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William Le Queux

"Number 70, Berlin"

"A Story of Britain's Peril"

Chapter One.

The Man of the Moment.

"That man knows too much!"

"Do you really think he overheard?"

"He may not have done. But we must take no risks, my dear fellow. Remember we are at war! With people who know too much there's but one way—dismissal," declared Lewin Rodwell, the tall, well-groomed middle-aged man, in morning-coat and grey trousers, who stood in the panelled boardroom with his chairman, Sir Boyle Huntley, the other directors having left after the weekly meeting of the board.

"He might talk—eh?" Sir Boyle remarked in a low, apprehensive tone.

"He would probably fear the law of libel," said Lewin Rodwell, fair-haired, sleek, rather refined, who, at the moment, was one of the most popular and patriotic figures in London—a man whose praises were sung constantly in the halfpenny press, and who numbered peers, Cabinet Ministers and diplomats among his friends.

His companion, ten years his senior, was of a different type—a somewhat uncouth man, with a reddish, bloated face, dark hair tinged with grey, deep-set crafty eyes, and a voice which betrayed his cockney birth and breeding, which even his Birthday baronetcy could not disguise.

Both men, of humble origin, had won considerable fortune in the City and had worked together on the boards of many companies more or less prosperous. They were "keen business men"—which, in these days, seems to be the accepted description of those who are not above descending to sharp practices—and indeed, if the truth be told, had been guilty of certain financial juggling which would have looked very ugly against them if placed before a court of law.

Yet what they had done had been done within the law, and their hands were, consequently, just as clean as those of hundreds of other company-directors in the City of London.

Rodwell, with his back to the fire—for it was a cold, dark November afternoon in the year 1914—slowly lit a good cigar which he took from his case, while Sir Boyle fidgeted uneasily with some papers at the table.

"How shall you get rid of that unnecessary fellow?" he asked his friend at last. "If he were dismissed now, he'd at once guess the reason, and might become our enemy."

"Enemy! Bosh!" laughed Lewin Rodwell, scornfully. "There's no fear of that, my dear chap. Leave him to me. I shall do nothing till after our meeting next Thursday. Then we can call in Charlesworth and tell him that the fellow—Sainsbury is his name, I believe—is a slacker, and ought to join the army. Owing to the war we must cut down expenditure—you know. He must go, and several others too—in order to give our economy a flavour of truth."

"Charlesworth has always spoken very highly of him. He'll certainly urge us to keep him," the chairman remarked, looking blankly into the fire. "Only a fortnight ago his name was on the list of employees to be retained throughout the war."

"I know. But if Sainsbury has overheard what I said, then he's better outside this building than in it," Rodwell declared emphatically, drawing heavily at his cigar.

"You were a confounded fool to speak of such matters outside your own room at home, Lewin. It was most indiscreet. It isn't like you."

"I know. I was a confounded fool," the other admitted. "But I had no idea anyone had entered. He wears those infernal rubber things on his heels. But leave it to me. I'll clear him out all right."

"It must be done most delicately. He mustn't, for a single moment, suspect the reason of his dismissal."

Lewin Rodwell reflected for a second, and then, as though in his active, clever brain a sudden suggestion had arisen, he laughed and replied:

"There are more ways than one by which to crush an enemy, my dear Boyle—as you yourself know. Leave all to me, and I can guarantee that we shall have nothing to fear from this young prig, Sainsbury. So set your mind at ease at once over it."

"Very well, Lewin. I know how clever you always are in avoiding trouble," laughed Sir Boyle Huntley. "Had it not been for you we'd both have more than once been in a very tight corner. As it is we've prospered famously, and—well, I suppose the world thinks quite a lot of us—especially of you—the man who does so much good and charitable work without any thought of reward—purely as a patriotic Briton."

Lewin Rodwell winked knowingly, and both men laughed aloud.

Rodwell's eye caught the clock. It was half-past four.

"By Jove! I must fly!" he cried. "I promised to be at Lady Betty's soon after four. Trustram, of the Admiralty, will be there, and I particularly want to meet him. I've got my car. Can I drop you anywhere?"

"Yes. At the Constitutional. I'm meeting a man there."

So the pair, leaving the room, were helped on with their overcoats by an obsequious liveried servant and, descending in the lift, passed through the handsome set of offices where a hundred clerks were working beneath the electric-light, and out into Gracechurch Street, where Rodwell's fine limousine was awaiting him; the footman standing with the fur rug ready to throw over his master's knees.

On their way through the City the elder man reverted to the subject they had discussed in the boardroom of The Ochrida Copper Corporation—one of the greatest copper concerns in the world—and, drawing a long breath, he said:

"I really do hope that young fellow heard nothing. What if he knew—eh?"

"Of course he heard," was his co-director's reply. "But whether he understood is quite another thing."

"I fear he did understand."

"Why?"

"Because, as he left the room, I watched his face, and saw both suspicion and surprise upon it."

"Bah! My dear Boyle, don't let that worry you for a second longer," Rodwell laughed, as the car sped silently along Queen Victoria Street and across to the Embankment. "Even if he does suspect he'll soon be rendered quite harmless. When Lewin Rodwell makes up his mind to sweep an enemy from his path, you know that the enemy always disappears."

"I know that," replied the Baronet, with a slight hardening at the corners of his flabby mouth. Perhaps he recollected the fate of certain other enemies. He well knew the callous unscrupulousness of his friend and associate in his determined efforts to get rich quickly. Indeed, they had both got rich very quickly—more especially Rodwell—during the past four or five years by methods which would never bear investigation. Yet, as in so many other cases in our great complex London, the world regarded him as a perfectly honest and trustworthy man—a true Briton, who was ever ready to place both his valuable time and his money at the disposal of the British cause against her barbaric enemy.

"Sainsbury will never trouble us, I assure you," he repeated, as at last Sir Boyle alighted in Northumberland Avenue, and he waved him a cheery good-bye as he went up the steps of the club.

Then, as the car re-started off to Upper Brook Street, Lewin Rodwell sat back, his hands resting idly on the fur rug, his cold, round blue eyes staring straight before him, the skin drawn rather tightly over his cheek-bones, giving him a look haggard and quite unusual.

"Yes," he exclaimed to himself, drawing a long breath, "Boyle is quite right. That young man suspects—curse him! Phew! I must close his mouth somehow. But how? That's the question. In these days, with the Government deceiving the people and lulling them into a false sense of security, the very least breath of suspicion quickly becomes magnified into an open scandal. And scandal, as far as I am concerned, would mean that I should be compelled to invite investigation. Could I bear such a test?" he asked. "Gad! no!" he gasped.

He set his lips firmly, and his eyes narrowed. He tossed his cigar angrily out into the roadway. It tasted bitter.

As the car went up the Haymarket, boys were crying the evening papers. Upon the contents-bill he noticed that the British were fighting gallantly at the Yser, stemming the tide of the Devil's spawn, who were endeavouring to strike a death-blow at French's little army and get through to Calais.

He smiled at his own strange thoughts, and then sank back into the soft cushions, again reflecting. That *contretemps* in the boardroom had really unnerved him. It unnerved him so much, indeed, that from Piccadilly Circus he drove to his club and swallowed a stiff brandy-and-soda—an action quite unusual to him—and then he went along to Upper Brook Street.

When the rather pompous elderly butler announced him at the door of the large drawing-room, Lady Betty Kenworthy, a tall, middle-aged woman, rose, greeting the great man affably, and then she introduced him to the dozen or so of her friends who were gossiping over their teacups—the names of most of them being household words both to those in society and the readers of the halfpenny picture-papers out of it.

Lady Betty, a well-preserved, good-looking woman, whose boy was at the front, was one of those leaders of society who, at the outbreak of war, for want of something more exciting, had become the leader of a movement. In London, after the first few months of war, the majority of society women took up one movement or another: red cross, Serbian relief, socks for the troops, comforts for mine-sweepers, huts for soldiers, work for women, hose-extensions for Highlanders, or one or other of the thousand-and-one “movements” which cropped up and duly found their places in the advertisement columns of the *Times*.

Lady Betty Kenworthy's particular movement was the Anti-Teuton Alliance—an association formed by a few patriotic enthusiasts who bound themselves to take action against the hated German in every way—to expose and intern the enemy in our midst, to free the country from the baneful German influence which has spread into every sphere of our national life, to purchase no goods of German origin, to ban the German language, and to discover the existence of the pro-German sentiment, German intrigue, and the expenditure of German gold—“palm-oil” one distinguished writer has called it—in official and Parliamentary circles.

The programme was, to say the least, a wide and laudable one, and afforded ample scope to the thousands of members who had enrolled themselves.

In Lady Betty's drawing-room that afternoon the committee of the movement had assembled, eager to meet Mr Lewin Rodwell, who had shown such patriotism that even Cabinet Ministers had publicly bestowed great praise upon his ceaseless and self-denying efforts.

There were present, first of all, the usual set of society women of uncertain age, dressed in the latest French models, which gave them an air of youth, yet, at the same time, accentuated their angularity and unnatural freshness; two or three elderly men, led there against their will by their strong-minded spouses, a pretty girl or two from nowhere, and one or two male enthusiasts, including two good-looking and merry-going peers who were loud in their condemnation of the whole Government—from the Prime Minister downwards.

Among those to whom the great and much-advertised Lewin Rodwell was introduced was a rather thick-set, dark-haired, clean-shaven, middle-aged man named Charles Trustram, a thoroughly John Bull type of Englishman, who occupied a highly responsible position in the Transport department of the Admiralty.

The two men shook hands warmly, whereupon Trustram expressed his great pleasure at meeting a man so famous as Lewin Rodwell.

“I came here this afternoon, Mr Rodwell, on purpose to meet you,” he assured him. “Lady Kenworthy told me you were coming, and I know the committee of the Anti-Teuton Alliance, of which I'm a member, are most eager to enlist your influence.”

“I'll be most delighted,” declared Rodwell, in his charmingly affable manner. “I think the movement is a really excellent one. Without a doubt the question has become very serious indeed. There are Germans and German influence in our midst in quarters quite unexpected and undiscovered—high official quarters too. Can we, therefore, be surprised if things don't always go as they should?”

“Exactly,” said the Admiralty official, as they both took seats together on a couch against the wall. “There's no doubt that the Germans, as part of their marvellous preparedness, made an audacious attempt to weave a network of vile treachery in our Government Departments and, above all, in the War Office and Admiralty. As an official I can tell you, in strictest confidence of course, that I have, several times of late, had my suspicions seriously aroused. Information leaks out. How—nobody—not even our Intelligence Department itself can discover.”

“My dear sir,” exclaimed Rodwell confidentially, “is it really to be wondered at when men of German birth and German descent are employed in nearly all the various departments in Whitehall? After all, are we not to-day fighting for our country's life and freedom? Certainly those who come after us would never forgive us—you and I—those who, if born into a Germanised world and held under the iron yoke of barbaric 'Kultur,' looked back to our conduct of the war that sealed their fate and found that, besides supplying the enemy with war material—cotton and the like—we actually harboured Germans in our camp and gave them knowledge, power and position vital to the enemy's success. And I assert to-day, Mr Trustram, that we treat Germany as the 'most-favoured nation,' even though the flower of our land are being sacrificed by thousands and thousands upon the fields of Flanders. Yes, it is an outrageous scandal—a disgrace to our nation. As I said in a speech at Liverpool last week, we are daily being misled, misguided, and lured to our destruction. And for that reason,” the great man added—“for that reason I'm only too ready and anxious to help the Anti-Teuton Alliance in their splendid crusade against this canker-worm in England's heart.”

Lady Betty, seated quite near, talking to a dowager-duchess, overheard him. He had purposely spoken loudly and

emphatically, with that object.

“Good! Mr Rodwell,” her ladyship cried. “Excellent! I am so delighted that you thoroughly approve of our efforts. We are trying to do our share, in this terrible crisis. You are such a busy man that I almost feared to ask you to help us.”

“I am never too busy, Lady Kenworthy, to help in such a good cause as this,” he assured her, in that suave manner of his which stood him in such good stead at times. “True, I am rather a busy man, as everyone has to be in these days. We, in the City, have to bear our share in finance, for we know that one day—sooner or later—the Government will require a big loan to carry on the war. And when they do, we hope to be as ready to meet it as the industrial population of the country will no doubt be. Still, to us it means much thought. We have no time nowadays for any idle week-ends, or golf by the sea.”

At mention of golf Lady Betty smiled. She knew well that it was the great man’s habit to play golf at Sunningdale or Walton Heath with various important personages.

The conversation regarding the aims and aspirations of the Anti-Teuton Alliance grew general, and everyone was much gratified to hear Mr Lewin Rodwell’s reiterated approval of it, especially the half-dozen ascetic, hard-faced women who made “movements” the chief object of their lives.

Lewin Rodwell smiled inwardly at them all, sipped the cup of China tea offered him by a slim, dark-haired, loosely-clad girl who secretly regarded him as a hero, and then talked loudly, airing his opinion of “what the Government really ought to do.” To him, the huge farce was amusing. Lady Betty was, of course, “a good sort,” but he knew quite well that her association with the Anti-Teuton movement was merely for the sake of advertisement and notoriety—in order to go one better than the Countess of Chesterbridge, who had, for years, been her rival on the face of the social barometer—which, after all, was the personal columns of the daily newspapers.

After an hour, when most of the guests had left, Rodwell rose at last and said to Trustram, with whom he had had a long and very intimate chat:

“I really do wish you’d run in and see me, Mr Trustram. I’d be so awfully delighted. I’m sure we can do something together in order to expose this terrible scandal. Will you?”

“Most certainly. I’ll be most pleased.”

“Good. Can’t you dine with me—say on Tuesday?”

His newly-found friend reflected a moment, and then replied in the affirmative.

“Excellent. Tuesday at eight—eh? You know my address.”

“Yes—in Bruton Street.”

“Right—that’s an appointment,” Rodwell exclaimed cheerily; and then, after bending low over Lady Betty’s thin white hand, he left.

Chapter Two.

The Suspicions of Elise.

At nine o’clock that same evening, in a well-furnished drawing-room half-way up Fitzjohn’s Avenue, in Hampstead, a pretty, blue-eyed, fair-haired girl of twenty-one sat at the piano alone, playing a gay French chanson, to pass away the time.

Dressed in a dainty little dinner-gown of carnation pink, and wearing in her well-dressed hair a touch of velvet to match, she presented a pretty picture beneath the shaded electric-light which fell over the instrument set in a corner.

Her mother, Mrs Shearman, a charming, grey-haired lady, had just gone out, while her father, Daniel Shearman, a rich tool-manufacturer, whose works were outside Birmingham, was away at the factory, as was his habit three days each week.

Elise Shearman was just a typical athletic English girl. In her early youth her parents were “making their way in the world,” but at fourteen she had been sent abroad to school, first to Lausanne, and afterwards to Dresden, where she had studied music, as so many English girls have done.

On her return to Hampstead, whither her father had removed from the grime and toil of work-a-day Birmingham, she found her home very dull. Because the Shearmans were manufacturers, the snobbishness of Hampstead, with its “first Thursdays,” would have nothing to do with them; though, if the truth were told, Dan Shearman could have bought up most of his neighbours in Fitzjohn’s Avenue, and was a sterling good Englishman into the bargain—which could not be said of some of those slippery, smooth-tongued City adventurers who resided behind the iron railings of that select thoroughfare.

Running her slim white hands over the keys, she began the gay refrain of one of the chansonettes which she had learned in Paris—one of the gay songs of the boulevards, which was, perhaps, not very apropos for young ladies, but which she often sang because of its gay, blithe air—Belloche’s “L’Eventail Parisien.”

In her sweet, musical treble she sang gaily—

Dès qu'arrivent les grand's chaleurs,
À la terrass' des brasseries
Les éventails de tout's couleurs
Viennent bercer nos rêveries.
Car, pour allécher le client,
Le camelot toujours cocasse
En s'éventant d'un air bonasse
Envoi' ce petit boniment:

And then, with a swing and go, she sang the chorus—

Ça va, ça vient,
Ça donn' de l'air, ça fait du bien.
C'est vraiment magnifique.
Quel instrument magique!
Ça va, ça vient,
Ca donn' de l'air et du maintien
Et ça ne coûte presque rien:
Voici l'éventail parisien!

Hardly had she concluded the final line when the door opened and a tall, dark-haired, good-looking young man entered, crossed to her, and, placing his hand upon her shoulder, bent and kissed her fondly.

"Why, Jack, dear—you really are late!" the girl exclaimed. "Were you kept at the office?"

"Yes, dearest," was his answer. "Or rather I had some work that I particularly wanted to finish, so I stayed behind."

He was tall and broad-shouldered, with a pair of keen, merry brown eyes, a handsome face with high, intelligent brow, as yet unlined by care, a small, dark moustache, and a manner as courteous towards a woman as any diplomat accredited to the Court of St. James.

Jack Sainsbury, though merely an employee of the Ochrida Copper Corporation, a man who went by "Tube" to the City each morning and returned each night to the modest little flat in Heath Street, at which his sister Jane acted as housekeeper for him, was an honest, upright Englishman who had, in the first month of the war, done his duty and gone to the recruiting office of the Honourable Artillery Company to enlist.

A defective elbow-joint had prevented him passing the doctor. And though no one in the office knew he had tried to join the new army, he had returned to the City and continued his soul-killing avocation of adding figures and getting out totals.

His meeting with Elise Shearman was not without its romantic side.

One Sunday morning, two years before, he had been riding his motor-cycle up to Hatfield, as was his habit, to meet at the Red Lion—that old inn that is the rendezvous of all motor-cyclists—the men and women who come out there each Sunday morning, wet or fine, from London. Fine cars, driven by their owners, turn into the inn-yard all the morning, but the motor-cyclist ignores them. It is the meeting-place of the man on the cycle.

One well-remembered Sunday morning Elise, who was advanced enough to put on a Burberry with a leather strap around her waist and sit astride on a motor-cycle, was careering up the North Road beyond Barnet when, of a sudden, she swerved to avoid a cart, and ran headlong into a ditch.

At the moment Jack Sainsbury, who chanced to be behind her, stopped, sprang off, and went to her assistance.

She lay in the ditch with her arm broken. Quickly he obtained medical aid, and eventually brought her home to Fitzjohn's Avenue, where he had, with her father's knowledge and consent, been a constant visitor ever since.

Jack Sainsbury, whose father, and his family before him, had been gentlemen-farmers for two centuries in Leicestershire, was, above all, a thorough-going Englishman. He was no smug, get-on-at-all-hazards person of the consumptive type one meets at every turn in the City. On the contrary, he was a well-set-up, bold, straightforward, fearless fellow who, though but a clerk in a City office, was one of that clean-limbed, splendid type which any girl would have welcomed as her hero.

What Jack Sainsbury said, he meant. His colleagues in the office knew that. They all regarded him as a man of high ideals, and as one whose heart had, ever since the war, been fired with a keen and intense spirit of patriotism.

That Elise Shearman loved him could be seen at the first moment when he had opened the door and crossed the threshold. Her eyes brightened, and her full, red lips puckered sweetly as she returned his fond, passionate kisses.

Yes, they loved each other. Elise's parents knew that. Sometimes they were anxious, for Dan Shearman felt that it would not be altogether a brilliant match, as far as an alliance went. Yet Mrs Shearman, on her part, had so often pleaded, that no separation of the pair had, as yet, been demanded. Hence they found idyllic happiness in each other's love.

"You seem unusually thoughtful to-night, Jack!" exclaimed the girl, tenderly smoothing his hair as they stood together clasped in each other's arms.

"Do I?" he answered with a start. "I really didn't know," he laughed, aroused from his deep thoughts.

"You are, Jack. Why?"

"I—well, I'm really not—except perhaps—"

"Perhaps what?" asked Elise determinedly.

"Well, I had rather a heavy day at the office," was her lover's hesitating reply. "And I've just remembered something."

"Oh! business. And that's all?"

"Yes, business, dearest," was his reply. "I must apologise if my thoughts were, for the moment, far away," he laughed.

"You're like father," said the girl. "He sits by the fire sometimes for a quarter of an hour at a stretch staring into it, and thinking of his horrid business affairs. But of course business is an obsession with him."

"Perhaps when I'm your father's age it will be an obsession with me," replied Jack Sainsbury.

"I sincerely hope it won't," she said, with a smile upon her pretty lips.

"It won't, if I'm able to make sufficient money to keep you properly, darling," was the young man's fervent answer, as he bent until his moustache lightly brushed her cheek.

Truth to tell, he was reflecting seriously. For hours he had thought over those strange words he had overheard on entering the boardroom that afternoon.

Those astounding words of Lewin Rodwell's were, in themselves, an admission—a grave and terrible admission.

Lewin Rodwell and Sir Boyle Huntley were engaged in a great conspiracy, and he—Jack Sainsbury—was the only person who knew the ghastly truth.

Those two highly patriotic men, whose praises were being sung by every newspaper up and down the country; whose charitable efforts had brought in hundreds of thousands of pounds and hundreds of tons of comforts for our troops abroad; the two men whose photographs were in every journal, and whom the world regarded as fine typical specimens of the honest Briton, men who had raised their voices loudly against German barbarism and intrigue, were, Jack Sainsbury knew, wearing impenetrable masks. They were traitors!

He alone knew the truth—a truth so remarkable and startling that, were it told and published to the world, Great Britain would stand aghast and bewildered at the revelation. It was inconceivable, incredible. At times he felt himself doubting what he had really heard with his own ears. Yet it had been Rodwell's voice, and the words had been clear and distinct, a confession of guilt that was as plain as it was damning.

Sir Boyle had, from his seat in the House of Commons, risen time after time and denounced the policy of the Government in not interning every enemy alien in the country; he had heckled the Home Secretary, and had exposed cases of German intrigue; he had demanded that rigorous action should be taken against the horde of German spies in our midst, and had spoken up and down the country warning the Government and the people of the gravity of the spy-peril, and that British citizens would take the law in their own hands if drastic measures were not taken to crush out the enemy in our midst.

Yet that afternoon—by no seeking of his own—Jack Sainsbury had learnt a truth which, even hours after the words had fallen upon his ears, left him staggered and astounded.

He knew the secret of those two great and influential men.

What should he do? How should he act?

Such was the cause of his marked thoughtfulness that night—an attitude which Elise had not failed to notice and which considerably puzzled her.

Mrs Shearman, a pleasant-faced, grey-haired and prosperous-looking lady, who spoke with a strong Lancashire accent, entered the room a few moments later, and the pair, springing aside at the sound of her footsteps, pretended to be otherwise occupied, much to the elder lady's amusement.

After greeting Jack the old lady sat down with him, while Elise, at her mother's request, returned to the piano and began to sing Léon Garnier's "Sublime Caresse," with that catchy refrain so popular on the boulevards of Paris and in cafés in every town in France—

Quand lâchement
À l'autre amant
Je me livre et me donne.
Qu'à lui je m'abandonne.
Le coeur pâmé,
O cher aimé,
C'est à toi que s'adresse
Ma sublime caresse!

Elise, who spoke French excellently, was extremely fond of the French chansonette, and knew a great many. Her

lover spoke French quite well also, and very frequently when they were together in the “tube” or train they conversed in that language so that the every-day person around them should not understand.

To speak a foreign language amid the open mouths of the ignorant is always secretly amusing, but not so amusing as to the one person who unfortunately sits opposite and who knows that language even more perfectly than the speaker—I was about to write “swanker.”

In that drawing-room of the red-brick Hampstead residence—where the road is so steep that the vulgar London County Council Tramways have never attempted to invade it, and consequently it is a “desirable residential neighbourhood” according to the house-agents’ advertisements—Jack and Elise remained after Mrs Shearman had risen and left. For another quarter of an hour they chatted and kissed wholeheartedly, for they loved each other fondly and dearly. Then, at ten o’clock, Jack rose to go. It was his hour, and he never overstepped the bounds of propriety. From the first he had felt himself a mere clerk on the forbidden ground of the successful manufacturer’s home. Dan Shearman, honest, outspoken and square, had achieved Hampstead as a stepping-stone to Mayfair or Belgravia. To Jack Sainsbury—the man of the fine old yeoman stock—the refinement of the red-brick and laurels of Hampstead was synonymous with taste and breeding. To him the dull aristocracy of the London squares was unknown, and therefore unregarded.

How the people born in society laugh at Tom, Dick and Harry, with their feminine folk, who, in our world of make-believe, are struggling and fighting with one another to be regarded by the world as geniuses. Money can bring everything—all the thousand attributes this world can give—all except breeding and brains.

Breed, even in the idiot, and brains in the pauper’s child, will always tell.

When Jack Sainsbury descended the steps into Fitzjohn’s Avenue and strode down the hill to Swiss Cottage station, he was full of grave and bitter thoughts.

As an Englishman and a patriot, what was his line of action? That was the sole thought which filled his mind. He loved Elise with every fibre of his being, yet, on that evening, greater and even more serious thoughts occupied his mind—the safety of the British Empire.

To whom should he go? In whom dare he confide?

As he crossed from the Avenue to the station, another thought arose within him. Would anybody in whom he confided really believe what he could tell them?

Lewin Rodwell and Sir Boyle Huntley were national heroes—men against whom no breath of suspicion as traitors had ever arisen. It was the habit of the day to laugh at any suspicion of Britain’s betrayal—an attitude which the Government had carefully cultivated ever since the outbreak of war. On that day the Chief of the Military Operations Department of the War Office—in other words our Secret Service—had been—for reasons which will one day be revealed—promoted and sent to the front, leaving the Department in the hands of others fresh to the work.

Such, alas! was the British Intelligence Department—an organisation laughed at by the Secret Services of each of our Allies.

The folly of it all was really pathetic.

Jack Sainsbury knew much of this. He had, indeed, been, through Dr Jerome Jerrold, a friend of his, behind the scenes. Like all the world, he had read the optimistic, hide-the-truth newspapers. Often he had smiled in disbelief. Yet, on that afternoon, his worst fears had in a single instant been confirmed. He knew the volcano upon the edge of which Great Britain was seated.

What should he do? How should he act?

In the narrow booking-office of Swiss Cottage station he stood for a moment, hesitating to take his ticket.

Of a sudden an idea crossed his mind. He knew a certain man—his intimate friend. Could he help him? Dare he reveal his suspicions without being laughed at for his pains?

Yes. He would risk being derided, because the safety of the Empire was now at stake.

After all, he—Jack Sainsbury—was a well-bred Briton, without a strain of the hated Teutonic blood in his veins.

He would speak the truth, and expose that man who was so cleverly luring the Empire to its doom.

He passed before the little pigeonhole of the booking-office and took his ticket—an action which was destined to have a greater bearing upon our national defence than any person even with knowledge of the facts could ever dream.

Chapter Three.

The House in Wimpole Street.

Just before eleven o’clock that night Jack Sainsbury stopped at a large, rather severe house half-way up Wimpole Street—a house the door of which could be seen in the daytime to be painted a royal blue, thus distinguishing it from its rather dingy green-painted neighbours.

In response to his ring at the visitors' bell, a tall, middle-aged, round-faced manservant opened the door.

"Is Dr Jerrold in?" Jack inquired.

"Yes, sir," was the man's quick reply; and then, as Sainsbury entered, he added politely: "Nice evening, sir."

"Very," responded the visitor, laying-down his hat and stick and taking off his overcoat in the wide, old-fashioned hall.

Dr Jerome Jerrold, though still a young man, was a consulting physician of considerable eminence, and, in addition, was Jack's most intimate friend. Their fathers had been friends, living in the same remote country village, and, in consequence, ever since his boyhood he had known the doctor.

Jack was a frequent visitor at the doctor's house, Jerrold always being at home to him whenever he called. The place was big and solidly furnished, a gloomy abode for a bachelor without any thought of marrying. It had belonged to Jerrold's aunt, who had left it to him by her will, together with a comfortable income; hence her nephew had found it, situated as it was in the centre of the medical quarter of London, a most convenient, if dull, place of abode.

On the ground floor was the usual depressing waiting-room, with its big round table littered with illustrated papers and magazines; behind it the consulting-room, with its businesslike writing-table—whereon many a good man's death-warrant had been written in that open case-book—its heavy leather-covered furniture, and its thick Turkey carpet, upon which the patient trod noiselessly.

Above, in the big room on the first floor, Jerome Jerrold had his cosy library—for he was essentially a studious man, his literary mind having a bent for history, his "History of the Cinquecento" being one of the standard works upon that period. Indeed, while on the ground floor all was heavy, dull and gloomy, well in keeping with the dismal atmosphere which all the most famous West-End doctors seem to cultivate, yet, on the floor above, one passed instantly into far brighter, more pleasant and more artistic surroundings.

Without waiting for the servant, Thomasson, to conduct him upstairs, Jack Sainsbury ran lightly up, as was his habit, and tried the door of the doctor's den, when, to his surprise, he found it locked.

He twisted the handle again, but it was certainly firmly fastened.

"Jerome!" he cried, tapping at the door. "Can I come in? It's Jack!"

But there was no reply. Sainsbury strained his ears at the door, but could detect no movement within.

A taxicab rushed past; then a moment later, when the sound had died away, he cried again—

"Jerome! I'm here! I want to see you, old fellow. Open the door."

Still there was no answer.

Thomasson, standing at the foot of the wide, old-fashioned stairs, heard his master's visitor, and asked—

"Is the door locked, sir?"

"Yes," Jack shouted back.

"That's very strange?" remarked the man. "I've let nobody in since Mr Trustram, of the Admiralty, went away—about a quarter of an hour ago."

"Has he been here?" Jack asked. "I met him here the other day. He struck me as being a rather surly man, and I didn't like him at all," declared Sainsbury, with his usual frankness.

"Neither do I, sir, strictly between ourselves," replied Thomasson quite frankly. "He's been here quite a lot lately. His wife consulted the master about three months ago, and that's how they first met, I believe. But can't you get in?"

"No. Curious, isn't it?"

"Very. The doctor never locks his door in the usual way," Thomasson said, ascending the stairs with Sainsbury, and himself trying the handle.

He knocked loudly, asking—

"Are you in there, sir?" But still no response was given.

"I can't make this out, Mr Sainsbury," exclaimed the man, turning to him with anxiety on his pale face. "The key's in the lock—on the inside too! He must be inside, and he's locked himself in. Why, I wonder?"

Jack Sainsbury bent and put his eye to the keyhole. The room within was lit, for he could see the well-filled bookcase straight before him, and an empty chair was plainly visible.

Instantly he listened, for he thought in the silence—at that moment there being an absence of traffic out in the street—that he heard a slight sound, as though of a low, metallic click.

Again he listened, holding his breath. He was not mistaken. A slight but quite distinct sharp click could be heard, as though a piece of metal had struck the window-pane. Once—twice—it was repeated, afterwards a long-drawn sigh.

Then he heard no more.

"Open the door, Jerrold!" he cried impatiently. "Don't play the fool. What's the matter, old chap?"

"Funny—very funny—isn't it!" Thomasson exclaimed, his brows knit in mystification.

"Most curious," declared Sainsbury, now thoroughly anxious. "How long was Mr Trustram here?"

"He dined out with the doctor—at Prince's, I think—and they came back together about half-past nine. While Mr Trustram was here he was on the telephone twice or three times. Once he was rung up by Mr Lewin Rodwell."

"Mr Lewin Rodwell!" echoed Sainsbury. "Did you happen to hear anything of their conversation?"

"Well, not much, sir," was the servant's discreet reply. "I answered the 'phone at first, and it was Mr Rodwell speaking. He told me who he was, and then asked if Mr Trustram was with the doctor. I said he was, and at once went and called him."

"Did Mr Trustram appear to be on friendly terms with Mr Rodwell?" asked the young man eagerly.

"Oh! quite. I heard Mr Trustram laughing over the 'phone, and saying 'All right—yes, I quite understand. It's awfully good of you to make the suggestion. I think it excellent. I'll propose it to-morrow—yes, at the club to-morrow at four.'"

Suggestion? What suggestion had Lewin Rodwell made to that official of the Transport Department—Lewin Rodwell, of all men!

Jack Sainsbury stood before that locked door, for the moment unable to think. He was utterly dumbfounded.

Those words he had heard in the boardroom in the City that afternoon had burned themselves deeply into his brain. Lewin Rodwell was, it seemed, a personal friend of Charles Trustram, the well-known and trusted official to whose push-and-go the nation had been so deeply indebted—the man who had transported so many hundreds of thousands of our Expeditionary Force across the Channel, with all their guns, ammunition and equipment, without a single mishap. It was both curious and startling. What could it all mean?

Thomasson again hammered upon the stout old-fashioned door of polished mahogany.

"Speak, sir! Do speak!" he implored. "Are you all right?"

Still there was no reply.

"He may have fainted!" Jack suggested. "Something may have happened to him!"

"I hope not, sir," replied the man very anxiously. "I'll just run outside and see whether the window is open. If so, we might get a ladder."

The man dashed downstairs and out into the street, but a moment later he returned breathlessly, saying—

"No. Both windows are closed, just as I closed them at dusk. And the curtains are drawn; not a chink of light is showing through. All we can do, I fear, is to force the door."

"You are quite sure he's in the room?"

"Positive, sir."

"Did you see him after Mr Trustram left?"

"No, I didn't. I let Mr Trustram out, and as he wished me good-night he hailed a passing taxi, and then I went down and read the evening paper. I always have it after the doctor's finished with it."

"Well, Thomasson, what is to be done?" asked Sainsbury, essentially a young man of action. "We must get into this room—and at once. I don't like the present aspect of things a bit."

"Neither do I, sir. Below I've got the jemmy we use for opening packing-cases. We may be able to force the door with that."

And once again the tall, thin, wiry man disappeared below. Jack Sainsbury did not see how the man, when he had disappeared into the basement, stood in the kitchen his face blanched to the lips and his thin hands trembling.

It was only at the moment when Thomasson was alone that his marvellous self-possession forsook him. On the floor above he remained cool, collected, anxious, and perfectly unruffled. Below, and alone, the cook and housemaid not having returned, they being out for a late evening at the theatre, a craven fear possessed him.

It would have been quite evident to the casual observer that the man, Thomasson, possessed some secret fear of what had occurred in the brief interval between Mr Trustram's departure and Sainsbury's arrival. Tall and pale-faced, he stood in the big basement kitchen, with its rows of shining plated covers and plate-racks, motionless and statuesque: his head upon his breast, his teeth set, his cheeks as white as paper.

But only for a moment. A second later he drew a deep breath, nerved himself with a superhuman effort, and then, opening a cupboard, took out a steel tool with an axe-head at one end and a curved and pronged point at the other—

very much like a burglar's jemmy. Such a tool was constructed for strong leverage, and, quite cool as before, he carried it up the two flights of stairs to where Jack stood before the locked door, eager and impatient.

Sainsbury, being the younger of the pair, took it, and inserting the flat chisel-like end into the slight crevice between the stout polished door and the lintel, worked it in with leverage, endeavouring to break the lock from its fastening.

This proved unsuccessful, for, after two or three attempts, the woodwork of the lintel suddenly splintered and gave way, leaving the door locked securely as before.

Time after time he tried, but with no other result than breaking away the lintel of the door.

What mystery might not be contained in that locked room?

His hands trembled with excitement and nervousness. Once he had thought of summoning the police by telephone, but such an action might, he thought, for certain reasons which he knew, annoy his friend the doctor, therefore he hesitated.

Probably Jerrold had fainted, and as soon as they could get at him he would recover and be quite right again. He knew how strenuously he had worked of late at Guy's, in those wards filled with wounded soldiers. Only two days before, Jerrold had told him, in confidence, that he very much feared a nervous breakdown, and felt that he must get away and have a brief rest.

Because of that, Sainsbury believed that his friend had fainted after his hard day at the hospital, and that as soon as they could reach him all would be well.

But why had he locked the door of his den? For what reason had he desired privacy as soon as Trustram had left him?

Again and again both of them used the steel lever upon the door, until at last, taking it from Thomasson's hands, Jack placed the bright curved prong half-way between the lock and the ground and, with a well-directed blow, he threw his whole weight upon it.

There was a sharp snap, a crackling of wood, the door suddenly flew back into the room, and the young man, carried by the impetus of his body, fell headlong forward upon the dark red carpet within.

Chapter Four.

His Dying Words.

When Jack recovered himself he scrambled to his feet and gazed around.

The sight which met both their eyes caused them ejaculations of surprise, for, near the left-hand window, the heavy plush curtains of which were drawn, Dr Jerrold was lying, face downwards and motionless, his arms outstretched over his head.

Quite near lay his pet briar pipe, which had fallen suddenly from his mouth, showing that he had been in the act of smoking as, in crossing the room, he had been suddenly stricken.

Without a word, both Sainsbury and Thomasson fell upon their knees and lifted the prostrate form. The limbs were warm and limp, yet the white face, with the dropped jaw and the aimless, staring eyes, was horrible to behold.

"Surely he's not dead, sir!" gasped the manservant anxiously, in an awed voice.

"I hope not," was Sainsbury's reply. "If so, there's a mystery here that we must solve." Then, bending to him, he shook him slightly and cried, "Jerome! Jerome! Speak to me. Jack Sainsbury!"

"I'll get some water," suggested Thomasson, and, springing up, he crossed the room to where, upon a side-table, stood a great crystal bowl full of flowers. These he cast aside, and, carrying the bowl across, dashed water into his master's face.

Sainsbury, who had the doctor's head raised upon his knee, shook him and repeated his appeal, yet the combined efforts of the pair failed to arouse the prostrate man.

"What can have happened?" queried Jack, gazing into the wide-open, staring eyes of his friend, as he pulled his limp body towards him and examined his hands.

"It's a mystery, sir—ain't it?" remarked Thomasson.

"One thing is certain—that the attack was very sudden. Look at his pipe! It's still warm. He was smoking when, of a sudden, he must have collapsed."

"I'll ring up Sir Houston Bird, over in Cavendish Square. He's the doctor's greatest friend," suggested Thomasson, and next moment he disappeared to speak to the well-known pathologist, leaving Sainsbury to gaze around the room of mystery.

It was quite evident that something extraordinary had occurred there in the brief quarter of an hour which had elapsed between Mr Trustram's departure and Jack's arrival. But what had taken place was a great and inscrutable mystery.

Sainsbury recollected that strange metallic click he had heard so distinctly. Was it the closing of the window? Had someone escaped from the room while he had been so eagerly trying to gain entrance there?

He gazed down into his friend's white, drawn face—a weird, haggard countenance, with black hair. The eyes stared at him so fixedly that he became horrified.

He bent to his friend's breast, but could detect no heart-beats. He snatched up a big silver photograph frame from a table near and held it close to the doctor's lips, but upon the glass he could discover no trace of breath.

Was he dead? Surely not.

Yet the suggestion held him aghast. The hands were still limp and warm, the cheeks warm, the white brow slightly damp. And yet there was no sign of respiration, so inert and motionless was he.

He was in well-cut evening clothes, with a fine diamond sparkling in his well-starched shirt-front. Jerome Jerrold had always been well-dressed, and even though he had risen to that high position in the medical profession, he had always dressed even foppishly, so his traducers had alleged.

Jack Sainsbury unloosed the black satin cravat, tore off his collar, and opened his friend's shirt at the throat. But it was all of no avail. There was no movement—no sign of life.

A few moments later Thomasson came back in breathless haste.

"I've spoken to Sir Houston, sir," he said. "He's on his way round in a taxi."

Then both men gazed on the prostrate form which Sainsbury supported, and as they did so there slowly came a faint flush into the doctor's face. He drew a long breath, gasped for a second, and his eyes relaxed as he turned his gaze upon his friend. His right arm moved, and his hand gripped Sainsbury's arm convulsively.

For a few moments he looked straight into his friend's face inquiringly, gazing intently, first as though he realised nothing, and then in slow recognition.

"Why, it's Jack!" he gasped, recognising his friend. "You—I—I felt a sudden pain—so strange, and in an instant I—ah! I—I wonder—save me—I—I—ah! how far off you are! No—no! don't leave me—don't. I—I've been shot—shot!—I know I have—ah! what pain—what agony! I—"

And, drawing a long breath, he next second fell back into Sainsbury's arms like a stone.

Ten minutes later a spruce, young-looking, clean-shaven man entered briskly with Thomasson, who introduced him as Sir Houston Bird.

In a moment he was full of concern regarding his friend Jerrold, and, kneeling beside the couch whereon Sainsbury and Thomasson had placed him, quickly made an examination.

"Gone! I'm afraid," he said at last, in a low voice full of emotion, as he critically examined the eyes.

Jack Sainsbury then repeated his friend's strange words, whereupon the great pathologist—the expert whose evidence was sought by the Home Office in all mysteries of crime—exclaimed—

"The whole affair is certainly a mystery. Poor Jerrold is dead, without a doubt. But how did he die?"

Thomasson explained in detail Mr Trustram's departure, and how, a quarter of an hour later, Sainsbury had arrived.

"The doctor had never before, to my knowledge, locked this door," he went on. "I heard him cheerily wishing Mr Trustram good-night as he came down the stairs, and I heard him say that he was not to fail to call to-morrow night at nine, as they would then carry the inquiry further."

"What inquiry?" asked Sir Houston quickly.

"Ah! sir—that, of course, I don't know," was the servant's response. "My master seemed in the highest of spirits. I just caught sight of him at the head of the stairs, smoking his pipe as usual after his day's work."

The great pathologist knit his brows and cast down his head thoughtfully. He was a man of great influence, the head of his profession—for, being the expert of the Home Office, his work, clever, ingenious, and yet cool and incisive, was to lay the accusing finger upon the criminal.

Hardly a session passed at the Old Bailey but Sir Houston Bird appeared in the witness box, spruce in his morning-coat, and presenting somewhat the appearance of a bank-clerk; yet, in his cold unemotional words, he explained to the jury the truth as written plainly by scientific investigation. Many murderers had been hanged upon his words, always given with that strange, deliberate hesitation, and yet words—that could never, for a moment, be shaken by counsel for the defence.

Indeed, long ago defending counsel had given up cross-examination on any evidence presented by Sir Houston Bird, who had at his service the most expert chemists and analysts which our time could produce.

"This is a mystery," exclaimed the great expert, gazing upon the body of his friend with his big grey eyes. "Do you tell me that he was actually locked in here?"

"Yes, Sir Houston," replied Thomasson. "Curious—most curious," exclaimed the great pathologist, as though

speaking to himself. Then, addressing Sainsbury, after the latter had been speaking, he said: "The poor fellow declared that he'd been shot. Is that so?"

"Yes. He said that he felt a sudden and very sharp pain, and the words he used were, 'I've been shot! I know I have!'"

"And yet there appears no trace of any wound, or injury," Sir Houston remarked, much puzzled.

"Both windows and door were secured from the inside, therefore no assassin could possibly escape, sir," declared Thomasson. "I suppose there's no one concealed here in the room?" he added, glancing apprehensively around.

In a few moments the three men had examined every nook and corner of the apartment—the two long cupboards, beneath the table, behind the heavy plush curtains and the chenille portière. But nobody was in concealment.

The whole affair was a profound mystery.

Sir Houston, dark-eyed and thoughtful, gazed down upon the body of his friend.

Sainsbury and Thomasson had already removed Jerrold's coat, and were searching for any bullet-wound. But there was none. Again Sir Houston inquired what the dying man had actually said, and again Sainsbury repeated the disjointed words which the prostrate man had gasped with his dying breath.

To the pathologist it was quite clear first that Jerome Jerrold believed he had been shot; secondly that no second person could have entered the room, and thirdly that the theory of assassination might be at once dismissed.

"I think that poor Jerrold has died a natural death—sudden and painful, for if he had been shot some wound would most certainly show," Sir Houston remarked.

"There will have to be an inquest, won't there?" asked Sainsbury.

"Of course. And, Thomasson, you had better ring up the police at once and inform them of the facts," urged Sir Houston, who, turning again to Sainsbury, added: "At the post-mortem we shall, of course, quickly establish the cause of death."

Again he bent, and with his forefinger drew down the dead man's nether lip.

"Curious," he remarked, as though speaking to himself, as he gazed into the white, distorted face. "By the symptoms I would certainly have suspected poisoning. Surely he can't have committed suicide!"

And he glanced eagerly around the room, seeking to discover any bottle, glass, or cup that could have held a fatal draught.

"I don't see anything which might lead us to such a conclusion, Sir Houston," answered Sainsbury.

"But he may have swallowed it in tablet form," the other suggested.

"Ah! yes. I never thought of that!"

"His dying words were hardly the gasping remarks of a suicide."

"Unless he wished to conceal the fact that he had taken his own life?" remarked Sainsbury.

"If he committed suicide, then he will probably have left some message behind him. They generally do," Sir Houston said; whereupon both men crossed to the writing-table, which, neat and tidy, betrayed the well-ordered life its owner had led.

An electric lamp with a shade of pale green silk was burning, and showed that the big padded writing-chair had recently been occupied. Though nothing lay upon the blotting pad, there were, in the rack, three letters the man now dead had written and stamped for post. Sainsbury took them and glanced at the addresses.

"Had we not better examine them?" he suggested; and, Sir Houston consenting, he tore them open one after the other and quickly read their contents. All three, however, were professional letters to patients.

Next they turned their attention to the waste-paper basket. In it were a number of letters which Jerrold had torn up and cast away. Thomasson having gone to the telephone to inform the police of the tragic affair, the pair busied themselves in piecing together the various missives and reading them.

All were without interest—letters such as a busy doctor would receive every day. Suddenly, however, Sainsbury spread out before him some crumpled pieces of cartridge-paper which proved to be the fragments of a large strong envelope which had been torn up hurriedly and discarded.

There were words on the envelope in Jerrold's neat handwriting, and in ink which was still blue in its freshness. As Sainsbury put them together he read, to his astonishment:

"Private. For my friend Mr John Sainsbury, of Heath Street, Hampstead. Not to be opened until one year after my death."

Sir Houston, attracted by the cry of surprise which escaped Sainsbury's lips, looked over his shoulder and read the words.

"Ah!" he sighed. "Suicide! I thought he would leave something!"

Chapter Five.

Certain Curious Facts.

Both men searched eagerly through the drawers of the writing-table to see if the dead man had left another envelope addressed to his friend. Two of the drawers were locked, but these they opened with the key which they found upon poor Jerrold's watch-chain which he was wearing.

Some private papers, accounts and ledgers, were in the drawers, but the envelope of which they were in search they failed to discover.

It seemed evident that Jerome Jerrold had written the envelope in which he had enclosed a letter, but, on reflection, he had torn it up. Though the crumpled fragments of the envelope were there, yet the letter—whatever it might have been—was missing. And their careful examination of the waste-paper basket revealed nothing, whereupon Sir Houston Bird remarked—

"He may, of course, have changed his mind, and burned it, after all!"

"Perhaps he did," Jack agreed. "But I wonder what could have been the message he wished to give me a year after his death? Why not now?"

"People who take their own lives sometimes have curious hallucinations. I have known many. Suicide is a fascinating, if very grim study."

"Then you really think this is a case of suicide?"

"I can, I fear, give no opinion until after the post-mortem, Mr Sainsbury," was Sir Houston's guarded reply, his face grave and thoughtful.

"But it is all so strange, so remarkable," exclaimed the younger man. "Why did he tell me that he'd been shot, if he hadn't?"

"Because to you, his most intimate friend, he perhaps, as you suggested, wished to conceal the fact that he had been guilty of the cowardly action of taking his own life," was the reply.

"It is a mystery—a profound mystery," declared Jack Sainsbury. "Jerome dined with Mr Trustram, and the latter came back here with him. Meanwhile, Mr Lewin Rodwell was very anxious concerning him. Why? Was Rodwell a friend of Jerome's? Do you happen to know that?"

"I happen to know to the contrary," declared the great pathologist. "Only a week ago we met at Charing Cross Hospital, and some chance remark brought up Rodwell's name, when Jerrold burst forth angrily, and declared most emphatically that the man who posed as such a patriotic Englishman would, one day, be unmasked and exposed in his true colours. In confidence, he made an allegation that Lewin Rodwell's real name was Ludwig Heitzman, and that he was born in Hanover. He had become a naturalised Englishman ten years ago in Glasgow, and had, by deed-poll, changed his name to Lewin Rodwell."

Jack Sainsbury stared the speaker full in the face.

Lewin Rodwell, the great patriot who, since the outbreak of war, had been in the forefront of every charitable movement, who had been belauded by the Press, and to whom the Prime Minister had referred in the most eulogistic terms in the House of Commons, was a German!

"That's utterly impossible," exclaimed Jack. "He is one of the directors of the Ochrida Copper Corporation, in whose office I am. I know Mr Rodwell well. There's no trace whatever of German birth about him."

"Jerrold assured me that his real name was Heitzman, that he had been born of poor parents, and had been educated by an English shipping-agent in Hamburg, who had adopted him and sent him to England. On the Englishman's death he inherited about two thousand pounds, which he made the nucleus of his present fortune."

"That's all news to me," said Jack reflectively; "and yet—"

"What? Do you know something regarding Rodwell then?" inquired Sir Houston quickly.

"No," he replied. "Nothing very extraordinary. What you have just told me surprises me greatly."

"Just as it surprised me. Yet, surely, his case is only one of many similar. Thousands of Germans have come here, and become naturalised Englishmen."

"A German who becomes a naturalised Englishman is a traitor to his own country, while he poses as our friend. I contend that we have no use for traitors of any sort in England to-day," declared Jack vehemently; both men being still engaged in searching the dead man's room to discover the message which it appeared had been his intention to leave after his death. They had carefully examined the grate, but found no trace of any burnt paper. Yet, from the fact that a piece of red sealing-wax and a burnt taper lay upon the writing-table, it appeared that something had been recently sealed, though the torn envelope bore no seal.

If an envelope had been sealed, then where was it?

"We shall, no doubt, be able to establish the truth of Jerrold's allegation by reference to the register of naturalised Germans kept at the Home Office," Sir Houston said at last.

Jack was silent for a few moments, and then answered:

"That, I fear, may be a little difficult. Jerrold has often told me how it had been discovered that it was a favourite dodge of Germans, after becoming naturalised and changing their names by deed-poll, to adopt a second and rather similar name, in order to avoid any inquiry along the channel which you have just suggested. As an example, if Ludwig Heitzman became naturalised, then it is more than probable that when he changed his name by deed-poll he did not adopt the name of Lewin Rodwell, but something rather near it."

"Very likely," was the great doctor's remark.

Suddenly Jack Sainsbury paused and, facing his companion, said:

"Look here, Sir Houston. In this tragic affair I believe there's something more than suicide. That's my firm opinion. Reflect for one moment, and follow my suspicions. Poor Jerome, in addition to his profession, has for some years been unofficially assisting the Intelligence Department of the War Office. He was one of the keenest and cleverest investigators in England. He scented acts of espionage as a terrier does a rat, and by his efforts half a dozen, or so, dangerous spies have been arrested and punished. In a modest way I have been his assistant, and have helped to watch and follow suspected persons. Together, we have traced cases of petrol-running to the coast, investigated night-signalling in the southern counties, and other things, therefore I happen to know that he was keen on the work. Curious that he never told me of his grave suspicions regarding Mr Rodwell."

"Perhaps he had a reason for concealing them from you," was the other's reply.

"But he was always so frank and open with me, because I believe that he trusted in my discretion to say nothing."

"Probably he had not verified his facts, and intended to do so before revealing the truth to you."

"Yes, he was most careful always to obtain corroboration of everything, before accepting it," was Jack's reply. "But certainly what you have just told me arouses a grave suspicion."

"Of what?"

"Well—that our poor friend, having gained knowledge of Lewin Rodwell's birth and antecedents, may, in all probability, have probed further into his past and—"

"Into his present, I think more likely," exclaimed the great doctor. "Ah! I quite see the line of your argument," he added quickly. "You suggest that Rodwell may have discovered that Jerrold knew the truth, and that, in consequence, death came suddenly and unexpectedly—eh?"

Jack Sainsbury nodded in the affirmative. "But surely Trustram, who was one of Jerrold's most intimate friends, could not have had any hand in foul play! He was the last man who saw him alive. No," he went on. "My own experience shows me that poor Jerrold has died of poisoning, and as nobody has been here, or could have escaped from the room, it must have been administered by his own hand."

"But do you not discern the motive?" cried Sainsbury. "Rodwell has risen to a position of great affluence and notoriety. He is a bosom friend of Cabinet Ministers, and to him many secrets of State are confided. He, and his friend Sir Boyle Huntley, play golf with Ministers, and the name of Lewin Rodwell is everywhere to-day one to conjure with. He has, since the war, risen to be one of the most patriotic Englishmen—a man whose unselfish efforts are praised and admired from one end of Great Britain to another. Surely he would have become desperate if he had the least suspicion that Jerome Jerrold had discovered the truth, and intended to unmask him—as he had openly declared to you."

"Yes, yes, I see," Sir Houston replied dubiously. "If there were any traces of foul play I should at once be of the same opinion. But you see they do not exist."

"Whether there are traces, or whether there are none, nothing will shake my firm opinion, and that is that poor Jerome has been assassinated, and the motive of the crime is what I have already suggested."

"Very well; we shall clear it up at the post-mortem," was the doctor's reply, while at that moment Thomasson re-entered, followed by a police-officer in plain clothes and two constables in uniform.

On their entry, Sainsbury introduced Sir Houston Bird, and told them his own name and that of his dead friend.

Then the officer of the local branch of the Criminal Investigation Department sat down at the dead man's writing-table and began to write in his note-book the story of the strange affair, as dictated by Jack.

Sir Houston also made a statement, this being followed by the man Thomasson, who detailed his master's movements prior to his death—as far as he knew them.

His master, he declared, had seemed in excellent spirits all day. He had seen patients in the morning, had lunched frugally at home, and had gone down to Guy's in the car to see the wounded, as was his daily round. At six he had returned, dressed, and gone forth in a taxi to meet his friend, Mr Trustram of the Admiralty. They having dined together returned, and afterwards Mr Trustram had left and the doctor, smoking his pipe, had retired to his room to

write. Nothing further was heard, Thomasson said, till the arrival of Mr Sainsbury, when the door of the room was found locked.

"You heard no one enter the house—no sounds whatever?" asked the detective inspector, Rees by name, a tall, clean-shaven, fresh-complexioned man, with rather curly hair.

"I didn't hear a sound," was the servant's reply. "The others were all out, and, as a matter of fact, I was in the waiting-room, just inside the door, looking at the newspapers on the table. So I should have heard anyone go up or down the stairs."

Inspector Rees submitted Thomasson to a very searching cross-examination, but it was quite evident to all in the room that he knew nothing more than what he had already told. He and his wife had been in Dr Jerrold's service for eight years. His wife, until her death, a year ago, had acted as cook-housekeeper.

"Did you ever know of Mr Lewin Rodwell visiting the doctor?" asked Sir Houston.

"Never, as far as I know, sir. He, of course, might have come to consult him professionally when I've been out, and the maid has sometimes opened the door and admitted patients."

"Have you ever heard Mr Rodwell's name?"

"Only on the telephone to-night—and of course very often in the papers," replied the man.

"Your master was very intimate with Mr Trustram?" inquired the detective.

"Oh yes. They first met about three months ago, and after that Mr Trustram came here several times weekly. The doctor went to stay at his country cottage near Dorking for the week-end, about a fortnight ago."

"Did you ever discover the reason of those conferences?" Jack Sainsbury asked. "I mean, did you ever overhear any of their conversations?"

"Sometimes, sir. But not very often," was Thomasson's discreet reply. "They frequently discussed the war, and the spy-peril, in which—as you know—the doctor was actively interesting himself."

Upon Jack Sainsbury's countenance a faint smile appeared. He now discerned the reason of the visits of that Admiralty official to the man who had been so suddenly and mysteriously stricken down.

He exchanged glances with Sir Houston, who, a moment before, had been searching a cigar cabinet which had hitherto escaped their notice.

At Rees's suggestion, Jack Sainsbury went to the telephone and rang up Charles Trustram, to whom he briefly related the story of the tragic discovery.

Within twenty minutes Trustram arrived, and, to the detective, told the story of the events of the evening: how they had met by appointment at Prince's Restaurant at half-past seven, had dined together, and then he had accompanied the doctor back to Wimpole Street about half-past nine, where they had sat smoking and chatting.

"Jerrold seemed in quite good spirits over the result of an inquiry he had been making regarding a secret store of petrol established by the enemy's emissaries somewhere on the Sussex coast," Mr Trustram explained. "He had, he told me, disclosed it to the Intelligence Department, and they were taking secret measures to watch a certain barn wherein the petrol was concealed, and to arrest those implicated in the affair. He also expressed some anxiety regarding Mr Sainsbury, saying that he wished he could see him to-night." Then, turning to Jack, he added: "At his request I rang up your flat at Hampstead, but you were not in."

"Why did he wish to see me?"

"Ah! that I don't know. He told me nothing," was the Admiralty official's reply. "While I was sitting here with him I was rung up three times—twice from my office, and once by a well-known man I had met for the first time that afternoon—Mr Lewin Rodwell."

At mention of Rodwell all present became instantly interested.

"How did Mr Rodwell know that you were here?" inquired the detective quickly. "That's a mystery. I did not tell him."

"He might have rung up your house, and your servant may possibly have told him that you were dining with Jerrold," Sir Houston suggested.

"That may be so. I will ask my man."

"What did Mr Rodwell want?" Rees asked.

"He told me that he had that evening been in consultation with his friend Sir Boyle Huntley, and that, between them they had resolved to commence a propaganda for the internment of all alien enemies—naturalised as well as unnaturalised—and he asked whether I would meet them at the club to-morrow afternoon to discuss the scheme. To this I readily consented. When I returned to this room I found the doctor in the act of sealing an envelope. After he had finished he gave the envelope to me, saying 'This will be safer in your care than in mine, my dear Trustram. Will you please keep it in your safe?' I consented, of course, and as I took it I saw that it was a private letter addressed to Mr Sainsbury, with instructions that it was not to be opened till a year after his death."

"Then you have the letter!" cried Jack excitedly.

"Yes, I have it at home," replied Mr Trustram; who, proceeding, said: "At first I was greatly surprised at being given such a letter, and chaffingly remarked that I hoped he wouldn't die just yet; whereat he laughed, refilled his pipe and declared that life was, after all, very uncertain. 'I want my friend Sainsbury to know something—but not before a year after I'm gone. You understand, Trustram. I give you this, and you, on your part, will give me your word of honour that, whatever occurs, you will safely guard it, and not allow it to be opened till a year has elapsed after my death.' He seemed to have suddenly grown serious, and I confess I was not a little surprised at his curious change of manner."

"Did it strike you at all that he might be contemplating suicide?"

"No, not in the least. Such an idea never entered my head. I regarded his action just as that of a man who makes his will—that's all. I took the envelope and, about five minutes later, left him, as I had been called down to the Admiralty upon an urgent matter."

"A quarter of an hour afterwards Mr Sainsbury called and we could not get into the room," Thomasson remarked. "That is all we know."

Chapter Six.

Reveals the Victim.

Three days had passed.

The coroner's inquiry had been duly held into the death of Dr Jerome Jerrold, and medical evidence, including that of the deceased's friend, Sir Houston Bird, had been called. This evidence showed conclusively that Sir Houston had been right in his conjecture, from the convulsed appearance of the body and other signs, that poor Jerrold had died of poisoning by strychnine. Therefore the proceedings were brief, and a verdict was returned of "Suicide while temporarily insane."

No mention was made of the sealed letter left with Mr Trustram, for in a case of that distressing nature the coroner is always ready to make the inquiry as short as possible.

Jack Sainsbury, who had been granted leave by Mr Charlesworth, the managing-director, to attend the inquest upon his friend, returned to the City in a very perturbed state of mind.

He sat at his desk on that grey December afternoon, unable to attend to the correspondence before him, unable to fix his mind upon business, unable to understand the subtle ramifications of the cleverly conceived and dastardly plot, the key of which he had discovered by those few words he had overheard between the Chairman of the Board and his close friend, the great Lewin Rodwell.

He was wondering whether his dead friend's allegation that Rodwell was none other than Ludwig Heitzman was really the truth. Sir Houston Bird had promised to institute inquiry at the Alien department of the Home Office, yet, only that day he had heard that the official of whom inquiry must be made actually bore a German name. The taint of the Teuton seemed, alas! over everything, notwithstanding the public resentment apparent up and down the whole country, and the formation of leagues and unions to combat the activity of the enemy in our midst.

Jack Sainsbury disagreed with the verdict of suicide. Jerome Jerrold was surely not the man to take his own life by swallowing strychnine. Yet why had he left behind that puzzling and mysterious message which Charles Trustram, having given his word of honour to his friend, refused to be opened for another year?

The will had been found deposited with his solicitor—a will which left the sum of eighteen-odd thousand pounds to "my friend and assistant in many confidential matters, Mr John Sainsbury, of Heath Street, Hampstead."

As far as it went that was gratifying to Jack. It rendered him independent of the Ochrida Copper Corporation, and the strenuous "driving-power," as it is termed in the City, of Charlesworth, the sycophant of Sir Boyle Huntley and his fellow directors. The whole office knew that Huntley and Rodwell, brought in during days of peace "to reorganise the Company upon a sound financial basis," were gradually getting all the power into their own hands, as they had done in other companies. The lives of that pair were one huge money-getting adventure.

In the office strange things were whispered. But Jack alone knew the truth.

The most irritating fact to him was that Jerome Jerrold, just as he had discovered Rodwell's birth and masquerading, had died.

Why?

Why had Lewin Rodwell rung up his new friend, Trustram, just before poor Jerome's death? Why had Jerome asked to see his friend Sainsbury so particularly on that night? Why had he locked his door and taken his life at the very moment when he should have lived to face and denounce the man who, while an alien enemy, was posing as a loyal subject of Great Britain?

Of these and other things—things which he had discussed on the previous night with Elise—he was thinking deeply, when a lad entered saying:

"Mr Charlesworth wants to see you, sir." He rose from his chair and ascended in the lift to the next floor. On entering the manager's room he found Mr Charlesworth, the catspaw of Sir Boyle, seated in his padded chair, smoking a good cigar.

"Oh—er—Sainsbury. I'm rather sorry to call you in, but the directors have decided that as you are of military age they are compelled, from patriotic motives, to suggest to you that you should join the army, as so many of the staff here have done. Don't you think it is your duty?"

Jack Sainsbury looked the manager straight in the face.

"Yes," he said, with a curious smile. "I quite agree. It certainly is my duty to resign and take my part in the defence of the country. But," he added, "I think it is somewhat curious that the directors have taken this step—to ask me to resign." Charlesworth, an estimable man, and beloved by the whole of the staff of the company at home and abroad, hesitated a moment, and then replied:

"Unfortunately I am only here to carry out the orders of the directors, Sainsbury. You have been a most reliable and trusted servant of the company, and I shall be only too pleased to write you a good testimonial. You will have half-pay during the time you are absent, of course, as the others have."

"Well, if I leave the Ochrida Copper Corporation, as the directors have practically dismissed me, I require no half-pay—nothing whatever," he answered, with a grim smile. "I part from you and from the company, Mr Charlesworth, with the very kindest and most cordial recollections; but I wish you, please, to give my compliments to the directors and say that, as they wish me to leave and act in the interests of my country, I shall do so, refusing to accept the half of my salary which they, in their patriotism, have so generously offered me."

Charlesworth was a little puzzled by this speech. It was unexpected. The steady, hardworking clerk, who had been so reliable, and whom he had greatly esteemed, might easily have met his suggestion with resentment. Indeed, he had expected him to do so. But, on the contrary, Sainsbury seemed even eager to retire from the service of the company.

Charlesworth was, of course, ignorant of the conditions of Dr Jerrold's will, or of those words Jack Sainsbury had overheard as he had entered the boardroom. Vernon Charlesworth had been a servant of the Ochrida Copper Corporation ever since its formation eighteen years ago—long before the "new blood" represented by the Huntley-Rodwell combination had been "brought into" it. From the first inception of the company the public, who had put their modest savings into it, had lost their money. Yet recently, by the bombastic and optimistic speeches of Sir Boyle Huntley at the Cannon Street Hotel, and the self-complacent smiles of Lewin Rodwell at the meetings, confidence had been inspired, and it was still a going concern—one which, if the truth be told, Huntley and Rodwell were working to get into their own hands.

"Of course I am really very sorry to part with you, Sainsbury," the manager said, leaning back in his chair and looking at him. "You've been a most trustworthy servant, yet I, of course, have to abide by the decision of the board."

Jack Sainsbury smiled.

"No, please don't apologise, Mr Charlesworth," he said, with a faint smile. "I daresay I shall soon find some other employment more congenial to me."

"I hope so," replied the manager, peering at the young man through his horn-rimmed glasses—a style affected in official circles. "Nowadays, with so many men at the front, it is not really a difficult matter to find a post in the City. It seems to me that the slacker has the best of it."

"I'm not a slacker, though you may think I am, Mr Charlesworth," cried Jack, reddening. "A month after war was declared I went to the recruiting office fully prepared to enlist. But, unfortunately, they rejected me as medically unfit."

"Did they?" exclaimed the other in surprise. "You never told us that!"

"Was it necessary? I merely tried to do my duty. But—" and he paused, and then, in a meaning voice, he added: "If I can't do my duty out in the trenches, I can at least do it here, at home."

"If it is true that you've been already rejected as unfit," exclaimed Charlesworth, "I daresay I might induce the directors to reconsider their decision."

"No, sir," was Sainsbury's proud reply. "I will not trouble you to do that. It is quite apparent that, for some unknown reason, they wish to dismiss me. Therefore I consider myself dismissed—and, to tell you the truth, I don't regret it. But, before I go, I would like to thank you and the staff for all the kindness and consideration shown to me during my illness a year ago."

"Then you refuse to stay?" asked Charlesworth, rather puzzled, for he held Sainsbury in high esteem.

"Yes. Before dismissing me I consider that the directors should have inquired whether I had tried to enlist," he answered resentfully.

"Then I suppose there is no more to say. Shall you remain till the end of the week?"

"No, sir. I intend to go now. It would not, I think, be a very happy seven days for me if I remained, would it?"

Charlesworth sighed. He was sorry to lose the services of such a bright, shrewd and clever young man.

"Very well," he replied regretfully. "If that is really so, Sainsbury, I must wish you good-bye," and with frankness he stretched forth his hand, which the young man took, and then turned on his heel and left the manager's room.

While Jack Sainsbury was on his way through the bustle of Gracechurch Street, Lewin Rodwell, who had been upstairs at a meeting of the board, descended and entered Charlesworth's room, closing the door after him.

"Well," he asked carelessly, after chatting upon several important business matters, "have you spoken yet to young Sainsbury?"

"Yes. And he's gone."

Lewin Rodwell drew a sigh of relief.

"He ought to enlist—a smart, athletic fellow like that! Such men are just what England wants to-day, Charlesworth. I hope you gave him a good hint—eh?"

"I did. But it seems that he has already endeavoured to enlist, but was rejected—a defective arm."

Lewin Rodwell was silent—but only for a few seconds.

"Well, never mind; he's gone. We must reduce the staff—it is quite imperative in these days. What about those six others? Staff reduction will mean increased profits, you know."

"They all have notice. I'm sorry about Carew. He has an invalid wife and seven children. His salary is only two pounds fifteen."

"I'm afraid we can't help that, Charlesworth," replied the man who posed in the West End as the great self-denying patriot who hobnobbed with Cabinet Ministers. "We must reduce the staff, if we're going to pay a dividend. He'll get work—munition-making or something. Sentiment is out of place in these war-days."

And yet, only two days before, the speaker had made a brilliant speech at a Mansion House meeting in which he had beaten the patriotic drum loudly, and appealed to all employers of labour to increase wages because of the serious rise in food-prices. Charlesworth knew this, but made no remark. It was not to his interest to thwart the great Lewin Rodwell, or his place-seeking sycophant Sir Boyle Huntley, who had been put by his friend into the position he now held.

Truly the City is a strange, complex world of unpatriotic, hard-hearted money-seeking—a world where the Anglo-German or the swindling financier waxes rich quickly, and where the God-fearing Englishman goes to a Rowton House ousted by the "peaceful penetration" of our "dear kind friends" the Germans.

Those who have known the City for the past ten years or so know full well—ay, they know, alas! too well—the way in which Germany has prepared us for the financial aspect of the war. In the light of current events much has been made plain that was hitherto shrouded in mystery. We have seen plainly the subtle methods of the enemy.

Lewin Rodwell and his catspaw, Sir Boyle, were only typical of dozens of others in that little area from Temple Bar to Aldgate, the men who were working for Germany both prior to the war and after.

Charlesworth, to do him full credit, was an honest Englishman. Yet such a man was bound to be employed by our enemies as a safeguard against inquiry, and in order to avert suspicion. City men, like Charlesworth, might be patriotic to the backbone, yet when it became a matter of choosing between bread-and-cheese and starvation, as in his own case, the matter of living at Wimbledon on two thousand a year appealed to him, in preference to cold mutton and lodgings in Bloomsbury.

Germans, with or without assumed English names, controlled our finances, our professions, our hotels, nay, our very lives, wherefore it was hardly surprising that we were unable, in the first few months of war, to rid ourselves of that disease known as "German measles."

"I must say I'm sorry about Carew," remarked Charlesworth. "He's been with us ever since the formation of the Company—and you recollect we sent him abroad two years ago upon the Elektra deal. He made a splendid bargain—one that has brought us over twenty thousand pounds."

"And he was paid a bonus of twenty-pounds, wasn't he?" snapped Rodwell impatiently. "Surely that was enough?"

"But really I think we should keep him; he is very valuable."

"No, Charlesworth. Let him go. Give him the best of references, if you like. But we must cut down expenses, if you and I are to live at all."

"We must live at the expense of these poor devils, I suppose," remarked Charlesworth, with a slight sigh.

Truth to tell, he could not express his repugnance.

"Yes. Surely we are the masters. And capital must live!" was the other's hard reply. "But where is Sainsbury going?" Rodwell inquired quickly. "What does he intend doing?"

"I have no idea," the manager said. "He behaved most mysteriously when I told him that his services were no longer required."

"Mysteriously!" exclaimed Rodwell, starting and looking straight across at his companion. "How?"

“Well, he expressed undisguised pleasure at leaving us—that’s all.”

“What did he say?” asked Lewin Rodwell, in an instant deeply interested. “Tell me exactly what transpired. I have a reason—a very strong reason—for ascertaining. Tell me,” he urged, with an eagerness which was quite unusual to him. “Tell me the whole facts.”

Chapter Seven.

The Spider’s Web.

Three weeks went past—dark, breathless weeks in England’s history.

Jack Sainsbury, keeping the knowledge to himself, spent many deep and thoughtful hours over his friend’s tragic end. Several times he suggested to Mr Trustram that, in order to clear up the mystery, the sealed letter should be opened. But Trustram—having given his word of honour to the dead man—argued, and quite rightly, that there was no mystery regarding Jerrold’s death. He had simply committed suicide.

Rodwell and Charles Trustram had, by this time, become very friendly. The latter had been introduced to Sir Boyle Huntley, and the pair had soon introduced the Admiralty official into a higher circle of society than he had ever before attained. Indeed, within a few weeks Rodwell, prime mover of several patriotic funds, had become Trustram’s bosom friend. So intimate did they become that they frequently played golf together at Sunningdale, Berkhamstead or Walton Heath, on such occasions when Trustram could snatch an hour or so of well-earned recreation from the Admiralty; and further, on two occasions Sir Boyle had given him very valuable financial tips—advice which had put into his pocket a very considerable sum in hard cash.

Admiralty officials are not too well paid for their splendid and untiring work, therefore to Charles Trustram this unexpected addition to his income was truly welcome.

The establishment of Lady Betty Kenworthy’s Anti-Teutonic Alliance had caused a wave of indignant hatred of the German across the country, and hence it was receiving universal support. It aimed at the internment of all Germans, both naturalised and unnaturalised, at the drastic rooting out of the German influence in our officialdom, and the ousting of all persons who, in any sphere of life, might possess German connections by blood or by marriage.

While Trustram was, of course, debarred, on account of his official position, from open sympathy with the great movement, Lewin Rodwell and Sir Boyle went up and down the country addressing great and enthusiastic audiences and denouncing in violent terms the subtle influence of “the enemy in our midst.”

Jack Sainsbury watched all this in grim silence. What he had overheard in the boardroom of the Ochrida Copper Corporation rang ever in his ears.

More than once he had sat in Sir Houston Bird’s quiet, sombre consulting-room, and the pair had discussed the situation. Both agreed that the clever masquerade being played by Rodwell and his baroneted puppet was, though entertaining, yet a highly dangerous one. But without being in possession of hard, indisputable facts, how could they act? The British public had hailed Lewin Rodwell as a fine specimen of the truly patriotic Englishman, little dreaming him to be a wolf in sheep’s-clothing. To all and every charitable appeal he subscribed readily, and to his small, snug house in Bruton Street came many of the highest in the land. Alas! that we always judge a man by his coat, his cook, his smiles and his glib speeches. Put a dress-suit upon the biggest scoundrel who ever stood in the dock at the Old Bailey—from Smith who murdered his brides in baths downwards—and he would pass as what the world calls “a gentleman.”

One evening in December—the ninth, to be exact—there had been a big dinner-party at Sir Boyle’s, in Berkeley Square, and afterwards Trustram had accompanied Rodwell home to Bruton Street in a taxi for a smoke.

As the pair—the spider and the fly—sat together before the fire in the small, cosy room at the back of the house which the financier used as his own den, their conversation turned upon a forthcoming meeting at the Mansion House, which it was intended to hold in order to further arouse the Home Office to a true sense of the danger of allowing alien enemies to be at liberty.

“I intend to speak quite openly and plainly upon the subject,” declared Rodwell, leaning back in his chair and blowing a cloud of cigar-smoke from his lips. “The time has now passed for polite speeches. If we are to win this war we must no longer coddle the enemy with Donnington Hall methods. The authorities know full well that there are hundreds of spies among us to-day, and yet they deliberately close their eyes to them. To me their motto seems, ‘Don’t aggravate the Germans. They are such dear good people.’ The whole comedy would be intensely humorous—a rollicking farce—if it were not so terribly pathetic. Therefore, at the meeting, I intend to warn the Government that if some strong measure is not adopted, and at once, the people themselves will rise and take matters into their own hands. There’ll be rioting soon, if something is not done—that’s my firm conviction,” and in his dark eyes was a keen, earnest look, as he waved his white hand emphatically. Truly, Lewin Rodwell was a clever actor, and the line he had taken was, surely, sufficiently bold to remove from him any suspicion of German birth, or of double-dealing.

“Yes, I quite agree,” declared Trustram enthusiastically. “We know well enough at the Admiralty that the most confidential information leaks out to the enemy almost daily, and—”

“And what can you expect, my dear fellow, when we have so many Germans and naturalised Germans here in our midst?” cried Rodwell, interrupting. “Intern the whole lot—that’s my idea.”

"With that I entirely agree," exclaimed Trustram, of course believing fully in his friend's whole-hearted sincerity. "There are far too many Germans in high places, and while they occupy them we shall never be able to combat their craftiness—never!" Lewin Rodwell fixed his cold, keen eyes upon the speaker, and smiled inwardly with satisfaction.

"My poor friend Dr Jerrold held exactly similar views," Trustram went on. "Dear old Jerrold! He was ever active in hunting out spies. He assisted our Secret Service in a variety of ways and, by dint of diligent and patient inquiry, discovered many strange things."

"Did he ever really discover any spies?" asked Rodwell in a rather languid voice.

"Yes, several. I happen to know one case—that of a man who collected certain information. The documents were found on him, together with a pocket-book which contained a number of names and addresses of German secret agents in England." Rodwell instantly became interested.

"Did he? What became of the book? That surely ought to be most valuable to the authorities—eh?"

"It has been, I believe. But, of course, all inquiries of that nature are done by the War Office, so I only know the facts from Jerrold himself. He devoted all the time he could snatch from his profession to the study of spies, and to actual spy-hunting."

"And with good results—eh? Poor fellow! He was very alert. His was a sad end. Suicide. I wonder why?" asked Rodwell.

"Who knows?" remarked the other, shrugging his shoulders. "We all of us have our skeletons in our cupboards. Possibly his might have been rather uglier than others?"

Rodwell remained thoughtful. Mention of that pocket-book, of which Jerrold had obtained possession, caused him to ponder. That it was in the hands of the Intelligence Department was the reverse of comforting. He had known of the arrest of Otto Hartwig, alias Hart, who had, for many years before the war, carried on business in Kensington, but this was the first he had learnt that anything had been found upon the prisoner.

He endeavoured to gain some further details from Trustram, but the latter had but little knowledge.

"All I know," he said, "is that the case occupied poor Jerrold fully a month of patient inquiry and watchful vigilance. At last his efforts were rewarded, for he was enabled to follow the man down to Portsmouth, and actually watch him making inquiries there—gathering facts which he intended to transmit to the enemy."

"How?" asked Rodwell quickly.

"Ah! that's exactly what we don't know. That there exists a rapid mode of transmitting secret intelligence across the North Sea is certain," replied the Admiralty official. "We've had illustrations of it, time after time. Between ourselves, facts which I thought were only known to myself—facts regarding the transport of troops across the Channel—have actually been known in Berlin in a few hours after I have made the necessary arrangements."

"Are you quite certain of that?" Rodwell asked, with sudden interest.

"Absolutely. It has been reported back to us by our friends in Germany."

"Then we do have friends in Germany?" remarked Rodwell, with affected ignorance.

"Oh, several," was the other's reply. Then, in confidence, he explained how certain officers had volunteered to enter Germany, posing as American citizens and travelling from America with American passports. He mentioned two by name—Beeton and Fordyce.

The well-dressed man lolling in his chair, smoking as he listened, made a mental note of those names, and grinned with satisfaction at Trustram's indiscretions.

Yet, surely, the Admiralty official could not be blamed, for so completely had Lewin Rodwell practised the deception that he believed him to be a sterling Englishman, red-hot against the enemy and all his knavish devices.

"I suppose you must be pretty busy at the Admiralty just now—eh? The official account of the Battle of the Falklands in to-night's papers is splendid reading. Sturdee gave Admiral von Spee a very nasty shock. I suppose we shall hear of some other naval successes in the North Sea soon—eh?"

Trustram hesitated for a few seconds. "Well, not just yet," was his brief reply.

"Why do you say 'not yet'?" he asked with a laugh. "Has the Admiralty some thrilling surprise in store for us? Your people are always so confoundedly mysterious."

"We have to be discreet," laughed Trustram. "In these days one never knows who is friend or foe."

"Well, you know me well enough, Trustram, to be quite certain of my discretion. I never tell a soul any official information which may come to me—and I hear quite a lot from my Cabinet friends—as you may well imagine."

"I do trust you, Mr Rodwell," his friend replied. "If I did not, I should not have told you the many things I have regarding my own department."

Lewin Rodwell smoked on, his legs crossed, his right hand behind his head as he gazed at his friend.

"Well, you arouse my curiosity when you say that the Admiralty have in store a surprise for us which we shall know later. Where is it to take place?"

Again Charles Trustram hesitated. Then he answered, with some reluctance:

"In the North Sea, I believe. A certain scheme has been arranged which will, we hope, prove effectual."

"A trap, I suppose?"

Trustram laughed faintly.

"I didn't tell you so, remember," he said quickly.

"Ah, I see!—a trap to draw the German Fleet north—up towards Iceland. Is my surmise correct?"

Trustram's smile was a silent affirmative. "This is indeed interesting," Rodwell exclaimed. "I won't breathe a word to anyone. When is it to be?"

"Within a week."

"You mean in a week. To-day is Wednesday—next Wednesday will be the sixteenth."

Again Trustram smiled, as Rodwell, with his shrewd intelligence, divined the truth.

"It's all arranged—eh? And orders have been sent out to the Fleet?" asked the financier.

Again Trustram laughingly replied, "I didn't say so," but from his friend's manner Lewin Rodwell knew that he had learnt the great and most valuable secret of the true intentions of the British Navy.

It was not the first piece of valuable information which he had wormed out of his official friends. So clever was he that he now pretended to be highly eager and enthusiastic over the probable result of the strategy.

"Let's hope Von Tirpitz will fall into the trap," he said. "Of course it will have to be very cunningly baited, if you are to successfully deceive him. He's already shown himself to be an artful old bird."

"Well—without giving anything away—I happen to know, from certain information passing through my hands, that the bait will be sufficiently tempting."

"So we may expect to hear of a big naval battle about the sixteenth. I should say that it will, in all probability, be fought south of Iceland, somewhere off the Shetlands."

"Well, that certainly is within the range of probability," was the other's response. "All I can tell you—and in the very strictest confidence, remember—is that the scheme is such a cleverly conceived one that I do not believe it can possibly fail."

"And if it failed?"

"Well—if it failed," Trustram said, hesitating and speaking in a lower tone—"if it failed, then no real harm would occur—only one thing perhaps: that the East Coast of England might be left practically unguarded for perhaps twelve hours or so. That's all."

"Well, that would not matter very much, so long as the enemy obtains no knowledge of the British Admiral's intentions," remarked Lewin Rodwell, contemplating the end of his cigar and reflecting for a few seconds.

Then he blurted out:

"Gad! that's jolly interesting. I shall wait for next Wednesday with all eagerness."

"You won't breathe a word, will you? Remember, it was you who obtained the information by suggestion," Trustram said, with a good-humoured laugh.

"Can't you really rely on me, my dear fellow, when I give you my word of honour as an Englishman to say nothing?" he asked. "I expect I am often in the know in secrets of the Cabinet, and I am trusted."

"Very well," replied his friend. "I accept your promise. Not a word must leak out. If it did, then all our plans would be upset, and possibly it would mean the loss of one, or more, of our ships. But you, of course, realise the full seriousness of it all."

"I do, my dear Trustram—I do," was the reassuring answer. "No single whisper of it shall pass my lips. That, I most faithfully promise you."

Chapter Eight.

Toilers of the North Sea.

Just as it was growing dark on the following evening, a powerful pale grey car, with cabriolet body, drew out of the yard of the quaint old Saracen's Head Hotel at Lincoln, and, passing slowly through the town, set out on the straight,

open road which led past Langworth station to Wragby, and on to Horncastle.

The occupant of the car, muffled up as though he were an invalid, had come in from London half an hour before, taken his tea in the coffee-room, and had resumed his journey, together with his smart, clean-shaven chauffeur.

Though he posed as an invalid at the Saracen's Head, yet as soon as the car had left the town he threw off his thick muffler, opened his coat and drew a long sigh of relief.

Truth to tell, Mr Lewin Rodwell, whose photograph appeared so constantly in the picture-papers, was not over anxious to be seen in Lincoln, or, indeed, in that neighbourhood at all. With Penney, his trusted chauffeur—a man who, like himself, was a "friend of Germany"—he had set out from Bruton Street that morning, and all day they had sat side by side on their journey towards the Fens.

Many times, after chatting with Penney, he had lapsed into long spells of silence, during which time he had puffed vigorously at his cigar, and thought deeply.

Until, after about five miles, they passed Langworth station, they had been content with their side-lights, but soon they switched on the huge electric head-lamps, and then they "put a move on," as Rodwell was anxious to get to his journey's end as quickly as possible.

"You'll drop me, as usual, at the three roads beyond Mumby. Then go into Skegness and put up for the night. Meet me at the same spot to-morrow morning at seven-thirty."

"Very well, sir," was the young man's obedient reply.

"Let's see," remarked Rodwell. "When we were up in this lonely, forsaken part of the country a week ago, where did you put up?"

"The last time in Louth, sir. The time before in Lincoln, and the time before that in Grimsby. I haven't been in Skegness for a full month."

"Then go there, and mind and keep your mouth shut tight!"

"I always do, sir."

"Yes, it pays you to do so—eh?" laughed Rodwell. "But I confess, Penney, that I'm getting heartily sick of this long journey," he sighed, "compelled, as we are, to constantly go many miles out of our way in order to vary the route."

"The road is all right in summer, sir, but it isn't pleasant on a cold stormy night like this—especially when you've got a two-mile walk at the end of it."

"That's just it. I hate that walk. It's so dark and lonely, along by that open dyke. Yet it has to be done; and, after all, the darker the night—perhaps the safer it is." Then he lapsed again into silence, while the car—well-driven by Penney, who was an expert driver—flew across the broad open fenlands, in the direction of the sea.

The December night was dark, with rain driving against and blurring the windscreen, in which was a small oblong hole in the glass, allowing Penney to see the long, lonely road before him. Passing the station at Horncastle, they continued through the town and then up over the hill on the Spilsby road and over the wide gloomy stretch until, about half-past seven o'clock, after taking a number of intricate turns up unfrequented fen-roads, they found themselves passing through a small, lonely, ill-lit village. Beyond this place, called Orby, they entered another wide stretch of those low-lying marshes which border the North Sea on the Lincolnshire coast, marshes intersected by a veritable maze of roads, most of which were without sign-posts, and where, in the darkness, it was a very easy matter to lose one's way.

But Penney—who had left the high road on purpose—had been over those cross-roads on many previous occasions. Indeed, he knew them as well as any Fenman, and without slackening speed or faltering, he at last brought the car to a standstill a few miles beyond the village of Mumby, at a point where three roads met about two miles from the sea.

It was still raining—not quite so heavily as before, but sufficiently to cause Rodwell to discard his fur-lined overcoat for a mackintosh. Then, having placed an electric flash-lamp in his pocket, together with a large bulky cartridge envelope, a silver flask and a packet of sandwiches, he took a stout stick from the car and alighting bade the young man good-night, and set forth into the darkness.

"I wonder whether I'll be in time?" he muttered to himself in German, going forward as he bent against the cold driving rain which swept in from the sea. He usually spoke German to himself when alone. His way, for the first mile, was beside a long straight "drain," into which, in the darkness, it would have been very easy to slip had he not now and then flashed on his lamp to reveal the path.

Beneath his breath, in German, he cursed the weather, for already the bottoms of his trousers were saturated as he splashed on through the mud, while the rain beat full in his face. Presently he came in sight of a row of cottage-windows at a place called Langham, and then, turning due north into the marshes, he at last, after a further mile, came to the beach whereon the stormy waters of the North Sea were lashing themselves into a white foam discernible in the darkness.

That six miles of low-lying coast, stretching from the little village of Chapel St. Leonards north to Sutton-on-Sea, was very sparsely inhabited—a wide expanse of lonely fenland almost without a house.

Upon that deserted, low-lying coast were two coastguard stations, one near Huttoft Bank and the other at Anderby

Creek, and of course—it being war-time—constant vigil was kept at sea both night and day. But as the district was not a vulnerable one in Great Britain's defences, nothing very serious was ever reported from there to the Admiralty.

By day a sleepy plain of brown and green marshes, by night a dark, cavernous wilderness, where the wild sea beat monotonously upon the shingle, it was a truly gloomy, out-of-the-world spot, far removed from the bustle of war's alarm.

Lewin Rodwell, on gaining the beach at the end of a long straight path, turned without hesitation to the right, and walked to the south of the little creek of Anderby for some distance, until he suddenly ascended a low mound close by the sea, half-way between Anderby Creek and Chapel Point, and there before him stood a low-built fisherman's cottage, partly constructed of wood, which by day was seen to be well-tarred and water-tight.

Within a few yards of the beach it stood, with two boats drawn up near and a number of nets spread out to dry; the home of honest Tom Small and his son, typical Lincolnshire fishermen, who, father and son, had fished the North Sea for generations.

At the Anchor, in Chapel St. Leonards, old Tom Small was a weekly visitor on Saturday nights, when, in that small, close-smelling bar-parlour, he would hurl the most bitter anathemas at the "All Highest of Germany," and laugh his fleet to scorn; while at Anderby Church each Sunday morning he would appear in his best dark blue trousers, thick blue jacket and peaked cap, a worthy hardworking British fisherman with wrinkled, weatherbeaten face and reddish beard. He was of that hardy type of seafarer so much admired by the town-dweller when on his summer holiday, a man who, in his youth, had been "cox" of the Sutton lifeboat, and who had stirring stories to tell of wild nights around the Rosse Spit and the Sand Haile, the foundering of tramps with all hands, and the marvellous rescues effected by his splendid crew.

It was this man, heavily-booted and deep-voiced, by whom Lewin Rodwell was confronted when he tapped at the cottage door.

"Come, hurry up! Let me in!" cried Rodwell impatiently, after the door was slowly unlocked. "I'm soaked! This infernal neighbourhood of yours is absolutely the limit, Small. Phew!" and he threw down his soaked cap and entered the stone-flagged living-room, where Small's son rose respectfully to greet him.

"Where are my other clothes?" he asked sharply, whereupon the weatherbeaten fisherman produced from an old chest in the corner a rough suit of grey tweeds, which Rodwell, carried to the inner room on the left, and quickly assumed.

"Pretty nice weather this!" he shouted cheerily to father and son, while in the act of changing his clothes. "Is all serene? Have you tested lately?"

"Yes, sir," replied the elder man. "I spoke at five o'clock an' told 'em you were coming. So Mr Stendel is waiting."

"Good!" was Rodwell's reply. "Anybody been looking around?"

"Not a soul to-day, sir. The weather's been bad, an' the only man we've seen is Mr Bennett, from the coastguard station, on his patrol. He was 'ere last night and had a drop o' whisky with us."

"Good?" laughed Rodwell. "Keep well in with the coastguard. They're a fine body, but only a year or so ago the British Admiralty reduced them. It wasn't their fault."

"We do keep in with 'em," was old Tom Small's reply, as Rodwell re-entered the room in dry clothes. "I generally give 'em a bit o' fish when they wants it, and o' course I'm always on the alert looking out for periscopes that don't appear," and the shrewd old chap gave vent to a deep guttural laugh.

"Well now, Small, let's get to work," Rodwell said brusquely. "I've got some important matters on hand. Is all working smoothly?"

"Splendidly, sir," answered the younger man. "Nothing could be better. Signals are perfect to-night."

"Then come along," answered the man who was so universally believed to be a great British patriot; and, turning the handle of the door on the right-hand side of the living-room, he entered a small, close-smelling bedroom, furnished cheaply, as the bedroom of a small struggling fisherman would be. The Smalls were honest, homely folk, the domestic department being carried on by Tom's younger daughter, Mary, who at the moment happened to be visiting her married sister in Louth.

The son, Ted, having lit a petrol table-lamp—one of those which, filled with spirit, give forth gas from the porous block by which the petrol is absorbed and an intense light in consequence—Lewin Rodwell went to the corner of the room where an old curtain of crimson damask hung before a recess. This he drew aside, when, hanging in the recess, were shown several coats and pairs of trousers—the wardrobe of old Tom Small; while below was a tailor's sewing-machine on a treadle stand—a machine protected by the usual wooden cover.

The latter he lifted; but beneath, instead of a machine for the innocent needle-and-cotton industry, there was revealed a long electrical tapping-key upon an ebonite base, together with several electrical contrivances which, to the uninitiated, would present a mysterious problem.

A small, neatly-constructed Morse printing machine, with its narrow ribbon of green paper passing through beneath a little glass cover protecting the "inker" from the dust; a cylindrical brass relay with its glass cover, and a tangle of rubber-insulated wires had been hidden beneath that square wooden cover, measuring two and a half feet by one.

Behind the sewing-machine stand, and cunningly concealed, there ran a thick cable fully two inches in diameter, which was nothing else but the shore-end of a submarine cable directly connecting the East Coast of England with Wangeroog, the most northerly of the East Frisian Islands, running thence across to Cuxhaven, at the mouth of the Elbe, and on by the land-line, via Hamburg, to Berlin.

The history of that cable was unknown and unsuspected by the British public, who, full of trust of the authorities, never dreamed that there could possibly be any communication from the English shore actually direct into Berlin. Five years before the declaration of war the German Government had approached the General Post Office, offering to lay down a new cable from Wangeroog to Spurn Head, in order to relieve some of the constantly increasing traffic over the existing cables from Lowestoft, Bacton and Mundesley. Long negotiations ensued, with the result that one day the German cable-ship *Christoph* passed the Chequer shoal and, arriving off the Spurn Lighthouse, put in the shore-end, landed several German engineers to conduct the electrical control-tests between ship and shore, and then sailed away back to Germany, paying out the cable as she went.

In due course, after the arranged forty days' tests from Wangeroog to the Spurn, the cable was accepted by the General Post Office, and over it much of the telegraphic traffic between England and Germany had, for the past five years, been conducted.

On the declaration of war, however, telegraph engineers from York had arrived, excavated the cable out of the beach at the Spurn, and effectively cut the line, as all the lines connecting us with German stations had been severed. After that, the British postal authorities contented themselves that no further communication could possibly be established with the enemy, and the public were satisfied with a defiant isolation.

They were ignorant how, ten days after the cables had been cut, old Tom Small, his son and two other men, in trawling for fish not far from the shore, had one night suddenly grappled a long black snaky-looking line, and, after considerable difficulties, had followed it with their grapnels to a certain spot where, with the aid of their winch, they were able to haul it on board in the darkness.

Slimy and covered with weeds and barnacles, that strategic cable had been submerged and lay there, unsuspected, ready for "the Day," for, truth to tell, the Spurn Head-Wangeroog cable had possessed a double shore-end, one of which had been landed upon British soil, while the other had been flung overboard from the German cable-ship four miles from land, while old Tom Small and his son had been established on shore in readiness to perform their part in dredging it up and landing it when required.

So completely and carefully had Germany's plans been laid for war that Small, once an honest British fisherman, had unsuspectingly fallen into the hands of a certain moneylender in Hull, who had first pressed him, and had afterwards shown him an easy way out of his financial difficulties; that way being to secretly accept the gift of a small trawler, on condition that, any time his services were required by a strange gentleman who would come down from London and bring him instructions, he would faithfully carry them out.

In the middle of the month of August 1914 the mysterious gentleman had arrived, showed him a marked chart of the sea beyond the five-fathoms line at the Sand Haile, and had given him certain instructions, which he had been forced to carry out.

Not without great difficulty had the second shore-end of the cable been brought ashore at night just opposite his cottage, and dug into the sand at low water, the end being afterwards carried into the little bedroom in the cottage, where, a few days before, several heavy boxes had arrived—boxes which old Tom afterwards saw contained a quantity of electric batteries and weird-looking apparatus.

It was then that Lewin Rodwell arrived for the first time, and, among other accomplishments, being a trained telegraph electrician, he had set the instruments up upon the unsuspecting-looking stand of the big old sewing-machine.

Small, who daily realised and regretted the crafty machinations of the enemy in entrapping him by means of the moneylender in Hull, was inclined to go to the police, confess, and expose the whole affair.

Rodwell, with his shrewd intuition, knew this, and in consequence treated father and son with very little consideration.

Even as he stood in the room that night fingering the secret instruments, which he had just revealed by lifting the cover, he turned to the weatherbeaten old man and said, in a hard, sarcastic voice:

"You see the war is lasting longer than you expected, Small—isn't it? I suppose you've seen all that silly nonsense in the papers about Germany being already at the end of her tether? Don't you believe it. In a year's time we shall have only just started."

"Yes, sir," replied the old fellow, in a thick voice. "But—well, sir, I—I tell you frankly, I'm growing a bit nervous. Mr Judd, from the Chapel Point coastguard, came 'ere twice last week and sat with me smokin', as if he were a-tryin' to pump me."

"Nervous, be hanged, Small. Don't be an idiot!" Rodwell replied quickly. "What can anybody know, unless you yourself blab? And if you did—by Gad! your own people would shoot you as a traitor at the Tower of London—you and your boy too! So remember that—and be very careful to keep a still tongue."

"But I never thought, when that Mr Josephs, up in London, wrote to me sending me a receipt for the money I owed, that I was expected to do all this!" Small protested.

"No, if you had known you would never have done it!" laughed Rodwell. "But Germany is not like your gallant rule-of-thumb England. She leaves nothing to chance, and, knowing the cupidity of men, she takes full advantage of it—as in your case."

"But I can't bear the suspense, sir; I feel—I feel, Mr Rodwell—that I'm suspected—that this house is under suspicion—that—"

"Utter bosh! It's all imagination, Small," Lewin Rodwell interrupted. "They've cut the cable at the Spurn, and that's sufficient. Nobody in England ever dreams that the German Admiralty prepared for this war five years ago, and therefore spliced a second end into the cable."

"Well, I tell you, sir, I heartily wish I'd never had anything to do with this affair," grumbled old Tom.

"And if you hadn't you'd have been in Grimsby Workhouse instead of having six hundred and fifty-five pounds to your credit at the bank in Skegness. You see I know the exact amount. And that amount you have secured by assisting the enemy. I know mine is a somewhat unpalatable remark—but that's the truth, a truth which you and your son Ted, as well as your two brothers must hide—if you don't want to be tried by court-martial and shot as traitors, the whole lot of you."

The old fisherman started at those words, and held his breath.

"We won't say any more, Tom, on that delicate question," Rodwell went on, speaking in a hard, intense voice. "Just keep a dead silence, all of you, and you'll have nothing to fear or regret. If you don't, the punishment will fall upon you; I shall take good care to make myself secure—depend upon that!"

"But can't we leave this cottage? Can't we get away?" implored the old fellow who had innocently fallen into the dastardly web so cleverly spun by the enemy.

"No; you can't. You've accepted German money for five years, and Germany now requires your services," was Rodwell's stern, brutal rejoinder. "Any attempt on your part to back out of your bargain will result in betraying you to your own people. That's plain speaking! You and your son should think it over carefully together. You know the truth now. When Germany is at war she doesn't fight in kid-gloves—like your idiotic pigs of English!"

Chapter Nine.

To "Number 70 Berlin."

Lewin Rodwell, as a powerful and well-informed secret agent, was no amateur.

After the old fisherman had left the close atmosphere of that little room, Rodwell seated himself on a rickety rush-bottomed chair before the sewing-machine stand, beside the bed, and by the bright light of the petrol table-lamp, carefully and with expert touch adjusted the tangle of wires and the polished brass instruments before him.

The manner in which he manipulated them showed him to be perfectly well acquainted with the due importance of their adjustment. With infinite care he examined the end of the cable, unscrewing it from its place, carefully scraping with his clasp-knife the exposed copper wires protruding from the sheath of gutta percha and steel wire, and placing them each beneath the solid brass binding-screws upon the mahogany base.

"The silly old owl now knows that we won't stand any more nonsense from him," he muttered to himself, in German, as he did this. "It's an unsavoury thought that the old fool, in his silly patriotism, might blab to the police or the coastguard. Phew! If he did, things would become awkward—devilish awkward."

Then, settling himself before the instruments, he took from his inner pocket the long, bulky envelope, out of which he drew a sheet of closely-written paper which he spread out upon the little table before him. Afterwards, with methodical exactness, he took out a pencil and a memorandum-block from his side-pocket, arranging them before him.

Again he examined the connections running into the big, heavy tapping-key, and then, grasping the ebonite knob of the latter, he ticked out dots and dashes in a manner which showed him to be an expert telegraphist.

"M.X.Q.Q." were the code-letters he sent. "M.X.Q.Q." he clicked out, once—twice—thrice. The call, in the German cable war-code, meant: "Are you ready to receive message?"

He waited for a reply. But there was none. The cable that ran for three hundred miles, or so, beneath the black, storm-tossed waters of the North Sea was silent.

"Curious!" he muttered to himself. "Stendel is generally on the alert. Why doesn't he answer?"

"M.X.Q.Q." he repeated with a quick, impatient touch. "M.X.Q.Q."

Then he waited, but in vain.

"Surely the cable, after the great cost to the Empire, has not broken down just at the very moment when we want it!" he exclaimed, speaking in German, as was his habit when excited.

Again he sent the urgent call beneath the waters by the only direct means of communication between Britain's soil

and that of her bitter enemy.

But in Tom Small's stuffy little bedroom was a silence that seemed ominous. Outside could be heard the dull roar of the sea, the salt spray coming up almost to the door. But there was no answering click upon the instruments.

The electric current from the rows of batteries hidden in the cellar was sufficient, for he had tested it before he had touched the key.

"Tom," he shouted, summoning the old fisherman whom he had only a few moments before dismissed.

"Yes, sir," replied the old fellow gruffly, as he stalked forward again, in his long, heavy sea-boots.

"The cable's broken down, I believe! What monkey-tricks have you been playing—eh?" he cried angrily.

"None, sir. None, I assure you. Ted tested at five o'clock this evening, as usual, and got an acknowledgment. The line was quite all right then."

"Well, it isn't now," was Rodwell's rough answer, for he detected in the old man's face a secret gleaming satisfaction that no enemy message could be transmitted.

"I believe you're playing us false, Small!" cried Rodwell, his eyes flashing angrily. "By Gad! if you have dared to do so you'll pay dearly for it—I warn you both! Now confess!"

"I assure you, sir, that I haven't. I was in here when Ted tested, as he does each evening. All was working well then."

The younger man, a tall, big-limbed, fair-haired toiler of the sea, in a fisherman's blouse of tanned canvas like his father, overhearing the conversation, entered the little room.

"It was all right at five, sir. I made a call, and got the answer."

"Are you sure it was answered—quite sure?" queried the man from London.

"Positive, sir."

"Then why in the name of your dear goddess Britannia, who thinks she rules the waves, can't I get a reply now?" demanded Rodwell furiously.

"How can I tell, sir? I got signals—good strong signals."

"Very well. I'll try again. But remember that you and your father are bound up to us. And if you've played us false I shall see that you're both shot as spies. Remember you won't be the first. There's Shrimpton, up at Gateshead, Paulett at Glasgow, and half a dozen more in prison paying the penalty of all traitors to their country. The British public haven't yet heard of them. But they will before long—depend upon it. The thing was so simple. Germany, before the war, held out the bait for your good King-and-country English to swallow. That you English—or rather a section of you—will always swallow the money-bait we have known ever so long ago."

"Mr Rodwell, you needn't tell us more than we know," protested the old fisherman. "You and your people 'ave got the better of us. We know that, to our cost, so don't rub it in."

"Ah! as long as you know it, that's all right," laughed Rodwell. "When the invasion comes, as it undoubtedly will, very soon, then you will be looked after all right. Don't you or your son worry at all. Just sit tight, as this house is marked as the house of friends. Germany never betrays a friend—never!"

"Then they do intend to come over here?" exclaimed the old fisherman eagerly, his eyes wide-open in wonderment.

"Why, of course. All has been arranged long ago," declared the man whom the British public knew as a great patriot. "The big expeditionary force, fully fit and equipped, has been waiting in Hamburg, at Cuxhaven and Bremerhaven, ever since the war began—waiting for the signal to start when the way is left open across the North Sea."

"That will never be," declared the younger man decisively.

"Perhaps not, if you have dared to tamper with the cable," was Rodwell's hard reply.

"I haven't, I assure you," the young man declared. "I haven't touched it."

"Well, I don't trust either of you," was Rodwell's reply. "You've had lots of money from us, yet your confounded patriotism towards your effete old country has, I believe, caused you to try and defeat us. You've broken down the cable—perhaps cut the insulation under the water. How do I know?"

"I protest, Mr Rodwell, that you should insinuate this!" cried old Tom. "Through all this time we've worked for you, and—"

"Because you've been jolly well paid for it," interrupted the other. "What would you have earned by your paltry bit of fish sent into Skegness for cheap holiday-makers to eat?—why, nothing! You've been paid handsomely, so you needn't grumble. If you do, then I have means of at once cutting your supplies off and informing the Intelligence Department at Whitehall. Where would you both be then, I wonder?"

"We could give you away also!" growled Ted Small.

"You might make charges. But who would believe you if you—a fisherman—declared that Lewin Rodwell was a spy—eh? Try the game if you like—and see!"

For a few moments silence fell.

"Well, sir," exclaimed Ted's father. "Why not call up again? Perhaps Mr Stendel may be there now."

Again Rodwell placed his expert hand upon the tapping-key, and once more tapped out the call in the dot-and-dash of the Morse Code.

For a full minute all three men waited, holding their breath and watching the receiver.

Suddenly there was a sharp click on the recorder. "Click—click, click, click!"

The answering signals were coming up from beneath the sea.

"B.S.Q." was heard on the "sounder," while the pale green tape slowly unwound, recording the acknowledgment.

Stendel was there, in the cable-station far away on the long, low-lying island of Wangeroog—alert at last, and ready to receive any message from the secret agents of the All Highest of Germany.

"B.S.Q.—B.S.Q."—came up rapidly from beneath the sea. "I am here. Who are you?" answered the wire rapidly, in German.

Lewin Rodwell's heart beat quickly when he heard the belated reply to his impatient summons. He had fully believed that a breakdown had occurred. And if so, it certainly could never be repaired.

But a thrill of pleasure stirred him anew when he saw that his harsh and premature denunciation of the Smalls had been unwarranted, and the cable connection—so cunningly contrived five years before, was working as usual from shore to shore.

Cable-telegraphy differs, in many respects, from ordinary land-telegraphy, especially in the instruments used. Those spread out before Rodwell were, indeed, a strange and complicated collection, with their tangled and twisted wires, each of which Rodwell traced without hesitation.

In a few seconds his white, well-manicured and expert hand was upon the key again, as the Smalls returned to their living-room, and he swiftly tapped out the message in German:

"I am Rodwell. Are you Stendel? Put me through Cuxhaven direct to Berlin: Number Seventy: very urgent."

"Yes," came the reply. "I am Stendel. Your signals are good. Wait, and I will put you through direct to Berlin."

The "sounder" clicked loudly, and the clockwork of the tape released, causing the narrow paper ribbon to unwind.

"S.S." answered Rodwell, the German war-code letters for "All right. Received your message and understand it."

Then he took from his pocket his gold cigarette-case, which bore his initials in diamonds on the side, and selecting a cigarette, lit it and smoked while waiting for the necessary connections and relays to be made which would enable him to transmit his message direct to the general headquarters of the German Secret Service in the Koeniger-gratzerstrasse, in Berlin.

In patience he waited for a full ten minutes in that close little room, watching the receiving instrument before him. The angry roar of the wintry sea could be heard without, the great breakers rolling in upon the beach, while every now and then the salt spindrift would cut sharply across the little window, which rattled in the gusty wind.

Click—click—click! The long letter T repeated three times. Then a pause, and the call "M.X.Q.Q.—J.A.J.70."

By the prefix, Rodwell knew that he was "through," and actually in communication with the headquarters of the German espionage throughout the world; that marvellously alert department from which no secret of state, or of hostile army or navy was safe; the department formed and controlled by the great Steinhauer, who had so many times boasted to him, and perhaps with truth, that at the Koeniger-gratzerstrasse they knew more of England than even the English themselves knew.

True, the British public will never be able to realise one hundredth part of what Germany has done by her spy-system, or of the great diplomatic and military successes which she has achieved by it. Yet we know enough to realise that for years no country and no walk of life—from the highest to the lowest—has been free from the ubiquitous, unscrupulous and unsuspected secret agents of whom Lewin Rodwell was a type.

In Germany's long and patient preparation for the world-war, nothing in the way of espionage was too large, or too small for attention. The activity of her secret agents in Berlin had surely been an object-lesson to the world. Her spies swarmed in all cities, and in every village; her agents ranked among the leaders of social and commercial life, and among the sweepings and outcasts of great communities. The wealthiest of commercial men did not shrink from acting as her secret agents. She was not above employing beside them the very dregs of the community. No such system had ever been seen in the world. Yet the benefits which our enemies were deriving from it, now that we were at war, were incalculable.

By every subtle and underhand means in her power, Germany had prepared for her supreme effort to conquer us, and, as a result of this it was that Lewin Rodwell that night sat at the telegraph-key of the Berlin spy-bureau actually

established on British soil.

He waited until the call had been repeated three times with the secret code-number of the Koeniger-gratzerstrasse, namely: "Number 70 Berlin."

Then, putting out his cigarette, he drew his chair forward until his elbows rested upon the table, and spreading out the closely-written document before him, tapped out a signal in code.

The letters were "F.B.S.M."

To this kind of pass-word, which was frequently altered from time to time, he received a reply: "G.L.G.S." and then he added his own number, "0740."

The signals exchanged were quite strong, and he drew a long breath of relief and satisfaction.

Then, settling down to his dastardly work, he began to tap out rapidly the following in German:

"On Imperial War Service. Most Urgent. From 0740 to Berlin 70. Transmitted Personally.

"Source of information G.27, British Admiralty. Lieutenant Ralph Beeton, Grenadier Guards, British secret agent, is at present staying at Kaiserhof Hotel, Berlin, as James B. James, an American citizen, of Fernville, Kansas, and is transmitting reports. Captain Henry Fordyce, British Navy, is at Park Hotel, Düsseldorf, as Francis Dexter, iron merchant of New Orleans, and has sent reports regarding Erhardt's ordnance factory. Both should be arrested at once. Lieutenant George Evans, reported at Amsterdam on the 5th, has gone to Emden, and will probably be found at the Krone Hotel."

Then he paused. That message had, he knew, sealed the fate of three brave Englishmen who had dared to enter the camp of our enemies. They would be arrested within an hour or so, and most certainly shot as spies. His face broadened into an evil grin of satisfaction as the truth crossed his mind.

He waited for an acknowledgment that his report had been received. Then, having listened to the answering click—clickety—click, he sent a second message as follows:—

"British Naval Dispositions: Urgent to Q.S.R.

"Source of information H.238. To-night, off the Outer Skerries, Shetlands, are battleships *King Charles* (flag), *Mole*, *Wey*, *Welland*, *Teign*, *Yare*, *Queen Boadicea*, *Emperor of India*, *King Henry VIII*; with first-class cruisers *Hogue*, *Stamford*, *Petworth*, *Lichfield*, *Dorchester*; second-class cruisers *Rockingham*, *Guildford*, *Driffield*, *Verulam*, *Donnington*, *Pirbright*, *Tremayne* and *Blackpool*; destroyers *Viking*, *Serpent*, *Chameleon*, *Adder*, *Batswing*, *Sturdy* and *Havoc*, with eight submarines, the aircraft-ship *Flyer*, and repair-ship *Vulcan*. Another strong division left Girdle Ness at 4 p.m. coming south. The division in Moray Firth remains the same. *Trusty*, *Dragon*, *Norfolk* and *Shadower* left Portsmouth this evening going east. British Naval war-code to be altered at midnight to 106-13."

The figures he spelt out very carefully, repeating them three times so that there could be no mistake. Again he paused until, from Berlin, they were repeated for confirmation.

Afterwards he proceeded as follows:

"*Ruritania* leaves Liverpool for New York at noon to-morrow, carrying bullion. Also liners *Smyrna*, *Jacob Elderson*, *City of Rotterdam* and *Great Missenden* leave same port for Atlantic ports to-morrow. Submarines may be advised by wireless."

Once more he paused until he received the signal of acknowledgment, together with the query whether the name of one of the ships mentioned was Elderson or Elderton. But Lewin Rodwell, with keen interest in his fell work of betraying British liners into the hands of the German pirate submarines, quickly tapped out the correct spelling, repeating it, so that there should be no further mistake.

After yet another pause, the man seated in the fisherman's stuffy little bedroom grasped the telegraph-key and made the signals—"J.O.H.J."—which, in the German war-code, meant: "Take careful note and report to proper quarter instantly."

"All right," came the answering signal, also in code. "Prepared to receive J.O.H.J."

Then, after a few seconds, Rodwell glanced again at the closely-written sheet spread before him, and began to tap out the following secret message in German to the very heart of the Imperial war-machine:

"Official information just gained from a fresh and most reliable source—confirmed by H.238, M.605, and also B.1928—shows that British Admiralty have conceived a clever plan for entrapping the German Grand Fleet. Roughly, the scheme is to make attack with inferior force upon Heligoland early on Wednesday morning, the 16th, together with corresponding attack upon German division in the estuary of the Eider and thus draw out the German ships northward towards the Shetlands, behind which British Grand Fleet are concealed in readiness. This concentration of forces northward will, according to the scheme of which I have learned full details, leave the East coast of England from the Tyne to the Humber unprotected for a full twelve hours on the 16th, thus full advantage could be taken for bombardment. Inform Grand Admiral immediately."

Having thus betrayed the well-laid plans of the British Admiralty to entice the German Fleet out of the Kiel canal and the other harbours in which barnacles were growing on their keels, Lewin Rodwell, the popular British "patriot," paused once more.

But not for long, because, in less than a minute, he received again the signal of acknowledgment that his highly interesting message to the German Admiralty had been received, and would be delivered without a moment's delay.

Then he knew that the well-organised plans of the British Fleet, so cleverly conceived and so deadly if executed, would be effectively frustrated.

He gave the signal that he had ended his message and, with a low laugh of satisfaction, rose from the rickety old chair and lit another cigarette.

Thus had England been foully betrayed by one of the men whom her deluded public most confidently trusted and so greatly admired.

Chapter Ten.

The Khaki Cult.

Twenty-four hours later Lewin Rodwell was standing upon the platform of the big Music Hall, in George Street, Edinburgh, addressing a great recruiting meeting.

The meeting, presided over by a well-known Scotch earl, had already been addressed by a Cabinet Minister; but when Rodwell rose, a neat, spruce figure in his well-fitting morning-coat, with well-brushed hair, and an affable smile, the applause was tremendous—even greater than that which had greeted the Minister.

Lewin Rodwell was a people's idol—one of those who, in these times, are so suddenly placed high upon the pedestal of public opinion, and as quickly cast down.

A man's reputation is made to-day and marred to-morrow. Rodwell's rapid rise to fortune had certainly been phenomenal. Yet, as he had "made money in the City"—like so many other people—nobody took the trouble to inquire exactly how that money had been obtained. By beating the patriotic drum so loudly he stifled down inquiry, and the public now took him at his own valuation.

A glib and forceful orator, with a suave, persuasive manner, at times declamatory, but usually slow and decisive, he thrust home his arguments with unusual strength and power.

In repeating Lord Kitchener's call for recruits, he pointed to the stricken fields of Belgium, recalling those harrowing scenes of rapine and murder, in August, along the fair valley of the Meuse. He described, in vivid language, the massacre in cold blood of seven hundred peaceful men, women and young children in the little town of Dinant-sur-Meuse, the town of gingerbread and beaten brass; the sack of Louvain, and the appalling scenes in Liège and Malines, at the same time loudly denouncing the Germans as "licentious liars" and the "spawn of Satan." From his tongue fell the most violent denunciations of Germany and all her ways, until his hearers were electrified by his whole-souled patriotism.

"The Kaiser," he cried, "is the Great Assassin of civilisation. There is now ample evidence, documentary and otherwise, to prove that he, the Great War Lord, forced this great war upon the world at a moment which he considered propitious to himself. We now, alas I know that as far back as June 1908 the Kaiser assembled his Council and, in a secret speech, declared war against England. You, ladies and gentlemen, have been bamboozled and befooled all along by a Hush-a-bye Government who told you that there never would be war:" emphatic words which were met with loud yells of "Shame!" and execration.

"The Cabinet," he continued, "knew all along—they knew as far back as 1908—that this Mad Dog of Germany intended to strangle and crush us. Yet, what did they do? They told you—and you believed them—that we should never have war—not in our time, they said; while in the House of Commons they, knowing what they did, actually suggested disarmament! Think of it!"

Renewed cries of "Shame!" rose from all parts of the hall.

"Well," Lewin Rodwell went on, clenching his fist, "we are at war—a war the result of which no man can, as yet, foresee. But win we must—yet, if we are to win, we must still make the greatest sacrifices. We must expend our last shilling and our last drop of blood if victory is at last to be ours. Germany, the mighty country of the volte-face, with her blood-stained Kaiser at her head, has willed that Teuton 'kultur' shall crush modern civilisation beneath the heel of its jack-boot. Are you young men of Scotland to sit tight here and allow the Germans to invade you, to ruin and burn your homes, and to put your women and children to the sword? Will you actually allow this accursed race of murderers, burglars and fire-bugs to swarm over this land which your ancestors have won for you? No! Think of the past history of your homes and your dear ones, and come forward now, to-night, all of you of military age, and give in your names for enlistment! Come, I implore of you!" he shouted, waving his arms. "Come forward, and do your duty as men in the service of mankind—your duty to your King, your country, and your God!"

His speech, of which this was only one very small extract, was certainly a brilliant and telling one. When he sat down, not only was there a great thunder of applause while the fine organ struck up "Rule Britannia," but a number of strong young men, in their new-born enthusiasm, rose from the audience and announced their intention of enlisting.

"Excellent!" cried Rodwell, rising again from his chair. "Here are brave fellows ready to do their duty! Come, let all you slackers follow their example and act as real honest, patriotic men—the men of the Scotland of history!"

This proved an incentive to several waverers. But what, indeed, would that meeting have thought had they caught the words the speaker whispered in German beneath his breath, as he reseated himself? "More cannon-fodder," he

had muttered, though his face was brightened by a smile of supreme satisfaction of a true Briton, for he had realised by his reception there in Edinburgh, where audiences were never over-demonstrative, how exceedingly popular he was.

Afterwards he had supper at the Caledonian Hotel with the Cabinet Minister whom he had supported; and later, when he retired to his room, he at once locked the door, flung off his coat, and threw himself into the armchair by the fire to smoke and think.

He was wondering what action his friends at Number 70 Berlin were taking in consequence of the report he had made on the previous night. On Wednesday the north-east coast of England would be left unguarded. What, he wondered, would happen to startle with "frightfulness" the stupid English, whom he at heart held in such utter contempt?

That same night Jack Sainsbury was on his way home in a taxi from the theatre with Elise. They had spent a delightful evening together. Mrs Shearman had arranged to accompany them, but at the last moment had been prevented by a headache. The play they had seen was one of the spy-plays at that moment so popular in London; and Elise, seated at his side, was full of the impressions which the drama had left upon her.

"I wonder if there really are any spies still among us, Jack?" she exclaimed, as, with her soft little hand in his, they were being whirled along up darkened Regent Street in the direction of Hampstead.

"Alas! I fear there are many," was her lover's reply. "Poor Jerrold told me many extraordinary things which showed how cleverly conceived is this whole plot against England."

"But surely you don't think that there are really any spies still here. There might have been some before the war, but there can't be any now."

"Why not, dearest?" he asked very seriously. He was as deeply in love with her as she was with him. "The Germans, having prepared for war for so many years, have, no doubt, taken good care to establish many thoroughly trustworthy secret agents in our midst. Jerrold often used to declare how certain men, who were regarded as the most honest, true John Bull Englishmen, were actually in the service of the enemy. As an instance, we have the case of Frederic Adolphus Gould, who was arrested at Rochester last April. He was a perfect John Bull: he spoke English without the slightest trace of accent; he hated Germany and all her works, and he was most friendly with many naval officers at Chatham. Yet he was discovered to be a spy, having for years sent reports of all our naval movements to Germany, and in consequence he was sent to penal servitude for six years. In the course of the inquiries it was found that he was a German who had fought in the Franco-German war, and was actually possessed of the inevitable iron cross!"

"Impossible!" cried the girl, in her sweet, musical voice.

"But it's all on record! The fellow was a dangerously clever spy; and no doubt there are many others of his sort amongst us. Jerrold declared so, and told me how the authorities, dazzled by the glamour of Teuton finance, were, unfortunately, not yet fully awake to the craft and cunning of the enemy and the dangers by which we are beset."

Then he lapsed into silence.

"Your friend Dr Jerrold took a very keen interest in the spy-peril, didn't he?"

"Yes, dear. And I frequently helped him in watching and investigating," was his reply. "In the course of our inquiries we often met with some very strange adventures."

"Did you ever catch a spy?" she asked, quickly interested, for the subject was one upon which Jack usually avoided speaking.

"Yes, several," was his brief and rather vague reply. The dead man's discretion was reflected upon him. He never spoke of his activity more frequently than was necessary. In such inquiries silence was golden.

"And you really think there are many still at large?"

"I know there are, Elise," he declared quickly. "The authorities are, alas! so supine that their lethargy is little short of criminal. Poor Jerrold foresaw what was happening. He had no axe to grind, as they have at the War Office. To-day the policy of the Government seems to be to protect the aliens rather than interfere with them. Poor Jerrold's exposure of the unsatisfactory methods of our bureau of contra-espionage to a certain member of Parliament will, I happen to know, be placed before the House ere long. Then matters may perhaps be remedied. If they are not, I really believe that the long-suffering public will take affairs into their own hands."

"But I don't understand what spies have done against us," queried Elise, looking into her lover's face in the furtive light of the street-lamp they were at that moment passing. Her question was quite natural to a woman.

"Done!" echoed her fine manly lover. "Why, lots of our disasters have been proved to be due to their machinations. The authorities well know that all our disasters do not appear in the newspapers, for very obvious reasons. Look what spies did in Belgium! Men who had lived in that country all their lives, believed to be Belgians and occupying high and responsible positions—men who were deeply respected, and whose loyalty was unquestioned—openly revealed themselves as spies of the Kaiser, and betrayed their friends the instant the Germans set foot on Belgian soil. All has long ago been prepared for an invasion of Great Britain, and when 'the Day' comes we shall, depend upon it, receive a very rude shock, for the same thing will certainly happen."

"How wicked it all is!" she remarked.

"All war is 'wicked,' dearest," was the young man's slow reply. "Yet I only wish I were fit enough to wear khaki."

"But you can surely do something at home," she suggested, pressing his hand. "There are many things here to do, now that you've left the City."

"Yes, I *will* do something. I must, *and I will!*" he declared earnestly.

A silence again fell between them.

"It is a great pity poor Dr Jerrold died as he did," the girl remarked thoughtfully at last. "I met him twice with you, and I liked him awfully. He struck me as so thoroughly earnest and so perfectly genuine."

"He was, Elise. When he died—well—I—I lost my best friend," and he sighed.

"Yes," she answered. "And he was doing such a good work, patiently tracing out suspicious cases of espionage."

"He was. Yet by so doing he, like all true patriots, got himself strangely disliked, first by the Germans themselves, who hated him, and secondly by the Intelligence Department."

"The latter were jealous that he, a mere civilian doctor, should dare to interfere, I suppose," remarked the girl thoughtfully.

"The khaki cult is full of silly jealousies and petty prejudices."

"Exactly. It was a very ridiculous situation. Surely the man in khaki cannot pursue inquiries so secretly and delicately as the civilian. The Scotland Yard detective does not go about dressed in the uniform of an inspector. Therefore, why should an Intelligence officer put on red-tabs in order to make himself conspicuous? No, dearest," he went on; "I quite agree with the doctor that the officials whose duty it is to look after spies have not taken sufficient advantage of patriotic civilians who are ready to assist them."

"Why don't you help them, Jack?" suggested the girl. "You assisted Dr Jerrold, and you know a great deal regarding spies and their methods. Yet you are always so awfully mysterious about them."

"Am I, darling?" he laughed, carrying her hand tenderly to his lips and kissing it fondly.

"Yes, you are," she protested quickly. "Do tell me one thing—answer me one question, Jack. Have you any suspicion in one single case?—I mean do you really know a spy?"

Jack hesitated. He drew a long breath, as again across his troubled mind flashed that thought which had so constantly obsessed him ever since that afternoon before Jerome Jerrold had died so mysteriously.

"Yes, Elise," he answered in a thick voice. "Yes, I do."

Chapter Eleven.

The Enemy's Cipher.

The afternoon of December 16th, 1914—the 135th day of the war—was grey and gloomy in Northumberland Avenue, that short thoroughfare of high uniform hotels and buildings.

The street-lamps had just been lit around Trafalgar Square when Lewin Rodwell passed out of the big hall of the Constitutional Club, and down the steps into the street. At the moment a newsboy dashed past crying the evening papers.

The words that fell upon Rodwell's ear caused him to start; and, stopping the lad, he purchased a paper, and, halting, read the bold, startling headlines: "Bombardment of the East Coast this morning: Great destruction of seaside towns."

"Ach!" he murmured with a grin of satisfaction. "Ach! Number 70 was not slow in acting upon my message. Instead of the German Fleet falling into the trap, they have taught these pigs of English a lesson. Not long ago one Minister declared that if the German Fleet did not come out of the Kiel Canal, that the brave British would dig them like rats out of a hole. Good! They have come out to respond to that challenge," and he laughed in grim satisfaction. "Let's see what they've done."

Turning upon his heel, in his eagerness to learn the truth, he reascended the broad steps of the Club, and in the hall seated himself and eagerly devoured the account which, at that moment, was thrilling the whole country.

The paper stated, as all will remember, that the German ships having, by some extraordinary and unknown means, succeeded in evading the diligent watch kept upon them in the North Sea, had appeared on the Yorkshire coast early that morning. A German battleship, together with several first-class cruisers, had made a raid, and shelled Hartlepool, Scarborough and Whitby. At the three towns bombarded much damage was done, hotels, churches and hospitals being struck; and, according to the casualty list at that moment available, twenty-nine persons had been killed and forty-six wounded at Hartlepool; two killed and two wounded at Whitby, and thirteen casualties in Scarborough. The paper added that the list of casualties was believed to be very much greater, and would, it was thought, amount to quite two hundred. British patrol boats had endeavoured to cut off the Germans, whereupon the latter had fled.

Lewin Rodwell, having read the leading article, in which the journal loudly protested against the bombardment of

undefended towns, and the ruthless slaughter of women and children, cast the paper aside, rose and again went out.

As he walked in the falling twilight towards Pall Mall, he laughed lightly, muttering in German, beneath his breath: "That is their first taste of bombardment! They will have many yet, in the near future. They laugh at our Zeppelins now. But will they laugh when our new aircraft bases are ready? No. The idiots, they will not laugh when we begin to drop bombs upon London!"

And, hailing a taxi, he entered it and drove home to Bruton Street, where Sir Boyle Huntley was awaiting him.

The man with the bloated, red face and loose lips greeted his friend warmly as he entered the quiet, cosy study. Then when Franks, Rodwell's man, had pulled down the blinds and retired, he exclaimed:

"Seen this evening's paper? Isn't it splendid, Lewin! All your doing, my dear fellow. You'll get a handsome reward for it. Trustram is very useful to us, after all."

"Yes," was the other's reply. "He's useful—but only up to a certain point. My only regret is that we haven't a real grip upon him. If we knew something against him—or if he'd borrowed money from one of our friends—then we might easily put on the screw, and learn a lot. As it is, he's careful to give away but little information, and that not always trustworthy."

"True," was Sir Boyle's reply. "But could we not manage to entice him into our fold? We've captured others, even more wary than he, remember."

"Ah! I wish I could see a way," replied Rodwell reflectively, as he stood before his own fireplace, his hands thrust deep into his trousers pockets.

"To my mind, Lewin, I foresee a danger," said the stout man, tossing his cigarette-end into the grate as he rose and stood before his friend.

"How?"

"Well—last night I happened to be at the theatre, and in the stalls in front of me sat Trustram with young Sainsbury, the fellow whom we dismissed from the Ochrida office."

"Sainsbury!" gasped the other. "Is he on friendly terms with Trustram, do you think?"

"I don't think, my dear fellow—I am certain," was the reply. "He had his girl with him, and all three were laughing and chatting merrily together."

"His girl? Let me see, we had him watched a few days ago, didn't we? That's a girl living up at Hampstead—daughter of a Birmingham tool-manufacturer, Elise Shearman, isn't she?" remarked Rodwell slowly, his eyebrows narrowing as he spoke.

"I believe that was the name. Olsen watched and reported, didn't he?" asked the Baronet.

"Yes. I must see him. That young fellow is dangerous to us, Boyle—distinctly dangerous! He knows something, remember, and he would have told his friend Jerrold—if the latter had not conveniently died just before his visit to Wimpole Street."

"Yes. That was indeed a lucky incident—eh?"

"And now he is friendly with Charles Trustram. How did they meet, I wonder?"

"Trustram was, of course, a friend of Jerrold's."

"Ah—I see. Well, we must lose no time in acting," exclaimed Lewin Rodwell in a low, hard voice. "I quite realise the very grave and imminent danger. We may be already suspected by Trustram."

"Most probably, I think. We surely can't afford to court disaster any further."

"No," was Rodwell's low, decisive answer, and he drew a long breath. "We must act—swiftly and effectively."

And then he lapsed into a long silence, during which his active brain was ardently at work in order to devise some subtle and deadly plan which should crush out suspicion and place them both in a position of further safety.

At the moment, the British public believed both men to be honest, patriotic supporters of the Government—men who were making much sacrifice for the country's welfare.

What if the horrible and disgraceful truth ever became revealed? What if they were proved to be traitors? Why, a London mob would undoubtedly lynch them both, and tear them limb from limb!

One man in England knew the truth—that was quite plain—and that man was young Sainsbury, the clerk who had accidentally overheard those indiscreet words in the boardroom in Gracechurch Street.

Lewin Rodwell, though ever since that afternoon when he had been so indiscreet he had tried to hide the truth from himself, now realised that, at all hazards, the young man's activity must be cut short, and his mouth closed.

Sir Boyle remained and dined with him. As a bachelor, and an epicure, Lewin Rodwell always gave excellent dinners, dinners that were renowned in London. He had a French *chef* to whom he paid a big salary—a man who had been

chef at Armenonville, in the Bois, in Paris. Upon his kitchen Rodwell spared nothing, hence when any of those men—whom he afterwards so cleverly made use of to swell his bank-balance—accepted his hospitality they knew that the meal would be perhaps the best procurable in all London.

Many are the men-about-town who pride themselves upon their knowledge of the gastronomic art, and talk with loving reflections of the soups, entrées, and what-not, that they have eaten. Most of such men are what may be termed “hotel epicures.” They swallow the dishes served at the fashionable hotels—dishes to the liking of their own palates possibly—smack their lips, pay, and are satisfied. But the real epicure—and he is indeed a *rara avis*—is the one who knows that the thin-sliced grey truffle, light as a feather, cannot be put on a fillet in London, and that “sea-truffles” have never been seen in the Metropolis.

To be a real epicure one must be a cosmopolitan, taking one’s *bouillabaisse* in Marseilles, one’s red mullet in Leghorn, one’s caviare at eleven in the morning in Bucharest, one’s smoked fish and cheese in Tromso, one’s chicken’s breasts with rice in Bologna, and so on, across the face of the earth. To the man who merely pretends to know, the long gilt-printed menu of the smart London hotel becomes enticing to the palate, but to the man who has eaten his dinner under many suns it is often an amusing piece of mysteriously-worded bunkum.

Lewin Rodwell and his friend the Birthday Baronet sat down together to a perfectly-cooked and perfectly-served repast. Franks, the quiet, astute, clean-shaven man, a secret friend of Germany like his master, moved noiselessly, and the pair chatted without restraint, knowing well that Franks—whose real name was Grünhold—would say nothing. It was not to his advantage to say anything, because he was a secret agent of Germany of the fifth class—namely, one in weekly receipt of sixty marks, or three pounds.

Rodwell was apprehensive, unhappy, and undecided. Truth to tell, he wanted to be alone, to plot and to scheme. His friend’s presence prevented him from thinking. Yet, after dinner, he was compelled to go forth with him somewhere, so they went to the *revue* at the Hippodrome, and on to Murray’s afterwards.

It was half-past two o’clock in the morning when Rodwell re-entered with his latch-key and, passing into his den, found upon his writing-table a rather soiled note, addressed in a somewhat uneducated hand, which had evidently been left during his absence.

Throwing off his overcoat, he took up the note and, tearing it open, read the few brief unsigned lines it contained. Then, replacing it upon the table, he drew his white hand across his brow, as though to clear his troubled brain.

Afterwards he crossed to the small safe let into the wall near the fireplace and, unlocking it, took forth a little well-worn memorandum-book bound in dark blue leather.

“Cipher Number 38, I think,” he muttered to himself, as he turned over its pages until he came to that for which he was in search.

Then he sat down beneath the reading-lamp and carefully studied the page, which, ruled in parallel columns, displayed in the first column the alphabet, in the second the key-sentence of the cipher in question—one of forty-three different combinations of letters—and in the third the discarded letters to be interspersed in the message in order to render any attempt at deciphering the more difficult.

In that cleverly-compiled little volume were forty-three different key-sentences, each easy of remembrance, and corresponding in its number of letters with about two-thirds, or so, of the number of letters of the alphabet. From time to time it changed automatically, according to the calendar and to a certain rule set forth at the end of the little volume. Hence, though the spy’s code was constantly being changed without any correspondence from headquarters—“Number 70 Berlin”—yet, without a copy of the book, the exact change and its date could not be ascertained.

Truly, the very best brains of Germany had, long ago, been concentrated upon the complete system of espionage in Great Britain, with the result that the organisation was now absolutely perfect.

Taking a sheet of ruled paper from one of the compartments in the American rolltop desk before him, Lewin Rodwell, after leaning back wearily in his chair to compose himself, commenced, by reference to the pages of the little book before him, to trace out the cipher equivalents of the information contained in the note that had been left for him by an unknown hand in his absence.

He opened the big silver cigarette-box at his elbow, and having taken a cigarette, he lit it and began reducing the information into cipher, carefully producing a jumble of letters, a code so difficult that it had for a long time entirely defied the British War Office, the Admiralty, the Foreign Office, and the French Secret Service.

Though marvellously ingenious, yet it was, after all, quite simple when one knew the key-sentence.

Those key-sentences used by “Number 70 Berlin” in their wonderful and ever-changing secret code—that code by which signal lights were flashed across Great Britain by night, and buzzed out by wireless by day—were quite usual sentences, often proverbs in English, such as “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” “A man and his money are soon parted,” “Give one an inch and he’ll take an ell,” “Money makes the world go round,” and so on.

Simple, of course. Yet the very simplicity of it all, combined with the constant change, constituted its greatest and most remarkable secrecy. The great Steinhauer, with his far-reaching tentacles of espionage across both hemispheres, held his octopus-like grip upon the world, a surer, a more subtle and a more ingenious hold than the civilised world, from the spies of Alexander the Great down to those of President Kruger, had ever seen.

With infinite care, and because the information concerning certain naval movements in the Channel was urgent, he produced a mass of letters with words in German interspersed—a cipher message which resulted a fortnight later in

one of our battleships being sunk in the Channel, with only eighty survivors. Of the message the following is a facsimile:—

6 n u ' s s t ' A g ' 2 2 k m r ' d ' b ' n ' o ' j ' f ' o '
- s w ' b ' p ' o o a ' B g ' t ' n ' x ' b ' l ' f ' g ' g ' s ' a '
schachspeil ' o f ' x ' a ' g ' r ' t ' k ' b ' u ' z '
' l ' a ' r ' f ' j ' h ' o ' t ' n ' s ' h ' i ' x ' w ' k ' F ' b ' e ' g ' e ' h ' r '
s ' s ' w ' t ' i ' v ' , d ' e ' k ' o ' r ' t ' b ' o ' b ' h ' x ' j ' s ' s ' h ' i '
' d ' y ' n ' g ' l ' e ' i ' c ' h ' g ' u ' l ' t ' i ' g ' j ' o ' n ' b ' s ' x ' b '
86 ' k ' t ' 5

Chapter Twelve.

On Thin Ice.

One evening early in January three men had assembled and held a serious conference in Jack Sainsbury's modest little flat in Heath Street, Hampstead. His sister being out for the day, Jack had personally admitted his visitors, who were Charles Trustram and Sir Houston Bird, and the trio had sat by the fire discussing a matter of the greatest moment.

Briefly, the facts were as follow: Trustram had, ever since the raid on Scarborough, wondered whether the failure of the British naval plan to entrap the German Fleet had been directly due to his own indiscretion in mentioning to Lewin Rodwell what was intended. He deeply regretted having let out what had been an absolute secret; yet Rodwell was a man of such tried and sterling patriotism, constantly addressing audiences in the interests of recruiting, and a man whose battle cry "Britain for the British" had been taken up everywhere. No one was possessed of a deeper and more intense hatred of Germany than he, and Trustram felt certain that no man was a greater enemy of the Kaiser.

The papers wrote fulsome praise of his splendid example and his fine patriotic efforts, both as regards recruiting and in the raising of funds for various charitable objects; therefore the Admiralty official was wont to comfort himself with the reflection that such a man could never be an agent of Germany.

Only a few days ago, when he had confessed to Sir Houston and the latter had, on his part, spoken to Sainsbury, the puzzle had become pieced together; and on that evening, as the trio sat opposite each other, the young fellow explained how he had been dismissed from the Ochrida Company at the instigation of Lewin Rodwell and his titled sycophant Sir Boyle Huntley.

"There is a mystery," Jack went on. "I'm certain there's some great mystery regarding poor Jerrold's sudden death," he said decisively. "I was, that night, on my way to him, to tell him what I had accidentally learnt, and to seek his advice how to act. Yet, poor fellow, he died in my arms."

"His suicide was certainly quite unaccountable," declared Sir Houston. "I often reflect and wonder whether he really did commit suicide—and yet it was all quite plain and straightforward. He must have swallowed a tablet—coated, no doubt, or the effect must have been far more rapid."

"But why did he declare that he'd been shot?" asked Trustram, whose fine, strong face was dark and thoughtful.

"Ah! Who knows? There's the mystery," replied the great pathologist. "Of course, men sometimes have curious hallucinations immediately prior to death. It might have been one."

"He was in terrible agony—poor fellow," Jack remarked.

"No doubt, no doubt. But the drug would, of course, account for that."

"Then, in the light of your expert medical knowledge, you don't think that his death was a mysterious one?" Jack queried.

"No, I don't say that at all," was the reply of the busy man, who was working night and day among the wounded in the hospitals. "I merely say that Jerrold was poisoned—and probably by his own hand. That's all."

"You say 'probably,'" remarked Trustram. "Could that man, Rodwell, have had anything to do with it do you think?"

"My dear Mr Trustram, how can we possibly tell?" asked Sir Houston. "What real evidence have we got? None."

"And so clever are our enemies that we are not likely ever to get any, I believe," was Trustram's hard reply. "I only

know what has happened to our plans for the defeat of the German Fleet. Is it really possible that this Lewin Rodwell, one of the most popular men in England, is a German agent?"

"If you dared to say so, the whole country would rise and kill you with ridicule," remarked Jack Sainsbury. "Once the British public establishes a man as a patriot, their belief in him remains unshaken to the very end. This war is a war where spies and spying, treachery and double-dealing, play a far bigger part than the world ever dreams. Jerrold always declared to me that there were German spies in every department of the State, just as there are in France, in Russia, and in Italy. No secret of any of the European States is a secret from the central spy-bureau in Berlin."

"Jerrold knew that. He set out sacrificing body and soul—nay, his very life—to assist our Intelligence Department," Trustram remarked.

"I know," said Jack. "They were foolishly jealous of his knowledge—jealous of the facts he had gathered during his wanderings up and down Germany, and jealous of the sources of information. They pretended a certain friendliness towards him, of course, but, as you know, the khaki cult is never in unison with the civilian. Jerrold did his duty—did it splendidly, as a true Englishman should. His work will live as a record. Seven years ago he commenced, at a time when the money-grubbing, ostrich-like section of the public—bamboozled by politicians who pretended not to know, yet who knew too well, and who told us there would be no war—not in our time—were content in amassing wealth. What did they care for the country's future, as long as they drew big dividends? Jerrold foresaw the great Teutonic plot against civilisation, and was not afraid to point to it. What did he get for his pains? Ridicule, derision, and aspersions that his mind was deranged, and that he was a mere romancer. Well, to-day he's dead, and we can only judge him by his works."

"There are others—certain others too—whom we may also judge by their works," remarked Trustram grimly—"their subtle, fiendish works, aimed at the downfall of our Empire. If the truth had been realised when Lord Roberts started out to speak—and when the whole Government united to poke fun and heap ridicule upon the great Field-Marshal, who knew more of real warfare than the whole tangle of red-tape at Whitehall combined—then to-day thousands of brave men, the flower of our youth, who have laid down their lives in the trenches in Flanders, would have been alive to-day. No!" he cried angrily. "There are traitors in our midst, and yet if one dares to suspect, if one dares to breathe a word, even to inquire and bring absolute evidence, the only thing which the khaki-clad Department will vouchsafe to the informant is a meagre printed form to acknowledge that one's report has been 'received.' After that, the matter is buried."

"Perhaps burnt," laughed Sir Houston.

"Most probably," Trustram asserted. "To me, an Englishman, the whole situation is as utterly appalling as it is ludicrous. We must win. And it is up to us all to see that *we do win*."

"Excellent!" cried Sir Houston. "And so we will—all three of us. I'll go to the War Office to-morrow and try and see someone in authority. You, Sainsbury, will come with me, and you'll make your statement—you'll tell them all that you know. They must take some notice of it!"

"I should be quite ready," was Jack's reply. "But will they believe me? They didn't believe poor Jerrold, remember—and he actually held proof positive of certain traitorous acts. The whole idea of the Intelligence Department is to pooh-pooh any report furnished by a civilian. Indeed, Jerrold showed me a signed statement by a British officer whom the authorities had actually threatened to cashier because he had assisted him to investigate some night-signalling in Surrey!"

"Impossible!" cried Sir Houston.

"It's the absolute truth. I've had the statement in my own hands. He was an officer stationed in a town in Surrey."

"Well," remarked the great pathologist. "Let us allow the past by-gones to be by-gones. Let us work—not in resentment of the past, but for our protection in the future. What shall we do?"

The two men were silent. On the one hand they saw the fortress-wall which the War Office placed between the civilian and the man in khaki. Reports of espionage were extremely unwelcome at Whitehall. And yet how could men in khaki and assistant-provost-marshals, with their crimson brassards of special-constable or veteran volunteer conspicuousness, ever hope to cope with the clever, subtle and wary spies of Germany? The whole thing was too farcical for words.

The British public, trustful of this cult of khaki and of a Cabinet who daily bleated forth "All is well!" had no knowledge, for instance, of the cleverly-laid plan of the enemy in Russia—the plot to blow up Ohta, the Russian Woolwich. Later, the English, in their ignorance of German intrigue, asked each other why no forward move was being made—the move promised us in the spring. They knew nothing of that great disaster, so cleverly accomplished by Germany's spies, the blowing up of Ohta, that disaster which entirely crippled Russia, and which resulted, later on, in her retreat from Warsaw. It was this—alas that I should pen these lines!—which prevented the British and French from advancing during the whole spring and summer of 1915.

The Russians, our gallant allies, were producing, at the Putilof works, great siege guns, bigger than any turned out from Krupp's. Yet, after Ohta had been blown up by means of a cable laid by spies under the Neva before the war, so that hardly one brick stood upon another and Petrograd had been shaken as by an earthquake in consequence, what could Russia do? She had no munitions; therefore why make guns?

That act of German spies in directly crippling Russia—an act plotted and prepared ten years previously—had checked the striking power of France, and quite defeated the splendid intentions of Lord Kitchener and our own good General French.

Let history speak. As our two armies were holding only a small section of the line, it was more convenient for the general interests of the Allies that we should, instead of employing our increased forces, postpone the entry into action of our national armies, and bend our chief energies to the task of supplying Russia with the munitions which had suddenly become to her a matter of life or death.

Was not this, indeed, an object-lesson to England?

The trio were discussing the situation, when Jack Sainsbury exclaimed:

“And yet the public will not believe that there are spies amongst us—even in face of daily events of incendiary fires, of submarine outrages, and of spies who, arriving with American passports, are watched, arrested, and executed at the Tower of London.”

“True?” cried Trustram. “I agree entirely with all you say. Shall we act—or shall we join in the saliva of sweetness and raise the chorus that the Germans are, after all, dear good people?”

“Never!” exclaimed Sir Houston fiercely. “Jerrold knew, and he died mysteriously. We, all three of us, know. Let us act; let us raise our voices, as the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Charles Beresford, Lord Leith of Fyvie, Lord Crawford, Lord Portsmouth, Lord Headley, and all the others have raised theirs. ‘Britain for the British,’ I say, and we must win—and, at all hazards, *we will win!*”

“Yes, but what shall we do? How are we now to act?” queried Jack, looking at his visitors.

“That we must decide,” Sir Houston responded. “We know many things—things that are proved as far as Lewin Rodwell is concerned. We must watch—and watch very closely and carefully—then we shall learn more.”

“But while we are watching the Empire is, surely, in gravest peril?” Trustram protested.

“We have an Intelligence Department which is said to be dealing with news leaking from our shores.”

“Intelligence Department?” laughed Jack Sainsbury. “Read the German papers, and you’ll see that the public in Germany are daily told the actual truth concerning us, while we are deliberately kept in ignorance by the superior cult of khaki.” Then he added, “The whole of this system of secrecy, and of playing upon the public mind, must be broken down, otherwise very soon, I fear, the British will believe nothing that is told them. We won’t be spoon-fed on tit-bits any more. We are not the pet-dogs of a Hide-the-Truth administration.”

“That’s a bit stiff,” declared Trustram with a frown, as befitted an official wearing His Majesty’s uniform.

“I don’t care! I speak exactly what I feel. The British Empire is to-day greatly menaced, and if we are to win, we must face the facts and speak out boldly. We don’t want these incompetent khaki-clad amateur detectives telling the matter-of-fact British nation official untruths. Why, only the other day the Parliamentary mouthpiece of the War Office told us that every German secret agent was known and under constant surveillance! Is that the truth, I ask you, or is it a deliberate official falsehood? Read Hansard’s reports. I have quoted from them!”

The two men could not raise a protest. They knew, alas! that the words the young man had spoken were the actual and ghastly truth.

“Well,” he went on, looking at his visitors, “we know what is in progress—or at least we have the strongest suspicion of it. Now, what decision have you both arrived at? What, in the interests of the safety of the Empire, shall we do?”

Trustram shrugged his shoulders blankly, while Sir Houston drew a long breath.

Neither man replied. What could they do, save to warn the War Office, who they knew would probably turn a deaf ear to all their suspicions?

Chapter Thirteen.

Towards the Brink.

Later that same evening Jack, who had walked down Fitzjohn’s Avenue to Mr Shearman’s, as was his habit, found Elise’s father at home.

Though old Dan Shearman, a hale, bluff North-country man, rather liked young Sainsbury, yet, at heart, he would have preferred a man of established prosperity as his daughter’s husband—a manufacturer like himself, or a professional man with a good paying practice. Dan Shearman—as everybody called him in Birmingham—was a practical man, and had made a fortune by dint of hard toil and strict economy. He had begun as a half-timer in a cotton-mill in Oldham, and had risen, step by step, until now he was one of the biggest private employers of labour in the Midlands.

For years he had hoped that Elise would make a rich marriage, yet her chance meeting with Jack Sainsbury had suddenly turned the course of events, and both he and his wife could not hide from themselves how deeply the young couple had fallen in love with one another. More than once husband and wife had consulted as to whether it would not be to Elise’s future interest if they broke off the attachment. Indeed, just before the outbreak of war, they had contemplated sending Elise for a long stay with her aunt, who was married to an English merchant in Palermo.

Yet, partly because the girl begged to remain in London, and partly because of Mrs Shearman’s liking for young

Sainsbury, the bluff old fellow gave way—though there always remained the fact that Jack was a mere clerk and that, at the present time, he was out of a situation. That he had been rejected by the military doctors Mr Shearman knew, but he was unaware that Jack had been left a legacy by the doctor who had so mysteriously committed suicide in Wimpole Street.

“Hey, lad!” old Dan cried cheerily, as Jack entered the little smoking-room. “Sit yer down a moment, an’ have a cigarette. There’s some over yonder!”

When the young man had lit up and seated himself, Shearman asked:

“Well! what’s the pay-pers say to-night—eh? Aw wonder ’ow this ’ere war is goin’ on?”

“Badly, sir, I fear,” was Sainsbury’s prompt reply. “We don’t seem to be able to move against the superior power of the enemy.”

“Superior power be ’anged, lad!” cried the round-faced, grey-haired old man, his eyes flashing as he spoke. “Aw don’t believe in what these ’ere writers talk about—their big guns, their superior power, an’ all that! We’re still powerful enough in good old England to lick the ’ole lot o’ them sour-krowts, as I ’eard a man in New Street callin’ ’em yesterday.”

“Well, I hope so,” laughed Sainsbury, who really was anxious to get upstairs to the drawing-room, where he knew Elise was eagerly awaiting him. “But at present we seem to be progressing very slowly. The Russian steam-roller, as it was called, has come to a halt.”

“Ah! a bit more o’ them there writers’ bunkum! What aw say is that we’re a-bein’ misled altogether. Nawbody tells the truth, and nawbody writes it. What yer reads to-day, lad, ’ll be flatly contradicted to-morrow. So what’s the use o’ believin’ anything?”

He was, truly, a bluff old chap who, born and bred in Lancashire, had afterwards spent three parts of his life in and about Birmingham. Old Dan Shearman was a man who always wanted hard facts, and when he got them he would make use of them in business, as well as elsewhere, with an acumen far greater than many men who had been educated at a public school. He rather prided himself upon his national-school training, and was fond of remarking, “Aw doan’t pretend to much book-learnin’, but aw knows my trade, an aw knows ’ow to make money by it—which a lot o’ people doan’t!”

Jack Sainsbury always found him amusing, for he was full of dry, witty remarks; and as he sat for a quarter of an hour, or so, the old fellow, puffing at his cigar—though he always smoked his pet pipe in his private office at the works—made some very caustic remarks about official red-tape at Whitehall.

“We’re a-makin’ munitions now,” he explained. “But oh! the queries we get, and the visits from officers in uniform—people who come and tell me ’ow aw should run my business, yet the first time they’ve ever seen a Drummond lathe is in one of my workshops. Aw say that ’arf of it’s all a mere wicked waste of a man’s time!”

“Yes,” sighed the young man—“I suppose there is far too much officialism; and yet perhaps it is necessary.” Then he added, “Is Elise at home, do you know?”

“Yes, she’s at ’ome, lad—she’s at ’ome!” laughed the old fellow cheerily. “Aw know you want to go oop to ’er. Well, aw did the same when I wor your age. Aw won’t keep yer longer. So go oop, lad, an’ see ’er. My wife’s out somewhere—gone to see one of ’er fine friends, I expect.”

Jack did not want further persuasion. Leaving the old man, he closed the door, ran up the carpeted steps two at a time and, in a few moments, held his well-beloved fondly in his arms.

She looked very pretty that night—a sweet, rather demure little figure in a smart, but young-looking dinner-gown of pale cornflower-blue crêpe-de-chine, a dress which well became her, setting off her trim, dainty figure to perfection, while the touch of velvet of the same shade in her fair hair enhanced her beauty.

“Oh! I’m so glad you’ve come, dear!” cried the girl, as she looked fondly into her lover’s face with those clear, childlike eyes, which held him always beneath their indescribable spell. And as he imprinted soft kisses upon her lips, she added: “Do you know, Jack, I may be most awfully silly—probably you’ll say I am—but the truth is I have suddenly been seized by grave apprehensions concerning you.”

“Why, darling?” he asked quickly, still holding her in his strong arms.

“Well, I’ll confess, however silly it may appear,” said the girl. “All day to-day I’ve felt ever so anxious about you. I know that, like poor Dr Jerrold, you are trying to discover and punish the spies of Germany. Now, those people know it. They are as unscrupulous as they are vindictive, and I—well, I’ve been seriously wondering whether, knowing that you are their enemy, they may not endeavour to do you some grave harm.”

“Harm!” laughed the young man. “Why, whatever makes you anticipate such a thing, darling?”

“Well—I don’t really know,” was her reply. “Only to-day I’ve been thinking so much about it all—about Dr Jerrold’s strange death, and of all you’ve lately told me—that I’m very apprehensive. Do take care of yourself, Jack dear, won’t you—for my sake?”

“Of course I will,” he said, with a smile. “But what terrible fate do you anticipate for me? You don’t really think that the Germans will try and murder me, do you?”

"Ah! You don't know what revenge they might not take upon you," the girl said as they stood together near the fire in the big, handsome room, his arm tenderly around her waist. "Remember that poor Dr Jerrold upset a good many of their plans, and that you helped him."

"Well, and if I did, I don't really anticipate being assassinated," he answered, quite calmly.

"But the doctor died. Why?" asked the girl. "Could his death have been due to revenge, do you think?"

Jack Sainsbury was silent. It was not the first time that that vague and terrible suggestion had crossed his mind, yet he had never uttered a word to her regarding his suspicions.

"Jerome committed suicide," was his quiet, thoughtful reply.

"That's what the doctors said. But do you think he really did?" queried the girl.

Jack shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply.

"Ah! I see! You yourself are not quite convinced!" she said, looking him straight in the face.

"Well, Elise," he said after a brief silence, and with a forced laugh, "I really don't think I should worry. I can surely take care of myself. Perhaps you would like me to carry a revolver? I'll do so, if it will content you."

"You can't be too careful, dear," she said earnestly, laying her slim fingers upon his arm. "Remember that they are the spies of the most barbarous race on earth and, in order to gain their ends, they'll stick at nothing."

"Not even at killing your humble and most devoted servant—eh?" laughed Jack. "Well, if it will relieve your mind I'll carry a pistol. I have an automatic Browning at home—a bit rusty, I fear."

"Then carry it with you always, dear.—I—" But she hesitated in her eagerness, and did not conclude her sentence.

In a second he realised that she had been on the point of speaking, of telling him something. Yet she had broken off just in time. That fact puzzled him considerably.

"Well," he asked, his serious gaze fixed upon those big blue eyes of his well-beloved, while her fair head rested upon his shoulder: "what has caused you these gloomy forebodings concerning myself, dearest? Tell me."

"Oh, nothing," she replied in a strange, nervous voice. "I suppose that I'm horribly silly, of course. But, knowing all that you have told me about the wonderful spy-system of Germany, I have now become gravely apprehensive regarding your safety."

Jack saw that she was endeavouring to conceal something. What knowledge had she gained? In an instant he grew eagerly interested. Yet he did not, at the moment, press her further.

"And you think that the fact of carrying a gun will be a protection to me, do you, little one? Well, most women believe that. Yet, as a matter of fact, firearms are very little protection. If a man is seriously marked down by an enemy, a whole army of detectives cannot save him. Think of the political assassinations, anarchist outrages, and the like. Police protection has usually proved futile."

"But you can take proper ordinary precautions," she suggested.

"And pray, dear, why do you ask me to take precautions?" he inquired. Then, looking earnestly into her eyes, he added very gravely: "Something—or somebody—has put all these grim fears into your head. Now, dearest, tell me the truth," he urged.

She made no response. Her eyes were downcast, and he saw that she hesitated. For what reason?

"Whoever has put all these silly ideas into your head, darling, is responsible to me!" he said in a hard voice.

"Well, Jack, I—I really can't help it. I—I love you, as you know; and I can't bear to think that you are running into danger, as you undoubtedly are."

He looked into her pretty face again.

"Now look here, darling," he went on: "aren't you getting just a little too nervous about me? I quite admit that in these days of wars, of terrible massacres, of barbarism and of outrages of which even African savages would not be guilty, one is apt to become unduly nervous. You've been reading the papers, perhaps. They don't always tell us the truth nowadays, with the Censor trying to hide up everything."

"No, Jack," she said boldly. "I haven't been reading the papers. I'm only anxious to save you."

"But how do you know that I'm in any danger?" he asked quickly. "Why be anxious at all? I assure you that I'm perfectly safe. Nobody will lift a finger against me. Why should they?"

"Ah! you don't see," she cried. "There is a motive—a hidden motive of revenge. Your enemies intend to do you harm—grievous bodily harm. I know that."

"How?" he asked quickly, fixing her splendid eyes with his.

That straight, bold question caused her to hesitate. She had intended to prevaricate, that he knew. She did not wish

to reveal the truth to him, yet she feared lest he might be annoyed. Nevertheless, so serious was he, so calm and utterly defiant in face of her grave warning, that a second later she found herself wavering.

"Well," she replied, "I—I feel absolutely certain that it is intended that some harm shall come to you."

"Then I'd better go to Scotland Yard and say that I'm threatened—eh?" he laughed merrily. "And they will put on somebody to watch me, well knowing that, if the whole of Scotland Yard—from the Assistant Commissioner downwards—were put on to shadow me, the result would be just the same. I should surely be killed, if my enemies had seriously plotted my death."

"That's just my very argument," she said sagely, her pretty head slightly inclined as she spoke. "I feel convinced that some evil is intended."

"But why, darling?" he asked in surprise. "What causes you all these silly notions?"

"Several things. Frankly, I don't believe that Dr Jerrold took his own life. I believe that he was a victim of the dastardly spies of the Great Assassin."

Jack said nothing. The mystery in Wimpole Street was great. Yet, how could they dispute the medical evidence?

"That's another matter," he remarked. "How does that concern my safety?"

"It does, very deeply. Your enemies know that you assisted Jerrold, and I am firmly convinced that you are marked down in consequence."

"My darling!" he cried, drawing her closer to him. "You really make me feel quite creepy all over!" and he laughed.

"Oh, I do wish, dear, you'd take this grave danger seriously!"

"But I don't. That's just it!" he answered. "I quite understand, darling, that you may be anxious, but I really feel that your anxiety is quite groundless and hence unnecessary."

The girl sighed, and then protested, saying—

"Ah! if you would only heed my warning!"

"Haven't I promised to do so? I'm going to carry my revolver in future."

"You take it as a huge joke!" she said in dissatisfaction, disengaging herself slowly from his embrace.

"I do. Because I can't see why you should warn me. Who has put such thoughts into your head? Surely I know how to take care of myself?" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps you do. But that a grave danger threatens you, Jack, I happen to know," was her serious reply.

"How do you know?" he asked quickly, facing her. He had, all along, seen that, for some unaccountable reason, she was hesitating to tell him the truth.

"Well," she said slowly, "if—if I tell you the truth, Jack dear, you won't laugh at me, will you?" she asked at last.

"Of course not, my darling. I know full well that you love me, and, as a natural consequence, you are perhaps a little too apprehensive."

"I have cause to be," she said in a low voice, and, taking from the breast of her low-cut gown a crumpled letter, she handed it to him, saying: "A week ago I received this! Read it!"

He took it and, opening it, found it to be an ill-scribbled note, upon a sheet of common note-paper such as one would buy in a penny packet, envelopes included.

The note, which was anonymous, and bore the postmark of Willesden, commenced with the words "Dear Miss," and ran as follows:

"Your lover, Sainsbury, has been warned to keep his nose out of other people's affairs, and as he continues to inquire about what does not concern him his activity is to be cut short. Tell him that, as he has disregarded the advice given him by letter two months ago, his fate is now sealed. The arm of Germany's vengeance is long, and reaches far. So beware—*both of you!*"

For a few seconds Jack held the mysterious missive in his hand, and then suddenly he burst out laughing.

"You surely won't allow this to worry you?" he exclaimed. "Why, it's only some crank—somebody we know who is playing a silly practical joke,"—and folding the letter, he gave it back to her with a careless air. "Such a letter as that doesn't worry me for a single minute."

"But it contains a distinct assertion—that you are doomed!" cried the girl, pale-faced and very anxious.

"Yes—it certainly is a very cheerful note. Whom do you know at Willesden?"

"Not a soul that I can think of. I've been puzzling my brains for days as to anybody I know there, but can think of no one."

"It was posted out there on purpose, no doubt!" he laughed. "Well, if I were you, Elise, I wouldn't give it another thought."

"Ah, that's all very well. But I can't get rid of the distinct belief that some mischief is intended," answered the girl very gravely.

"No, no, darling?" he assured her, placing his arm again round her slim waist, and kissing her fondly upon the lips. "Don't anticipate any such thing. Somebody's having a game with us. They think it a huge joke, no doubt."

"But do look the facts in the face, Jack!" she urged. "These spies of Germany, swarming over the country as they do, will hesitate at nothing in order to gain victory for their barbarous Fatherland. Not only have we to fight the unscrupulous army of the Kaiser, remember, but another army of pro-Germans in our midst,—those pretended Englishmen who have their 'spiritual homes' in Berlin."

"True. But don't let that letter get on your nerves, darling. Burn it, and then forget it."

"Did you ever receive a letter warning you?" she asked.

"Yes. I've had several. One was, I believe, in the same handwriting as yours," was his rather careless reply.

"You never told me of them!"

"Because I discarded them," he said. "I believe I've had quite half a dozen at various times, but I pay no attention to people who don't sign their names."

Elise Shearman sighed. In her fine blue eyes there was a distinctly troubled look.

She loved Jack very deeply and tenderly. What if these people actually did make an attempt upon his life? Suppose he were killed! That the spies of Germany had every motive to put an end to his activity in ferreting them out, was quite plain. Indeed, her father, knowing nothing of the anonymous letter, had referred to it that evening. He had declared that her lover was running very grave risks. It had been this remark which had set her thinking more deeply and more apprehensively.

Jack saw that she was worrying, therefore he kissed her fondly, and reassured her that no harm would befall him.

"I'll take every precaution possible, in order to satisfy you, my darling," he declared, his strong arms again around her as he held her closely to him.

They looked indeed a handsome pair—he tall, good-looking, strong and manly, and she dainty and fair, with a sweet, delightful expression upon her pretty face.

"Then—then you really love me, Jack?" she faltered, looking up into his face as he whispered into her delicate ear, regretting if any ill-considered word he had uttered had pained her.

"Love you, my darling?" he cried passionately—"why, of course I do. How can you doubt me? You surely know that, for me, there is only one good, true woman in all the world—your own dear, sweet self!" She smiled in full content, burying her pretty head upon his shoulder.

"Then—then you really will take care of yourself, Jack—*won't you?*" she implored. "When you are absent I'm always thinking—and wondering—"

"And worrying, I fear, little one," he interrupted. "Now don't worry. I assure you that I'm quite safe—that—"

His sentence was interrupted by a tap at the door. They sprang apart, and Littlewood, old Dan's neat, middle-aged manservant—a North-country man, a trusted friend of the family—entered and, addressing Jack, said, with that pleasant burr in his voice:

"There's a gentleman called, sir—gives the name of Murray, sir. He wants to see you a moment upon some rather urgent business."

"Murray?" echoed Jack. "I don't recollect the name. Who is he?"

"He's a gentleman, sir. He's down in the hall. He won't detain you a minute, he says," was the man's reply.

"Then excuse me a moment," he said in apology to Elise, and left the room, descending to the hall with Littlewood.

Below stood a clean-shaven man in a black overcoat who, advancing to meet him, said—"Are you Mr Sainsbury, sir?"

"Yes. That's my name," replied the young man.

"I want to speak to you privately, just for a few moments," the stranger said. "I want to tell you something in confidence," he added, lowering his voice. "Shall we go outside the door?" and he glanced meaningfully at Littlewood.

At first Jack was much puzzled, but, next moment, he said—

"Certainly—if you wish."

Then both men went forth, descending the steps to the pavement, whereupon a second man, who sprang from nowhere, joined them instantly, while "Mr Murray" said, in a calm and quite determined voice—

"Mr Sainsbury, we are officers of the Criminal Investigation Department, and we arrest you upon a warrant charging you with certain offences under the Defence of the Realm Act."

"What!" gasped Jack, staring at them absolutely dumbfounded. "Are you mad? What tomfoolery is this?"

"I will read the warrant over to you at Bow Street," answered the man who had called himself Murray.

And, as he uttered the words, a taxi that had been waiting a few doors away drew up, and almost before Sainsbury could protest, or seek permission to return to his fiancée and explain the farce in progress, he was, in full view of Littlewood, bundled unceremoniously into the conveyance, which, next instant, moved swiftly down the hill in the direction of Swiss Cottage station, on its way to Bow Street Police Station.

Chapter Fourteen.

Held by the Enemy.

"That can hardly be correct—because there are proofs," remarked the tall, fair, quick-eyed man, who sat in the cold, official-looking room at Bow Street Police Station at half-past three o'clock that same morning.

Jack Sainsbury was standing in defiance before the table, while, in the room, stood the two plain-clothes men who had effected his arrest.

The fair-haired man at the table was Inspector Tennant, of the Special Department at New Scotland Yard, an official whose duty since the outbreak of war was to make inquiry into the thousand-and-one cases of espionage which the public reported weekly to that much-harassed department. Tennant, who had graduated, as all others had graduated, from the rank of police-constable on the streets of London, was a reliable officer as far as patriotism and a sense of duty went. But it was impossible for a man born in a labourer's cottage on the south side of Dartmoor, and educated at the village school, to possess such a highly trained brain as that possessed by say certain commissaires of the Paris Sûreté.

Thomas Tennant, a highly popular man as far as the staff at "the Yard" went, and trusted implicitly by his superiors from the Assistant-Commissioner downwards, worked with an iron sense of the red-taped duty for which he received his salary.

"I'm sorry," said Tennant, looking at the young man; "but all these denials will not, I fear, help you in the least. As I warned you, they are being taken down in writing, and may be used in evidence against you," and he indicated a clerk writing shorthand at a side-table.

Jack Sainsbury grew furious.

"I don't care a brass button what evidence you can give against me," he cried. "I only know that my conscience is perfectly clear. I have tried, since the war, to help my friend Dr Jerome Jerrold of Wimpole Street, to inquire into spies and espionage. We acted together, and Jerrold reported much that was unknown to Whitehall. He—"

"Doctor Jerrold is the gentleman who committed suicide—if my memory serves me correctly," interrupted the police official, speaking very quietly.

"Perhaps he did. I say perhaps—remember," exclaimed the young man under arrest. "But I don't agree with the finding of the Coroner's jury."

"People often disagree with a Coroner's jury," was the dry reply of the hide-bound official, seated at the table. "But now, let us get along," he added persuasively. "You admit that you are John James Sainsbury; that you were, until lately, clerk in the employ of the Ochrida Copper Corporation, in Gracechurch Street, from the service of which you were recently discharged. Is that so?"

"Most certainly. I have nothing to deny."

"Good. Then let us advance a step further. You were, I believe, an intimate friend of Dr Jerome Jerrold, who lived in Wimpole Street, and who, for no apparent reason, committed suicide."

"Yes."

"You do not know, I presume, that Dr Jerrold was suspected of a very grave offence under the Defence of the Realm Act, and that, rather than face arrest and prosecution by court-martial as a spy—he took his own life!"

"It's a lie—an *infernal lie!*" shouted young Sainsbury. "Who alleges such an outrageous lie as that?"

The fair-haired detective smiled, and in that suave manner he usually adopted towards prisoners, with clasped hands he said:

"I fear I cannot tell you that."

"But it's a confounded lie! Jerome Jerrold was no spy. He and I were the firmest friends, and I know how he devoted his time and his money to investigating the doings of the enemy in our midst. Did you not read the words of the Lord Chancellor the other day?"

"I'm afraid I didn't."

"Well, speaking in the House of Lords, he admitted that we have not only to fight a foe in the open field, but that their spies are in every land and that the webs of their intrigue enmesh and entangle every Government. It was in order to assist the authorities—your own department indeed—that Dr Jerome, two friends of his, and myself devoted our time to watching at nights, and investigating."

The official's lips curled slightly.

"I know that, full well. But how do you explain away the fact that your friend, the doctor, committed suicide rather than face a prosecution?"

"He had nothing to fear. Of that I am quite confident. No braver, more loyal, or more patriotic man ever existed than he, poor fellow."

"I'm afraid the facts hardly bear out your contention."

"But what are the facts?" demanded the young man fiercely.

"As I have already said, it is not within my province to tell you."

"But I've been arrested to-night upon a false charge—a charge trumped up against me perhaps by certain officials who may be jealous of what I have done, and what I have learnt. I am discredited in the eyes of my friends at the house where I was arrested. Surely I should be told the truth!"

"I, of course, do not know what truths may be forthcoming at your trial. But at present I am not allowed to explain anything to you, save that the charge against you is that you have attempted to communicate with the enemy."

"What!" shouted Jack, astounded: "am I actually charged, then, with being a German spy?"

"I'm afraid that is so."

"But I have no knowledge of any other of the enemy's agents, save those which were discovered by Jerrold and reported to Whitehall by him."

"Ah! the evidence, I think, goes a little further—documentary evidence which has recently been placed in the hands of the War Office."

"By whom, pray?"

"You surely don't think it possible for me to reveal the name of the informant in such a case?" was the cold reply.

Jack Sainsbury stood aghast and silent at the grave charge which had been preferred against him. It meant, he knew, a trial *in camera*. He saw how entirely he must be discredited in the eyes of the world, who could never know the truth, or even the nature of his defence.

He thought of Elise. What would she think? What did she think when Littlewood told her—as he had told her, no doubt—of how he had been mysteriously hustled into a taxi, and driven off?

For the first time a recollection of that strange anonymous warning which his well-beloved had received crossed his memory. Who had sent that letter? Certainly some friend who had wished his, or her, name to remain unknown.

"The whole thing is a hideous farce," he cried savagely, at last. "Nobody can prove that I am not what I here allege myself to be—an honest, loyal and patriotic Englishman."

"You will have full opportunity of proving that, and of disproving the documentary evidence which is in the hands of the Director of Public Prosecutions."

"Public Prosecutions! Mine will be *in camera*," laughed Jack grimly. "I suppose I shall be tried by a kind of military inquisition. I hope they won't wear black robes, with slits for the eyes, as they did in the old days in Spain!" he laughed.

"I fail to see much humour in your present position, Mr Sainsbury," replied Tennant rather frigidly.

"I see a lot—even though I'm annoyed that your men should have called at Fitzjohn's Avenue, instead of going to my place in Heath Street. If you know so much about me, you surely knew my address."

"The warrant was issued for immediate arrest, sir," exclaimed one of the detectives to his superior. "Therefore we went to Fitzjohn's Avenue."

"I suppose I shall have an opportunity of knowing the name of my enemy—of the person who laid this false information against me—and also that I can see my counsel?"

"The latter will certainly be allowed to-morrow."

"May I write to Miss Shearman—my fiancée?"

"No. But if you wish to give her any message—say by telephone—I will see that it is sent to her, if you care to write it down."

A pencil was handed to him, whereupon he bent and scribbled a couple of lines.

“To Miss Elise Shearman, from the prisoner, John Sainsbury.—Please tell Miss Shearman that I have been arrested as a spy, and am at Bow Street Police Station. Tell her not to worry. I have nothing to fear, and will be at liberty very soon. Some grave official error has evidently been made.” Then, handing the slip to the Detective Inspector, he said —

“If they will kindly ring up Mr Shearman’s in Hampstead”—and he gave the number—“and give that message, I shall be greatly obliged.”

“It shall be done,” replied the police official. “Have you anything else to say?”

“Only one thing, and of this statement I hope you will make a careful note: namely, that on the night when Dr Jerome Jerrold died so mysteriously, I was on my way to give him some most important information that I had gathered in the City only a few hours before—information which, when I reveal it, will startle the Kingdom—but he died before I could tell him. He died in my arms, as a matter of fact.”

Inspector Tennant was silent for a few moments. Then he asked—

“Did you ever reveal this important information to anyone else?”

“No. I did not. Only Jerrold would have understood its true gravity.”

“Then it concerned him—eh?”

“No. It concerned somebody else. I was on my way to consult him—to ask his opinion as to how I should act, when I found I could not get into his room. His man helped me to break in, and we found him dying. In fact, he spoke to me—he said he’d been shot—just before he expired.”

“Yes, I know,” remarked Tennant reflectively. “I happened to be present in court when the inquest was held. I heard your evidence, and I also heard the evidence of Sir Houston Bird, who testified as to suicide.”

“Jerrold did not take his life!” Jack protested.

“Can you put your opinion before that of such a man as Sir Houston?” asked Tennant dubiously.

“He had no motive in committing suicide.”

“Ah! I think your opinion will rather alter, that is, if the prosecution reveals to you the truth. He had, according to my information, every motive for escape from exposure and punishment.”

“Impossible!” declared Jack Sainsbury, standing defiant and rather amused than otherwise at the ridiculous charge brought against him. “Dr Jerrold was not a man to shrink from his duty. He did his best to combat the peril of the enemy alien, and if others had had the courage to act as he did, we should not be faced with the scandalous situation—our enemies moving freely among us—that we have to-day.”

Inspector Tennant—typical of the slow-plodding of police officialdom, and the careful attention to method of those who have risen from “uniformed rank”—listened and smiled.

Upon the warrant was a distinct charge against the young man before him, and upon that charge he centred his hide-bound mind. It is always so easy to convict a suspect by one’s inner intuition. Had Jack Sainsbury been able to glance at the file of papers which had culminated in his conviction, he would have seen that only after Jerome Jerrold’s death had the charge of war-treason been brought against him. There was no charge of espionage, because, according to the Hague Convention, nobody can technically be charged as a spy unless the act of espionage is committed within the war zone. England was not then—because Zeppelin raids had not taken place—within the war zone. Hence nobody could be charged as a spy.

“Mr Sainsbury, I think there is nothing more to say to-night,” Tennant said at last. “It is growing late. I’ll see that your message is sent to Fitzjohn’s Avenue by telephone. They will see you in the morning regarding your defence. But—well, I confess that I’m sorry that you should have said so much as you have.”

“So much!” cried the young man furiously. “Here I am, arrested upon a false charge—accused of being a traitor to my country—and you regret that I dare to defend a man who is in his grave and cannot answer for himself! Are you an Englishman—or are you one of those tainted by the Teuton trail—as so many are in high places?”

“I think you are losing your temper,” said the red-tape-tangled inspector of the Special Branch—a man who held one of the plums of the Scotland Yard service. “I have had an order, and I have executed it. That is as far as I can go.”

“At my expense. You charge me with an offence which is utterly ridiculous, and beyond that you cast scandalous reflections upon the memory of the man who was my dearest friend!”

“I only tell you what is reported.”

“By whom?”

“I have already stated that I am not permitted to answer such a question.”

“Then my enemies—some unknown and secret enemies—have placed me in this invidious position!”

“Well—if you like to put it in that way, you may,” reflected the police official, who, with a cold smile, closed the book upon the table, as a sign that the interview was at an end.

Chapter Fifteen.

The Working of "Number 70."

Just as it was growing dusk on the following evening, a handsome middle-aged woman, exquisitely dressed in the latest *mode*, and carrying a big gold chain-purse, attached to which was a quantity of jangling paraphernalia in the shape of cigarette-case, puff-box, and other articles, was lolling in, a big armchair in Lewin Rodwell's little study in Bruton Street.

From her easy attitude, and the fact that she had taken off her fur coat and was in the full enjoyment of a cigarette with her well-shod feet upon the fender, it was quite apparent that she was no stranger there.

"It certainly was the only thing to be done in the circumstances, I quite agree," she was saying to Rodwell, who was seated opposite her, on the other side of the fire.

"How did he look at Bow Street this, morning? Tell me!" Rodwell asked her eagerly.

"Pale and worried," was the woman's reply. "The case was heard in the extradition court, and there were very few people there. The girl was there, of course. A young barrister named Charles Pelham appeared for him, and reserved his defence. The whole proceedings did not occupy five minutes—just the evidence of arrest, and then the magistrate remanded him for a week."

"So I heard over the 'phone."

"I thought perhaps you would be called," the woman remarked.

"My dear Molly," laughed the man grimly, "I'm not going to be called as witness. I've taken very good care of that! I haven't any desire to go into the box, I can assure you."

"I suppose not," laughed the woman. "The prisoner must never know that you've had a hand in the affair."

She was a well-built, striking-looking woman, with a pair of fine dark eyes sparkling from beneath a black hat, the daring shape of which was most becoming to her. Upon her white hand jewels gleamed in the fitful firelight, for the lights were not switched on, and in her low-cut blouse of cream *crêpe-de-chine* she wore a small circle of diamonds as a brooch.

"It's a good job for us all that you've closed the young man's mouth just in time," she declared. "He knew something, that is evident."

"And he kept it to himself, intending one day to launch it as a thunderbolt," Rodwell remarked. "But you've been infernally clever over the affair, Molly. Without you, I don't know what I should have done in this case. There was a distinct danger."

"It wasn't very difficult, after all," his companion replied. "Money does wonders—especially the good money of Germany. Here in England 'Number Seventy' happily has much good money, and has a 'good press.'"

"Yes," laughed Rodwell. "And yet the fools here think they will win!"

"My dear Lewin, they would win if they were not so hopelessly egotistical, and if we had not long foreseen the coming conflict and Germanised the British political and official life as our first precaution. In consequence, our victory is assured. Already this country is in the grip of our German financiers, our pro-German politicians, labour-leaders, and officials of every class. Our good German money has not been ill-spent, I can assure you!" she laughed.

"I quite agree. But tell me how you really managed to engineer that evidence," he asked, much interested.

"Well, after you had given me the correspondence four days ago, I took a taxi and went down to the City to see my old friend George Charlesworth," was her reply. "He and I used to be quite old chums a year ago, when, as you know, he fell into the trap over that other little matter, and became so useful, though he still remains in entire ignorance."

"Ah! of course, you know the arrangements of the office. I quite forgot that."

"Yes. I arrived about five o'clock, just as the old boy was leaving, and sat in his room while he finished signing his letters. Already most of the clerks had gone. When he had finished, and all the staff had left, I lit up a cigarette and begged to be allowed to finish it before we went out, I having suggested that he should take me to dinner that night at the Carlton. Suddenly I pretended to grow faint, and asked him to get me some brandy. In alarm the dear old fellow jumped up quickly, and ran out to an hotel for some, leaving me in the office alone. Then, when he'd gone, it didn't take me long to hurry out into the clerks' office and put the papers in between the leaves of that big green ledger which I found in the desk at which young Sainsbury had worked—just as you had described where it would be found."

"Excellent! You are always very 'cute, Molly," he laughed. "I suppose you quickly recovered when Charlesworth got back with the brandy—eh?"

"Well, I didn't recover too quickly, or the old bird might have grown suspicious," was her reply.

Mariechen Pagenkoff, known as Mrs Molly Kirby, was a native of Coblenz, but had been educated in England, and had

lived here the greater part of her life until she had lost all trace of her foreign birth. Her husband had been a German shipping-agent in Glasgow, and at the same time a secret agent of the Koeniger-gratzerstrasse. But he had died two years before, leaving her a widow. Her profession of spy had brought her into contact with Lewin Rodwell, and ever since the outbreak of war the pair had acted in conjunction with each other in collecting and transmitting information through the various secret channels open between London and Berlin, and in carrying out many coups of espionage. Mrs Kirby lived very comfortably—as the widow of a rather wealthy shipping-agent might live—in a pretty flat in Cadogan Gardens, and to those around her she was believed to be, like Lewin Rodwell, most patriotic and charitable. Indeed, she had done much voluntary work for the charitable funds, and had interested herself in the relief of Belgian refugees, and in the work of the Red Cross.

“The day after you had been to the office,” Rodwell explained, “I went down there upon one or two matters which required attention, and, after a couple of hours, I told Charlesworth that I wanted to glance at a certain ledger to verify a query. The book was brought, and as I carelessly searched through it in Charlesworth’s presence, I discovered some documents. We opened them, when, to our great surprise, we found letters in German, there being enclosed in one a ten-pound note.”

“What did old Charlesworth say?” asked Mrs Kirby, with a smile upon her red lips.

“Well, as he can read German, I allowed him to digest the letters. The old man was dumbfounded, and exclaimed: ‘Why, young Sainsbury kept this book! Look at this letter! It’s addressed to “Dear Jack”! Is it possible, do you think, that Sainsbury was a German spy?’”

“What did you say?”

“I expressed the gravest surprise and concern, of course, and suggested that he, as manager, should take the documents to Scotland Yard and make a statement as to how they had been discovered. He wanted me to go with him, but I declined, saying that in my position I had no desire to be mixed up with any such unpleasant affair, and that he, as managing-director of the Ochrida Corporation, was the proper person to lodge information. The old fellow grew quite excited over it. He had several of the clerks up, and from them ascertained that the ledger in question had not been used since Sainsbury left. This, in conjunction with the fact that one of the letters was addressed to ‘Jack,’ and in it a mention of meeting at Heath Street, proved most conclusively that the incriminating documents belonged to Sainsbury. Therefore, an hour later, after I had instructed Charlesworth what to tell them at Scotland Yard, I had the satisfaction of seeing him enter a taxi with the documents in his pocket. I continued to do some work in the office when, later on, as I expected, he returned with a detective who inspected the book, the desk in which it was kept, and who listened to the story of young Sainsbury’s career.”

“And I suppose you gave the young man a very good character—eh?” asked the woman who had led such an adventurous life.

“Oh, excellent!” was Rodwell’s grim reply. “The officer went away quite convinced that Sainsbury was a spy.”

“Though you gave me the letters, I quite forgot to read them,” said the woman. “Of what character were they? Pretty damning, I suppose?”

“Damning—I should rather think they were!” answered the man who posed as the great British patriot, and hid his real profession beneath the cloak of finance and platform-speaking. “Two of them were letters which our friend Wentzel, at Aldershot, had received from the Insurance Company at Amsterdam—you know the little institution I mean, in the Kalverstraat. Wentzel is known as ‘Jack,’ and in one of these he is addressed as such. So it came in very useful. The letter enclosed a Bank of England note for ten pounds.”

“The monthly payment of his little annuity—eh?” laughed the woman. “I understand. I had a letter only this morning from the same Insurance Company.”

“Well,” laughed the man, “we all have dealings with the same office. I have had many. The organisation there is perfect—not a soul in the Censor’s department suspects. Truly, one must admire such perfect organisation as that established by ‘Number Seventy.’”

“I do. My husband always declared the arrangements in Holland to be perfect—and they are perfect, even to-day, while we are at war in England—the great Ruler of the Seas, as she calls herself, has already fallen from her height. Britannia’s trident is broken; her rulers know, and quite appreciate the fact. That is why they establish a censorship in order to keep the truth regarding our submarines from what they term the man-in-the-street. As soon as he knows the truth—if he ever will—then Heaven help Great Britain!”

“Meanwhile we are all working towards one end, my dear Molly—victory for our Fatherland!”

“Certainly. We shall conquer. The great Russian steam-roller—as the English journalists once called it—is already rusty at its joints. The rust has eaten into it, and soon its engineers will fail to make it move—except in its reverse-gear,” and the woman laughed. “But tell me,” she added: “of what does the evidence against Sainsbury exactly consist?”

Lewin Rodwell reflected seriously for a few moments. Then he slowly replied:

“Well, there are several things—things which he will have great difficulty in explaining away. I’ve taken good care of that. First, there is the letter from the Dutch Insurance Company sending him a ten-pound note. Secondly, there is a letter from a certain Carl Stefansen, living at Waxholm, on the Baltic, not far from Stockholm, asking for details regarding the movements of certain regiments of Kitchener’s Army, and thanking him for previous reports regarding the camps at Watford, Bramshott and elsewhere. Thirdly, there is an acknowledgment of a report sent to a lock-box

address in Sayville, in the United States, on the second of last month, and promising to send, by next post, a remittance of five pounds in payment for it. A letter from Halifax, Nova Scotia, also requests certain information as to whether the line of forts from Guildford to Redhill—part of the ring-defences of London—are yet occupied.”

“Forts? What do you mean?”

“Those forts established years ago along the Surrey hills as part of the scheme for the defence of the Metropolis, but never manned or equipped with guns. They cost very many thousands to construct—but were never fully equipped.”

“And they are still in existence?”

“Certainly. And they could be occupied, and turned to valuable account, at any moment.”

“A fact which I can see they fully appreciated at Whitehall, and which will lend much colour to the charge against this inquisitive young fellow—who—well—who knows just a little too much. Ah! my dear Lewin, I never met a man quite like you. You can see through a brick wall.”

“No further than you can see, my dear Molly,” laughed the crafty man. “We were both of us trained in the same excellent school—that school which is the eyes and ears of the great and invincible Imperial Army of the Fatherland. Where would be that army, with our Kaiser at its head, if it had no eyes and no ears? Every report we send to Berlin is noted; every report, however small and vague, is one step towards our great goal and final victory. The Allies may beat themselves against our steel and concrete ring, but they will never win. We sit tight. Our men sit in their comfortable dug-outs to wait—and to wait on until the Allies beat themselves out in sheer exhaustion. Our great invincible nation must win in this island, for one reason—because the German eagle has already gripped in her talons the very official heart of Great Britain herself. Our Kaiser Wilhelm is only William of Normandy over again. In Berlin we hold no apprehensions. We know we must win. If not to-day—well, we sit safe in our trenches in Flanders, or give the gallant Russians a run just to exercise them—knowing well that victory must be ours when we will it!”

“Then, the correspondence found in Sainsbury’s ledger is entirely conclusive, you think?” asked his companion after a pause.

“Absolutely. There is no question. The letter shows him guilty of espionage.”

“They were actual letters, then?”

“Certainly. One of them was in an envelope addressed to him at the office, and posted at Norwich. I managed to find that envelope in his desk on the day before he was discharged. It came in extremely useful, as I expected it might.”

“So the charge against him cannot fail?” asked the handsome woman, puffing slowly at her cigarette. “Remember, he may suspect you—knowing all that he does!”

“Bah! The charge cannot fail. Of course I’ve had nothing to do with the matter as far as the authorities are concerned. I have simply slipped the noose over his head, and shall let the Intelligence Department do the rest. They will do their work well—never fear.”

“But you told the Intelligence Department about that Dr Jerrold?”

“Boyle did. I was most careful to keep out of it,” replied Rodwell, with a cunning look. “Boyle happens to be a friend of Heaton-Smith, who is in the Intelligence Department, and to him he gave information which cast a very deep suspicion that while Jerrold was pretending to hunt out spies, he was also engaged in collecting information. Indeed, we sent our friend Klost to consult him as a patient in order to further colour the idea that, in the doctor’s consulting-room, he was receiving German spies. Heaton-Smith, who has a perfect mania regarding espionage, took it up at once, and had Jerome watched, while we on our part, manufactured just a little thread of evidence, as we have done in the present case. By it we succeeded in a warrant being issued for his arrest. It would have been executed that night if—well, if he had not committed suicide.”

“Perhaps he knew a warrant was out against him?”

“I think he did,” said Rodwell, with an evil smile.

“What causes you to think so?”

“Well, by the fact that Boyle, to whom he was unknown, rang him up that evening at half-past seven and, posing as an anonymous friend, warned him that there was a warrant out for him and that, as a friend, he gave him an opportunity to escape.”

“What did he reply to Sir Boyle?”

“He hardly replied anything, except to thank the speaker for his timely information, and to ask who it was who spoke. Boyle pretended to be a certain Mr Long, speaking from the National Liberal Club, and added, ‘If you wish to write to me, my name is J.S. Long.’ The doctor said he would write, but could not understand the charge against him. Boyle replied that it was one of war-treason, and added that the authorities had got hold of some documents or other which incriminated him on a charge of spying.”

“What did he say?”

“Well, he declared that it was an infernal lie, of course,” laughed Rodwell.

The woman was again silent for a few moments.

"Its truth was plainly shown by his suicide," she remarked at last. "By Jove, my dear Lewin, his death was most fortunate for you—wasn't it?"

"Yes. We had to play a trump card then—just as we now have to play another against young Sainsbury," replied the man, his eyes narrowing.

"I must congratulate you both," said Mrs Kirby. "You've played your cards well—if you're certain that he'll be convicted."

"My dear Molly, they can't help convicting him. The acknowledgment and payment for reports, the request for more information, and the vague references to certain matters in which our friends in Holland are so keenly interested, all are there—addressed to him. Besides, he is known to have been an intimate friend and assistant of the man Jerrold—the man who committed suicide rather than face arrest and trial for treason. No," Rodwell added confidently; "the whole affair is quite plain, and conviction must most certainly follow."

"And serve him well right!" added the handsome woman. "Serve him right for being too inquisitive. But," she added in a rather apprehensive voice, "I suppose there's no chance of him making any allegations against you—is there?"

"What do I care if he did!" asked the man, with a laugh of defiance. Then, lowering his voice, he added: "First, there is no evidence whatsoever to connect me with any matters of espionage, and secondly, nobody would believe a word he said. The world would never credit that Lewin Rodwell was a spy!"

"No," she laughed; "you are far too clever and cunning for them all. Really your *sang-froid* is truly marvellous."

Chapter Sixteen.

The Catpaw.

Some weeks had passed.

Jack Sainsbury had not reappeared at Bow Street, the authorities having decided, so serious was the charge and so important the evidence, that the trial should take place by court-martial and *in camera*.

Therefore the prisoner spent day after day in his narrow cell at Brixton Prison, full of fierce, angry resentment at the false charge made against him, and full of anxiety as to how Elise was bearing up beneath the tragic blow which had fallen upon them both.

He saw no one save Charles Pelham, his counsel, who now and then visited him. But even his adviser was entirely in the dark as to the exact evidence against his client. In the meantime the truth was that the Intelligence Department at Whitehall had sent an agent over to Holland to inquire into the *bona fides* of the Insurance Company whose offices were supposed to be in the Kalverstraat, in Amsterdam, and had discovered that though the "office" was run by highly respectable persons, the latter were undoubtedly Germans who had come to Holland just before the war. Every inquiry made by the Department revealed further proof of the accused's guilt. Indeed, the astute Colonel who was the titular head of the Department had had Mr Charlesworth up at the War Office and thanked him personally for exposing what he had declared to be "a most serious case of espionage."

Truly the fetters were gradually being forged upon the innocent young fellow languishing within Brixton Prison.

In complete ignorance of either the exact charge, or the identity of those who made it, Jack lived on day by day, full of the gravest apprehensions. The whole affair seemed to be one great, hideous nightmare. What would old Dan Shearman, never very well disposed towards him, think of him now? He recollected that strange anonymous letter which Elise had received. Who could possibly have sent it? A friend, without a doubt. Yet who was that secret friend? When would his identity be revealed?

He wondered if the person who had written that warning to his well-beloved would, when he knew of his arrest, come forward and expose the dastardly plot against him? Would he rescue him, now that he was in deadly peril?

With chagrin, too, he remembered how he had treated Elise's fears with such silly unconcern. He had never dreamed of the real gravity of the situation until he found himself in the hands of the police, with that scandalous and disgraceful charge hanging over his head. The whole thing was so amazing, and so utterly bewildering, that at times he felt, as he paced that narrow, dispiriting cell, that he must go mad.

The days dragged on, each longer than its predecessor. Once his sister was allowed to see him. But he was anxious and eager to face his judges, to hear what false evidence the prosecution had to offer, and to refute the foul lies that had evidently been uttered against him. The authorities, however, seemed in no hurry to act, and it almost seemed as though they had forgotten all about him.

One day he received a letter—the one welcome gleam of hope—a letter from Elise, who told him to bear up, to take courage, and to look forward to an early freedom.

"You surely know, Jack," she wrote, "that I do not believe you to be a spy. Surely I know how strenuously you have worked in order to ferret out and expose the horde of spies surrounding us, and how you constantly helped poor Dr Jerrold."

Those words of hers cheered him, yet he deeply regretted that she should have referred to the dead man's name. The prison authorities had read that letter, and mention of Jerrold would, in the circumstances, probably be registered as a point against him.

The weeks thus lengthened, until the middle of February.

On the night of the 21st of that month—the night on which the Admiralty issued its notification that a British fleet of battleships and battle cruisers, accompanied by flotillas, and aided by a strong French squadron, the whole under the command of Vice-Admiral Carden, had begun the attack on the forts of the Dardanelles—Charles Trustram dined early with Lewin Rodwell at the Ritz.

Rodwell was due to speak at a big recruiting meeting down at Poplar, and after their meal the pair drove in his car eastwards to the meeting, where he was received with the wildest enthusiasm.

A well-known retired Admiral was in the chair—a man whose name was as a household word, and whose reputation was that of one who always hit straight from the shoulder with the courage of his own convictions. The hall was crowded. The speech by the chairman was a magnificent one, well calculated to stir the blood of any Briton of military age to avenge Germany's piracy "blockade." He spoke of the low cunning of the "scrap-of-paper incident," of the introduction of the red phosphorus poison-shells a month before, and the terrible barbarities committed in Belgium. That East-End audience were held spellbound by the fine patriotic speech of the grey-haired Admiral, who had spent his whole life at sea ever since he had left the *Britannia* as a midshipman.

Trustram, seated near the front, saw Lewin Rodwell rise deliberately from his chair on the platform, and became electrified by his words—fiery words which showed how deep was the splendid patriotic spirit within his heart.

On rising he was met with a veritable thunder of applause from that huge expectant working-class audience. They knew that Lewin Rodwell, being in the confidence of the Cabinet, would tell them something real and conclusive about the secret war-facts which the hundred-and-one irresponsible censors, in their infinite wisdom, forbade the long-suffering press to publish. Lewin Rodwell always regaled them with some tit-bits of "inside information." It had been advertised up and down the country that he was on golfing terms with the rulers of Great Britain, and the words of a man possessing such knowledge of state-secrets were always worth listening to.

Glibly, and with that curious, half-amused expression which always fascinated an audience, Lewin Rodwell began by jeering at those who "slacked."

"I ask you—every man of military age present," he cried, thrusting forth his clenched fist towards his audience—"I ask you all to get, at any post office, that little pink-covered pamphlet called 'The Truth about German Atrocities.' You can get it for nothing—just for asking for it. Take it home and read it for yourselves—read how those devilish hordes of the Kaiser invaded poor little law-abiding Belgium, and what they did when they got there. Murder, rape, arson and pillage began from the first moment when the German army crossed the frontier. Soldiers had their eyes gouged out, men were murdered treacherously and given poisoned food. Those fiends in grey killed civilians upon a scale without any parallel in modern warfare between civilised Powers. We know now that this killing of civilians was deliberately planned by the higher military authorities in Berlin, and carried out methodically. They are a nation of murderers and fire-bugs. A calculated policy of cruelty was displayed that was without parallel in all history. Women were outraged, murdered and mutilated in unspeakable fashion; poor little children were murdered, bayoneted or maimed; the aged, crippled and infirm were treated with a brutality that was appalling; wounded soldiers and prisoners were tortured and afterwards murdered; innocent civilians, women and children of tender age, were placed before the German troops to act as living screens for the inhuman monsters, while there was looting, burning and destruction of property everywhere. Read, I say, that official report for yourselves!" he shouted, with anger burning his eyes, for he was indeed a wonderful actor.

"Read!" he cried again. "Read, all of you, how seven hundred innocent men, women and children were shot in cold blood in the picturesque little town of Dinant, on the Meuse; read of the massacres and mutilations at Louvain, Tamines, Termonde and Malines—and then reflect! Think what would be the fate of your own women and children should the German army land upon these shores! The Germans did not hate the Belgians—they had no reason whatever to do so. But the hatred in Germany against the British race to-day amounts to a religion, and if ever the Germans come, depend upon it that the awful massacres in Belgium will be repeated with tenfold vigour, until the streets of every English town and village run red with the blood of your dearly-loved ones. Young men!" he shouted, "I ask you whether you will still stand by and see these awful outrages done, whether you will be content to witness the mutilation and murder of those dearest to your hearts, or whether, before it is too late, you will come forward, now, and at once, and bear your manly share in the crushing out for ever of this ogre of barbarism which has arisen as a terrible and imminent menace to Europe, and to the thousand years of the building up of our civilisation."

In conclusion he made a fervent, stirring appeal to his hearers—an appeal in which sounded a true ring of heartfelt patriotism, and in consequence of which many young men came forward and gave in their names for enlistment.

And Lewin Rodwell laughed within himself.

A dozen men congratulated him upon his splendid speech, and as Charles Trustram sat by his side, on their drive back to the West End, he could not refrain from expressing admiration of the speech.

"Ah!" laughed Rodwell. "I merely try to do my little bit when I can. It is what we should all do in these black days. There is a big section of the public that doesn't yet realise that we are at war; they must be taught, and shown what invasion would really mean. The lesson of poor stricken Belgium cannot be too vividly brought home to such idiots as we have about us."

As the car dashed past Aldgate, going west, Trustram caught sight of the contents-bill of a late edition of one of the

evening papers. In large letters was the bold announcement, "Air Raids on Colchester, Braintree and Coggeshall."

"The Zeppelins have been over again!" he remarked, telling Rodwell what he had just read.

"When?"

"Last night, I suppose."

"Didn't you know anything of it at the Admiralty?" asked Rodwell.

"I heard nothing before I left this evening," Trustram replied.

The pair smoked together for an hour in Rodwell's room in Bruton Street; and during that time the conversation turned upon the arrest of Jack Sainsbury, Trustram expressing surprise that he had not yet been brought to trial.

"I suppose the case against him is not yet complete," remarked Rodwell, with a careless air. "A most unfortunate affair," he added. "He was a clerk in the office of a company in which I have some interest."

"So I hear. But I really can't think it's true that he's been guilty of espionage," remarked the Admiralty official. "He was a great friend of Jerrold's, you remember."

"Well, I fear, if the truth were told, there was a charge of a similar character against Jerrold."

"What!" cried Trustram, starting forward in great surprise. "This is the first I've heard of it!"

"Of course I can't say quite positively—only that is what's rumoured," Rodwell said.

"But what kind of charge was there against Jerrold? I can't credit it. Why, he did so much to unearth spies, and was of the greatest assistance to the Intelligence Department. That I happen to know."

"That is, I think, admitted," replied the man who led such a wonderful life of duplicity. "It seems, however, that information which came into the hands of the authorities was of such a grave character that a warrant was issued against him for war-treason, and—"

"A warrant!" cried Trustram. "Surely that's not true!"

"Quite true," was Rodwell's cold reply. "On the evening of his death he somehow learned the truth, and after you had left him that night he apparently committed suicide."

Trustram was silent and thoughtful for some time. The story had astounded him. Yet, now he reflected, he recollected how, on that fatal night, while they had been dining together, the doctor had spoken rather gloomily upon the outlook, and had remarked that he believed that all his patriotic efforts had been misunderstood by the red-taped officialdom. In face of what his companion had just told him, it was now revealed that Jerome Jerrold, even while they had been dining together, had been contemplating putting an end to his life. He recollected that envelope in his possession, that envelope in which the man now dead had left something—some mysterious message, which was not to be read until one year after his death. What could it be? Was it, after all, a confession that he, the man so long unsuspected, had been guilty of war-treason!

The doctor's rather strange attitude, and the fierce tirade he had uttered against the Intelligence Department for their lack of initiative and their old-fashioned methods, he had, at the time, put down to irritability consequent upon over-work and the strain of the war, but, in face of what he had now learnt, he was quite able to understand it. It was the key to the tragedy. No doubt that letter left for Jack Sainsbury contained some confession. Curious that suspicion had now also fallen upon Sainsbury, who had so often assisted him in watching night-signals over the hills in the southern counties, and in making inquiries regarding mysterious individuals suspected of espionage.

"Well," he said at last, "you've utterly astounded me. Where did you hear this rumour?"

"My friend Sir Boyle Huntley is very intimate with a man in the War Office—in the Intelligence Department in fact—and it came from him. So I think there's no doubt about it. A great pity, for Dr Jerrold was a first-class man, and highly respected everywhere."

"Yes. If true, it is most terrible. But so many idle and ill-natured rumours get afloat nowadays—how, nobody can tell—that one doesn't know what to believe, if the information does not come from an absolutely reliable source."

"What I've just told you does come from an absolutely reliable source," Rodwell assured him. "And as regards young Sainsbury, letters which he forgot and left behind him in his desk at the office are clear proof of his dealings with the enemy. In one was enclosed a ten-pound note sent as payment for information from somebody in Holland."

"Is that really so? And he forgot it?" asked Trustram.

"Well, I've had the letter and the banknote in my hand. Our managing-director found the correspondence, and showed it to me before he handed it over to Scotland Yard."

"Well, I must say that I've never suspected either of them as traitors," declared the Admiralty official. "I liked young Sainsbury very much. He was a smart young fellow, I thought, and I know that Jerrold held him in very high esteem."

"Ah! my dear Trustram," remarked Rodwell, with a sigh, "nowadays, with an avalanche of German gold doing its fell work in England, it is, alas! difficult to trust anybody. And yet it is all the fault of the Government, who seem afraid to offend Germany by interning our enemies. If I had my way I'd put the whole lot of them under lock and key,

naturalised and unnaturalised alike. It is in that where the peril arises, for, in my opinion, the naturalised Germans in high places are suborning many of our men to become traitors and blackmailing them into the bargain—alas! that I, an Englishman, should be compelled to express such an opinion regarding my compatriots. Here you have two cases in point where apparently honest, well-meaning and patriotic Englishmen are branded as spies, with evidence—in one case certainly, that of Sainsbury—sufficient to convict him.”

“When will his trial be? Have you heard?”

“No. You will be better able to discover that. It will, of course, be a secret court-martial.”

“In that case we shall never know either the nature of the charge—or of his defence.”

“Exactly,” replied Lewin Rodwell, with grim inward satisfaction. “We shall only know the sentence.”

Charles Trustram drew heavily at the fine cigar his host had given him, and sighed. The terrible charges of treason against his dead friend and young Sainsbury were indeed astounding. Yet he, as an official, knew full well that the Director of Intelligence did not take such steps as had been taken without some very firm and sound basis for prosecution. The Department generally erred upon the side of leniency, and always gave the accused the benefit of the doubt. That there was to be a court-martial was, indeed, a very significant fact.

“I suppose you are sending out troops to the Dardanelles?” remarked Lewin Rodwell carelessly, after a short silence. “I saw the announcement in to-day’s papers?”

“Yes. It will be a far tougher proposition than we at first believed. That’s the general opinion at the Admiralty. We have three troop-ships leaving Southampton to-morrow, and four are leaving Plymouth on Friday—all for Gallipoli.”

“Of course they’ll have escorts,” Rodwell remarked, making a mental note of that most important information.

“As far as Gibraltar.”

“Not farther? Aren’t you afraid of German submarines?”

“Not after they have passed the Straits. The drafts we are sending out this week are the most important we have yet despatched. The American liners *Ellenborough* and *Desborough* are also taking out troops to Egypt to-morrow.”

“From Plymouth, I suppose?”

“Yes. All the drafts for Egypt and Gallipoli are going via Plymouth in future,” was Trustram’s innocent reply.

Those few unguarded words might cost the British Empire several thousand officers and men, yet it seemed as though Trustram never dreamed the true character of the unscrupulous spy with whom he was seated, or the fact that the woman Kirby—whom he had never seen—was seated in an adjoining room, patiently awaiting his departure.

What, indeed, would Charles Trustram have thought had he known the true import of that vital information which he had imparted to his friend, under the pledge of confidence. The bombardment of Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby had been directly due to what he had divulged, though he was in ignorance of the truth. More than once, however, he had reflected upon it and wondered.

Yet after all he had dismissed such suspicion as utterly absurd. To suspect Lewin Rodwell of any dealings with the enemy was utterly ridiculous. No finer nor truer Englishman had ever breathed. The very thought of such a thing caused him to ridicule himself.

He rose at half-past eleven, and, warmly shaking his friend’s hand, asked:

“Will you dine with me to-morrow at the Club?”

Rodwell hesitated; then, consulting his little pocket diary, replied—

“I’m awfully sorry, my dear fellow, but I am due to speak in Lincoln to-morrow night. Any other night I’ll be delighted.”

“Thursday next, then, at eight o’clock—eh?”

“Good. It’s an appointment,” and he scribbled it down.

Then Trustram strode out and, hailing a passing taxi, drove home to his quiet rooms off Eaton Square.

The moment he had gone Mrs Kirby, wearing a small, close-fitting hat and blue serge walking-gown, quickly joined Rodwell in the hall.

“I’ve learnt something of importance, Molly. I must get away down to old Small’s at once. *Gott strafe England!*” he added very seriously.

“*Gott strafe England!*” the woman repeated after him in fervent earnestness, as though it were a prayer. Then she asked in surprise, “Going to-night? It’s a long way. Why, you won’t get there before morning!”

“I must be there as soon as possible. Our submarines can get some troop-ships—if we are slick enough! Every moment’s delay is of the utmost importance,” he exclaimed hurriedly. “Ring up Penney, will you, and tell him to bring round the car at once. Then come into the dining-room and have a snack with me before I go. But to what do I owe a

visit at this hour? Have you anything to report?"

"Yes," she said. "I'll tell you when I've been on the 'phone," she answered. "It's something urgent, and very important. I don't like the look of things."

Chapter Seventeen.

The Super-Spy.

Dawn was breaking, chill and stormy, over the grey North Sea.

On the far, misty horizon showed four little puffs of black smoke at regular intervals upon the sky-line—four British destroyers steaming on patrol duty.

Beyond, as Lewin Rodwell approached Tom Small's cottage, he also distinguished two trawlers moving towards the left, off Sutton-on-Sea, engaged in the perilous work of mine-sweeping.

Rodwell, wearing a thick and somewhat shabby overcoat, and a golf-cap pulled well down, had trudged across from those branch roads where Penney had dropped him after his night run of nearly a hundred and sixty miles. He was tired, yet he plodded forward through the mud, for the little low-built old tarred cottage was at last in sight.

"If we can get those troop-ships it will be a grand *coup* for us. Molly is quite right," he exclaimed to himself in German. "From Norddeich they can wireless away to Pola, on the Adriatic, and the Austrian submarines can go out to meet them in the Mediterranean—providing we have no undersea boats there just now."

Old Tom Small was outside his door mending a net when Rodwell approached.

"Hulloa, Tom!" cried the visitor cheerily. "Didn't expect me—eh?"

"No, sir," grinned the bronzed, wrinkle-faced old fellow in the tanned smock—tanned in the same tub as his lines and nets. "This is unusual for you to come 'ere at this 'our—isn't it?"

"Yes. I've just come from London," he explained, as he entered the little sitting-room, which smelt so strongly of stale fish and rank tobacco. "Where's Ted?"

"'E's gone along to Skegness to get me some tackle. 'E only started 'arf an 'our ago."

"Well," asked Rodwell, throwing off his coat and cap, and flinging himself upon the old wooden armchair. "Anything happened since I was here last week?"

"Not much—only that there Judd, the coastguard from Chapel Point, seems to be always a passin' or comin' in to smoke—as though he suspects summat."

"Ah! you're getting nervy again, Tom, I see," laughed Rodwell. "What the dickens can he suspect if he doesn't see me, and you and Ted are both discreet and keep still tongues! Why, there's no more respectable fisherman along the whole coast here than Tom Small," he added.

"Well, sir," replied the old fellow, "I've tried to keep respectable always, till now. And I wouldn't ha' done this dirty work—no, not for a fortune, had I known what was intended."

"No, I don't really suppose you would," remarked Rodwell with quiet sarcasm. "But, having begun, you've got to go on—or else be shot, both of you, as traitors to your country. Nevertheless, don't let's discuss that: it serves no purpose. I must get to work. Is the line all in order?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "I tested just before six—as soon as I got up. Mr Stendel is on duty on the other side. He asked Ted if we'd seen you lately, and 'e told 'im you 'adn't been down this week."

"Did he want to speak to me?"

"Yes, sir. I think 'e did."

Old Small did not know the Morse code, except the testing signals, but young Ted had, before the war, been sent for a course to a wireless and cable-school in Glasgow, on the pretext that he wanted to act as wireless operator on board a Grimsby trawler. Therefore Ted always transmitted and received messages.

When they wanted to speak urgently from Wangeroog, the German operator rang up Ted and informed him. Then Ted would walk into Huttoft, Alford, Chapel St. Leonard's, or one or other of the neighbouring villages where there was a telegraph-office, and despatch a perfectly innocent-looking message addressed to either the chauffeur Penney, or to Mrs Kirby, such as "Received your letter—Small," "My daughter left yesterday—Small," "Thanks, am writing—Ted," or "Will send fish to-morrow—T. Small." The wording of the message did not matter in the least; as long as Rodwell received the name "Tom," "Ted," or "Small," he knew that he was wanted at the end of the secret cable.

The gentleman from London passed into the stuffy little bedroom, drew aside the old damask curtain and took off the top of the big tailors' sewing-machine displaying the instruments beneath. Through the little window the grey, dispiriting light grew brighter as the dawn spread. The tide was out, and there was very little wind. The sea lay unusually calm in the morning mist. In the air was a salt smell of seaweed, and when he seated himself upon the old rush chair he could hear the low, monotonous lapping of the waves up and down the beach. That February morning

was raw and chill upon the bleak, open coast of Lincolnshire, and while old Tom bustled about to get "Muster Rodwell" a slice of cooked bacon, the spy of the "All Highest of Germany" busied himself in looking through the intricate-looking array of cable instruments, the hidden batteries of which he had recharged a week ago, spending a whole night there working in his shirt-sleeves and perspiring freely.

Presently, settling himself down to his work, he touched the ebonite tapping-key and in dot-and-dash he sent under the sea the letters "M.X.Q.Q.," the German war-code for "Are you ready to receive message?" Thrice he despatched the letters, and then awaited the answering click.

There was no response.

"Stendel is always so slow!" he growled to himself. Already the appetising smell of frying bacon had greeted his nostrils. Old Tom's daughter was away. Indeed, he kept her away as much as possible, as Mr Rodwell had no desire to have women "poking their noses into things that did not concern them"—as he once remarked.

Thrice again did the man at the end of that unsuspected cable tap out those four code-letters.

At last, however, came the answering sound upon the receiver.

"B.S.Q.—B.S.Q.," came up rapidly from the depths of the sea. "Who are you?" Wangeroog was asking.

"Rodwell is here," tapped out the spy. "Is Stendel there?"

In a moment came the answer.

"Yes. Stendel is speaking. I have a message for you."

"Mine is most urgent. Please put me through at once to J.A.J.70."

"Your signals are good. Cuxhaven is engaged with Copenhagen. Wait, and I will put you through. While waiting will you take my message?"

"S.S.," answered Rodwell, which meant, "All right. I understand." Then he added "O.O.," by which the German operator on the island of Wangeroog knew that he was to proceed.

After a few seconds' pause the recorder began to click, and upon its green receiving "tape" there came out the following:

"J. Number 6834115. Berlin, February 21st, 1915.

"Ueber die zustaende 1828, 59361 sind folgende Nachrichten 0083 joasckcumf 2122: 298511, 3826, 3278: 2564: 8392 schmutzig: 6111: sparsam: dannen: schiene: 2568, tbsxc zerreiben. 3286 zeilverlust."

Slowly it came out accurately registered on the long green paper ribbon, which, when it stopped, Rodwell tore off and carefully rolled up in order to decipher it at his leisure by aid of his little cipher-book.

Then, after a brief pause, he placed his fingers upon the key and, with an expert touch, inquired if he were yet through to Number Seventy Berlin?

The answer came in the affirmative.

A few moments later he tapped out the letters G.S.F.A.—the code pass-word which automatically by the calendar was so often changed. He received the answer G.L.G.S. Then, according to rule, he gave his own registered number—that of "0740." Every spy of Germany is registered by number in the department presided over by Dr Steinhauer.

Fully five minutes elapsed before he received the permission to proceed.

Then, finding himself in direct communication with the headquarters of the Imperial Secret Service, that argus-eyed bureau known as "Number 70 Berlin," he began his report with the usual preamble, as follows:

"On Imperial War Service. Most Urgent. Naval. From 0740, to Berlin 70. Transmitted Personally. February 22nd, 1915.

"Source of information G.27, British Admiralty. American liners *Ellenborough* and *Desborough* leave Plymouth to-day with drafts for Alexandria. Four troop-ships also leave Plymouth for Dardanelles on Friday next, and three leave Southampton to-day. Names of latter are *Cardigan*, *Lamberhead*, and *Turleigh*. All are escorted to Gibraltar, but not farther. In future all drafts for Mediterranean ports embark at Plymouth. Suggest Pola be informed by wireless, if none of our submarines are in Mediterranean. Are there any? Await reply. Burchardt Number 6503 left for Amsterdam with important information last night. Grossman 3684 was arrested in Hartlepool yesterday. Nothing found upon him. Will probably be released. Expecting visit of B— shortly. Tell him to call in secret upon 0740 in London. End of message."

Then he sat back and waited for the reply to his inquiry regarding the submarines of the Fatherland. He knew that even at that early hour the great bureau in the Koeniger-gratzerstrasse, the eyes and ears of the German nation, was all agog, and that one of the sub-directors would certainly be on duty. They never failed to answer any question put to them.

Old Small entered with the news that the bacon was ready, therefore he ordered it to be brought in, and as he sat at the table of the old sewing-machine awaiting the response, he ate the homely breakfast with a distinct relish. He did

not notice the look of hatred in old Small's eyes.

Suddenly Stendel, on Wangeroog, asked if he had finished with Berlin, to which message he answered that he was waiting for a reply.

"I have another message," Stendel tapped out. "Will you take it?—very short."

"G.G.F.," replied Rodwell, which in the war-code meant "Am ready to receive message."

Then came the following from beneath the cold waters which divided the two nations at war, a combination of German words and the numerical code—

"J.S.F.: 26378: *Möwe*: (sea-gull) J.S.J.: *schimpflich* (infamous) Ozstc: 32; *Schandfleck* (blot) *tollkühn* (foolhardy)."

And it was followed by the affix of the sender, "10,111, and the word *zerren*" (pull).

Again Rodwell tore off the piece of pale green "tape" and placed it carefully in his pocket, in order to decode it later on.

Then he leisurely finished his bacon and declared to Tom that he felt the better for it.

"I 'ear as 'ow the pay-pers are a sayin' that the German submarines are a torpedoin' our ships 'olesale, sir," remarked old Tom, when the recorder was silent again. "It's a great shame, surely. That ain't war—to kill women an' children on board ship. Why, the most brutal of all foreigners in the world would go out and rescue women an' children from a sinkin' ship!"

"It's war, my dear man—war?" replied Rodwell. "You people, living on the shores of England, don't yet know what war means. It means that, at all hazards and at all costs, you must vanquish your enemy. No kid-glove or polite speeches. The silly peace ideas of humanity, and all that rubbish, don't count nowadays. The German super-man does not understand such silly manoeuvres when he is out to vanquish his enemy. Why, you and your daughter and Ted would be far better off under our own Kaiser than you are to-day, with all this shuttlecock policy of your out-of-date rule-of-thumb Government, and your strangulating taxation consequent upon it. Your English sovereign is only worth fifteen shillings to-day."

"Yes, but I don't understand how it is that you German people have put us under your thumbs, as you have done."

"Merely because you British people are trustful fools," laughed Rodwell merrily. "You never listened to Lord Roberts, a great soldier and strategist greater than any we have to-day in Germany. You all laughed at his warnings. And now you'll have to laugh on the other side of your mouths. That's the real, plain, brutal truth of it all. You can't conceal it. If you English had taken the advice of your popular hero 'Bobs,' there would have been no war to-day. You would have been far too strong for our Fatherland."

"But why should we sacrifice our lives any further?" asked the toiler of the sea. "I'm sick and tired of the whole affair, as I said to Ted only this morning."

"I quite appreciate that," was Rodwell's reply. "But—"

A click sounded upon the instrument, and Rodwell, breaking off, bent eagerly to read the tape.

The words, in German, which came out upon it were: "Reply to 0740. Eight undersea boats are in Mediterranean. Message will be sent by wireless to Trieste and Pola for re-transmission. Any report from 6839? Await reply."

Rodwell hesitated. The number quoted was that of his friend Mrs Kirby.

In a few moments he tapped out the reply.

"Number 6839 is in close touch with Minister, as reported by me a week ago. She will make cable report as soon as accurate information can be obtained. Our activity on the Clyde is progressing. The engineers are out and other branches of labour are threatening to strike. Unrest also in South Wales. Good work in progress there."

Then, for some minutes, the instruments were silent, and he watched the receiver intently.

At last it again clicked, and the green tape once more began to unwind.

"To 0740.—From O. Meiszner—Headquarters Imperial Intelligence Staff. Order 0213 to do utmost possible with Clyde workers. Information will reach him from Holland by Route Number 6 regarding South Wales and dockers. Report all movements of troops to Dardanelles, also movements from Aldershot to Flanders. Nothing from 0802 at Portsmouth. Please inquire reason and reply: urgent. Are you on good terms with G.27 British Admiralty? Reply."

The number "G.27" meant Charles Trustram, for as such he had been reported by Rodwell, and duly registered in the *dossiers* of the great spy-bureau in Berlin.

"Yes. On excellent terms with G.27. But he is not yet indebted to us," he replied, swiftly tapping the instrument.

"He should be. Please see to it. His information is always good, and may be as extremely useful as that regarding the plot to entrap our Navy. I am sending Number 0324 to you as an American citizen. He bears urgent instructions, and is travelling via New York, and due in Liverpool about March 10th. He will report personally on arrival in London. End

of message.”

“SS.” were the letters tapped out—three dots, succeeded by three more dots—and by it Dr Otto Meiszner, seated at the headquarters of German espionage in Berlin, knew that his friend had received and understood what he had transmitted from the heart of the Fatherland.

Rodwell, having replaced the cover over the instruments, lay back for a moment to think.

He knew that ere long the unseen rays of wireless would flash in code the news from Hanover away across Europe, to the Austrian station at Pola, on the Adriatic, reporting the departure of those troop-ships, which, after passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, would be at the mercy of the German submarines lurking in readiness in the Mediterranean.

Upon his hard mouth was an evil grin, as he rose, pushed the old chair aside and, striding into the adjoining room, joined the weatherbeaten old fisherman—the man who was held so dumb and powerless in the far-reaching tentacles of that terrible Teuton octopus, that was slowly, but surely, strangling all civilisation.

Chapter Eighteen.

Tom Small Receives Visitors.

The super-spy, having concluded his work, sat with the old fisherman beside the wood-fire in the little low-pitched living-room that smelt so strongly of fish and tar.

Old Tom Small presented a picturesque figure in his long sea-boots, on which the salt stood in grey crystals, and his tanned blouse; for, only an hour ago, he had helped Ted to haul up the boat in which, on the previous night, they had been out baiting their crab-pots. Ruddy and cheery-looking, his grey hair was scanty on top, and his knotty hands, hardened by the sea, were brown and hairy. He was a fine specimen of the North Sea fishermen, and, being one of “nature’s gentlemen,” he was always polite to his visitor, though at heart he entertained the deepest and undying contempt for the man by whose craft and cunning the enemy were being kept informed of the movements of Britain’s defensive forces, both on land and at sea.

Now that it was too late, he had at last awakened to the subtle manner in which he had been inveigled into the net so cleverly-spread to catch both his son and himself. Ted, his son, had been sent to the cable-school at Glasgow and there instructed, while, at the same time, he and his father had fallen into the moneylender’s spider-web, stretched purposely to entrap him.

What could the old fellow do to extricate himself? He and Ted often, in the evening hours, before their fire, while the storm howled and tore about that lonely cottage on the beach, had discussed the situation. They had both, in their half-hearted way, sought to discover a means out of the *impasse*. Yet with the threat of Rodwell—that they would both be prosecuted and shot as traitors—hanging over them, the result of their deliberation was always the same. They were compelled to remain silent, and to suffer.

They cursed their visitor who came there so constantly and sent his mysterious messages under the sea. Yet they were compelled to accept the ten pounds a week which he paid them so regularly, with a frequent extra sovereign to the younger man. Both father and son hesitated about taking the tainted money. Yet they dared not raise a word of protest. Besides, in the event of an invasion by Germany, had not Rodwell promised that they should be protected, and receive ample reward for their services?

Old Small and Rodwell were talking, the latter stretching forth his white hands towards the welcome warmth of the flaming logs.

“You must continue to still keep your daughter Mary away from here, Tom,” the visitor was saying. “Send her anywhere you like. But I don’t want her prying about here just now. You understand! You’ve got a married daughter at Bristol, haven’t you?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well, send her down there for a long stay. I’ll pay all expenses. So book the whole of it down to me. Here’s twenty pounds to go on with;” and, taking his banknote case from his pocket, he drew forth four five-pound notes.

“Yes, sir; but she may think it funny—and—”

“Funny!” cried his visitor. “Remember that you’re paid to see that she doesn’t think it funny. Have her back here, say next Tuesday, for a couple of days, and then send her off on a visit down to Bristol. You and Ted are able to rub along together very well without her.”

“Well—we feels the miss o’ the girl,” replied the old fellow, who, though honest and loyal, had fallen hopelessly into the trap which German double-dealing had prepared for him.

“Of course you do. I should—were I in your place,” was Rodwell’s response. “But the confidential business in which you and I are engaged just now is not one in which a woman has any concern. She’s out of place here; and, moreover, few women can keep a still tongue. Just reflect a moment. Suppose she told some friend of hers what was in progress under your roof? Well, the police would soon be out here to investigate, and you’d both find yourselves under arrest. No,” he added. “Keep your girl away from here—keep her away at all costs. That’s my advice.”

"Very well, sir, I will," replied the wrinkled old fellow, rubbing the knees of his stained trousers with his hands, and drawing at his rather foul pipe. "I quite see your point. I'll get the girl away to Bristol this week."

"Oh! and there's another thing. I'd better remain in here all day to-day, for I don't want to be seen wandering about by anybody. They might suspect something. So if anyone happens to come in, mind they have no suspicion of my being here."

"All right, sir. Leave that to me."

"To-night, about ten or eleven, I'm expecting a lady down from London. She's bringing me some important news. So you'd better get something or other for her to eat."

"A bit o' nice fish, perhaps?" the old fellow suggested as a luxury.

"Well—something that she can eat, you know."

"I'll boil two or three nice fresh crabs. The lady may like 'em, if I dress 'em nice."

"Excellent!" laughed Rodwell. Truly his was a strange life. One day he ate a perfectly-cooked dinner in Bruton Street, and the next he enjoyed fat bacon cooked by a fisherman in his cottage.

Old Tom, glancing through the window out upon the grey, misty sea, remarked:

"Hulloa! There's that patrol a-comin' back. For two days they've been up and down from the Spurn to the Wash. Old Fred Turner, on the *Seamew*, what's a minesweeper nowadays, hailed me last night when we were baitin' our pots. He got three mines yesterday. Those devils have sown death haphazard!"

"Devils!" echoed Rodwell, in a reproachful tone. "The Germans are only devils because we are out to win."

"I'm sorry, sir," exclaimed the old fellow, biting his lip. "I didn't think when I spoke."

"But, Tom, you should never speak before you think. It lands you into trouble always," his visitor said severely.

"Yes, I—But—I say—look!" cried the old man, starting forward, and craning his neck towards the window. "Why, if there ain't that there Judd, the coastguard petty-officer from Chapel Point again! An' he's a-comin' across 'ere too."

"I'll get into the bedroom," whispered Rodwell, rising instantly, and bending as he passed the window, so as not to be seen. "Get rid of him—get rid of him as soon as ever you can."

"E's got a gentleman with him," old Tom added.

"Don't breathe a word that I'm here," urged the spy, and then, slipping into the stuffy little bedroom, he closed the door and turned the key. Afterwards he stood listening eagerly for the arrival of the visitors.

In a few moments there was a loud knocking on the tarred door, and, with a grunt, Tom rose to open it.

"Hulloa, Tom!" cried the petty-officer of the coastguard cheerily. "'Morning! How are you?"

"Oh! pretty nicely, Muster Judd—if it warn't for my confounded rheumatics. An' now, to cap it all, I've got my girl laid up 'ere very bad. She only got 'ome last night."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr Judd. "But I thought you had a gentleman visitor this morning?"

"Gentleman visitor? Yes. I've 'ad the doctor to my girl—a visitor I've got to pay—if that's what you mean. She's been awful bad all night, an' Ted's now gone into Skegness for some med'cine for 'er."

The man who accompanied the coastguard-officer remarked:

"This is a lonely house of yours, Mr Small. A long way from the doctor—eh?"

"It is, sir, an' no mistake. We don't see many people out 'ere, except Mr Judd, or Mr Bennett—or one o' the men on patrol."

Then, being compelled to ask the pair inside, for it had started to rain heavily, Tom Small sat with them chatting, yet full of wonder why they had called at that early hour.

The man in the next room stood breathless behind the door, listening to all their conversation. It was quite plain that he had been seen to enter there, whereupon the coastguard's suspicions had been aroused. He scented considerable danger. Yet his adventurous spirit was such that he smiled amusedly at old Small's story of his sick daughter, and of the visit of the doctor.

Judd, seated in the chair which Rodwell had occupied until he had vacated it in alarm, suddenly turned to old Tom, and said:

"This gentleman here is my superior officer, Tom, and he wants to ask you something, I think."

"Yes, sir, what is it?" asked the crafty old fisherman, turning to the man in plain clothes.

"You had a visitor here last Thursday—a gentleman. Who was he?" asked the stranger suddenly.

"Last Thursday," repeated Small reflectively. "Now let me see. Who came 'ere last Thursday? Weren't we both out fishin'? No," he added: "I know! Yes, we did 'ave someone come—Mr Jennings, of course."

"And who is Mr Jennings?"

"Why, 'e comes regularly from Lincoln for our insurances."

The petty-officer exchanged meaning glances with his superior, who then asked—

"Aren't you in the habit of receiving visits from a gentleman—somebody who's been seen about here in a closed car, painted pale grey?"

"No car 'as ever come 'ere, sir," declared the old man blankly. "Folk in cars don't come to visit people like Tom Small."

"And yet you are not quite so poorly off as you pretend to be, Mr Small," remarked his questioner. "What about that nice little balance you have in the bank—eh?"

"Well, I've earned it, therefore I don't see why it should concern you," protested the old fellow angrily.

"Just now it does concern me," was the other's rather hard reply—words to which the man in the inner room listened with breathless concern.

Was it possible that the existence of the secret cable was suspected? Had Tom, or his son, been indiscreet? No; he felt sure they had not. They had everything to lose by disclosing anything. And yet those two visitors were bent upon extracting some information from him. Of what nature he was not quite clear.

An awful thought occurred to him that he had left his cap in the sitting-room, but, on glancing round, he was relieved to see that he had carried it into the bedroom when he had sat down at the instruments.

What would those two men say, if they only knew that, within a few yards of them, was the end of a cable which ran direct to Berlin?

While the rain continued pelting down for perhaps a quarter of an hour, the pair sat chatting with Small. It was evident that the naval officer was disappointed with the result of his visit, for the old fisherman answered quite frankly, and had given explanation of his two visitors which could not well be met with disbelief.

"Are you gentlemen a-lookin' for German spies, then?" asked old Small at last, as though sorely puzzled at the questions that had been put to him.

"We're always on the look out for those devil's spawn," answered Judd. "There was a Dutch trawler off here last night, and she wasn't up to any good—I'm sure of that."

"Perhaps it's the same craft as wor 'ere about a fortnight back. She flew the Dutch flag, but I believe she wor a waitin' for a German submarine, in order to give 'er petrol. They were a talkin' about 'er in the Anchor on Saturday night. Bill Chesney was out fishin' an' got right near 'er. I think one o' the patrol boats ought to ha' boarded 'er."

"She was seen off the Spurn, and was then flying the British flag," remarked Judd's superior officer.

"Ah! There you are!" cried Small. "I was certain she was up to no good! Those Germans are up to every bit o' craft and cunnin'. Did you gentlemen think that Mr Jennings, from Lincoln, was a German spy?" he asked naively.

"No, not particularly," replied his visitor. "Only when strangers come along here, in the prohibited area, we naturally like to know who and what they are."

"Quite so, sir. An' if I see any stranger a-prowlin' about 'ere in future, I won't fail to let Mr Judd know of 'im."

"That's right, Small," was the officer's response. "There are lots of rumours around the coast of our fishermen giving assistance to the enemy by supplying them with petrol and other things, but, as far as I can gather, such reports are disgraceful libels upon a very hardworking and deserving class. We know that some of them put down tackle in Torbay, and elsewhere, when they learn the fleet is coming in, so that they may obtain compensation for damage caused to their nets. But as to their loyalty, I don't think anyone can challenge that."

"I 'ope not, sir," was Small's fervent reply. "There ain't a fisherman along the whole coast o' Lincolnshire who wouldn't bear his part against the enemy, if he could—an' bear it well, too."

The clean-shaven officer reflected for a few moments.

"You've never, to your recollection, seen a pale grey closed-up car anywhere about here, have you?" he asked at last.

"Never, sir."

"Quite sure?"

"Positive, sir. The roads about 'ere are not made for cars," was the old fellow's reply. "I certainly did see a car one night, about six weeks ago. The man had lost his way an' was driving straight down to the sea. He wanted to get to Cleethorpes. They were Navy men from the wireless station, I think."

The old man's manner and speech had entirely disarmed suspicion, and presently the pair rose, and bidding him good-bye, and urging him to keep a sharp look-out for strangers, they left.

The moment they were safely away, Rodwell emerged from the bedroom, and in a low, apprehensive voice, asked:

"What does all this mean, Tom—eh?"

"Don't know, sir. That Judd's been about here constantly of late. 'E's up to no good, I'm sure. I've told you, weeks ago, that I didn't like the look o' things—an' I don't!"

Rodwell saw that the old fellow was pale and alarmed. He had preserved an impenetrable mask before his two visitors, but now they had gone he was full of fear.

Rodwell, as he stood in the low-pitched little room, recollected certain misgivings which Molly had uttered on the previous night, just before he had left Bruton Street. His first impulse now was to leave the house and slip away across the fen. Yet if he did somebody must certainly see him.

"Shall you get off now, sir?" asked the old man suddenly.

"Not till to-night," was the other's reply. "It would be a bit dangerous, so I must lay doggo here till dusk, and then escape."

"Do you think they really suspect us, sir?" asked the old fellow, in a voice which betrayed his fear.

"No. So don't alarm yourself in the least," replied the gentleman from London. "I suppose I've been seen about, and my car has been noticed on the roads. There's no danger, as long as I'm not seen again here for a bit. I'll get through to Stendel, and let him know that I shan't be back again for a fortnight or so."

"Yes; you must certainly keep away from 'ere," Tom urged. "They'll be a-watchin' of us, no doubt."

"I've got a lady coming here, as I told you—Mrs Kirby, to whom you telegraph sometimes. She won't get here till night, and I must wait for her. She'll have some urgent information to send across to the other side. Penney will meet her in Lincoln, where she'll arrive by train, and he'll bring her on by car."

"You'd better keep to the bedroom," urged the old man. "They might come back later on."

"Yes: I won't be seen," and returning to the stuffy little room, he reopened the cable instruments and soon got into communication with Stendel, in order to pass away the time which he knew must hang heavily upon his hands, for even then it was not yet nine o'clock in the morning.

He sat smoking and gossiping with the old fisherman nearly all the day, impatient for the coming of darkness, for his imprisonment there was already becoming irksome.

It grew dusk early when, about four o'clock, a footstep outside caused them both to start and listen. In answer to the summons at the door Tom went, and was handed a telegram by the boy messenger from Huttoft.

Opening it, he found it had been despatched from London, and read:

"Impossible to leave till to-morrow.—M."

He gave it to Rodwell, who at once saw that the woman he expected had been delayed. Probably she had not yet been able to gather that important information which was wanted so urgently in Berlin.

The telegram puzzled him. Was it possible that the arrangements which he had made with such cunning and forethought, and had left to Molly to carry out, had broken down after all?

Lewin Rodwell bit his lip, and wondered. He seemed that day beset by misfortune, for when at five o'clock, Ted having returned, he tested the cable as usual, a call came through from Berlin.

Rodwell answered it, whereupon "Number 70" flashed the following message beneath the sea.

"Your information of this morning regarding troop-ships leaving Plymouth for Dardanelles is incorrect. *Desborough* was torpedoed off Canary Islands on January 18th, and *Ellenborough* is in dry dock in Belfast. Source of your report evidently unreliable."

Rodwell read the words upon the long green tape as it slowly unwound, and sat staring at them like a man in a dream.

Chapter Nineteen.

Days of Darkness.

On the same afternoon that Lewin Rodwell was stretching himself, impatient and somewhat nervous, in the lonely little house on the beach, Elise Shearman, pale and apprehensive, was seated in Sir Houston Bird's consulting-room in Cavendish Square.

The spruce, young-looking pathologist, clean-shaven and grave, with hair streaked with grey, was listening intently to

the girl's words. It was her second visit to him that day. In his waiting-room were half a dozen persons who had come to consult him, but the blue-eyed young lady had been ushered straight into the sanctum of the great Home Office expert.

"Curious! Very curious!" he remarked as he listened to her. "That anonymous letter you brought this morning I have already taken to Whitehall. The whole affair seems a complete mystery, Miss Shearman. No doubt the charge against young Sainsbury is a very serious one, but that you should have been given warning is most strange. Since I saw you this morning I've had a visit from Mr Trustram, whom I called up on the 'phone, and we have had a long consultation."

"What is your opinion?" she asked breathlessly.

"Will you forgive me, Miss Shearman if, for the present, I refrain from answering that question?" asked the great doctor, with a smile. He was sitting at his table with one elbow resting upon it and half turned towards her, as was his habit when diagnosing a case. The room was small, old-fashioned, and depressingly sombre in the gloom of the wintry afternoon.

"But do you think Jack will ever clear himself of these horrible charges?" she asked, pale and anxious.

"I hope so. But at present I can give no definite opinion."

"But if he can't, he'll go to penal servitude!" cried the girl. "Ah! how I have suffered since his arrest! Father will hear no word in his favour. He daily tells me that Jack is a spy of Germany, and as such deserves full punishment."

"Mr Trustram has found out from the War Office that his trial by court-martial begins at the Old Bailey to-morrow."

"Yes, I know. Mr Pelham, his counsel, called on me just after lunch, and told me so," said the girl tearfully. "But oh! he seemed so hopeless of the result. The prosecution, he said, would bring forward the most damning evidence against him. Can it be true, Sir Houston? Do you really think it is true?"

"No, I don't," was the prompt, straightforward answer. "Nothing will ever cause me to suspect Sainsbury to be guilty of espionage. He's far too good an Englishman to accept German gold."

"Then you believe him to be innocent!" cried the girl, her fair countenance brightening with a ray of hope.

"Yes, I do. He's the victim of some dastardly plot. That's my firm belief. And yet it is so strange that his friend Jerrold committed suicide."

"But was Dr Jerrold a spy? That is the question!"

"It seems quite true that a warrant had been issued for his arrest upon a charge of war-treason," Sir Houston replied. "Why didn't he try and face it?"

The girl, pale and agitated, sat in silence, her gloved hands lying idly on her lap before her. Those awful weeks of anxiety had left traces upon her face, now thin and worn. And she felt that her lover's fate was sealed unless he could clear himself. In desperation she had sought the great doctor, and he had been most thoughtful and sympathetic.

"I think," he went on in a kindly voice, "I think it would be best, Miss Shearman, if you went home, and remained there in patience. You know that Mr Pelham is a sharp lawyer, and, being quite alive to the seriousness of the situation, he will do his very utmost for his client. Go quietly home, and await the result of our combined efforts," he urged sympathetically. "I am meeting Mr Trustram again at five o'clock. Believe me, Mr Trustram is not inactive, while I, too, am doing my level best in your lover's interests."

"Oh! thank you," cried the girl, tears standing in her fine blue eyes. "You are both so good! I—I don't know how to thank you both," and, unable to further restrain her emotion, she suddenly burst into tears.

Quickly he rose and, placing his hand tenderly upon her shoulder, he uttered kind and sympathetic words, by which she was at length calmed; and presently she rose and left the room, Sir Houston promising to report to her on the morrow.

"Now, don't alarm yourself unduly," was his parting injunction. "Just remain quite calm and patient, for I assure you that all that can be done will be done, and is, indeed, being done."

And then, when the door had closed, the great pathologist drew his hand wearily across his white brow, sighed, buttoned his perfectly-fitting morning-coat, glanced at himself in the glass to see that his hair was unruffled—for he was a bit of a dandy—and then pressed the bell for his next patient.

Meanwhile, Charles Trustram was working in his big airy private room at the Admiralty. Many men in naval uniform were ever coming and going, for his room was always the scene of great, but quiet, orderly activity.

At his big table he was examining documents, signing some, dictating letters to his secretary, and discussing matters put forward by the officials who brought him papers to read and initial.

Presently there entered a lieutenant with a pale yellow naval signal-form, upon which was written a long message from the wireless department.

Those long, spidery aerial wires suspended between the domes at the Admiralty, had caught and intercepted a

German message sent out from Norddeich, the big German station at the mouth of the Elbe, to Pola, on the Adriatic. It had been in code, of course, but in the department it had been de-coded; and the enemy's message, as the officer placed it before him, was a truly illuminating one.

"I think this is what you wanted," said the lieutenant, as he placed the paper before him. "It came in an hour ago, but they've found great difficulty in decoding it. That is what you meant—is it not?"

"Good Heavens! Yes!" cried Trustram, starting to his feet. "Why, here the information has been sent to Austria for re-transmission to the German submarines—the exact information I gave of transports leaving for the Dardanelles! The *Ellenborough* and *Desborough* are not mentioned. That shows the extent of their intimate knowledge of the movements of our ships. But you see," he went on, pointing to the message, "the *Cardigan*, *Leatherhead* and *Turleigh* are all mentioned as having left Southampton escorted to Gibraltar, and not beyond, and further, that in future all drafts will embark at Plymouth—just the very information that I gave!"

"Yes; I quite see. There must be somewhere a very rapid and secret channel for the transit of information to Germany."

"Yes, and we have to find that out, without further delay," Trustram replied. "But," he added, "this has fixed the responsibility undoubtedly. Is Captain Weardale in his room?"

"He was, when I came along to you."

Trustram thanked him, and, a few moments later, was walking down one of the long corridors in the new building of the Admiralty overlooking St. James's Park, bearing the deciphered dispatch from the enemy in his hand.

"The artful skunk!" he muttered to himself. "Who would have credited such a thing! But it's that confounded woman, I suppose—the woman of whom poor Jerrold entertained such grave suspicions. What is the secret of it all, I wonder? I'll find out—if it costs me my life! How fortunate that I should have suspected, and been able to test the leakage of information, as I have done!"

Just before midnight a rather hollow-eyed, well-dressed young man was seated in Mrs Kirby's pretty little drawing-room in Cadogan Gardens. The dark plush curtains were drawn, and against them the big bowl of daffodils stood out in all their artistic beauty beneath the electric-light. His hostess was elaborately dressed, as was her wont, yet with a quiet, subdued taste which gave her an almost aristocratic air. She posed as a giddy bridge-player, a theatre and night-club goer; a woman who smoked, who was careless of what people thought, and who took drugs secretly. That, however, was only her mask. Really she was a most careful, abstemious, level-headed woman, whose eye was always directed towards the main chance of obtaining information which might be of use to her friend Lewin Rodwell, and his masters abroad.

Both were German-born. The trail of the Hun was over them—that Teuton taint of a hopeful world-power which, being inborn, could never be eradicated.

"Well?" she was asking, as she lolled artistically in the silk-covered easy chair in her pretty room, upholstered in carnation pink. "So you can't see him till to-morrow? That's horribly unfortunate. I'm very disappointed," she added pettishly.

"No," replied the young man, who, fair-haired and square-jawed, was of distinctly German type. "I'm sorry. I tried my best, but I failed."

"H'm. I thought you were clever enough, Carl. But it seems that you failed," and she sighed wearily.

"You know, Molly, I'd do anything for you," replied the young fellow, who was evidently of quite superior class, for he wore his well-cut evening coat and soft-fronted dress-shirt with the ease of one accustomed to such things. And, if the truth were told, he would have been recognised by any of the clerks in the bureau of the Savoy Hotel as one of their most regular customers at dinner or supper.

"I know that, Carl," replied the handsome woman impatiently. "But, you see, I had made all my arrangements. The information is wanted hourly in Berlin. It is most urgent."

"Well, they'll have to wait, my dear Molly. If I can't get it till to-morrow—I can't."

"Why not?"

"Oh, what's the good of explaining? Heinrich has gone off down to Brighton with a little friend of his—that's all. He's motored her down to the Metropole, and won't be back till to-morrow. How, in Heaven's name, can I help it?"

"I don't suppose you can, my dear boy," laughed the big, overbearing woman, who held the son of the "naturalised" German financier in the grip of her white, bejewelled fingers. "But, all the same, we have both to remember our duty to the Fatherland. We are at war."

"True! And haven't I helped the Fatherland? Was it not from information given by me that you knew the truth of the blowing up of the battleship *Bulwark* off Sheerness, and of the loss of the *Formidable* on New Year's day? Have I and my friends in Jermyn Street been inactive?"

"No, you haven't. Our dear Fatherland owes you and your friends a deep debt of gratitude. But—Well, I tell you, I'm annoyed because my plans have been upset by your failure to-day."

"Rodwell's plans, you mean! Not yours!" cried the young fellow, his jealousy apparent.

"No, not at all. I don't see why you should so constantly refer to Mr Rodwell. He is our superior, as you know, and in its wisdom Number Seventy has placed him in supreme command."

"Then why do you complain of my failure?" protested the young man viciously, placing his cigarette-end in the silver ash-tray.

"I don't. I only tell you that it has upset my personal plans. I had hoped to get away down to Torquay to-morrow. I must have a change. I'm run down."

"One day does not matter, surely, when our national interests are at stake!"

"Of course not, silly boy," laughed the woman. She saw that she was not treating him with tact, and knew his exact value. "Don't let us discuss it any further. See what you can do to-morrow."

"I'll compel Heinrich to get at what we want," cried Carl Berenstein—whose father had, since the war, changed his name, with the consent of the Home Office, of course, to Burton. "I'm as savage as you are that he should prefer to motor a girl to Brighton. But what can I do?"

"Nothing, my dear boy. The girl will always win. When you've lived as long as I have, you will understand."

"Then you don't blame me—do you?" asked the young man, eagerly.

"Why, of course, not at all, my dear Carl. Heinrich's a fool to be attracted by any petticoat. There are always so many better."

"As long as you don't blame me, Molly, I don't care. The gov'nor is as wild as I am about it."

"Oh, never mind. Get hold of him when he comes back, and come here as soon as possible and tell me. Remember that Number Seventy is thirsting for information."

"Yes, I will. Rely on me. We are good Germans, all of us. These silly swelled-headed fools of English are only playing into our hands. They have no idea of what they will have to face later on. *Ach!* I only wish I were back again in the dear Rhineland with my friends, who are now officers serving at the front. But this British bubble cannot last. It must soon be pricked. And its result must be disastrous."

"We hope so. We can't tell. But, there, don't let us discuss it. We are out to win the war. This matter I leave to you, good Germans that you and Heinrich are, to make your report."

"Good. I will be here to-morrow evening, when I hope I shall have everything quite clear and precise. There is to be a big movement of troops to France the day after to-morrow, and I hope to give you a list of the names of all the regiments, with their destinations. You know, I suppose, that three parts of the cartridges they are making at the G—factory will, in a month's time, when they get to the front, be useless?"

"So Mr Rodwell told me, a couple of days ago. Herzfelder is evidently doing good work there; but it is not a matter even to whisper about. It might leak out, and tests might be made."

Then, having drained off the whisky-and-soda which his hostess had poured out for him, he rose, shook her hand warmly, saying, "I'll be here as early as possible to-morrow night. Good-bye, Molly," and strode out.

And the maid showed the young man to the door of the flat, while Mrs Kirby cast herself into a low lounge-chair before the fire, lit a cigarette, and, with her eyes fixed thoughtfully upon the flames, smoked furiously.

Chapter Twenty.

Told at Dawn.

Again the grey dawn was breaking over the chill North Sea—a wild, tempestuous morning.

On the far horizon northward, a steamer had just appeared, leaving behind a long trail of black smoke, but over the great expanse of storm-tossed waters which broke heavily upon the beach there was no sign of any other craft.

Thirty-six hours had passed since the young German who called himself Burton, but whose real name was Berenstein, had sat in Mrs Kirby's drawing-room discussing the faulty ammunition being made at the works at G—. Twelve hours before, namely, at six o'clock on the previous evening, the court-martial sitting at the Old Bailey had concluded the hearing of the grave case of espionage brought against young Sainsbury. The evidence—some of the most damning evidence ever brought before a court-martial—had been given, and Mr Pelham his counsel had made his speech for the defence. Sentence had been postponed, in order that the whole of the facts should be considered by the military authorities. The trial having taken place *in camera*, not a word had leaked out to the newspapers, therefore the public were in ignorance of the young man's arrest, still more so of the grave offence with which he had been charged.

Elise knew what had happened. She had sat outside the court, in the big stone hall upstairs, where a kindly usher had given her a brief résumé of the proceedings. Indeed, through the glass door she had been able to get a momentary peep of her lover as he had stood in the dock, pale and erect, defiant of his accusers.

When the court rose, she had returned to Fitzjohn's Avenue in a taxicab, sobbing and broken-hearted.

On arriving home she had rung up Sir Houston Bird on the telephone, but his man had answered saying that he had been called out suddenly, and had not returned. Therefore she went to her room and there gave way to a paroxysm of grief. It was over. *Jack had been found guilty!*

In the grey light of dawn, Lewin Rodwell was seated in the stuffy, little room in Tom Small's cottage, his hand upon the telegraph-key, clicking out rapidly a message to Berlin.

At his side sat his accomplice, Mrs Kirby, in a heavy fur motor-coat with toque to match, for she had been all night on the road with Penney, who, having dropped her quite near, had turned the car and gone back into Horncastle to wait until the following evening.

The woman had been engaged writing, by the light of the petrol lamp, a long message since her arrival an hour before, while it was still dark; and it was this—a detailed report of the movements of troops to the front in Flanders, which young Burton had obtained for her—that Rodwell was engaged in transmitting.

Without speaking the spy sat, his left elbow upon the table, with his brow upon his palm while, with his right hand, he tapped away quickly with the rapid touch of the expert telegraphist.

"What a wretched little place!" the woman remarked at last, gazing around the narrow little bedroom. "How horribly close and stuffy!"

"Yes, and you'd find it so, if you'd been here a prisoner for three days and nights, as I have, Molly," her companion laughed, still continuing to transmit the information for which Number Seventy had asked so constantly. The German General Staff were anxious to ascertain what strength of reinforcements we were sending to our line near Ypres.

Suddenly Rodwell shouted for Ted; but the woman, passing into the living-room, calling for young Small, and receiving no reply, remarked: "I believe they both went out down on the beach, to the boat, a moment ago. Do you want him?"

"Only to tell him to get some breakfast. You must be fagged out after your journey," he said, still working the cable without a pause. "How cold and draughty this house is!" he said. "I shall be glad when night comes again, and we can get away. I mean to give this place a rest for a month. I'm afraid it's getting just a bit unhealthy for me. Come in, and shut the door, Molly. I'm nearly blown out, with that door open," he complained.

Then, after she had re-entered the room and closed the door, he soon gave the signal "end of message," and paused for the acknowledgment.

It came without delay. A few rapid clicks, and then all was still again—a silence save for the howl of the wind and the monotonous roar of the great breakers rolling in upon the beach outside.

"Well, Molly," the man said, as he lit a cigarette, and seated himself on the edge of the little old-fashioned bed, "we'll have to stay in here, I suppose, till it's dark. Small doesn't like it known that he has visitors. What time did you order Penney?"

"I told him to be at the place where he usually drops you at eight o'clock."

"Excellent. I wonder where Ted is? I want my breakfast badly."

"He said something about going down to the boat to get some fish for you."

"Ah! of course. They went out in the night. I forgot," he said.

Then, after a pause, the woman exclaimed—

"Is there no possibility of getting away from here before night? I don't like the black looks which Small and his son gave me, Lewin."

"Black looks! Oh, that's nothing. I'm always putting the screw on them. Besides, Ted got to know from Stendel—who chatted to him over the wire one day—all about the Scarborough raid. So, naturally, he's antagonistic."

"But he might betray us, you know."

"He'll never do that, depend upon it. He knows that his own neck would be in danger if he did so. So rest quite assured about that." Then, after a few moments' silence, he added: "I wonder when we shall get that young Sainsbury out of the way. He's the greatest source of danger that we have."

"I thought your idea was that nobody would believe him, whatever he alleged against you?" asked the woman.

"That's so. But we have now to count with Trustram. If he wilfully deceived me regarding those two transports leaving Plymouth, then he certainly suspects. And if he suspects, his suspicions may lead him in the direction of Sainsbury—see?"

"Yes. I quite see. You scent a further danger!"

"No, not exactly," was his vague reply, an evil smile upon his lips. "With the exercise of due precaution we need have nothing to fear—as long as Sainsbury's mouth is closed by the law—as it must be in a day or two."

"But you don't mean to come down here again for some time, do you?"

"No. For the next week or two we must trust to other channels of transmission—Schuette's wireless at Sydenham, perhaps, though that's far from satisfactory."

"Hark!" exclaimed the woman, as they heard someone at the outer door. Both listened. There was a grating sound like that of a key—as though the door was being unlocked.

This surprised them, and they exchanged inquiring glances.

There was a sound of heavy footsteps, causing them both to hold their breath.

Next instant the door of the bedroom was unceremoniously flung open, revealing upon the threshold two burly men in hard felt hats and overcoats presenting service revolvers at them.

It was a striking scene.

The woman screamed loudly, but the man, who had sprung to his feet to find himself thus cornered, stood firm, his face blanched, and his eyebrows contracted.

"And pray what's the meaning of all this?" he demanded, in hoarse defiance.

A second later, however, he saw that behind the two men who entered the room to place himself and his companion under arrest, were three other persons. One was a naval officer in uniform, evidently from the Admiralty Intelligence Department, while the other two were men well-known to him—namely, Sir Houston Bird and Charles Trustram.

"Your clever game is up, Mr Rodwell!" exclaimed Trustram, entering the room with the naval captain, whose gaze fell at once upon the telegraph instruments mounted on the old sewing-machine in the corner.

"Yes," exclaimed the officer. "And a pretty big game it seems to have been—eh? So you've been working a cable across to Germany, have you? We've had suspicion that the cable laid to Wangeroog might have had a second shore-end, and, indeed, we started dredging for it off the Spurn only two days ago."

"Mr Rodwell," said Trustram, addressing him, as the two detectives were searching him for firearms: "You thought you were very clever. You betrayed me once, but I took very good care that all the information I gave you afterwards should be such as you would work for England's advantage, and not for yours. In one case last week, when your masters acted upon my information, we were able to bag six of your submarines in the Straits of Dover within forty-eight hours. So you see my game was a double one," he added, with a smile of satisfaction.

Rodwell was so nonplussed at thus being caught red-handed, that he could utter no reply. All his bluff and defiance had left him, and he stood white, inert, with a look of abject shame and terror upon his changed countenance.

As for the woman, she gave vent to a torrent of bitter vituperation. But nobody noticed her; she had, like poor old Tom Small and his son, been simply tools of that unscrupulous and clever master-spy in whose stirring patriotism all England was believing, but who had at last fallen into the trap which Charles Trustram had so cunningly prepared for him—a trap in which the confirmation of his traitorous act had actually been made by the enemy's unseen wireless rays.

Sir Houston said little, except to remark that no doubt Lewin Rodwell's arrest would put a new complexion upon the case against John Sainsbury, and result, he hoped, in breaking up the activity of the enemy in our midst.

Of much that followed the public are already aware.

The newspapers, however, merely reported that Mr Lewin Rodwell, who had been a most popular speaker at recruiting meetings, who had been a well-known city financier, and a power in the social and political world of London, had died suddenly in a motor-car in the Brixton Road. The Censor, however, suppressed the facts that he had been in the custody of two officers of the Special Department of New Scotland Yard when the tragic occurrence happened, and that he had succeeded in swallowing a tabloid that he had carried concealed in his handkerchief in case of necessity, while being conveyed to Brixton Prison on a charge of espionage.

The public knew, of course, that an unnamed woman was under arrest for acts of war-treason and, later, that she had been sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. They also knew that Jack Sainsbury had been mysteriously and suddenly released by a Home Office order, after having been tried and convicted by court-martial; but the true story of the evil machinations of Ludwig Heitzman, alias Lewin Rodwell, and how he had succeeded in bringing such indisputable evidence against an innocent man, is here revealed for the first time in the foregoing pages.

On the evening of Lewin Rodwell's well-deserved, but cowardly end—the evening of the day of his arrest—Sir Boyle Huntley disappeared from London to the Continent, and was never again seen.

On that same night, too, at ten o'clock, there was a little assembly in Sir Houston Bird's consulting-room in Cavendish Square. Jack and his fiancée were standing happily reunited and arm in arm, while Charles Trustram and Sir Houston were also present. It was then that Trustram decided to hand over the note which poor Dr Jerrold had left for his friend on the fatal night before he took his own life.

Jack broke the seals, and slowly taking out the brief letter, read it, his lips contracting as he realised its contents. Then he handed it from one to the other until they had all read it.

The confession, for such it was, showed how Jerrold had, like old Small—who, by the way, was forgiven, for the assistance he had in the end rendered to the authorities—first been inveigled into the net spread by a moneylender, and having been forced to perform a small traitorous though unsuspected act three years before the outbreak of war,

had, in order to extricate himself from financial ruin, been constantly threatened with exposure by Rodwell if he refused to further help the enemy, now that we were at war. He had steadfastly defied the master-spy, and had, indeed, in order to retrieve his past, boldly sought out spies and denounced them. But, alas! Rodwell's widespread influence in the network of espionage asserted itself, and into the hands of the Intelligence Department there had been placed the facts, with the proofs of his action three years before. A warrant had consequently been issued, and rather than bear the blackmail longer, or the punishment, he had been driven to take his own life, and thus unfortunately give colour to the base, unfounded charges levelled against his friend.

Then, when the lovers knew the truth—and that the anonymous letter of warning had been sent by the woman Kirby in order to mystify them and thus strengthen Rodwell's hand—Jack, heedless of their two friends being present, turned and kissed his well-beloved fondly upon the lips.

He saw that her big blue eyes were dimmed by tears of joy, and then he said, his voice trembling with emotion:

“At last, my darling, I am free—free to love and to marry you—free at last of that terrible stigma placed so cleverly and wilfully upon me by that mean, despicable coward, who was both spy and blackmailer.”

“Yes, Jack dear,” whispered the girl softly, as she raised her ready lips to those of her lover—“yes, you are free, and moreover we now love each other far better than ever we did, for our affection has been tried—tried and proven in the fire of the hatred of ‘Number Seventy Berlin.’”

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