"—Rugger three-quarter style—and brought him down upon the deck. The man gave a loud shout, but it was drowned by a furious noise below. There was no more necessity for silence. I pulled out my pistol and there was an end of the German. Scarlett jumped up like a gymnast, and together we heaved the body overboard.

"The swine's bin and bit my ear!" said Scarlett. "Now then, sir, come on!" and he swung himself over the hatchway and dropped.

I followed. It is impossible to describe what I saw—at any rate, my pen is not equal to the task. For a moment, I was blinded by brilliant light, through which a multitude of figures danced and leapt, like people in a dream. My ear-drums were almost split by the noise. There was a horrible, bitter smell in my nostrils, and my throat felt as if I was swallowing a bullet of lead.

Then, as things cleared, and I suppose it could only have been an instant before they did so, I found myself in a gleaming tunnel, surrounded by unfamiliar machinery.

A man lying within three yards of me, his face like wet, red velvet, suddenly jerked up his body like a marionette. His arms shot out, there was a deafening explosion, and something rang behind my head like a gong smitten without warning. I shot him in the body, and then I saw three dripping figures growling and worrying upon the floor like wolves. They rolled about with a crash and clank of metal until the great arm of the Cornishman, Bosustow, rose and fell three times like a flail.

At the far end of the tunnel, there were more reports, and then I saw my brother walking along a sort of grating and coming towards me.

Everything seemed to rock and dissolve. I fell back against an upright of some sort or other and my senses nearly went. I thought I was in bed at Morstone House School and the seven-o'clock bell was tolling.

Once more, things cleared. Everything gradually became distinct. The infernal noise, the wild welter of sound, was hushed. Only two yards away from me, a man dressed as a sailor was kneeling before my brother, who held a pistol to his head. The man's hands were held up, his face was a white wedge of terror, and a constant stream of words bubbled from his livid lips.

"Yes, sir. Karl, sir. Coming, sir. Porterhouse steak, sir, what you always used to like. No, sir—Swiss really—not a German. Oh, Captain Carey, don't kill me, sir"—the voice rose into a shriek of agony—"I am Karl, sir!"—the words came in an ecstasy of conviction. "Karl, head-waiter at the Portsmouth Royal! Why, sir, you've tipped me half a crown twenty times. Oh, sir ..."

My brother's face seemed cut in granite, but he began to laugh.

"Tie this up!" he said, and Adams ran forward—Adams was all black and red and his clothes were torn.

Then Bernard turned to me.

"By God!" he said, "we've done it, John, we've done it so far!"

Then I realised that, save for the whining creature being trussed upon the grating, the crew of the German submarine were all dead.

"Mr. Dickson!"

"Sir!"

"Instruct the boatswain to pipe all hands tidy ship."

It was the man Adams who, fumbling in his clothes, produced a whistle which shrilled loudly and acted as a strange tonic to us all.

"I give you quarter of an hour," Bernard said. "Bodies to be heaved overboard; gratings to be swabbed as well as possible in the time. Get a hose overboard, Mr. Dickson, and have the hand-pump manned."

Then Bernard took me by the arm and led me up the slippery ladder. We stood upon the long, narrow deck, and the snow fell over us like a mantle.

"Now, old boy," he said, "pull yourself together. All has gone well, but in half an hour we must be out in the North Sea, five fathoms deep. Feel a bit sickish? Oh, you'll get over that in a few minutes. We have only just begun."

END OF PART II

PART III

CHAPTER IX

OUT IN THE NORTH SEA. PREPARING FOR ACTION

The bees were humming through the orchard with a long, droning sound as I lay in the hammock of my old home, once more a careless boy. My eyes were closed, but the bright sun shone upon my face, and Peters, my father's old butler, was coming over the grass to tell me that tea was ready.

He touched my arm.

It was not Peters; it was a pale, clean-shaved fellow with an obsequious manner, who held a wooden bowl of steaming milk and coffee in his hands. I sat up and rubbed my eyes. The deep, droning noise, which had seemed like the bees of childhood in my dream, was the noise of engines not far away. I had slept three hours in the hammock, as my brother had insisted, and here was the captured German waiter bringing me coffee. I took it, but half-awake, and watched the man go to two other hammocks which stretched away in front of me. The Dickson boys tumbled out of them and I became fully conscious of where I was.

For the moment, but only for a moment, I was unmanned. The horror of all that we had been through so recently rolled over me like a flood. The shambles that the submarine had become, the ruthless killing of fourteen men—the horrible little snick as I broke the back of my own victim!...

But it passed. The coffee was excellent and invigorating, and in a minute I tossed the empty bowl into the hammock and stood upon a steel grating, looking about me with wide eyes.

At that moment my brother came up, walking briskly, like a man at home. He seemed changed in some way, and I realised what it was—the policeman on his beat, and unbuttoned and at ease, the parson in his pulpit or trimming roses in the rectory garden, are two very different people.

"Where are we?" I said. "What has happened?"

"You've had a very good sleep, John. You went off like a log directly I had the hammock slung. It was necessary, too, or you'd never be fit for what is coming."

"Have we started?"

"Started!" he grinned. "We're thirty miles away from Morstone Marshes, abreast of Skegness, I should judge, which, as far as I can calculate, is about sixty miles to the westward—and heading straight out into the North Sea. We're just crossing the line of the Rotterdam boats from Hull."

"But there is no movement!"

"No, my son, because we're twenty-five feet under water, that's why. Now, you had better come and look round the boat; I shall have to explain everything to you and show you what you will have to do later on." He turned to the Dicksons. "You come, too," he said, "and if ever the three of you have your wits about you, have them now. You've got to learn in an hour or two what it takes

an ordinary seaman six months to learn—or part of it, at any rate."

I am not going to describe everything I saw in detail. This is a story of action, and I always skip the descriptive parts in books, myself. The Johnnies only put them in to fill up. I expect they are paid so much a page, if the truth were known! Still, I must try and give some picture of the strange and unfamiliar world in which I found myself. Here I was sailing under the sea for all the world like someone in Jules Verne, experiencing something that only the tried men of the navies ever know.

I was in a long, narrow tunnel, most brilliantly lit. The air was warm and close, tainted a little with a faint suggestion of chemical fumes. It was rather like being in a chemist's shop in winter time when a large fire is burning.

Immediately to my right, the German waiter was busy over a little electric stove, in a doorless compartment not bigger than a bathing machine, Pots and pans hung above him and there were shelves covered with wire netting containing stores of food. We passed him, and I judged, from the breadth from side to side, that we were standing almost in the middle of the submarine.

Upon white-painted gratings, my brother's sailors moved here and there with bare feet, quiet and alert in their jumpers. The light was caught by, and reflected again, from innumerable pieces of shining machinery, brass and silver and dull bronze. There was a tension both of physical atmosphere and mental excitement, strange and unnatural to me, but which those who go beneath the waters and explore the mysterious deep always have with them.

We walked down a central gangway and stopped by two powerful gasolene engines, one on each side—long, lean, polished monsters, that lay inert, but ready to leap into action on the turn of a switch and the pulling of a lever.

"Those are the engines which run the boat when we are on the surface—'awash,' we call it. We can do seventeen knots then—I am assuming that this German boat is about equal to one of our own of its class, though I have already come across several remarkable improvements in her. We are running now by electric motor and doing about twelve knots, which is first-class, but I'm pushing her along for all I know."

We passed onwards and to where Bosustow stood beaming over three great purring, spitting dynamos, a piece of cotton waste in one huge paw.

"Oh, they're daisies, sir," he said, as he patted coils of insulated wire in an ecstasy of appreciation. "They can show us something, sir, the Germans can. The sleeve that carries the commutator is keyed to the armature shaft on an entirely new system; it's a fair miracle of ingenuity. But where they beat us hollow is in the accumulators. I've not had time to inspect them thoroughly, but if we get out of this, then the whole of our system will have to be altered."

We all bent over a rail towards the great accumulator tanks below, and I felt a faint, acrid odour rising up from them.

"You're smelling electricity, sir," said Bosustow to me. Then he turned to a big, table-like switch-board which controlled the flow of current from below and commanded all the electrical machinery on board. He fingered the big, vulcanite handles as if he loved them and stroked the shining flanged rim of the volt meter as a mother strokes her child.

"Now Mr. Carey understands something about machinery, Bosustow," said my brother. "You can trust him to follow out your directions without making any blunders, I think. John, your station will be by Bosustow until you are wanted forrard, but there is no need for you to stay now. There is a good deal more that I must say."

All the voices were sharp and staccato, my own sounded like that in my ears when I answered. They echoed and rang in the heavy air of the sealed, steel tube, voices that were not quite free and natural, for all their readiness of tone.

We turned and went forward again, passing an open doorway and a few steps which led upwards to the conning-tower. The gangway ran at each side of it.

The long, tunnel-like vista grew narrower and the roof began to slope downward to a point. In front of us, in the extreme bows of the boat, were two huge, circular steel doors, like the doors of a safe, clamped and locked by an intricate mechanism.

"These are the mouths of the torpedo expulsion tubes," said Bernard. "We carry six torpedoes, I am glad to find—two more than I should have expected in a boat of this size—and, by Jove, we shall want 'em! If we throw away a single one, the game will be up, I expect. The torpedoes are run into these tubes along steel rails. They're discharged from the tubes by compressed air from the air tanks below. I see here the pressure is several thousand pounds to the square inch. In some boats we send out the tin fish by exploding a few ounces of cordite, but the air is the better way."

He turned to where Scarlett was busy and I saw a submarine torpedo for the first time. I confess there was a little inward shudder as I looked upon the deadly thing that could send the largest battleship afloat to the bottom in a few minutes. It was like a huge fish of steel with a large propeller at one end.

"These are beauties," Bernard said, "and to think that we are going to have the chance of using

them against their original owners!" He chuckled.

"The propelling engines," he went on, "are inside—for you must remember that a torpedo is a little ship in itself and is not a projectile at all. There are three hundred pounds of trinitrotoluene in this beauty—we've done away with the old-fashioned gun-cotton now—and she's got a range of seven thousand yards—over four miles, Johnny, my boy! Now, Mr. Dickson and Mr. Harold Dickson, you will stay here with Scarlett. It will be your part, when we go into action, to fire these torpedoes. There ought to be six or seven of you to do it. There are only three, and two of you are quite untrained. Scarlett, get to work at once and give these gentlemen a practical drill. Show them exactly what they will have to do and explain the orders that will come from me. Miss out anything superfluous; remember we've hardly any time. Just teach them what is absolutely necessary."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Scarlett, and as we turned back I heard him at once beginning his lecture.

And now we came to the most interesting part of that world of marvels, to the *brain* of the submarine. Adams stood in the first stage of the conning-tower, his hands upon a little leather-covered steering-wheel. In front of him was a gyroscopic compass and a row of speaking-tubes. A light threw a bright radiance upon a framed chart hanging on the wall, marked everywhere with faint purple pencil lines.

Bernard glanced at the compass and gave the man a few directions. Then we went up a short ladder of half a dozen rungs into the highest chamber of all.

It was perfectly circular. There was just room for two or three people, and the steel roof was two feet above our heads. A great tube came down through the roof and disappeared beneath the open grating of the floor. It was like the mast of a ship going through the cabin down to the very gar-board strike. There was a row of brass clock-faces with trembling needles and oddly shaped gauges, in which coloured liquid rose and fell. The whole ganglion of nerves met here in the cerebellum of the ship, and at a glance its commander knew exactly what she was doing, her speed, her depth below the surface of the water, the pressure—a thousand other things which I am not competent to name. The whimsical idea came to me that it was like lifting up the top of a man's head and seeing the thoughts which controlled every motion of his body.

There were charts, also, spread upon a semi-circular shelf of mahogany, with dividers, compasses, and a large magnifying glass.

Fastened to the wall, just above this shelf, was something that touched me strangely. It was a photograph in a silver frame, the photograph of a young, light-haired girl, and upon it was written in German, "*An meinem lieber Otto.*"

Bernard saw it too and sighed. "It's the skipper's girl," he said. "Poor chap! he'll never see her again in this world! It was an ugly death to die, John!" and his voice had a note of deep feeling in it. "But it had to be, and Scarlett told me that he didn't know what hurt him.

"Now," he continued, "I'm going to show you something." He pulled out his watch and then, leaning over to the wall, he snapped over something like the stunted lever of a signal box. Then he pressed a button and a bell rang somewhere far down below. A hoarse voice sounded in our ears from a speaking-tube, and there was a quick, throbbing, pumping sound from the column in the wall.

Looking down, I saw that immediately below us was a circular white table. I put my hand on it and it was painted canvas, dazzlingly white.

"The periscope is going up," my brother said. "It should be light, now—watch!"

There was a click and the lamp in the roof went out. We were in darkness. A slight creaking sound, a movement of my brother's arm, and there flashed down, in clear light upon the table, a picture of the upper seas.

Forty feet above, the eye of the submarine surveyed the dawn, and in that still box where we stood, we saw it also.

Dawn upon the waters! A tossing grey expanse of waves. It was like the film of a cinematograph, only in colour, and as Bernard turned the wheel, picture after picture glided over the table—the most incredible thing!

Not a sail was in sight. The North Sea was an empty, tossing waste of waters in the cold light of the winter's dawn.

The dawn of—what?

CHAPTER X

THE SPEAR OF FOAM

"A little fresh air is clearly indicated," said my brother, "and after that, when I've attended to

another little matter, a good breakfast. Some of us may be taking our next meal in Fiddlers' Green, which, they say in the Navy, is nine miles to windward of hell, though I hope not."

He switched on the light again and went to the side table, where there was a complicated array of wheels and levers, all of which were duplicated in the chamber immediately below and by means of which the Commander, watching the picture of the periscope, could control every movement of the boat with his own hands if necessary.

He pulled a lever and a bell clanged. At once the loud purring of the electric engines ceased.

Bernard pulled over another and larger lever with both hands. I suddenly felt myself slipping backwards, until I fetched up against the wall of the conning-tower, narrowly missing the opening to the steersman's chamber.

"By Jove! I forgot to tell you," said Bernard. "You see, I've stopped the electric engines and jammed over the horizontal rudders. We're slanting up to the surface—look!"

Immediately in front of me and a little above my head, I now saw round portholes filled with amazingly thick, toughened glass. These had been quite black and had escaped my notice before. Now, as I watched, they grew a little lighter. Click! and the lamp went out. The portholes were grey now, grey melting into green, which grew brighter and brighter until it turned into a froth of soda-water, and then there was nothing but white sky. There was a slight jerk and the floor seemed to right itself.

"We're just awash now, but we'll get above water."

Again the ring of a bell, an order through a speaking-tube. After that came a clang of machinery and an extraordinary bubbling, choking noise, like a giant drinking.

"Just blown out the water tanks, old soul. Feel her lift? Now her whale-back is above water and we'll go and say good-morning to the sun, which I perceive is very kindly beginning to show himself. But before that ..."

He shouted another order and there came a deafening din from below. Bang! Bang! Bang! till the whole steel hull quivered.

"That is the surface engine starting. It'll be all right in a minute," and even as he spoke, the noise subsided into a regular throb. It was for all the world like a motor car starting on bottom speed and then slipping into top gear.

Scarlett came hurrying up into the conning-tower and he and my brother unlocked the sliding hatch. In a minute we had emerged into the keen air of the morning. How fresh and sweet it seemed to me it is impossible to say. The sun was rising. The bitter cold of the marshes had gone. The small waves were flecked with gold as we stood upon the wet steel plates and drank in the air as if it had been wine.

"An ideal day for a submarine action!" Bernard said, rubbing his hands. "There's just enough ripple on the surface to make us difficult to detect, and yet it is smooth enough to give me a clear view. This boat is beautifully trimmed, she doesn't roll a bit. I'll send those boys up in a minute or two, but meanwhile I've got to play a bit of bluff. A lot depends on it."

I nodded. It was not my place to ask questions.

"You see," he went on, "of course the German battleship expects us. I know exactly the spot in the North Sea where we are supposed to pick her up some time after lunch—provided, of course, that the Germans have carried out their plans successfully and our scouts really have been decoyed away. It is part of a huge scheme.

"Well, assuming that their own plans are successful, they will be on the look-out for us and they'll send us a wireless message when we're within close range. This will be some prearranged signal, a single letter repeated a certain number of times or something of that sort, so that any of our ships picking it up would not know what it meant. We've got a wireless mast on board which can be shoved up at will and there's a complete installation in a little room down below next to the cook's galley. Unfortunately there is not one of us who knows anything about wireless. Bosustow is a capable electrician and could control the machinery, but he can't understand the signals. Therefore, when we sight the *Friesland*—and I want to get as near her as possible so as to make no mistakes—we must signal with flags.

"I've got their signal book and in it is a special code made for this occasion. The flags are in the flag locker all right, but I don't understand a word of German and none of us here do, so I'm going to put the fear of God into our friend, Karl of the Portsmouth Royal. A lot depends on that.

"Just skip down, young John, and tell Scarlett to bring him up here."

"Aye, aye, sir!" I said—it came to me quite naturally, I didn't think about it—and I climbed down into the interior of the submarine.

Scarlett was standing by the starboard torpedo tube, while the Dickson brothers, with their backs turned to me, were chuckling delightedly. I heard a fragment of the conversation.

"... and so, sir, I ses to the gal, Molly her name was, they used to call her the belle of South-sea pier, 'Molly,' I ses, 'you're a little bit of all right, but ...'"

I cut short that anecdote. My pedagogic instincts awoke and I forgot that the Dicksons were now brevet officers of the King.

A sharp order did it. The two lads turned away and began to be ostentatiously busy, while Scarlett, his face did not belie his name at that moment, pattered along the grating, caught hold of the ex-German waiter with unnecessary roughness, and kicked him towards the ladder of the conning-tower.

I went up first, and when Karl emerged he stood to attention with a very pale face, though I did not miss a quick glance round the horizon. My brother was looking down upon a shining magazine pistol in his hand.

Then he raised his head and his voice grated like a file.

"Look here, you Karl, or whatever you call yourself, you're a spy!"

There was a torrent of expostulation. "No, sir, not a spy; I never was that. I was a reservist in our Navy. I was called out and I had to go. I'm a prisoner of war, sir, that's what I am."

My brother shook his head. "You can't prove that," he said, "and the circumstances are most suspicious. I spared you last night, thinking you might be useful, and you certainly made some very good coffee this morning. But I've come to the conclusion ..."—he lifted the pistol.

I had had my brother's word for it that Karl was an excellent head-waiter. My own observations showed me that he was a coward, for he fell on his knees and tears began to stream from his eyes. My brother spat over the side in disgust and I kicked the fellow up to attention again.

"Well, I'll give you one more chance before shooting you out of hand. You must come down with me and translate the German in the Flag Signal Book. You must tell me all you know about the plans of your late commander. Then, if you make us a good breakfast—I thought I saw some tinned sausages and some marmalade in your rack—I may possibly not shoot you, though I shall tie you up when we go into action. At any rate, you will have the same chance as the rest of us."

The fellow's gratitude was painful to see. He was all smiles and obsequiousness at once, and so that little matter was concluded satisfactorily.

We had our breakfast, and an excellent one it was, all sharing alike. Afterwards I went up on deck with the Dicksons.

We saw the sails of two trawlers a mile away on the port bow, but save for them the sea was deserted. The boys were in high spirits. Not a thought of what was to come troubled them for a moment. "Just think, sir," said Dickson max., "what a bit of luck to be in for a rag like this!" But I won't recount any more of their joyous prattle. It was real enough. They had not a trace of fear, but underlying everything there was a deep seriousness that had made them men in a few short hours.

For two hours I worked hard with Bosustow at the engines. There was lots to do. The gauges of the petrol tanks needed attention. There were many details which would only interest an engineer were I to recount them.

At a quarter to twelve I went forward with my brother. We were still on the surface—heading fast for our destination—and saw the port and starboard torpedo tubes loaded. It was astonishing how the Dicksons had picked up something of their work, and Bernard was very pleased.

At twelve we lunched and a tot of rum was served out to the three sailors. Everything was now ship-shape. We were all dressed in uniforms of the dead crew. We tied up Karl and lashed him securely in his galley. Then, Adams being at the wheel in the lower portion of the conning-tower, my brother assembled us aft, by the clanging petrol engines.

"In ten minutes," he said, "I shall sound 'Prepare for action,' and from that time onwards you will be at your posts. I believe we are going to surprise the Germans and surprise the whole world. I believe we are going to save England from this raid. But we've got to remember that we may not pull it off. I am very pleased, more than pleased, with all you have done. I never want to command a better crew. It is the best scratch crew in naval history. We are only seven and we ought to be fifteen, but that does not matter. We have shown it does not matter, already. Now before we get to quarters I think we ought to remember what day this is. It happens to be Sunday."

I am ashamed to say we all looked up in surprise, but so it was.

"Well," my brother continued, "by good luck, I happen to have a prayer-book in my pocket and I am going to read a bit of the service and the ninety-first psalm."

Very straight and stiff, he pulled out a battered little book and began. This is not a scene I wish to linger on, but you will understand my reasons.

After the last sonorous Amen, Bernard said:

"Well, we've said our prayers and we've thought of our wives and—and of our girls. That is all I

have got to say."

He nodded to Scarlett and a shrill whistle—the trumpet of the Navy—rang and rattled through the tube.

The two boys and Scarlett went forward to the torpedoes. Adams was called down from the steering wheel to assist Bosustow at the engines. My brother ordered me up into the conning-tower by his side.

"You'll be of more help to me here," he said. "I shall control the ship entirely myself, but I may want your assistance. Watch me carefully in case I have to go below at any moment."

At twelve-thirty precisely, the gasolene engines were stopped. Bernard filled the tanks, slightly deflected the horizontal rudders, and we dived into the smooth, green wall of an approaching swell and sank to ten feet. The light was switched off, the periscope rose, and we bent over the white table, white no longer.

At five minutes to one the picture of the empty sea was altered. Our range of vision was about two miles, and at that distance to the north-east we observed a cloud of smoke upon the horizon.

"There she is!" I said, and put my finger upon the rapidly growing smear.

Within twenty minutes, a large battleship raised her hull, making directly towards us. We altered our course a little, and as we swerved I could see she had four funnels which grew larger every moment. Of her accompanying flotilla and of the transports we could see nothing at all.

Then we rose to the surface.

Our short-handedness became apparent at once. Adams had to be called from the engines to stand at the wheel. Scarlett and my brother went on deck as I was useless at the manipulation of flags. It was a critical moment.

"I am determined to take no chances," Bernard said; "that is why I am risking signalling. We could probably get her without showing at all, but as she expects us and will lay to for us, we can make it absolutely certain."

He had the signal book, over which he had pencilled translations of the German, in his hand.

"That flag, Scarlett—'wireless out of order,' it means."

That flag ran up a steel halliard bent to the top of the conning-tower.

"Ah, they see us!"

Scarcely three-quarters of a mile away, the great battleship was moving at a snail's pace. Her decks were crowded with men—in the clear sunlight I could see every detail. A piece of bunting ran up her mast in a ball and opened to the breeze.

"I'm damned if I know what it means, but it's obviously all right. Now then, Scarlett, the black flag with the white stripe. That means 'am successfully bringing despatches'—got it?—good!"

There was another signal from the battleship, to which we had now approached within half a mile. The smoke from her funnels had almost ceased. She was lying to and waiting.

Slowly we forged onwards. Then came a sharp order. We jumped back into the conning-tower and the sliding hatchway closed. Scarlett had gone like a flash to his torpedo tubes, and we dived. We sank in just a hundred and fifty seconds.

"Good!" said Bernard, as the periscope panted up and the battleship lay on the table before us.

The hum and tick of the electric motors began again. Bernard turned his wheel and the picture of the battleship opened out in full broadside.

"They don't know what to make of it," he remarked, to himself, rather than to me. "Now, I think—steady—steady ..."

The ship grew larger every moment, higher and higher. It seemed as if she was rising out of the water.

"Now!"—he leant over a speaking tube.

He had hardly given his order when a bell rang smartly, close by my head. I heard staccato voices below in the bows of the submarine, and then the clang and swish of the discharge. We were only three hundred yards away. A white streak appeared shooting towards the monster, like a spear of foam. It was so quick that I could hardly have followed it with my finger upon the table.

CHAPTER XI

THE SUBMARINE FIGHTS FOR ENGLAND

Can you imagine a narrow belt of foam, rushing over the sea like a live thing with irresistible and sinister suggestion of *something* terrible below? That is what I saw as I stared down at the toy theatre, the little, coloured microcosm.

Then the inevitable happened. *Der Friesland* was struck full amidships. A wall of white water rose up out of the sea. Above it, in an instant, spread a huge black fan of smoke, dark as ebony against the sun. At that moment, my brother put the helm hard down and we flew off at an angle. Even as we did so, it seemed that the side of our ship received a terrific blow. We lurched in the conning-tower; we were flung against the starboard wall. There was a nerve-wracking pause, and then, with a jerk, the submarine righted herself, simultaneously as the faintest indication of a mighty explosion fell through the water and came through our armoured walls.

"Too close!" my brother gasped. "I ought to have allowed for these German torpedoes—look, John, look!"

The recoil from the explosion of *Der Friesland* had nearly sent us to the bottom, but we were righted again, and we saw upon the table, quivering and indistinct, a piteous mass of unrecognisability, wreathed in black fumes, from which flared out angry bursts of fire, like Vesuvius in eruption. All this horror was sinking—sinking into the table, it seemed. Blazing all over, broken in two, the wreck of the monster went lower and lower in the water.

She was done. Bernard gave a great sob, and then hoarse orders rang through the submarine.

Within two minutes we were upon the surface. The hatch was open. My brother and myself stood there, gasping in the sunlight at the ruin we had made. The sea was covered with debris and dotted with the heads of swimming sailors. There was one boat afloat, crammed with men, under whose weight it hesitated, trembled, and sank like a stone, as we looked on.

"Good God!" I cried, "can't we help them, Bernard?"

"No can do," he answered, in Navy slang. "It can't be done, old soul. That's that. I'm damned sorry though."

We were rolling in a grey sea, churned by the monster's dying struggles. It was a desolate waste, patched with horror. Far away, on the port bow, something small and blurred was showing. It was either smoke or the hull of a big ship.

"The first transport!" Bernard said. "We had better be ..."

He did not finish his sentence. Something shrieked overhead like an invisible express train. There was a sound like a clap of thunder, and a fountain of spray rose a hundred yards away from us.

We wheeled round. Not quarter of a mile away, and heading straight for us, we saw two immense, white ostrich feathers, divided as by the blade of a knife. Each instant they grew larger.

One of the convoying destroyers had made a grand detour and was coming for us at the charge.

Then, I cannot say when or how, there was a sound like two great hands clapping together in the air above us. Instantaneously, the plates of the deck and conning-tower rang like gongs, followed by little splashing sounds, as if someone was throwing eggs.

I had no idea what it was. "What the devil ..." I was beginning, when Bernard explained.

"Shrapnel," he said, and held out his left arm to me. It ended in what looked like a bundle of crimson rags.

"Damn the blighters!" he said, "they've blown off my left hand. Quick, John, or we shall lose the trick. Your handkerchief!"

I pulled it out mechanically.

"Knot it round my arm—yes—there—just above the wrist. Thank God you're strong! Now then, you've got to twist it. Got anything for a lever?"

The only thing I could find was a silver-mounted fountain pen, a Christmas present from Doris the year before. I whipped it into the knot of the handkerchief, turned it round and secured it. The whole thing did not take more than ten seconds. I had hardly finished, when Bernard skipped inside the conning-tower. I followed him. The hatchway slid into its place with a clang, and as we heard another terrific explosion above us, I wrenched the rudder lever over, Bernard signalled below to fill the tanks, and through the portholes I saw the welcome green creep up, the light disappear, and felt the gratings sinking beneath my feet. I shouted down for Dickson—the first name I could think of.

Dickson max. was up in a second.

"Get the bottle of rum," I said, "the Captain's hurt."

It came. I held it to my brother's lips. He took a little and gave one deep groan.

Dickson max. stood like a statue. He never asked a question. It was wonderful.

"Who fired that torpedo?" Bernard asked.

"I did, sir. Mr. Scarlett showed me how."

"You will be pleased to know, Mr. Dickson, that you have sunk the German battleship, *Der Friesland*, with probably a thousand souls on board. This will be remembered."

"You are hurt, sir?"

"Get down to the torpedo tubes. Load the empty one and stand by for orders."

Dickson vanished.

"Are you all right?" I asked.

"Right as rain. Now then, we've got to find those transports. I took their bearings before we sank. Meanwhile I think we'll get a little deeper, out of harm's way."

He told me what to do. I pulled the necessary lever and spoke orders to Bosustow at the engines. The needle on the manometer quivered and rose. We went down to thirty feet. Immediately, it seemed as if the world above, the noise of battle, everything, faded away. We were buzzing along in the depths of the sea, just as we had been, intact, unhurt, until I looked at Bernard's hand. He was rather pale, but as pleased in face as if he was just tumbling into the "Sawdust Club" at Portsmouth.

"I say," he said, "won't the daily papers spread themselves over this!"

Somehow or other, a beastly little fly must have got into the conning-tower. It settled on me. I put up my hand to brush it away. My hand came back—pink, and I stared stupidly at it.

"You silly blighter!" my brother said, "didn't you know you'd lost half your ear?"

I suppose we ran, deep under water, at the top speed of which the motors were capable for at least another ten minutes. Adams was called up to the wheel and Bernard went down. I stood where I was until the man below shouted up. "Captain calling for you, sir!"

I tumbled down into the centre of the submarine, looking first aft to where the huge Cornishman, Bosustow, was quietly moving about his engines.

"Farrard, sir," said Bosustow, and I hastened round the gangway towards the bows. Scarlett, the Dicksons, and Bernard were standing by the torpedo tubes. Bernard turned to me.

"That concussion has snookered our tubes a bit," he said. "You see we aren't quite accustomed to this new German mechanism. Scarlett says, and I quite agree, that it's a toss up if we can make correct aim under water. I think we shall have to go for that transport on the surface."

He looked at me with quick interrogation. I knew what he meant. Already we had done more than anyone in the world would have thought possible. It was no time for sentimentalism or heroic thoughts, and we knew that, whatever happened, we had earned imperishable fame. We were safe now. Should we run another risk? That was what my brother was asking me. Even his iron nerve doubted itself for an instant.

"The only thing I can see to do," I answered, "is to let 'em have it in the open—out of the trenches, bayonet attack, what?"

"My own opinion entirely, sir," said Scarlett. "Damn it, begging your pardon, sir, we've not 'alf give 'em it yet!"

For a moment my brother's glance rested on the two eager boys. Was he justified in flinging them to death after they had done so much, behaved so splendidly?

They knew it. By some intuition, the young devils saw it at once.

"Oh, let's have another smack at them, sir!" they said in chorus.

Without another word, Bernard limped along the gratings and I helped him up into the conning-tower again. We rose to the surface.

The stars in their courses fought for Sisera! When we went out on deck, the first transport was scarcely a mile away from us on the starboard quarter. We had judged it to a tick.

But she was no longer heading west. She had turned tail. She was a Hamburg-Amerika liner converted to a transport, and thick black smoke poured out of her four funnels as she raced back towards Heligoland and safety.

"She's got nearly three thousand troops on board, I'll bet you a manhattan," Bernard said. "We *must* get her, we simply *must*!"

Turning to the west, we saw at least five destroyers rushing for us like express trains. Whether they had seen us come up or not I cannot tell, but they knew well enough what our manœuvre would be, and they were not a mile and a half away.

"Get down. Tell Bosustow to cram it all on. Increase the spark. We've got to do twenty knots if we scrap the whole thing."

I was there in a moment, I told Bosustow what the skipper had said. The big man was quietly chewing tobacco, and he spat down on the accumulators as he made a motion to salute. He

moved like a slug over his roaring engines, but even as he did so, the angry hum, the muffled explosions, rose into a steel symphony like Tchaikovsky's "1812"! I felt the ship leap forward like a whippet out of leash. When I stumbled up on deck again, the wind was whistling all round the conning-tower. It blew my cap off into the sea.

We gained, we gained enormously, but so did the pursuing destroyers.

We soon knew that. There were sounds behind us like a little street-boy whistling to a friend. They were firing their bow machine guns, taking no careful aim, at the fearful pace they were going, but all around us fountains of foam rose in the sea as we plunged onwards.

"You know, John," said my brother, "it's a difficult thing for any gunners at all to fire their bow chasers at a little bobbing thing like a submarine. Of course, they may get us with a lucky shot, but I don't think they will."

They didn't.

The great liner saw us coming and slanted off obliquely to the north. It wasn't any use at all. We had the heels of her, though we knew that at any moment our engines might give out, owing to the fearful strain we were putting on them.

It was Scarlett who fired the torpedo—"must let the old blighter have his chance!" my brother said—and it went straight and true to the *Princessin Amalia*, as we afterwards learned she was.

I think that was the worst of all. We torpedoed her from six hundred yards. There was no explosion, as there was in the case of the battleship. We could see everything far more distinctly. She simply broke in two and sank in three minutes, defenceless, impotent.

"Poor chaps!" I said, as we watched.

"Fortune of war!" Bernard answered—"Yes, poor chaps! At the same time, remember that they're the same sort of fellows who have been crucifying flappers in Belgium and taking out the whole male population of harmless villages and shooting them before breakfast. They would have been doing that all over Norfolk in thirty hours, if"—he paused—"if you hadn't been rejected by the R.N.F.C. and also been the right hand of the late lamented Doctor Upjelly. We must get down quickly, or else ..."

He had turned and was holding his binoculars to his eyes.

"Good heavens!" he said, "what's that?"

I turned, and I saw that the five destroyers were sweeping away in a great curve to the north. They were pursuing us no longer.

"What is it?" I cried.

The answer didn't come from my brother, though I heard it plainly enough. It was like thunder many miles away—a huge, dull boom such as I had never heard before.

"Why, they're running!"

"I should rather think so, old soul!"

"Are they afraid of us? What is that noise?"

"That, my dear young friend, unless I am very much mistaken, is one of the twelve-inch guns of His Majesty's ship, *Vengeance*. Cruiser-battleship, young John. I happen to know she's been lying off Harwich for the last week, waiting orders. Our friend, Lieutenant Murphy, has sent my wires to good purpose, and 'now we shan't be long!'"

Again the great, menacing boom, but this time we saw something.

From the deck of a submarine the range of vision is only two miles. The last destroyer was almost disappearing on the horizon, when she suddenly jumped out of the sea and fell to pieces like a pack of cards.

"That's old Snorty Bethune-Ranger!" my brother said, wagging his head gravely. "Best gunner commander in the fleet, and I know he's on board the *Vengeance*. Now don't you think we'll have the boys up and let 'em chortle a bit?"

"I'll go and call them."

I was just going in when I was gripped by the arm so hard that I winced.

"Look there!" said my brother.

I followed his pointing right arm and saw something far up in the sky, something like a crow, which grew larger every second.

"One of their hydroplanes, off the deck of the second transport. She's going to try and drop bombs on us."

"Will she do it?"

"Can a duck bark?" Bernard answered contemptuously. "Of course, she may be lucky, but it's

never happened yet. The worst of it is that they can see us thirty feet below the surface. Still, old sport, she can't do much—hear her coming?"

I did. There was a noise like a motor-bicycle in the sky, and the crow grew to an eagle, developed into an aeroplane, such as I had seen so often in the illustrated papers.

"I suppose we'd better submerge, though I don't want to run from a beastly mechanical kite, after sinking Kaiser Bill's lovin' enthusiastic soldiers, all in the box, complete, one shilling! I say, John, would you like a little bit of sport?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I don't suppose this fellow is going to do us any harm, and any way, it's a toss up. Now you rather pride yourself as a wild-fowler, don't you?"

"If I hadn't been a wild-fowler," I said, "we shouldn't have been where we are now."

"Quite so. Now, there's a rack of excellent rifles down below, and dozens of clips; see if you can't pick this Johnny off."

He bellowed down through the hatch.

"Bring up a magazine rifle and some ammunition. Look sharp!"

I got the rifle in a few seconds. I think we were both perfectly reckless. I know I was. I laughed as I tucked the gun into my shoulder. There was a complicated arrangement of sights, but I never even snapped up the foresight. It did not seem worth while; the mark was so big.

The hydroplane fetched a sweep of quarter of a mile round us, and then came head on. I could see the pilot distinctly and, a little below him, the gentleman who was getting ready to drop his bombs.

It was quite delightful. They were not going at a higher speed than a flock of widgeon. To me, it was child's play.

I plugged the bomb expert with the second shot. Then, and I really rather pride myself on what I did next, I hit the long, sausage-like petrol tank and ripped it up. There was a huge roar, an overhead explosion, and as the whole beastly thing turned a somersault and fell, I am pretty certain, too, that I put the pilot out of his pain with my last shot.

We were surrounded by ships—they had come racing north out of Harwich just in time. The big *Vengeance* was still booming away, but two snaky-like destroyers were coming up hell for leather and a big seven thousand ton cruiser was not more than three hundred yards from us.

Puff! puff! A white pinnacle, with a shining brass funnel, swirled round and came up on our quarter. My brother and myself, together with the two Dickson boys, were standing by the conning-tower.

The pinnacle was full of men. It was steered by a youngish-looking, clean-shaved officer, wearing the badges of a lieutenant.

Adams, Scarlett, and Bosustow were over the side in a minute, a coil of rope ran out, boat-hooks appeared from nowhere. There was a subdued hum of chatter, as the men from the cruiser greeted the three heroes of the submarine.

Then I heard a sharp and rather squeaky voice.

"Hallo, Whelk!" it said.

Bernard leant over the rail; he was nearly done, but he found voice to answer that hail.

"That you, Reptile?" he muttered, "you are more like a stuffed frog than ever!"

Such are the greetings and amenities of the Navy. But the last thing I remember hearing that afternoon came from the lieutenant in charge of the pinnacle.

"I say, excuse me for mentioning it, but 'well done,' you fellows!"

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST CHAPTER—IN TWO PARTS

PART I.—DORIS AND MARJORIE HAVE A LATE VISITOR

NOTE.—I have certainly written this chapter—with a pen, that is. Neither my brother's wife nor my own actually set down a word of the following. I am not responsible, and I

will say no more. You will understand why when you have read this last chapter. If I were the usual sort of poopstick that often lurks behind such a story, I should say: "This is put in at the request of my friends." It is not. It is done simply to tell you the end of our little affairs, and rather more with my heart in my mouth than my tongue in my cheek.—J. C.

It was Sunday night in Lieutenant Murphy's house at Cockthorpe. The wires had worked. By dawn there was an army of police from Norwich in a fleet of motor cars. They invested Morstone House School. Old Mr. Pugmire, startlingly sober for once, was placed in charge of the boarders, who were all sent home during the course of the next day. Another, and more dangerous reprobate, Mrs. Gaunt with the broken leg, was interrogated by a stern-faced inspector in the presence of a doctor. The hag had been in von Vedal's confidence for years. The police learned much.

By ten o'clock, others than the County Police had arrived. There were clean-shaved, quiet-mannered officials from the Admiralty. There was a lean, elderly gentleman in khaki, with the red band round his cap and on his shoulders which pronounced him of the War Office Staff.

Admiral Kiderlen-Waechter and the man, Schweitzer, were in Norwich Castle by eleven. The whole countryside and coastline buzzed like swarming bees. A detachment of Territorials patrolled the village. Nobody knew anything at all of what had really happened, but everyone was very excited. All the local people agreed that there had not been a Sunday like this for many years!

Doris and Marjorie Joyce were at Cockthorpe, in the Lieutenant's house. They were being looked after by Mrs. Murphy, a jolly old Irishwoman with all the tact and humour of her nation—a woman who knew when to foil hysteria with a jest, to hearten a girl with a sharp word, and, when the final interrogation was over, to invite the warm relieving flood of tears with the instinctive motherhood of one who nightly prayed to Mary to pray for those in distress.

The girls were troubled very little. The Lieutenant of the Coastguards had seen almost everything. There would not be an inquest for two or three days. They had made their statement to a courteous person from London. They were to be left in peace.

After lunch the old lady came to them—came to the little sitting-room which opened out of the bedroom she had given them.

"Now, my dear children," she said, "ye'll just take off your stays and pull down your hair, and I'll tuck ye in under the eiderdown, and ye'll sleep!"

She had two tumblers in her plump hands, upon which sparkled many rings—the Irish carbuncles, which are so much larger and more brilliant than mere rubies, the Ballysheen emeralds, "which you can only find at Ballysheen, me dear, and glad the jewellers of Regent Street would be if they could get a supply of 'em! Faith! and the doctor has given me this for you. Bromide to calm the nerves—not that I ever had any nerves, meself, when I was your age! But I never had a crool stepfather lying dead in an adjacent village, nor was mixed up with spies, though in the Sin-fein riots of '84—Marjorie, me darlint, take your shoes off. Now then, I'll tuck ye both up and pull down the blinds to keep out the sunlight, though it's shutters I would be putting up when I was a gurl!"

It was like a fairy story, and Mrs. Murphy was the good Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid: "The children sank into a deep, dreamless sleep."

Poor dears, how they must have wanted it after all they had been through! I can see them lying there....

(Excision by censor and pencil note in the margin of the manuscript: "John Carey, you liar, don't obtrude yourself and your sickly sentiments.")

It was about six when Doris and Marjorie awoke. They came out of the bedroom into the sitting-room adjoining. A bright fire burnt upon the hearth with that clear redness which indicates a dry and frosty night. On a little table there was an equipage of tea, and a copper kettle sang gently.

These two girls were essentially healthy and plucky. The semi-imprisoned life they had led at Morstone House School had broken nothing of their spirit. The death—the righteous execution—of the man who had hurried their mother into her grave affected them not at all. They were too brave and fine to affect an emotion that they did not, could not, feel. All that had happened in the large, L-shaped house was hideous and horrible, yet not to be overmuch remembered or deplored.

They had another subject of discussion, these two beautiful sisters.

"Doris, it was desperate from the first."

"Yes, it was, Marjorie."

"Then, do you think——?"

"That they will come out all right, you mean?"

"Yes, do you?"

"My red-haired sister," Doris answered, "if you go on like this I'll be bound to bite!"

"Of course, Commander Carey knows all about submarines, and he's one of the bravest officers...."

"Yes, I rather like Bernard myself."

"You *rather like* him, Doris!"

"Well, you haven't known him as long as I've known John. What price Johnny, my sweet young sister, and what about the bold, brave Dickson max. and Dickson major?"

They kept it up for a minute or two very well, and then their arms went round each other, and one sister held the other close.

The bell from the adjacent church tolled for evensong. It was a lovely night, cold and clear with a great, round, green moon. Mrs. Murphy mercifully left them alone. They heard the front door close, and saw her rolling up the path towards the church, a long, dark façade with lit windows.

As if in a dream, the girls heard the droning murmur of the Psalms. Their thoughts were far away with a little band of heroes. There was a long pause—it must have been the sermon—and then came a deep, swelling sound. The congregation were singing the last hymn, and it was "for those in peril on the sea."

They clasped hands and went to the window, opening it wide to the moonlight. The simple, familiar music flooded into the room.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The door burst open. It was midnight, and Mrs. Murphy, in an appalling night-cap and a magenta dressing-gown, was standing by the girls' beds.

"Get ye up! Get ye up!—no, don't bother about your hair, it's well enough as it is. The Saints be praised—hush, ye'll not say a word, for I'm a good Protestant here, for Murphy's sake, and an old gazaboo the clergyman is, to be shure!—but there's a gintleman come down in a big automobile to see you. Wirra, phwat news!"

While she was shouting and gesticulating, the old lady had pulled Doris and Marjorie out of their beds, and was wrapping them up in their dressing-gowns with shaking fingers.

"News?" Doris gasped—"news of John?"

"News that'll shake England, aye, and Doblin too, to its foundations."

"Bernard?" Marjorie said unsteadily.

"Ye'll kindly come along with me," said Mrs. Murphy, and a strange procession went down the stairs into the hall.

The three servants of the house were bundled into one corner, and the less said about their attire the better. Lieutenant Murphy, in his uniform, was trying to light candles, and his wrinkled face was brighter than the flaring, smoking lamp which hung from the ceiling. In the centre of the hall was a tall, clean-shaved, youngish-looking man. He held a cocked hat in one hand and wore a uniform of dead black-blue.

Directly the old lady rolled down the stairs, followed by the frightened girls, this new-comer made a step forward. His manners were perfect, and he bowed as if he were at Court.

"Miss Joyce?—Miss Marjorie Joyce?"

"Faith, and they're the same, the very gurrlls!" said Mrs. Murphy.

"I am sent by the First Lord, ladies, to give you some news, which I understand will be most welcome. Lieutenant-Commander Bernard Carey, Mr. John Carey, the two young gentlemen named Dickson, and Commander Carey's three sailors, Scarlett, Adams and Bosustow, have covered themselves with glory."

Doris was splendid.

"Ah!" she said, "we were waiting for this, my sister and myself. Are they, are they—?" She could not go on.

"Madam, they are all safe and sound. Commander Carey is slightly wounded—that is all. They have engaged in action with the great German battleship, *Der Friesland*, and sunk her. They have sunk a transport. They have evaded a flotilla of German destroyers. In short, they have saved England. Our flotilla came up just in time. The Admiralty have had wireless messages during the whole of the afternoon."

Hitherto, the officer—he looked thirty-five, was really fifty, and the son of a duke—had spoken

formally.

"Then?" Marjorie sighed.

"Then, it just amounts to this. No more glorious deed had ever been done in the whole history of our Navy, from the days of Sir Francis Drake down to this moment. I was privileged to be at the Palace a few hours ago when the news was brought. Each member of the crew of the submarine is to receive the Victoria Cross. It is not only by order of the First Lord of the Admiralty, but also by express command of His Majesty that I have motored down here to-night to bring you the news. My instructions are to ask you if you will accompany me to-morrow to Harwich, for we expect and hope that, during the earlier part of the afternoon...."

"They will come back!" Marjorie shouted.

"Precisely," said Lord William, "and, of course, you must be there to meet them!"

"Gurrls, I'll chaperone ye! Now, get back to bed, and sleep—if ye can. Shure, and I'm ashamed of ye appearin' in such dishybayle!" concluded the merry old lady, with a wink.

She stood at the foot of the stairs and hooshed her young charges away.

Then she turned to her guest.

"Ye'll forgive an old woman appearin' like this," she said simply. "Pathrick, take Lord William into the dining-room, and we'll make him some supper in a moment. We're all friends in the Navy."

Her voice changed and became very grave.

"Blessings on you," she said, "that have brought the good news to this house and to those dear gurrls this night!"

PART II.—RETURN OF THE SEVEN HEROES

It was a tall man with black hair, dark eyes and a pinched face. His black, clerical clothes were rather rusty in the bright morning sunlight, though they were his best.

"The young beggars!" he said, "the young beggars!" and there was a catch in his voice. "A commission for both of them and a special allowance, did you say, Lord William?"

"The Admiralty could do no less, Mr. Dickson. We want a thousand lads like yours, if we could only get them. Not that any officer of their age in the Navy wouldn't have done the same, but their names will be for ever glorious in the history of the service. It is a feat that England will never willingly forget. You know that they, as well as the rest, are to have the Victoria Cross?"

Mr. Dickson stared, as if he saw something at a great distance.

"No," he said, "I didn't know that—er—excuse me for a moment."

The clergyman turned away to the window of the Admiral's office, which overlooked Harwich Harbour, and his shoulders were shaking. "*Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen—*"

"Shure, and they can't be long now, the Admiral says," came from Mrs. Murphy, sitting in the Admiral's chair, at the Admiral's table, with all sorts of confidential documents spread in front of her.

"Pathrick is to have the rank of Captain for the part he's tuk in it, though that was pure luck and him being on the spot. And, bedad, we'll have that motor cyar—and I never did see why a mere Docthor's wife like Mrs. Pestle, and him little better than a vetherinary surgeon, should keep a cyar when an officer in His Majesty's Navy couldn't!"

The Admiral in command at Harwich, a grizzled sailor who had been called up from his peaceful Devon home to leave his pheasants and fat cattle, came into the room, rubbing his hands.

"Well, they'll have the reception of their lives, young ladies," he said beaming; and, with a clank of his sword as he sat down, "Mrs. Murphy, if you attempt to read any of the papers on that table, I shall regretfully be compelled to have you shot, which will mar the festivity of the occasion! My dears, a special train full of journalists has just come down from town. There are thousands of people flocking to the quays in the spaces provided, and what the papers are saying about our friends will astonish you."

He produced a copy of the *Daily Wire* and opened it, while they all crowded round to look. Modern journalism had secured a triumph. Short as the time had been, there were columns and columns of description of the events at Morstone of which hardly anybody had been allowed to know anything—and the Battle in the North Sea, about which nobody knew but the Admiralty.

There were portraits of the two Dickson boys, each apparently about twelve years of age and in broad Eton collars. There was a truculent, prize-fighting individual, with distinct side-whiskers, labelled, "Mr. John Carey, M.A., the heroic schoolmaster who slew the Master-spy, 'Doctor Upjelly,' with his own hands." A smudge on the top of a uniform represented Lieutenant-Commander Bernard Carey—also "heroic," with sundry other adjectives; and if those excellent Plymouth ladies, Mrs. Bosustow, Mrs. Scarlett and Mrs. Adams, had seen the people represented

in the newspaper as their lords and masters walk into Paradise Row, Devonport, they certainly would not have known them.

Doris gasped. "To call that *John!*" she said; "what a wicked libel! Couldn't the editor be arrested?"

"An editor is one of the people whom nothing can arrest," said the Admiral. "*In rebus desperatis remedia desperata,*" which means 'What the public wants, the public must have, however short the time in which to fake it up.'"

There was a knock at the door, and a young officer entered, saluting.

"Destroyers sighted, Sir," he said, not without an appreciative glance at the two pretty girls close by. He handed a piece of paper to the Admiral, adding: "Just come in by wireless from the *Arethusa*, Sir."

The old gentleman with the pointed beard and clanking sword read it. He chuckled.

"Well," he said, "the public is going to have some fun for its money, for Commander Carey is coming into harbour on board *his own* boat. Now, then, suppose we all go out to the signalling station at the end of the Mole and get the first sight of them?"

Half a dozen clouds of black smoke upon the horizon, growing larger and larger every minute; a great murmur of the crowd; officers in dress uniform with binoculars at their eyes; a group of journalists in hard felt hats, making notes!...

Now the destroyers can be seen in a half-circle, with three great ships in the background.

"The Transports!" the Admiral said—"from seven to eight thousand Germans in them—what a haul! Look, Mrs. Murphy, that is the Cruiser *Arethusa* by the side of them. I expect they had a handful in disarming all those chaps, and they must be pretty short-handed on board the whole flotilla, for they'll have had to send a lot of men aboard those two liners. Fine boats, the new light cruisers, *Captain* Murphy?"

The old lieutenant of Coastguards flushed with pleasure.

"Never had a chance to go to sea in one of them, Sir," he said—"long after my time, I am sorry to say."

"Look!" Marjorie whispered to Doris, "they're opening out. Isn't it wonderful? How near they're getting! It's just like a figure in the Lancers."

Doris did not answer for a moment. Then she said:—"What's that, right in the middle?"

The Admiral overheard her.

"You've quick eyes, young lady," he answered; "that, unless I am very much mistaken, is a certain Submarine, lately in possession of the Kaiser, and which people are talking about a good deal just now!"

It was so. The destroyers slowed down, and made a great lane upon the sea. In the centre of this lane was something infinitely small, a black speck, like a cork floating on the water.

It grew and grew.

Then, from somewhere not far away, there was the heavy boom of a gun. Immediately, the air was rent with a noise like hundreds of bellowing bulls as all the ships at anchor opened their steam-sirens until the very stone quays trembled.

The cheers of thousands of voices, the wild tossing of hats into the air, the fluttering of handkerchiefs like sudden snow; and then, the Submarine, its whale-back ploughing through the Harbour waters, a white wake of foam behind it, came into full view. From the periscope fluttered two little flags, black and white. In half a minute the cheering, delirious crowd saw what they were.

"The skull and cross-bones, by Jove—two of 'em!" said a young lieutenant on the Admiral's Staff to his friend, a newly promoted Commander.

"So it is! How on earth did they get those on board a German submarine?"

"Someone of resource on board has spent a happy hour or two on the cruise home."

The young gentleman was right, but he did not know that Dickson major's shirt and the back of Dickson major's coat were the materials used by Mr. Scarlett, who was very handy with his needle.

"Here they come!"

"Here they come!" "Here they come!" "Hurrah!" "Hurrah!"

Bang! went a whole salvo of guns. Upon the deck of the Submarine was a little group of four figures, and, if the truth must be told, four dirtier and more shame-faced human beings have

rarely made a public appearance.

"Those must be the boys," the lieutenant shouted in his friend's ear.

The other nodded. He was staring at the Submarine.

"By Jove!" he cried, "there's the 'Whelk,' the good old Whelk! Look at him! We were at Osborne together, and he always swore he liked the beastly things—so the name stuck to him. That other chap must be his brother, I suppose—the schoolmaster Johnny."

"Good old Whe-e-lk!" he shouted, his hands to his mouth.

The lieutenant had never been shipmates with Bernard Carey. Also, his eyes were elsewhere. He twitched his friend's arm.

"I say," he said, in an awed voice, "look at the faces of those two girls!"

The Commander did so.

"Lucky old Whelk!"

THE END

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