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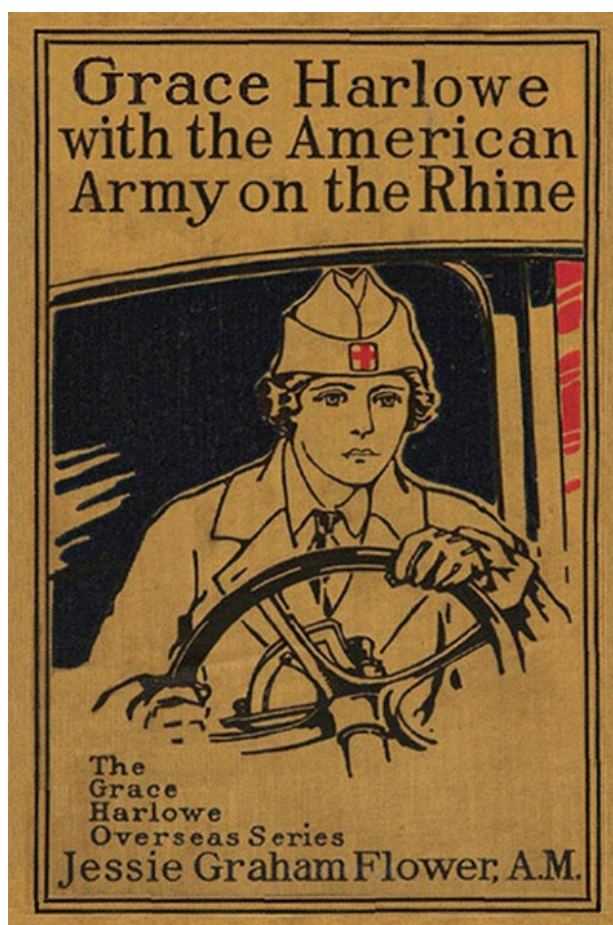
Author: Josephine Chase

Release date: April 8, 2016 [EBook #51697]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Stephen Hutcheson, Rod Crawford, Dave Morgan and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY ON THE RHINE ***



Grace Harlowe with the American Army on the Rhine



The Visitor Was Captain Boucher.
Frontispiece.

Grace Harlowe with the American Army on the Rhine

By
JESSIE GRAHAM FLOWER, A.M.

Author of The Grace Harlowe High School Series, The Grace Harlowe
College Girls Series, Grace Harlowe's Return to Overton Campus,
Grace Harlowe's Problem, Grace Harlowe's Golden Summer,
Grace Harlowe Overseas, Grace Harlowe with the Red
Cross in France, Grace Harlowe with the Marines at
Chateau Thierry, Grace Harlowe with the U. S.
Troops in the Argonne, Grace Harlowe with the
Yankee Shock Boys at St. Quentin,
etc., etc.

Illustrated

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GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY ON THE RHINE

CHAPTER I

ON THE MARCH TO THE RHINE

"HERE is where we take on our load," observed Grace Harlowe, backing her car up to the door of a peasant cottage.

"Never was a truer word spoken," agreed J. Elfreda Briggs. "Chad of her own sweet self is considerable of a load." Miss Briggs reached back and threw open the door of the army automobile, to be ready for their passenger who had not yet appeared. "Baggage, some would characterize her," added the girl.

"She is our superior, Elfreda," reminded Grace. "One always must preserve a certain respect for one's superior, else discipline in the army will quickly go to pieces. While Mrs. Smythe plainly is not all that we wish she were, she is our superior officer whom we must both respect and obey."

"Ever meet her?" questioned Elfreda.

"Once. I was not favorably impressed with her, though I did not see enough of her to form an opinion worth while. That she was fat and rather fair, I recall quite distinctly."

"Know anything about her, Grace?"

"Nothing beyond the fact that she is said to be the wife of a wealthy Chicago meat-packer, and that Mrs. Meat Packer wishes every one to know that she is a rich woman and an influential one."

"She must be to get here, Grace. What I cannot understand is how she ever got into army welfare work, especially how she came to be assigned to join out with this American Third Army's march to the Rhine."

"Perhaps influence, perhaps her money; perhaps a little of both," nodded Grace. "You know as much about it as I do."

"And that much, little as it is, is too much," declared J. Elfreda Briggs. "I should characterize her as an inordinately vain woman, one of the newly rich, who, clothed with a little authority, would be a mighty uncomfortable companion. The girls at the hospital who have worked under her say she is a regular martinet. How does it come that she has been unloaded on us?"

"I am sure I do not know, J. Elfreda. I do not even know with whom she came through last night when we started out on our march to the Rhine. I was ordered to pick her up and take her through in our automobile to-day, together with two other women who accompany her. However, this march to the River Rhine having only just begun, we haven't yet settled down to a routine."

"Neither has the enemy," observed Elfreda.

Grace nodded reflectively.

"He has signed the armistice, but knowing the Hun as I do, I know that, if he thinks he can safely do so, he will play a scurvy trick on us. I hardly think we shall be attacked, however, but, J. Elfreda, take my word for it, there are many deep and dark Hun plots being hatched in this victorious army at this very moment," she declared.

"What do you mean?"

"Hun treachery, Elfreda."

"You know something, Grace Harlowe?"

"No, not in the way you mean. I know the animal and its ways; that's all. Look at that line of observation balloons of ours floating in the sky to our rear, and moving forward as we move forward. Know what they are doing?"

"Watching the Boches."

"Exactly. Were the Boche a worthy foe, a foe who would respect his agreements, the need for

watching him would not exist. But a foe who has broken his word, his bond and all the ten commandments is not to be trusted. I suppose I shouldn't feel that way, but I have lived at the front for many months, Elfreda, and what I have seen has chilled my very soul. It behooves us Sammies to watch our steps and keep our hands on our guns," she added after an interval of reflection. "I think our passenger is approaching."

Mrs. Chadsey Smythe, clad in a suit of tight-fitting khaki, which accentuated her stoutness, was walking stiffly down the path from the cottage, followed by two welfare workers, discreetly keeping to the rear of their superior. The face of the meat-packer's wife wore an expression of austerity which Grace told herself had been borrowed from some high army officer, an officer with a grouch of several years' standing. Mrs. Smythe halted, eyeing first the car itself, then the two young women on the front seat, both of whom were gazing stolidly ahead.

"Are you the chauffeur?" she demanded, addressing Grace.

"I am Mrs. Grace Gray, Madame. I am driving this car through," replied Grace courteously.

"A car, did you say? No, this is not a car, it is a truck, and a very dirty truck. I venture to say that it has not been washed in some time," observed the welfare supervisor sarcastically.

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"Quite probable, Mrs. Smythe. This is wartime, you know."

"That is not an excuse. The war is ended. Hereafter you will see that the car is clean when you start out in the morning."

"Yes, Madame."

"Another thing, driver, I do not brook impertinence from my subordinates. No matter how slack this department may have been carried on in the past, henceforth military form must be observed."

"Yes, Madame," replied Grace meekly.

"If proper for a superior to do so, I would ask if it is customary for a private to remain seated when such superior approaches to speak to the private?"

"When driving, yes."

"It is not! Hereafter, driver, when a superior officer comes up to you, you will step down, hold the car door open and stand at salute, if you know how to salute, until the officer is seated. Am I clear?"

"Perfectly so, Madame." Grace repressed a hot retort, and Elfreda's face burned with indignation. She found herself wondering how her companion could keep her self-control under the insulting tone of the welfare supervisor.

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"It is quite apparent, driver, that you are new to the army and its ways."

"Oh!" exclaimed J. Elfreda.

"What is that?" demanded Mrs. Smythe.

"I—I think I pinched my finger in the door," stammered Elfreda.

"Driver, step down. There is nothing like making a right start."

Without an instant's hesitation, Grace sprang out, grasped the door of the car, and, standing very erect, held it until Mrs. Smythe and her two "aides" had entered and taken their seats. Grace Harlowe closed the door, clicked her heels together and gave her superior a snappy salute that even a freshly made second lieutenant could not have improved upon.

"Oh, you can at least salute, I see," observed the passenger. "I sincerely hope, however, that you are a better driver than you are a soldier. I wish a fast driver, but not a careless one. If you are afraid to drive fast I will request the colonel to give me a driver who is not."

"Yes, Madame."

There was mischief in the eyes of Grace Harlowe as she climbed into the driver's seat, an expression that J. Elfreda understood full well was a sure forecast of trouble to come.

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The road was greatly congested, and for a time the driver worked her way cautiously along at a rate of speed of not more than ten miles an hour.

"Faster! Are you too timid to drive?" cried the passenger.

At this juncture an opening presented itself, a narrow space between two army trucks, and an officer's car tearing along behind her at a terrific pace was reaching for the opening. Grace opened up and hurled her car at the opening as if it were a projectile on its way to the enemy lines. The two cars touched hubs. Grace fed a little more gas and went into the opening a winner.

"Stop it!" shouted Mrs. Chadsey Smythe.

Ahead there were open spots and Grace made for them, dodging, swerving, the car careening, the horn sounding until the drivers ahead, thinking a staff officer was coming, made all the room they could for the charging army automobile. Madame was expostulating, threatening, jouncing about until speech became an unintelligible stutter. Reaching a clear stretch of road, by clever manipulation Grace sent the car into a series of skids that would have excited the envy of a fighting aviator. That it did not turn over was because there was no obstruction in the road to catch the tires and send the car hurtling into the ditch.

18

"For the love of Heaven, stop it, Grace Harlowe!" gasped Miss Briggs. "I'm on the verge of nervous prostration. You'll have us all in the hospital or worse."

Grace grinned but made no reply. She straightened up a little as the officer's car finally shot past her, and it was then that she saw she had been racing with a general, though she did not know who the general might be. She hoped he did not know who it was that had cut him off, but of course he could not expect her to look behind her when driving in that tangle of traffic. That was good logic, so she devoted her attention and thought wholly to the work in hand, and, putting on more speed, rapidly drew up on the charging automobile ahead, reasoning that the general would have a fairly clear road, which road would be hers provided she were able to keep up with him.

Ahead of them a short distance she espied a concrete bridge. There was a concrete barrier on either side of the bridge, but the bridge was amply wide to permit two vehicles to pass. The general's car took the bridge at high speed, army trucks drawing to their right so as to leave him plenty of room. Grace followed, driving at the bridge at top speed, but when within a few yards of the structure a truck driver swayed over past the center of the span, evidently not having heard her horn.

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The girl thought she could still go through, but discovered too late that the truck was too far over to permit her passing. The emergency brakes went on and the horn shrieked, but too late. The truck driver, losing his head, swung further to the left instead of to the right as he should have done, thus crowding Grace further over toward the concrete wall-railing.

"Hold fast!" shouted Grace.

Ere the passengers could "hold fast" the car met the end of the concrete railing head-on with a mighty crash, the rear of the car shot up into the air and the passengers were hurled over the dash. They cleared the obstruction and went hurtling into the river, disappearing beneath its surface. The car lurched sideways until half its length hung over, threatening any moment to slip down after them into the stream. Harlowe luck had not improved. This time Grace had overreached the mark.

Those readers who have followed Grace through the eventful years from her exciting days in the Oakdale High School have learned to love her for her gentle qualities and to admire her for her pluck and achievements, for the sterling qualities that from her early school days drew to her so many loyal friends.

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It was in "GRACE HARLOWE'S PLEBE YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL" that the readers of this series first became acquainted with her. They followed her through her high school course as told in "GRACE HARLOWE'S SOPHOMORE YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL," "GRACE HARLOWE'S JUNIOR YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL" and "GRACE HARLOWE'S SENIOR YEAR AT HIGH SCHOOL," in which those dear friends of her girlhood days, Nora O'Malley, Anne Pierson and Jessica Bright—the Original Four—shared her joys and her sorrows.

After high school came college, Grace and Anne going to Overton, Nora and Jessica choosing for their further education an eastern conservatory of music. At Overton new friends rallied to Grace's colors, such as Elfreda Briggs, Arline Thayer, Emma Dean, Mabel Ashe and many others. Four eventful years were spent at old Overton, the experiences of those college years being related in "GRACE HARLOWE'S FIRST YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE," "GRACE HARLOWE'S SECOND YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE," "GRACE HARLOWE'S THIRD YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE" and "GRACE HARLOWE'S FOURTH YEAR AT OVERTON COLLEGE," followed by "GRACE HARLOWE'S RETURN TO OVERTON CAMPUS" and "GRACE HARLOWE'S PROBLEM."

21

The story of the fruition of the Overton girl's dreams is told in "GRACE HARLOWE'S GOLDEN SUMMER," when she became the bride of her lifelong friend and chum, Tom Gray, and went to "Haven Home" a happy wife. Grace's home life was a brief one, for the great world war enveloped the big white "House Behind the World," as she had so happily characterized it. First Tom Gray went away to serve his country in its hour of need, then Grace followed him as a member of the Overton unit, and in "GRACE HARLOWE OVERSEAS" is related the story of how she became involved in the plots of the Old World nearly to her own undoing. In "GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE RED CROSS IN FRANCE" she is assigned to drive an ambulance at the front, which she had long yearned to do, and out there in the thick of the fighting she is called upon to face death in many forms. It is, however, in a following volume, "GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY," however, that the Overton girl meets with hardships and perils that nearly cost her her life. Yet

more thrilling even than this were her experiences as related in "GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE U. S. ARMY IN THE ARGONNE," where perhaps the most desperate fighting of the war occurred.

"GRACE HARLOWE WITH THE YANKEE SHOCK BOYS AT ST. QUENTIN" finds Grace an active participant in that most brilliant single achievement of the war, the breaking of the Hindenburg Line, in which, by sheer pluck and daring, she saves an entire regiment from certain annihilation and wins a decoration for her heroism.

Following the signing of the armistice the march of the American troops toward the Rhine began. With them went Grace Harlowe and her faithful friend, J. Elfreda Briggs, Anne Nesbit having been left behind to continue her work in a hospital.

Just how it had come about that Grace and Elfreda were to accompany the troops neither girl knew. The assignment brought joy to both girls, and especially to Grace, for when the sound of the big guns died away and an unnatural stillness settled over war-torn Europe she felt ill at ease, felt as if there were something lacking, though down deep in her heart was a thankfulness that overbalanced the regret that the excitement of months in the war zone was a thing of the past. She was first thankful for the soldiers, then for her husband, Tom Gray, who also was on his way to the Rhine, and for the little Yvonne, now their daughter, the child whom Grace had picked up as a waif in a deserted French village under fire.

Grace, at her own request, was permitted to drive through with her friend, in an army car. The first day she carried, besides herself, supplies for canteen work, for both she and Elfreda Briggs were now welfare workers. It had been understood that Mrs. Smythe was to go with the invading army, but that she would take an active part in directing the work neither girl considered probable, for, as a rule, such workers left the actual directing to some person of experience. Not so with Mrs. Chadsey Smythe. She proposed to be a working head, and she was. At least she had been an active participant on the march to the Rhine since she came up with Grace Harlowe. Her real troubles began with the starting of the car with Grace at the wheel, and the troubles continued without a second's intermission right up to and including that fatal second when Grace collided with the bridge rail and Mrs. "Chadsey," together with the other occupants of the car, took an unexpected dive into the river.

Fortunately for the five women in the car, the machine had remained on the road, else it might have fallen on them and finished them entirely.

Grace came up to the surface first, shook the water from her eyes, and then dived and brought up one of the welfare workers who had accompanied Mrs. "Chadsey." The other woman and Elfreda came up of their own accord and Grace quickly went in search of Mrs. "Chadsey."

"There she is," gasped Elfreda, pointing downstream, where the welfare supervisor was seen floundering, fighting desperately to get to shore, not realizing that the water at that point was shallow enough to permit her to stand up and keep her chin above water.

Grace swam to her quickly and grasped the supervisor by the hair of her head just as Mrs. "Chadsey," giving up, had gone under. Even though the water there was only about five feet deep, Grace had never come nearer to drowning, for not only did Mrs. "Chadsey" grip her with both arms, but fought desperately, when Grace got her head above water.

"Stop it!" gasped Grace, struggling to free herself from the grip of those really strong arms. "You'll drown us both."

"Let me go!" screamed the supervisor, fastening a hand in the Overton girl's hair.

One of Grace's hands being thus freed she took a firm grip in the hair of her opponent, pushed her head under the water and both sank out of sight.

CHAPTER II

"GRACE HARLOWE, TROUBLE-MAKER"

WHEN Mrs. Smythe and Grace came to the surface, the fight had been all taken out of the supervisor. She was limp, choking and gasping, but not in a serious condition, as the Overton girl observed, though the water was chill and serious consequences might follow the wetting, there being no way to secure dry clothing until they arrived at the end of the day's march, a few miles further on.

"You will be all right now," comforted Grace. "Don't fight. Give me half a chance to get you ashore. I'm sorry, Mrs. Smythe. The water is not over our heads, so please try to walk in."

The woman screamed and choked some more, so Grace grasped her by the collar of her blouse and began swimming toward shore with her. They had not gone more than half of the way, when doughboys who had witnessed the accident plunged into the river and went to the rescue. Grace turned over her burden to them quite willingly, but waved the soldiers aside when they offered to assist her. The men had their hands full in getting the supervisor ashore, where they laid her down on the bank and shook her until she was able to sit up.

"Please wring the water out of me, Grace," begged the disheveled J. Elfreda Briggs, who was shivering.

"That will not help any. Keep moving, is my advice. Were you hurt, Elfreda?"

"My feelings were very much hurt. Grace Harlowe, you are the original trouble-maker. I blame myself wholly in this matter, not you at all, for I should have known better than to remain in that car for an instant after I saw that look in your eyes. It was a perfectly safe intimation that something terrible was about to occur."

"There's the lieutenant talking with Mrs. Smythe. I must see what she has to say."

"Probably recommending you for the Congressional Medal," observed Miss Briggs sourly.

Mrs. Smythe was sitting on the bank wringing the water out of her blouse when Grace came up, the lieutenant standing by and apparently not knowing what he should do in the circumstances. The supervisor's hair was down over her shoulders and she was half crying, half raging. Grace was filled with regret.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Smythe," she said, bending over the supervisor. "May I assist you to your feet? You must not sit here, you know. The ground is cold and you are very wet."

Mrs. Chadsey Smythe blinked at the Overton girl and struggled for words. The words finally came, a torrent of them.

"She did it!" screamed the woman. "She did it on purpose! She set out to mur—"

"Mrs. Smythe, you know better than that," rebuked Grace.

"Arrest that woman!" commanded Mrs. Smythe.

"Well, I—I don't know about that. Do you wish to make a charge against her, Madame?"

"Of course. She threw me into the river."

"But," protested the officer, "she did no more to you than she did to herself and the others in the car. Of course you may make a complaint to the captain, or to your superior whoever he or she may be, but I do not think this woman can be arrested, because the wreck plainly was an accident."

"It was not! I tell you she did it on purpose!"

The lieutenant shrugged his shoulders.

"I will inform my superior, Captain Rowland," answered the lieutenant gravely. "You are—"

"Mrs. Chadsey Smythe, in command of the welfare workers."

The officer turned to Grace inquiringly.

"Mrs. Grace Gray, former ambulance driver on the western front, now a welfare worker on the march to the Rhine, sir," answered Grace meekly, out of the corners of her eyes observing that the lieutenant was passing a hand over his face, to hide the grin that had appeared there.

"Anything to say, Mrs. Gray?"

"I think not, sir, except that we should be moving."

"Yes, get me a car at once, if you will be so good," urged Mrs. Smythe.

"If I may offer a suggestion, sir, I do not think it would be prudent for either Mrs. Smythe or the others to ride in. We would all be chilled through and on the verge of pneumonia. My advice, if I may offer it, would be that we walk."

"Walk? Never!" exclaimed the supervisor. "I demand a car. It is my right to make such a demand."

"I fear I cannot give you a car. The best I can possibly do is to put you on a truck, but I agree with Mrs. Gray that it would be much wiser for you to walk, all of you."

"A truck!" moaned the woman. "I'll walk, thank you. It is much more dignified than being jounced about on an army truck. No army truck for me, thank you." 29

"Very good. I will see to it that the belongings of the party are sent in so that you may have change of clothing as soon as we reach the end of the day's march."

"Do I understand that you will do nothing to this woman?" demanded Mrs. Smythe.

"I will report the matter to Captain Rowland. May I assist you up the bank?" he offered politely.

Mrs. Smythe accepted with all the grace she could assume. Grace's face wore a serious expression as she looked at the car hanging over the edge of the bridge.

"I could do no worse myself," observed Miss Briggs to her companion.

"I doubt if I could equal that achievement," agreed Grace. "That woman is going to make trouble for me, and I am inclined to think that I deserve all that she will try to give me. You know it was an accident, Elfreda?"

"An accident? It was that! Why, the train wreck on our way to Paris with the wounded doughboys was no more of an accident than this. What you mean to say is that you did not do it on purpose. Personally, Elfreda Briggs has her own views on that phase of the matter." 30

"Elfreda!" rebuked Grace.

"However, it is some satisfaction to see our beloved superior taking the same medicine that we are taking; walking for our health, as it were."

Mrs. Smythe was making heavy weather of it, and Grace, filled with compassion, stepped up to her and linked an arm within that of the supervisor.

"Please permit me to assist you along," she urged gently.

Mrs. Smythe threw off Grace's arm angrily.

"Be good enough to keep your hands off. I wish nothing whatever to do with you."

"Mrs. Smythe, please do not speak to me in that tone. I feel much worse about it than you possibly can, and I blame myself, even if that truck driver did crowd me into the railing. Won't you please forgive me?"

"You will learn later what I propose to do to you, driver. Do not forget that you are speaking to your superior officer and not to your equal."

"I had suspected something of the sort myself," answered the Overton girl, drawing herself up and moving on ahead at a rapid stride.

"Chad spoke the truth for once," chuckled Miss Briggs. "I wonder if she realizes what she said? That is too good to keep. I shall have to tell the girls about that. Do you really think she will do something to you?" 31

"I would not be at all surprised."

"In that event remember that I am a lawyer, and that I invite myself to defend you," declared Elfreda eloquently. "This going is the toughest experience I have ever had."

Two hours before dark they reached their destination, which proved to be the little city of Etain, a deserted city, not a living thing being in sight there when the advance guard reached the place. The city was pretty well pounded to pieces. For a long time before the armistice was signed those of the inhabitants who had clung to their homes lived in holes in the ground. It was a cheerless place, and the cellar where the welfare workers were berthed was more than dismal.

The belongings of Grace and her party were brought in by a Chinaman, who grinned as he put

the first bundle down, and was rewarded by a smile from Grace. He did not speak when he entered the first time, but upon the second trip he straightened up and saluted, which Grace returned snappily.

"Missie plenty fine dliiver, a-la," observed the Chinaman.

"Not very, I fear. You mean my running into the bridge?"

"Les."

"What is your name?"

"Won Lue."

"Belong to the labor battalion?"

"Les. Plenty blad men b'long labor blattalion," observed Won.

"So I have heard, but surely you are not a bad man, Won?"

He shook his head with emphasis.

"Me good Chinaman, a-la."

"I am glad to hear that."

"Well, I never," declared Elfreda Briggs. "One would think you and Won were very old friends. Better look out for those oily Orientals. They are not to be trusted."

"So I have been told," replied Grace absently. "I wonder where Mrs. Smythe has taken herself. Ah, here comes one of her aides."

The young woman said she had come for the supervisor's bags, having been directed there by the officer who had come to their assistance on the river bank.

"I trust Mrs. Smythe is feeling better," said Grace with a voice full of sympathy. "You are Miss Cahill, I believe?"

"Yes. Madame is in high temper because they have put her in a cellar. The lieutenant told her she was in luck that she didn't have to wrap herself up in a blanket and sleep on the ground, which did not serve to improve her temper. I wish we might stay here with you two ladies."

"Why not come with us, then?" urged Grace.

"The supervisor wouldn't let me. However, I am going to request that we be relieved some way."

"Better go through with it until we get to the Rhine," advised Grace. "Something may develop that will make a change possible. If I can assist you to that end you may depend upon me to do so."

"Thank you. May—may I tell you something, Mrs. Gray?"

Grace nodded smilingly.

"Mrs. Smythe, I fear, is going to make you a lot of trouble. She is making all sorts of threats of what she is going to do and—"

"If she doesn't succeed any better than she has thus far, there won't be much left of her," interjected Miss Briggs. "How long have you been with her?"

"Only since we started for the Rhine. We were directed from headquarters to join out with the outfit to act as her assistants, Miss O'Leary and myself, but we have had about enough of it already. She is making servants of us and—"

"In wartime we must do many things that we don't care to do," suggested Grace. "We are still at war with the Huns, so we must take whatever comes to us, doing our best to keep our heads level."

"Thank you, Mrs. Gray. You make me feel better. I shall do my best not to lose my temper, but really I do not see how such a woman could be chosen for our important work. I call it a rank injustice."

"That's what the doughboys say about their treatment," smiled Grace. "*C'est la guerre* (it is war). Come in to see us whenever you can. So few of us women are out here that we should do what we can to make it pleasant for one another."

Miss Cahill thanked her and went out, after which the two Overton girls changed their wrinkled uniforms, put on dry underwear and sat down each before a steel trench mirror to do her hair.

This proceeding occupied all their time up to the mess hour, when they went out with their kits to draw their evening meal. Doughboys made way for them and insisted on their taking a place at the front of the line, but Grace smilingly declined to do anything of the sort.

Most of the men in that division had seen the welfare women and knew by that time who they were, for a woman at the front was too rare a sight not to attract attention. Then, too, there were among them men who either knew of their own knowledge what Grace Harlowe had accomplished or had heard the story from others. Her smash on the bridge was already known to several regiments, and when the two girls appeared, looking as fresh and well-groomed as if they had been serving in Paris rather than out at the front, the doughboys wondered and admired.

Grace and Elfreda, having drawn their rations, returned to their cellar, where, to their surprise, they found a bundle of fagots, which some considerate person had left for them.

"Isn't that fine? I wonder who gave the wood to us?" cried Grace. "Now we can brew some tea. Get the tea ready while I start the fire. Well, I do declare, here is a can of water, and in a petrol can too. J. Elfreda, have you an admirer? Have you been deceiving me?"

"If I have he isn't a Chinaman," retorted Miss Briggs.

"Thank you."

The cellar was soon filled with smoke, but neither girl cared so long as tea was to be the result. After finishing the meal they began considering where they were going to sleep. There were two cots in the cellar, cots without springs, rough boards having been nailed on, but no mattress.

"Not very inviting, but I for one shall be able to sleep soundly, I know," declared Grace. "When we get to the Rhine we probably shall be billeted in a house where we can have ordinary comforts. I know I shall have difficulty in accustoming myself to civilized life again, won't you, J. Elfreda?"

"Not so that you could notice it," was Miss Briggs' brief reply. "I—"

"Hulloa the cellar!" shouted a voice from above.

"Enter," answered Grace.

A sergeant of infantry crunched in, coughed as he inhaled the smoke, and, snapping to attention, saluted, which both girls returned.

"What is it, Sergeant?" asked Grace.

"Captain Rowland wishes you to report at his headquarters at half past seven o'clock, Madame."

"Very good, Sergeant. Where are the captain's headquarters?"

"Four dumps down the street from here, to the right as you go out, down one flight to the cellar."

"Thank you. Will you have a nip of tea? We still have some left."

The sergeant accepted a tin-cup of tea, gulped it down, thanked them, and saluting tramped out.

"Queer fellows those doughboys," murmured Grace. "All gold, but odd josies every one of them."

"Is that what you are thinking of? Were I in your place I should be thinking of what I am going to say to Captain Rowland this evening. This is the summons I have been waiting for. You understand what this means, do you not, Grace?"

"I presume so. However, I will cross that bridge when I come to it."

"Humph! That is more than you did to-day," grumbled J. Elfreda Briggs.

Half an hour later, after a final look into the steel mirror, Grace, accompanied by Miss Briggs, left the cellar and started for Captain Rowland's headquarters, Grace having first pinned her *croix de guerre* and Distinguished Service Cross to her breast. She had neglected to wear them in the confusion of the start that morning, though being supposed to wear them at all times when in uniform.

CHAPTER III

THE IRON HAND

CAPTAIN ROWLAND sat at a table that had seen more prosperous days, and the camp chair that he was using creaked ominously. Elfreda Briggs feared that it was about to collapse under him, for the captain was not a slight man by any means.

Neither Overton girl had ever before met Captain Rowland, but they had heard of him as a severe man, cold and not always as just as were most of his fellow officers, so rumor had said.

Mrs. Smythe was seated on a camp stool just back of the captain, and with her was a young woman that Grace had never seen before, though she afterwards learned that the girl was Marie Debussy, a French woman, who, it appeared, was acting as the supervisor's maid. Except for the lieutenant who had assisted Mrs. Smythe on the occasion of her rescue from the river, there were no others present.

"Are you Mrs. Grace Gray?" demanded the captain, fixing a stern look on Grace Harlowe.

"I am, sir."

"What right have you to those decorations?" he demanded, pointing an accusing finger at her.

Grace for the instant was staggered. She found herself at a loss to answer.

"Sir?"

He repeated the question, but more sharply accentuated than before.

"With all respect, sir, your question carries with it an inference not at all creditable to me."

Elfreda Briggs was proud of Grace. She could not have said it better herself, and being a lawyer, Elfreda ordinarily was quite equal to making the retort courteous.

The face of the army officer hardened, but before he could reply, Grace continued.

"The decorations, sir, were awarded to me, one by the commander-in-chief and the other by the French Government."

"For what?"

"I have frequently asked myself that very same question, sir," replied the Overton girl.

"This is a military inquiry, Mrs. Gray. You will answer my questions directly. Why were you awarded the decorations you are wearing?"

Grace's face hardened ever so little, and Elfreda looked for an explosion, but none came.

"If you will pardon me, I must be excused from answering. The records will show why I am wearing them. General Gordon knows something of this matter. May I ask why you are pressing me on this point, sir?"

"You may. It has been said that you were wearing decorations to which you had no right. This is a very serious accusation, Madame."

Grace caught her breath sharply.

"Then the person who told you that either was misinformed or was telling a malicious falsehood," she declared with some heat, fixing a steady look on Mrs. Chadsey Smythe.

"You see, Captain! The woman is an impertinent creature," interjected Mrs. Smythe.

The captain waved a hand for her to be silent.

"I will attend to that phase of the matter later on. You wrecked an automobile to-day and imperilled the lives of your passengers. I am informed that previous to the accident you had been driving recklessly, doing so with the intent to intimidate your passenger, and at the same time endangering other lives. Is this true?"

"I was driving rather fast, I will admit, sir."

"Why?"

"Mrs. Smythe ordered me to do so, and accused me of being afraid to speed up, so I speeded

up. That, however, had nothing to do with the accident. At the time of the crash I was following an officer's car. A truck crowded me against the bridge railing. Understand, sir, I am not excusing myself. In a way I was not wholly blameless for the accident, because I was driving too fast for the crowded condition of the road. So far as intent was concerned, it is foolish to assume that there could have been anything of that sort. I had my own neck to consider as well as those of my passengers."

"How fast were you driving?"

"About thirty-five miles an hour, I should say."

"What experience have you had in driving a car?"

"I have been driving an ambulance on the western front for many months, sir. Previously to coming overseas I had been driving for several years. I consider myself a fairly successful driver."

"I understand that you have had accidents before this one?"

"Naturally, sir. One cannot drive an ambulance at the front in wartime without having more or less trouble, as you know, and I cannot understand why so much should have been made of this accident by my superior. It was an accident, I was driving fast, but I deny most emphatically that I was careless or that a slower rate of speed would have prevented the collision."

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"Others will be the judge of that, Mrs. Gray," rebuked the officer. "Mrs. Smythe makes a further charge against you. She asserts that, after you all fell into the river, you handled her roughly. Not only that but that you tried to drown her."

"Mrs. Smythe is in error."

"You held my head under water!" cried the supervisor.

"I was trying to rescue you, Mrs. Smythe, but you fought me, and to save you I was obliged first to subdue you. The accusation is preposterous. I am not a Hun. Are there any other charges, Captain?"

"I believe not. Those already named are quite sufficient. Mrs. Smythe, is there anything you wish to add to the statement you have already made?" questioned the captain.

"Yes, there is. I demand that this woman be dismissed from the service. She is unfit for our purposes, and I refuse to have anything further to do with her," declared the supervisor heatedly.

Grace smiled down on her superior, but made no comment.

"That I cannot do," answered the captain. "The most that I am empowered to do is to request her organization to withdraw her from your service. I should say, however, that such a request had best come from you. However, I agree with you that Mrs. Gray should be punished for what verges on criminal carelessness."

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"I should say it was criminal carelessness," muttered the angry woman.

"What I can do is to relieve her from duty until—"

"Sir," interjected Grace Harlowe in an even tone, "as I understand the military law in the case, you have no authority to do even that. You can recommend, but you have no authority to go further. I shall be obliged to stand on my rights. I say this in no spirit of insubordination, and with full knowledge that I am responsible to the military authorities for my conduct. If it is your belief that I should be relieved from duty, I hope you will make the recommendation to your superior, who, in turn, can pass the recommendation on to a higher authority. By the time these formalities have been observed we undoubtedly shall have arrived at the Rhine, where a more formal hearing may be more conveniently held. I hope I have made myself perfectly clear both as to meaning and intent, sir."

"Perfectly," observed the captain sarcastically. "I agree with you in your interpretation of your rights in the case, and I shall, as you suggest, make my recommendations to my superior officer."

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"Thank you."

"My recommendation will be that you be dismissed from service with the Army of Occupation and returned to your organization in Paris. That is all, Mrs. Gray. In the meantime you will proceed with your work as before. A car will be turned over to you to-morrow morning. That's all!"

CHAPTER IV

A TIMELY MEETING

"GRACE HARLOWE, I am proud of you," glowed Elfreda as they left the headquarters of Captain Rowland.

"You may not be if Mrs. Smythe has her way. She plainly has more or less influence in high places. You saw how thoroughly against me the captain was, didn't you?"

"Yes, but he agreed with the soundness of your argument."

"He had to. He knew I was right. What pleases me most of all is that I shall have the pleasure of driving Madame to-morrow. Beyond that I cannot say."

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"My legal training tells me that we should make some overtures in high places ourselves. You surely will not stand by and let the supervisor have her way?"

"Why not?"

"Could we reach Tom, who is somewhere in line on this march to the Rhine, he would be able to assist us," reflected Elfreda.

Grace shook her head.

"Having gotten into this mess I shall get out of it of my own self, so possess your soul in peace, J. Elfreda. Here we are at our suburban home. I wonder who left the fagots for us? We have enough left for our morning tea, no matter what else happens."

"Humph!" exclaimed Miss Briggs. "I should consider, were I in your place, that I had something of more importance to worry about. I'm going to bed. By the way, where did Madame get that wooden-faced maid of hers?"

Grace said she did not know, and would not even try to guess. The Overton girls soon were rolled in their blankets, and, despite the hard boards underneath them, went to sleep at once. They were used to hardships, and a little matter like a hard bed was not a thing to retard their sleep for many moments.

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Grace was up at break of day next morning. After dressing she stepped out for a long breath of fresh, crisp air and a look about. There was activity all about her, and the smoke of rolling kitchens and the odor of cooking food was on the air. Glancing to the eastward and into the haze of the early morning, Grace Harlowe's eyes dwelt momentarily on a little strip of forest about a quarter of a mile from her point of observation, then passed on.

A bird was rising from among the trees in the forest. She saw it circle and spiral, steadily rising higher and higher, finally setting out on a course to the eastward. Many times had the Overton girls seen pigeons bearing messages of great moment start out from the American lines, and what she had just witnessed was so much like the flight of a carrier pigeon that she could not believe it was not one. The difference that caused the doubt of her vision was that the pigeons she had seen in flight were always headed to the westward, while this one was flying east.

"There goes another!" exclaimed Grace. "This doesn't look right."

Three birds in all arose, circled and soared to the eastward while she stood watching. Grace wondered what it could mean, there now being no doubt in her mind that she had witnessed the flight of war pigeons. Returning to the cellar, she awakened Miss Briggs, told her to get up and make the tea, started the fire and went out with the mess kits to fetch their breakfast.

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Breakfast was rather hurried, as Grace knew she would have to look for the car that she was to drive that morning, and that operation undoubtedly would consume some little time. It did. She was sent from officer to officer before she found the one who was to assign a car to her, and even then she had difficulty in obtaining possession of the vehicle. At last she succeeded in getting it, and lost no time in getting away with the machine before it should be grabbed by some one else.

Pulling up before their cellar she jumped out and ran down to assist in loading aboard their belongings.

"All aboard for the River Rhine, Elfreda," she called cheerily. "We are going to enjoy this drive, I know. The air is fine."

"I can't say as much for the water in this neck of the woods. That water yesterday was beastly. Don't you dare give me another such a bath, Grace Harlowe," warned Elfreda.

"No, I'm determined to be good to-day and not do a thing to rile our supervisor. You shall see how nice I can be to her. Come, we must get ready."

A few moments later they pulled up before Mrs. Smythe's cellar and sat waiting for her to appear, after having given a few discreet honks on the horn. When the supervisor emerged with her maid and Miss O'Leary, her face wore a hard expression that had not been there before.

Grace, jumping out, opened the car door for her, slammed it shut after the passengers were in, and saluted snappily.

"Does not Miss Cahill ride with us to-day?" she questioned.

"Carry on as you are!" commanded Mrs. Smythe.

"Very good," answered the Overton girl, climbing to her seat.

"Just a moment," commanded the supervisor. "You are to drive slowly to-day. At the first indication of recklessness or the slightest disobedience of orders I shall call an officer to place you under arrest for insubordination. Do you get me clearly?"

"I get you quite clearly, Madame," answered Grace smilingly. "What speed—three, five, ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty or forty miles?"

"You know what I mean. I ordered you to drive slowly."

Grace swung into the highway and started off at a speed of about five miles an hour, but she had not gone far ere the rasping voice of her superior ordered her to drive, not creep.

The speed of the car was increased to ten miles an hour, but beyond this the Overton girl would not go, despite the insistent demands of Mrs. Smythe. Finally exasperated beyond measure, Grace stopped the car at the side of the road and faced her supervisor.

"Perhaps, Madame, you would prefer to have Miss Briggs drive the car?"

"No, thank you," spoke up Elfreda.

"Are you a safe driver?" demanded Mrs. Smythe.

"Very, but I am not a skilled driver."

"Take the wheel. You can do no worse than the present driver."

"I will settle with you for this later," muttered J. Elfreda in a low voice to her companion. "I call this a low-down trick. I probably shall turn you all over in the ditch."

"Go as far as you like," answered Grace, getting out to enable Elfreda to take the driver's seat. Miss Briggs fumbled, stalled the car, but after a few back-fires succeeded in getting under way, the passenger growing more and more irritable as the moments passed.

Elfreda shot ahead with a jolt that brought a torrent of abuse from the supervisor, and narrowly missed smashing into an officer's car ahead. A few rods further on, in attempting to dodge an army truck, J. Elfreda Briggs came to grief. One of the rear wheels of the army automobile slipped from the road into a shallow ditch, the wheels sank into the soft mud and the car began to settle, threatening every second to turn over on its side. Grace snapped off the spark and silenced the motors, her quick action saving them from a bad spill. Elfreda had wholly lost her head.

"Drive out, drive out!" cried Mrs. Smythe.

"I—I can't," gasped Miss Briggs. "The wheels will go around but the car won't move. What shall I do?"

"We must all get out," directed Grace.

Just then a car slipped past them and brought up abruptly. Grace observed that it was an officer's car, but beyond that gave no heed. A second or so later she saw two men get out and walk back toward them.

"I thought I recognized you when we passed, Mrs. Gray," called a familiar voice. "Are you in need of assistance?"

"Why, Colonel Gordon—I mean General Gordon," corrected Grace, flushing. "I am glad to see you and glad of the opportunity to congratulate you on your promotion."

"You are no more delighted to see me than I am to meet you again. I believe this is Miss Briggs, isn't it? Mrs. Gray and Miss Briggs, meet Captain Boucher of the Intelligence Department."

The general and the captain shook hands cordially with both Overton girls, the general giving a quick, comprehensive glance at the occupants of the rear seats, and nodding ever so slightly.

Grace did not offer to introduce either to the supervisor.

"Mrs. Gray is the young woman who saved my life in the Argonne, Captain. I could tell you a lot more about her, but I know it would embarrass her if I did. Miss Briggs, I did not know that you drove."

"I don't," answered J. Elfreda rather abruptly.

"Oh, yes she does," insisted Grace. "At least she has just driven us into a ditch. Miss Briggs learned to drive immediately after the armistice was signed, but in doing so she smashed up two army cars and ran over a major. She will soon be up to my record. My latest exploit, General, was trying conclusions with the concrete railing of a bridge yesterday. The bridge won and we all went into the river."

"Was that your car that I saw hanging over the edge of a bridge near Etain, Mrs. Gray?"

"Yes, sir, that was the car."

Mrs. Smythe who had been controlling her emotions with some success, now interjected herself into the conversation.

"General, I think I have met you. I am Mrs. Chadsey Smythe, in command of the welfare workers of—"

The general and the captain saluted, smiled and turned back to Grace.

"That was not the worst of it," resumed Grace. "I had with me my supervisor, a somewhat irritable person. She went into the river with the rest of us, and of course I went to her rescue and, with the assistance of some doughboys, got her out. My supervisor was not a grateful person—she accused me of trying to drown her."

The officers laughed heartily.

"That surely was a good joke, Mrs. Gray," observed the general, regarding her quizzically.

J. Elfreda Briggs had forgotten her own troubles in her delight at the trend of the conversation.

"Let us have the rest of the story. You will pardon us for reminiscing, Mrs. Smythe," begged the general, observing the angry look on the face of the supervisor. "Listen, Captain. The worst is yet to come. I know Mrs. Gray."

"There is not much more to relate," continued Grace smilingly. "I had been driving in a way that did not please my supervisor and she was thoroughly angry with me on that account, and not wholly without reason, for I was going too fast for the crowded condition of the road. Well, the result of all this was that she made complaint against me and I was called before an officer for a hearing."

"Eh? What's that?" demanded the general.

"Yes, sir. I was accused of reckless driving and with intent to drown my superior officer."

"The woman accused you of that?"

"Yes, sir."

The two officers laughed heartily.

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed the general. "Was the woman suffering from shell shock or was it a chronic condition with her?"

"I'm sure I don't know, sir," answered Grace meekly. "As I have already said, I was called before a captain, who among other things questioned me sharply about the decorations I wore, the intimation being that I had no right to them. Of course I do not know who suggested the thought to him. I declined to discuss the matter, taking the liberty of saying to him that General Gordon was familiar with the circumstances of at least one of my decorations."

"I should say so. Who was the officer?"

"Captain Rowland of the Forty-Ninth, sir."

"Ah! Please proceed."

"The captain was of the opinion that I should be punished and was for dismissing me from the army and sending me back to Paris, until I took the liberty of pointing out to him that he had no authority to do so, that he could make recommendations, but had not the power to enforce in this instance."

"You were right. What were his recommendations?"

"That I be dismissed and sent back to my organization."

"Thank you. I am glad you told me the story. It is most interesting, I assure you. Mrs. Gray, it was on my urgent recommendation that you were directed to join this march and go with us to the Rhine. Having done so I shall make it my business to see to it that a crazy woman and a misinformed officer do not interfere with my plans. I will discuss this matter with you further later on. Captain, do you mind ordering some men to place this car back in the road?"

CHAPTER V

GRACE WINS AND IS SORRY

THE general saluted and stepped away, and in a moment or so a squad of soldiers ran to the car.

"All hands out, please," called Grace. "No need to have them lift us with the car."

Up to this time J. Elfreda had not dared permit herself to catch Grace's eye, knowing very well that were she to do so she would laugh. Perhaps "Captain" Grace was of the same opinion regarding her own emotions, so she avoided Elfreda's eyes. The men quickly boosted the car back into the road.

"Take the wheel and make a fresh start, Elfreda," directed Grace, after thanking the doughboys.

"I beg most respectfully to be excused. Mrs. Smythe, I ask to be relieved from driving. An empty road and a wide one is the only safe place for me to experiment. May I turn the wheel over to Mrs. Gray?"

The supervisor half nodded. She was dazed, at least she appeared to be so, and had not a word to say. At least two of her companions in the car found themselves wondering what her thoughts were at that moment. After a little Elfreda ventured to speak.

"How wide and expansive the morning is," she observed.

"Very," agreed Grace. "I don't know what you are talking about, but I agree with you."

A great silence hovered over the army automobile, so far as the rear seat was concerned, though eventually Grace and Elfreda fell to discussing army matters of a general nature. At noon they halted for mess, then proceeded on at slow speed, for they were close up to the engineers, who were following the advance column to examine roads for mines and repair them where necessary.

Thus far not a gun had been fired, though at any moment a blast was looked for by every one in the Third Army. Airplanes were constantly buzzing overhead, observation balloons were continuously on watch in the skies, and every precaution was being taken to guard against a surprise. That night their bedroom again was in a cellar, and once more Won Lue brought them fagots and water.

They had left Mrs. Chadsey Smythe at the cellar that had been assigned to her. Miss Cahill arrived at about the same time on an army truck and shared the cellar with Madame, Miss O'Leary and the maid, Marie Debussy.

"Grace Harlowe, I take off my hat to you," Elfreda exclaimed, throwing off her cap and blouse. "Chad got her deserts that time, but, woman, look out for her. Revenge is as sweet to her as it is to you."

"Revenge is not sweet to me," objected Grace. "I am so sorry that I turned the tables on her as I did, but it was an opportunity that I could not miss. At least it served one useful purpose; Madame did not speak to me all the rest of the day. What a heavenly relief. Do you suppose the general knew who she was?"

"He may have known who she was, but I do not believe he understood that she was the woman to whom you referred. I hope the general doesn't find out that he was abusing the woman to her face," Elfreda chuckled.

"He will learn it the first time I see him. I feel that I did an inexcusable thing in drawing him into the muss as I did. I am always doing the wrong thing at the wrong time."

"It is war," reminded Elfreda. "Ah! Here comes our friend the Chinaman. Good evening, Won. What is it?"

"Plenty fine apple," he answered, emptying out full two quarts of red apples from a gas mask bag.

"Oh, isn't that fine," glowed Elfreda. "I haven't had an apple since I left America. Grace, what do you think of that?"

"I think Won must have found an orchard in a cellar somewhere. Thank you ever so much. Why do you do so many nice things for us?"

"Nicee lady, a-la. Missie see nicee birdie fly fly away?" Won accompanied the words with a wink and knowing smirk.

"What do you mean?" demanded Grace, regarding him narrowly.

For answer Won formed a spiral in the air with one hand, raising the hand a little higher with each circle, then sending the hand flitting through the air in imitation of a bird's flight.

Grace caught the meaning instantly.

"Oh, you mean a bird?"

"Les. Plidgin bird. Him fly, a-la. Missie see plidgin fly."

"Did you see it, Won?"

"Me savvy. Me see."

"Do you know where they came from, where they were going or who sent them? Understand me?"

"Not know. Plenty blad man. Mebbly Chinaman blad man."

"Why do you tell me, then?"

"Missie no like blad man, no likee plidgin go so," pointing to the east.

"Thank you. I understand. You must keep watch, Won, and let me know who is making the 'plidgin fly-fly.'"

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Won nodded and chuckled, then shaking hands with himself, trotted away without another word.

"What was that wild heathen talking about?" demanded Elfreda. "You appeared to understand perfectly what he was getting at, but I couldn't make a single thing out of it."

"He was trying to convey to me that something bad is going on in the Third Army."

"What is the something?"

"Perhaps I shall be able to tell you about that later. Won is a wise Chinaman. He knew that I knew something was going on and wished to let me know he was on our side. I don't believe many of the Orientals in the labor battalion are in the same class with our friend. To change the subject, do you know I feel sorry for that poor little Marie Debussy. The half dumb way she looks at you is almost heart-breaking. Mrs. Smythe must make her life miserable. When we get to the Rhine we must try to do something for the girl. Did you observe that Miss Cahill came through on a camion to-day?"

"Yes, I observed it."

"Mrs. Smythe evidently did not propose to be so crowded."

"No, she wished to be free to jump if you hit another bridge," declared Elfreda.

60

Supper was attended with the same smoke-screen as had happened at the meal of the previous evening, but they enjoyed their mess and chatted and teased each other until it was time to turn in.

Grace was up at daybreak again, but did not awaken her companion. The morning was very chill, but the air was clear, and Grace with her binoculars surveyed the surrounding country as well as she could in the half light of the early morning, appearing to be especially interested in every clump of trees within the range of her vision.

Day was just dawning when she discovered that of which she was in search, a pigeon rising into the air from a field quite a distance to the southward. As on the previous occasion the pigeon flew east, and was followed at regular intervals by two others.

There could be no doubt about it now. War pigeons were being sent toward the enemy country, though Grace was not at all certain that it was enemy agents who were doing the sending. In any event it was a matter that should be reported, which the Overton girl determined to do that very day.

Without saying anything to her companion of what she had observed, Grace ate her breakfast, and asking Elfreda to clean up and pack up, set out for Mrs. Smythe's headquarters. The supervisor was just eating her breakfast. Her face flushed as she saw who her visitor was, but she spoke no word, merely stared.

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"I have come, Mrs. Smythe, for two reasons; first, to ask what your orders are for the day; secondly, to tell you I am sorry that I gave way to my inclinations yesterday and related the story

of our trouble to the general. I ordinarily fight my own battles. You must admit, however, that I had very excellent reasons for feeling as I did toward you."

"You insulted and humiliated me!" cried the supervisor, suddenly finding speech.

"And you also have insulted and humiliated me," replied Grace. "It is my feeling that you were well entitled to all that you received, but my regret is that I permitted myself to be the instrument of the rebuke. You are my superior. I am at all times ready to take and obey any reasonable orders that you may give me. However, we must understand each other. My self-respect will not permit me to remain silent under such tongue-lashings as you have been indulging in. It must cease, Mrs. Smythe!"

"You—you are telling me, your commanding officer, what I must do?" demanded the woman, exercising more than ordinary self-restraint.

"No, not that, Mrs. Smythe. What I am seeking to do is to convince you that it will not be advisable for the peace of mind of either of us for you to continue your unkind treatment of me."

"And, in the event that I decide to do as I please in all matters relating to your official duties, what then?"

Grace shrugged her shoulders.

"Attention!"

Grace smiled sweetly.

"The regulations do not require me to salute a superior when that superior is seated, without head covering and with blouse unbuttoned. Neither do the regulations require that I shall come to attention in such circumstances. This is not an official call and I do not expect you to receive me as such, therefore you must expect no more of me. I am here as woman to woman to ask that you treat me like a human being, and then to ask your forgiveness for my questionable revenge of to-day. Even the Huns have signed an armistice and agreed to cease fighting. Surely you and I as good Americans should be able to settle our differences by declaring an armistice; and you may rest assured that I shall do my part toward preserving the peace. What are your feelings on the matter and your orders for the day, please?"

"Driver, my feelings are my own. You came here with the deliberate intention of further insulting me."

"I am sincerely sorry that you look at it in that light. I know you will not feel that way after you have thought over what I have said."

"Have you anything further to say, driver? If so, say it and have done, for it will be your last opportunity."

"Only to ask again for orders, Mrs. Smythe," replied Grace sweetly.

"My orders are that you get out of my sight instantly!" The supervisor rose, buttoned her blouse to the throat and put on her cap. "Go!" she commanded, pointing to the cellar opening.

Grace Harlowe clicked her heels together and snapped into a salute, then executing a right-about, marched from the cellar and back to her own headquarters under a ruined cottage.

CHAPTER VI

MESSING WITH A BRIGADIER

"THE car has gone?"

"Yes, Mrs. Gray. One of our men drivers took it out under orders this morning," the sergeant informed her.

"Whose orders?"

"Captain Grant's."

"No provision then has been made for a car for me?" questioned Grace.

"Not that I am aware of. Sorry, but I can't help it. It's orders."

"I understand, Sergeant. I think a hike will do myself and my friend good."

"Would you ride on a truck?"

"Of course if necessary, but I think we prefer to walk, thank you. I always did enjoy hiking. You don't know whether or not the car has gone on?"

"It went on less than five minutes before you came out. Four women in it, the same ones you carried before."

"Thank you, Sergeant. May I offer you a package of cigarettes?"

He said she might, and thanked her, a broad grin on his face.

"The old party hasn't passed out a thing since we started," he informed her.

"I know it. She informs me that none will be distributed from the canteen until we reach the Rhine. Thank you very much for your kindness." Grace returned to their cellar, where she found Elfreda awaiting her with more or less impatience. Their mess kits and other supplies were packed.

"Where is the car? I didn't hear you drive up," questioned Miss Briggs.

"Mrs. Chadsey Smythe took the car and a soldier driver, and went on, I am informed."

"What?"

"You and I are going to enjoy a lovely twelve-mile walk this morning, and I know it will do us a world of good. We have been riding too much since we came over here."

"I call that an outrage!" expostulated J. Elfreda. "What about all this stuff?"

"We will carry our own kits. Our bags and what little government property we have here we will try to get on a truck. The rest will be easy. I had an interview with Madame in her cellar this morning. I tried to come to an amicable settlement of our difficulties, but she threatened me and drove me out. It is quite evident that General Gordon has not taken action, as he said he would. However, I feel that we are going to be all right and that we shall arrive at the Rhine flying high."

"Tell me about it," urged Elfreda.

Grace did so, her companion listening with narrowed eyes.

"This passes all comprehension, Grace. I can't believe that the woman is so bad as she would have us think her. You must admit that she is a good American else she would not be here, suffering all the discomforts of army life."

"That is the way I have reasoned it out, Elfreda, and that is why I went to see her this morning, hoping that after yesterday she might have seen a light—instead she saw red," added Grace, smiling up at her companion. "Let's get our luggage out and I will look up one of our unit's wagons. Perhaps we may arrange our day's journey quite satisfactorily."

They were fortunate in finding one of their own camions that was just starting out, and the driver was more than willing to take their belongings and asked them to ride through with him, but Grace said they preferred to walk, now that their car had gone on without them.

The Overton girls set out bravely, falling in behind the regiment with which they had been

billeted. There were many offers of a ride on wagons of their train, and doughboys frequently urged them to turn over their kits, to all of which Grace gave a smiling "Thank you" and shook her head.

They were two weary girls when they arrived at their objective, and while Elfreda was in search of a cellar, Grace looked up the driver who had their belongings and carried them to the side of the street to a point where Elfreda was to meet her.

"I have a whole house for us," cried Miss Briggs, running up to Grace nearly half an hour later. "It is what is left of a peasant cottage. Part of the roof is shot away, but what is left of it will cover us very nicely. There is a fireplace where we can make our tea, and enough pieces of board about to make a roaring fire and keep us warm."

"Fine. Help me carry the things in, then I will report our location to Company A's commander. I don't suppose you chance to know where Mrs. Smythe's billet is?"

"Neither know nor care, Grace Harlowe. I have troubles of my own, the principal one being a pair of feet that weigh several pounds above normal. Let's go!"

Grace was delighted with their quarters, and the two girls promptly set about arranging their belongings. "Captain" Grace then reported their billet to a lieutenant of Company A, which was according to orders.

When she returned to the cottage a car was standing before it, and Elfreda was at the door of the house watching for her.

"What is it?"

"General Gordon's car," said Elfreda. "He has sent it for us, requesting that we mess with him. It strikes me that this is moving some. I hope Chad doesn't hear of it, or she will have us drawn and quartered at sunrise."

Grace stepped out to the driver.

"Can you wait fifteen minutes, Buddy? We simply must slick up before we go."

"Yes, Mrs. Gray. Take your time."

The girls changed their clothes, brushed their hair and put on clean boots, and came out fit for the most rigid inspection.

The general's driver was not a slow driver, and ten minutes later they halted before a cottage that appeared to be whole. It was about the only one in town that escaped the deluge of Hun steel that had been hurled on the little French village. The general met the Overton girls at the door and led them in. Captain Boucher was there, and a Major Colt, who was a member of the balloon corps, and to whom he introduced both women.

A cheerful fire was blazing in the wide fireplace, and a table was set for five, while a Chinaman was cooking the supper over the fire.

"How cheerful," exclaimed Grace. "We too have a cottage and fireplace, but we lack a roof, and what heat doesn't go up the chimney goes through the place where the roof once was."

"How is your superior behaving to-day?" questioned the general quizzically.

"I don't know, not having seen her since early morning, sir. I wish to make a confession to you, and now is the proper time to do so. I feel that I took an inexcusable advantage of you yesterday in telling you of my supervisor's shortcomings in her presence. Mrs. Chadsey Smythe was the woman I referred to, and she was in the car when I told you the story. She also, of course, heard you express your opinion of her. I owe you an apology, General, but do not see how you can overlook what I did."

General Gordon laughed heartily.

"No apology is necessary. I knew that it was she to whom you referred. Even had I not known it, her face would have told me. I expressed myself as I did, partly for her own good. I take it that she hasn't been driving with you to-day?"

"No, sir. She preferred to drive with some one else. When do we reach the Rhine, if I may ask, sir?"

"Four or five days hence. We could do it in much less time, but the enemy is moving slowly, and you know we cannot hurry him, much as we should like to. Things have been moving smoothly thus far, but I am of the opinion that we shall meet with little friendliness after we cross the Moselle. So you ladies hiked through to-day, eh?"

Grace's face flushed and Elfreda looked amazed.

"Yes, sir, so long as you have mentioned the subject. May I ask how you know?" questioned Grace.

"Our Intelligence Department hears and sees all things," the general informed her, waving a hand toward Captain Boucher.

"Are you quite positive as to that, General?" returned "Captain" Grace suggestively.

"What do you mean?" demanded the captain, pricking up his ears.

"I was wondering if the Intelligence Department had reason to believe we had spies with us in this army of invasion," smiled the Overton girl. She observed a quick flash in the eyes of the Intelligence officer, followed by an expression of inquiry there.

"We will be seated now, if you please. Sorry, Mrs. Gray, that we can offer you nothing better than a board to sit on." 71

"A board for a seat is luxury compared with what we have had for the last several evenings. Miss Briggs and myself have been dining sitting on a cellar floor," replied Grace brightly, taking a seat at the right of the general, Elfreda being placed between Captain Boucher and Major Colt on the opposite side of the table.

"To return to your hike, I am very sorry that you did not inform me of the difficulty. Was the action taken without notice to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"What led up to it? Had you any conversation with Mrs. Smythe last evening?"

"Not last evening. I had this morning. It was this way, sir. I went to her headquarters and tried to get her to see the matter in a right light and at the same time to warn her that I could tolerate no further insults from her. I should prefer to say nothing about it, for I do not like to talk behind a person's back, much preferring to speak out when that person is present and can answer."

"So I observed the other day. I don't know about finding another car for you, but in any event I will see that you and Miss Briggs have places in an officer's car for the rest of the journey." 72

"Have you ever been up in the air, Mrs. Gray?" interjected Major Colt.

Grace said she had, and related her experience when on a flight with Hippy Wingate, which interested and amused the officers very much.

"Never been in an observation balloon?" questioned the major.

"No, sir."

"With the general's permission, I should be glad to have you go up with me, and Miss Briggs too, though she would have to go in another car or else wait until a later date, for the basket is not roomy enough for so many."

"If I am permitted to say so without offense, I believe I should prefer to remain on the ground," spoke up J. Elfreda. "I have no ambition to soar."

"How about you, Mrs. Gray?"

"I should be delighted, sir."

"Done! To-morrow if the weather looks promising; otherwise on the following day, if that is agreeable."

Grace said it was.

"I warn you, though," she added, "that you will be taking desperate chances if I go with you."

"How so?" 73

"Mrs. Gray means that something always happens when she is along," Elfreda informed them.

"Nothing very serious can interfere with us now," soothed the major. "There are no Boche airplanes to shoot us down, no enemy artillery to shoot off our cables, and, being attached to trucks, we shall move along slowly and steadily behind the army, with a wonderful view spread out before us."

"I know I shall enjoy it until—"

"Until what?" demanded the general.

"Until the cable breaks," returned "Captain" Grace with a twinkle in her eyes.

"I will let you hear from me early in the morning, Mrs. Gray."

"And I will have a car to take you to the balloons or on toward the front," added the general. "Then that is settled."

"You spoke of spies a few moments ago," spoke up Captain Boucher inquiringly. "I was wondering if you had anything in mind?"

"Likewise, I was wondering if you were having any spy scares?" answered Grace.

Captain Boucher reflected briefly.

"We are," he said. "I am revealing no military secrets when I say that we are."

"You may speak frankly before Mrs. Gray, Captain," interjected the general. "She is something of an investigator herself, and if ever you get in a pickle call on her to assist you." 74

"And make a mess of the case," finished "Captain" Grace. "Pardon me."

"Military information of a vital nature is percolating to the enemy. Of course an army always has and always will have traitors in it, enemy subjects, I mean, but we thought we had stopped all the leaks. It appears that we haven't."

"It is an impossible task, Captain," observed Grace.

"So long as there are wars there will be spies," added the general. "All that we can do is to do our best to minimize the evil and deal sternly with those we catch. Our people in Washington have not been in sympathy with stern measures and the enemy knows this. The result is they have been very bold. It was Mrs. Gray, I understand, Captain, who was responsible for the capture of the spy André."

"And Madame de Beaupre," added Captain Boucher.

"Oh, you know about it, then?" exclaimed General Gordon.

"Yes."

"Suppose we change the subject," suggested Grace, her face flushing. "I never did like to hear myself talked about. May I ask if we are using carrier pigeons on this march?" she questioned innocently. 75

"Not to speak of. We have them, of course, but our lines of communication are so open that birds are not needed. We have sent out a few in an experimental way; but that is all."

"In which direction did they fly, sir, if I may ask?"

"Westward, of course. Why do you ask?" demanded the captain, bending a keen glance on the face of the Overton girl.

"I wondered."

"Will you be good enough to tell us, Mrs. Gray, why you appear to be so interested in carrier pigeons at this moment?" urged the Intelligence officer.

"Yes, what have you to suggest?" added the general.

"That you watch the skies in the early morning. Pigeons are being flown from this army in the early morning, and, sir, they are flying to the eastward," Grace Harlowe informed them in a quiet tone.

CHAPTER VII

OFFICERS GET A SHOCK

EVERY eye was fixed on Grace Harlowe's face mid a tense silence. General Gordon was the first to break the silence.

"Ah! I was certain that you had something in mind," he said.

"I think you must be mistaken, Mrs. Gray," objected Captain Boucher. "What you probably saw was a bird and—"

"Yes, sir, it was a bird," agreed "Captain" Grace amid much laughter.

"Did you see the bird, or did some one tell about it?" persisted the Intelligence officer.

"I saw it, sir."

"Describe its manner of flight, if you can, please, and the point where you saw it."

"The bird spiralled up after a little apparent uncertainty, then taking a direct line, streaked it to the eastward. Two others followed it at regular intervals. That was at Etain, and the birds were flown from a little patch of woods to the south of the ruined village. I have seen many pigeons flown in this war, Captain Boucher, and I am familiar, in a way, with their methods of operating."

"You surely have described it properly. You only saw three birds go up?"

"That was all I saw at Etain."

"You have seen some since?" asked the general quickly.

"Yes, sir. Three more were liberated from a field just at break of day this morning. They too went east."

"Most remarkable," declared the major gazing at her admiringly. "Our Intelligence Department is obtaining some real intelligence."

"Yes, here's a job for you, Captain. I'll warrant you are up at break of day to-morrow morning," chuckled the general.

"This is a serious matter, General," reminded the captain. "It doesn't seem possible that a thing like that could be pulled off under the very eyes of the army. However, if your information is correct, we shall catch the culprit. May I ask you to take an early observation again in the morning, Mrs. Gray?"

"I shall be pleased to do so. If I may make a suggestion, I would urge you to discuss nothing of this before the Chinaman. I observed that the general sent him away before we began speaking; else I should not have told you what I have," said Grace.

"You suspect that the Chinese are involved in this? I hadn't considered that at all."

"No, Captain, I do not—that is, I do not know, but it is well to be cautious. I understand that the Chinese labor battalion was recruited from a very bad element in China. They are great gamblers, as you all know, and for a little money those fellows would go to any lengths. Fertile ground for the Huns, sir."

General Gordon nodded his approval of the sentiment.

"Boucher, would it not be well to make contact with a Chinaman and have him watch his fellows?" asked the general.

"Afraid we can't trust them. We shall have to adopt other methods, which we shall do at once."

"Perhaps I may be able to assist you somewhat. I know one of them, and I know that he knows of the flights of the birds. He knows that I saw them; how, I can't say."

"Who is he?" demanded the Intelligence officer sharply.

"I should prefer not to say just now, and I hope you will not press me on that point. I am asking that, believing that I can obtain information from the man better than you can. What I learn from him may not be very definite, but it may be an indication."



Every Eye Was Fixed on Grace Harlowe.

"Better allow Mrs. Gray to operate in her own way, Boucher. That is my advice," urged the general.

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Captain Boucher nodded.

"We will leave this particular Chinaman to you, Mrs. Gray. When you have any information I trust you will advise me immediately, for moments may be precious. I hope they send out other birds, desiring to have the confirmation of my own eyes."

"Thank you, Captain."

"You have not spoken to any one about what you saw?" questioned the Intelligence officer.

"No, sir."

"That is well. Please do not. Pardon me, I am well aware that you are too clever a woman to do that. I may need your assistance in other matters when we get into enemy territory. If I may say so, you would make an excellent secret service agent."

"Thank you, but I have no ambitions in that direction. My great ambition at the moment is to finish with this miserable business and go back to my home in the States with my husband, Captain Gray of the engineers, and my adopted daughter who is now at school in Paris. Believe me, gentlemen, when I do get back I shall be perfectly content to stay at home, even on election day."

"We all feel as you do," agreed the general, "but you, like the rest of us, will be in the thick of things even then. One can't get the fireside habit immediately after having spent months on the western front. I suppose you are thinking of getting back to your billets?" suggested the general politely.

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"Yes, if you please, sir. I am most grateful for this pleasant evening and the excellent dinner. The bacon tastes like that which we have at home."

"Straight from the States," the general informed her. "This, unfortunately, is the last of it, and we shall live on army chow hereafter, unless the Germans see fit to give us something more worth while. The pleasure this evening has been wholly ours, Mrs. Gray and Miss Briggs, and we thank you for coming. I am in hopes of meeting your husband one of these days. I wish to tell him what I think of his wife," added the general.

"I am grateful to you for the information," said the captain in a low tone, for the Chinese

servant had just come in, though the general sent him out immediately to order the car for the visitors.

Good nights were said, and a few moments later the Overton girls were on their way to their billets.

"You surely gave those army gentlemen a genuine shock, Loyalheart," declared Miss Briggs. "It was all news to me. How you can keep things in the back of your head, and never say a word to your next best friend, is more than I can understand. When did you see all you told them about?"

"While you were in dreamland, my dear. If you will rise early enough to-morrow, you may see something too."

"No, thank you. My desire to sleep is greater than my curiosity. You may do all the sleuthing you choose, J. Elfreda prefers her beauty sleep. I wonder what Mrs. Smythe would say were she to know that we had been dining with a general. I'll venture to say that she does hear about it; then look out for squalls. Here we are."

The car came to a stop before their billets, and as it did Grace observed that some one was standing leaning against the wall of the house. She could not make out much more than that in the darkness. Perhaps it was some one seeking protection from the chill wind that was sweeping up the street, and under which both girls were shivering a little.

Grace stepped up on the walk, went up to the man standing there, and peered into his face.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"Me Won."

"Indeed! What are you doing here so late, Won?"

"Me watchee."

"Watching what?" Grace was puzzled.

"Watchee Missie Glay's slatchel," the Chinaman informed her, pointing to something standing against the side of the building.

"Elfreda, will you look here?" called Grace. "Our belongings are out here on the street."

"You don't say! What can have happened?"

"I should say from the appearance of things that we had been evicted. Who threw these things out, Won?"

"Number one boss woman."

"Who?"

"Blig boss woman. Tlow everything all over, a-la."

"Do you mean Mrs. Smythe?" demanded "Captain" Grace.

"Les."

"I—I begin to understand," gasped Miss Briggs. "She threw our belongings into the street, eh?"

"Les."

"Oh, for a place where I could practice law for one little half hour," raged J. Elfreda.

"Why did she do that, Won?" questioned Grace Harlowe, though suspecting the truth.

"Not know."

"Is she in there?" pointing to the cottage.

"Les."

"Thank you, Won. It was very kind of you to watch our belongings. Don't go away yet, I may need you."

Grace tried the door and found it barred. She called, but there was no answer.

"This is provoking!" she exclaimed, now thoroughly exasperated.

"What are you going to do?" asked Elfreda.

"Wake up the house," she replied shortly, stepping out into the street and feeling about on the ground. "I think this will do it," she observed, returning to the sidewalk with a rock in one hand.

It was a sizable rock, a big cobblestone, with which the street was paved, except for the holes that had been dug by German shells.

"Hulloa the house!" shouted Grace.

There was no response from within. Grace drew back the rock and banged it against the door, but still no response. Now began such a banging as awakened sleepers in the cellars all along the street, a banging that attracted the attention of M. P.'s (military police) and that split a board in the door itself.

"Hulloa the house!" repeated the Overton girl.

"What do you want?" demanded a calm voice from within, in a tone that convinced Grace Harlowe that its owner had not been asleep at all.

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"I wish to get into my billet, if you please."

"Then go to your billet," suggested Mrs. Smythe.

"These are our billets, Mrs. Smythe. If you wish to stay in them, you are welcome so far as we are concerned, but you will please open the door so we may come in."

"You are mistaken. These are not your billets; they are the headquarters of the welfare supervisor. You will be good enough to go away before it becomes necessary for me to call the police."

"Be so kind as to open the door!" demanded Grace evenly.

"You threw our things into the street," shouted Elfreda.

Grace begged her to be quiet.

"Will you go away?" demanded the supervisor, raising her voice.

"Where shall we go? We have no place to sleep. You have thrown our kits out, and we are very cold. I ask you once more to let us in."

"That does not concern me, driver. I am not interested in your domestic affairs. Go away or I shall scream for the M. P.'s."

"Save your breath, they are coming now," answered "Captain" Grace as she heard men running toward them from two directions, and a moment later half a dozen military police with drawn clubs came rushing on the scene.

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CHAPTER VIII

HUNLAND IS REACHED AT LAST

"WHAT'S all this row about?" demanded a gruff voice, and a heavy hand was laid on Grace Harlowe's shoulder.

"Don't get excited, Buddy," answered Grace laughingly.

"Woman!" he exclaimed.

"Two of them," added another M. P. "This needs investigation."

"Just a moment, please. I—"

"Arrest those persons, whoever they are. They were trying to break into this house!" shouted Mrs. Smythe.

"Listen to me, Buddies, then arrest us if you think best. These were our billets, but while we were out to dinner with some friends, *officers* (she accentuated the word), our belongings were thrown into the street and the door barred against us. The woman who did it is Mrs. Smythe, supervisor of the welfare workers with the Third Army. We are both welfare workers."

"What's your name?" demanded the M. P. a little less gruffly.

"Grace Harlowe Gray, formerly ambulance driver on the western front."

"You don't say!" Striding over to the door, the M. P. struck it a blow with his club. "Open that door or I'll beat it down!" he ordered.

"No, no," begged Grace, laying a restraining hand on his arm. "You must not do that, Buddy. Remember there are women in there behind the barred door. If you break it down you will find yourself in serious difficulties. You were going to arrest us?" she asked teasingly, leading him away from the door.

"Arrest nothing. What's that Chink doing against the wall?"

"Watching our outfit. We were out, as I already have told you, when our things were thrown out. The Chinaman was on hand and remained on guard watching the stuff. I know him and will vouch for him, so please don't bother him."

"It goes if you say so. I know you, but you don't know me. Where are you going to sleep?"

Grace said she did not know and asked him if he knew of a vacant place. The M. P. said there wasn't one in the village, but that he would turn some fellows out of a cellar and give the place to the two women.

"No, you will not," declared Grace. "Never mind us, we can shift for ourselves if you can rustle a couple of blankets for us. There is a car just up the street; we can sleep in that."

"Five doughboys in it already," the M. P. informed them. "Have to guess again. I'll tell you what. There's a covered lorry further up the street, loaded with supplies. We'll unload enough of them to give you a place to bunk in, if that will suit you."

"Fine!" glowed Grace. "We shall not be displacing any one and we shall be quite comfortable, I know. Do you make a report of this matter?"

"Sure I do. Want me to say anything in particular?"

"The truth, nothing but the truth," she advised. "Elfreda, shall we shoulder our household belongings and move to our Pullman?"

"I suppose so, but, my dear, I am bitterly disappointed that you didn't permit the M. P. to break the door in," complained J. Elfreda.

"You may well be thankful that he did not. We are on the way to enough trouble as it is. Won, will you carry some of our gear?"

"Let the Chink go. We men will take care of the stuff," spoke up an M. P.

Grace thanked the soldier and also shook hands with Won, then leaning forward she whispered in his ear, "Watch the plidgins and tell me." Grace heard him chuckle and knew that it was all right. Elfreda demanded to know what she was doing, but Grace merely laughed and started on

after the military police, who were carrying their equipment.

The lorry proved to be a most comfortable place, though the girls knew they would be somewhat cramped for room. Several cases of supplies were removed by the men and stowed forward back of the driver's seat. Two pairs of blankets were produced, which Grace was quite certain had been hooked from another truck, and dumped into their sleeping place.

"I reckon that's all we can do for you to-night," announced the M. P. "Sorry we can't do more."

"You have done quite enough and we are grateful," replied Grace earnestly. "I know we shall have a fine night's sleep in our—"

"Rolling bedroom," finished Elfreda.

"Yes. Perhaps we may dream that we are gypsies. I fear I should just love that vagabond life."

"No need to tell me that, Grace Harlowe. I have known it for a long time. Suppose we make our beds and retire. Good-night, Buddies."

"Yes, good-night, and thank you all again," added Grace.

"We'll just hook down the tailpiece so in case of storm you won't get wet. Here's my club. Should any one bother you, bat him over the head and yell for me. I'll be on till four in the morning. Good-night."

The M. P. pulled down the canvas tailpiece and secured it, then the girls heard them going away.

"Even if the M. P.'s *are* 'winning the war' they're real Americans," concluded Miss Briggs. "Are you going to undress?"

Grace said she was not, so they removed their blouses, rolled in their blankets and promptly went to sleep.

It was some hours later when Grace Harlowe heard shouting, listened half asleep, then went back into dreamland. Some time later she sat up wide awake. The truck was swaying from side to side, jolting disagreeably, and the horn up forward was honking like a frightened wild goose leader warning its flock. She knew instantly what had happened. The army train was under motion and they were going with it. This was rather more than she had bargained for, and quickly pulling an edge of the tailpiece aside, opening a narrow slit, the Overton girl peered out. The scene was an unfamiliar one. They were out in the country and there was no sign of the village where they had been only a few minutes before, as it seemed to her.

"Why, we must have been out for some time," she marveled. "Br-r-r!" Rain was falling, the wind was blowing a gale, and marching columns that they were passing were soaked and the faces of the men wore surly expressions.

"No balloon flight to-day, so I suppose I might as well let well enough alone and take what the kind fates have bestowed upon me," concluded the Overton girl. "Poor Elfreda doesn't know anything about it. I think I shall go back to sleep."

This Grace did. Along toward noon she was awakened by Elfreda, who was shaking her.

"Grace Harlowe, do you know where we are?" demanded Miss Briggs.

"Of course I do," muttered Grace.

"Where?"

"In a camion on our way to the Rhine. Did you only now discover that?"

"Yes."

"What a sleepy-head! I knew that hours ago, but what was the use in raising a row? We could not be better off."

"Yes, but our mess," protested Elfreda.

"We have sufficient in our kits for our needs. Let's be sensible and take it easy while we may. Think what a lovely time we are missing. We might have had to walk."

"First this brave soldier would have deserted. The last walk was exercise enough to last me for the rest of my life. Is it your intention to stay in this wagon all day?"

Grace said she hoped to be allowed to remain there undisturbed, declaring that it was the most comfortable berth she had found since coming to France, and suggested that they eat their breakfast. It was not wholly a satisfying meal, but it was helped by a bottle of cold tea which did very well to wash down the hardtack and tinned beef. Enough of the tea was saved for their luncheon, for if the rain continued to fall it was Grace's intention not to get out at all. After

breakfast they lay down for another delicious nap, which was not long coming, lulled as they were by the gusts of rain spattering over the top of the camion. It was not until late in the afternoon that they finally awakened.

Peering out, Grace observed that the line back of them was pulling out of formation, which told her that the army was approaching its objective for the day. The rain had stopped, but a strong wind was whipping the clouds, and altogether the outlook was not a cheerful one.

"Here is a village," she cried. "I hope we have arrived. See, we too are pulling out of formation."

Elfreda complained that, as Grace was using the only peep hole in the house, she could see nothing.

The camion soon stopped, then backed up, bumped against something as it started backing again, and finally came to permanent rest. Grace decided that it was time to bestir themselves and was about to call through the opening she had made, for assistance, when some one began unhooking the curtains.

"Look out for a surprise," whispered "Captain" Grace.

The surprise came, but it was not theirs. The driver of the camion, having unhooked the curtain, raised it up to secure it to the top, probably to permit him to take out some supplies, and suddenly discovered them.

"Here you, get out of that before I yank you out!" he ordered roughly.

"You wouldn't do a thing like that, now would you, Buddy?" teased Grace.

"What! Who are you?"

Grace told him briefly how they came to be in the car, who they were and what their business was.

"You are probably all right, Miss, but if you are you will understand that this isn't quite regular," he declared, considerably perplexed. "I don't know you. I shall have to call the corporal of the guard and turn you over to him." This the driver did. The corporal, after looking them over, decided that he must refer the matter to the sergeant. The sergeant was of the opinion that both were spies, and, conducting them to a cellar, told them to go in and wait until he could report to his superior officer.

Grace told him what unit they belonged to and asked him to suggest to his superior that he identify them through any officer in the Forty-seventh.

The sergeant went away, first taking the precaution to close and secure the door from the outside. Grace Harlowe sat down on the cellar floor and laughed until Elfreda, standing over her, hands on hips, thought "Captain" Grace was becoming hysterical.

"I see nothing in the present situation for merriment," she rebuked most emphatically.

"It is your misfortune, Elfreda, that you have no sense of humor. That you are lacking in this is my one great sorrow in life," saying which Grace went into another spasm of laughter. She sobered suddenly and got up. "I wish we had had the forethought to fetch our rations with us. It would be just like that man to forget all about us."

The cellar was damp and very cold, so that sitting down on the floor for any length of time was not prudent, and therefore the girls walked back and forth, Grace seeking to keep up the spirits of her companion, frequently laughing at the thought of the luck of the Overton girls. But when nine o'clock came and no one had been near them, their situation ceased to be a subject for jest.

"Elfreda, I give you due notice that I am going to break jail. I am going to get out of here. Enough is enough," announced Grace Harlowe.

"How?"

"I shall find a way." Grace tried the door. It gave a little, but plainly was secured with a bar on the outside. She observed, however, that the door was not heavily built except for the crosspieces.

"Elfreda, can you find that post that we fell over on the rear side of this place?" she called.

"Yes, here it is." She carried the post to the front. It was heavy, undoubtedly having been used for a supporting post for the floor above at one time, but Grace found it too heavy for one person to use as she wished to use it.

"Elfreda, if you will take hold of this end and stand before the door, steering the post against it as I thrust, I believe we shall be able to smash the miserable thing."

“Grace Harlowe, you will be court-martialed if you do that—if you break out. Don’t you know that you are at least theoretically under arrest?”

“So are you, but that will not stop me from getting out if I can. Take hold here, please.”

Elfreda did so reluctantly. The two girls then backed up several feet from the door, Grace at the far end of the post, Elfreda near the door end of it.

“When I say Go! run with all your might. Steer the post squarely against the door or you are going to get hurt. Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

“Go!”

A patter of feet, a sharp impact, and a crash followed almost instantly. Elfreda Briggs plunged headfirst into the wreckage, for the door had been stripped from its hinges and broken into many pieces. Grace Harlowe landed on the cellar floor on top of the post, with her breath jolted out of her.

CHAPTER IX

AN IRATE OFFICER

"CAPTAIN" Grace sprang up, gasping for breath, for she had been thrown violently against the end of the post when the other end struck the door.

"Are you hurt, Elfreda?" she cried.

"Of course I am."

"Forget it and let's get out of here," urged Grace, assisting her companion to her feet. "If they catch us now they surely will have a case against us."

"I can't forget, but I'll try to get out," promised Miss Briggs, rubbing a tender spot on one arm.

They hurried from the cellar to the street. Grace looked up and down the street, then started to the left, having discovered what seemed to her, from his attitude of bored indifference, to be an M. P. As she neared the man she recognized him. It was this M. P. who had assisted the Overton girls to the truck the night before.

"I am truly glad to see you, Buddy," cried Grace. "We are in difficulties again. We were locked in a cellar as suspicious characters and have just broken jail. Can you tell me if the headquarters of Company A, Forty-seventh, is anywhere near? Also where may I find the Intelligence headquarters?"

"Forty-seventh is at the other end of the town. Intelligence headquarters is the last building before you reach the river bridge right on the way you are headed."

"What river?"

"The Moselle. Heinie is camped on the other side of it, so be careful that you don't get too near the bridge or you are liable to be picked up again. Come along, I'll show you the way. It's on my beat."

Grace thanked him gratefully.

"You do not happen to know whether or not Captain Boucher is there, do you?"

The M. P. said he did not, but presumed so, for there was some sort of a council of war being held at the headquarters.

The M. P. left them at the door and Grace entered, halting when she found herself facing a sentry. She said she wished to see Captain Boucher on a matter of importance and asked the sentry to send her name in to the officer. The sentry told her he did not believe Captain Boucher wished to be disturbed, but she insisted that she must see him, so her name was sent in and Grace and Elfreda were seated in the hall.

The Intelligence officer came out immediately and greeted them with great cordiality.

"What can I do for you?" he questioned, smiling down into the flushed face of Grace Harlowe. "Is it something connected with the affair we were speaking of?"

"Not directly. The person that I said knew something about it is, I believe, working for us. I am quite certain that he will have something to report. Have you discovered anything?"

"I have verified your statement." He smiled grimly. "Beyond that we have not gone. But you have something else to say to me?"

"Yes, sir." She glanced at the sentry.

"Come into the kitchen. There is a conference in the front room. Now what is it?" he demanded when they had reached the rear room and the door was closed behind them.

"I have just broken out of jail and have come here to ask you to straighten the matter out for me. Miss Briggs is a lawyer, but her sort of law isn't good on the western front. Besides, she is an accessory both before and after the fact, as she would characterize it."

"I don't quite understand," wondered the captain.

"It is not customary with me to carry my troubles to others, but something must be done or I shall have to go to General Gordon and enter a formal complaint, which I do not wish to do," began Grace. She thereupon related the story of their ejection from the cottage where they had

planned to berth the previous night; their finding a place to sleep in a camion; the arrival at the river and their arrest and imprisonment in the cellar, followed by their smashing the door and taking matters into their own hands.

As Grace related the story a flush mounted to the temples of the Intelligence officer.

"Outrageous! Asinine!" he exclaimed explosively. "You are right, this sort of thing must be put down. I think I see how it happened that you were kept in the cellar. We are on the border of the enemy territory, theoretically on it already, and the officers are very busy this evening, for we have many uncertainties ahead of us."

"I understand, sir, and should not have come to you, but for the fact that I am likely to be picked up by the M. P. again at any moment."

"Rest easy. I will attend to that."

"Thank you. Please do not report the eviction incident. We can settle it when we get to the Rhine, or perhaps by then it will have settled itself," urged Grace.

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"As I was saying, the officers being very busy, the sergeant's report may not even yet have been read by the officer in command. I am glad that you took matters into your own hands. Have you a place to sleep to-night?"

"Not yet, sir."

"You ladies will remain here. I will have two cots put in the kitchen. We shall be in conference more or less most of the night and you may not get much sleep. However, it will be better than nothing. In the meantime I will send an orderly to report that you are here and to vouch for you. Where is your equipment?"

Grace told him that it was left in the truck, and described as well as she could the place where the truck might be found.

"Good. Don't worry. I will also send word to Major Colt so he may know where you are to be found. He has been looking for you, but all he could learn was that neither of you ladies had been seen all day. No one appeared to know what had become of you. He wishes you to go up with him to-morrow. Will you go?"

"Yes, sir, provided I am not then in jail."

"Very good. I'll send word to him to that effect," laughed the captain. "In the meantime make yourselves tea or coffee. There's army bacon in the chest and potatoes in the woodbox."

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"Pardon me, but have you had mess?" asked Grace.

"Haven't had time to attend to that. In fact, I had forgotten all about it."

"With your permission we will get supper for you."

"That will be fine. Thank you."

"How many?" questioned "Captain" Grace.

"Just three," replied the Intelligence officer quizzically. "The others have messed, but perhaps they will be glad of a pot of tea while I am eating with you."

The Overton girls busied themselves at once and soon had a savory meal going. There were bacon with eggs, French fried potatoes, a bread pudding made of crusts of bread and dressed with a mound of jelly, baked beans and a plate of sardines.

"Something of a hodge-podge," observed Grace, surveying the layout rather disapprovingly. "It lacks something, but I can't think what."

"I know what," spoke up Elfreda. "It lacks three people with appetites. The odor of that bacon and eggs nearly drives me frantic, and if we don't sit down soon my appetite will overcome my better judgment. The tea is ready for the council of war. I suppose they have their mess cups with them."

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"If not, they will be obliged to drink out of the teapot. I'll hand it in." Grace tapped on the door, which was opened by Captain Boucher. "The tea, sir. Have you cups?" The captain nodded and Grace pointed to the table. The signal was unnecessary, for the captain's eyes and nose had informed him that supper was ready.

The officer joined them soon afterwards, and a pleasant chat helped to compensate for what was lacking in food. He declared that it was the daintiest meal he had had, outside of Paris, since coming to France.

"I will send in your belongings as soon as they arrive. You may then turn in and will not be

disturbed. You can lock the door leading into the front room if you wish."

Grace thanked him, saying that she preferred to leave the door unlocked. They had about finished clearing up after the meal when Captain Boucher entered with two soldiers who had brought the girls' things from the truck. There was also news for them. Their difficulty had been adjusted, and nothing further would be done in the matter. As Captain Boucher had surmised, the officer to whom the sergeant submitted his report on their arrest had not even taken time to look at it.

"I presume the French Government will bring in a bill for the door we broke down," suggested Grace laughingly.

"Trust the French for that. One never has to ask them for a bill. Oh, by the way, Major Colt's car will be here for you at nine-thirty. He asks me to say to you that he has signed you up for an interesting voyage in the skies."

"Do you think, sir, that he has flying togs that I could use?"

"That will be provided. You will have a cold sail, but I don't suppose you will mind that after your months of campaigning."

"No, sir. How will Miss Briggs ride?"

"In the major's car with myself and two others. She will ride out to see you make the start. Good-night. Hope you sleep well. The cots are standing up there in the corner."

Grace and Elfreda made preparations for retiring and were soon in bed and asleep, Grace undisturbed by the noise or the thought of what was to be a thrilling day for her on the morrow.

CHAPTER X

GRACE TAKES THE SKY ROUTE

THE morning was cool and there were wind clouds on the horizon when Grace Harlowe stepped out to take an observation just at daybreak on the following morning. She scanned the sky for some moments, but saw no more carrier pigeons.

Across the river the enemy was moving. She could see them plainly through her glasses and it gave her a queer feeling. Here within pistol range were the hosts of the enemy that had laid France in ruins, that had killed and wounded hundreds of thousands of her own countrymen, moving out into their own land, a land on which hardly a shell had fallen in the four years of desperate warfare. It wasn't fair, it wasn't right, as Grace reasoned it out with some bitterness. Could the enemy have been driven back by force of arms and hammered until his hosts poured into the Rhine in a perfect cataract, she confessed to herself that she would have felt better over the situation. But there they were, taking their time to retire and without a shot being fired at them. The Overton girl actually shuddered to think what a different situation would exist at that moment had victory crowned the arms of the enemy.

Grace shrugged her shoulders and went back to awaken Elfreda and start the fire for breakfast.

"If the captain has not gone out, please give him some breakfast. I must hurry with mine, for I am going over to report to our superior that we are off duty to-day; that is, I am. You will be on call."

"Are you going to report to her?" demanded Miss Briggs disapprovingly.

"Yes. I have no way of getting word to her, and by the time we drive back to the balloon base she may be on her way. The army is to make an early start to-day, I understand. It will take a long time to cross the bridges. What an opportunity for the enemy; but he knows better. He knows that the American artillery is trained on him and that machine guns are ready to sweep his ranks from this side of the river. Our people are taking no chances."

"They are familiar with the breed," nodded Miss Briggs.

Grace ate a hurried breakfast, and leaving her equipment with Elfreda started out at a brisk pace for the headquarters of Mrs. Chadsey Smythe. As she drew near the cottage she saw some one emerge from it. This some one proved to be the maid, Marie Debussy.

"Good morning, Marie. Where are you going?"

The girl answered dully that she was going to fetch Madame's mess.

"You have been crying, what is the trouble?"

"Oh, Madame, it is terrible! Because I came late the supervisor would not let me in last night. She was in a terrible temper. I sat out all night and this morning she abused me terribly. Can you not do something for me? I should like so much to be with you and Miss Briggs, for you are so kind. She will abuse you if you go to her this morning. Please don't go."

"I presume there will be more trouble if I do," reflected Grace. "Will you deliver a message to her for me, Marie?"

"Yes, surely, Madame."

"Tell her, please, that I am relieved from duty for the day, that I am to spend the day with Major Colt in his balloon, with the permission of General Gordon, but that I shall report for duty to-morrow morning. I am sorry Mrs. Smythe is so unkind to you, but do try to get along with her until we reach the Rhine. I am sure there will be a change soon after we get there. Please tell her that Miss Briggs will go through in Major Colt's car to-day with Captain Boucher of the Intelligence Department and some others."

"I will tell her. I hope I may live with you and work for you when we reach the Rhine. I can do much for you. I will do any and all things for you. We go to Coblenz, I am told."

Grace said that was her understanding.

"I shall be afraid with so many of the Boches about."

"Don't worry, Marie, you will be protected. I am so sorry you are in trouble, but I promise you it will all come out right and that you soon shall be back in your beloved France, just as I hope to be back in my much-loved country. Good-bye, and don't forget the message."

Elfreda and Captain Boucher were eating breakfast together when "Captain" Grace arrived. He advised Grace to take rations with her, as the balloon probably would not come down, unless forced down, until night, adding that the rest of the equipment would be placed in the army car, where she would find it, or in Miss Briggs' billet that evening.

Immediately after breakfast Captain Boucher ordered his attendant to pack up, and to assist the ladies in shipping their belongings when the car arrived. He asked them to have the car pick him up at the cottage on the return from the balloon base.

"I shall not see you again, as I am going out," he said shaking hands cordially with Grace. "Good luck and don't fall out."

"So long as the basket keeps right side up I expect to be with it," replied the Overton girl brightly. "Good-bye, sir, and thank you."

"If I thought you would be in position to settle a wager, Loyalheart, I should like to lay a wager that that big sausage balloon comes down a hopeless wreck with you at the bottom of the heap," observed Miss Briggs.

"Your reasoning is bad, J. Elfreda. Were we to make such a wager and I returned in condition to pay up, don't you see that you would lose? I am not a lawyer, but my logic on rare occasions is really brilliant. Any rebuttal?"

"Not a word," answered Elfreda, shrugging her shoulders. "I think the car is coming."

Everything being ready the Overton girls were soon on their way to the balloon base, that is, on the way to Major Colt's balloon base, for the sausage observation balloons were strung out over a line several miles in length. The big gas bag was swaying, chafing at its bit, as Grace characterized it, when they reached the base. They observed that the huge bag was attached by a cable to a big, heavy army truck, the shining cable being wound about a drum on a winch. As the army moved, the truck moved, and the crew either paid out the cable or wound it in, as the officer in the basket far above them wished to go up or down.

The cable looked a too slender thread to hold such a giant of a thing as a big observation balloon. Elfreda shook her head disapprovingly as she looked at the outfit with wide-open eyes.

"I'll bet you really wish you were going up, too," teased Grace, having observed the expression on the face of her companion.

"What! Never! I have no ambition to go skyward on a bubble. The bubble might burst."

"In the first place, this isn't a bubble, and in the second place I am not going to make a spectacular leap in a parachute. Good morning, Major," greeted "Captain" Grace as the car drew up near where the officer, clad in his flying togs, was giving directions to the men. "How soon do we take the sky route?"

"In a few minutes, Mrs. Gray. Good morning, Miss Briggs. Looks like wind to-day. Ever get sea-sick, Mrs. Gray?"

"No, sir."

"Then you should not be air-sick. Sometimes we flop about a bit, but we shall be all right."

"Is—is that the thing that you ride in?" questioned Elfreda pointing to the basket that was resting on the truck.

The major laughingly said it was.

"It does look rather too delicate for two human beings to ride in," agreed Grace. "I hope it is stronger than it looks."

The officer assured her that it would hold, though its smallness did not permit of much moving about.

"Flying now, as compared with wartime, is a perfectly safe sport. It is different when enemy artillery are trying to pot one, and enemy airplanes are dropping incendiary bombs at you or trying to rake you with machine-gun fire. That sometimes makes it quite interesting for the balloonist. As a matter of common prudence, however, we always attach ourselves to parachutes, as we will do this morning," added the major.

J. Elfreda shot a significant glance at her companion and Grace looked a little troubled, but this soon passed and she began asking questions about the parachute. She observed that two of them were attached to the basket.

"Our parachutes," explained the major, "when open are thirty-five feet in diameter, with a circular hole in the top about a foot wide to permit the imprisoned air to escape. Otherwise the parachute would go into a side-slip in making a descent."

"Cheerful, isn't it?" observed Miss Briggs under her breath.

"Fastened to the edge of the parachute, as you can see, are small cords which lead down and attach to half as many light ropes, finally terminating in only two ropes which are fastened to the harness worn by the person for whose use the parachute is intended," continued the major. "That cone-shaped case contains the entire works. I'll not go into the mechanism of the contrivance in detail. When a man prepares to descend, the harness being already on him, the parachute is pulled from the case and out he jumps. Then all he has to do is to wait for the parachute to open."

"Quite simple, sir," agreed Elfreda. "All one has to do is to jump, and wait. If the parachute breaks or doesn't open you keep on waiting. Is that it, Major?"

The major laughingly agreed that it was.

"It is well to understand the workings before one goes up. I know it all sounds formidable to you, but it isn't at all formidable. See that you are fastened all right and make certain that your harness has not fouled, then jump."

"Do parachutes ever fail to open?" questioned Grace soberly.

"I have heard of such cases, but not in this war. If one thinks fast and clearly and doesn't lose his head, the chances are that he will be all right."

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"How far does one ordinarily drop before the parachute opens?" asked Miss Briggs.

"About fifty feet, sometimes a little less if one is heavy. If light, he might fall much further than this."

"Heavens!" exclaimed J. Elfreda. "Grace, I'm sorry for you. Being light you may fall a mile before the thing opens, and by that time you may have no need for a parachute."

"I should think one would land pretty hard," suggested Grace.

"About the equivalent of jumping from a fence. The descent is very easy, about five hundred feet a minute. However, there will be no need for worry to-day. I am explaining these matters merely as a matter of routine and ordinary prudence. I can imagine no emergency that would make it necessary for you to take the jump into space. If I did, I shouldn't be taking you up. No, there is no possibility of such a thing. Now, if you will step down we will get you into your flying togs and harness you to the parachute."

For a moment Grace Harlowe's courage weakened, but only for a moment.

"If I can go through a battle in the air in an airplane, I surely can ride in a captive balloon, even if the basket I am to ride in does look like a toy spaniel's sleeping basket," she told herself. "I am ready, sir," she announced, stepping down.

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A heavy flying coat and helmet were put on, then came the harness. The latter was adjusted while Grace was standing on the ground, the major fixing her up before donning his own harness, examining it with a care that sent the cold chills up and down the spine of J. Elfreda Briggs.

"Does it pinch you anywhere?" asked the major. "You know it must fit firmly."

"I think it is quite comfortable," replied Grace. "Now what do I do?"

"Climb up the ladder and get in, being careful that you do not foul the lines."

The officer stood on the ground to watch her getting in to make certain that the parachute ropes did not become tangled. Grace ran up the ladder nimbly and climbed over into the basket, which was just deep enough to leave her head and shoulders showing above its upper edge.

"All set," cried the major, going up the ladder. "Let up gently. I'll direct you as we go as to altitude. You see, Mrs. Gray, we are connected with the truck by a telephone wire, so that the observer may be always in contact not only with his base, but also with the artillery control station. We spot in wartime, both for marks and for results. Sorry I can't show you some spotting under actual war conditions."

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"I am quite content to have you tell me about it," laughed Grace.

The major grinned, then tested the telephone, adjusted the aneroid barometer, took a final glance around, and nodded to the flight sergeant. The latter blew two short whistles, and as if for good measure bellowed "Let go!"

"Better come along," called down Grace to Elfreda who with one hand shading her eyes was gazing up at them, her face a little pale.

Miss Briggs shook her head.

"One balloonic in the family is enough," she cried, then something seemed to be drawing the

earth away from Grace Harlowe, and she suddenly realized that they were going up.

ROUGH GOING IN CLOUDLAND

"WE'RE off," the major informed her, but his reminder was unnecessary. Already J. Elfreda Briggs had shrunk to almost childish proportions and the big army truck looked like a toy express wagon. Had it been painted red the illusion would have been nearly perfect.

"My, it's windy up here!" shouted Grace.

"We will be out of it soon, I think," answered the major.

The wind was roaring through the rigging and the basket was swaying most alarmingly. It seemed to Grace as if they were in imminent danger of being spilled out. She clung tightly to the edge of the basket, and looked down into it rather than toward the earth. What was even more disturbing was the way that wicker floor settled and heaved underneath her feet. What if the bottom should drop out? What if the sides should give way? "Captain" Grace leaned back a little so as not to bear too much weight on the side she was clinging to.

Major Colt's back was turned toward her and his binoculars were at his eyes. Those confident shoulders gave Grace renewed assurance that there was nothing unusual about their situation. Just the same she rather envied J. Elfreda Briggs, probably at that moment lounging back comfortably on the rear seat of the major's automobile and making uncomplimentary remarks about "that crazy Grace Harlowe." "Captain" Grace was not over-certain that Elfreda was wrong.

Going up in a captive balloon is very different from a trip in an airplane. There is no comparison possible so far as sensations are concerned. Flying in a plane is exhilarating, but the lurches and sways of the basket of a balloon, have a far different effect.

They had been going up for hours, as it seemed to her, when the major turned toward her.

"Make you dizzy?" he shouted.

Grace smiled and nodded. She wondered how pale her face was, or as much of it as showed outside of the helmet.

"Enjoying it?"

"It is a wonderful experience," answered Grace, forcing a smile to her face.

"Stop at two thousand," called the officer through his telephone. "Now you see one of the difficulties of going eastward. The strong light is in our faces and we cannot see clearly. After the sun passes the meridian, visibility will be vastly improved. You will enjoy the view then."

Grace Harlowe fervently hoped she might.

"Look over. You will get used to it very quickly. Not so much wind at this level. I knew we should get better weather here. Guess I spoke too quickly," he added as a sickening lurch heaved the basket, and for a few seconds the bottom seemed surely to be falling out of it.

"Stopped at two thousand," came a voice from the depth somewhere below.

"Thought you were gone that time, didn't you?" chuckled the officer. "That jolt was caused by the stopping of the winch at two thousand."

"Two thousand what, sir?"

"Feet of altitude. We will loaf around here for a time until you grow weary of it, then we will go higher in search of some new scenery. When the light gets better I will show you the Rhine."

For the next several minutes the officer was occupied with studying the landscape to the eastward.

"Enemy trains moving in formation. Nothing unusual," he called down through the telephone. "Large body of men emerging from forest ten kilometers to the south of the main body. Go to thirty-five. May get a better view."

Grace tightened her grip as the basket lurched. She knew now what the order meant. They were going fifteen hundred feet higher than they were. Her eardrums began to throb and her breath came in little short gasps.

"Stop at thirty-five."

Again that disconcerting jolt and a violent swaying back and forth of the huge, ungainly bag over their heads.

"How do you like it now?" called the officer in a jovial voice.

Grace saw his lips move and knew he was speaking to her, though she could not hear a word he said.

"I can't hear you, sir."

"I thought so. Pinch your nose and swallow hard several times," he shouted, himself performing the same operation on his own nose.

Grace followed his direction, faintly heard, and something snapped in both ears. For the moment she thought she had ruptured her eardrums, but to her amazement discovered that she could hear as well as ever.

"I think I am perfectly all right now, sir," she said. "How queer!"

"Decreased pressure," answered Major Colt briefly. "We will make our weather report now if you will be good enough to remove the thermometer from the pocket behind you and throw it overboard."

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"Throw it overboard? Do you mean it, sir?"

He nodded.

Grace thrust her hand into the pocket and, finding the instrument, dropped it over the side. To her surprise it stopped with a jolt when just below the level of the basket. It was attached to a slender wire. "Please haul it in in five minutes," the major ordered. Then he gave through the telephone the wind velocity, which Grace was amazed to learn was thirty-eight miles an hour; then the barometer reading, and then he called for the temperature.

"Twenty-eight, sir."

"Twenty-eight," repeated the major through the telephone. "That duty done we will now proceed to enjoy ourselves. Hungry?"

"I—I hadn't thought about it. Now that you mention the subject I do realize that there is a sort of gone feeling in my stomach."

"We'll have a bit of a bite. While I am getting it ready you see if you can find the American Army."

Grace studied the landscape ahead of them for a long time, and said she couldn't see anything that looked like an army. He demanded to know where she was looking.

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"About where those little green hills are. I do not recall having seen those from the ground," she said, lowering her glasses.

The major chuckled.

"Know where you are looking for the American Army? You're hunting for it on the other side of the Rhine. Look down at an angle of about forty-five degrees. See anything?"

"I think I do, but what I see doesn't look like any army that I ever saw."

"You're looking at the Third American Army, just the same. Now find the Boche army a little further out, but not too far."

"I have them, sir."

"What are they doing?"

"Creeping in formation."

"Good! You are an observer already. Lean over and look down. Get used to it. Make you dizzy?"

"A little. I get dizzy when the basket tries to lie down on its side, and feel as if I were going to fall out."

The major laughed and motioned to her to sit down.

"Going to have tiffin now. Don't bother us with your family troubles down there, at least not until after the whistle blows," he called through the telephone, and doubling his legs under him he sat down on the bottom of the basket, with an appetizing-looking luncheon spread out on a piece of paper in his lap.

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They could hear the wind roaring over them now, but only breaths of it sucked down into the

basket. A thermos bottle of tea that was still hot was handed to Grace, Major Colt producing another from “nowhere” for his own consumption.

“Drink it down. It will put new life into you. Dip into the food too. There’s plenty and to spare. Suppose you never sat down to tiffin thirty-five hundred feet in the air?”

Grace said she never had.

“Were you ever shot down while on observation work?” she asked him between mouthfuls.

“Yes, a few times.”

“What happened?”

“I came down.” He grinned.

“What else, sir?” persisted Grace, determined to get the story from him.

“Nothing except that a Boche flier took a mean advantage of me and sneaked up on me in an Allied plane that the enemy had captured. Then he calmly dropped a bomb on the old bag.”

“What did you do then, sir?”

“Deserted the ship and woke up in a hospital. You see I bumped my head against a stone wall in landing. My head from infancy has been soft and demands most delicate handling.”

Grace said she couldn’t imagine such a thing. To her the major was a heroic figure. He reminded her of Hippy Wingate. Like Hippy he made a joke of the desperate work he had done and was still doing. There were no heroics about those cloudland pirates.

“What did you do before the war, if it is not an impertinent question? You know a woman’s curiosity must be satisfied.”

“No impertinence about it at all. I had a good job, and maybe I shall have the luck to get it back again after the war is over. I was a floor-walker in a Newark, New Jersey, department store. I’ve been up in the world since then. Had my ups and downs as it were.”

Grace laughed. War played strange freaks with human beings. The officer’s confession, instead of decreasing her admiration of him, increased it. A man who could step from department store life into the perilous life of a wartime balloonist was a *man*! That was the way with her wonderful Americans. But to have to return to the chattering crowds of shoppers, directing this one to the ribbon counter, that one to the galvanized cooking utensil sale in the basement—the thought was too much for Grace Harlowe. She could not reconcile herself to it nor adjust herself to seeing this hardy pirate acting in any such rôle in the future.

“You do not think so, eh?” he demanded shrewdly. “Watch me. One day you will step up to me, without recognizing me, and say, ‘Floor-walker, will you please direct me to the cosmetics?’”

“I will not,” declared Grace Harlowe. “I never use them.”

Both laughed heartily.

“You may be right—I may be right, who knows?” he muttered. “I shall miss this wonderful life, of course, and it will be difficult to settle down and have to look up again rather than down on a world of pigmies. Had I to do it over again I should go into aviation. Those fellows are free as the birds of the air, while I am anchored to a tree or truck. I prefer to be free, to soar the heavens without having a string attached—What!”

The major sprang up, scattering the remainder of their tiffin on the floor of the basket. The basket had given a terrific lurch and, glancing up with a frightened expression on her face, Grace saw the huge bag heaving, swelling and plunging, the basket twisting, lurching and jolting under her.

The girl staggered to her feet and grasped the side of the basket. Her head was spinning and her diaphragm seemed to be seeking to emulate the erratic movements of the ship.

“Wind-storm!” shouted Major Colt. “Going to have some real sport.”

Grace did not know what his idea of sport was, but she was quite positive that if this were sport she was not a sportsman.

“Haul in, you idiots!” bellowed the officer through the telephone. “Can’t you see we’re trying to stand on our heads?”

“Waiting for orders, sir,” came back the answer. “Hauling down now till ordered to stop.”

“You’d better,” growled the major. “Hang on so you don’t get thrown out!” he called to Grace.

The Overton girl needed no advice in that direction. She was clinging to the basket’s edge with

all her might. The balloon adopted new tactics. The instant the winch down there began to wind in, the balloon, as if resentful of this interference with its "sport," began to buck and dive. At one time the wicker basket was actually lying on its side, and as Grace lay on her stomach against it she found herself gazing straight down three-and-a-half thousand feet.

"Captain" Grace closed her eyes to shut out the sight. It was just a little more than she could stand. A few seconds later she was on her feet again, for the balloon had righted. Now the bag began to whip the air.

"Let go!" she heard the balloonist call through the telephone. "Trying to crack the whip with us? Not ready to bump our heads on the ground just yet. Up five hundred more. Maybe we'll find a better streak there. Anyway we'll ride it out, wind or no wind."

The balloon eased a little, and while it still bucked there was less kick, so to speak, in its movements.

The respite, however, was a brief one, and again those fearsome tactics were resumed.

Major Colt glanced at Grace during a brief lull. She nodded and forced a smile to her face.

"Are we in great danger?" she shouted.

"It might be worse," was the comforting response. "We are good so long as the bag holds, but the wind is growing stronger and no telling what may turn up. Keep cool. I'll get you out of it, wind or no wind."

A blast that threatened to rend the bag struck them, and the balloon lay down on its side. It was up with a bound, then down again, until Grace Harlowe could not decide for a certainty whether she was standing on her head or on her feet. As a matter of fact she was practically doing both.

Then suddenly peace, delicious peace and quiet, settled over the troubled ship. It righted, the wind stopped blowing and the balloon floated gently on an even keel.

"Oh, isn't this fine!" cried Grace happily.

"Rotten fine, thank you, as the Englishman would say. Know what's happened?"

"No, sir, but whatever it is I feel greatly relieved to know that the wind has died down as suddenly as it broke loose."

"My dear woman, something other than the wind has broken loose. The wind is blowing just as hard as before, but we do not feel it because we are going with it. We're adrift!"

"Meaning?"

"That the balloon has snapped its cable and is now traveling toward the Rhine at a high rate of speed. From present indications I should say that you and I will arrive there considerably in advance of the Third American Army." Trying to appear undisturbed, though he was more troubled than he cared to admit to his passenger, Major Colt possessed a pretty clear idea of what was before them.

CHAPTER XII

A LEAP FROM THE SKIES

GRACE HARLOWE regarded him calmly, rather to the surprise of the balloonist, for he had feared a different attitude.

"What are the probabilities, sir?" she asked.

"Oh, we are certain to get down, Mrs. Gray."

"But—" She smiled doubtfully.

"We are getting higher all the time, and I am in hopes that we shall run into a counter-current that will drive us back over our own lines. Once there we can come down with nothing more than a shaking up. We can do that anyway if we do not become mixed up with more currents."

"But, sir, I do not see how getting back to our own lines is going to be of much assistance to us. Granting that we reach a current of air that will take us over our lines, haven't we got to pass through the present level to get down, and will not that level blow us toward the Rhine again? We might keep on seesawing indefinitely, it appears to me."

"You surely have a head on your shoulders, young woman," answered the major laughingly. "This being the case I'll tell you the truth. We are in a fix. The best we can do at the moment is to let the bag drift where it will, hoping for the best. Provided it doesn't carry us too far away, the wind probably will at least moderate by sundown, then I shall liberate some gas and we will make a landing. To try it in this wind would mean that the ship surely would be torn to pieces and that quite probably we would share a similar fate."

"How long can the balloon be depended upon to stay up?"

"Until sometime to-morrow morning. Of course if it takes a great altitude it is liable to burst, but I shall try not to let it get up that high."

"It is a cheerful outlook, Major. I thank you for your frankness, just the same. It is considerable satisfaction to know just what the probabilities are."

As she was speaking, the officer, with glasses to his eyes, was studying the terrain ahead of them. Grace applied her own glasses to her eyes and gazed off to the eastward. She could make out the narrow ribbon of water, a crooked ribbon it was, that marked the course of the Rhine. Beyond it were rugged, terraced hills which she knew were vineyards, here and there the towers of a castle relieving the monotony of the hills. She was interrupted by a shout from the pilot.

"Here we go back," he cried. "In another level now. That's good."

It was not long before they had swept over the marching American army, now so far below them that it could be made out only with the binoculars. The major liberated a little gas, whereupon the big bag was caught in a blast and driven to the eastward again. This time he let the ship go. There was no other safe course to follow. As it swept through the air it gained in altitude again, but did not go so high as before. Soon the earth was blotted out by a sea of clouds, which only now and then broke sufficiently to give the aviators a view of what lay beneath the cloud-sea.

"We must go lower," the pilot told her, opening the gas valve ever so little, whereupon the balloon slowly sank through the clouds and the earth grew into their vision.

Something *pinged* through the air close at hand. Grace Harlowe had heard that sound many times since she arrived on the western front, and so had the major. It was a bullet, probably a rifle bullet. She flashed a significant glance at her companion and he nodded.

Ping! Another bullet had flung itself up from the earth.

The major threw over some ballast, which in this instance proved to be one of his sailing instruments.

"Sorry, but I had to do it," he explained in answer to her look of inquiry. "Of course I might throw myself out, but that would be too much ballast and you never would stop going heavenward until the outfit blew up."

Grace laughed and the officer joined in the laugh. The balloon had quickly shot through the clouds and was sailing along, the basket just grazing the tops of them. It was a wonderful spectacle, which the Overton girl, despite her serious situation, found time to gaze upon, and

marvel at the beauties of cloudland.

All at once the clouds broke up into huge banks of black and white vapor, and looking down the officer saw that they had been swept back some little distance to the westward. He reasoned that they were about over the spot where the shots had been fired, which proved to be the range of terraced hills on the eastern side of the river.

"I told you we would reach the Rhine before the army did," he chuckled.

Ping!

A little chip of wicker was neatly snipped from one corner of the basket. Grace Harlowe regarded it questioningly, and grinned.

"I thought you said the war was ended, sir," she said, glancing over at him.

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"Huns!" he replied explosively. "What can one expect?"

"What I am concerned about principally, sir, is what would happen to us if the gas bag were hit by a rifle bullet. Would it be a serious matter for us?"

He nodded.

"We would be obliged to give up our joy ride and go home."

Ping! Pock!

"Hit!" exclaimed the major, glancing up apprehensively at the bag.

"I heard it, sir. Are we losing altitude?"

"Not much, but we shall be soon. Yes, she's settling a little now. Look up."

Grace did so and observed a fold in the bag that had not been there before, showing that some gas had escaped.

"How long will it take to let us down?"

"About twenty minutes. We shall go down faster after a little. Look over your harness and make certain that the lines are not fouled," he directed, taking his own advice. "Just in case of emergency," he nodded.

"They seem to be all right, sir," Grace informed him. "You do not think we shall have to use them, do you?"

Major Colt shook his head.

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"Not at this rate of descent."

Ping! Pock!

They had been hit again. Grace found herself admiring the shooting, for it really was excellent work, probably done with an automatic rifle in the hands of a former enemy sharpshooter.

The major cast an anxious glance up at the swaying bag, then down at that which was slowly assuming the appearance of Mother Earth. He was disturbed, not for himself but because of his passenger. Grace observed his distress.

"Don't worry, Major. You know you said that nothing serious possibly could happen on this voyage, now that the war is over."

"I take it back. The war isn't over. It will be over mighty quickly, though, if I get my hands on the miserable Boche who is trying to shoot us down."

"Trying to? He already has," corrected the Overton girl.

There were now several folds in the big envelope, the sides of which seemed to be respirating like those of some huge animal, and they were falling altogether too rapidly to leave much hope for what was to come.

"We shall be down in a heap soon," announced the officer calmly. "Mrs. Gray, are you in full possession of your nerve?"

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"I think so. Why?"

"Because you've got to jump."

"Oh!" "Captain" Grace could feel a cold sweat breaking out all over her. "Ho—ow—ho—ow high are we?"

"About a mile."

She looked over the side into the abyss, and Grace Harlowe was convinced that were she to try that jump her heart would stop beating forever long before she reached the earth. Still, she showed none of her real feelings when she looked up at her companion.

"I am ready whenever you give the word, sir. You must tell me just what to do and when to do it. You know it will have been the first time that I ever fell out of the skies. I'll be a real shooting star, won't I?"

"You will do," grinned the balloonist. "Get ready. We have no time to lose."

"How about yourself, sir?"

"As soon as you are well started I will follow, and being heavier I probably shall catch up with you. Make certain that you are clear before you get out of the basket. Then climb out, hanging on to the edge of the basket, looking about you once more to be on the safe side. Understand?"



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She Clung Desperately to the Basket's Edge.

Grace nodded.

"Then what, sir?"

"Let go! Your part of the operation will not have been completed until you reach the ground. The instant you feel your feet touching earth, cut yourself clear. Here is a knife. Hang it about your neck. Hurry now. We are losing rapidly." The pilot cast another anxious glance over the big bag, then down at the earth.

"Are you clear?"

"I think so, sir."

"Climb out! Take it easy. I knew an absent-minded pilot who climbed out with great deliberateness and let go and was dashed to his death because he had forgotten to hook up his harness. He thought he had it in order, but he had not. Out now. I will give you a hand."

The basket tipped perilously when she threw a leg over the edge of it. The other leg seemed to weigh tons. It simply would not go over, and the major had to assist her. Grace's body finally slipped over, she clinging desperately to the basket's edge as she straightened out. It was the most awful moment of her life.

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"Let go!" bellowed the major.

Grace shut her eyes and held them shut with all her might. Her fingers slowly relaxed their grip on the basket and her body shot downward.

CHAPTER XIII

"CAPTAIN" GRACE INVADES GERMANY

A JOLT followed, then a series of them, and the Overton girl felt herself going down and down and down. After a little she summoned the courage to open her eyes and look down, but only for a second, then she pinched them shut.

"Shake yourself!" bellowed a voice above her.

Grace wondered at this marvel, for it was the voice of Major Colt. Once more she opened her eyes and, tilting back her head, looked up. She saw the pilot jumping up and down in the basket of the balloon only a few feet above her. Grace was going down only as fast as the rapidly collapsing balloon itself. The silk had fouled the long handling guys of the balloon and hung there, leaving the Overton girl suspended between sky and earth a little more than five thousand feet in the air.

Grace groaned when she discovered her predicament, but even then she did not lose possession of her faculties. It was characteristic of Grace to think calmly and clearly when facing an emergency. She did so now, but that clear thinking did not get her out of her terrible predicament.

"What shall I do?" she cried.

"Wiggle, woman, wiggle! Shake yourself loose and fall. You will be killed where you are, and so shall I if I don't quickly get away." He began jumping up and down again to assist in the operation of shaking her loose.

Obedient to his command Grace began to wiggle and twist, raising her arms and bringing them smartly down with a violent jerk, apparently as calm and collected as if she were standing on the ground.

"Great work!" approved the anxious watcher. "You're getting loose. Keep it up."

"There you go!" he yelled as the silk of the parachute released itself. Grace Harlowe shot downward half lying on her side, a black streak in the air. Almost at the same instant, Major Colt climbed over the edge of the basket, took a quick glance first up at the big gas bag, then at his lines, and let go.

This was no new operation for him. On several occasions he had been obliged to go home in this manner, but this time his mind had assumed a burden greater than any that had been on it in his previous experiences—he had the responsibility of a woman's life. That is, he had had that responsibility. Just now Grace Harlowe was on her own responsibility, beyond the hope of assistance from any human being.

She seemed to have fallen miles and miles, when finally she sensed a gradual slackening of her speed. Grace had, on account of her light weight, taken a terrific plunge, but the parachute at last began to open. It did not bring her up with a jerk, but gradually, until her downward motion was reduced to about four hundred feet a minute, fast enough for a human being to fall.

Opening her eyes, Grace looked up and she breathed a sigh of relief as she saw the glistening silk of the huge parachute spread out high above her, slender lines running down from it, all centering in two ropes that looked reasonably safe. Up above, the lines looked cobwebby, too delicate for the purpose they were serving. Grace looked down, but raised her eyes quickly. The awful distance between her and the earth was too much for her ordinarily steady nerves to stand when she visualized it.

As she raised her eyes something suddenly floated into the range of her vision. It was a parachute and was coming down rather close to her.

"The major!" gasped the Overton girl. Then Grace Harlowe laughed. It was a hollow sort of a laugh, and sounded weak in her ears. The major's arms and legs were sprawling as he leaned a little forward, and he looked for all the world like a great spider dangling from the end of a string, which so appealed to Grace Harlowe's sense of humor that she forgot herself and laughed. Being much heavier than she he was rapidly gaining on her and would soon pass her at his present falling speed.

Grace, observing the ludicrousness of his position, quickly wrapped her ankles about each other, not desiring to make such a spectacle of herself as the balloon officer was doing.

Now they were abreast of each other and could look into each others' faces. The Overton girl had been preparing herself for this very moment and at the instant the major came near enough

to catch the full import of it, Grace smiled, and waved at him what ordinarily might have passed for a joyous hand.

The major waved back and shouted something at her, but she was unable to understand it. Voices up there sounded hollow, weak and far away. A few moments later she was looking down on the top of his swaying parachute, then Grace untangled herself and permitted her body to hang limply, which she found much easier than keeping herself under a strong physical strain.

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"Hippy Wingate wouldn't let me land his airplane. I wonder what he would say were he to see me making a landing in Germany from a parachute?" murmured the girl.

By this time objects began to grow out of the landscape in more or less detail. Houses appeared; the Rhine shimmered in the sunlight that had broken through the clouds, and here and there she thought she saw human beings, though she could not be positive as to this. Several villages came within her range of vision. Remarkable as it seemed to her, Grace realized that she had lost all fear. She was beginning to feel a great confidence in that filmy silk umbrella-shaped affair that was swaying far above her, that confidence having been born when she saw how easily it supported the major's bulky figure.

"If the thing only will let me out without cutting up, I shall be well pleased," Grace told herself. "I wonder what has become of the major?" He had passed out of her sight. Had the Overton girl looked for him further to the westward, she might have discovered the silk parachute settling down on the Rhine and, soon afterwards, the doughty major floundering in its waters.

His weight had carried him down in nearly a straight line, while Grace, being light, had drifted down the wind and was headed for a vineyard. She eyed the terraced hillside dubiously.

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"If I land there they surely will have to replant their vineyard. I shall certainly leave a trail of devastation," she chuckled. "In any event it will have been accomplishing something to lay waste even a small patch of enemy territory. Let me see, what am I to do? Oh, yes, I am to cut the strings the instant I feel my feet touching the ground."

Grace removed the knife-lanyard from her neck and gripped the handle of the knife. Glancing up she fixed upon a point for cutting the rope, and even reached up to it with the knife hand.

"I wish Elfreda might see me now," she chuckled. "Instead of a 'balloonatic' she would call me a 'parahutic.' I never heard of such an animal, but I must be it. Get ready, Grace Harlowe, and watch your step," she reminded herself. "Upon second thought I think I am just as well satisfied that J. Elfreda is not to be a spectator of my landing. I have a growing suspicion that I am about to make an exhibition of myself. My, but that earth does look good!"

She could see human beings running up the terraces toward the point at which she might confidently be expected to alight. Grace did not approve of this, and wished they would all go away about their business. Among them she discovered some men in German uniforms. Her eyes narrowed.

143

"Boches! Too bad they couldn't have had this opportunity of catching me a few weeks ago. Here we are. I am now about to show the natives what an American girl can do in piloting a parachute to earth."

What the Overton girl had not taken into her reckoning was a tree that stood directly in her downward path. She went through its outer branches, but the parachute, relieved of a little of its weight, swayed forward and missed the tree, straightening up as her weight was once more thrown on the ropes.

The wind filled the parachute again, and it began to drift on, parallel with the rows of terraces. In going through the tree, Grace had lost the knife, but she did not miss it as yet, being concerned with her landing and the raking that the branches of the tree had given her. She discovered the loss when, upon reaching up to cut the rope, she found she had nothing with which to cut.

It was at that instant that her feet touched the ground. Up to this time the parachute had behaved very well indeed. As she already had expressed it to herself, the animal proved to be "thoroughly halter-broken." However, the instant it felt that it was free, the thing began to cut up. It lurched and bucked and Grace went through half a dozen rows of vines, boring a path for herself with her head, bowling over two women and a boy in her mad drive.

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"Catch me!" she gasped, but if her plea was heard it was not heeded. None of the spectators appeared to be eager to get within striking distance of the bird-woman who was first being whipped in the air, then on the vines of the Rhine vineyard. Her feet were in the air about as much as they were on the ground, for the parachute had now changed its course and was headed for the Rhine.

Ahead of her Grace espied a stone wall, and an idea came to her, for her mind was working even if, up to that point, her body had been unable to perform any functions of self-preservation.

"If I can get my feet against that wall as we go over, I may be able to brace myself for a few

seconds until something rips. Surely the silk ought to tear in those circumstances.”

Her monologue was cut short by a dive into a thick hedge that divided two vineyards. It seemed to Grace as if the raking she got was literally tearing her to pieces. Her clothing, when she came through, was in tatters, her body bore many deep scratches and cuts, and blood from a scalp wound was trickling down her face. There was one side of Grace Harlowe, though, that no amount of mauling could subdue—her spirit of pluck.

“I’ll win yet,” she gritted, coming to her feet, which were jerked from the ground, while she kept her gaze fastened on the stone fence at the bottom of the rows of terraces.

There was, of course, the possibility of bumping her head against the stone wall, as the major had once done, instead of striking it feet first. If the former were her luck the result would be serious, so the Overton girl tried to jockey the parachute, but with little more success than had she been trying the same tactics on an outlaw mustang.

The wind down between the hills in the Rhine Valley was a variable wind, that hurled her first in one direction, then in another. Just now she was headed for the river—and the stone wall.

Grace met the wall feet first, as she had hoped to do. The shock to her nervous system was terrific, and it seemed to the girl as if her limbs were being driven up through her body. The parachute merely hesitated. It took a mighty lunge with the assistance of a favoring blast of wind, and jumped up a few feet into the air, taking Grace Harlowe with it, then dived for the railroad tracks at the base of the bluff.

Grace went down the bank on her stomach, keeping her head up as well as she could. She was suddenly yanked to her feet and slammed viciously down on the roadbed, while the parachute wrapped itself about a telegraph pole and went to sleep, a heap of torn silk, fit only for souvenir neckties.

CHAPTER XIV

A GUEST OF THE HUNS

GRACE HARLOWE heard a guttural voice speaking in German, replied to by a woman's voice in the same tongue.

Opening her eyes ever so little, the Overton girl looked cautiously about her. She was in a room that was peculiar in that the walls were of stone, and the windows very narrow and high. She felt sore all over, and to move hurt her, but her physical condition did not interest her so much at the moment as did the two persons who were speaking. The man was in the uniform of a German officer. The woman was receiving orders regarding the patient. Grace closed her eyes to listen without their being aware that she was awake.

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"You will send for me as soon as the fraulein awakens," he directed gruffly. "Should she try to leave the castle she must be prevented. She may have information of value to the Fatherland. As for the man, he will not talk. Being an officer we hesitate to force him to speak. Remember, we know nothing of the woman here. He has asked for her and is ugly because we profess to know nothing about her. She must speak as soon as she can. It was well that Rosa von Blum was watchful and informed us that the runaway balloon was headed in this direction, and better still that we were able to bring it down."

"Will the Allies not bring reprisals upon us, Herr Colonel, for having shot the balloon down?"

"They cannot hold the Germans responsible for the act of a crazy peasant, as we shall so characterize it, and pass the incident off lightly. When the Americans get to the Rhine they may make all the inquiries they wish. We shall not be in the castle; almost no one knows we are here now, there will be no trail left for them to follow, and they will not be permitted to cross the river to look for one."

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"Did not Fraulein von Blum say who the woman is?" questioned the German woman.

"No. 'Important woman in drifting balloon,' was the message she sent. The man refuses to say who she is, so you must get it out of the woman herself."

"You think she will come to soon?"

"Yes, she will be on her feet before the day is done."

"Thank you," whispered the subject of the dialogue. "I am glad to know that I am all right. Good boy, Major. I will take my tip from him. But who is this Rosa von Blum that they speak of? I don't believe I ever heard of her, though somehow the name strikes a disagreeable note in my memory. There goes the colonel. I must get ready to wake up after a proper interval."

Grace heard the woman step over to the bed and look down at her, after the departure of the officer. She stirred a little under that gaze, which seemed to burn into her, moaned and twisted her head from side to side several times. After a brief interval of quietness the Overton girl opened her eyes, closed and then opened them again, apparently with great effort. Grace was acting her part without the slightest slip. She gazed up blankly into the face of the German woman.

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"Guten morgen, Fraulein Schmidt," greeted the German.

"What is that you say? I am an American."

"I said good morning, Fraulein Schmidt," repeated the woman, this time in English, smiling encouragingly.

"You know me?" exclaimed Grace Harlowe, raising herself on one elbow, the effort giving her pain and causing her to make a wry face. "How did you know my name?"

"The Germans know many things. They are not the thickheads that the enemy would have the world believe them. You come from the American army?"

Grace said she did, and explained that they had gone adrift in the storm when she was with the balloon on invitation for the day, but in answer to a question as to what she did in the army, the Overton girl asked one for herself.

"Who are you and where am I?"

"You were hurt and a kind-hearted officer had you brought here. You will, I hope, be able to go out in a week or so."

"So long as that?"

"Yes. You were very badly hurt and the Herr Doctor says you must be in bed for some time. To get up would mean your death."

"Oh, please don't tell me that," begged Grace. "What is it you wish to know?"

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"How many are with the American army that is marching on the Rhine?"

"Truly I cannot say, Frau."

"Is it not true that they are planning to take revenge on the Rhine country when the Germans are helpless, having laid down their arms?"

"How do you mean?" demanded Grace.

"To turn the big guns on us?"

"No, my countrymen do not break their word, Frau."

"I have heard that they plan to make it very hard for the peaceful Germans too. It would be wrong, it would be a crime, for the Germans are a kindly people. They love the Americans, but are sorry for them that they were so misled as to enter the war."

"Sad to contemplate, isn't it, Frau? I can almost weep over it myself. What has been done with the officer who was with me in the balloon?"

The German woman said she knew nothing about it, that she did not even know of the officer, which Grace was aware was not true.

"And the town on the other side of the river—what is it?"

"The Fraulein must ask no questions; such are my instructions."

"I may ask when I am to be permitted to get up, may I not?"

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"I have told the Fraulein what the Herr Doctor has said."

"When I am able, I may get up?"

"Yes."

"Then I think I will get up now." Grace made a move as if to leave the bed, but the German woman thrust her back, a menacing look flashing into her eyes. "What do you mean by detaining me in this manner? Am I a prisoner?"

"No, no, Fraulein," protested the woman.

"It looks very much as if I were. If such be the case look out for trouble."

"The Fraulein threatens?"

"No. I simply warn you. If the Americans hear that a countrywoman is being held on this side of the Rhine against her will, perhaps you can imagine what they will do, whether or not they may know her or have ever heard of her. However, ask all the questions you wish. I shall reply to them or not as I feel inclined."

"It is not that I care to know, Fraulein, but that I am interested. We on the Rhine are troubled, for we hear many things. If you can tell me the things that will bring peace to my soul, I in turn will do all for you. It is a fair bargain."

"Let me tell you something, Frau. The Americans do not trust the Germans. That is why they are marching on the Rhine ready to go into battle at a moment's notice. That is military information, but my countrymen are ready to fight you Germans, and I don't care whether you or all of you know it. Their artillery is constantly trained on your retreating army. At the first sign of treachery the music will begin, but I warn you it will not be sweet music, even for German ears that profess to be so fond of music. It will be the music of the guns, Frau." Grace felt that she could do her country and her cause no better service than by sounding this warning. She was by this time fully aware that the woman was a German agent, placed there to wring whatever information she could from the girl who had fallen into their hands from the skies. Grace too had gained a little information, but she hoped to obtain more of it.

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The Frau pressed her on a variety of subjects connected with the approaching army, the tenor of which, as nearly as Grace could reason it out, was as to the secret plans of the Allies after they had occupied the Rhine bridgeheads, the territory that fed into the bridges that crossed the Rhine, the principal bridgeheads being at Mainz, Cologne and Coblenz, the three great bridgeheads of the Rhine. Grace was extremely cautious in answering questions where the answers might prove of military value to the enemy.

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On the question of spies the German woman, several times in different forms, questioned the American girl as to whether they suspected that German spies were operating with the American forces. The Frau said she had heard that the Americans were complaining of this, but that it was a silly idea, for the war was ended, so why should there be need for spies in either army.

Grace agreed with her, but that was as far as her information went. Later in the day the Herr Colonel came in and after examining Grace he shook his head and pronounced her to be in a most serious condition. He told the Overton girl, still speaking in German, that she had sustained internal injuries that might prove fatal unless the utmost quiet of body was persevered in. He said that his first diagnosis had not revealed this because at the time she was unconscious.

During this monologue the Overton girl gazed blankly at the Herr Colonel, who plainly was a medical man, as well perhaps as an intelligence officer. She turned to the Frau.

"What is the man talking about?" she asked, though having understood every word he had uttered.

The German woman translated, and in the translation made Grace's condition really a desperate one. Both were lying, as the American girl knew. She knew that she was badly shaken, bruised and scratched, but that there was not a serious hurt anywhere. After the Herr Colonel's departure she was questioned still further. In the midst of it Grace turned her face to the wall and promptly went to sleep.

When Grace awakened it was late in the night. Her trench watch told her it was half after twelve o'clock. Grace listened a few moments to make certain that she was alone, then got out of bed. Standing on her feet hurt her all over. She had been more shaken than she thought. The girl groped her way about the room, feeling before each step, and finally finding that for which she was in search, her clothing. What she hoped to find was her flash lamp, but it was not there. The lamp had been taken away. Plainly they did not propose to leave her the means of signalling.

Trying the door, it was found to be locked, as she had expected it would be, but the windows were neither barred nor locked. Grace cautiously threw one open and looked eagerly out. The moon, somewhere back of her to the eastward, was in the sky and lighted up the valley before her, though none of the light penetrated the room. Before her lay a village, two villages in fact, but it was the one on the opposite side of the river that most interested her, and Grace studied its outlines in the moonlight for some time.

"I believe that is Coblenz," she muttered. "This building is a castle and I am up in the air for certain. There is no necessity to bar these windows, for they know I can't get down from here unless I fall down. I wonder why they wish to keep me a prisoner?"

Grace pondered over this for some time, going over all that had been said to her by the German woman and what she had heard the man and woman say to each other in their own language.

"It seems to resolve itself to this," she decided. "Some one of the name of Rosa von Blum has warned them that an important woman was in a drifting balloon headed their way. Now this Rosa person must be somewhere in the American lines. It is my idea that this Rosa is a man. That would be just like a Hun scheme. Perhaps the word came by the pigeon route. The more I think of the pigeon incident the more convinced am I that a Chinaman is mixed up with it. Won Lue is the key to that mystery, and with that key I shall yet unravel the pigeon mystery. So much for that. To-morrow morning they will get another pigeon message unless some one shoots down all three of the birds, and that message will tell them who I am. The war being ended will they dare take their revenge on me now for exposing Madame de Beaupre and André? They will! Trust a Hun not to have sense enough to realize that he too will have to pay the price."

Grace pondered for a long time.

"I am glad I woke up and have had time to think this matter over. I shall know how to conduct myself to-morrow when they speak my name. Of one thing I am glad. I am facing Coblenz, and sooner or later I may be able to attract the attention of some one who will be interested in what I have to say, though they will probably move me to some other less convenient room before the Americans arrive. Our troops should be at the Rhine to-morrow afternoon. To-night they will be but twelve miles from here, and even now an advance guard may be in the city. At least there are American intelligence officers there. I wonder where they have stowed the major away?" She sighed and concluded to go back to bed, knowing that she would be in need of all her strength for what might be before her on the morrow.

Grace got in gingerly, for bending her body hurt her. She floundered about for a moment, and rolling to the back of the bed came in contact with something hard that lay at the edge of the bed next to the wall. Her fingers closed over the object. She uttered an exclamation. The object was her flash light that undoubtedly had slipped from her pocket when they first placed her on the bed before undressing her.

"It works," she whispered excitedly, and was out of the bed without thought of her aches and pains. "Only a chance, but it is worth while," she muttered, giving a series of quick flashes with the lamp thrust out to the edge of the window casing.

This was the flash signal indicating that she was about to send a message.

"American woman prisoner in tower here. Drifting balloon victim," was the message she flashed out slowly, then waited to see if there were a reply. There was none. After an interval she tried it again with the same result, not once giving her name, for there might be, and undoubtedly were, plenty of persons over there who could read the Morse code.

Several times in the next hour the girl sent the same message, keeping an attentive ear on the door.

"I fear it is a failure. No one read my message. I must hide the lamp and get to bed." The bed appeared to offer the best hiding place. Opening a seam in the mattress the Overton girl thrust the lamp far in, packed the straw about it, replaced the mattress and the blankets and got into bed, first closing the window.

Grace lay in bed for some time, thinking over the events of the day, and was about to turn over and go to sleep when her attention was attracted by a slight noise. She sat up and listened. At first it sounded to her like the gnawing of a mouse, but upon second thought she realized that a mouse could not gnaw stone. A metallic click revealed the truth.

"Some one is at the door," murmured the girl, and began groping for her flash lamp, but suddenly withdrew her hand and composed herself in a position from which she could observe the entire room.

The Overton girl did not have long to wait. The door opened ever so little, as she knew from the sound, and she could hear some one breathing. The door was pushed in further. A moment of silence followed, then cautious footsteps approached her bed. It was very difficult for Grace Harlowe to breathe regularly and naturally, the inclination being to hold one's breath, but she overcame that inclination and waited, every faculty on the alert.

CHAPTER XV

AN INTERRUPTED INTERVIEW

"IT is the Frau," thought Grace, with an effort repressing a long breath of relief.

The German woman, after satisfying herself that her prisoner was asleep, began a careful search of the room, first going to the window and finding it shut, then searching Grace's clothing, after which she felt cautiously under the girl's pillow. It was at that moment that Grace's plans took form and definite shape.

Uttering a piercing shriek, the American girl leaped from the bed and hurled herself against the German woman, who had sprung back and in her fright started toward the door. Ere she had opportunity to collect herself, Grace's hands were against the Frau's back and the German woman was being "bounced" in the most approved manner. She ran because she couldn't help it. To have stopped would have meant measuring her length on the floor.

They reached the door, Grace Harlowe still uttering those piercing screams, and there the Frau met disaster. She tripped on the doorsill and fell headlong into the corridor. Grace too went down, but was up like a flash and, darting into the room, slammed the door shut, securing it by bracing a tipped chair against it under the knob, whereupon the Overton girl sat down heavily on the floor and gave way to laughter that was almost hysterical, though so well repressed that the woman out there could not hear it.

"Oh, what a fright I gave her. I'll warrant that frau doesn't do any more prowling about in my room at unseemly hours. I should have thought of the chair before I went to bed." Grace paused abruptly. Some one was pounding on the door.

"Who is it?" she called.

"It is I, Frau Woelber."

"Oh!" Grace boldly threw open the door and as she did so the woman pressed a button and flooded the room with light. Her face wore an angry flush, but it moderated as she saw that Grace was breathing heavily and that her face wore a frightened expression.

"Oh, why did you frighten me so, Frau?" gasped the girl, still playing her part.

"You shall suffer for this," threatened the woman. "You did it on purpose."

"How—how can you say such a thing. Why did you creep into my room and startle me by tugging at my pillow? It was terrible! What do you wish?"

"It is like the American schweinhunde to be thus grateful. I came to see that you were well and you repay by assaulting me. Bah!" The woman turned on her heel and strode from the room, slamming the door after her, and locking it from the outside. Grace replaced the chair and returned to her bed.

"I think I will use the flash again," she muttered. Once more the Overton girl sent out her message for help. "I hope some one does see it, for to-morrow I feel I shall be in still more trouble."

Morning did bring trouble. She was awakened at an early hour by the German woman and ordered to dress. There was not even time to regain possession of her electric flash lamp nor to dress her hair.

After getting on her clothes the woman took her by the arm and led her from the room, down several staircases, the first of which was a spiral. The Overton girl was conducted into a room which she judged was on the side away from the river. There were no windows, and the room was dark, save for the faint light shed by a candle.

"You are a spy!" raged the woman, pointing an accusing finger at the American girl.

"It is not true," answered Grace evenly. "Remember, I am not here on my own choice, and I shall be pleased to leave now. You see I am perfectly able to go. If you detain me longer you will be punished. The war is at an end, or is supposed to be, and you have no right to keep me a prisoner. Are you going to permit me to go back to my own lines?"

The German woman laughed harshly.

"The Herr Officer will see you. We shall see," was the non-committal reply. The Herr Officer came in a few moments later, the woman occupying the interval by a repetition of her questions

of the previous day. The officer-doctor examined Grace or pretended to, then turned to the Frau.

"Tell her she will die as the result of her getting up. She must not be permitted to go until we have the message. You have not heard?" he asked in German.

The woman shook her head.

"I will find out if anything has come since we spoke, and let you know. You will wait in the library."

He nodded, gave the Overton girl a frowning appraising glance, and turning on his heel strode out, followed by the woman, who locked the door behind her. Both were back in a few moments, rather to the girl's surprise.

"So?" said the woman nodding slowly. "It is Frau Gray?"

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Grace regarded her inquiringly.

"What do you mean?"

"That it is not Frau Schmidt, but Frau Gray."

"I did not tell you my name was Schmidt, for it is not. I am an American, not a Hun, nor do I admit that my name is Gray. The carrier pigeon was late in arriving this morning, eh?" Grace grinned broadly as she saw that the shot had gone home, for both showed their amazement. "Ah! I observe that the Herr Colonel understands English after all. A precious pair of enemy agents. What do you think will be done to you when my people find out about this—and about the pigeons?"

"Nothing! They will never know," retorted the woman savagely.

"Do not be deceived. I have arranged that they shall, no matter whether I go back or do not go back." She reasoned that no more pigeons would be used, now that the American army was nearing the river. Grace did not know that the army already had arrived. "It will not help your cause to detain me. It will have the opposite effect. Am I to go or stay?" continued Grace.

"You are to—"

An orderly rapped on the door and saluted as the colonel wheeled on him.

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"What is it?" demanded the officer.

"Orders, Herr Colonel. The enemy has heard that a woman is being detained here. Unless she is released and given safe conduct to the bridge before twelve o'clock to-day they threaten to come and get her."

Grace understood every word of the conversation, but not so much as the flicker of an eyelash indicated that she did. She was not yet out of her difficulties and a slip, even in the face of that order, might prove her undoing.

"What shall you do, Herr Colonel?" demanded the German woman.

The colonel shrugged his shoulders.

"They would not dare to do it," added the Frau.

"You do not know. They eagerly await the chance, the schweinhunde! See that she has safe conduct, but it must not be known that we have detained her here," he said, turning to the orderly. "We shall have to give up our quarters and go elsewhere. Tell them, when the woman is turned over, that she was taken in seriously hurt, and that she was held only until she could safely go away. Tell them that she would have died had she been left uncared for. No names are to be mentioned. Understand?"

"Yes, Herr Colonel. I will go with her. Is she to go now?"

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"Yes." He turned savagely to Grace. "Frau Gray," he announced in English that was quite broken, "had I known yesterday who you were you would not now be here. There are those who would not treat you as we have treated you, were they to know who you are. Do not presume to come to Germany again, intentionally or unintentionally. If you do you may not go back. That is all." The Herr Colonel strode from the room, and the woman hurried after him. Then the orderly beckoned to Grace to follow him, after discovering that she "could not understand German." Grace smiled and nodded and dutifully followed the soldier down the stairs.

It was quite a distance down, but not once during their journey to the outer air did Grace see a person. The old castle might have been deserted, and probably was. There was a difference when they got into the village. The streets were filled with chattering, gesticulating men, women and children. Some appeared to know who she was so far as her arrival in a parachute was concerned; others saw or had heard that she was an American.

That was not a pleasant walk for Grace Harlowe Gray, though it was an interesting one to her. The sidewalks were lined with spectators, some stolid and sullen, others quite the opposite. The latter were in the majority and the American girl frequently was jeered at and poked at with fingers. A woman slapped her, but, though Grace's face burned, she did no more than look at the woman calmly, unemotionally. Several times she heard the word "spy" hurled at her in German and smiled to herself. It was an interesting study in psychology to Grace Harlowe, even if she were the object of the demonstration.

"Isn't she pretty?" demanded a male voice in German.

Grace flashed a look in that direction to see who had uttered the words. She saw a German officer and an attractive-looking young woman backed up against a store front.

"Pretty? How can you say that of an American?" demanded the young woman. "She is as hideous and as ugly as no doubt her soul is black."

"You are a true German, Fraulein," exclaimed the German officer enthusiastically.

Grace grinned, though the characterization hurt her more than she cared to admit to herself. With every step after that she expected to encounter violence, but it was not until she neared the bridge that she did. Some one threw a stone. It was a small stone, but the thrower, as Grace concluded later when thinking over the occurrence, must have been a member of a Hun bomb squad. It hit and knocked the Overton girl down.

Grace got up dizzily. Blood was trickling down her cheek. Her escort appeared to be wholly indifferent to her plight, and did not even rebuke the one who threw the stone. Fortunately for Grace it was a small stone, else she would not have gotten up quite so readily.

"This is a sample of Hun 'kultur,' I presume?" she said in German, addressing her conductor.

The orderly glanced at her inquiringly.

"Sprechen Sie Deutsch?" he demanded.

"No, I wouldn't speak the language if it were the only language in the world," she retorted, again in German, but refused to utter another word in the language.

"The woman is to pass," directed the orderly, presenting a pass to the sentry on duty at the bridge; then he turned abruptly and left Grace to get along as best she might.

"Courtesy appears to have been neglected in the education of these people," muttered Grace. "However, I should not be amazed at that, knowing the Boches as I do after my many months on the western front. Thank goodness I am free, I hope, for good and all. Now I suppose I shall have a hard time getting into our lines."

Grace did have a hard time. She was promptly halted by an American sentry, who, calling the corporal of the guard, turned her over to him. Grace demanded to be taken before Captain Boucher of the Intelligence Department, which was done because orders had been given to that effect.

Captain Boucher gazed at the ragged figure for a few seconds, his gaze traveling up to the face, from which the blood had not all been wiped away. He was on his feet in an instant.

"Mrs. Gray!" he exclaimed. "You are wounded!"

"Nothing to speak of, sir. Merely a little memento of Boche 'kultur.' In other words I was stoned out of Germany." Grace smiled that winning smile that always won people to her. "I am quite all right, but my clothing and my hair are simply impossible. I wish it were dark, for I do dread to go through the streets here in my present disgraceful condition."

"This is an outrage. Were I the general in command of this army I'd have those hounds down on their knees!" raged the captain.

"That is what they need, sir. Those people need to have the arrogance beaten out of them. I am not saying this in any spirit of revenge, nor for what they did to me."

"I understand—I understand. I will call a car to take you to your billet. Your signal from the castle was seen by one of our agents before the army got here. Then later Major Colt escaped and swam the Rhine, and he too reported it. He saw your Morse message just as he reached the bank on this side. When you are able I shall wish you to tell me what occurred over there."

"I will tell you now, if I may." Grace took up the narrative from the time of her landing in the vineyard, giving him only such information as she knew to be of military interest. The Intelligence officer listened with close attention.

"You should be in the secret service," he declared after she had finished. "By what means do you think the Germans got information about you?"

"Pigeon or spy, sir. Pigeon most likely. You have not found the guilty one, have you, sir?"

"We have not." The captain pinched his lips together. "I think we shall have to ask you to run this spy matter down, Mrs. Gray."

CHAPTER XVI

ELFREDA HAS A SUSPICION

THE billet to which Grace had been assigned was the home of a German doctor, where she had a comfortable, large room extending all the way across the rear of the house. The owner, as she later learned, occupied a large front room with a small communicating room on the left-hand side of the house, a similar apartment on the other side of the house being occupied by some one else.

Elfreda Briggs was busy getting her hand in at canteen work when Grace arrived at the billet with her credentials, without which no one could obtain lodgings in Coblenz, now that the Americans had taken possession of the place and were at work setting it in order. The Overton girl found her belongings already there, including her mail. There was mail from home, but a letter from Emma Dean got first reading and put Grace in a happy frame of mind.

"My Darling Grace (This goes for all of the Overton Unit)," wrote Emma:

"We haven't had a letter from you in so long I don't believe we should recognize your handwriting. There isn't a thing new in Paris except military news that I hear over the wire, which of course I can't tell you. By the way, I did hear that William the First had been called before a court-martial for insubordination and ungentlemanly language to a superior officer. My! what a narrow escape I did have. Think what a terrible mistake I should have made had I married him. Thank heaven my present William is not that sort of a fighter. By the way, I learned over the wire only yesterday that he too is on his way to Coblenz. I am glad of that, for, you being a married woman, I can trust you to chaperon him and see that he doesn't fall in love with one of those rosy-cheeked Gretchens on the Rhine. I am told that they are inclined to favor the American doughboys. They'd better not favor my William.

"By the way, that daughter of yours surely has made a place for herself at Madame Duchamp's school. They will spoil that child. We had Yvonne over to stay all night with us and spend Sunday last week. The yellow cat was with her. If I am well informed the yellow cat is a lady-mouser, so you can imagine how shocked we were when Yvonne told us that she had named the cat Tom Gray after her adopted father, but that she called her Tom for short. I know your Tom will be delighted with the great honor that has come to him. It's up to your Tom to give his namesake a handsome present. Might send on a shell-case of mice. I understand they have plenty of them out near the front. What a lovely present to send to a young ladies' boarding school. What?

"Arline Thayer, Mabel Ashe, Ruth Denton and the rest of this Overton unit are simply expiring to see you. Ruth thinks she is in love with a Y secretary. For myself I prefer a fighting man—I don't mean one that will fight me—leave that to the Huns—but who will fight another man when he crowds me off the walk. I heard a story over the wire the other day about Hippy Wingate. It seems that one of those secretary fellows—I don't know what organization he belonged to—got quite friendly with Nora Wingate, all in the nicest possible way. But you know Hippy. Hippy heard of it, so one day he dropped in on the Salvation hut and found Nora singing for the secretary. She said he wanted to try her voice. Well, Hippy he—as I was saying, Hippy invited the fellow to take a flight with him—a hop, I believe they call it—the secretary wasn't permitted to refuse and up they went. It seems they have some sort of telephone arrangement between the pilot and the observer, and after a little the secretary discovered that he had no safety belt on and he called Hippy's attention to it rather anxiously. Hippy, according to the reports I got over the wire, said he was sorry, for he was going to do some loops, to see how many he could do. One of his squadron had done thirty-seven, but Hippy was of the opinion that he could do at least thirty-seven and a half. 'But I'll fall out,' protested the secretary. 'Sure you will,' agreed Hippy, 'but I'll turn the loops right over the Salvation hut. When you fall out, if my wife thinks you're worth saving she'll catch you.' Well, the secretary begged, and finally Hippy relented and said he would let his passenger out before he looped. They landed. The secretary took the hint and 'beat it,' as the doughboys would say. I understand he hasn't been seen around the Salvation canteen since. Isn't that just like Hippy?

"Now that the war is over I suppose we all will soon be on our way to the good old United States. I know I shall die if I have to go back before my William does. I have been afraid that he might be appointed on the Peace Commission, for I know he must stand very high with the President, even if he is only a lieutenant. Well, good-bye. Remember me to Tom, and tell him I hope that when he gets home he will make it his business to see that his most attractive wife stays home and washes the dishes rather than go scouting all over America and half of Europe driving ambulances and things.

"Yours lovingly, EMMA."

Grace sat back and laughed until the tears came, laughed until she was interrupted by a cry from the doorway. It was Elfreda, but instead of throwing herself into Grace's arms, J. Elfreda

stood off and surveyed her with disapproving eyes.

"Grace Harlowe Gray, you surely are a sight. I am not at all surprised. What does make me marvel is that you have come back at all. Tell me about it. Have you been crying? Your eyes are red."

"I have been laughing. I have a letter from Emma."

"Enough said. Tell me the story. You were a prisoner, I understand."

"A sort of prisoner. No, I was not hit with a bullet, but with a stone. The Huns are such gentle creatures. The state of my clothing is due to the fact that I got mixed up with a vineyard when I came down in the parachute. I suppose you had your information from Major Colt?"

"Yes. I have a lot of other information too; but that will keep until I hear your story."

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Grace, to save time, told the story from the time they left the ground in the sausage balloon right down to the moment when she got back into the American lines.

"What do you propose to do next for thrills?" demanded Elfreda finally.

"I am not looking for thrills. I am in hope that I shall be permitted to go back home before very long—that is, if Tom goes."

"He won't. They are planted here for months to come, provided we do not go on into the enemy country."

"How is Mrs. Smythe?" Grace smiled.

"No change. I understand from her that you are to be placed on canteen work, drawing hot chocolate and the like. She will have you mopping out the place next. Chad is in a rage most of the time, except when her latest friend is with her. Oh, I didn't tell you about that. The day before you went over by the air route, a most charming young lady appeared on the scene. Mrs. Smythe said it was a very old friend of hers of the name of Molly Marshall. I don't know who she is or how she got into the lines, but I have been told by those who ought to know, that she is an American woman who has been a prisoner of the Germans; that she got by the German sentries and reached our lines after suffering all sorts of hardships. She doesn't look the part, I am free to say."

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Grace was interested at once.

"You are suspicious of her, Elfreda?" she demanded.

"Of course I am. I am suspicious of any one who takes up with Chad. I don't know where Molly is to-day. I haven't seen her since last evening. She is billeted with Chad."

"Where does Mrs. Smythe live?"

Elfreda regarded her frowningly.

"I forgot that you had been in the air so long. Chad occupies the front room on this floor. We are all in the house together, but if trouble doesn't make us wish we weren't, I shall be much mistaken. Won Lue comes over to ask about you. He appears to have something on his mind. Have you any idea what it is?"

"Plidgins," answered Grace laughingly. "What is it you suspect about this woman Marshall?"

"I do not suspect her any more than I do some other persons. I am beginning to believe that our supervisor isn't as loyal to the cause as she might be. That feeling has been strengthened since Miss Marshall appeared so mysteriously."

"Elfreda, you know how I feel toward Mrs. Smythe, but for all that I must stand up for her. With all her faults she is an American. Her presence at the front is sufficient evidence of that to satisfy me as to her loyalty. As I have said before, she is a vain and jealous woman, a fair type of the newly rich. As for the other woman, I hope to see her and form my own opinion of her. I think the Intelligence Department is considerably disturbed over spy activities. There is something else going on here too, though I haven't yet learned what it is. I have some queer fancies in the back of my head, Elfreda, and—"

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"You always did have."

"They are not yet sufficiently clarified to make it prudent for me to speak of them, but remember what I have said. Some day I shall tell you the story that I now warn you of. Whose house is this?"

"It is occupied by a Doctor Klein, a scientific, studious-appearing fellow, and apparently very friendly to Americans. He says the Germans have been in the wrong in this war and—"

"I should be suspicious of that man, Elfreda. Either he is not a German or else he isn't telling the truth. What is the attitude of the people of Coblenz?"

"Some appear to be afraid of the Americans, while others—these are in the majority—are sullen. The situation appears to me to be very tense, likely to result in an explosion at any moment. There are very few German men of military age here. I think our people are treating the inhabitants very leniently."

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"That is a mistake," declared Grace with emphasis. "Mark me, the Huns can't understand and appreciate humane treatment. They will take advantage of that attitude, believing that the Americans are afraid of them. Then we shall have to put pressure on them, and that will cause more trouble than were we to be severe with them now at the outset. I must get about and see what the lay of the land is."

"You keep out of it, Loyalheart; that is my advice to you. Haven't you had enough yet?"

"No, I never shall until my country has no further use for my services, my dear. When that time comes, I shall be ready to settle down to the simple life in beautiful Haven Home and enjoy a real home-life with Tom and my beautiful adopted daughter. Elfreda, that child is entwining herself about my heartstrings more and more as time goes on."

"She is doing the same thing to me," declared Elfreda. "You will have to divide her with me—I mean share her with me, Grace. I am as much her mother as you are, am I not?"

"You are, of course, though my claim is a prior claim, which you as a lawyer must recognize." They had a hearty laugh over this.

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It was late in the afternoon when Grace went out, first having knocked on Mrs. Smythe's door but receiving no response. Grace inquired her way to the canteen, looking in the shop windows as she passed, enjoying the sight of stores once more. There were few of these left in rural France where she had been, and those that were left ordinarily bore the marks of shell fire.

The supervisor was not at the canteen where Grace understood she was to be stationed, but Marie Debussy, the supervisor's maid, was there and at work. Grace greeted her cordially and the girl appeared equally glad to see Grace.

"How is Madame behaving?" she questioned.

"There is no change, but I am here most of the time and do not see so much of her."

"You are satisfied here then, Marie?"

"Oh, yes, it will do. The war will soon be over and I shall go back to my beloved France. Bah! These Germans! I like them not."

"None of us do, Marie. Is Miss Marshall with Madame?" asked Grace carelessly. Marie gave her a quick glance, a keener glance than Grace had ever seen from those eyes, after which the eyes lapsed into their former dullness.

"I have not seen her since yesterday. I do not know. Do you know her?"

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Grace said she did not, and giving Marie a smile, stepped behind the counter and began her work as a canteen server. It was not the free life of the ambulance driver, but it was service, and Grace Harlowe was satisfied. But there was plenty of excitement ahead of her, even though life moved on in Coblenz much the same as before and during the war. Shopkeepers were overcharging the American soldiers, others were robbing them, and the situation was lax to an extent that disturbed Grace Harlowe.

She said as much to Major Colt, who called at the canteen that evening to see her, and he agreed with the Overton girl, but said that the American officers were awakening to the possibilities and that something would be done. The major told Grace of his experience with the Germans after they dragged him from the Rhine, she in turn relating her own. He told of having seen her signal and of reading the message, and he was filled with admiration for Grace's resourcefulness and cleverness.

"I told Captain Boucher about that. He declared that you ought to be in the Secret Service and that he was going to have you there if his advice prevailed with those higher up. How would you like that?"

"Not at all," answered Grace smilingly. "Is the captain still disturbed over the activities of spies with the Army of Occupation?"

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Major Colt flashed a quick glance at her.

"So, you do know about it, eh?"

"Perhaps I may have surmised some things, sir—and I know the Hun and his ways rather well," she added. "May I ask you, sir, if you know a Miss Marshall who entered camp the day before we

went up?"

"No. I have heard of her. Why?"

"Just a woman's curiosity."

"I would suggest that you ask Captain Boucher about that. You will be somewhat amazed at what he will tell you—if he tells you anything," laughed the officer. "There's a real mystery for you, eh?"

Grace shrugged her shoulders.

"There are many others more worth while, sir," she made reply, turning to hand a doughboy a bar of chocolate. "I—"

Grace did not finish the sentence. An explosion that seemed to be splitting the earth wide open crushed in one end of the canteen and blew off part of the roof, bringing a good part of the structure down on the heads of the occupants of the building.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TREACHERY OF THE HUN

FORTUNATELY for those in the canteen the heavy framework of the building stood up under the blast, so though they were buried in the wreckage it was comparatively light wreckage.

Major Colt and one soldier suffered the most, the major being hit on the head with a piece of galvanized iron roofing and knocked unconscious. It was Grace Harlowe who raised the piece from his body and dug him out of the mess, though she herself was dazed almost to the point of losing herself. In the midst of the confusion she found herself thinking of Elfreda, who had not yet come on for the evening, though darkness had fallen, and Grace was thankful.

After getting the officer out, Grace plunged into the wreckage again, for the canteen had caught fire and there were still others to be rescued. By this time doughboys had rushed to the scene, two grabbing her and fairly throwing her out. They ordered her to stay out, but not before she had dragged out Marie and made her as comfortable as possible.

Major Colt had recovered consciousness by the time she got to him.

"Wha—at was it?" he asked weakly.

"Ammunition dump, I think."

"Hun work!" he growled.

"Looks like it. I hope our people will get busy now. Is there anything I can do for you? If not I must look after Marie. She got a hard rap on the head, same as you did."

"If you will have some one help me to my quarters I think I shall be all right. Did you get me out?"

"Yes. Here, Buddy, will you please give Major Colt a lift?" she called to a passing soldier, and a moment later, after pressing Grace's hand, the balloonist was being guided to his billet. Grace, in the meantime, had assisted Marie to her feet and was leading her toward the house in which the welfare workers were living.

Only a short distance away from the canteen shells were going up with loud bangs, and this racket kept up for half an hour, until the last of the ammunition dump had been destroyed, wounding many persons, but fortunately having killed only two men. Doughboys soon put out the fire in the canteen, but all gave the ammunition dump a wide berth.

Reaching the house the Overton girl was met by Elfreda, who had been considerably shaken up by the explosion, which had crashed every window in the house.

"Ammunition dump blown up," Grace informed Elfreda in answer to the latter's glance of inquiry. "Here we are, Marie. I will put you to bed, then I must hurry back. Elfreda, you had better go out with me. We may be needed, if they should wish to transfer the canteen to-night."

Mrs. Smythe was in her room. Grace observed that her face was pale and lined.

"Wha—wha—what has happened?" she gasped.

"Nothing very much except that an ammunition dump has blown up. I have seen many of them go up, but never one quite so near. The canteen is wrecked, Mrs. Smythe. Have you orders for us?"

"N—n—n—no!" stammered the supervisor. "Y—ye—yes. Go out and find out all you can, then come back and report to me."

"About what?" demanded Grace politely.

"About what is to be done."

"Very good. I will leave Marie in your hands. She is badly shaken up and should be put to bed at once."



Grace Rescues Major Colt.

"That's her affair," observed the supervisor, beginning to get control of her nerves. "Are you going?"

Grace nodded and stepped out into the hall, where she found Elfreda awaiting her, and together they hurried away.

"Absolutely unfeeling," declared Grace heatedly. "She will make that girl put herself to bed, and Marie can scarcely stand."

"Tell me about it," urged Miss Briggs.

"I know nothing at all about it except that the building fell in on us. I assisted Marie and the major out, the latter having received a bang on the head that completely knocked him out. By the way, do you know a Chinaman who carries a red birthmark on the left side of his face?"

"I do not," returned J. Elfreda, elevating her chin a little. "I do not associate with those animals."

"Be sensible, Elfreda."

"Why do you ask?" demanded Elfreda.

"I have my reasons. Some queer doings in Coblenz; and the end is not yet."

"Do—do you think the Boches blew up the dump?"

"I cannot say that. My natural impression, of course, is that they did. I was asking the major about Miss Marshall about the time the blow-up occurred, and he suggested that I ask Captain Boucher, intimating that if the captain would talk he would give me information that would amaze me."

"H—m—m—m! That sounds interesting. He will talk to you, all right. Every one does. Oh, look at the canteen!" she cried when they came within sight of the wrecked building. A squad of men, with an officer in charge, were at work, clearing away and salvaging such of the supplies as had not been destroyed.

"Here, Mrs. Gray, I am glad you have come over. What are we to do with this stuff?" demanded the officer.

"I am not in charge, Lieutenant. Mrs. Smythe is the supervisor."

"Then why isn't she here attending to her duties?"

Grace said she could not answer for that.

"I would suggest, sir, if you will, that you have the supplies taken on a truck to the Number Two Canteen. To-morrow the supervisor can make such disposition of them as she sees fit."

"Very good. I commission you to take charge of removing and caring for the goods. You are under orders."

Grace saluted and asked the officer to order a truck to the scene, which he promptly did. Grace then got to work. Her salvaging was thorough. There were many boxes of chocolate bars that had been crushed, in some instances to powder. These she had carefully removed, saving every possible grain of the sweets for melting over. Observing that she was handling the situation properly, the officer went away.

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After two hours of hard work the supplies were collected and loaded on the truck. Grace thanked the men who had worked so well for her, and climbing to the seat of the truck, rode with it to its destination. The Number Two Canteen was located some distance from the scene of the explosion, but it had suffered the loss of most of its windows just the same, as had many of the buildings in Coblenz.

Number Two Canteen being open, Grace informed the worker in charge that the supplies were to be left there until Mrs. Smythe gave orders for their distribution. Grace then started for home.

Reaching her billet Grace tapped on the door of Mrs. Smythe's room, wishing to report what had been done. The supervisor bade her enter.

"Oh, I beg pardon," exclaimed Grace, observing that Mrs. Smythe was not alone.

A well-groomed man, wearing a vandyke beard, slightly gray, rose and extended a hand to the Overton girl.

"Mrs. Gray, I believe."

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"Yes, sir," she answered. "And you?"

"I am Dr. Karl Klein. Being the guest of my home it is well that we should know each other. I trust you are quite comfortable."

"Thank you. I am sure that I shall be after I have had opportunity to compose myself." A sudden aversion to this suave German fairly overwhelmed Grace Harlowe. He jarred on her, aroused a feeling of antagonism that would not down. He was altogether too smooth, too polite and courteous for a Hun, was the reason that Grace felt that way.

"Mrs. Smythe—you will pardon me, sir—acting upon the orders of an officer, I had the supplies, such of them as we were able to salvage, removed to Number Two Canteen, where they are to be held awaiting your orders."

"What! You gave orders over my head?" demanded the woman sternly.

"I acted under the orders of an officer, Madame."

"You will return at once, take the things back where they were, pile them up and have a guard placed over them."

"I think you are mistaken, Mrs. Smythe," answered Grace sweetly, though there was little sweetness in her heart at that moment. She had been humiliated before Doctor Klein, and even though he were an enemy, the cut was felt keenly.

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"What is that you say?"

"That, so far as I am concerned, the supplies will remain where they are for the rest of the night. It undoubtedly will rain before morning and the supplies will be ruined if left out. Furthermore, I acted under the orders of an American officer. It is true that you are my superior, but he is the superior of both of us."

"You dare to disobey my orders?" shouted the supervisor.

"If you choose to so construe it, yes, but with no intention of being impertinent or disobedient. I beg to remind you that you have your remedy, should you feel that I am guilty of insubordination. It is your privilege to report me. I bid you good-night."

Grace bowed to the doctor, and turning on her heel walked from the room.

"Whatever is the matter with you?" demanded Elfreda when Grace walked into their quarters. "You are as pale as the proverbial ghost."

"Matter? J. Elfreda, I never was so humiliated in my life. Madame is furious because I had the

supplies removed under the orders of the lieutenant.”

“Take it easy now, Loyalheart,” soothed Miss Briggs. “Let her do her worst, which can be no more than reporting you.”

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“That is just the trouble. After a time our superiors will begin to believe that where there is such a smudge there must be at least a few coals if not a real fire. Who and what is this man?”

“What man do you refer to?”

“Doctor Klein.”

“Beyond the fact that he is our landlord, I have no information about him. Why?”

“I do not trust him. There is something queer about the man.”

“Perhaps it is you who are queer, Loyalheart. I call the doctor a most courteous gentleman for a Hun.”

“Exactly! That is what I mean—in part. He is too courteous for his kind. Furthermore, my intuition tells me that there is something wrong with him. I seem to be getting into a perfect maze of contradicting elements. I wish I did not have such an imagination. I see more mystery everywhere since we came to Coblenz than I can express in words. How is Marie? I was so upset over the way Madame went at me that I forgot to ask.”

“Asleep when I went in to inquire. I don’t believe she is much hurt. My advice to you is to get into bed and go to sleep. You are worn out and your nerves are upset, which is not surprising when one considers that you fell out of the skies the day before yesterday.”

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“At least my equilibrium was upset,” grinned Grace. “Yes, I will turn in, but I know I shall have bad dreams to-night, and that our friend the doctor will be the principal character in them. To add to my troubles I presume I shall be called upon for an explanation to-morrow. Madame is certain to report me, nor do I blame her so very much in the circumstances. Good-night. Do you know, I don’t think you are much of a lawyer or you wouldn’t let your one and only client get into such perplexing situations.”

“Thank you. I agree with you on the main issue. What I should do is to have a commission in lunacy appointed for you and then browbeat them into believing that you are an unsafe person to be allowed to remain at large.”

“Good-night,” laughed Grace, getting into bed. “Please don’t blow out the gas in your excitement.” Elfreda was trying to do this very thing. “In my craziest moods, I never was so afflicted that I tried to put out the gas by blowing it out.”

Grace was soon asleep, but hers was not a wholly restful night, dreaming as she did of plots against herself and her country, in which Molly Marshall, Won Lue and Mrs. Chadsey Smythe were inextricably entangled, with Doctor Klein as the chief figure in the conspiracy.

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CHAPTER XVIII

GRACE GETS A CLUE

"CAPTAIN, is it proper to ask if the Huns blew up the ammunition dump?" asked Grace next morning upon chancing to meet Captain Boucher on the paved plaza facing the river.

"If you will put your question in a form that I can answer I will do so," was the smiling reply.

"Was the explosion last evening an accident, sir?" Grace came back at him quick as a flash.

"It was not an accident, Mrs. Gray," he replied gravely, then burst out laughing. "You are the quickest-witted person I ever knew or heard of. Have you made any headway in the matter I spoke to you about?"

"Do you know a Chinaman, belonging to the labor battalion, who wears a hideous birthmark on his left cheek?" she questioned in reply.

"Can't say that I do. Why?"

"Merely that I would suggest your making his acquaintance. I think perhaps you may find him worth while."

"Cultivating or watching?" asked the Intelligence officer, regarding her keenly.

"The latter."

"Thank you. What is his name?"

"I have not heard. I will find out if you wish."

The officer nodded.

"Who is Miss Marshall, if I am permitted to ask? I know it seems an impertinence on my part to question an officer, but I want to know," declared the Overton girl laughing. "I believe that is quite a common excuse with women for asking questions, but it is comprehensive."

The captain glanced about them and invited Grace to sit down with him on a bench. The air was quite chill, but the view up and down the river was an attractive one.

"What I am about to say is strictly confidential. I am giving it to you for your own guidance, now that you belong to our Intelligence Department."

"Strange, sir, that I have not heard of that."

"Yes, you are a member. To return to the subject, Molly Marshall is one of the cleverest operators in the Secret Service."

"A spy?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"I never liked the word when applied to our own. She is an investigator and a brilliant operator. I shall be glad to have you know her, and assure you that you may trust her fully."

"Thank you, but I do not believe I should care to trust any one in these confidential matters, unless I knew her pretty well. I should like to meet her, just the same, but she is not to know that I am doing anything in the investigating line, if you will be so good as to keep that fact confidential."

The captain promised, saying it was not generally customary for Secret Service operators with the army to know each other, as such an acquaintance opened the way for many errors of judgment.

"You are perfectly right in the position you take," he added. "You possess all the makings of a brilliant operator yourself."

Grace thanked him.

"As I have said before, I have no aspirations in that direction, at least not beyond the point that I can serve my country. Perhaps my woman's curiosity in combination with my woman's intuition is responsible for my being in it to the extent that I am. You will observe that I am not backward about paying my sex compliments. However, it will soon be ended and then we shall all return to

our previous lives—if we can. How about you, sir, shall you continue in the Service?”

“I think not.”

Grace rose and, thanking the captain, said she must be on her way to the canteen at Number Two. On her way she encountered a Chinaman and told him if he should see Won Lue to send him to the canteen. Rather to her amazement Won was waiting for her when she arrived there.

Won shook hands with himself and smiled broadly.

“You may be able to help us here to-day, Won. Are you working?”

The Chinaman shook his head negatively. “You savvy plidgin?” he asked.

“No.”

“Me savvy plenty plidgin, a-la. Plidgin all fly away. No more plidgin.”

Grace understood his meaning. The pigeon-flying came to an end when the army reached the Rhine, for there the enemy agents could work more directly and without much danger of being caught. That was what they were doing at that very moment.

“Oh! I knew there was something I wished to ask you. Do you know a Chinaman with a red mark on his left cheek, so?” She ran a hand over her cheek.

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Won chuckled delightedly, though what there was in her question to amuse him, Grace could not imagine.

“You savvy Yat Sen? Me savvy Yat Sen plenty much. What me do?”

“Thank you. I savvy Yat Sen, too. Please clean the place, scrub the floors nice and clean before Mrs. Smythe gets here.”

“Me savvy Slith,” volunteered Won with a grimace.

“Why the ‘a-la,’ Won?” asked Elfreda who came in at this juncture.

“That is a Chinese round-off, as it were,” Grace informed her. “Have you seen the supervisor this morning?”

Elfreda said she had not, for Marie had said that Mrs. Smythe went out rather early. Grace suddenly decided to go home, and asked Elfreda to remain at the canteen to meet the supervisor.

“Tell her I was obliged to return to our billet for a few moments,” requested Grace. “She cannot be angrier than she will naturally be, in any event.”

Grace, nodding to Elfreda, hurried away.

“I wonder what that child is up to now?” Miss Briggs muttered. “I have learned one thing about Grace Harlowe, and that is that she seldom does anything that hasn’t a well-defined motive behind it. I suppose that is the proper way to arrange one’s life. She should have been a lawyer.”

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Reaching her billet, Grace entered the house quietly and went to her room, apparently without having attracted attention to herself. As she passed the doctor’s rooms she heard voices there. The voices were not loud, but were audible enough to enable her to distinguish those of at least one man and a woman, though it was her impression that there were two men in the room. Now that she was in her own room the voices were borne to her ears even more distinctly than when she had been passing through the hallway.

“I believe Miss Marshall is in there,” muttered the Overton girl after several moments of listening. The conversation was being carried on in German, most of it being understandable to Grace. It was only when they lowered their voices that she failed to catch what was being said. Yet, for all that, she did not know what they were talking about, though at times the inference was suggestive of certain things.

The conversation lasted for several minutes, then Grace heard the doctor approaching the rear of his apartment, heard the bang of what she took to be a trap door, then footsteps descending stairs.

“He is going down to the cellar. I suppose he has a right to do so if he wishes, so why should I object or even be interested? Hark!”

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Grace heard what she took to be voices in the cellar, though she was positive that no one had accompanied the owner below.

“I was right. This is a house of mystery. There he comes!”

The German’s tread, as he ascended the stairs on his return to his apartment, she noted, was very light and elastic for a heavy man. His speech too, this morning, was quicker than when she

had spoken with him in Mrs. Smythe's quarters, more incisive, more like that of a German officer than a civilian.

"Perhaps he has been in the service as a surgeon," murmured Grace in explanation of the difference. "I wish I might get a peep into that room, just for one little minute. Ah!" Grace caught her breath and held it. The German doctor was speaking again, and what he said sent the red blood pounding to Grace Harlowe's temples.

"I am right or else I am terribly mistaken!" she exclaimed in a troubled voice.

CHAPTER XIX

A VOICE AND A FACE

"I MUST see who leaves this house!" decided the Overton girl, glancing about her perplexedly. "The window!"

Quietly raising it she crawled through, then pulled it down with the least possible noise. A path that led past the side of the house extended back to the next street. Out through this Grace ran, then down one block and out to the main street, where she took up a position in a shop across the way, from whose windows she could command a good view of the front of the house in which she and Elfreda lived.

Grace kept her vigil for the better part of an hour, but no one emerged. She was getting restive, and the shop people now and then regarded her curiously.

"This will never do," thought Grace. "I am making myself too conspicuous. I believe I will move to the next shop." She did so, stopping at a place several doors below. Grace had been there but a few moments when the door of the doctor's house opened and Doctor Klein stepped out and walked rapidly down the street in her direction. He halted when opposite the store and strode across toward it. She saw him heading, as she thought, for the shop, and boldly stepped out.

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"Ah, Madame Gray," greeted the doctor. "I observed you waiting in the store and I came right over. Perhaps you were waiting for me?"

"Perhaps I was." She smiled pleasantly. "I would ask how the maid Marie is."

"Sleeping when I saw her last. I too have been indisposed and have been sleeping for the last two hours," volunteered the doctor, his keen, twinkling eyes regarding her shrewdly.

Grace smiled, but not by the slightest expression of face or eyes did she show that she knew him to be telling an untruth.

"The maid is suffering from shock, nothing more. She should be able to resume her duties before the day is done."

"I am glad to hear that, Doctor. I am going on to the canteen. Are you going in that direction?"

The doctor smiled, bowed, and, taking the outside of the walk, stepped briskly along beside her. They chatted of the occupation by the American troops, Grace taking the opportunity to say she hoped the inhabitants would not take advantage of the leniency of the invaders lest the Americans put heavy restrictive measures upon them that might prove burdensome.

202

"Our people are kindly disposed, but they are quite likely to be savage when imposed upon or deceived," she added.

"Ah! They are like my own countrymen, whose hearts are tender, Frau Gray, but those hearts are breaking to-day. We are very sad and full of humility. Yes, I have said that we were wrong, but that is not the fault of the German people. It is Wilhelm and his war lords who should be blamed."

"Oh, Doctor, you forget! Did you not have an army in the field?"

"Most certainly."

"And they were Germans, several millions of them. Is it not so?"

He bowed profoundly.

"Then why blame it all on the man who, like a coward, has run away and left you to work out your own salvation? The German nation—the whole nation—was behind the Kaiser in this wicked war—wicked so far as Germany was concerned. If I may say so without offense, the trouble—one of the shortcomings, I should say—with your people is that they are not good sportsmen. They are unsportsmanlike losers. Instead of standing up like men and confessing that they were wrong and that they are whipped, they prate about the spirit of Germany being unbroken, and then whimper like spoiled children because the victor says they must pay for breaking his windows!"

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"You are very severe on my people."

"Herr Doctor, I have been on the western front, up on the lines, for many months, and I have seen much, too much ever to permit me to grow sentimental about 'the poor German nation that had nothing to do with the war,' that was opposed to the war, and refused to fight, but let the

Kaiser fight it out all by himself." Grace laughed, and her laugh took the sting out of her words, but they went home to the heart of the Herr Doctor, and his face reddened.

"I have admitted that our rulers were in error; I do not admit that the German people were at fault. They were forced into the war," he answered stiffly.

"And forced out of it," retorted Grace. "Pardon me, but I should not have said so much. When I hear Germans glibly throwing off their own responsibility for the wounding and killing of several million men I am inclined to be irritable. Suppose we drop the subject and not refer to it again. When did you leave the service, Doctor?"

"I—I—why, what made you think I had been in the service?" he parried.

"Your walk. You have been in the German army. At times you forget yourself and lapse into the goose-step. There I go again. That was too personal. I ask your pardon."

"You are a keen woman, Frau Gray. I served my time in the army when a young man, as all good Germans have done—"

Grace interrupted him with a merry laugh.

"Thank you for the compliment. Thank you for admitting the truth of all that I have said about the German people. Of course there is nothing personal, unless one chooses to assume it, in what I have said. We part on the best of terms, do we not, Herr Doctor?" urged Grace, pausing and extending her hand.

Doctor Klein bowed stiffly over it. He appeared to be somewhat dazed over her rapid-fire conversation.

Grace backed away and saluted. She was answered by the stiff military salute of the German officer. The doctor flushed as he realized that he had again been caught napping by a woman. The Overton girl smiled a guileless happy smile, and turning she walked rapidly away.

"Our fine doctor, clever as he thinks he is, has been checkmated," she chuckled. "But watch your step, Grace Harlowe. When he thinks it over in his methodical German way he will be furious."

Grace hurried on to her canteen, well satisfied with her morning's work, but more perplexed than ever. She had been favored by a kind fate in meeting the doctor, had turned his attempted flanking movement into a defeat and had made him appear ridiculous. That was quite sufficient for one morning, yet Grace could not understand why only the doctor had emerged from the house, finally deciding that perhaps the other had gone out by the route that she herself had taken in leaving the house, through the yard in the rear.

When Grace reached the canteen, she found Elfreda very busy assisting in serving a crowd of doughboys, and Won Lue, wearing a happy smile, working like a beaver, assisting. She paused to observe for a moment or so, then stepped in.

"Has the supervisor not been in yet?" she asked.

Elfreda shook her head.

"I wonder why?"

"I shouldn't worry my head about it were I in your place," returned Miss Briggs briefly. "Miss Cahill and Miss O'Leary were here a few moments ago inquiring for you. They are located about four miles from here and find themselves very lonely. Miss Cahill said the only compensation about it is that they do not have to listen to the supervisor's unpleasant remarks all day long. I am glad she has left us alone this morning. Anything doing over at the quarters?"

"Quiet. I walked down most of the way with the doctor and we had a delightful chat. That is, I enjoyed it. I am not so certain about his enjoyment."

"Poor Doctor! Here, Buddy, don't try to play tricks on me. I am a lawyer at home, and I am likely to use my legal knowledge to advantage if you try to slip a bar of chocolate in your pocket when you think I am not looking. Come across, please."

The doughboy did so shamefacedly, while his companions laughed uproariously.

"Here! I don't believe in taking candy from babies. Here are two pieces for you because you have promised to be good. This army has the biggest sweet tooth in the world," she said, handing two bars of chocolate to the discomfited doughboy.

"I—I'm sorry," muttered the doughboy.

"That is all right, Buddy. I was just making conversation, and you happened to furnish the makings. When you wish any more and haven't the money to buy, come in just the same. If I am here you will get it, and if I am not ask for Mrs. Gray. She is even easier than I am."

Grace, talking to a group of soldiers, overheard and smiled to herself. She was proud of Elfreda. The war had done wonders for the young lawyeress; it had made her more tolerant of her fellow man; it had filled her heart with a human sympathy that she had never known before; it had made her a womanly woman, at the same time sharpening her wits. Elfreda would turn her back on war and return to her profession a better and bigger woman mentally than when she had joined the colors. Grace's heart was full of gladness as these thoughts filtered through her mind.

"You savvy Missie Slith?" questioned a voice in her ear.

"Yes, I savvy her, Won. What about her?"

"Me savvy Missie Slith." Won chuckled and shook hands with himself. Grace regarded him half amusedly, then turned to her customers.

All at once the Overton girls found themselves alone, so far as customers were concerned. The doughboys had remained as long as they could find an excuse for remaining, for they were happy to be able to talk to two bright, good-looking American girls, the "girls from God's country," as they expressed it, but they were careful not to outstay their welcome. Had they known it both girls were just as eager to talk with the soldiers as the soldiers were to talk with them.

"Now that we aren't busy, tell me about the doctor," urged Elfreda.

Grace perched herself on the counter with her back to the door and told the story of her walk with the German physician, but failed to mention what had occurred in the house. She did admit that she was waiting in the shop to see who came out of the house, and mentioned the doctor's bold move in going directly to the store. Grace was convinced, after her talk with the physician, that he did not know that she had been in the house. It was probable, as she reasoned it out, that he must have seen her enter the second store, if not the first.

"That was fine. I could not have given it to him straighter myself," declared Miss Briggs mischievously. "You made him dizzy, I'll warrant. I know just how you did it. You could talk a deaf and dumb man to death, I really believe. Why were you so curious about seeing who came out of the house?"

"Just a little idea that I had in mind. I—" The expression on her companion's face caused Grace to pause. Elfreda's face had suddenly assumed a strained expression, the lines had hardened ever so little and the eyes had narrowed.

It was not necessary for "Captain" Grace to turn around facing the door to see who or what had so changed her companion.

"Girl, you will please get down from the counter!" commanded the cold voice of Mrs. Chadsey Smythe, though it was a more restrained tone than she had ever employed in speaking to Grace.

"You are right, Mrs. Smythe. It is not a dignified position," answered Grace laughingly, hopping down from the counter.

"Why bother her? She seems to be enjoying it so much," urged a voice that was pleasing. "I know I should be perched up there all the time were I on duty here."

Grace suddenly felt the color mounting to her cheeks. She had not yet turned about to face the newcomers, but the Overton girl knew that voice, and at the same time knew that she must control herself before she faced the owner of it. When she finally did turn, after a meaningless word or two to Elfreda to aid the process of control, Grace presented a smiling face and laughing eyes that offered no trace of recognition as she looked into the eyes of the woman who accompanied Mrs. Smythe.

"You will kindly remain standing while on duty after this," added the supervisor. "Are all of our supplies here, none missing?"

"Yes, Mrs. Smythe, all that were sent over last evening from the wreck." Grace was wondering what had come over Mrs. Smythe that she was exercising so much self-control. Ordinarily in the circumstances the supervisor would have worked herself into a towering rage. Then wonder of wonders! Mrs. Smythe introduced her companion.

"This is Mrs. Gray. Miss Marshall, Mrs. Gray." It was done sourly and resentfully, but it was better than Grace Harlowe had any reason to expect of her immediate superior.

Grace extended a hand and greeted the young woman smilingly.

"I am glad to meet you," she said, but as she said it "Captain" Grace again saw this same face beside that of a German officer on the other side of the Rhine, and heard these smiling lips utter the words: "She is as hideous and as ugly as no doubt her soul is black."

CHAPTER XX

IN A MAZE OF MYSTERIES

"I HEAR you have been having a most unpleasant time, Mrs. Gray," volunteered Molly Marshall. "Between falling from the skies and being made a prisoner by the enemy you have had, I should consider, enough thrills to satisfy any one."

"*C'est la guerre* (it is war)," answered Grace smiling and shrugging her shoulders.

"*Oui*," agreed Miss Marshall. "I shall hope to see more of you. Mrs. Smythe has kindly offered to share her apartment with me, and I understand that you are billeted in the same house, so we should have some pleasant chats. I should love to know you better."

Grace said the sentiment was reciprocated. While they were speaking, the supervisor was taking her revenge on the Chinaman. She was abusing him shamefully, so much so that Grace could stand it no longer.

"Won, you go now. You savvy too much talk," declared Grace nodding to him.

"Me savvy talk like machine glun, a-la. Me go."

Grace smiled and handed him the promised gift, whereupon Madame's rage broke out afresh.

"Girl, how dare you!"

"Won has been working for me, Mrs. Smythe. It is best that he go now. He has worked too faithfully for me to stand by and see him abused, begging your pardon." Grace signalled to the Chinaman to be gone. He lost no time in leaving the place, giving Grace a sly wink and a grimace as he backed from the doorway. Molly Marshall saved the situation by leading Mrs. Smythe to the rear of the canteen, where she soon had the supervisor laughing. Shortly afterwards the young woman walked out with her, much to Grace's relief.

"Chad came in here intending to keep her temper, but she lost it," declared Elfreda.

"It was my fault that she did, Elfreda. Some one has been advising her to behave herself. It is my idea that she went to headquarters to enter a complaint against me this morning, but that she was advised to be good if she wished to remain with the Army of Occupation. Here, Buddy, are you headed in the direction of the Intelligence Department?" she called to a soldier who was passing. He said he could go that way, whereupon Grace asked him to carry a note and leave it there. The note, which she scribbled on a piece of wrapping paper, was addressed to Captain Boucher and read: "Yat Sen," and was signed, "G. G."

"More mystery?" questioned Elfreda.

"Oceans of it. Miss Marshall is a good-looking woman, isn't she?"

"Yes, I suppose so, but I can't get over my first impression that there is something queer about her. Doesn't she impress you that way?"

"Considering what I know about her, she does."

"Eh? What do you know?" demanded Elfreda.

"Do you recall my telling you about a German officer and a woman who, the day I was released on the other side, stood making remarks as I passed—how the woman said, 'She is as hideous and as ugly no doubt as her soul is black'?"

"Yes."

"You ask me what I know of Miss Marshall. When I tell you that she is the woman who made that remark, you will understand that I know altogether too much about her."

"A spy!" gasped Miss Briggs.

Grace nodded.

"Yes, but which way?"

"Captain Boucher informs me that she is an American spy and a brilliant one. It is difficult for me to believe that, in view of what I saw and heard. She at least appears to be playing the game both ways."

"Have you told Captain Boucher of that?"

"Not yet, but I shall at the first opportunity. I intended to do so, but after what he said to me I decided to wait. He told me further that I might with perfect safety coöperate with Miss Marshall, which I shall not do."

"Loyalheart, you are wonderful. How you could meet her, as you did after what you knew of her, is beyond me. I could no more have done it than I could fly. I don't believe she even suspects that you recognized her."

"I hope not for the sake of the work I have before me. Of course this is between us only, and I wish you would not breathe a word of it or any other confidential matter while we are in our rooms. I suspect those walls have ears."

Mrs. Smythe did not return to the canteen again that afternoon, being engaged, as Grace surmised, in arranging for a new building to take the place of the one destroyed when the ammunition dump blew up. At six o'clock Grace went home to prepare their supper, leaving Elfreda to wait for their relief at the canteen. There was no effort on Grace's part this time to enter her home quietly, still she made no noise that she was conscious of, but she had no more than gotten to her room than there came a tap on the door. It was Marie.

Grace welcomed her smilingly.

"I am glad to see you out again. How do you feel?"

"Not very well, Madame. I am sore all over. All Huns are brutes!"

"Do you include the good doctor?"

"Ah, the doctor. He is fine on the outside, but the soul, Madame! Why should one say it when one does not know?"

Grace nodded thoughtfully and asked who was with Mrs. Smythe. Marie informed her that Miss Marshall was taking supper with Madame and talking of the war.

"Madame told me to say to you when you came in that you were to go to the new canteen in the morning. It is near the river on the same street as the old one. You are to be there at six o'clock in the morning. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I believe you have already done something for me. Did you make up the bed and slick up the room?" Grace regarded her smilingly.

"Yes, Madame."

"Thank you very much. Did Madame go to headquarters this morning?"

Marie nodded and grinned.

"She went to ask them to send you home, but instead they told her she was the one who should be sent home. Was that not glorious? Oo-lá-lá, how I should have loved to hear it and to see the face of Madame."

"That will do, please, Marie," rebuked the Overton girl. "She is our superior. Thank you for your kindness about the room."

Marie smiled and nodded as she backed to the door, then closed it softly behind her. Grace stepped over and locked the door, and pulling the shade down began a thorough examination of the room. First she examined the furniture, then the fireplace, the lighting fixtures and the baseboard that extended all the way around the room.

"All clear," muttered the girl.

Next, the walls came in for a scrutiny. Not only did she look the walls over, but felt them gingerly with her finger tips. What the result of that search was Grace Harlowe did not even confide to Elfreda Briggs, but she was satisfied that her intuition again had served her well, and was now determined to be more watchful than ever.

Her suspicions were still further confirmed when she heard the voices of Mrs. Smythe and Miss Marshall in conversation with the doctor in his apartment that evening. They were making merry and Madame was actually laughing. When Grace discovered that they were discussing subjects that she knew were of military value she was horrified that Mrs. Smythe could so far forget herself, but what to do about it she did not know. Grace felt that she should take the matter to Captain Boucher, yet she could not quite bring herself to carry tales about the woman she did not like. It looked petty to her, beneath her, so Grace decided to await developments and continue with her work.

That night as she lay wide awake in her bed, she heard the doctor go to the cellar. She heard him fix the furnace for the night; then the sound of distant conversation floated up to her. After a

time the doctor came up and the house settled down to silence.

This same thing, so far as the cellar excursion was concerned, continued for three nights. During that time Grace did not get much sleep. Much of the time, after Elfreda went to sleep, Grace spent sitting in a chair tipped back against the wall where she appeared to be resting in profound thought. On the third night she was aroused by an alarm of fire in the street. She did not learn the cause of it until the following morning, when she was informed that the fire had been discovered in the basement of the main barracks, where nearly a thousand American soldiers were sleeping.

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Grace asked few questions about this blaze, though in the light of what she already knew she had certain well-founded suspicions. The next night nothing occurred to disturb the Army of Occupation, though Grace Harlowe increased her rapidly enlarging fund of information to an extent that alarmed even her. She saw that she must turn over some of it to the Intelligence Department without delay. Human lives depended upon her doing so. It was too late to do so that night, for to leave the place might upset all her plans were she discovered.

After pondering over the subject from all angles the Overton girl went to bed. How she did wish she might confide in Elfreda Briggs. Grace, however, had learned that in these secret matters there was but one safe course—to keep one's own counsel. Well-intentioned as those in whom one confided might be, there was always the possibility of a word slipping out, of a facial expression or of an unconsciously antagonistic attitude toward the wrong person.

"Dear Elfreda shall know all that I know after I have completed my work. I must confess to myself that it is the most interesting work I have ever done, this pitting one's wits against some of the keenest ones in Europe. However, I still have some distance to go before I arrive at my objective." These thoughts and many others drifted through Grace Harlowe's mind before she got to sleep.

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In the morning she asked Elfreda to report for her at the canteen, as she expected to be late in arriving there. After breakfast, during which the girls discussed nothing beyond their own personal affairs, "Captain" Grace went out, this time by way of the front door, heading straight for the canteen.

The place was not yet open, so, unlocking the door, the Overton girl stepped in and, sitting down, studied the street keenly. What Grace was seeking to determine was whether or not she had been followed. There being no indication that she had been followed she went out, locking the door behind her, and proceeded directly to the headquarters of the Intelligence Department, which was located in the executive building on the river front.

Captain Boucher had not yet come in, and Grace waited for the better part of an hour for him, preferring not to have him called up, for reasons known only to herself. The captain came in briskly, humming to himself, but stopped short when he discovered the demure figure of "Captain" Grace seated at his desk.

The Overton girl rose and saluted.

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"Ah! I have been looking for you. Thank you for the name you sent over. We have been watching that gentleman since, but while his actions at times have been suspicious, we have as yet nothing on him. Can you give me further information that will assist?"

Grace said she was not prepared to do so, that what knowledge she had of Yat Sen was only circumstantial, but that she expected to round out the matter very soon and have something more definite for the Bureau.

"I suppose, sir, that you discovered that the cause of the fire in Barracks Number One was due to a short circuit?" she questioned innocently.

"What! How did you know that?"

"Perhaps I surmised it, sir. If I may do so I would offer the suggestion that the wiring of Number Two Barracks be looked over before to-night. If you do not watch out the place will be on fire before you know it."

"Mrs. Gray, what do you mean?"

"That there is a Hun plot to cut the ground from under the Army of Occupation, if I may put it that way. There is a big plot on foot here, reaching out through many lines."

"I know it, but that is about all I do know on the subject. If you succeed in leading us to a solution of this problem you will have done quite the biggest thing that has been done yet for the American Army of Occupation. What do you know?"

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"I know that it is part of the plan to burn down the barracks. Of course the Huns do not wish to destroy Coblenz, but they are perfectly willing to lose such buildings as the barracks. Then again, according to Hun reasoning, the moral effect on the Army of Occupation will be of great value."

"The fools! They haven't learned their lesson yet. You believe that this attempt is to be made by short-circuiting the electric wires?"

"It may be. I should advise that the building be closely watched, even to the extent of hiding watchers in the cellar, but you must be very careful. Personally I hope you do not catch any one to-night, nor for several nights, until I have completed my work. Of course I don't mean that you are to let a building burn down," added Grace smilingly. "Are you quite certain of Miss Marshall?"

"Yes! No doubt at all about her."

Grace told him of what she had heard and seen on the other side of the Rhine when she was on her way across to the American lines.

"Thank you!" he exclaimed after a brief reflection over what she told him, but offered no further comment on the subject of the woman who appeared to Grace to be playing a double game. "How long do you believe it will take you to gather in the ends of the clues you have? I take it that is what you mean?"

"That is it exactly, sir. Perhaps a day or two; perhaps longer. If I make as much headway in the next twenty-four hours as I have done in the last, I may be able to close my case in less time. Please be careful how you communicate with me and never do so at my billet. What do you know about Doctor Klein, my landlord? I wish to be certain about what sort of a house I am living in. You see Miss Briggs and I being alone makes some difference."

The captain chuckled and stroked his chin, Grace regarding him solemnly. The Intelligence officer understood in a way why she asked the question.

"He is one of the finest Germans I know, Mrs. Gray, and that is much for me to say about a Hun. I might say considerably more, but I am going to let you work out your own problem. You will be surprised when you get yourself set straight on this matter."

"Thank you. I am sure I do not know what you mean. I will report as soon as I have something further of a definite nature for you," promised Grace, rising to go to her work.

"Do you need assistance?"

"No, thank you. There are too many persons mixed up in this affair already."

"Clever woman! If you wish anything, let me know."

"Well, sir, so long as you have made the offer, I do need some assistance. If convenient I should like the loan of an auger."

"A what?"

"Auger, sir, to bore holes with."

"Are you in earnest?"

"I am, sir. I wish one about two inches in diameter if I can get it, but if not I can use a smaller one. I should like to have a saw, but I fear I cannot use it to advantage."

"Are you thinking of building a house?" questioned the officer whimsically.

"No, sir, but I am going to partially tear down one. When may I have it?"

"Now. I will order it, or shall I send it to the canteen?"

"Neither, I think," decided Grace after reflection. "I think I shall have some one call for it. Please see that it is well wrapped so that no one can tell from the appearance of the package what is in it. Good morning, sir. I must return to the canteen or I shall be in difficulties," she added laughingly, and saluting, walked out without another word.

CHAPTER XXI

A MOUSE IN THE TRAP

THE Intelligence officer spent some moments in profound meditation after the departure of "Captain" Grace, but what his conclusions were did not appear, either in words or in the expression of his face. The captain ordered the package for Grace and, addressing it, left it with his orderly to be turned over to any one bearing Mrs. Gray's order.

It was a doughboy who called for the package later in the day and who handed it to Grace on the street according to arrangement. She went home with her package concealed in a bag of groceries which she had purchased on her way.

After listening for some time and being convinced that there was no one in the adjoining rooms, Grace covered the keyhole, pinned her overseas cap on the wall, pulled down the shades and very carefully moved the bed out a few feet from the wall. She then removed the tacks down one side of the carpet at the back of the bed, and as many more from the end of the floor covering at the head of the bed. She drew the carpet back, estimated distances with her eyes and, putting the bit in its stock, began boring a hole in the floor.

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The auger went through the soft pine flooring with rather too great ease and made a noise that led the girl to fear that she would arouse the household. Not only that, but, should there chance to be some one in the cellar, discovery would be certain.

"If any shavings have gone down to the cellar floor I am lost anyway," she muttered. Applying her eye to the hole she had made in the floor Grace was relieved to find that only the point of the bit had gone through the lower side of the pine flooring. The job could not have turned out more to her satisfaction. She would have liked to make the opening wider so that she could look into the cellar, but the Overton girl was dealing, as she believed, with keen people, people who were ever on the alert, and who would not hesitate at anything to protect themselves and their interests.

"Now that I have made the hole, I must hide it," reflected Grace.

This was easily done. A piece of cardboard was laid over the opening, the carpet replaced and the tacks pressed back into place without a sound that could have been heard a dozen feet away.

Having accomplished all this the Overton girl locked the hammer in her trunk, removed her cap from the wall and also all traces that might indicate that something unusual had been going on, after which she wrapped the auger in paper and tucked it inside of her blouse, over which she threw her cloak and walked out on her way to the canteen.

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Elfreda and Marie, with the assistance of Won Lue, had arranged the stock and were nearly ready to open, though it had been decided that this should not be done until the following day for the reason that the lights would not be in place that evening.

Just before leaving the canteen for home Grace wrote a note to Captain Boucher in which she said, "The house is demolished, thank you." This she wrapped about the handle of the bitstock, enclosing the whole in heavy wrapping paper, and gave it to Won.

"Captain Boucher," she said in a low tone. "You savvy?"

"Me savvy, la."

"You savvy nobody, see?"

Won chuckled and nodded. She turned to answer a question asked by Elfreda and when she looked around again Won was not there, not even Elfreda Briggs' sharp eyes having seen him go.

"Those Orientals give me the creeps," declared Miss Briggs. "Now you see them, now you don't. Did you send him on an errand?"

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"Please don't ask questions. Some one might hear. Marie is down in the cellar and—"

Elfreda interrupted with a laugh.

"Marie is a thick-head. Don't worry about her, Grace."

"I am not worrying about any one. Just the same, think before you speak, no matter if only a cat is within hearing. There is serious business on foot; serious for our boys and for you and myself."

"So serious as that, Grace?" whispered Elfreda.

"Captain" Grace nodded and gave her companion a warning look, for Marie was faintly heard coming up the stairs. Grace said it was time to close and go home.

"Marie, you have done well. Thank you. Madame should be pleased."

"Nothing will please her," complained the French girl.

Elfreda said she agreed with Marie, and declared that the maid was a girl of good common sense, which made Marie smile, a thing she seldom did. The three went home together, Grace engaging the maid in conversation most of the way, asking her questions about her home in France, her family and how she came to be with the Army of Occupation. Marie said that Madame was billeted in her home and had asked her to come along with the welfare workers.

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Reaching the house Grace thrust a hand to the maid, a bright new shining franc piece resting in the palm.

Marie Debussy drew herself up, shook her head, and smiled as she opened the door and entered Mrs. Smythe's apartment.

"My! What offended dignity," exclaimed Elfreda when the girls had gained their own room. "Did you see the look she gave you?"

"Yes," answered Grace meekly, placing a finger on her lips and giving Miss Briggs a warning glance. "Remember, Elfreda," she reminded in a low tone, "if I talk rather erratically at any time this evening and place my finger on my cheek this way, you will understand that I have a motive, and that you are not to express any opinions out loud," whispered Grace in her companion's ear.

"It is my opinion that you have too many motives," whispered Miss Briggs in reply. "My head is swimming already. Well, here we are home again," she added out loud. "I'm sick of war and everybody in it. Suppose we have some chow and forget war."

"For the present, yes."

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They chatted over their meal, which was served on their center table, on a white table cloth, with real silver and china which had been supplied by the owner of the house. It was really homelike, so different from what these two loyal girls had been accustomed to since they had been on the western war front, and they gave themselves up to the fullest possible enjoyment of the moment.

"Have you heard from Tom recently?" asked Elfreda.

"I had a letter from him two days ago. He tells me that he expects to be ordered away on some military mission soon. What it is or where, I do not know, but he says perhaps it may be possible for me to go with him provided it is not too confidential a mission," she added in a lower tone. "You see officers' wives are not supposed to be able to keep a secret."

"I know one who is," declared Elfreda in a half whisper. "There are others who know it, too."

"Meaning?" inquired Grace.

"Oh, most any old person," returned Elfreda. "I had a letter from Anne this morning. She says she is just dying from loneliness, that she hasn't seen her husband in ages, and that unless this war ends pretty soon she is either coming out to see us or desert. Jessica Brooks, she says, had a visit from Reddy when he last had shore leave. She wishes to know if any one has heard from Hippy, who she said, a flier told her, had had a bad fall."

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"I don't believe the report is correct," declared Grace. "We would have heard of it through Nora, who isn't very far from here. Does Anne say anything about the girls of the unit in Paris?"

"She said she had heard from them through Arline Thayer, whose letter was mostly made up of remarks laudatory of *our* daughter Yvonne. Grace Harlowe, I believe I am actually getting jealous of that child, and I don't see how you can be so passive."

"I don't wear my heart on my sleeve, dear. I love that dear little golden-haired darling more than I ever loved anything in my life, outside of my dear mother and Tom, and I am looking forward with every fiber of my being to the day when we three shall be together in our beautiful Haven Home. I hope she will be happy there."

"She will be, Loyalheart. Don't worry about that. I wonder if the doctor has come in?" she asked in a whisper.

"He came in as we were sitting down to our mess."

"You must have ears in the back of your head. I never saw anything like you in all my experience."

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Grace got up and stretched herself, placed a finger against her cheek and faced the end of the room.

"Have you heard the rumor, Elfreda? It is said that the American artillery is trained on the Germans, and that some hot-headed officers are planning to shoot up our friends across the Rhine one of these nights."

"No? You don't say!" cried Elfreda, speaking loudly enough to be heard in the next room. "I hope they will not do anything like that."

"So do I, but it appears to be a possibility."

Grace winked at Elfreda and changed the subject. After the dishes were washed and put away the two girls sat down to study their German, which they had been studying for some time. Since coming to the Rhine Grace had taken advantage of every opportunity to speak German, feeling certain that it would prove to be a good investment. Her knowledge of the language was destined to be very useful to her in the near future.

They turned in shortly after nine o'clock, Elfreda to go to sleep, Grace to lie awake and think. Before getting into bed she had whispered to Miss Briggs not to be alarmed if she were awakened suddenly in the night with a feeling that something was wrong in the room.

"That something will be only unimportant little I. I may be walking in my sleep for several nights to come."

After ages of effort to keep heavy eyelids from falling, Grace was rewarded by hearing the trap raised in the adjoining room and light footsteps descending the cellar stairs. The Overton girl crept under the bed at the sound of the opening trap, and ere the footsteps had reached the cellar she had pulled aside the carpet just far enough for her purposes, removed the cardboard and pressed her ear to the hole in the floor. Every sound down there was almost as audible to her as if she had been in the cellar.

"Now for the test of my plan," she told herself.

Significant sounds were borne to her ears, then a human voice, speaking in a low guarded tone, drifted up through the hole in the floor. What she heard amazed even Grace Harlowe. She learned too that one mouse had walked into the trap that had been cleverly set for it.

CHAPTER XXII

"CAPTAIN" GRACE DECIDES TO ACT

WHEN finally Grace Harlowe had replaced the carpet and crawled out, her face wore a serious look. She stood in the middle of the floor for a long time, thinking over what her resourcefulness had produced in the way of definite information.

"I shall at last have to take Elfreda into my confidence. The time to act is at hand," she muttered. "This is bigger than even I, with all my suspicions, dreamed. The Intelligence captain surely will have a good laugh at my expense when I tell him what I have discovered." Grace grinned mirthlessly and returned to bed and went to sleep.

"I have something to tell you this morning, Elfreda," she whispered at the breakfast table. "Don't ask me now. I haven't decided where or when, but I shall think it over between now and the time we finish breakfast. Remember, the walls have ears. To-night something will be doing."

Elfreda looked at her curiously, but Grace merely kissed her and proceeded to put the breakfast on the table. After finishing, Grace said she thought their best plan was to stroll down to the river, where they would be certain to be alone.

On the same seat where she had talked with Captain Boucher, Grace told her companion all that she had learned up to that moment. Elfreda's amazement was for the moment beyond words.

"I never dreamed of anything so terrible as this. What brutes!"

"We knew that before, dear. Time is precious. No telling what they may not be up to next. The propaganda plan is in full swing. While I do not believe the uprising will amount to much, it will at least cause the loss of some American lives, but if we save only one American life we shall have justified our existence. I shall probably see Captain Boucher some time to-day and plan for him to verify all that I have told you, by the evidence of his own ears."

"What about Miss Marshall? Do you believe she is in this plot?"

"The evidence of my eyes and ears tells me that she is, that she is a German spy, but my woman's intuition is directly the opposite. If one were guided by intuitions one would make fewer mistakes. The trouble is that we fight that intuition and try to reason with it. I am a great believer in impressions that come to the human mind, apparently out of nowhere. I know that had I followed mine I should have been better off. In a way it is an advantage to be blind and deaf and dumb," she added smilingly, while Miss Briggs regarded her with a curious light in her eyes. "I wish I might get in communication with the captain without the necessity of going to headquarters. I suspect that we are being watched, at least that I am. Keep your eyes open to-day, Elfreda. That's all for now."

Grace rose and the two girls proceeded to the canteen, which they opened and began preparing for the day's work. They knew that the supervisor would not arrive until late in the forenoon, if then, for she was, as a rule, a late sleeper. They had not been there long before Grace discovered the grinning face of Won Lue at the door. She nodded to him to enter.

"You savvy Missie Slyth?" he asked, bowing and smirking.

"Not yet, Won."

"You savvy Yat Sen?" he next questioned, eyeing her shrewdly.

Grace nodded.

"I want you to take a letter to headquarters for me. You savvy no one must know?"

"Me savvy plenty, la."

Grace nodded and penciled a line to the Intelligence officer as follows:

"Important that I see you to-day. Do not wish to go to headquarters. Can you arrange to meet me elsewhere? Answer by messenger. He is perfectly reliable, but send no verbal messages, please.

"G. G."

The answer came back in about an hour, the captain directing her to meet him accidentally on the river front where they met before. The hour was to be two o'clock. Grace informed Miss Briggs, directing her to say, in case Madame should come in and inquire for her, that she had gone for a walk, but would return soon. Grace set out a few minutes before the hour named and

went by a roundabout way to the river front, strolling along aimlessly, hesitating now and then as if uncertain where she had better go.

This aimless wandering finally brought her to the Rhine, and eventually Grace sank down on a bench and began studying her German grammar. She saw the captain approaching, but did not look up, for there were many persons, German and American, strolling along, enjoying the view. Doughboys arm in arm with rosy-cheeked frauleins passed and repassed, prospective war brides, many of them; women going to the river to wash their rough clothing, and dignified Germans with chins elevated, marching back and forth with a suggestion of the goose-step in their stride.

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The captain was nearly past her, when he appeared suddenly to have discovered the Overton girl. He halted and saluted.

"Why, good morning, Mrs. Gray," he exclaimed.

"You must be a late riser, sir," chided Grace. "It is now well into the afternoon. Won't you sit down, if I may be so bold as to ask an officer to sit down beside me?" The conversation had been carried on in tones loud enough to be heard by any one passing.

"There is a man down near the water's edge who appears to be interested in us. I would suggest that we seem to be indulging only in airy persiflage," suggested the Overton girl, raising her voice in a merry laugh, the captain bowing and smiling to keep up the illusion.

Grace opened her German book and pointed to the page, speaking in a low tone.

"I observe that the mouse walked into the trap," she said.

"What mouse do you refer to?"

"The mouse that is now on his way to a certain building near Paris known as the American prison." Grace laughed merrily.

"Yat Sen! How did you know?"

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"Got it out of the air, sir."

"Thanks to you we caught him. The screws in the hinges of the cellar window, we discovered in advance, had been loosened so that all one had to do was to pull the window out. There was no short-circuit about this affair. The man crept in and actually started a fire in the rubbish down there. The men we had planted there pounced upon him, but they had a time getting the fire out without calling for assistance, which we did not wish them to do. We tried to make him confess."

"A waste of time," observed Grace.

"Yes. Chinamen lose the power of speech absolutely when you try to drag information from them. The situation is really serious. It is those back of such cut-throats as Yat Sen that we wish to get. You have done a very great service to us, but you began at the wrong end. It isn't the little man that we are after, it is the head and brains of the plot against the Army of Occupation."

"I think it can be arranged to put that information into your hands too, sir."

"If you can do that you ought to be promoted to the rank of General. You have discovered something! Gordon said you would. Tell me. We mustn't sit here long." They were keeping up a semblance of merry chatter through the conversation.

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"You know where we are living, Captain?"

"Yes."

"I wish you to visit us secretly to-night, when I think I may be able to give you the evidence you are in search of. Of course it may require more than one visit to place you in possession of all the facts, but with what I can tell you should be fully prepared to act."

"Mrs. Gray, do you mean to tell me that you have discovered those who are directly at the bottom of the plot here against the Allies?"

"Perhaps, sir. Please listen. You know where the Schutzenstrasse is, the street to the rear of our billet?"

He nodded.

"An alley leads from that directly to our house, but the alley may be under observation from the rear street. I would suggest, therefore, that you get into a rear yard somewhere to the east or west of that alley and follow along until you reach our billet. Our room will be dark, but I shall be at the window to let you in through it. Miss Briggs will be with me. The utmost caution must be observed, you must not speak a loud word while in our apartment; even a whisper may be overheard. I think it would be advisable for you to remove your shoes before you climb in through the window, as you might scrape the side of the house with them and give alarm."

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The Intelligence officer regarded her narrowly.

"Were I not in possession of more or less information as to your past performances, I might wonder if you were all there," declared the officer, tapping his own head.

"Perhaps I am not," laughed Grace. "This evening should prove whether I am or not," answered the Overton girl laughingly. "I am making a peculiar request, but we are dealing with peculiar people, shrewd, unscrupulous—desperate people. I think you had better come in at ten o'clock. You will have to wait a couple of hours, and perhaps I shall have to secrete you. You will not be over-comfortable, but I promise you that you will consider it well worth while, if things develop as I am expecting them to. May I depend upon you, sir?"

"You may, Mrs. Gray."

"I would suggest that this matter be kept absolutely confidential between us. Miss Briggs knows that I am going to invite you to visit us, and it will be best that no other human being, outside of yourself, knows about it. I have come to the point where I am afraid to trust any one."

"Your wishes in the matter shall be observed. I thank you, Mrs. Gray," answered the captain rising. "Happy to have come up with you," he said in a louder tone. "One of these days we will make up a party for a sail on the river. You will find it well worth while."

The captain strolled away and Grace resumed her study of the language that she had come to loathe. The Overton girl was on the verge of a great achievement, but from her attitude of indifference to all outside influences, and the absorption in her book that she was showing, one would not have imagined that she was planning the most important coup that had fallen to the lot of the American Secret Service since the beginning of the war, so far as its activity with the army was concerned.

Grace remained seated for half an hour longer, then started back to the canteen to take up her day's work for the doughboys.

CHAPTER XXIII

A DESPERATE PLOT REVEALED

ELFREDA had been informed of the proposed visit and carefully instructed by her companion as to her part in it. The girls spent a quiet evening until ten o'clock, when Grace got up and pinned her blouse on the wall, then put out the light and raised the shade. Peering out she saw a shadowy figure outlined in the darkness. After observing it keenly for a moment the Overton girl cautiously raised the window, that she had greased in the grooves to prevent squeaking. No sooner had she done so than the figure moved forward quickly.

The visitor was Captain Boucher, in his stockinged feet. He peered up into the face of Grace Harlowe, and climbed into the room with no more disturbance than a cat would have made. Not a word had been spoken. Grace lowered the window and stood motionless gazing out into the darkness, which vigil she kept for several moments, then pulled down the shade and lighted a candle.

"Take a seat," whispered Grace. "Should any one knock, crawl under the bed, and be sure to take your shoes with you. They wouldn't look well standing out in the middle of our room."

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The captain nodded and glanced curiously at the blouse pinned up on the wall, but Grace pretended not to have observed his exhibition of curiosity. She handed him a book, beckoned him to a chair, whereupon she and Elfreda sat down and began chatting in their ordinary tone, discussing their German study. Captain Boucher now and then would lay down his book, to listen and observe the faces of the two girls, which he found an interesting study, especially Grace's with its rapidly changing expression that left one in a state of bewilderment as to what particular emotion was predominant.

A slight sound as of some one opening a door in the front room was heard. Grace's head turned ever so little, and though the expression on her face did not change, attentiveness and intelligence swam instantly into her eyes. The captain, observing, bent his own ears to the sound that had arrested Grace Harlowe's attention. She glanced at her watch, nodded to Elfreda, and greatly to the amazement of her caller, got down and crawled under the bed.

Grace emerged, a moment later, her face flushed, her hair in slight disorder, and smiled radiantly at the visitor. She offered no explanation to the captain, but nodding to Elfreda, the latter began speaking of the girls of the Overton unit. It was half after eleven when Grace, hearing movement again in the front room, got up and went over to the captain. Leaning over him she placed her lips close to his ear.

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"You will please crawl under the bed," she whispered. "You will find the carpet drawn back, and by groping you will find a hole in the floor, made by the auger that you so kindly loaned to me. Place your ear to the hole and listen. Do not move and be sure to control your breathing to the limit. Have a handkerchief ready in case you find you have to cough or sneeze. I think you will hear something interesting. Afterwards I will supply any points that may be required to explain any remarks you may hear and not understand. Do not come out or move until I snap my finger. Here! You forgot your shoes," she reminded him, picking up and handing them to him. The captain flushed and accepted the shoes and the rebuke with a profound bow.

The Overton girls watched him with interest, and both were obliged to admit that the captain was very agile. He wriggled under and out of sight without making a sound, then all was silence. Listening as intently as she might she failed to hear his breathing.

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Grace then removed the blouse from the wall.

"Let's turn in, Elfreda. I'm terribly sleepy," yawned Grace.

Putting out the light the two girls threw themselves on the bed, and apparently went to sleep. There was a long wait, without a sound coming from the man under the bed.

Grace heard the trap raised, though she had not heard any one walking. She snapped her fingers once, receiving a similar signal from the man on watch at the auger hole. Silence settled over the house until perhaps five minutes later the Overton girls heard the drone of a far-away voice. It came from the cellar, and the chief of the Army Intelligence Department was listening to every word that the voice uttered.

Grace Harlowe found herself wishing that she might see the expression on the face of Captain Boucher at that moment.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRAP IS SPRUNG

IT must have been fully half an hour later when Grace Harlowe's straining ears told her that the conversation was ended. Hearing footsteps on the stairs she snapped her fingers sharply.

"Quietly, Elfreda!" she warned, slipping out to the floor about the time that Captain Boucher rose from the floor before her. "Any luck?" she whispered.

"I should say so. I must speak with you. Go to headquarters directly and I will meet you there. Two blocks below here on the Schutzenstrasse you will find a drosky. The driver is one of our operators. Hand him this card and tell him to take you to the office. If you get there before I do, tell the orderly to summon General Gordon in my name for an immediate conference."

The Overton girls slipped into their blouses, after which Grace crawled under the bed and replaced the carpet. This done she opened the window, all this without making a sound likely to attract attention. Elfreda climbed out first, followed by the captain, then Grace herself. The window was lowered and three persons were swallowed up in the darkness of the night, the captain going to the left, the girls to the right.

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Grace and Elfreda found the carriage and quickly reached headquarters, where Grace delivered her message. General Gordon came in about the time that Captain Boucher arrived, and looked his amazement at finding the Overton girls there.

"What's wrong, Boucher?" he demanded.

"Nothing except that our very good friend, Mrs. Gray, has run down the plotters. I haven't all of the story yet, but I have this evening listened to one of them giving the plans for blowing up the second ammunition dump and sacrificing the town for the sake of smoking the Americans out. This includes a desperate attempt to fire the barracks so that many men must perish. It's damnable!"

Captain Boucher then related briefly all that had occurred that evening.

"This man Klein must be arrested immediately. How did you know that we had caught Yat Sen, Mrs. Gray?" he demanded, turning to the demure figure of the Overton girl.

"I heard the doctor reporting it over the telephone in the cellar. The telephone evidently leads across the river. He reports every night at about the same time. It was from overhearing him that I was able to warn you about the proposed firing of Barracks Number Two."

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"Now that the matter is in my mind, will you tell me why you had your tunic pinned to the wall?" questioned Captain Boucher.

"There is a dictaphone behind the wallpaper at that point, with an opening through the paper so small that one never would notice it."

"I thought so. How did you chance to discover it?"

"I looked for it."

The two officers exchanged meaning glances.

"How did you come to suspect the doctor?" continued the captain.

"He was too suave to be genuine. Then, too, I presume my intuition had something to do with it. Little things, expressions on faces, mannerisms, all these things always did make an impression on me." Grace then went on to relate conversations that she had heard when the doctor was talking at the cellar telephone.

"The doctor in his conversation this evening referred to some person as the Babbler. Do you know whom he meant?"

"Mrs. Smythe."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the captain.

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"I am not at all surprised," interjected the general. "She must go, even if she succeeds in clearing herself."

Grace hastened to urge that no suspicion be directed at Mrs. Smythe, who, she declared, was a vain woman who had been used by the German spies because they knew how to appeal to her

vanity. In this way they obtained information that the supervisor did not realize she was giving.

"You speak of *spies*. I heard references made to at least one this evening. Do you suspect any others?" asked the captain.

"I know one other, sir. That one is the supervisor's maid, Marie Debussy!"

"Are you positive?" asked the general.

"I am, sir. I have heard conversations between her and the doctor. I have seen her acting suspiciously and in conference with men that I was certain were enemy officers, and I have heard her holding telephone conversations that connected her with plots against our men."

"I wonder who she can be?" marveled the captain.

"Who she is? She is Rosa von Blum, the famous German agent."

Both officers started, and stared at her in amazement.

"I presume you also would like to know who this other spy, that you call Doctor Klein, is. He is Captain Carl Schuster of the German Secret Service, a man who, I have heard said, is perhaps the cleverest of the Imperial operators. You no doubt wonder how I have obtained this information. It was quite simple, not due to any unusual ability or cleverness on my part. I did not know definitely until last night, when he said upon opening the telephone conversation, 'This is Carl! No, Carl Schuster—B One!' I then knew. The revelation of Rosa von Blum's identity occurred in a somewhat similar manner."

"This is most remarkable!" exclaimed Captain Boucher.

"Remember what I told you, Boucher," interjected the general. "I think you will agree with my expressed estimate of Mrs. Gray's ability. I may say, Mrs. Gray," he added, turning to the Overton girl, "that we have wondered about Doctor Klein, and that Miss Marshall has been working on his case, but without results beyond mere suspicion. Before the army reached the Rhine our operatives here reported their suspicions of him. That was the reason you were billeted in his house. I told Captain Boucher that if there was the slightest basis for our suspicions, you would discover that basis. We decided that nothing should be said to you of those suspicions. I wished to prove to the captain that my estimate of your ability was not influenced by the fact that you saved my life in the Argonne. We therefore gave you the opportunity to demonstrate, and you did."

"That was what I referred to when I told you you would be surprised when you had set yourself straight on the matter of the doctor," spoke up Captain Boucher. "You doubted Miss Marshall too, and with very good reason. That shows what a clever worker she is. You and she will compare notes to-morrow. But this that you tell me about Schuster and von Blum is a blow between the eyes. I never even considered such a possibility. It should be some satisfaction to you to know that you have turned up two of the most dangerous agents in the enemy service. It surely is a source of satisfaction to us. I suppose we should have Mrs. Smythe dismissed to-morrow, General? Why not recommend that Mrs. Gray take charge as supervisor in her place?"

"I had hoped to get home soon, sir," answered Grace, after a slight hesitancy.

"Take it until some one else is selected," urged the general. "How about those two spies, Captain?"

"We will arrest them at once."

"If I may offer a suggestion, gentlemen, I would urge that it be done with a speed that will not permit either to do away with evidence that may be in their possession. It might be wise for you to have your men enter the doctor's house through our quarters, which will give access to the hall. Once in the hall, the doors of the doctor's apartment, and that occupied by Mrs. Smythe, should be burst in without warning. The doctor sleeps in the rear room next to ours, and the maid occupies the corresponding room in Mrs. Smythe's quarters. If you wish I will accompany you."

"You two ladies will remain here, Mrs. Gray!" commanded the general. "You have done quite enough for one night. Then again, there may be shooting, and you might get hurt. You see we cannot afford to lose you just yet."

"It would not be the first time I had been under fire, sir," replied "Captain" Grace in a mild voice.

"Then, too, for obvious reasons, we do not wish you to appear in the case. The doctor may have surmised that you have had something to do with it, but that will be the extent of his knowledge of your participation. Boucher, get your men and go after those people."

Grace and Elfreda occupied General Gordon's quarters for the rest of the night, and were weary enough to sleep the night through without even once turning over. In the early morning they were summoned to Captain Boucher's office, where they were informed that the doctor had been taken only after a fight in which two soldiers were wounded—that both he and the woman

were being held for trial, and that considerable documentary evidence had been found in a secret receptacle in the doctor's cellar.

"We shall hope to accomplish something by using his cellar telephone late this evening," added the Intelligence officer.

"What about Mrs. Smythe?" questioned Grace.

"She undoubtedly will be recalled to-day. The woman may consider herself fortunate that she too is not under arrest."

"I'm sorry," murmured Grace. "Do you not think, Captain, that, with the lesson she has learned, Mrs. Smythe may more clearly see her error and do better?"

"No!" exploded Captain Boucher. "Besides, there is no place for a woman with her lack of brains in this army. You ought to have the Congressional Medal, but we of the Intelligence Service not only work in the dark, but must be content to be retiring heroes destined to blush unseen in the shadows, while the other fellows are the objects of the world's acclaim. Your house is under guard, but you are at liberty to return there and make yourselves at home. It has been decided to keep a guard there so long as you ladies occupy the house. Mrs. Smythe has been removed to other lodgings. It will not be necessary for you to see her, and I prefer that you do not report for duty until after her departure. Thank you. You are a clever woman, Mrs. Gray. General Gordon will see to it that you have proper recognition in reports."

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Both German spies were tried within a few days before a military tribunal and sentenced to prison. Grace took charge of the welfare work on the second day after their arrest, Mrs. Smythe then being well on her way toward Brest, whence she was booked for passage to America, a disgraced and unhappy woman, but the Overton girl found no joy in the downfall of her enemy. Rather was she deeply depressed over it, and wished that she might have been able to do something to soften the blow, but the supervisor had made that impossible.

Grace's mind, however, was at once filled with other affairs, and especially in what her husband wrote to her. He was writing from Paris, which city he was leaving that very day, he having been ordered to Russia on military duty.

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Now that Tom Gray had left Europe, Grace began to long for home, but it was a little more than a month later that "Captain" Grace finally severed her connection with the army and bidding good-bye to her friends, entrained for Paris. She and most of the Overton Unit, including Yvonne and the yellow cat, sailed for America and Home, early in the following week.

Grace had passed through experiences on the western front such as few women could boast of; she had won honors, she had made friends in high places, but it was the same Grace Harlowe, gentle, sweet, lovable, unsullied by the scenes through which she had passed, that was returning to the "House Behind the World," where she hoped to spend many happy, peaceful years with her much loved husband and her new-found daughter Yvonne.

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Changes from the original publication are as follows:

- Page 6
intelligence captain smoothes *changed to*
intelligence captain [smooths](#)
- Page 75
grace Harlowe informed them *changed to*
[Grace](#) Harlowe informed them
- Page 222
I might say considerable more *changed to*
I might say [considerably](#) more
- Book lists
[Battleship Boys Series](#) and
[Boys of the Army Series](#)
numbers 6, 7 and 8 *changed respectively to* 5, 6
and 7

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