

GREY SHADOW

GEO. E. ROCHESTER

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AT THIRTY FEET IT PASSED OVER THE HEADS OF THE
SERGEANT AND HIS MEN

THE "ACE" SERIES

GREY SHADOW

*THE STIRRING ESCAPADES OF A MYSTERIOUS
AND ELUSIVE BRITISH SECRET SERVICE
AGENT DURING THE GREAT
WAR DAYS*

BY
GEO. E. ROCHESTER



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To
CHRISTINE

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

At thirty feet it passed over the heads of the sergeant and his men.

Plan of Buhl aerodrome.

Plan of German kite balloon station.

Once a blinding glare flooded the forward cockpit as the searchlight beam settled upon the machine.

CHAPTER I

GREY SHADOW

I

IMPERATIVELY, a harsh voice, commanding silence, rang out above the din and chatter in Lorenz's crowded basement café. Startled, every dancing couple halted. Those who were not dancing looked up sharply from the stained and wooden-topped tables at which they were seated, to stare through the smoke-laden atmosphere at the grey-uniformed picket military which had appeared in the doorway.

"Stop that piano!" Again the voice of the grim-faced picket sergeant barked the order. It was Lorenz himself fat, perspiring, and shirt-sleeved, who waddled hastily to obey. Name of a dog, what was this? What did the military want here? He had been serving no meals—nothing—without first seeing the necessary food tickets. He was a loyal and honest citizen. Nothing to hide——

"Line the walls! Everyone will produce identification papers for inspection!" came the next order.

Ah, that was it! Identification papers. Then the picket must be in search of some deserter. From the piano, his fat and podgy hands folded together, Lorenz surveyed his customers with quickened interest.

A motley crowd they were, such a crowd as might only be found in a third-rate place like Lorenz's. Uniforms predominated, the tidy dark blue of the German fleet being most in evidence. But here and there, worn and mud-stained field-glory of the trenches bespoke of leave from the Line.

And somewhere amongst them was a deserter. Well, it was to be hoped the sergeant would smell him out quickly. Cowardly rat to desert, when every man was wanted out yonder on the Western Front. If he, Lorenz, was younger he himself would be out there fighting against the Englanders. Always he had deplored that he was too old——

"Your papers!" The sergeant had halted in front of him, and barked at him, with hand outstretched.

"But you know me!" wheezed Lorenz protestingly. "I am Lorenz, the proprietor——"

"I know no one to-night!" rasped the sergeant. "Your papers!"

A sudden paralysing thought came to Lorenz, leaving his flabby face ashen, his eyes protruding. The age limit had been raised again, and this was a rounding up! A search for more cannon-fodder with which to feed the hungry English guns! With shaking fingers, he produced his papers from the capacious pocket of his woollen waistcoat.

"I cannot fight!" he gasped. "My heart—no tribunal would pass me——"

Brusquely the sergeant took his papers, examined them, and handed them back.

"Now you!" he rapped, turning to Adolph, the waiter. Rapidly he scanned the man's papers and thrust them back.

"An invalid, eh?" he sneered, his contemptuous gaze taking in Adolph's hollow

cheeks and sunken eyes. "Why don't you ask to be sent to the Front, where there is the chance of a swift, clean death from a bullet through the head? Better that"—he broke off as a fit of coughing racked Adolph's emaciated frame—"than dying like that!"

He moved on, examining the papers of everyone in the place. Then, from the leather pouch on his belt, he produced a notice printed in heavy black type and pinned it to the wall.

Impelled by curiosity, Lorenz waddled forward, and, peering over the sergeant's shoulder, read:

REWARD!

FIFTY THOUSAND MARKS!

The above reward will be paid to anyone giving information which will lead to the apprehension of the British spy known as Grey Shadow. Anyone found guilty of wittingly withholding such information will be shot.

(Signed) GENERAL LODZ,
Military Commandant of Wilhelmshaven.

"Grey Shadow!" wheezed Lorenz excitedly. "Here in Wilhelmshaven?"

"Yes, here in Wilhelmshaven!" The sergeant turned and surveyed him. "He has been traced this far. He is on the run. He is trying to get out of Germany. But there is a net drawn round this town through which he will not slip!"

He jabbed Lorenz on the chest with a forefinger which hurt, and said: "So keep your eyes open!" Then to Adolph: "And you, too!"

Wheeling, he rapped out a harsh order to the picket, and clumped with them from the place. The departure of the picket served to unleash the eager and excited crowd lining the walls. They surged forward, jostling to read the notice the sergeant had pinned up.

Grey Shadow here in Wilhelmshaven. Incredible! Impossible! There was not one there that night who had not heard of Grey Shadow, that mysterious and elusive British spy on whose head the German High Command had placed such a price.

The stories told of Grey Shadow were many. Was it not said of him that for nine long months, by means of forged commission and identification papers, he had served in the field as a trusted Staff officer of Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria?

There was audacity for you! Audacity which had spelt tragedy for the Fatherland. For vital indeed had been the information which this daring rogue of a spy had sent across the line to his fellow-countrymen, the Englishers.

And when his work there had ended, what had he done, this cursed Grey Shadow? Quietly vanished? No, not he. For that was never his way. What he had done was to send a courteous note to General von Ruller, aide-de-camp to Prince Ruprecht, resigning what he was pleased to term his commission, and thanking them, one and all, for the pleasant sojourn which he had been permitted to make in their midst!

Again, had he not, honoured and fêted and passing himself off as the Kaiser's emissary, inspected the great Zeppelin base at Stralsund and been shown some of its most closely guarded secrets? Two highly placed officers of the Fatherland had been shot by

order of the German High Command because of that episode. And two more, stripped of all rank and decorations, had been banished for life to a fortress in East Prussia.

Again this daring Englander had written a pleasant little note of thanks, this time to the headquarters of the German Air Force at Berlin.

Again, it was common knowledge here in Wilhelmshaven that his was the hand which had stolen and sent to the British Admiralty the plans of the German mine-fields in the Skagerrak and the Cattegat, thus bringing almost to naught the work of weary and laborious months—work which had been carried out in storm and peril and at the cost of many lives.

Yes, it was Grey Shadow who had stolen those plans, for in the empty safe where they had been he had left a card bearing his name!

And these were but a few of the things laid to the credit of Grey Shadow. There were many others, every one of them characterised by the same cold nerve, the same almost superhuman cunning, the same unparalleled daring and colossal impertinence.

And now he was here, in Wilhelmshaven. He was trying, the sergeant had said, to get out of Germany. Well, only let him be discovered and it would be a marvel if he ever lived to stand his trial and face a firing-party.

“We will tear the villain limb from limb!” wheezed Lorenz venomously. “Donner! But what wouldn’t I give to see him walk in here—what wouldn’t I give to feel my hands around his English throat——”

“Ah, you talk—and talk!” cut in a dark and swarthy sailor roughly. “Always talking—that’s you. If the Englander came near you you would run as fast as those barrel legs of yours would take you!”

A bellow of laughter from those near by greeted this observation. His flabby face flaming, Lorenz raised a podgy finger quivering with rage and said furiously: “You get out of here!”

The sailor took a step forward, his fists clenched.

“No, no!” Lorenz stammered, in sudden fright. “Just my pleasantry. There, go and sit down.”

“D’you think I’ll take orders from you?” shouted the other. “I’ll sit down when I like. What’s that there?” He pointed to a covered plate which Adolph had just brought from the serving hatch and placed on the counter.

“That,” quavered Lorenz, “is my supper.”

“Oh, is it?” sneered the other. “Then undoubtedly it’ll be the best meal in the place. I’ll have it! D’you hear me? Send it over to that table there!”

He lurched away, seating himself heavily at a vacant table.

“Take it to him!” muttered Lorenz to Adolph, who carried the greasy dish of beef, potatoes, and carrots to the sailor’s table and set it down in front of him, together with a chunk of black bread.

“And bring a bottle of wine to wash it down with!” ordered the fellow, tackling the food with gusto. Adolph brought the wine, then returned to the counter and busied himself with the needs of other customers.

A hail from the sailor’s table brought him hastily back to the side of that individual.

“Tell that slug over there,” ordered the latter, “that I have enjoyed his rations. And now”—he produced his shore food tickets—“I am going to buy some food to take away.”

Taking the tickets, Adolph glanced at them. They were made out to Emil Holz, torpedo rating on forty-eight hours’ completion of course leave, and issued by the commandant of the submarine school at Kiel.

“These are yours?” questioned Adolph.

“Of course they’re mine!” said the other roughly. “My name is Holz—Emil Holz—as it is written on there. I want every bit of food which those tickets entitle me to. And also what these two entitle me to!”

He pulled from his pocket two more food tickets—well-worn civilian cards issued to one Anna Holz by the Food Bureau of Wilhelmshaven.

“But you cannot buy food with these,” said Adolph, taking them and studying them. “They are made out to a person named Anna Holz——”

“Who is my mother!” cut in the other. “And she is ill—dying! See? She cannot come herself. I join my boat at midnight, and before I go I take her food.” His voice rose menacingly.

“And there’s neither you nor that fat toad over there’ll refuse me food. Do you understand? She is dying, that mother of mine. And if I’m refused food by that animal over there, then I’ll throttle him!”

“But, Herr Holz——” Adolph made a despairing gesture.

“There’s no but about it!” roared Holz, crashing a clenched fist to the table. “I’m a U-boat man. A U-boat man, d’you hear, and I’ll get what I want! You take these cards to that fat weevil over there and tell him to stamp them and wrap me up some food!”

“You say you are on the U-boats, Herr Holz?” Adolph asked then, admiration in his voice.

“Yes, on the U-boats!” announced Holz. “And we sail at dawn for the open sea. And before I go I’ll have food for the one person in the world I care a jot about. When I go to her, I’m not going empty-handed——”

Adolph touched him on the arm, bent to pick up the empty plate from the table, and said, in a lowered voice:

“I have food in the room where I lodge. Far better food than you can buy here to take away. White bread from Denmark. Good red cheese from Holland. I go off duty at ten o’clock. Wait for me outside, and I will give you some.”

Holz looked up at him through suspicious, bloodshot eyes.

“You will give me food?” he repeated. “Why should you?”

“Because you are a man,” replied Adolph steadily. “Not like Lorenz, nor others that we get in here. And I—well, you heard what the sergeant called me. It is a little enough thing that I do for my country to help you. But it is all I can do.”

Holz understood. Poor invalid! No assistance could he give his country in her hour of need save the handing of some stolen and hoarded food to a U-boat man. What a pitiable gesture it was—but generous and comradely.

“You’re a good sort!” Holz said heartily. “I shall be waiting outside.” He pushed back his chair, and rose.

“And tell that maggot who employs you,” he went on, “that if he’s still here, and not conscripted, I may pay him what I owe him—when next I am ashore!” He laughed rumblingly, turned on his heel, and strode out into the night.

II

THE ONLY WAY OUT!

Holz was waiting for Adolph, kicking his heels in the street outside, when the waiter came off duty.

“Where is your sty?” Holz asked pleasantly, as they set off together along the dark and narrow street. “I should have thought you would have slept on the premises.”

“No. Lorenz sleeps there in the kitchen,” replied Adolph. “I have a room just here, in the Gasschen.” He turned into a narrow alley, and pushed open a door. A match scattered into flame in his hand, and he led the way up a rickety flight of wooden stairs to the second floor.

Halting outside a door shorn by time of much of its paint, he opened it and ushered Holz into a room, sparsely-furnished with a bed, table, a couple of broken-backed chairs, and a cupboard.

“Be seated, my friend,” he said, applying a match to a small oil-lamp, “and I will get you the food I promised. But first, maybe, you would like a little wine?”

“I never say no to that!” laughed Holz, seating himself. “But we haven’t too much time. I must report aboard my boat at midnight!”

He broke off, a certain pity in his eyes, as Adolph was racked by a fit of coughing.

“I feel sorry for you,” he said, with brutal directness. “It must be terrible to be like that!”

“Do not let us talk of it,” Adolph said. “The only hurt it has for me now is that it prevents me joining the colours of our Fatherland!” From the cupboard he produced a bottle of wine and placed it on the table, together with a glass and a tin mug.

“Perhaps,” he said, a trifle wistfully, “you will tell me something of what it is like out there in the North Sea. Me, I think of it—I dream of it——”

“Ay, and that’s as near to it as you want to get!” cut in Holz, pouring himself out a glass of wine. “There is nothing but death out there now. Mines—depth charges—nets. The Englishers are devils! And another thing. Every time you submerge to lie on the bottom, you never know if your boat will surface again!”

“D’you mean the machinery is bad?” ejaculated Adolph.

“It is not good on some of the old boats, and that is a fact!” grunted Holz. “I know them. I have seen hydroplanes jam—valves stick—flooding gear go wrong. I will be all right this trip, though, as far as that is concerned. I am joining U.240, a new boat just back from her trials off the Ems.”

“You like her?”

“I haven’t seen her yet. I tell you, I don’t report aboard till midnight.”

“If it had been me,” said Adolph, “I would have been down at the submarine pier having a look at her.”

Holz laughed boisterously.

“What, and get roped in for a warping job, or something?” he jeered. “Not me. I’ve been caught that way before. No, if there’s one thing this war’s taught me it’s to keep clear of the docks when I’m on leave.

“But what about that food, friend?” he went on. “If you’ll get it, I’ll thank you and be going.”

“Yes, certainly,” said Adolph. Crossing to the bed he laboriously shifted it away from the wall and pulled up a loose floorboard.

“Got it hidden, have you?” laughed Holz.

“Yes; hoarding food is punished by imprisonment now. One has to be very careful. The eyes of the police are everywhere.”

“And so they should be,” Holz said angrily. “No, don’t think I’m meaning that you’re wrong in hoarding food. You, an invalid, I don’t blame. You get out of life just what you can and while you can. That’s my tip. It’s the rich, the profiteers—that I’m talking about.”

He watched, his eyes widening in astonishment as Adolph brought white loaves, butter, cheese, coffee, bacon, eggs, and other edibles to light from the cache in the floor.

“If your mother does not live too far from here,” said Adolph awkwardly, stowing the food away in a linen bag, “perhaps I might be able to take her some little things whilst you are away at sea.”

“Now, by thunder!” exclaimed Holz. “That’s good of you, friend! You do that and I’ll bring you back a souvenir from the sea—an Englander’s lifebelt, or something like that. She lives in the Plazenstrasse, my mother, No. 42, the Plazenstrasse. You know it?”

“Yes, I know it,” nodded Adolph, tying the mouth of the linen bag and placing it on the table. “Well, there you are, Herr Holz. Now one more drink before you go!”

“It’ll have to be the last!” said Holz.

Adolph looked at him queerly, then turned towards the cupboard and muttered, “Yes, it will be the last!” Bringing out another bottle of wine, he returned to the table and drew the cork. The liquid was poured into Holz’s glass and into the tin mug.

“I give you a toast, Herr Holz,” said Adolph, placing the bottle on the table and picking up the brimming mug. “A safe voyage to English waters for U.240!”

“Yes, and a safe return!” cried Holz, tossing off his drink at one gulp. Then suddenly a startled look came to his face.

“That wine,” he said hoarsely, “it—it tasted——” His voice was harsh with sudden suspicion—“and you—you have not drunk yours!”

“No, Holz!” Adolph’s voice was sharp and incisive. “I have not drunk mine!”

“By thunder! You—you’ve doped me——” Swaying on his feet, Holz lunged with outstretched hand across the table. Then suddenly his arm went limp, his body slumped on to the table, then slid heavily to the floor.

Setting down his untouched wine, Adolph stepped quickly round the table and bent over the prostrate man.

“Sorry, Holz,” he murmured, “but it was the only way out for me.” Straightening up, he moved quickly to the door and looked out into the deserted corridor. Satisfied that there was no one moving about, he stepped back into the room, drawing the door shut and

locking it.

A great change had come over him, a change which seemed inward as well as outward. No longer was he the thin-chested figure, bent of shoulder, whom Lorenz and his customers had known so well.

No, there was now a liveness and virility about him which was amazing, as swiftly he peeled off his jacket and waistcoat and went to work to effect a change of attire with Holz.

At length, clad in the dark blue uniform of the German fleet and with Holz's papers in his pockets, Adolph stood in the centre of the room taking a last quick look round.

Holz, breathing evenly, lay on the bed to which Adolph had carried him. It would be a good twelve hours before he came back to consciousness.

For a moment Adolph stood there, his narrowed eyes searching every corner of the room.

Then, picking up the bulging linen bag of food from the table, he blew out the light and quitted the room, closing and locking the door behind him.

Once out in the street, Adolph moved quickly, heading towards the Plazenstrasse, keeping to byways and alleys, in order to avoid an encounter with any of the naval pickets patrolling the streets. For to be stopped and asked to explain what he was carrying would be more than awkward!

Without incident, such was his caution, he reached No. 42, a squalid tenement house. By inquiry, on the ground floor, he ascertained the room of Anna Holz and mounted the staircase to a door on the third floor.

In response to his knock a faint voice called to him to enter. Opening the door, Adolph stepped into a poorly-furnished room not unlike the one he had just vacated back in the Gasschen. On a bed against the wall lay the small and thin figure of an old woman. At sight of Adolph she weakly raised her head.

"I thought," she whispered, "that you were—Emil——"

Two strides took Adolph to the bed.

"Emil cannot come, little mother," he said softly. "But, see, he has sent you this. It is food. Good food, which will make you strong and well." He showed the linen bag.

"Food?" quavered the weak voice. "But how did he come by it?"

"Honestly, little mother. Yes, I swear it!"

Weak, trembling fingers, thin and fragile, plucked at Adolph's sleeve, and the weak voice faltered:

"Emil cannot come—you say——"

"No, he cannot come, I am taking his kitbag down to the submarine pier. There, be brave, little mother."

"Yes,"—the dim and faded eyes filled with tears—"I understand. But I lie here—thinking—thinking of what is happening out there on the sea—so many of our sons do not return——"

"But Emil will return." Adolph's voice was very gentle. "And soon it will all be over. The end is in sight. Peace is coming!" From his pocket he drew a wad of notes.

“And see,” he said, pressing them into the frail and trembling hand, “here is something else Emil has sent you! Five hundred marks saved out of his pay and prize-money just for you. That is a surprise, eh?” Stooping, he kissed the wrinkled forehead.

“Farewell, little mother,” he whispered. Then, straightening up, he turned away, picked up Emil’s kitbag from where it stood in a corner, and strode from the room.

Out in the night again, he turned towards the docks. Through darkened streets of shuttered shops he walked. Twice he was stopped by naval pickets who examined his papers—the papers of Emil Holz. Unsuspecting, they sent him on his way.

Again, at the dock gates, his papers were examined. Then he passed on to the submarine pier, and inquired of one of the naval sentries on duty there where U.240 was lying.

A few minutes later he was standing gazing down at the long grey hull and the black bulk of the conning-tower of U.240, dimly visible against the murky background of water. Sure-footed, he negotiated the steep gangway which led down to the steel deck. Mounting to the conning-tower, he reported to the officer of the watch.

“Holz, torpedo rating?” grunted the officer. “All right, get below and report to Torpedo Officer Muller!”

Obediently, Adolph swung himself down into the control-room, where the atmosphere was warm and reeking of oil. For a moment he stood quite still, taking stock of the great tangle of pipe-lines, voice-lines, pressure-tubes and gauges. Then he passed through the aft bulkhead door to the torpedo compartment.

Torpedo Officer Muller was a short, stocky man, brusque of speech.

“Get your kit stowed away!” he rapped. “Then return here!”

Adolph did so, and for an hour he laboured with others of the torpedo crew in adjusting the deadly torpedoes and fitting them into their tubes.

By midnight every man of U.240 was aboard, and at four bells the submarine was towed out into the basin. There was great excitement aboard amongst the men, for it was rumoured that they were sailing under sealed orders.

Excitement, yes, and confidence. For Lieutenant Count von Schagel, one of the most famous and most experienced of Germany’s U-boat captains, had been given command of this latest U-boat.

Tall, slim, and with the erect carriage of the Prussian, Count von Schagel looked very elegant, very efficient, in his tightly fitting uniform as, with two of his officers, he made a tour of the boat shortly before the dawn.

“Men,” he said, in sharp tones, “this is a new boat, and you are a new crew. But I know that you will, every man of you, acquit yourselves in accordance with the proudest traditions of the German Fleet. Soon we will be in enemy waters.

“It may be that we will never live to return. But if, by our efforts, we can in some little way help weaken the remorseless blockade of our coasts by the British Fleet, then we will not have died in vain!”

With that he passed on. And a short time later, jerseyed and leather-jacketed, he mounted to the conning-tower. Dawn was very close now. And as its first grey light appeared in the eastern sky, the Diesel engines rumbled into life and U.240 moved slowly

from the basin, to stand out for the open sea.

The rumour that she was sailing under sealed orders was correct. And in the conning-tower Von Schagel drew a heavily sealed envelope from the pocket of his reefer jacket. Ripping open the flap, he withdrew the flimsy sheet of paper inside. Unfolding it, he read:

“Carry out war on commerce in accordance with International Prize Law on the south-west coast of England. Confine your operations to within a radius of 100 miles of Land’s End. Proceed through the English Channel to take up position.”

With steady hand, Von Schagel handed the orders to First Officer Vorsatz, standing with him in the tower. Vorsatz read, and his eyes hardened.

“The fools!” he said gratingly. “With a boat of this size, we will never make the passage through the Straits of Dover!”

“We must make it!” said Von Schagel quietly. But his eyes, too, were sombre. He knew what lay ahead in those Straits, which had been the grave of many a U-boat—mines, nets, timber-booms, armed patrol-boats, and submarine-chasers! Well protected indeed was the English Channel. A veritable death-trap! Even the sea itself seemed allied against the U-boats in the shifting, treacherous Goodwin Sands.

“We will attempt to slip through in the darkness, running on the surface,” said Von Schagel. “The Flanders U-boats report that to get through, submerged, a boat must keep on the bottom. And there is little chance that way. The mines are very deep!”

The sun had by this time swung up above the horizon, and the U-boat was slipping through the water at a speed of sixteen knots. Soon the yellow sand-dunes of Borkum, visible on the port bow, golden in the morning sun, faded from view, and nothing broke the even contour of the grey North Sea.

Throughout the day the U-boat drove steadily on, heading south-westwards towards the English Channel. Twice before midday she was forced to dive to avoid being sighted by British warships on patrol. Afternoon found her cruising at periscope depth, for now she was well within enemy waters.

It was when the sun had sunk in a crimson ball and darkness had crept in across the sea that she surfaced once again, and the drone of her electric motors, which she used when submerged, was replaced by the rumble of her powerful Diesel engines.

Below, all hands were standing to diving stations. For at any moment a wheeling searchlight beam from a destroyer or a submarine chaser might split the darkness and make a swift dive necessary to avoid being sighted.

Adolph, together with the fore and aft torpedo crews, was off duty. There would be no torpedoes fired, no attack launched, until U.240 was safely through the barrage. All she was concerned with, all her commander was concentrating on, was to get through that gauntlet of death.

In the conning-tower, his night glasses to his eyes, Von Schagel continuously swept the night-enshrouded waters around him. Once he spoke into the voice tube connecting with the engine-room:

“Half-speed!”

He gave no reason for that order. But Vorsatz, on the tower beside him, understood. It had been that bow wave—too big—a shimmering silver wash which might be spotted by alert eyes out there in the darkness!

To starboard, friend to German as well as Englander, the long, broad beam of the North Foreland Lighthouse stabbed through the night. And then the smaller, twinkling light of the North Goodwin Lightship came into view on the starboard bow.

Running parallel with the coast, and stretching from the Elbow Light Buoy off the Foreland to a point due east of the Gull Lightship, was a barrier of mines, and Von Schagel kept well out in order to give them a wide berth.

He and Vorsatz had spent the greater part of that afternoon in poring over the charts prepared by the German Admiralty from the reports of Flanders U-boat captains and German Secret Service agents.

Those charts set out in detail the position of the mines, the nets, and the timber-booms of the Channel barrages, and were, in the circumstances, remarkably accurate.

On through the night slipped the U-boat, past the darkened towns of Ramsgate and Deal, neither of them visible. Not a light showed anywhere.

In the conning-tower Von Schagel and Vorsatz, together with the officer of the watch, were tense and silent, listening with straining ears for the sound of engines out there in the darkness, continuously sweeping the night with their glasses.

The main barrage of nets, sunken mines, and booms, stretching right across the Channel from Folkestone to Cap Gris Nez, was very close now. Taking his glasses from his eyes, Von Schagel spoke into the voice tube:

“Full speed ahead!”

He would rush the barrage—get past it on the surface. If only he could do that he'd be safe! It was in the depths, where hung the nets and submerged mines, that danger lay. And once past the barrage he would submerge, and, at periscope depth, nose his way down the remainder of the Channel, close in to the French coast.

The rumble of the Diesel engines grew in volume. The bow wave rose higher and higher, pouring away, a leaping, silver surge. Like some desperate, hunted animal of the seas the U-boat tore towards the barrage.

They were nearly there. It could not be far now——

Splitting the darkness with vivid and appalling suddenness came the powerful beam of a searchlight. For an instant it wheeled, then settled on the U-boat, bringing a silver sheen to the streaming deck and flooding the conning-tower with brilliant golden light.

Instantly the deafening clamour of the “alarm” sounded throughout the U-boat. Simultaneously, flame stabbed out in the darkness, and a shell screamed low over the conning-tower.

Von Schagel, his face grim and set, was at the voice-pipe:

“Dive! Take her to fifteen fathoms!”

Another shell, and another, screamed past the conning-tower. Already Vorsatz and the watch-keeping officer had dropped into the control-room. Von Schagel followed them, the hatch was closed, and, with water swirling into her ballast tanks and mounting round her conning-tower, U.240 slid below the surface of the sea.

“A British destroyer!” The watch-keeping officer’s face was haggard, his voice shaking.

Boo-oom! Boo-oom! The depth charges were coming down now, dropped by the swift little destroyer which had dashed up to the spot where her prey had dived. Boo-oom! Boo-oom!

The U-boat dived madly through the roaring welter of sound as the depth charges exploded about her. Suddenly she reeled, mortally stricken. Her lights went dim, then out. And in the awful blackness which followed there sounded the gurgling inrush of water. Out of control, her motors dead, she sank like a stone to the bottom.

“There is a chance in the tower!” Von Schagel’s voice rang out in the blackness of that living tomb. “Take it—all who can!”

“And you, sir?” rasped the voice of Torpedo Officer Muller.

“I stay with my boat!”

It was the men off duty and the bridge watch who had survived the first inrush of water, for they had been in the control-room and in the tower. There was only a handful of them, but, led by Muller, they groped their way up and crowded into the iron tower.

Adolph was last. He lingered a moment, knowing that somewhere near him in the darkness was Lieutenant Count von Schagel.

“Will you not come, sir?” Adolph pleaded.

“I remain with my boat!” was the reply.

Realising that to the last Von Schagel was resolutely determined to uphold the finest traditions of his rank and calling, Adolph turned away and swung himself up into the tower.

Beyond the plea he had made, there was nothing Adolph could do to save this gallant sailor, who was prepared to die with his boat.

“Are you ready?” Muller’s voice was hoarse. “I am going to open the hatch!” The compressed air in the control-room was by now holding back the water. Under its pressure the hatch opened easily enough, and in the great air bubble thus formed the men in the control tower were thrown out.

Instinctively Adolph struck out with arms and legs in a downward movement, to avoid being swept too rapidly to the surface. There was a roaring in his ears. His lungs full to bursting point. The torture of them was terrible. He must breathe—must expel some of that air from his inflated lungs. The roaring in his ears increased. Strange, fantastic lights danced before his eyes.

Then suddenly he broke water, his head bobbing above the surface, and thankfully he drew in great gulping breaths of the cool night air.

Near him he heard the sound of oars, and gave a faint hail. One of the destroyer’s boats, looking out for survivors, made towards him. Willing hands grabbed him, and he was hauled aboard.

“Another of ’em!” he heard a voice say. Then it addressed him: “All right, Jerry?”

“Yes,” answered Adolph weakly, but in perfect English. “I—I’m all right, thank you!”

Before dawn, after a brief interview with the captain of the destroyer—an interview

which had startled that individual considerably—Adolph was put ashore at Dover.

In response to a wireless message from the destroyer, a fast car was waiting for him. It whirled him Londonwards, and within three hours of leaving Dover he was talking with a certain high personage in the British Admiralty building in Whitehall.

For a long time the two talked earnestly behind locked doors. At length the high personage pushed back his chair and rose.

“Well, Captain Ellis,” he said, “this information which you have brought back with you about the submarine bases at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven will prove invaluable to us. But”—with a smile—“you took a great risk in impersonating that German seaman!”

“It was the only way for me to get out of Wilhelmshaven and Germany, sir. The net had been drawn very close about me. I did not anticipate, however, our being holed. It was my intention to go overboard the first time we were on the surface near a British ship.”

The high personage laughed and held out his hand.

“Well, you must now take some leave,” he said; “but I am afraid we cannot spare you for long. General Headquarters in France want you for an important mission. Do you think you will be able to get back into Germany?”

“Yes; I will slip in somehow, sir,” the other replied. “And as far as leave is concerned, I do not want any. I will leave for France to-morrow!”

And a few minutes later Captain Guy Ellis of the British Secret Service, alias Adolph, alias Grey Shadow, stepped out of the Admiralty building into the bustle of Whitehall!

CHAPTER II
GREY SHADOW'S JOKE

I
A FOKKER SCOUT

IT was very pleasant reclining there by the side of the road, puffing at pipe and cigarette whilst the sun set slowly in a blaze of golden glory behind the distant Vosges. Were it not for the dull, incessant rumble of guns echoing over from the westward, one could easily forget the War in such peaceful surroundings.

“Always those guns!” grumbled Sergeant Schwarg. “Donner! What must the cost of ammunition be?”

Corporal Lieb, asprawl on the turf beside him, slowly emitted a cloud of blue smoke from between his bearded lips.

“The cost of ammunition, eh?” he rumbled. “You do not speak of the cost of lives, sergeant!”

“Lives do not count!” retorted Sergeant Schwarg. “We can spare more lives than shells.” With the stem of his pipe he indicated the two long-barrelled, tarpaulin-covered guns and the searchlight mounted on the lorry which was drawn up on the road in front of them.

“I have been in charge of this anti-aircraft battery now for five weeks,” he went on. “In that time, as you very well know, we have shot down three Englishers and one Frenchman. But is that enough? No! I have been reprimanded for wasting shells!”

“Ja, it is a terrible war,” sighed the corporal, half-humorously, bringing a laugh from the other four grey-clad soldiers who comprised the crew of the battery.

“Well!” The sergeant pocketed his pipe and rose. “We had better be continuing our patrol towards Saarbrucken——” He broke off, turning abruptly towards the west. To his ears had come the noise of an aero engine. Shading his eyes with his hand he stood rigid and motionless. Then suddenly he relaxed.

“A Fokker!” he exclaimed. “Flying low with engine trouble!” From out of the sunset, with engine spluttering, and at a height of less than a hundred feet, came lurching a black Fokker scout.

“He has been in a fight, that one,” said Corporal Lieb, eyeing the swaying wings. “He is going to land!”

The nose of the Fokker had dropped. Under closing throttle the intermittent roar of its engine died away, and there came the shrill whine of wind through flying wires and struts as the machine circled unsteadily for a landing.

At thirty feet it passed over the heads of the sergeant and his men. Then, obviously out of control, the port planes dipped steeply and the machine side-slipped to the ground, to crash with a splintering of wooden framework and a tearing of riven fabric.

Sergeant Schwarg led the rush to assist the pilot. But before he could reach the

machine, the lithe figure of a man in black flying-kit crawled from out of the wreckage and rose shakily to his feet.

“Are you hurt, Herr Offizier?” panted Sergeant Schwarg, running up.

The other shook his head. He was young and his sharply-cut features were very pale. He was wearing no goggles, and there was that in his cold, blue eyes and about his thin, firm-lipped mouth which stamped him as one older than his years.

“No, I am not hurt,” he answered curtly. “Where is the nearest telephone?”

“There is one at the village of Angou, Herr Offizier, three kilometres along the road,” answered the corporal. “You have been in a fight, yes?”

The other ignored him, addressing himself to the sergeant:

“You will proceed to the village,” he rasped, “and telephone Buhl aerodrome. You will inform them that the Hauptmann von Orzt has crashed here and awaits a car for himself and a salvage lorry for his machine.”

“Yes, Herr Hauptmann!” gulped the sergeant, rigid at the salute, but gaping in amaze. This Von Orzt? This young, pale-faced and black-clad pilot the famous Von Orzt who already was reputed to have sixty-eight enemy machines to his credit?

But there could be no doubt about it. Von Orzt wore black flying-kit and flew a black Fokker scout. That fact was well known on both sides of the line—from Ostend to the Swiss frontier.

What a bit of good fortune it was that he, Sergeant Schwarg, should have been on hand to render assistance to this hero—to this great air ace of the Fatherland!

“What are you staring at?” Von Orzt’s voice was harsh and impatient. “Get on to Angou with my message!”

“Yes, Herr Hauptmann!” Smartly the sergeant turned about. In sharp, strident tones, modelled remarkably well at such short notice on those of Von Orzt, he ordered his men to the gun lorry, had it started up, and swung himself up alongside the soldier who was driving.

“Quickly now!” he snapped. “Lose no time!”

The grey-clad driver released the heavy brake and let in the clutch. And as the lorry vanished towards Angou in a cloud of dust, the black-clad Von Orzt produced a cigarette-case from the pocket of his flying-coat and proceeded to await the arrival of the car from Buhl.

II

A LITTLE SURPRISE

General Putz, commandant of the great day-and-night flying aerodrome of Buhl, had got his flabby bulk wedged into a chair. And with his feet on a paper-littered and blanket-covered table he was mopping with a silk handkerchief at his perspiring face.

He was not a pleasant sight as he lolled there, wheezing and grunting, his high-necked tunic unbuttoned three-quarters of its length. But there, what did it matter what he looked like? Who was there to see him, save his adjutant?

None dare walk into this, the commandant’s office, without first being interviewed

outside by the adjutant. And by the time they were admitted—if they were admitted—then he, General Putz, would be seated very erect at his table, tunic buttoned, and pen in hand.

There were many who wondered how such a one as General Putz had come to be appointed to the command of Buhl aerodrome. He had a pull in influential circles, some said—friends on the general staff.

But they were wrong, those who said that Putz had been appointed to the command merely through influence. Flabby though the man might be, he was a Prussian soldier of the old school. In other words, he knew to the full what the phrase “blood and iron” meant. And he knew how to get the last ounce out of his men, be they merely a miserable fatigue party or pilots of the crack fighting squadron stationed on the aerodrome.

“It has been a good day, Augswort.” Commandant Putz paused in the mopping of his brow to address his adjutant, who was busily writing.

“Yes, sir?” Augswort looked up inquiringly, pen poised.

“Yes, a good day!” added Putz ponderously. “We have dropped forty bombs on the rest-camps behind the Line between Ouchy and Rambervilliers. Also, my machines have shot down five Englishers.”

“Yes, but eleven of our machines have failed to return,” interposed Augswort mildly. “Eight of them are posted here on the flying-list as having been shot down either in flames or out of control. The other three are missing.”

“Those three will return before darkness,” Putz grunted, and scowled. “They have had forced landings, maybe.”

The telephone bell trilled shrilly. Stretching out his hand, Augswort lifted the receiver.

“A call from Angou, sir,” he said, turning to Putz. “The Hauptmann von Orzt has crashed three kilometres from the village, and requires a motor-car for himself and a salvage lorry for his machine.”

Hastily the commandant swung his feet to the floor, and ejaculated:

“The Hauptmann von Orzt? Then say that a car will be dispatched immediately. Also a salvage lorry. Is he coming on here?”

“Apparently so,” replied Augswort, turning again to the telephone.

“But this is good news!” wheezed Putz, when the adjutant had replaced the receiver after ordering the car and salvage lorry to proceed immediately to the scene of the crash. “Von Orzt, eh? Often have I wished to meet him. He will stay the night most likely.”

“Yes, most likely,” agreed the adjutant.

“Then I must away and smarten my appearance!” exclaimed Putz, rising. “Ring through to the officer of the mess and tell him who is coming, and say that I shall expect everything at dinner to be of the best possible.”

Putz waddled towards the door. Reaching it, he halted.

“Von Orzt,” he informed his adjutant impressively, “received his Iron Cross from the gracious hands of his Imperial Majesty himself. It was a great honour for one so young to receive an audience at the palace of Potsdam. A very great honour!”

With that he departed. But within the hour he was back, sleek, well-groomed, and resplendent in the uniform which he used only when high officers of the German general staff visited the aerodrome on their periodical tours of inspection.

And thus Von Orzt found him, seated at his blanket-covered and paper-strewn table looking very efficient and very businesslike.

“I have to thank you, Herr Commandant, for the speedy dispatch of a car to my assistance,” said Von Orzt stiffly, after he had been ushered into Putz’s presence by the duty officer. “It arrived almost before I expected it.”

Putz, already on his feet, bowed.

“Do not mention it, Herr Hauptmann,” he returned. “It is a pleasure to be permitted to give some little aid to one who is rendering such invaluable service to the Fatherland in this its hour of need.”

Augswort, bent over his papers, grinned. It was only three days ago that he had taken up his duties as adjutant of Buhl aerodrome. But it had taken him less than half that time to weigh Putz up as an arrant snob.

“I was distressed beyond measure to hear that you had crashed, Herr Hauptmann,” Putz went on. “Was it engine failure, if one might be permitted to ask?”

“Yes, engine failure,” Von Orzt replied, “and the fact that my rudder and aileron controls were shot almost to shreds.”

“You don’t say so!” gasped Putz, wide-eyed in horrified dismay. “You had been in a fight then?”

“Yes, with four English Sopwith scouts,” replied Von Orzt. “But”—with a shrug of his leather-clad shoulders—“I did not get the worst of it. I sent three of them down in flames, and I would have got the fourth had he not bolted for home.”

“There!” gasped Putz. “Did you hear that, Augswort?”

“Yes, I heard it!” admitted Augswort dryly.

Von Orzt glanced at him sharply, then turned again to Putz.

“Ground officers,” he said, with a thinly veiled sneer, “are notoriously unenthusiastic. Your adjutant, I am afraid, is no exception to the rule.”

“Then I trust,” said Augswort, “that you will pardon what you acknowledge to be a common failing amongst us. Perhaps it is a failing accounted for by the fact that we of the infantry have seen too much of the blood-stained bayonet to be impressed by a riddled machine.”

“Augswort!” exclaimed Putz angrily.

“I have said my say, Herr Commandant,” grunted the adjutant, and busied himself again with his papers.

With podgy hands Putz gestured apologetically to Von Orzt. They were so uncouth—so very uncouth—these infantrymen, who, through wounds or other unfitness, got themselves transferred to ground jobs with the Air Force!

Augswort was typical of them—gruff, blunt, or sarcastic, as the occasion might demand. They could see little or no romance in the air, these fellows from the trenches. Nothing at all of high adventure. No, their thoughts and their sympathies were always with their comrades in the Line.

Well, he, Putz, would show Augswort that there were as many perils to be faced in the air as ever there were in the trenches. He would draw Von Orzt out and make him talk of

this fight with the English Sopwiths.

“So one of the Englanders bolted, you say, Herr Hauptmann?” he recommenced. “How like the cowards!”

“Yes, he bolted,” Von Orzt said. “But I do not think I would go so far as to call him a coward, Herr Commandant. Bear in mind that he had seen his three companions go down in flames, and that he knew whom he was fighting.”

“Ah, yes!” said Putz eagerly. “Your black machine. He would know it was you, Von Orzt. How they must hate you, those Englanders! They will be putting a price on your head next!”

“I am afraid so,” murmured Von Orzt modestly.

“And those three machines you have shot down this evening?” pressed Putz. “They bring your total up to what?”

“Seventy-one!”

“Seventy-one!” repeated Putz admiringly, staring at Augswort as though to make sure that that individual heard. “Seventy-one! My word, that is a colossal figure!”

From the drawer in his table he produced a book bound in well-worn leather covers. At sight of it, Augswort, who had raised his head, grinned contemptuously. He knew that book. It contained the autographs of all the famous personages whom Putz had met during his career, first as a cadet and then as a soldier.

“I wonder if you would be so good, Herr Hauptmann,” said Putz, a trifle awkwardly, “to humour a small whim of mine and do me the honour of adding your signature to my collection? I may add”—he swelled with visible pride—“that it will rest in excellent company.

“I have here the signatures of his Imperial Majesty, of the Crown Prince, of General Hindenburg, of Ludendorf, of Admiral von Tirpitz, and countless others. The Baron Richtofen’s is also here. Now, if you will be so good as to sign here——”

He opened the book, then grew suddenly rigid, his florid face purpling. For confronting him, on what should have been a virgin page, was a pencilled caricature which he had no difficulty in recognising as being a gross libel on himself.

“Who has done this?” he exploded furiously.

“Me!” said Augswort calmly.

“You?” Putz gasped. “Then what d’you mean by it, sir?”

“I meant it as a modest contribution to your collection,” replied Augswort. “A little surprise for you. I thought you would like it!”

“Like it!” quivered Putz. “Like it? I shall speak to you later, you—you——”

Words failed him entirely. At least, such words as were permissible in the presence of the Hauptmann von Orzt. Recovering himself by an effort, he turned again to the latter individual.

“We will leave your signature until later, Herr Hauptmann,” he said thickly. “Come, I will walk with you to your quarters.”

Returning the book to the drawer, he escorted his distinguished guest from the room.

“If I were you,” said Von Orzt, when they were outside, “I should get rid of that

fellow.”

“To-morrow,” promised Putz venomously, “I shall communicate with the High Command and demand that they detail him for immediate service in the trenches!”

III

SECRETS UNDERGROUND

Von Orzt, seated on the right of General Putz, was the guest of honour at dinner that evening. Of necessity, as night-flying machines operated from Buhl, there was a great deal of informality about the meal. Every now and again a chair would scrape back and some pilot or navigation officer would clump from the room en route to his hut for flying-kit and maps.

It was only the day-flying pilots and one or two of the ground officers who could afford to linger over dinner, for their work was over until the following morning. And as they sat there, some quietly talking to their immediate neighbours, others laughing with genuine enjoyment at some passing jest, one would not think that these men—mere boys, a lot of them—rode daily with death high above the battle smoke of the Western Front.

But here and there at the table, grim testimony to the ceaseless toll of war, stood a vacant chair telling mute tale of one who, in the service of the Fatherland, had flown westwards never to return. And it was of this that Von Orzt presently spoke.

“Your casualties here must be very heavy, Herr Commandant,” he observed.

“Yes, they are,” agreed Putz sombrely. “But there”—with a shrug of the shoulders—“that is only to be expected when one considers the number of machines operating from this aerodrome.”

“There are many, then?” said Von Orzt, with polite inquiry.

“Yes,” explained Putz. “There are two fighting squadrons and two daylight bombing squadrons. They alone total forty-eight machines. Then there is the night-bombing squadron of ten machines, to say nothing of my big, twin-engined Gothas.”

“Gothas?” exclaimed Von Orzt, in surprise.

“Yes, Gothas,” repeated Putz. “You did not know that there were Gothas operating from here, eh, Herr Hauptmann?”

“I certainly did not,” replied Von Orzt.

“Neither do those fools of Englanders,” chuckled Commandant Putz, “for our Gotha hangars are well hidden.” He nudged Von Orzt with a fat elbow, and his voice sank to a hoarse whisper. “They are underground, those hangars—and are not on the aerodrome, either!”

Von Orzt stared with interest, and Putz went on:

“We have five Gothas here. They raid westwards into France and as far north as Lille. But those are only practice flights.” Again his voice sank. “Practice flights, do you understand?”

“No, I do not,” replied Von Orzt.

Putz hitched his chair closer to him.

“We are preparing for a raid on Paris,” he explained confidentially. “In conjunction

with No. 1, No. 5, and No. 7 Squadrons, we are going to bomb the ammunition factories and aircraft factories which lie between the Gare du Nord and the Seine. It is all arranged. We are standing by, all ready to start, the moment word comes through from G.H.Q.”

“I do not envy your Gotha pilots,” said Von Orzt thoughtfully. “The aerial defences of Paris are very good.”

“They are!” agreed Putz. “But the raid is to take place on a moonless night, and my five machines will approach Paris from the south-west. The Frenchmen will not look for an attack from that quarter.”

He drained his coffee. Setting down the cup, he scraped back his chair.

“Perhaps, Herr Hauptmann,” he invited, “you would like to witness our night operations?”

“I would,” responded Von Orzt, with alacrity; and, pushing back his chair, he rose.

Out on the darkened aerodrome, vague and shadowy in the light from the dimly illumined hangars, stood the black-winged bombers which were to take the air that night.

Propellers were ticking over, and now and again there came a deafening roar as, under opening throttle, a machine swept away into the darkness, to rise up into the night sky and swing westwards towards the line, with its burden of high explosive bombs. For a few moments Putz and Von Orzt stood watching, then Putz touched his companion on the arm.

“Come,” he said, “and I will show you the Gotha hangars!”

Leading the way through a gate in the low hedge which bordered the southern side of the aerodrome, Putz piloted his guest along a well-worn path.

Twice they were challenged by sentries and allowed to pass on at a word from Putz. Then suddenly the commandant halted.

“Well, here we are!” he chuckled.

Von Orzt stared about him in the darkness. Nothing was to be seen save a long and uneven sloping mound.

“If this is a joke, Herr Commandant,” he began stiffly, “I fail entirely——”

“It is no joke, I assure you!” laughed Putz. “You cannot see the hangars, and because of that you think they are not here, eh? But they are here. Follow me, but step carefully!”

Moving forwards towards the mound, he led the way into the inky blackness of a low tunnel, which suddenly terminated in a flight of narrow and dimly illumined steps, up which drifted the mingled smell of petrol, fabric dope, and warm oil.

Descending the steps in the wake of Putz, Von Orzt found himself standing in a huge underground hangar, illumined by two electric bulbs suspended from the ceiling.

Taking up almost the whole of the floor space was a monster Gotha, its black wings folded back. Its engine cowlings and gun cases were off, and dungaree-clad mechanics and armourers were busily at work. In amazement, Von Orzt stared about him. It was common knowledge that the Gotha hangars near the line were invariably built underground. But he had never expected anything quite like this.

“But how do you get the machine out of here, Herr Commandant?” he demanded.

“It is towed out by tractor,” explained Putz. “You will notice that the hangar floor slopes steeply upwards away from the nose of the machine. The hangar doors are of steel and are controlled by an electric motor. They are built in at an angle of thirty degrees to

the ground level. On the outside they are rough and jagged and painted green.

“There are five hangars here altogether. Their green, sloping doors form the bank of the mound which you saw outside there in the darkness. It is one of the greatest triumphs of camouflage ever carried out by our engineers!”

“And one well calculated to deceive the Englanders,” said Von Orzt softly.

“Yes; but the Englanders do not even suspect the presence of these hangars,” said Putz. “Their machines come over here photographing, and their squadrons come over bombing. But what they are after, apart from the canvas hangars out on the aerodrome, are my petrol and ammunition dumps.” Again he chuckled.

“And they have found neither. Nor will they ever! Herr Hauptmann, I was not appointed to the command of the Buhl for nothing. I am a clever man. My ammunition dump and my petrol dump are as well hidden and as well camouflaged as are these hangars. The Englanders will never locate them. But, come, I will show you round.”

He conducted Von Orzt on a short tour of the five underground hangars, which opened into each other, then led the way back to the mess. The officers’ ante-room was fairly crowded when they entered. One or two card games were in progress, whilst other officers off duty were sitting chatting, smoking, and reading.

“I have got some fine old liqueur brandy which you must try,” said Putz hospitably, having got Von Orzt ensconced in an armchair. “I will take a glass with you. And then I am afraid it will be necessary for me to leave you for a time, as I have business to which to attend——”

He broke off as Augswort appeared at his elbow.

“Well,” demanded Putz, “and what do you want?”

“A word with you in private, sir,” replied the adjutant.

Putz regarded him sourly.

“I will be with you in a few moments,” he grunted.

“I am sorry, sir,” returned Augswort firmly, “but I must speak to you now.”

“I tell you——”

“It is a matter of the most urgent importance, sir!”

Putz hesitated no longer. With a brief word of apology to Von Orzt he accompanied the adjutant from the room.

But outside in the corridor he halted abruptly, taking astonished stock of four grey-clad soldiers who were standing there with fixed bayonets.

“What are these men doing here?” he burst out. “Who placed them here?”

“I did,” replied Augswort. “There are others guarding all exits as well.”

“But what is the meaning of it?” exploded Putz furiously. “Are you insane?”

“No, I am merely taking certain elementary precautions,” replied Augswort. “If you will accompany me to your office, sir, everything will be explained.”

“If it isn’t,” spluttered Putz, “I’ll have you put under close arrest. D’you understand?” Simmering, Putz accompanied him to the commandant’s office.

“The daily news report has just come through from G.H.Q.,” said Augswort, having closed the door. “There is an item in it which will be of interest to you.” From the table he

picked up a long, narrow, typewritten sheet of grey paper. "This is the item, sir," he said, handing the paper to Putz and indicating a certain paragraph.

Impatiently Putz commenced to read. Then suddenly he tensed, eyes bulging in sheer amazement. For the typewritten paragraph, terse, cold, and official, was as follows:

"At 6.10 this evening the Hauptmann von Orzt was encountered by two British scouts over Arras and was shot down in flames."

"But—but what does it mean?" Putz gasped.

Augswort shrugged his shoulders.

"It appears to mean," he said dryly, "that Von Orzt was killed this evening."

Putz made a throaty noise.

"But—but he's sitting yonder in the mess!" he wheezed. "Have you corroborated this?"

"Yes, sir—by telephone."

Sudden enlightenment came to Putz. And with it an awful, devastating rage.

"I see it now!" he roared, crumpling the paper savagely in his hand, purpling in the face. "He is an impostor! An impostor, I tell you!" He crashed a clenched fist to the table, eyes blazing.

"He has come here under false pretences. Adopted the name of Von Orzt to get in here! There'll be a reckoning for this!"

"I hope," interposed Augswort mildly, "that you have been discreet in what you have said to him?"

"Discreet?" bellowed Putz. "No, I have not been discreet. I have told him everything! Shown him everything! He'll face a firing-party, that's what he'll face——"

He broke off abruptly, staring strangely at Augswort. Then——

"If it should be he—if it should be he——"

"If it should be whom?" questioned Augswort sharply.

"The English spy, Grey Shadow!" whispered Putz hoarsely. "This imposture—this walking in here and claiming to be Von Orzt—is typical of the methods of that cursed Englander! And I have been warned that he is back again in Germany——" He swung towards the door, and rapped: "Come with me!"

Back to the mess he went, and strode into the ante-room, the four armed guards from the corridor following at his heels.

"Arrest that man!" he thundered, pointing at Von Orzt, who was still seated in the armchair where Putz had left him.

Von Orzt leapt to his feet, and as he did so the guards closed in about him.

"Herr Commandant," he grated, "what is the meaning of this?"

"It means, my fine English spy," Putz sneered, "that I have been too clever for you!" And he struck his prisoner across the mouth with the back of his hand.

So violent was the blow that Von Orzt reeled backwards. Face deathly white and blood seeping through his broken lips, he recovered himself.

“General Putz,” he said, his voice harsh and strident in the hushed stillness of the room, “that blow will cost you your command!”

Putz gestured to the guards.

“Take him away to the cells!” he mouthed. “You, Kluff”—he wheeled on the duty officer—“see that a proper guard is mounted over him!”

Ten minutes later Putz was in telephonic communication with the headquarters of the German Intelligence Bureau in Berlin.

“I have captured a spy,” he informed them. “And”—he added—“I have my suspicions that he is the Englishman, Grey Shadow.”

Laying down the receiver, he turned to Augswort.

“We are to hold him here pending further instructions,” he said. “Those instructions may come through at any hour, so you will remain here on duty, Augswort.”

“Very good, sir!” replied the adjutant. Until midnight Augswort remained on duty in the office. Then, glancing at his watch, he pushed back his chair and rose to his feet. Crossing the room he took his long field-grey coat and red-braided peaked cap from the peg on which they were hanging.

Donning them, he took one last look round the office, then stepped outside, quietly closing the door behind him. Without haste, he made his way to the hangars.

“I telephoned instructions half an hour ago to have the commandant’s machine made ready to take the air,” he said to the sergeant-mechanic on duty.

“Yes, sir,” replied the sergeant. “The machine is quite ready!” He led the way to where a double-seater Fokker was standing with engine ticking over.

“Commandant Putz has already retired for the night,” said Augswort, taking a sealed grey envelope from his pocket. “You will see that he gets this on rising in the morning.”

Swinging himself up to the forward cockpit, Augswort stowed his peaked cap away in the cockpit locker. A moment or two he spent in running the engine up on brief but searching test. Then, waving away the chocks from in front of the undercarriage wheels, he opened up the throttle and swept forward across the darkened aerodrome to soar up into the night sky.

IV

THE COMMANDANT’S FACE

It was an hour after dawn when Commandant Putz was roused from slumber by the thunderous reverberations of exploding bombs. Scarce had he thrown back the bed-clothes, in panic and alarm, than a white-faced officer of his staff burst unceremoniously in to the room.

“We are being bombed by four British squadrons, sir!” panted the officer. “The petrol dump is in flames and the Gotha hangars are in ruins——” A sudden, long-drawn, deafening roar which shook the hut cut in on his words.

“And—and that,” he said, through chattering teeth, “sounds like the ammunition dump going up!” His supposition was correct. And when Putz had hurriedly dressed and rushed out on to the aerodrome it was a terrible spectacle of devastation which met that

individual's furious eyes.

The British squadrons had gone. But they had left behind them a trail of ruin which would take many a long week to repair!

Where the ammunition dump had been was now a great smoking crater. Hangars were lying in charred and smouldering ruins, and blood-red flames from the burning petrol dump were leaping high into the air of early morning.

The long mound which had been the roof of the Gotha hangars was now a ploughed and smoking area of warped and twisted steel.

"Those squadrons were acting on information, sir," a grim-faced flight-officer spoke by Putz's side. "They concentrated on the petrol and ammunition dumps and on the Gotha hangars."

"But where," demanded Putz wildly—"where did they get the information from?"

It was later in the morning that he learnt where they had got the information from!

He learned it when he discovered that Augswort was missing, and when he found time to read the letter which his late adjutant had left for him:

"My dear Putz" (ran the missive), "what a conceited jackanapes Von Orzt is!

"It was because of that, that I could not resist, last night, the inserting of a paragraph in the News Report stating, quite erroneously, that he had been killed.

"And oh, my Putz, how you swallowed it! Yes, swallowed it whole, and played up as I wished—but scarcely dared hope—you would.

"I have no doubt that a night in clink with a dirty blanket and a three-plank bed will have taken some of the conceit out of our clever young friend.

"I am taking your autograph album away with me, my Putz. Did it never occur to you how useful those signatures of High Personages would be to us? But have no fear. We will not say that we have the album—and *you dare not!*

"In conclusion, you may be wondering how I came to be your adjutant. It is very simple. The real Augswort boarded the train at Munich, but he never reached Buhl. You will understand how impossible it is for me here to go into details of his—shall we say—misadventures. It is sufficient to say that it was I who arrived at Buhl in his stead.

"The rest you can guess.

"Yours sincerely,

"GREY SHADOW."

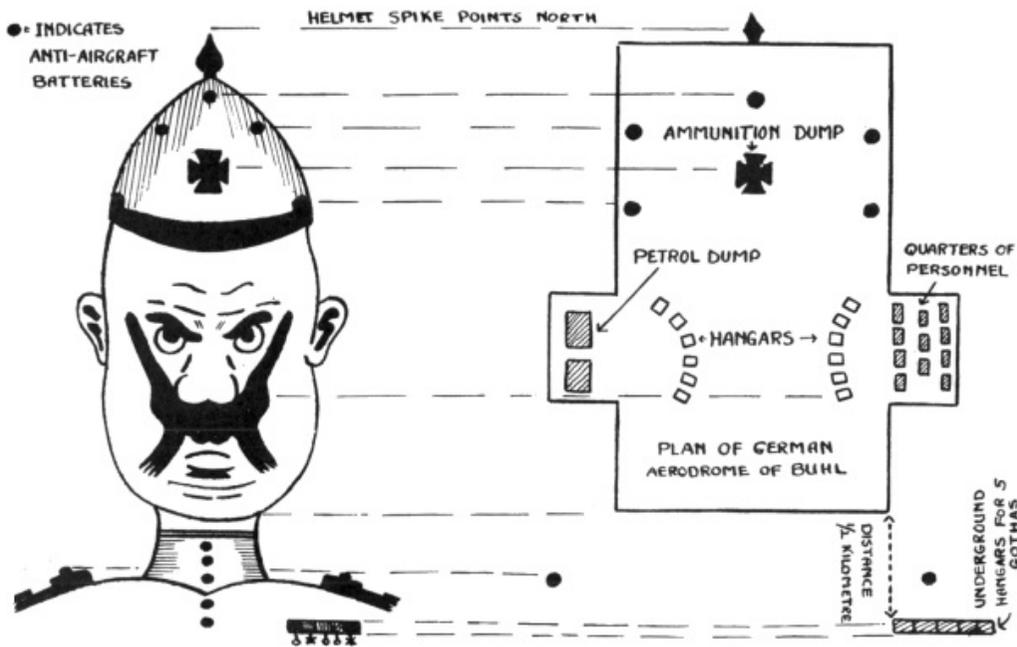
"P.S.—There is one page from your autograph album which I intend to return to you. I should like to think that you will treasure it in memory of me."

And three weeks later that particular page arrived in an envelope bearing the postmark of Cologne. Withdrawing it from the envelope, Putz recognised it as the one which had borne the impudent caricature of himself. But side by side with the caricature was now another drawing. And as Putz examined it, apoplectic rage boiled up in him anew.

To project a plan of Buhl aerodrome from a caricature of the face of the commandant!

Putz almost foamed at the mouth at such impudence.

There it was, the whole thing as plain as a pikestaff. His left ear marking the quarters of the personnel. His right ear marking the location of the petrol dump. The badge on his helmet giving the location of the ammunition dump. His moustache giving the sweep of the hangars. And his medals—his medals!—making the location of the hidden Gotha hangars!



PLAN OF BUHL AERODROME

CHAPTER III
THE LATHE HAND

I

THE MISSING LINK

"A GENTLEMAN to see you, sir!" Herr Tauber, head of the great Schwarzeisen Engineering Works of Essen, Germany, took the card which his secretary was proffering. A look of quickened interest came into his eyes as he glanced at the gilt-edged piece of pasteboard.

"Gregorius Raschel!" he murmured. "Chief of the Secret Service. Show him in, Erich!"

The secretary withdrew, to usher a tall, thin, heavily coated man into Herr Tauber's presence. He was a man with deep-set eyes of steely grey, a high-bridged and prominent nose, a firm, thin-lipped mouth and carefully trimmed moustache, and a pointed beard.

"Good-afternoon, Herr Raschel!" said Tauber, rising to shake hands. "Will you be seated?"

The newcomer seated himself, first handing his hat and gloves to Erich, who took them and quietly withdrew.

"Herr Tauber," he said, without preamble, "you have in your employ a man known as Fischer—Anton Fischer."

"Yes?" said Tauber. With fifteen thousand men on the pay roll there might well be an Anton Fischer. He did not know.

"This man who calls himself Fischer," went on Raschel, "works a lathe in your number four machine shop." Raschel leaned forward in his chair, and added: "It might interest you to know that this lathe hand is an Englishman and a spy!"

"What?" Tauber ejaculated, and sat bolt upright in his chair.

"We have been watching him for some weeks now," explained Raschel.

"But I did not know—I had no idea!" Tauber protested. "We will have him arrested at once——"

"No," cut in Raschel; "that is just what we will not do!"

"But surely," began Tauber, "if the man is a spy——"

"Wait!" Raschel held up his hand. "There is something I must explain to you, Herr Tauber." He paused a moment, then resumed: "I will preface what I have to say by reminding you that many of the exploits of a certain English spy in this country have become common knowledge. The spy to whom I refer is the notorious Grey Shadow."

"But you cannot mean that this man, Anton Fischer, is Grey Shadow?" exclaimed Tauber, startled.

"No, I do not mean that," Raschel said. "Anton Fischer is not Grey Shadow. But he may very well be the means of our capturing Grey Shadow.

"By using Fischer as a bait, we can prepare a trap into which someone is bound to

walk. And that particular someone, if my prediction is correct, may well be Grey Shadow. But we require your aid, Herr Tauber.”

“I will do anything,” responded the other eagerly. “Anything at all. I am yours to command.”

“Then you will make Anton Fischer foreman of the machine shop in which he is now working,” replied Raschel.

“Make him—make him foreman?” stammered Tauber. “But I do not understand.”

“Listen!” Raschel hitched his chair closer to the flat-topped desk. “In these works of yours you make guns, shells, torpedoes, aircraft engines, and other important necessities of war. For months now Fischer has been sending to England plans of these machines and information about them. The man is one of the most highly paid agents in the British Secret Service!”

“If only I had known!” exclaimed Tauber hoarsely.

“It was some weeks ago,” went on Raschel, unheeding the interruption, “that we first discovered Fischer’s activities. He sends his information to a man named Wurtzer, who has a small farm near the village of Krat, close by the Dutch frontier. Wurtzer, in turn, smuggles the information across the frontier to a jeweller in Arnhem, who sends it on to England.

“That is—or, rather, was—the channel by means of which Fischer got his information out of Germany. It was Wurtzer’s housekeeper who betrayed him and Fischer to us.”

He was silent, and when next he spoke his voice was harsh.

“I say *was* the channel. Yesterday we blocked it completely and effectively. Wurtzer is dead. But he has died under circumstances which will make it impossible for Fischer to associate the German Intelligence Bureau in any way with the man’s death.”

“He died accidentally, eh?”

“Yes.” Raschel smiled mirthlessly. “He was—er—accidentally killed. On hearing of his death, Fischer will see nothing in it at which to take alarm. You see, had we arrested Wurtzer, Fischer would undoubtedly have taken alarm and probably made an attempt to bolt.

“But all that Fischer will be aware of now is that his sole line of communication with England has been broken.”

“You are certain Wurtzer was his sole means of communication?” asked Tauber, with close interest.

“We are absolutely certain!” assented Raschel. “We have watched Fischer for weeks now. Every movement he has made, every person to whom he has spoken, every letter he has posted, has been seen by us. No, Wurtzer was the only link in this country connecting Fischer with England. And that brings me to the reason for my wishing Fischer to be made foreman.

“As foreman,” went on Raschel with slow deliberation, “Fischer will find his task of obtaining plans and information much easier. He will also have far greater scope for obtaining information than he had when he was only a lathe hand. The death of Wurtzer synchronising with his own promotion will be tragedy, indeed, for him.”

“Yes, yes, I see that!” exclaimed Tauber.

“Well, what will happen?” proceeded Raschel. “It will be imperative that he gets into communication with England, somehow or other. England, on the other hand, will wonder why his messages have suddenly stopped coming through. It may easily be that they will discover Wurtzer is dead.”

Impressively he tapped the flat-topped desk with a long and tapering forefinger.

“Be that as it may,” he said, “it is certain that England will send someone here to find out what has happened to the valuable Fischer and to re-establish communication with him. Whoever is sent will be a sound man, a clever man, a crafty man. I think, and hope, it will be Grey Shadow!

“Make Fischer a foreman,” he continued. “Every move he makes, every step he takes, will continue to be watched by us. Some day someone from England will either come to him here in Essen or will communicate with him in some manner.

“If that newcomer on the scene is not Grey Shadow I will be very sorry and very disappointed. But whoever he is we will get him. And we will get Fischer at the same time. It will be a good haul.

“You quite understand what is required of you, Herr Tauber?” he added, after a pause.

“Quite. I will make Fischer foreman of the machine shop without delay.”

“You will do it,” warned Raschel, rising, “in a manner sufficiently plausible to arouse no suspicion in him.”

“You can rely on me, Herr Raschel,” replied Tauber, also rising.

“Thank you!” Raschel held out his hand. “Then I will say good-afternoon. It is unnecessary, of course, to remind you that all I have said to you is in the strictest confidence——”

“Quite, quite!” Herr Tauber hastened to assure him. “You need have no fear on that point. I assure you.”

A few moments later, when Raschel had departed, Tauber pressed a bell on his desk.

“Who is foreman of number four machine shop?” he asked his secretary, who answered the summons.

“Hugel, sir.”

“He is eminently satisfactory, I suppose?”

“Yes, sir; very satisfactory.”

“Send him to me, please!” Tauber ordered.

When Hugel stood before him he weighed the man up appraisingly a moment before speaking.

“Hugel,” he said, “we are more than pleased with the way in which number four shop has worked on its share of the Government orders which have been placed with us. As some little mark of our appreciation I and my directors have decided to place you in charge of the new torpedo assembling shop.”

Smilingly he waved away the embarrassed Hugel’s stumbling words of thanks.

“There now arises,” he went on, “the question of appointing a foreman to take your place in number four machine shop. There is a man,” he lied, “on whom I have had my eye for some time. Anton Fischer. How about him, Hugel?”

“Well, sir,” Hugel said slowly, “he is a quiet and well-behaved man, and a hard worker. But he has only been with us eighteen months, and some of the other men might not like him being promoted over their heads.”

“I care nothing for what the men might like and what they might not like,” said Tauber sharply. “I am head of these works. Would Fischer make a good foreman?”

“Yes, sir, he would. But——”

“Then send him to me!” cut in Tauber. “You will commence your new duties in the morning!”

II

THE NET CLOSING IN

It was a keenly speculative and curious Tauber who sat waiting the coming of Anton Fischer. What manner of man would he be—this English spy? Clever, anyway. Yes, he must be that to have remained in the employ of the Schwarzeisen Company for eighteen months without either his mission or his real identity having been discovered until now!

A knock came at the door. Tauber tensed in his chair, and called:

“Enter!” His eyes were riveted on the door. It opened, and there stepped into his presence a small, dark, wiry man, oil-smudged of face and clad in solid blue dungarees.

“You are Anton Fischer?” said Tauber, when the man stood before him fumbling nervously with his greasy cap.

“Yes, sir.”

The man’s German was perfect. There was not the slightest trace of foreign accent. Indeed, he looked just what he had passed himself off to be—a negligible and unimportant unit in the great army of workers who were toiling night and day in the workshops and factories of Germany, making guns and shells and all the grim paraphernalia of war which were so urgently and desperately needed out there on the Western Front.

“Well, Fischer”—Tauber’s voice was steady and natural—“we are moving Hugel to the new torpedo assembling shop, and we feel from the reports of your work and general behaviour that you are the man to take his place as foreman of number four machine shop.”

“Me, sir?”

Fischer’s voice betrayed nothing but a pleased wonderment.

“Yes, you,” replied Tauber. “You have only been with us eighteen months, I know, and there are men in number four shop who have been with us much longer than that. But mere length of service does not count for promotion with us.

“During the time you have been with us your work and conduct have been so good that we have decided to give you this advancement.”

“Thank you, sir!” mumbled Fischer, awkward and embarrassed.

“You will take over your new duties in the morning,” went on Tauber, rising and holding out his hand. “Your increase in wage will commence from the beginning of this week. I wish you every success, Fischer!”

“Thank you, sir!”

Confusedly wiping his dirty hand down the leg of his dungarees, Fischer took the hand of Tauber in a brief shake. A few moments later he had gone.

Tauber, again alone, relaxed in his chair. So that was Fischer! An Englishman and a spy! Somehow Tauber felt nothing now of anger at the man's presence in the works. Why should he feel anger? Anton Fischer was doomed. Already the shadow of speedy trial and death lay heavy over him.

Just so long as it suited their purpose would the German Intelligence Bureau allow him to remain at liberty. Then they would stretch out remorseless hands and gather him in.

No, Herr Tauber was not angry. But he was intensely interested. What a splendid actor the spy was! Not by the flicker of an eyelid or the slightest inflection of voice had he been other than honest and pleurably surprised, if somewhat embarrassed, workman when he had stood in the room a few moments ago and learnt of his promotion.

From now on Tauber would watch him, would watch the stark drama of this man's last few weeks—it might only be days—of life.

Sitting there in his chair, Tauber felt as though he were the privileged spectator of some stirring and gripping play. But this was far more enthralling than any play. It was a tragedy, being enacted on the stage of life itself, breath-taking in its stern and awful reality, and with a curtain which would descend to a crash of musketry spelling the end of a man.

Meanwhile, Anton Fischer, lips compressed and eyes sombre, was making his way back to the machine shop from whence he had been summoned. What did it mean, he asked himself—this promotion to foreman? Was there anything in it to justify the sudden deepening of the uneasiness which he had been feeling for days?

No, there couldn't be. Since obtaining employment at the Schwarzeisen Works, he had conducted himself in a quiet and unassuming manner, working as hard as any man in the shop, always willing to remain on his job late into the night hours, always on hand when the buzzer blew in the mornings.

Not once had he been late, not once had Hugel had the slightest cause for complaint. And now had come promotion. It was the natural sequel to eighteen months of hard and ceaseless toil.

In spite of that, Anton Fischer was uneasy. He had been uneasy now for days. Why he should be so he did not know. Certainly, after a deep and serious mental survey of the position, he had found nothing tangible to give rise to the vague fears which were daily oppressing him more and more. Everything was going on, or appeared to be going on, just as it had done during the past weary months.

But something in Fischer, some undefined instinct, told him that all was not well. And it was in deep and brooding thought that he returned to his lathe in the whirring clamour of number four machine shop.

He was turning an armature shaft, and as he bent over it, calipers in hand, Hugel approached him.

"You have seen Herr Tauber?" said Hugel.

"Yes," replied Fischer. "I am to be foreman."

"And none more deserving of the position than you, Anton," responded Hugel. "I am

very glad.”

He passed on, and for a moment Anton Fischer stood motionless. Then, laying down the calipers, he pulled the starting lever and the belt-driven lathe rumbled into slow and ponderous life.

With unseeing eyes the man stood there watching the long, twisting shaving of steel writhing away from the revolving shaft. Why was it that this feeling of uneasiness was persisting in him? Why couldn't he shake it off? What was it that he was afraid of?

Deliberately he went back in his mind over the past few weeks. There was nothing, not one solitary incident or happening, which he could recall to cause him alarm.

Was it that after all these months he was developing nerves? Imagining things? Was that the explanation of his unrest of mind? If it was, then the sooner he put a bullet through his head the better.

For there could be no returning to England for him until his job was finished or until new orders came through for him. No, he must carry on. And if he found he could not, then the only way out would be to die at the post of duty.

The shriek of the buzzer wailing through the shop told him that the afternoon shift was ended. But there was no release for him. Not for another five hours would he be free to go.

Mechanically he went on with his work, testing the shaft anew with his calipers before setting the cutter in operation again. His workmates, hurrying out, bade him good-night in passing. The night shift, coming in clean and fresh and with their food packets under their arms or bulging their jacket pockets, were soon at work, and the whirling clamour of the shop went on.

All night, all day, week in, week out, until the weary struggle of War ended, the great leather belts would run their eternal round, driving machines which were forging the sinews of War for the field-grey hosts out there on the Western Front.

It was late when Anton Fischer handed over to his relief. Stepping back, he wiped his hands on a piece of oily waste and put on his jacket. To-morrow he would not be on the lathe. He would be foreman, occupying Hugel's little glass-windowed office at the end of the shop.

No longer would his work be hard, physically. But the responsibility would be very great.

Wearily he walked from the shop. It was raining, and the night was very dark. Making his way between great castings glistening in the sickly illumination of the yard lights, he passed through the time-keeper's office and out into the street which ran past the works.

His lodgings, a bed sitting-room in a humble apartment house, were quite close. Two streets only had he to traverse, and when he reached the house he entered a bare and musty hallway and mounted a creaking wooden staircase to his room.

Over his supper of black bread, dried vegetable soup and sauerkraut, he opened a letter which was waiting for him. It bore the postmark of Krat, where Wurtzer lived, but was addressed in an unfamiliar hand.

As Fischer read the contents his eyes narrowed and his face grew grim. For the letter, couched in tearful tones, was from Wurtzer's housekeeper.

It stated that Herr Fischer would be grieved to hear of his friend, the good and

estimable Herr Wurtzer's death. Herr Wurtzer, it appeared, had stepped on the rotted planking of an old wooden bridge which spanned a fast-flowing stream near the farm.

The planking had given way, and Wurtzer had been precipitated into the water. He had been rescued almost immediately. But the sudden shock of immersion had proved fatal to a heart which had never been strong.

The letter concluded by stating that as Herr Wurtzer had left neither son nor daughter, the farm was being taken over by the local magistrates until a relative could be traced.

For long moments after he had read the letter Anton Fischer sat staring in front of him. Here at last was something definite, something tangible. Here at last was solid crystallisation of all the vague fears and uneasiness of the past days.

Wurtzer was dead! No matter how he had died, accidentally or otherwise, the cold, irrefutable fact remained that he was dead.

Again Fischer read the letter slowly and carefully, to see if by some twist of phrase or sentence he could get at the mind of the writer. But the scrawled words told him nothing beyond their plain and pathetic story.

Was it true, this account of the death of Wurtzer? Or had Wurtzer been arrested and shot, and this letter written at the instigation of the German Intelligence Bureau in order that he, Fischer, should continue to feel secure?

Rising to his feet Fischer paced the room, hands clasped behind his back and head bent in troubled thought. More than once he paused to stare at the letter lying on the table, to resume his restless pacing, pondering on the manner of Wurtzer's death, and on the position in which it had placed himself.

One thing was very plain. Until a new channel was opened up it would be impossible for him to get any further information out of Germany. It was a perilous game that he had been playing since obtaining employment at the Schwarzeisen Works, and the fewer in it the better. So there had only been he and Wurtzer—this side of the frontier.

He had been a sound ally, had Wurtzer. And an Englishman, of course. His real name had been Stevens, as Fischer's real name was Richardson.

And now the other was dead—but had he died accidentally or been deliberately killed? That was the problem which confronted Fischer. And it was a problem to which he could find no answer. Accident or vengeance—which had it been? If only he, Fischer, knew, he would know just how to act.

If Wurtzer had died accidentally then he, Fischer, was in no greater danger than before. But if the man had been deliberately done to death, then Fischer's hours were numbered unless he succeeded in getting out of the country without delay.

What was he to do? Which was the best course to pursue? Should he flee or should he remain? Supposing, though, that he fled and Wurtzer's death turned out to have been an accident after all. Would he be able to justify himself in front of his superiors for having run away? No!

And thus at length he came to a decision. He would remain here in Essen.

But in the eyes of Anton Fischer was something akin to the look of a hunted animal. For, alone there in his room, he felt as though the net was closing in slowly and remorselessly about him.

THE HUNCHBACK TAPS

Days passed, anxious days for Anton Fischer, quietly and efficiently carrying out his new duties as foreman of number four machine shop. But as they merged first into a week and then into a fortnight, and nothing suspicious or untoward happened, he began to feel satisfied that the death of Wurtzer had indeed been the accident it had been purported to be.

By virtue of his new position he now had access to blue prints and drawings which had never come his way before.

But as far as he was concerned it was now impossible to get into touch with England. Communication must be re-established from the outside. All he could do was to wait. Some day, he knew, someone or some message would come to him.

Till then he must just carry on, working during the day, and spending his nights in the privacy of his bed sitting-room, coding and tabulating the rapidly increasing amount of information which was ready for dispatch to England.

He finished earlier now than he did when on the lathe, handing over to the night foreman when the evening buzzer blew. Consequently it was no longer dark when he left the works and traversed the two narrow and squalid streets to his lodgings.

It was as he was walking home one evening that a ragged, hunchbacked fellow standing in the gutter playing a barrel-organ drew his casual and uninterested glance.

Just a glance it was that Fischer threw him, such a glance as any passer-by might give. But next moment Fischer was walking on hands clenched and heart pounding.

For in that fleeting instant, during which his uninterested eyes had met those of the hunchback, the latter had swiftly raised a hand and wiped the back of it across his lips.

That quick gesture had been a sign, and Fischer knew that the ragged hunchback standing there in the gutter was an Englishman and a friend.

But not once did Fischer look back as he walked on along the street. Reaching his lodgings, he mounted the creaking staircase to his room and closed the door behind him, thankful for the relief of privacy at last.

After his meagre evening meal he spent the night as usual, not stirring out. None came near him. But he was not disappointed. He had expected it. The first move had been made by the hunchback. The second move would be made by Fischer the following evening.

But the following evening, as he walked slowly home from the works, the hunchback and his barrel-organ were nowhere to be seen. Their absence struck Fischer almost with the force of a blow. He had been so sure, had never doubted for an instant, that the hunchback would be there.

In an agony of doubt, he reached his lodgings. Had he been mistaken after all? Had he erroneously construed a natural gesture the previous evening as a sign for himself?

No, he wouldn't believe that he had been mistaken. The gesture had been a sign. But awful, haunting doubt persisted, and how he got through that night he scarce knew. He had been so sure that a fellow-countryman was at hand. And now he felt more utterly alone, more down in spirits than he had ever felt before.

Reaction and disappointment brought Fischer very near to breaking-point that night. But by an effort, heroic because of the ceaseless toll the perilous weeks and months had taken of his nerve, he got a grip on himself.

And next evening, when he turned into the street which led towards his lodgings, the hunchback and his barrel-organ were there.

Fischer did not quicken his pace, nor give the slightest sign of the tense excitement which gripped him. But as he approached, he casually groped in his pocket for a coin.

Reaching the hunchback, who was raucously grinding out the lilting cadences of the “Blue Danube” waltz, Fischer dropped the coin into the battered tin mug which stood on the organ.

Again, as on the evening before last, the eyes of the two men met for one brief instant. And as they did so, there came unmistakably from the hunchback’s lips the one word:

“Gemalde.”

Next moment Fischer was walking on, and in his heart was profound relief and exhilaration. For he knew now, beyond all doubt, that the hunchback was the friend he had first thought him.

The word “Gemalde” puzzled him, though. It was the German word for “picture.” What had the other meant by it? Fischer knew perfectly well that it was intended to convey some message to him. But what message?

In perplexed thought, he reached his lodgings, and behind the closed door of his room he paced the floor, puzzling over the meaning of that single word: “Picture.”

He’d got to find the solution to it. And he’d got to find it without delay. It must be something pretty obvious. That was evident. But it was often the obvious that was so easily overlooked.

Picture—picture? Had there been a poster, or anything of that description, near the barrel-organ? No, not that he could recollect——

Suddenly, eyes aglint, Fischer halted in his pacing. Yes, there had been a picture. On the barrel-organ itself. The replica of a boar’s head, painted in faded gilt.

Excitedly, Fischer resumed his pacing. He was on the trail, he felt certain. Boar’s head. A gilded boar’s head. Somehow, the words, as he repeated them over and over again to himself, were vaguely familiar. He’d seen them somewhere. Heard them somewhere

“Got it!” he ejaculated triumphantly, smacking sudden clenched fist into open palm. “Got it!”

Near by, in the Galgenstrasse, was the café of the Sign of the Golden Boar, a large, garish, and third-rate place of entertainment, a popular rendezvous of the workers of Essen.

Undoubtedly, the hunchback had meant that he should go there. The two of them had to meet somewhere. And what better place than that crowded café, where everyone was intent only on his or her pleasure? It was a safer meeting-place than any quiet room or deserted alley.

He might be wrong, of course, in construing the word Gemalde into this. But he did not think so. Anyway, he would go to the Golden Boar that night and see what happened.

Stripping off collar and jacket, he washed and shaved, then changed into his other suit. When he quitted his lodgings an hour later, he looked just what he had always made himself out to be—a quiet and honest German artisan.

Through the darkened streets he walked, past shuttered shops and straggling food queues, past little children, ragged and pitifully thin of frame, playing at soldiers in the gutter.

Poor, half-starved little kids, wheeling and marching in proud emulation of those fathers and brothers who were dying out there on the Western Front! Too young to understand the awful tragedy of that weary struggle—too young to share with their elders the bitter knowledge that already the tide of war was turning against the field-grey hosts, and that the shadow of defeat hung heavy over Germany!

Reaching the Golden Boar, Fischer turned into its crowded interior, and with a mug of beer in front of him, seated himself at a wooden-topped table.

Covertly he proceeded to take stock of his surroundings. Being in the heart of the factory quarter, civilians predominated on the dance floor and at the tables. But here and there were grey uniforms, telling of men on leave from the trenches and of others, attached to the garrison of the town, spending an hour or an evening off duty.

There was no sign of the hunchback, however. And as the minutes dragged slowly into an hour, the conviction came to Fischer that he had been mistaken in his assumption that this place had been meant as a rendezvous. Hoping desperately against hope, and partly because he might as well remain there as go anywhere else, he sat on.

It was rarely that he ventured out like this of an evening, and had the circumstances been different, he knew he would have enjoyed sitting there watching the crowded life and animation about him.

But there was nothing of interest or amusement in the eyes of Anton Fischer—nothing save a dull and hopeless disappointment which was closely allied to the apathy of despair.

Then, suddenly, his pulse quickened, and his heart missed a beat. For moving across the crowded dance floor in the direction of his table was the hunchback!

Sinking into a chair at Fischer's table, the hunchback ordered a mug of beer. And when the tankard had been placed before him, he sat quaffing, watching the couples on the dance floor, without so much as a word or a glance in the direction of Fischer.

But the latter was content to wait. In his own time, and in his own way, the hunchback would either act or speak. It was when he had almost drained his tankard that the hunchback commenced to tap idly on the table with it, keeping casual time to the raucous blare of the orchestra.

At first that idle tapping conveyed nothing to Fischer. Then a certain monotonous repetition about it riveted his attention.

Dot, dot, dash, dot—dot, dot, dash, dot—dot, dot, dash, dot——

Lolling in his chair, yet tensely alert mentally, Fischer listened with a strain that was almost agony.

Dot, dot, dash, dot—dash, dash, dash—dot, dash, dot, dot——

Letter by letter, word by word, Fischer slowly and laboriously spelled out to himself the message:

“Follow me when I leave here!”

When he was certain that he had got it correctly, Fischer commenced to tap idly with his own beer mug, informing the other that he understood.

A few minutes later the hunchback pushed back his chair and rose to his feet, and with hands in his pockets, drifted out of the café. For a little while Fischer sat on; then he, too, rose.

Outside in the darkened street he discerned the shadowy figure of the hunchback, and idly he commenced to saunter along in the man’s wake.

Near the end of the street the latter turned into a dark and narrow alleyway which lay between sordid tenement houses, and disappeared into the blackness of an open doorway.

Following slowly, Fischer reached the doorway, hesitated a moment, then stepped across the threshold.

Instantly a hand closed on his arm and a voice whispered imperatively: “Upstairs—quick!”

With the hand still clutching his arm, Fischer was propelled up a dark staircase to a sparsely and ill-furnished room on the first floor.

There, when the door had been closed and a grimy oil-lamp lighted, he found himself face to face with the hunchback—but hunchback no longer! Somehow or other the man’s bent and crooked shoulder had straightened, and now he was standing splendidly erect.

“Richardson”—he spoke swiftly and vibrantly—“you must leave Essen at once! You are being watched—and you are a doomed man unless you can make for the frontier to-night!”

Richardson, alias Anton Fischer, would have replied. But the other stayed him with a gesture, and went hurriedly on:

“When information from you stopped coming through, I was sent to find out what had happened and to re-establish communication with you. But first I took the elementary precaution of watching you and watching the house where you are lodging. It did not take long to discover that Raschel is having both you and the house watched night and day. Every move you make, every step you take, seen by the eyes of the German Espionage Service——”

“Then if that is the case,” cut in Fischer sharply, “I will have been followed here to this house?”

“Yes, undoubtedly,” assented the other. “But there is a back way out—and I am going to alter your appearance. Quick! Every moment is precious. Get into that suit!”

Fischer hesitated, and demanded: “Just who are you?”

“My name is Ellis!” replied the other, looking at him intently. “They know me in Germany as Grey Shadow.”

Fischer stared. So this was the famous Grey Shadow, this man who had come here to Essen. This was the Englishman whose exploits had caused the German High Command to place a price of fifty thousand marks on his head!

“You must hurry!” Grey Shadow’s voice was very urgent.

With a nod Fischer turned away. Stripping off his clothes, he donned the cheap ready-

made suit which Grey Shadow had indicated.

Whilst Fischer was so engaged, Grey Shadow busied himself with a syringe and a basinful of hot water which he poured from a thermos flask.

“This is liquid wax,” he said in terse explanation, inserting the needle of the syringe into Fischer’s nose. Gently he pressed the plunger, forcing the wax in under the skin. Then rapidly, and with deft fingers, he moulded the bridge of Fischer’s nose out of all semblance to its previous shape.

“There, no one will recognise that particular feature now,” he said. “Now your eyebrows!”

Swiftly, with a pair of nail scissors, he clipped Fischer’s eyebrows, which helped almost miraculously to alter Fischer’s expression.

“Put this hat on!” rapped Grey Shadow, handing him an old and battered Homburg. “Keep it pulled well down over your eyes——” He broke off, head bent in listening attitude. From the corridor outside had come the sound of a soft and stealthy step.

“They are here!” whispered Grey Shadow tensely. He did not say whom he meant by “they.” But Anton Fischer did not need to be told. He knew only too well!

“Here, take this!” Grey Shadow thrust an automatic into Fischer’s hand. “If necessary, we will shoot our way out!”

Blowing out the lamp, he stepped to the door, Fischer keeping close beside him.

“Ready?” he asked, his fingers closing on the handle.

“Yes,” breathed Fischer, a finger crooked round the trigger of his automatic.

Flinging open the door, Grey Shadow stepped out into the dimly illumined corridor, Fischer by his side. Six men were standing there, two of them civilians, the other four being soldiers, with rifles and fixed bayonets.

At sight of Grey Shadow and his companion the two civilians stepped quickly forward.

“I am arresting you men,” began one of them harshly, “on charges of espionage against this country——”

That was as far as he got. With the litheness of a panther, Grey Shadow sprang forward. His clenched fist took the man square on the point of the jaw, sending him reeling back against his companion.

“Now, Fischer!” shouted Grey Shadow. Side by side the two men leapt forward, savagely fought their way through the confused and bewildered soldiery and dashed madly along the corridor.

“This staircase!” panted Grey Shadow. They took the rear staircase, descending two steps at a time. It terminated in a dank and inky-black passage. A pause here, whilst Grey Shadow swung open a door, then the pair of them were sprinting desperately across a wide yard which gave egress to waste ground behind the tenements.

“This way!” directed Grey Shadow, as behind them sounded the noise of pursuit. With Grey Shadow’s hand on his arm, Fischer turned sharp left, and, hugging the black shadow of the wall, the two men ran on.

The waste ground terminated at the side of a large warehouse which stood at the corner of a labyrinth of dark and deserted alleyways, down the foremost of which Grey

Shadow propelled his companion.

“With luck, we can shake them off our trail now!” he panted.

“Yes; but how the dickens are we going to get out of Essen?” demanded Fischer.

“Easily enough, if we can lose our pursuers in this network of alleyways,” replied Grey Shadow. “During the past few days I haven’t been idle. I have new identification papers for you, and I have located a warehouse garage where, at this hour of night we can help ourselves to a van without interference. A private car would be hopeless—but a commercial van will not be suspected.”

It was an hour later that a contractor’s van, bound for Oldenburg, rumbled out of Essen and bore northwards through the night. At the wheel was Grey Shadow. Beside him sat Anton Fischer.

Twice, before it reached the outskirts of Essen, the van was stopped by military pickets. But each time, after examination of their papers and a scrutiny of their faces, the driver and his mate were allowed to proceed.

When a faint greying of the eastern skies heralded the approach of dawn, the van turned off the road. Slowing down the van, Grey Shadow and his companion leapt clear, leaving the now driverless van to rumble forward and vanish with a mighty splash into the waters of the River Ems.

Throughout that day the two men lay hidden in a thicket. With the coming of night they moved from cover, and, avoiding the highways, made steadily northwards, going to cover again in a wood before dawn.

When darkness had fallen they were on the move again, and the following night they reached a certain spot where a British aeroplane was waiting on the desolate moors of Westphalia.

For three nights the aeroplane had landed at that particular spot on the moors. Seven more nights would it have come. Ten in all. But on this, the third night, the man for whom it was waiting was there.

Before swinging himself up into the cockpit Anton Fischer took in firm, brief clasp the hand of the man who had saved him from certain death.

“You say you are not coming?” he asked.

“No; I must remain,” replied Grey Shadow. “There is work for me to do in Germany.”

“Then good-bye and good luck!” Fischer said. With that he turned away and swung himself up into the rear cockpit. A few moments later the machine swept forwards into the darkness to soar up into the night sky and swung westwards towards the Line.

And below on the ground the man on whose head was a price—Grey Shadow himself—merged with the darkness and was gone.

CHAPTER IV
BARBED WIRE

I
PRISONERS OF WAR

THEY stood there waiting, oblivious of the pelting rain—excited children, silent women, old and wrinkle-faced men, watching the sixteen soldiers of the Bavarian Rifle Brigade who, under the command of the taciturn Sergeant Zorn, were lounging at the railway entrance.

The fixed bayonets of the soldiers were dull with the rain, and their grey greatcoats were soaking, for they had had a dismal march to the station from the prison camp at which they were stationed.

“Yes, yes,” Schaufel, corporal of the guard, spoke to a bent and bearded civilian, “it is more prisoners, Herr Haken. From Karlsruhe—yes. A draft left here this morning for Ingolstadt, and these one for whom we now wait are to take their place.”

“They will be flying men, as usual, I suppose?” inquired the inquisitive Herr Haken.

“Yes, flying men,” assented the corporal. “It is always flying men who are sent here. There have been infantrymen, but very few——”

“Get forward to the barrier!” the harsh voice of Sergeant Zorn cut in on the corporal’s words. “The train is running in!”

To the accompaniment of a grinding of brakes and hiss of escaping steam, a great black engine slid into the station.

In obedience to the sergeant’s commands the grey-clad soldiers fell in, stiffened, then stood easy.

Rigid as a ramrod, Sergeant Zorn moved forward, then halted at the salute in front of the lieutenant who had descended from the train, and said:

“We are in readiness to take over the prisoners, Herr Leutnant!”

“There are thirty-three,” the lieutenant replied. “No stretcher cases, and no wounded. All are more or less physically fit.”

Something approaching the shadow of a grin appeared for an instant about the sergeant’s tight-lipped mouth.

“Yes, the food at Karlsruhe is better than here, Herr Leutnant,” he said.

“So I have heard,” observed the lieutenant dryly. “Will you please call the roll and take over?”

Sergeant Zorn saluted, then turned towards the khaki-clad prisoners, who had descended to the platform, accompanied by the guards who had escorted them from Karlsruhe. As Corporal Schaufel had said, the prisoners were all flying men—pilots and observers who had either been shot down or had had forced landings behind the German lines.

The majority of them were mere boys. And although they stood there laughing and joking, their haggard, unshaven faces and tired eyes told of starvation and privations already endured.

Aided by an interpreter, Sergeant Zorn called the roll. A few minutes later the formalities of the taking-over were completed. In double file and flanked on each side by eight guards, the prisoners were marched towards the barrier.

Headed by Sergeant Zorn, they passed through the station exit and out into the dusk and the drenching rain. The crowd of onlookers parted to give them passage. Then came a jeer, shrill, and from a childish throat. Instantly it was taken up by the other children, and more than one woman with son or husband out there on the Western Front leaned forwards to hurl biting words of vicious hate at the cursed Englishers.

But the prisoners took no notice. By neither word nor gesture did they give the slightest sign that they either heard or understood the epithets and abuse which were being hurled at them.

They were getting used to this sort of thing. During the first few days of capture it had not been so easy to ignore it. But now they were becoming hardened.

A handful of mud, scooped from the gutter by a youthful hand, splattered against the face of one of the prisoners. The nearest guard growled a warning to the offender, but another handful came, then another.

“Stop that!” snarled Sergeant Zorn, in the forefront.

They stopped it, and at once. For Sergeant Zorn of the Prison Camp was well known as a bad one to cross. His was a temper better not roused!

Free from missiles, but to the accompaniment of jeers, the prisoners marched through the straggling streets of Landshut and out into the open country beyond, taking the road, little better than a cart-track, which lay along the east bank of the River Iser. By this time the majority of the adults who had gathered to watch the prisoners disembark at the station had drifted away to seek their respective cottages and homes.

Few but children now followed the marching column, their laughter and cries of derision being almost the only sounds to be heard except the squelch, squelch of heavily booted feet in the ankle-deep mud of the road, and an occasional growling word passed by one guard to another.

A miserable march that, from Landshut railway station to the prison camp in mud and rain. Many of the prisoners were bare-headed. Not one had a coat—for on capture flying-kit was at once confiscated by the Germans—and every man was already drenched to the skin.

On the right of the column swirled the grey waters of the Iser. And around the flat, featureless, and desolate landscape lay shrouded in rain and deepening dusk. At long last there came into view through the greyness ahead long lines of low black huts, encircled by barbed wire ten feet in height. It was the prison camp.

Sergeant Zorn led the way in through the great main gates of stout wood and barbed wire, opened for him by the sentry on duty. In the middle of the parade ground, which was flanked on three sides by prisoners' huts and the quarters of the camp personnel, Sergeant Zorn halted the column.

And there, drawn up in two ranks, this newly arrived batch of prisoners waited shivering in the rain for inspection by the camp commandant. He came after some fifteen minutes had passed, a tall, arrogant Prussian, accompanied by three of his officers.

After a cursory inspection of the prisoners he addressed them, through the medium of an interpreter.

“It will be as well,” he said, “if you understand at once that this is a strong discipline camp. The martial regulations governing prisoners of war in Germany are strictly adhered to here. You will find a copy of those regulations in your huts. There are two clauses in them to which I wish to draw your attention.

“Any one of you approaching too close to the barbed wire is liable to be shot. Anyone instigating or commencing a demonstration, or attempting to escape, will receive the severest sentence I am permitted by the German High Command to impose. You will learn also that rations here are very short.

“It is the fault of the ruthless and brutal blockade of our coasts which is being carried out by the British Fleet. Let the blockade be raised so that we can feed our women and children, and we will feed you also.”

With that he handed the prisoners over again to Sergeant Zorn, who barked out an order, and the prisoners were marched across the parade ground and into a large, empty, barn-like hut, bare of floor and absolutely devoid of any furniture whatsoever. There was neither bed, bunk, table, nor chair in the place. Not even a mattress.

“You will sleep here until morning,” Sergeant Zorn informed them, through the interpreter. “You will then be given other quarters. Remove your boots. They will be taken away and returned to you in the morning.

“Your boots will be taken away every evening at six o’clock, before you are locked in your huts. You will have your first meal at midday to-morrow.”

He waited until the prisoners had removed their boots, which were collected by two German orderlies and taken away in a large basket. Then he withdrew with the guards, locking the door of the hut and leaving a sentry on duty outside.

Inside the hut the prisoners, shedding soaking tunics, stretched themselves out on the hard bare boards of the floor and sought to forget in slumber the discomfort of drenched clothing and gnawing hunger.

II

NUMBING FEAR

Amongst those who had witnessed the arrival of the British prisoners at Landshut railway station that evening had been the thin and scraggy Nicolaus Tirch. And he had been pleased to see this new batch, very pleased indeed. For, to him, they meant so much new business.

Nicolaus was the prison camp photographer. In other words, he held a permit from the commandant to enter the camp on certain days of the week and photograph such prisoners as wished to have their photographs taken.

The prisoners paid Nicolaus for the photographs in prison camp money, which Nicolaus promptly took to the commandant and had changed into proper currency. It was

a very paying game, and Nicolaus had made quite a lot out of it. At five marks per print, postcard size, he couldn't help but make a handsome profit.

And now, in the dingy little living-room-bedroom which adjoined his studio on the first floor of the tumble-down house in which he lived in the Seilstrasse, he was ruminating greedily on the morrow.

"I will take myself and my camera there first thing in the morning," he told himself, placing a tin kettle on a gas-ring in order to make himself his nightly cup of acorn coffee. "Thirty-three of them I counted. Now, say twenty of them buy two photographs each. That will be two hundred marks. Oh, how very excellent!

"And then there will be groups. They like groups, these Englishers. Seven or eight on a group will mean fifteen or sixteen prints from one plate. Splendid, splendid!

"But I wish the pigs were not from Karlsruhe!" he grumbled, his cadaverous features darkening in a sudden scowl. "It is a show camp, Karlsruhe—one visited by the neutral ambassadors—and it has a canteen! A prison camp with a canteen!" He snorted disgustedly.

"That canteen should be closed!" he went on venomously. "When the Englishers get here, they do not have as much money left as they should. They have spent it in the canteen of Karlsruhe. And on what? On vile tobacco made from the husks of hops! And it is me who has to suffer! I could sell twice as many photographs if the canteen at Karlsruhe was closed——"

He broke off as there came a knocking at the door downstairs.

"Now, who can that be at this time of night?" he asked himself. "I am not expecting visitors. Let them knock again!" Whoever it was downstairs did knock again, imperatively and insistently.

Ambling from the room, Nicolaus descended the dark and narrow staircase to the front door, and opened it. Confronting him in the darkness outside was the drenched figure of a man in civilian dress, with jacket collar turned up and soft felt hat pulled well down over his eyes.

"What do you want?" began Nicolaus angrily. "Knocking like that at this time of night ____"

That was as far as he got. For something hard and round—the barrel rim of an automatic—was jammed against his stomach and he was propelled backwards through the doorway.

"Utter one word," threatened the stranger softly, thrusting the door shut behind him, "and I'll shoot!"

"B-but wh-what——" stuttered Nicolaus.

"Get upstairs!" cut in the other. "And move quickly!" The automatic bored hard into Nicolaus. Quaking, he turned and commenced to grope his way upstairs. Name of a name, what was this? Robbery? Murder?

Only terror of the gun in the hand of the man behind him kept Nicolaus from giving vent to a frenzied shriek for help. He was going to be butchered. He knew it. He was going to be murdered, and his hard-earned savings stolen!

Oh, why didn't he call out? Why did his tongue cleave so to the roof of his mouth? He

lived alone in the house, but there were people next door, and the walls were very thin. Just one piercing yell, and they would come running to his aid.

Reaching the landing, Nicolaus gained his room. Shaking in every limb, he turned to face the armed intruder.

“If—if it’s money you want,” he said hoarsely, “I—I haven’t any—not a pfennig! I swear it on my sacred oath——”

“Yes, you’d swear anything!” cut in the other, closing the door behind him. “But do not alarm yourself. It is not your money I want!”

“Then what? I have no valuables. Me, I am poor—so very poor——”

“Sit down!”

Abruptly Nicolaus sat down, subsiding onto a rickety, wooden-backed chair.

“Now, understand this,” said the stranger. “If you keep quiet, and keep your mouth shut, no real harm will come to you. But if you raise your voice or in any way try to give the alarm, then that will be the end of you!”

“But—but who are you?” stammered Nicolaus. “And what do you want?”

“Call me Kruppel,” the other replied, indicating his foot. “It is a name which will do as well as any other. As for what I want, that can wait!”

Kruppel—the German word for cripple. Staring at the foot which the intruder had indicated, Nicolaus noticed for the first time that it was a club one, encased in a heavy boot with sole and heel a full six inches thick.

Slowly the gaze of Nicolaus travelled up to the man’s face. Intently, and fearfully, he studied the sharp features shadowed by the pulled-down brim of the soaking felt hat.

No, he did not know the man—had never seen him before. This vagabond was certainly no local fellow. Tensed in his chair, the gaze of Nicolaus moved again to the crippled foot, then slowly upwards to the gun. With the tip of his tongue he wetted his dry lips. Dare he launch himself suddenly forward in an endeavour to wrest the weapon from this villain, Kruppel’s, hand?

No, he dare not. And he knew it. The risk was too great. He might fail. And failure would mean a bullet.

“Will you state your business and—and go?” he quavered.

“Go?” jeered Kruppel. “What, do you expect me to turn out again on a night like this? My friend, I am here till morning!”

Nicolaus jerked bolt upright in his chair, his eyes widening in incredulous dismay.

“Here till morning?” he repeated. “Here till morning, did you say?”

“Yes,” responded Kruppel. “So you had better stir yourself and get me some supper. See, your kettle is already boiling!” Laying his gun on the table, he took off his hat and flung it into a corner.

“Be warned!” he said, quite pleasantly. “I may be a cripple, but I can move quickly. In other words, just because my gun is on the table, do not delude yourself that it will ever be nearer your reach than mine. Now, supper—and be quick about it!”

Whilst Nicolaus, in a state of mind equally divided between fear and rage, set about

preparing supper, the intruder calmly divested himself of his wet jacket and, throwing it on to the foot of Nicolaus' bed, seated himself in the chair which Nicolaus had vacated.

"Black bread, aniseed cheese, and acorn coffee, eh?" he remarked, when, with trembling hands, Nicolaus had prepared supper. "Frugal fare, my friend. But there! Who are we to complain? These are times of sacrifice for us all, are they not?"

Helping himself to a chunk of bread and a piece of the cheese, Kruppel went on:

"And, if you ask me, we are going to be called upon to make more sacrifices yet before this war is over. The news from the Western Front is not good. Have you seen a newspaper to-day?"

"No, I have not!" snarled Nicolaus.

"Ah, that is a pity! We are falling back on the Ancre. Yes, from Beaumont Hamel to Thiepval. Our High Command describe it as a 'strategic retirement.' That is amusing, that description, is it not?"

"You may think so," replied Nicolaus. "I do not!"

"No?" returned the other pleasantly. "Well, I do. And why? Because I am a man of vision. I can see things!" He tapped impressively on the table with his forefinger.

"And what do I see? Well, I see defeat already staring us in the face. We cannot go on. Our losses are appalling. Where, I ask you, are our Prussian Guards—our Uhlans—our Death Head Hussars? Gone—all gone! And who have taken their place? Students, clerks, and farm hands—dock rats and gutter sweepings! I ask you, can this new army of ours succeed where the old one has failed?"

"Will you be quiet?" burst out Nicolaus. "Why do you come here and talk to me like this?"

"Being your guest," the other said, "I was merely endeavouring to promote a little interesting discussion. However, as you seem disinclined for conversation, perhaps you will be good enough to go to bed?"

"Bed?" Nicolaus repeated. "Bed?"

"That is what I said," returned the other courteously.

Impotent rage surged up in the scraggy Nicolaus.

"Are you ordering me to bed, you—your blackguardly scoundrel?" he demanded furiously.

"Yes," nodded the other, "I am! I am afraid I find you rather tiresome, and I prefer my thoughts to your company. So go on, get to bed!"

"I will not!" shrieked Nicolaus passionately. "I will not be ordered to bed in my own house by you or anybody!" Furious resentment swamped completely both fear and discretion.

"I will not have it!" he exploded, leaping to his feet. "I will not have it, I tell you! I do not know you. I have never seen you before. Yet you walk in here and take possession at the point of the gun. You eat my supper. You talk about the war. Then, because I will not talk with you, you insult me, and order me to bed. I tell you I will not have it!" Passionately he stamped his foot on the floor.

"Who are you, anyway?" he proceeded breathlessly. "And what is your game? Why have you come here? I demand an answer! Why have you come here? And what do you

want?”

Lazily stretching out his hand, the other picked up the gun at his elbow.

“I will give you just five minutes to get into bed,” he said, toying with the weapon. Then suddenly his eyes became hard as steel. “Just five minutes. You understand?”

For a moment the eyes of Nicolaus met the cold, unwavering stare of his mysterious and unwanted guest. In that moment Nicolaus Tirch knew numbing fear again. Without a word he turned to his untidy bed.

III

THE BORROWED CAMERA

Nicolaus Tirch slept little that night. For long hours he lay awake, staring in sullen resentment at the man seated in the chair by the littered table. Who was this scoundrel, who called himself Kruppel? And what did he want? Just shelter for the night? No; there was more in it than that. But what? Strive as he would, Nicolaus could find no answer to the question.

But, by thunder, he declared to himself, the police would be informed about it at the very earliest opportunity and they would lay the villain by the heels—plant him in the gaol of Landshut and keep him there!

Now racking his brain as to the meaning of this visit—now planning dire revenge on the visitor—Nicolaus passed the long, uneasy hours of the night. With the dawn he dropped into fitful slumber.

He woke with a start, to find the room filled with the cold grey light of morning. The lamp had been turned out, but his strange guest was still seated, awake and watchful, in the chair.

Then Nicolaus made a discovery—a most unnerving and terrifying discovery. Whilst he slept, his ankles had been bound tightly together by a length of torn sheet.

“No, don’t attempt to loosen them!” warned Kruppel, as Nicolaus commenced to pluck frantically at the knot. “I will leave your hands free just so long as you behave yourself!”

“But why have you tied me like this?” quavered Nicolaus. “What are you going to do with me?”

“I am not going to hurt you,” replied the other. “I can assure you of that. Some little discomfort is, I am afraid, unavoidable, however!”

And that was all that Nicolaus could get out of him. Deaf to Nicolaus’ questions, he prepared a breakfast of sausage, black bread, and the eternal acorn coffee. Nicolaus had his share in bed, served to him on a tin tray. He didn’t eat it, however. He had never in all his life felt less like eating.

Kruppel, however, ate with evident enjoyment. When he had finished he pushed back his chair and, rising, limped to the bed.

“I am going out now,” he said. “And as I intend returning here, I am afraid it will be necessary for me to bind and gag you in order to prevent you giving the alarm during my absence!”

Nicolaus struggled and protested. But within a very short space of time he was lying gagged and helpless, bound hand and foot.

“I will get back as soon as I can,” promised Kruppel. “The quieter you lie, the more comfortable you will feel!” Then, watched by the glowering eyes of Nicolaus, he entered the small studio which adjoined the room, and reappeared a few moments later carrying Nicolaus’ camera and a box of plates.

“I am merely borrowing these, not stealing them,” he informed the almost frantic owner. Quitting the room, he locked the door behind him, slipping the key into his pocket. Then, burdened with the camera and plates, he descended the narrow staircase.

Letting himself out of the front door, he locked that behind him also. Pocketing the key, he entered the small newsagent’s shop which was situated next door.

Purchasing a paper, he answered the proprietor’s curious stare with a pleasant enough smile.

“Yes, this is the camera of Nicolaus,” he remarked. “I am his nephew from Frankfort. And as he has gone to Augsburg for the day, I am going up to the prison camp to take for him the photographs of the Englanders.”

A few moments he lingered chatting. Then, leaving the shop, he shouldered the camera and set off, limping, for the prison camp. There he presented himself to the sentry at the main gates and explained his mission.

“My Uncle Nicolaus cannot come, you see,” he said, producing identification papers. “So I, his nephew, am here in his place. It is all right, I suppose?”

Yes, it was all right. Sergeant Zorn, called to the gates, had no objection to the nephew of Nicolaus Tirch being admitted to the camp.

So Kruppel entered, and, planting his camera in the middle of the parade ground, began to solicit patronage from the khaki-clad prisoners who were strolling idly about.

Taken on the whole, he didn’t have at all a bad morning. The prisoners, weary with the awful boredom of existence behind the barbed wire, turned readily and with relief to this passing distraction, and Kruppel was kept fairly busy.

After taking a photograph, Kruppel would book the name of the client in a small notebook, so that he would know for whom to inquire when he returned to the camp with the prints. And it was with this notebook in hand that he eventually limped up to Sergeant Zorn.

“I have finished now,” he said. “But there is one name which I do not think I have got down correctly. Is it ‘Heathercoat,’ mein sergeant, or ‘Heathercoat’——”

“No; it will be Heathcote,” interposed Sergeant Zorn. “There is a Lieutenant Heathcote here.”

“Ah, yes, Heathcote,” said Kruppel, making an alteration in his notebook. “And he is in hut number two, yes?”

Sergeant Zorn nodded curtly, and was moving away when Kruppel laid a detaining hand on his arm.

“Now can you,” he said, “tell me where I can find the Sergeant Zorn?”

“I am Sergeant Zorn,” returned the other sharply.

Kruppel gestured with his hands.

“Ah, then I am more desolated than ever!” he whined. “Indeed I am the foolish one. When my Uncle Nicolaus left for Augsburg this morning he handed me two fine, plump rabbits, telling me to present them, with his compliments, to his good friend Sergeant Zorn. And, stupid fool that I am, I forgot to bring them.”

“I am sorry you forgot,” Sergeant Zorn snapped. “The food here is putrid!”

“I know, I know!” cried Kruppel. “At least, I have heard it is. But those rabbits—I will bring them up this evening. I swear it. I will see that you get them to-day!”

With which promise he departed, camera on shoulder and club-foot dragging pitifully.

It was mid-afternoon when he re-entered the house of Nicolaus Tirch in the Seilstrasse. Letting himself in at the front door, he limped up the staircase and entered the room.

The bound and gagged Nicolaus was lying as Kruppel had left him, and, turning his head at Kruppel’s entry, he greeted that individual with a malevolent glare.

“Still alive, then?” said Kruppel cheerily.

Dropping his camera and box of plates in a corner, he unbuttoned his bulging jacket, flung a couple of rabbits on to the table, then crossed to the helpless Nicolaus.

Swiftly he went to work, freeing the man’s wrists and ankles and loosening the gag.

“Has anyone been here?” he asked, gently massaging his host’s numbed limbs.

“Yes, a friend of mine knocked and knocked,” snarled Nicolaus. “And when he could get no answer he went away, and I heard him saying to himself that it was very queer his being unable to gain admittance, and that he would fetch the police and break in.”

Kruppel laughed with genuine enjoyment.

“What a rotten liar you make, friend Tirch!” he chided. “There, I think circulation has now been restored. You may get up and move about for a little while. Is it necessary to warn you against shouting for help or making any attempt to betray my presence here?”

“No!” snarled Nicolaus. “But you will pay for this some day!” Stiffly he sat up and swung his feet to the floor. “Those rabbits?” he demanded. “Where did you get them? You could not buy them.”

“I did not buy them,” Kruppel answered shortly.

Rising to his feet, Nicolaus shuffled to the table.

“They are not fresh,” he said, eyeing the rabbits closely. “They are at least three days dead. Come, tell me where you got them.”

“All right, I will,” nodded Kruppel. “I snared them in the Black Forest exactly three days ago.”

Nicolaus looked at him sharply.

“In the Black Forest?” he echoed. “That is a long way from here.” Then, with sudden blaze of passion: “I wish I knew who you were and what your game is with me!”

“You will know very soon now,” answered Kruppel softly. “But at the moment I advise you to make the most of your liberty, for, come nightfall, I must tie you up again!”

A LETTER FOR NICOLAUS

Darkness had fallen, and the barbed wire of the prison camp was gleaming silver in the brilliant illumination of powerful electric bulbs when Kruppel again presented himself at the camp gates. From beneath his jacket he produced the two rabbits.

"I take these to Sergeant Zorn," he said to the sentry.

"Ah, twice already has he been here to ask if you have left them," the sentry replied. "He wanted them, I think, for his supper."

"Is the food here so very bad, then?" inquired Kruppel.

"It is terrible!" responded the sentry fervently. "Awful!"

"It is said," commented Kruppel, "that the best food, the soap, the tobacco, and all that we have left is sent to the troops fighting in the Line."

"And that is true," replied the sentry. He sighed. "It is almost enough to make a man apply for transfer to a unit detailed for the Front. Ah, well, you had better be getting on to Sergeant Zorn with the rabbits."

He swung open the gate to allow Kruppel to pass through. Limping across the illumined parade ground in the direction of the non-commissioned officers' quarters, Kruppel looked about him with narrowed eyes. The long low huts housing the prisoners lay dark and silent. No lights showed in any of the windows, for lights were not allowed in the prisoners' huts.

Reaching the non-commissioned officers' quarters, Kruppel inquired for Sergeant Zorn, and, on that individual being brought, handed him the rabbits.

"I thought," said Sergeant Zorn curtly, "that you were not coming. Tell your uncle that I will thank him myself when I see him. Good-night!"

That was all. Not a word of thanks to Kruppel for trudging the three kilometres from the town. Not even an invitation to come in and rest himself for a while! But Kruppel did not seem to mind. Turning away from the door of the quarters, he commenced to make his way slowly back towards the gates.

But this time he did not cross the parade ground. He kept to the fringe of it, edging closer and closer in towards the dark shadow of the huts.

Then suddenly he vanished, swiftly and completely, merging with and becoming part of the black shadow at the base of the nearest hut.

There had been little of the cripple, little of lameness, about that swift, full length dive for cover which he had made!

For a few moments he lay in the shadows, listening intently. Then, confident that he had not been observed, he commenced to crawl round to the rear of the hut.

Here lay peril! Fifteen paces away was the illumined barbed wire, and on the other side of it he could plainly discern the belted and great-coated sentries pacing monotonously backwards and forwards with loaded rifle and fixed bayonet on shoulder.

Inch by inch Kruppel commenced to worm his way forward along the rear of the huts, moving always on his stomach.

So great was his caution that it took him an hour to reach number two prison hut. And another hour passed before he made his next move.

Glancing at his wrist-watch, with its luminous dial, he suddenly rose softly to his feet. Pressing himself against the black wooden timbers of the end of the hut, he drew a screwdriver from his pocket and cautiously set to work on the screws which held five iron bars in place over a square window which was kept permanently open for ventilation purposes.

During the hour in which he had lain in hiding at the base of the hut he had carefully noted the movements of the sentry on the outer side of the wire. For thirty seconds only was the man out of sight before turning and reappearing.

It was only during those thirty seconds of comparative safety that Kruppel could work. Each time that a muffled tread told of the sentry returning, Kruppel would sink down and become lost amidst the shadows. Then, when the sentry passed on, he would straighten up again and renew his attack on the rusted screws.

It was laborious work and painfully slow. But he completed it at length and the last bar came away in his hand. Then, awaiting his opportunity, he swung himself up, slithered through the window, and dropped into the hut.

Hardly had his feet touched the floor when a hand closed on his arm in the darkness and an English voice demanded guardedly:

“What’s the idea?”

“Oh, hallo!” exclaimed Kruppel in perfect English. “Many of you awake?” Then, without waiting for an answer: “Listen! I want Heathcote. I’ve got to get him out of this camp to-night and out of the country. He’s wanted in England.”

The unknown beside him in the darkness gasped and repeated:

“Wanted in England? Who—who are you?”

“British Secret Service,” answered Kruppel tersely. “But get Heathcote—quick! You know where his bed is.”

“Yes, that’s all right,” returned the unknown, who had been joined in the darkness by excited and whispering comrades. “But how the dickens do we know you’re Secret Service?”

“Who else do you think I am?” Kruppel’s voice was brusque and impatient. “Do you think that if I was acting in any way on behalf of the German authorities I would come here like this? Get Heathcote for me. He’s got to come with me.”

“I am Heathcote!” said a voice close by in the darkness. “But I don’t understand——”

“No, and I don’t intend to explain,” snapped Kruppel, “beyond telling you that your uncle is dead and the War Office want you—badly. I’ve come here to get you, and you’re coming with me. Get your trousers and tunic on, and jump to it!”

There was a moment of silence. Then came Heathcote’s voice, quivering with excitement.

“Rightyho, I’ll chance it! I’ll be with you in a jiffy!”

“And you other fellows”—Kruppel’s voice was curt and authoritative—“get back to bed. For your own sakes as well as ours keep as quiet as you can till morning. The Boche must not discover Heathcote is missing until roll-call in the morning.”

A few moments later the two shadowy forms of Kruppel and Heathcote dropped through the window and crouched on the ground outside the hut.

“Now follow me,” whispered Kruppel, “and keep flat on your stomach.” Slowly he commenced to move forward, making away from the hut towards a corner of the barbed wire where a massive support pole cast a long black shadow on the ground.

Inch by inch, under cover of the shadow, the two men reached the wire. Then to Heathcote’s ears there came a faint and almost imperceptible click, followed by another and another.

“We’re through!” whispered Kruppel. “Keep close to me!” Again he commenced to move forward, wriggling on his stomach through the clipped barbed wire.

“Now—quick!” he hissed. Next moment the two men were lying with their faces pressed close to the damp soil of the ploughed land which bordered the barbed wire on that side of the camp.

Thirty minutes later they reached an old barn situated a kilometre and a half from the camp. Groping in the darkness inside, Kruppel pulled a bulging suitcase down from where it had been hidden on top of a dusty beam.

“There are civilian clothes here for you,” he said to Heathcote, “and a German officer’s uniform for me. We dare not show a light; we will have to dress as best we can in the darkness.”

“And then?” said Heathcote, peeling off his tunic.

“I have identification papers, forged in England, which describe us as being attached to the German Consulate at Berne, in Switzerland,” replied Kruppel. “There is a train for the frontier which stops at Landshut at five-thirty this morning. We will board it—and a steady nerve will see us through into neutral territory.”

“But we have no luggage,” protested Heathcote. “Won’t that make people suspicious?”

Kruppel laughed quietly, and replied:

“Four suitcases have been lying at Landshut railway station for three days now, waiting to be picked up by their owners, the Hauptmann von Schloss and his companion, Herr Braden, who have been spending a few days’ leave with friends near Landshut. Von Schloss and Herr Braden are you and I.”

“By Jove!” breathed Heathcote. “You’ve certainly got everything fixed!”

“Yes,” replied Kruppel dryly. “It’s my job!”

“And why,” demanded Heathcote, after a moment of silence, “is my presence in England so greatly desired by the War Office?”

“You were assistant in your uncle’s laboratory before you joined the Air Force,” replied Kruppel. “You assisted him in experiments with high explosive. The last experiment you and he carried out together was, I understand, highly successful. But he would never put a formula on to paper.

“He died very suddenly—a heart attack—and the formula died with him. You are the only man who can supply the War Office with the formula of that explosive. That is why I have come to Germany to get you.”

Evening of that same day saw the Nuremburg-Berne express clank to a halt at the Swiss frontier. While papers were being examined and stamped there descended from a

first-class compartment the elegant and monocled figure of the Hauptmann von Schloss, who, according to his papers, was attached to the German Consulate in Berne.

“You will dispatch this telegram for me, please!” he said stiffly to the lieutenant in charge of the frontier guard.

“Yes, Herr Hauptmann,” replied the lieutenant, rigid at the salute.

“You will also post me this letter!”

“Yes, Herr Hauptmann.”

With a lofty nod, Hauptmann von Schloss ascended again to his compartment and to the company of Herr Braden.

“What was the telegram?” inquired the latter curiously.

“It was to the police at Landshut,” replied his companion, “instructing them to proceed at once to the house of Nicolaus Tirch in the Seilstrasse. Poor Nicolaus—he will be feeling very fed up by this time, I am afraid. But I had to leave him tied.”

“And what was the letter?”

“Ah, the letter! That was to Nicolaus himself.”

It was two days later that Nicolaus Tirch received that letter. As he opened it there fluttered to the floor a hundred-franc note which had been enclosed. But it was the letter itself which drew the incredulous stare of Nicolaus. For it ran:

“My dear Nicolaus,—Please find enclosed one hundred francs as some little compensation for the discomfort to which I was obliged to put you.

“Believe me, it was the only way. Had I not adopted the role of a mythical nephew of yours I would have found the greatest difficulty, I am afraid, in obtaining entry to the prison camp.

“And I simply had to get in, dear Nicolaus, in order to locate the hut in which a certain fellow-countryman of mine was incarcerated.

“Yours sincerely,
“GREY SHADOW.”

CHAPTER V
THE WAY OF A SPY

I
THE CONSPIRATORS

THE large, dimly lighted cellar beneath the empty warehouse off the Königsberg waterfront was crowded with men, their eager faces showing through drifting tobacco smoke.

The majority of those gathered in that secret place of meeting were civilians. But here and there was the field-grey uniform of the German Army in the Field and a few dark blue uniforms of the German Fleet.

Every face was turned towards a raised dais at the far end of the cellar. At a rough table on the dais five men were seated, whilst a sixth, on his feet, was addressing the gathering in low, impassioned tones which carried to every corner of the cellar.

“Kirsche is in good form to-night,” muttered one of the gathering, a great, bearded fellow, to his companion.

“Yes,” mumbled the latter. “But it is Zanderharn whom we want to hear.”

“And we are going to hear him now,” nodded the bearded one.

The speaker on the dais was bringing his oration to a close.

“That is all I have to say to you to-night, comrades,” he said. “There is one here more qualified to speak than I. One who has served out there on the Western Front. He will speak to you now. I call upon Comrade Zanderharn to address you.”

He sat down. And there came from every throat a low, rumbling growl of applause as a sallow-featured young man with long black hair rose from his seat at the table and advanced to the front of the dais.

“Comrades,” he began, amidst a deathly hush, “you know why we are here to-night. It is to further the great work of forming throughout Germany a Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council, which will, by force if necessary, take over the government of this country and bring to an end the awful, devastating war into which we have been plunged by those who have been too long our leaders—the swaggering and arrogant Prussian Junkers!”

Again came a growl of applause.

“Let me take you back, my comrades,” he went on, “to that fateful month of August, 1914, when Britain entered the War. What was it Wilhelm Hohenzollern, our Emperor, told us then? ‘*You will sweep England’s contemptible little army back into the sea,*’ he said, ‘*and when the leaves are falling in the autumn you will return home victorious!*’ ”

He paused, and not a sound broke the tense silence.

“Where to-day, my comrades,” he resumed, in a voice which was little more than a whisper, yet which carried to the farthest corner of the cellar, “is that army of ours which was to have marched home victorious? *It is wiped out to a man!* And where is the

contemptible little army of England?” His voice rose vibrantly.

“It still stands out there on the Western Front, its bayonets a solid, unwavering wall of steel through which we cannot break!”

Again his voice sank:

“I tell you, my comrades, the shadow of defeat hangs heavy over Germany to-day, and the time has come for us, the soldiers and the workmen, to take matters into our own hands and stop this awful slaughter which is breaking the hearts of our people and bringing poverty and grief into every home within the frontiers of the Fatherland!

“Ah, could you but see what I have seen! From out of the trenches grey wave after grey wave rising—going forward towards the British trenches! Forward towards their blazing guns! What matter how many of us die? Are we not just cannon-fodder—soulless things just there to be mown down?”

His voice rose, vibrant and impassioned:

“Six feet deep lay our dead at Verdun—ay, and the attack went on. Went on for what? So that the Crown Prince of Germany should justify himself in the eyes of the High Command. He was in command at Verdun. And because he is the Kaiser’s son a victory had to be gained for him at any cost. Was there a single home in Germany, my comrades, which did not feel that cost? And yet we failed and were thrust back. Verdun did not fall!”

He paused, and when next he spoke his voice was curiously calm:

“No, Verdun did not fall. And now, after all these long and weary months of slaughter, we, who understand these things, are to be hoodwinked no longer by our leaders’ glib talk of victory. Our fleet lies rusting in Kiel. Our armies fall steadily back. Our women and children are starving. How long are we to endure these things? Just so long, my comrades, as it takes this Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council which we have formed to become strong enough to overthrow the Prussian war lords!

“Then, when we are in power, we will sue for terms with Britain and her Allies, and, under a new flag, we will commence the building of a new and prosperous Germany. Too long, my comrades, has the god of Germany been the sabre and the gun. With us in power, Germany shall attain dominance and prosperity by means of merchant ships and commercial treaty!”

Again his voice rose vibrantly, thrilling every man gathered there that night:

“No truer words than these were ever spoken: ‘He who draweth the sword shall perish by the sword.’ We drew the sword, and the invincible might of England and her Empire is ranged against us in consequence!

“Go, then, every one of you, and enlist recruits to our cause before it is too late—before the British armies have swept across the Rhine and occupied our country. This is a sacred mission. It means the saving of our Fatherland. I charge you to do it, and to do it well!”

With that he stepped back and seated himself at the table. As he did so there came a subdued but enthusiastic roar of applause from his hearers.

Men, carried away by the emotion which this Zanderharn could always rouse in them, momentarily forgot the caution so necessary at these secret meetings, and it took Kirsche, leaping to his feet with uplifted hand, to still the tumult.

“Silence, comrades, silence, I beg of you!” he cried. “We do not want the military coming here, or the police. You will now disperse quietly, and in groups of no more than three. Our next meeting will be held here a week to-night, when reports of the progress of our movement at Berlin, Essen, Dusseldorf, and other prominent centres will be read to you!”

Obediently the men departed. But at the table on the dais the six who composed the committee still sat on. Kirsche, the chairman, said softly to Zanderharn:

“You spoke well to-night, comrade!”

“Yes,” the other replied, and his eyes were sombre. “But I feel it so deeply. The struggle cannot go on.”

Robel, short and swarthy, leaned forward across the table.

“And I have good news,” he began. “We have added two hundred more rifles and five thousand more rounds of ammunition hidden at Pillau——”

“Wait!” cut in the burly and heavily bearded Vorsworg. “There is more important business than that to discuss at the moment. Kirsche, hand me the register!”

“If you will permit me to finish what I was about to say——” commenced Robel, flushing.

“That can wait!” returned Vorsworg roughly. “Kirsche, give me the register!” He took a black leather-bound book from the hand of Kirsche, and commenced to run a forefinger down the closely written list of names inside.

“This man Lauber,” he announced, his finger halting suddenly at a name, “is a spy—a Junker spy—sent here by the High Command!”

There was a moment of silence. Kirsche was the first to speak.

“You are certain of this?” he asked sharply.

“I am certain!”

“How have you come by this information?”

“I got it from Otto Hals, who keeps the lodging-house where Lauber is staying,” replied Vorsworg.

“Do you mean to say”—Kirsche spoke slowly and deliberately—“that Otto Hals has told you that this man, Lauber, is a Junker spy?”

“Not in so many words!” Vorsworg answered gruffly. “But he told me this much. He said he thought I ought to know. He said that after every meeting we hold, Lauber sits in his room writing until well into the early hours of the morning. Lauber, he says, writes rapidly and without a pause.”

“How does Otto Hals know that?”

“He has watched through the keyhole. There are no keys to any of the room doors in his lodging-house. Only bolts.”

“But surely,” protested Kirsche, “you have more grounds than this for saying that the man is a spy?”

“No, I have not!” retorted Vorsworg. “Nor do I need any! And for why? Because Lauber has always passed himself off to us as an ignorant and illiterate seaman. When he

took the oath of allegiance to the Soldiers' and Workmen's Council, he pretended to me that he could not read. I had to read it for him, and he repeated it after me. Balance that with this nocturnal and fluent writing!"

With the air of one who has propounded the unanswerable, he leaned back in his chair. The other five exchanged glances. Then Kirsche spoke again.

"But why did you not mention this earlier in the evening?" he demanded. "Lauber was at the meeting to-night. We could have kept him behind and questioned him!"

"Yes, and he would have denied everything!" retorted Vorsworg. "The man is no fool. No. We are going to his room, and we are going to catch him red-handed!"

Again there was silence, broken by the uneasy voice of Kirsche:

"This certainly appears to need investigation!" he said.

The others, with the exception of Vorsworg, nodded.

"And if he is a traitor"—Robel's voice rang out vicious and spiteful—"we will know how to deal with him!"

"Oh, assuredly!" laughed Vorsworg; and it was laughter not pleasant to hear.

"Comrades"—by an effort Kirsche kept his voice steady—"we cannot—dare not—ignore this information about Lauber. I suggest that we finish our business here, then go quietly to the house of Otto Hals, break in on Lauber, and demand to know what those writings of his are. What do you say, Zanderharn?"

"I agree," assented Zanderharn.

"I think four of us will be enough," said Vorsworg. "Six are too many. Unnecessary. I will go. And you, Kirsche. And you, Zanderharn. And you, Robel. That is agreed—yes?"

It was agreed. And an hour later, when the business of the meeting in committee had been concluded, the chosen four quitted the cellar.

With coat collars turned up and hats pulled well down over their eyes, they walked along the ill-lighted waterfront to the dark lodging-house of Otto Hals.

Otto greeted them in the narrow and dingy entrance-hall.

"Yes, he is upstairs, in his room," he wheezed huskily, in answer to Kirsche's question. "Come, I will show you the way up!"

"Tread softly," warned Vorsworg.

A crafty smile creased Otto's face.

"None can tread so soft as me!" he wheezed.

"Ay, as many a poor sailorman has learned to his cost, I do not doubt," muttered Robel, "when he has wakened in the morning to find his money gone!"

If Otto heard that particular remark, he paid no heed to it. He could, at any time, be conveniently deaf. With the four following in single file behind him, he led the way up a narrow staircase, treading, in spite of his bulk, as softly as a cat.

On the second floor he turned along a corridor. Stealthily traversing half its length, he paused in front of a closed door, beneath which filtered a chink of light.

He uttered no word—just pointed. And the four knew that behind that door was Lauber, the man whom they suspected of being a spy and a traitor to the cause.

Motioning Otto away, Vorsworg waited until he had reluctantly retreated to the end of the corridor. Then, cautiously, he whispered to Kirsche:

“We will not knock. You and I will burst in the door!”

Kirsche nodded, and Robel and Zanderharn stepped aside.

“Ready?” whispered Vorsworg.

“Yes,” breathed Kirsche, tensing.

“Come on, then!” Together, the two men hurled themselves forward against the door. With a splintering crash it burst open, and as they stumbled into the room, Zanderharn and Robel stepped quickly in after them.

Lauber had sprung to his feet from the paper-littered table at which he had been seated. An open inkwell and a pen in his hand told plainly that he had been writing.

“What is the meaning of this?” he began, the colour draining from his face. “What do you want——” He broke off, staring at the gun which had appeared in the hand of Vorsworg.

“We want you, you rat!” Vorsworg’s voice was harsh and triumphant. “Put your hands up! Robel, close that door!”

Whilst Lauber’s hands crept waveringly upwards Robel closed the cracked and splintered door.

“Now,” said Vorsworg menacingly, “perhaps, Comrade Lauber, you will tell us what you are writing?”

Lauber’s face was ashen. With the tip of his tongue he wetted his dry lips.

“It is there,” he said unsteadily, “for you to read.”

“Ay, and we will read it!” said Vorsworg savagely, “Zanderharn, you keep this rat covered! You, Kirsche, search him for weapons!”

Leaving Lauber to the care of Kirsche and Zanderharn, Vorsworg strode to the table. Snatching up a sheet of closely written paper with the ink still wet upon it, he proceeded to read.

“By thunder,” he exploded furiously, “I knew it! It is to the Intelligence Bureau in the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin. Listen to this!” In a voice shaking with rage, he commenced to read:

“And to-night they held another meeting, at which the man Zanderharn spoke. I have written to you before about this man. He is a firebrand and an agitator of the very worst description.

“He has only been in Königsberg a few weeks, yet his fiery speeches have so impressed and swayed these traitors to the Fatherland that they have made him a member of their committee.

“I can only most earnestly reiterate what I have written over and over again during the past month. Unless this Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council is stamped out of existence without delay, and the ringleaders shot, it will become a menace which will assuredly bring disaster to our unhappy country.

“They are forming branches everywhere. And who can say how our weary army in the field and our disgruntled fleet will react to the seditious and treacherous

doctrines they are preaching?

“You have hesitated to strike, in case, in these troubled times, a crisis might be precipitated within our own frontiers by these men setting themselves up as innocent and misjudged citizens.

“But I most solemnly warn you, here and now, that unless you strike at once, a crisis will sooner or later come, and it will be of a magnitude undreamt of either by you or by our gallant and long-suffering people.”

Crumpling the paper in his hand, Vorsworg hurled it to the floor.

“Stamp us out of existence, eh?” he roared. “Have the ringleaders shot, eh?” Choking with passion, he swung on Lauber.

“So that’s what you are!” he snarled. “A dirty Government spy! Well, you’ve played your game and you’ve lost! You know what we are going to do with you?”

Lauber had got a grip on himself. Deathly pale, but very erect, he faced Vorsworg.

“You are going to kill me, I take it?” he said quietly.

Great, dreadful, bellowing laughter issued from Vorsworg’s bearded lips.

“Ay, kill you!” he roared. “How did you guess? But kill you in a way that will be a warning to all other spies!

“Get some rope,” he snarled to Kirsche and Robel, “and bind him to that chair!”

“What are you going to do with him?” inquired Kirsche hesitatingly.

“Never mind what I am going to do with him!” shouted Vorsworg. “You will soon see. Get some rope!”

Kirsche departed, to reappear a few minutes later with a length of rope which he had obtained from Otto, downstairs. Aided by Robel, he bound Lauber hand and foot in a chair. Lauber submitted without a struggle. It seemed as though he realised the futility of resistance.

“And now,” said Vorsworg, gloatingly surveying his prisoner, “do you know what I am going to do, you rat?”

Lauber stared at him steadily, but made no reply.

“There is an envelope there on the table,” proceeded Vorsworg, “already addressed to the Intelligence Bureau in the Wilhelmstrasse. I am going to seal it and post it.

“But there will be neither missive nor letter in it,” he went on gratingly. “No; there will be something else in it. There will be a present from the Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council.”

Again he laughed—horribly, throatily.

“You do not ask me, rat, what that present will be. Well, I will tell you.” Slowly from his belt he drew a glittering sheath knife. “*It will be your ears—the long and prying ears which they sent here to listen to our plans!*”

Kirsche sprang forward, dismay and consternation on his face.

“Vorsworg!” he cried, gripping the bearded brute by the arm. “You’re mad! You cannot do that!”

“Can I not?” Roughly Vorsworg shook him off. “I can—and I will!”

“You cannot!” wailed Kirsche. “I say you cannot! It will ruin everything! The military will strike at once, and we are not ready for resistance. You cannot do it! Zanderharn—Robel—he must not be allowed to do this thing!”

With a rage akin to madness in his blazing eyes, Vorsworg wheeled on him.

“I tell you I will do it!” he shouted. “The rat is a spy, and I am going to treat him as a spy! His ears are for the Wilhelmstrasse and his body for the river!”

“Zanderharn—Robel!” Kirsche’s voice was almost a sob. “This madman will ruin us all—ruin all our plans! Vorsworg”—again he clutched at the bearded man’s arm—“I will not let you do it——”

That was as far as he got before the clenched fist of Vorsworg smashed into his face, sending him reeling back, to crash to the floor, a limp and huddled heap.

“So much for a weak-kneed coward!” snarled Vorsworg, wheeling to glare defiantly at Robel and Zanderharn through red-rimmed, bloodshot eyes. “I am going on with this!”

Yes, he was going on with it. The worst in him had been roused. And in that moment he was more animal than man. Robel took a step forward, the shadow of a smile on his thin, cruel lips.

“I am entirely in agreement with you, comrade,” he said. “Kirsche says we are not yet strong enough to withstand reprisal. I say we are strong enough!”

Vorsworg paid no heed. It is doubtful if he heard. Drawn knife in hand, he was advancing on the livid-faced Lauber. And the horror he saw in Lauber’s eyes brought a satanic chuckle to his bearded lips.

“The way of a spy is hard,” he crooned, “but the death of a spy comes harder!” Slowly, his bearded face like that of a fiend, he raised the glittering blade.

Then came sudden interruption. It was the voice of Zanderharn, cool and quiet, but with a deadly intentness:

“One moment, please!”

II

“THROUGH YOUR FINGERS!”

The knife poised, Vorsworg slowly turned his head. Instantly he stiffened, glaring in stupefied amazement at the automatic which had appeared in the hand of Zanderharn and which was unwaveringly covering him.

“What is the matter with you, you fool?” he grated. “What are you doing with that gun?”

“I intend,” drawled Zanderharn, “to endeavour to preserve Lauber’s ears intact for him.”

“Are you like Kirsche?” snarled Vorsworg. “Frightened of the consequences?”

“No,” replied Zanderharn evenly, “I am not frightened of the consequences. Nor am I like Kirsche. Kirsche was merely futile. I am in deadly earnest. Drop that knife!”

“I’ll see you in purgatory first!” blazed Vorsworg, and turned again to the bound Lauber.

“Vorsworg”—Zanderharn’s voice was icy—“if you touch him with that knife I shall

shoot you through the heart!”

With an exclamation Vorsworg wheeled. The knife streaked from his hand, sang past the head of Zanderharn, and embedded itself quivering in the cracked panel of the door.

Simultaneously the gun in Zanderharn’s hand spat flame. Vorsworg reeled, clutching at the breast of his crimsoning shirt. One staggering, backward step he took. Then his knees caved in and he crashed face forward to the floor.

“What have you done?” screamed Robel. “What have you done?”

“Merely rid the world of a gross animal,” replied Zanderharn coolly. “One that should have been exterminated long ago. And you—keep your distance, Robel!”

“Are you insane?” gasped Robel. “The Council will demand the death penalty for this shooting! You—you’ve killed Vorsworg!”

“I know that,” Zanderharn replied. “I warned him what would happen. And as for the Council, I am through with them. Pull that knife out of the door!”

There came a sudden shuffling of hasty steps along the corridor outside, a knock, then the wheezing, excited voice of Otto:

“I heard a shot. Is everything all right?”

“One word from you, Robel,” hissed Zanderharn, “and you join Vorsworg!” Then, raising his voice, he called: “Yes, everything is all right! Go away—and stay away!”

Waiting until the shuffling steps of Otto had died away along the corridor, he spoke again to Robel.

“Pull that knife out of the door!” he ordered.

“But, comrade,” pleaded Robel, “what does this mean? Why are you acting like this?”

“I am acting like it because I choose to,” answered Zanderharn harshly. “I am through with you and the Council. Finished with it all, as I have just told you. Now, take that knife, or I shall give you what I have just given Vorsworg.”

Robel’s hesitation was but momentary. Moving to the door he tugged the knife out of the panel with shaking hand.

“Now cut Lauber’s bonds!” ordered Zanderharn.

Protest trembled on Robel’s lips. But he left the words unsaid. Moving to the chair, he severed the rope with which Lauber was bound.

“Now, Lauber,” ordered Zanderharn, “stand up! If possible I am going to get you out of here alive. But I can only do so with your assistance.”

“With that end in view,” Lauber responded, “I shall be only too happy to do anything you say.”

“Then pick up those pieces of rope,” ordered Zanderharn, “and tie Robel’s wrists and ankles. Then do the same to Kirsche. You had better hurry! Kirsche is showing signs of coming round.”

Turning to Robel, he said: “You will be well advised to submit quietly!” Robel did so. Covered by the gun in Zanderharn’s hand he had no other option. But when he was lying helpless on the floor, his wrists lashed together behind him, he could restrain himself no longer.

“We will get you for this!” he spat out venomously. “No matter where you are,

Zanderharn, we will find you.”

“Gag him!” said Zanderharn tersely. And Robel, gagged by his own handkerchief, was perforce silent. Lauber then turned his attention to Kirsche, who was beginning to stir restlessly, and a few moments later he, too, was lying bound, gagged, helpless.

“There remains only Otto to be dealt with,” said Zanderharn, “and I do not think we need anticipate much trouble from him. I will call him.”

“Wait!” Lauber moved closer. “Why have you done this thing?”

Zanderharn shrugged his shoulders, then answered:

“You, I know, think that we on whom you have been spying are traitors to the Fatherland, and as such, must necessarily be lost to all decency. In that you are wrong. I, for one, would never willingly stand idly by and see any man do to another what Vorseworn intended doing to you.”

“But do you realise that as long as this Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council remains in existence your life will be in the gravest danger?” said Lauber. “By saving me to-night, you have signed your own death warrant!”

“I am aware of that,” answered Zanderharn sombrely. “But what else could I have done?”

“Nothing, except to have stood in with them,” replied Lauber. He laid his hand for an instant on Zanderharn’s shoulder. “You will not find me ungrateful,” he went on quietly. “I heard you say to-night in this room that you were through with the Council.

“Even if you had not said it, I know—and you know—that you can never go back. I am not without influence, and what I can do to protect you from the vengeance of these late comrades of yours, I will do!”

“I thank you, Herr Lauber!” Zanderharn murmured. Then, briskly: “And now I will go and call Otto!” Quitting the room he walked along the corridor and, thrusting his head over the stair rail, bawled for the lodging-house keeper. Waiting until he heard the latter hastily ascending the stairs, he returned to the room.

“Here he comes!” he said, as shuffling footsteps came with haste along the corridor. Otto, driven by an overmastering curiosity, did not bother about knocking. He had been summoned to the room. That was good enough for him. So, pushing open the door, he waddled in.

Instantly he froze into a fat and terrified lump as the gun of Zanderharn was jammed hard into him.

“One word from you,” purred Zanderharn, “and it will be the last you will ever utter.”

A few minutes later—leaving the room in darkness and the fat Otto bound and helpless on the floor beside Robel and Kirsche—Lauber and Zanderharn passed out into the night.

“I am going straight to the military barracks,” said Lauber. “You will accompany me!” Zanderharn hung back, and replied:

“I am not overfond of military barracks, Herr Lauber.”

“You have nothing to fear, I assure you,” Lauber laughed. “I give you my word on that.”

Zanderharn objected no further, and Lauber hailed a taxi for himself and his

companion.

At the barracks he left Zanderharn in a bleak and bare waiting-room. He was gone a full half-hour, and when he returned it was with news.

“I have been in telephonic communication with the Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin,” he said. “Everyone suspected of being a member of the Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council in Königsberg is to be rounded up to-night by the military and the police and placed under close arrest. Your late comrades are, I am afraid, in for a bad time, my friend.”

“Yes, some of them undoubtedly are,” assented Zanderharn in a low voice. “But listen, Herr Lauber. You are too late. The movement has gained too deep a hold ever to be rooted out. Hourly it is growing. And although I no longer belong to it—nor ever will again—I warn you that the day will come when these men will rule Germany!”

Grim, prophetic words! For the day was indeed to come when, broken and humbled, her armies defeated and her Emperor a fugitive, Germany was to know for a time the rule of a power which had its origin in those secret meetings of the Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council.

But little thought of that was in Lauber’s mind as he laughed and said:

“Forget these dreams. You are well out of it all. And now, about yourself. I can provide a pass for you to any town you wish and, for your safety’s sake, I will provide an escort to take you to the station. Where do you wish to go?”

“I would naturally like to get as far away as possible,” replied Zanderharn, with engaging candour. “Somewhere near the Swiss frontier would suit me very well. I have an aunt in Mulhausen. May I go there?”

“Yes, certainly,” replied Lauber. “I will see about your pass at once, and detail your escort. I must warn you, however, not to be surprised if you receive periodical visits from the police whilst you are at Mulhausen.”

“I have nothing to fear,” declared Zanderharn stoutly. “I am through with the Council.”

It was the following day that Gregorius Raschel, Chief of the German Secret Service, arrived hotfoot at the military barracks of Königsberg. To his presence was summoned the commandant of the barracks and Herr Lauber.

“This raid—which was carried out last night,” said Raschel. “How many suspects were arrested?”

“One hundred and twenty-four, sir!” replied the commandant.

“Was there a man amongst them named Zanderharn?” rapped Raschel.

“There was a man of that name, sir. He saved me from horrible mutilation and death. In view of that we did not think it necessary to detain him. He left here last night for Mulhausen!” Lauber replied.

With an exclamation Raschel leaped to his feet.

“Left for Mulhausen!” he roared. “Left for Mulhausen! Oh, you fools—you fools! Do you know who that man was? He was the notorious English spy, Grey Shadow, whom we have been combing Germany to find!”

“Grey Shadow?” repeated the commandant incredulously, whilst Lauber could only

stare, speechless.

“Yes, Grey Shadow!” shouted Raschel. “Karl Hoffer, an agent of ours in England, got word through to us late last night that this Englishman, Grey Shadow, under the name of Zanderharn, was in Königsberg endeavouring to learn details of the confounded Soldiers’ and Workmen’s Council for the information of the British Government.

“And you, you fools, allowed him to slip through your fingers!”

“We may be able to apprehend him at Mulhausen!” suggested the commandant feebly.

“Mulhausen?” snarled Raschel. “You don’t think he’s going to Mulhausen, do you? No, we’ve lost him again, thanks to you stupid idiots! I shall have the pair of you detailed for service on the Western Front!

“Bunglers get shot there, sooner or later. Go on, get out of my sight, both of you. Grey Shadow here—here in these very barracks! And you lost him!”

With hands clasped behind his back, Raschel turned furiously and walked away.

CHAPTER VI
GREY SHADOW'S RAID

I
VILLAGE CRONIES

"I READ in my newspaper," said old Otto, setting down his tankard of ale, "that we are winning a great victory on the Somme."

One of his ancient cronies, seated with him on the bench outside the white-fronted inn, stared straight in front of him, puckering up his eyes against the rays of the setting sun.

"The newspapers," he announced quaveringly, "are not always right."

"The newspapers do not lie, Hans!" Otto protested. "Why should they? No, the truth is there in black and white for all to read. The Englanders have been thrust back from Gommecourt. Yes, and with great losses!"

"All along the Line their offensive has failed," took up old Mar. "At twenty thousand dead our official communiques estimate the Englanders' losses on the first day of the battle."

"Good, good!" mumbled old Hiob, rubbing his bony hands in glee. "Let us keep that up—let us kill all the Englanders—then the war will soon be over, and our sons and grandsons will come marching home again!"

There was silence then among these four aged men, who were old enough to realise to the full the awful tragedy of that ghastly struggle out there on the Western Front—old enough to know that if it went on much longer, few indeed would be the sons and grandsons left to come marching home again.

"It is the little ones," said Mar, his faded eyes on the evening beauty of the wooded slopes of the lovely Vosges—"the children—who are beginning to suffer now. Food is becoming very short!"

"That is the blockade," retorted Otto. "I was reading about it in my newspaper on Sunday. It is not war, this preventing of food ships coming to our coasts. Our Kaiser says the blockade must be broken at any cost. Our fleet——"

"Fleet!" cut in old Hans contemptuously. "You listen to me, Otto Haffer. And you, Mar. And you, Hiob. Our fleet lies safe in Kiel, when it should be out there on the North Sea. For years and years before this war—yes, even when I was a young man—we boasted about our German Navy.

"The finest in the world, we said. Well, why doesn't it sail against the Englander if it is so fine? Why does it lie skulking in harbour, its ships growing rusty, its sailors growing fat——"

"Hans, Hans, you must be silent!" interposed Otto. "You do not understand these things. They are tactics!"

"Tactics!" sneered old Hans. "Then they are tactics of which I would be ashamed had I anything to do with them. Mind you, I do not blame our admiral, Von Tirpitz. He, I

believe, would sail had he his way. No, I blame our Emperor. He is the one who should give the order to sail!”

“Our fleet will sail when the time is ripe,” mumbled old Hiob. “You will see!”

“Yes. And by that time our guns will be rusty and our ships out of date!” snarled Hans. “No! What I says is, sail at once against the Englander, and break his blockade of our coasts. Ah, how I wish I was the Emperor!

“If I was, I would go down to Kiel with a brass band in front of me and a brass band behind me and a brass band on each side of me, and I would say: ‘Delay no longer, my gallant sailors! Go! Sail against the Englander, and when you have sent his ships to the bottom of the sea, go and shell his coasts——’ ”

He broke off, staring at a man in field-grey uniform who had appeared round a bend in the road and was approaching the inn.

“Who is this that comes?” he demanded.

“He is a sergeant.” Otto screwed up his eyes in intent stare at the newcomer. “I do not know him.”

“No, nor I,” mumbled old Hiob. “He is a new one in these parts.”

With inquisitive interest, the four watched the sergeant’s approach.

He was fattish, this sergeant, with blue eyes, a fair moustache carefully trimmed and turned up at the corners, and a pink and white complexion, apparently well satisfied with himself and the world in general.

“Good evening, my olds!” he greeted them affably as he strode up.

“ ’Evening, sergeant!” quavered the four old men.

“Hola!” The sergeant raised his voice. “Hola, landlord!”

In response to the summons, fat Kaspar, the landlord, appeared in the doorway.

“Yes, mein sergeant?” he said obsequiously.

“A mug of ale!” ordered the sergeant. “And bring it outside here!” Seating himself on the bench beside the four cronies, he said: “Well, it is very pleasant here—very pleasant indeed!”

“Yes,” assented Otto. Then, on behalf of himself and his three cronies: “You are a stranger around these parts?”

“Yes,” the sergeant replied. “I and the Leutnant Farnkraut are in charge of the new company which has taken over the guard of the poison-gas laboratories three kilometres along the road. We are from the garrison of Munich.”

Otto and his three companions nodded. Curiosity was satisfied. In future, when the sergeant was seen in the village, they would be able to say:

“Yes, he is from Munich. He and the Leutnant Farnkraut are in charge of the guard at the poison-gas laboratories three kilometres along the road.”

Fat Kaspar waddling through the doorway of the inn, placed a brimming mug in front of the sergeant.

“Perhaps,” said the latter to Otto, “you and your three friends will join me in a mug of ale?”

“Yes, indeed!” assented Otto, with alacrity. Four mugs were rapidly drained and then

replenished.

“Your very good health, Sergeant——” said Otto, raising his mug and hesitating invitingly over the name.

“Grauch—Sergeant Grauch!” replied the other. His health was drunk, and, friendship having been thus cemented, Otto proceeded:

“It is very fortunate indeed that you have come along here, Sergeant Grauch. I, for one, am very pleased, for I can see that you are a man of sense, and I would like to ask you a question.

“The question is this,” continued Otto impressively. “Do you think our fleet should leave Kiel and sail against the Englanders? Old Hans, here, thinks it should. But we say that it should not sail until the time is ripe!”

“Well, now,” Sergeant Grauch began ponderously, “speaking as a thinking and intelligent man, I say——”

Exactly what he was going to say was left for the moment unsaid. For he broke off abruptly, staring at a ragged half-wit who, sprawled in the dust near the bench, was playing with a long and gleaming bayonet and crooning to himself.

“Donner und blitzen!” ejaculated the sergeant, his hand whipping to the empty scabbard at his belt. “How did he come by that?”

“It is your bayonet, eh?” chuckled Otto. “Ah, he is a clever one, is Baier! He can pick a pocket or steal a dinner better than anyone I know!”

“Oh, he can, can he?” demanded Sergeant Grauch ominously.

“Yes—but he means no harm,” explained Otto hastily. “Here, Baier”—he stretched out a gnarled and trembling hand—“the bayonet! Give me the bayonet, Baier. It is the good sergeant’s here. The bayonet, Baier, please!” Coaxingly he induced the half-wit to give up the bayonet.

“You must not be angry,” he said, wiping it on his sleeve and returning it to the sergeant. “Poor Baier means no harm.”

“Who is he?” demanded the sergeant, thrusting the bayonet back into its scabbard and eyeing the half-wit savagely.

“He is an outcast of the Bavarian gipsies,” explained Otto. “A creature of the woods and fields. It is sad to see one so afflicted as he. And none of us here in Amergau would think of doing him any hurt.”

“But you say he is an accomplished thief,” protested the sergeant.

“Yes, but just as a magpie is a thief,” replied Otto. “It is only mischief and hunger which makes him take things. He does not know he is doing any wrong.”

“Well, he had better be careful—very careful,” said the sergeant, “otherwise he will one day be getting himself into serious trouble.” He returned to the subject which had been under discussion.

“Now, about our fleet. You were asking me if I thought it should sail. Well, in my opinion, it should sail——”

“There!” exclaimed old Hans triumphantly.

“Wait!” Sergeant Grauch checked him with uplifted hand. “In my opinion,” he went on heavily, “it should sail. But not to attack the English fleet. No; it should endeavour to

elude the Englanders, and, having done so, it should proceed up the River Thames and bombard London from close range. That would be a decisive and glorious blow struck at the very heart of our enemy!”

The brilliancy and daring of this extraordinary plan left his four hearers temporarily speechless with admiration.

“That would be a very fine move indeed,” said Otto, who first found tongue. “I wonder it has not occurred to our Admiralty.”

“I wonder myself,” agreed Sergeant Grauch, stroking his moustache. “But there, it is a well-known fact that sailors have no brains. Now, if only some of our army leaders were placed in command at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven we should see some action, I assure you.”

Again he broke off, staring hard at the sprawling Baier.

“What is that he has got now?” he demanded fretfully.

Otto and his three cronies looked. Baier was playing with a small, oblong thing which gleamed silver in the rays of the setting sun. Bending down, Sergeant Grauch snatched it from the half-wit’s grimy hand.

“Huh!” he grunted, examining the article. “A card-case, eh? And a silver one. From whom has he stolen this, do you think?”

He opened the case. Inside were a dozen visiting-cards. Taking one out, Sergeant Grauch looked at it. And as he did so he tensed; his mouth opened, his eyes bulged.

For on the card were two words only. And they, in embossed print, held the sergeant’s amazed and incredulous stare: “GREY SHADOW.”

“‘Grey Shadow’!” he gasped. “‘Grey Shadow’!” Next instant he had become a man of action. Leaping to his feet, he bent down, gripped Baier roughly by the arm and jerked him upright.

“Where did you get this?” he shouted, thrusting the silver card-case under the half-wit’s nose. “Where did you get it? Come on, tell me! Where did you get it?” Violently he shook the terrified half-wit as though to jerk the truth out of him.

“Will you tell me where you got this thing?” he roared. “Come on—this thing I am holding—where did you get it?”

Baier cowered away, a shaking arm upraised as though to protect himself from a blow, his mouth twisting in pitiful and terrified appeal.

“You will get nothing out of him that way, sergeant,” said Otto, amazed at this happening.

“I want to know from whom he got this card-case!” thundered Sergeant Grauch. “I want to know—and I am going to know!”

Leaning heavily on his stick, old Otto rose.

“Let *me* try,” he said. Greatly daring, he pushed the sergeant’s hand away from Baier’s ragged arm.

“Baier,” he said gently, “no one is going to hurt you. Do you understand? The sergeant is not angry. He only wants to know where you got that thing he is holding. Come, tell me where you found it, Baier.”

But Baier paid no heed. He was shaking like a leaf in the wind, and his dilated, terror-filled eyes were on the sergeant.

“Come, Baier,” wheedled Otto, “tell the good sergeant what he wants to know. He did not mean to be angry with you, Baier. He will not hurt you. Look, you know me, Baier. Tell me where you got the pretty thing——A-ah!”

He gave an exclamation of dismay as Baier suddenly leapt backwards, turned, and sped away.

“After him!” bawled Sergeant Grauch. “After him!” He certainly had some hopes if he thought those four aged and infirm old men capable of joining in the pursuit of the fleeing Baier!

He set off himself, however, running strongly. But he might as well have pursued a deer as the fleet-footed Baier. And it was with helmet in hand and mopping at his perspiring brow that he eventually returned.

“He has got away!” he panted. “But you listen to me! The moment that half-wit shows his face again he is to be caught and handed over to me. That is an order—you understand? A military order! Anyone disobeying it will be shot—I promise you that! I will have a notice posted in the village to that effect before darkness falls!”

“But—but what does it all mean, sergeant?” quavered Otto.

“Never mind what it means!” barked the sergeant. “Who is the burgermeister of this village?”

“Me,” admitted Otto modestly. “I am. For thirty years I have held the post, come rain, come snow, and many are the conferences which I have attended at Munich—yes, and as far away as Leipzig——”

“All right!” cut in Sergeant Grauch roughly. “You can spare me details. You will, as burgermeister, at once organise a search-party and have that idiot captured. Every available man, woman, and child in the village will be enlisted in the search. You understand?”

“I will send soldiers to assist you the moment I return to the camp. The search will go on all night and all day until the half-wit is captured. He must be caught. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sergeant.”

“Very good, then!” rapped Sergeant Grauch. “Now find a conveyance to take me back to the camp with all possible speed!”

II

THE SEARCH-PARTY

Three kilometres along the road from Amergau, within a barbed wire enclosure and guarded by a company of thirty soldiers, were six long, corrugated iron huts, given over to the manufacture of poison-gas for use on the Western Front.

At these huts, half an hour later, there arrived Sergeant Grauch, seated stiffly upright on the hard cushions of an ancient and broken-sprunged cabriolet.

Scarce waiting for the bony animal between the shafts to come to a halt, the sergeant leapt to the road, dashed past the astonished sentry at the gate, and, in a fine state of fluster and perspiration, presented himself in front of his officer, the thin and monocled Leutnant

Farnkraut, who was seated writing at a blanket-covered table in the orderly office.

“Herr Leutnant!” he gasped. “What do you think?”

The Leutnant Farnkraut adjusted his monocle.

“I think,” he announced coldly, “that you look extraordinarily greasy and unpleasant.”

“No, no—you misunderstand me, Herr Leutnant!” panted Sergeant Grauch. “Who do you think is in the vicinity?”

Leutnant Farnkraut laid down his pen.

“I have no doubt, Sergeant Grauch,” he said stiffly, “that your riddles are both entertaining and amusing. But when I wish to hear them I shall send for you. At the moment I am busy.”

Frenziedly Sergeant Grauch gesticulated with his hands.

“No, no, Herr Leutnant!” he protested. “I am not presuming to ask riddles. Nor am I endeavouring to amuse. I have just made a discovery of the most colossal importance. A notorious English spy is in this district!”

The Leutnant Farnkraut started and dropped his monocle.

“A what?” he exclaimed.

“A notorious English spy!” proclaimed the sergeant vibrantly. “No other, in fact, than the infamous Grey Shadow!”

The Leutnant Farnkraut gripped the table and half rose to his feet. Then slowly he reseated himself and readjusted his monocle.

“You have been to the village?” he said. “To the inn?”

“Yes. That is where I learned about the presence of this spy. At the inn I met an idiot _____”

“And you got drinking together, eh?” interposed the Leutnant Farnkraut. “And he told you about this English spy, eh? And you, being also an idiot, believed him? And you have come running back here to tell me, thinking that I, too, will believe it. Not being an idiot, however, like you and your friend, I do not believe it.”

“But, Herr Leutnant, if you will permit me to explain——”

“I will hear your explanation in the morning. In fact, I am vastly looking forward to it. At the moment, believing you have been drinking, I advise you to go to bed.”

“No, no, Herr Leutnant!” protested Sergeant Grauch. “You wrong me, you do, indeed. Just one mouthful of ale has passed my lips. No more, I swear it! And it was when I had taken that mouthful that I discovered that the idiot of whom I am speaking had stolen my bayonet.”

“But your bayonet is in its scabbard,” pointed out the Leutnant Farnkraut patiently.

“Yes; I got it back,” said Sergeant Grauch. “I made him restore it to me at once. There were some men of the village there, including the burgermeister, and they told me that the idiot, who is known as Baier, is an extremely clever pickpocket and thief. He must be clever, Herr Leutnant, or how could he have stolen my bayonet without my knowing it?”

“How, indeed?” murmured the leutnant. “Proceed!”

“Well, when I had taken my bayonet from him,” went on Sergeant Grauch, his voice trembling with eagerness, “he commenced to play with a silver card-case. I took that from

him also. And when I opened it, what do you think I found, Herr Leutnant? What do you think I found?"

"Well, what?"

"That it contained a dozen or more cards bearing the name Grey Shadow!" announced Sergeant Grauch triumphantly. "Such cards, Herr Leutnant, as we have been given to understand this infamous spy has frequently left at the scenes of his exploits."

There was a moment of silence, in which the leutnant stared hard and unwaveringly at Sergeant Grauch before inquiring:

"You have the card-case, of course, and the cards?"

"Yes, here is the case, Herr Leutnant." Sergeant Grauch produced it and handed it over. "The cards are inside."

As he examined the pieces of pasteboard bearing the name "GREY SHADOW," Leutnant Farnkraut's expression changed.

"Where is the half-wit from whom you obtained these cards?" he rapped, looking up at the sergeant.

"Why, he—he ran away before I could place him under arrest," admitted Sergeant Grauch lamely. "But"—hastily—"I have instructed the burgermeister of Amergau to mobilise a search-party and find him without delay. I have promised, also, to send a detachment of soldiers to assist in the search."

"Detail the soldiers at once!" ordered the leutnant angrily. "It was exceedingly stupid of you to let the half-wit get away! Do you realise, you fool, that our High Command has placed a price of fifty thousand marks on the head of this Englishman, Grey Shadow?"

"Yes, I know that, Herr Leutnant," assented Sergeant Grauch. "You think, then, the cards are genuine?"

"To all appearances they are genuine," rapped Farnkraut. "That half-wit must be found at all costs! Get the soldiers off to the village at once. Detail twelve men, and go with them yourself!"

"Very good, Herr Leutnant!" The sergeant's heels clicked together as he came rigidly to the salute. Then, turning, he strode from the room.

III

"GOT YOU!"

All through the night unremitting search was made for Baier by the soldiers and the villagers. But by mid-morning of the following day he was still unfound.

"It is these villagers of yours," grumbled Sergeant Grauch to old Otto. "They are not trying. I believe they are half in sympathy with this half-wit. By thunder, if I thought anyone was hiding him I'd have him shot without trial!"

"None would hide Baier," old Otto quavered. "The military are feared too much for that. We like the poor creature, I know, and would not wish to see him come to any hurt. But our liking for him is not so strong as our fear of you and your authority."

"Well, then," demanded Sergeant Grauch, "why cannot he be found? Has he left the district, do you think?"

“That I do not know,” answered Otto. “But if he is still in the vicinity I think I know why he cannot be found.”

“Oh, you do, do you?” exclaimed the sergeant suspiciously. “Then *why* cannot he be found?”

“Because ever since last evening,” answered Otto, “you and your soldiers, in your grey uniforms, have been about in the village and in the woods.”

“Well, and what of that?” demanded Sergeant Grauch, staring.

“Do you not see?” explained Otto. “Everyone was kind to Baier until you, in your grey uniform, came along to the inn last night and gave him a very bad fright. He will now connect every grey uniform he sees with that fright.

“To him a grey uniform will mean unkindness. He will fear the grey uniform. I am certain, mein sergeant, that he will never show himself so long as a grey uniform remains in the village.”

“H’m!” Sergeant Grauch grunted thoughtfully. “There might be something in that.” He fixed his eyes on old Otto. “Well, what do you suggest we do?” he demanded.

“It seems to me,” said Otto slowly, “that the best thing you can do is to withdraw your soldiers to the camp. When you have gone perhaps Baier will show himself. Then I will get hold of him and hand him over to you.”

“No,” said Sergeant Grauch; “I will not do that! I will not withdraw the soldiers, I tell you, burgermeister. I do not trust you villagers overmuch. I will think of some other plan.”

He took a turn up the road, brow puckered in thought. Then suddenly he wheeled, confronting Otto.

“I have it!” he announced triumphantly. “I know what we will do. I and my men will don civilian attire. As you say, when this Baier of yours sees no grey uniforms about he may show himself. Then I and my soldiers will get him!”

So the order went forth for the twelve soldiers under the command of Sergeant Grauch to find civilian attire for themselves. They found it, but only after much difficulty. For these were hard times, and the villagers of Amergau had always been so very poor, with scarce enough clothes for themselves, let alone any to lend.

However, shortly after midday the squad paraded in sabots, frayed pantaloons, and ragged blue blouses. Only Sergeant Grauch was still in uniform. Being somewhat particular, and imbued with the rigorous cleanliness of barracks, he had failed to find anything in the way of dress which was not, in his opinion, only fit for the incinerator.

“And, in any case,” he informed old Otto, “I cannot dress as my men are dressed. I must be attired in such a manner as to be readily recognised by them and by you of the village. As burgermeister of Amergau I call upon you to find suitable civilian garments for me!”

“Have you tried Kaspar, at the inn?” asked Otto.

“No, of course not, stupid!” snapped the sergeant. “He is so fat, that Kaspar. His clothes would never fit me.”

“Yes, but sometimes tourists stay with him,” explained Otto. “Who knows but what he has some discarded garments left by them?”

“It is possible,” admitted Sergeant Grauch dubiously. “We will ask.”

They proceeded to the inn, and, on hearing of what they wanted, the fat Kaspar beamed.

“Yes, yes, I have garments,” he assured them. “Some very fine and very expensive ones. Wait, I will bring them.”

He disappeared upstairs, to return a few minutes later laden with a miscellaneous assortment of wear.

“See,” he beamed, dumping the things on the trestle table, “here are three overcoats of very fine cloth. A trifle patched, maybe in places, but still very serviceable. And here are a pair of trousers. Striped ones, yes. They were left here by a Frenchman before the war.”

He tossed aside a few shirts and odd socks, then proudly produced a complete suit of pepper-and-salt-coloured plus-fours.

“See,” he exclaimed excitedly, “a whole suit of the famous English plus-fours left with me by an English lord before the war! There, mein sergeant, how will they do?”

With a smile which was closely allied to a simper, Sergeant Grauch stroked his moustache.

“They belonged, those clothes, to an English lord, you say?” he demanded.

“Yes, yes,” assented Kaspar eagerly; “a most noble lord indeed! Ah, never will I forget his last words to me. ‘I do not want these plus-fours any longer, Kaspar,’ he said, ‘so you have them. And if ever you want to give your friends a treat, just put them on.’ ”

“Then they must be good, for him to say that,” announced Sergeant Grauch. “I will wear them. Conduct me to a room where I can change, and find me a pair of boots. It will spoil my disguise for me to wear my marching boots.”

“Wait!” said Otto, as Sergeant Grauch, with the plus-four suit over his arm, commenced to follow Kaspar towards the staircase. “You will require a hat. With a fine suit like that a hat is very necessary.”

“Yes,” nodded Kaspar, “that is true.”

There followed an earnest discussion as to the type of hat required. It was Kaspar who had the last word.

“The English lord did not wear the plus-fours when he was here,” he said, “so we have nothing to guide us on this question of a hat. But me, I do not require guiding. I have seen pictures of English lords, and they all wear high silk hats. A high silk hat is the necessary hat for the plus-fours. Otto, you are the burgermeister, and you have a high hat which you can lend the sergeant.”

“Go and get it!” ordered Sergeant Grauch.

Otto departed hotfoot, to return with the somewhat ancient high hat which he wore on civic occasions.

“There!” he said. “Now the sergeant is complete!”

It was some short time later that Sergeant Grauch emerged from the inn. Instead of his uniform he was wearing the suit of plus-fours. On his head, too small by several sizes, the top-hat of Otto was precariously perched.

His marching boots had been discarded in favour of ordinary boots, from which issued the tops of a pair of grey army socks, leaving an expanse of leg bare as far as the knee. And emanating from him as he walked was a strong and pungent odour of camphor.

Convinced, however, that he was dressed quite after the fashion of an English lord, Sergeant Grauch was quite satisfied with himself and his appearance. And throughout the afternoon he and his men lounged as inconspicuously as possible about the main street of the village.

No Baier appeared, however, and with the evening Sergeant Grauch retreated to the bench outside the inn, where he joined Otto and his aged cronies.

“If you ask me,” he said, after an hour or more of fruitless discussion, “I think the half-wit has left the district——”

Abruptly he broke off, staring with incredulous and bulging eyes at a ragged, shambling figure which at that moment had rounded the inn from the rear, and was standing, poised for instant flight, a few feet away.

“Baier!” ejaculated Otto.

“Be quiet!” hissed Grauch.

With fingers clenched tightly round the handle of his beer mug, and his ridiculous hat perched at a rakish angle, he sat as though frozen.

Mouth a-slobber and his whole body pitifully a-shake, Baier took one cautious step forward, then another.

Not a man on the bench moved. Another step forward Baier took, sliding his foot slowly forward through the white dust.

Then suddenly the sergeant pounced. With an unintelligible cry of terror, Baier leapt back and turned to flee. But he was too late. The arms of Sergeant Grauch were round him and the voice of Sergeant Grauch cried triumphantly:

“Got you!”

IV

A SEALED ENVELOPE

It took long and patient effort on the part of Otto and Kaspar, inside the inn, to soothe Baier from out of his state of wild, unreasoning terror. But at length Otto stepped out into the dusk and accosted Sergeant Grauch, who, having changed again into his uniform, was pacing restlessly up and down.

“He is quite quiet now,” Otto said, “and has promised to show Kaspar and me where he found the card-case.”

“You are sure he understands what you want of him?” demanded the sergeant.

“Yes, I think he understands,” replied Otto. “Leave him to Kaspar and me, and I think we will manage to get him to show us the place, wherever it is. But you and your men must keep out of sight.”

“We will follow quietly, and at a distance,” promised the sergeant.

“All right. But be careful!” warned Otto. There was no sign of Sergeant Grauch nor any of his men when, with Baier between them old Otto and Kaspar quitted the inn.

They walked slowly, that strange trio, Otto and Kaspar talking quietly but continually to the poor wretch with them. And always their talk was of the card-case—the pretty thing—the little flat box which Baier had found.

Skilfully they kept the thing uppermost in his poor crazed brain. Where had he found it? He would show old Otto—eh? And the good Kaspar who gave him food—he would show him also? Perhaps there would be more pretty little flat boxes to be found, eh? It was along this way, was it?

Once Otto turned his head. Away back there in the deepening dusk he saw a shadowy line of men silently following in single file.

At length they came, those three who led, to the gates of a big house situated half a kilometre from the village and standing in its own grounds.

“Not in here, surely?” whispered Kaspar to Otto, as Baier halted. “This is the house of Herr Lukter!”

But it was in there. That much Baier plainly indicated, pointing with a shaking hand up the dark and deserted drive.

“I will speak with the sergeant,” said Otto suddenly. “Take Baier a little farther along the road.”

Kaspar obeyed, moving off into the dusk, and Otto retraced his steps until he came to where Sergeant Grauch had halted with his men.

“Baier says he found the card-case at the house of Herr Lukter along the road there, sergeant,” said Otto. “But whether he means that he found it in the grounds, or stole it from someone in the house, I do not know.”

“That may not matter so very much!” said Sergeant Grauch harshly. “What I am interested in is the fact that he found it there—somewhere. Who is this Herr Lukter?”

“Why, you know, do you not?” quavered Otto. “He is the eminent scientist from Halle, who has come here to work in conjunction with the poison-gas laboratories at which you are stationed.”

“Ah, him?” said Sergeant Grauch softly. “He has not been here long, has he?”

“It will be three weeks to-morrow since he arrived at Amergau.”

“I am going to see him,” Sergeant Grauch announced. “Give me that card-case!”

Otto handed it over. Slipping it into his pocket, Sergeant Grauch rapped out an order. With his men following, he marched along the road, turned in at the drive gates, and strode up to the front door of Herr Lukter’s house.

“Eight of you surround the house,” he ordered, “and four of you remain here with me!”

There was no light in any of the windows at the front of the house, and there was an appreciable wait before an untidy-looking manservant appeared in response to the sergeant’s thunderous knock.

“Is Herr Lukter at home?” demanded Sergeant Grauch.

“He is,” replied the manservant. “But I am afraid he is engaged.”

“That does not matter to me!” retorted Sergeant Grauch roughly. “Tell him I wish to see him at once!”

Leaving one man on guard at the door, with the remaining three at his heels, he pushed his way past the manservant into a dimly illumined hallway. And there he waited whilst the manservant vanished upstairs, to reappear a few minutes later in the wake of a

sombrely clad man with a trim and pointed beard and pale features.

“Are you Herr Lukter?” demanded Sergeant Grauch.

“That is my name!” returned the other coldly. “Perhaps you will kindly explain the meaning of this intrusion?”

“I will in a moment!” retorted Sergeant Grauch. “How many men are there besides yourself in this house?”

“There are three.” Herr Lukter raised his eyebrows at the question. “My manservant and two plain-clothes guards provided for me by the Government.”

“You will assemble them, please, and at once!” ordered Sergeant Grauch.

Without protest, Herr Lukter turned and spoke to the manservant, who again disappeared, and returned with two men in civilian clothes.

“Now,” said Sergeant Grauch grimly, “have any of you ever seen this before?”

He thrust forward the silver card-case. There was a moment of silence, then Herr Lukter spoke quietly.

“Yes,” he said, “it is mine!”

“Hah!” barked Sergeant Grauch triumphantly. “You admit it, then? When did you lose it?”

“A few days ago,” answered Herr Lukter. “I was out for a walk, and I missed it when I returned!”

“Would you be astonished if I told you that your pocket was picked?” demanded Grauch.

“By that village idiot?” exclaimed Herr Lukter. “No, I would not be surprised! He shambled alongside of me for some distance before I could persuade him to go away!”

“And you still say your name is Herr Lukter?” the sergeant insisted.

“Yes, that is my name.”

Sergeant Grauch stepped forward and gripped him roughly by the shoulder.

“Herr Lukter is not your name!” he rasped. “You are Grey Shadow, the British spy, and you and your three associates are under arrest!”

“You’re mad!” Lukter cried, and tried to wrench himself free.

“No, I am not mad!” laughed Sergeant Grauch grimly. “You’ve gone a bit too far this time, my fine spy. Masquerading as Herr Lukter so that you could learn the secrets of our poison-gas laboratories along the road! Clever, eh? But not clever enough!” He turned to his men. “We will take them to the camp!” he rapped.

The inn, the common meeting-place of the villagers when the day’s work was done, was crowded that night with excited folk eagerly discussing the sensational events of the past twenty-four hours.

Into their midst, from out of the night, shambled Baier, his head lolling foolishly. Into the gnarled hand of old Otto he thrust a dirty, crumpled envelope, sealed and addressed in pencil to Sergeant Grauch. Then he was gone, shambling out into the night again and leaving Otto staring in surprise at the envelope.

“I shall take it myself,” announced Otto.

His four prisoners safe in the guard-room, Sergeant Grauch was with the Lieutenant Farnkraut when Otto arrived with the sealed envelope. Briefly the old man explained how it had come into his possession.

“I wonder what can be in it?” said Sergeant Grauch, ripping the envelope open. “He is a queer one, that Baier——”

He broke off, staring with protruding eyes at the sheet of notepaper which he had taken from the envelope, and gasped.

“What is it?” demanded Lieutenant Farnkraut sharply.

Sergeant Grauch made no answer. Impatiently the lieutenant snatched the letter from him. Adjusting his monocle, he read:

“DEAR SERGEANT GRAUCH,—Very many thanks for taking Herr Lukter, his two guards, and his manservant away to the camp this evening and thus providing me with the opportunity I have been seeking of raiding his house and taking possession of all his notebooks, papers, and poison-gas formula.

“How well you have played into my hands, dear Sergeant Grauch. But you have acted exactly as I expected you would. It is, you see, so very much a part of my job to endeavour to judge the probable actions and reactions of men.

“Please do not suspect, nor be harsh with, old Otto or any of the villagers. They knew me only as Baier. For I was here, my dear Sergeant Grauch, many months ago when the laboratories were first being built. Since that time, with the end in view of one day obtaining valuable information, I have come here as often as possible in order to establish Baier as a harmless lunatic in the eyes of the villagers.

“But the role is played out. And to-night, sad though this parting must be, I am leaving Amergau, never to return.

“Yours sincerely,
“GREY SHADOW.”

Lieutenant Farnkraut looked up from the letter.

“I can see,” he said icily, “a big, fat, stupid sergeant appearing either in front of a court martial or polluting with his presence a Front Line trench on the Western Front!”

CHAPTER VII
CAPTURE OF GREY SHADOW

I

“A SLIPPERY CUSTOMER!”

At the railway station of the Russian town of Mittau the noise and clamour was deafening, the shriek of escaping steam mingling with the brazen clang of bells and the shouting of excited men.

German soldiers were everywhere, great-coated, fur-capped, rifles slung on shoulders, leaving for the Western Front. But some of them, luckier than their comrades, were bound for home on a few hours' leave.

For Russia had collapsed. Riven by internal discord, the mighty armies of the Czar were a fleeing rabble. Here, on the Eastern Front, the War was over. After weary months of bitter cold and cruel privations the field-grey hosts of Germany had gained a great victory.

What was it the Englishmen and the Frenchmen called their late ally, Russia? The Russian steam-roller! One which was to have moved remorselessly forward, crushing beneath its weight the grey-clad armies of the Fatherland.

Well, the “steam-roller” had ceased to function. It was broken—dismantled—irretrievably smashed. Russia was definitely out of the War. And, released by her collapse, regiment upon regiment, corps upon corps daily boarded the long troop trains which thundered day and night across Germany en route for the Western Front.

Here at Mittau, on this cold, grey afternoon, all was bustle and confusion. Refreshment-rooms, waiting-rooms, and platforms were crowded with laughing and joking soldiers. Grim-faced sergeants and non-commissioned officers literally fought their way through the press of men, herding, shepherding, bawling out orders.

In the first-class waiting-rooms set apart for them, and in the white, well-heated saloon coaches of the trains, long-coated officers, helmeted and with revolver-holsters slung on their outer leather belts, stood chatting and exchanging greetings and farewells.

Out in the goods yards, under the supervision of armed guards, sullen and bearded Russian prisoners loaded the wagons of the long food and ammunition trains, their numbed hands chafed with the incessant toil. For, in addition to every man, every box of stores, every shell and cartridge was urgently needed on the Western Front.

One platform only of the station was comparatively clear, and that was the one set apart for the arrival of trains. Alongside this platform, as grey afternoon was merging into dusk, there clanked a train from Eastern Prussia.

From a first-class saloon coach two civilians in round fur caps and heavy fur coats stepped down to the platform. That they were expected was evident, for two long-coated staff officers stepped hurriedly forward from the barrier to meet them.

“Herr Raschel?” said one of the officers inquiringly.

“That is me!” the taller of the two civilians responded. “This”—he indicated his companion—“is Major Falkenheim, my secretary.”

Without delay the four passed through the barrier and out of the station to a waiting limousine, in which they were whirled through the crowded streets to the Petrokoff Barracks.

Alighting, Herr Raschel and the civilian-attired Major Falkenheim were piloted by their escort into the great gaunt building, along a stone corridor, and into the presence of General Laufer, German commandant of Mittau.

“The man about whom we communicated with you,” rapped Raschel, the first brief greetings over, “you have had him watched?”

“Yes,” the white-haired General Laufer answered.

“And what have you to report?”

“Nothing—simply nothing, Herr Raschel. If you suspect this man of being other than he professes to be, I am afraid you are making a mistake.”

“I never make a mistake,” Raschel retorted. “And it is because I never make a mistake that I am to-day head of the German Secret Service. This man in question—Karl Erberhard, as he calls himself—is not the Karl Erberhard, War correspondent of the *Berlin Chronik*, that he is pretending to be.

“No, the real Karl Erberhard is at this moment with our troops on the Somme. That is a fact which has been established beyond all possible question or doubt.”

“Then who,” demanded General Laufer, “do you imagine this Karl Erberhard, here in Mittau, to be?”

Raschel leaned forward, his gloved hand resting on the blanket-covered table in front of which he was standing.

“I will tell you who I suspect him of being,” he said harshly. “I suspect him of being the notorious English spy, Grey Shadow!”

“Grey Shadow?” repeated General Laufer sharply.

“Yes,” reiterated Raschel; “the man on whose head our high command has placed a price of fifty thousand marks.”

“But what could such a one as he want in Mittau?” demanded General Laufer. “The War on this front is over—there can no longer be information of value to be learned here _____”

“That is all you know!” cut in Raschel. “If this impostor is Grey Shadow—and it is because I am convinced he is that I have come here in person—then you can take it from me that he has come to Mittau for some definite and sinister purpose.”

“And what do you propose to do?” inquired General Laufer.

“I am going to have him arrested and questioned,” responded Raschel. “You know where we can find him, of course?”

“Of course,” assented the general. “He has never been out of our sight since your intelligence bureau first communicated with us. He is staying at the Klaus Hotel, a favourite resort of War correspondents and newspaper men.”

“Then you will detail an escort at once,” commanded Raschel. “Have him arrested and brought here. I will interrogate him at seven o’clock this evening. And if he is the man I

think he is, he will be facing a firing-party in your barrack square within forty-eight hours!”

“But be warned, Herr General,” Major Falkenheim spoke for the first time. “If this man is indeed Grey Shadow, then he is a slippery customer. Tell the escort to guard him well, or he will elude them even when the handcuffs are on his wrists.”

“Yes,” growled Raschel, “I am holding you personally responsible, Laufer, for his capture and safe custody!”

II

“I AM GREY SHADOW!”

In his room on the first floor of the Klaus Hotel the man who called himself Karl Erberhard, and whose arrest Raschel had ordered, was seated, writing busily. The curtains were drawn across the windows and the light had been switched on, for dusk was deepening into night.

A sudden knock at the door caused the man to pause in his writing, pen poised and head inclined. For a moment he sat motionless. Then, pushing back his chair, he rose. Quickly he crossed to the door, opened it, and stood staring at a long, blue-barrelled automatic which, in the hand of a German sergeant, was pointing unwaveringly at his chest.

“Put your hands up!” rasped the sergeant. “You are under arrest!”

The eyes of Karl Erberhard travelled slowly past the sergeant to the eight soldiers grouped behind him with rifles and fixed bayonets, and slowly his hands crept above his head.

“What is the meaning of this?” he demanded angrily.

“Just what I say,” retorted the sergeant. “You are under arrest!”

From the corner of his mouth he gave an order. In response, one of the soldiers stepped forward, reached up, and handcuffs clicked shut on Erberhard’s wrists.

“Now you can put your hands down,” said the sergeant, holstering his revolver. “But I warn you, try to escape, and you will get either a bayonet or a bullet!”

“But what is the meaning of it?” burst out Erberhard. “Why am I being arrested, and by whose orders?”

“By the orders of General Laufer, Military Commandant of Mittau!” snapped the sergeant. “And that is all I know about it!”

“Then General Laufer will find himself in serious trouble,” began Erberhard savagely. “The newspaper which I represent is very powerful, and General Laufer will be called upon to explain——”

“Silence!” barked the sergeant.

He wheeled on his men.

“Guelen, and you, Weiss, remain here on guard,” he commanded. “Allow no one to enter the room!”

Another order, and the remaining six soldiers closed in about their prisoner, and with him in their midst they passed down the stairs and out into the street.

The Petrokoff Barracks were situated only a few streets away. On arriving there, Erberhard, despite his protests and his demands to be taken at once in front of the commandant, was lodged in a cell.

There he remained until seven o'clock that same evening, when he was taken from the cell and, heavily guarded, was marched to a room in which General Laufer, Herr Raschel, and Major Falkenheim were seated at a paper-strewn table.

"Now, look here, sir," he burst out angrily, "I demand an immediate explanation of the outrageous treatment and insult to which I am being subjected! I have been arrested, handcuffed like a felon, and marched in public through the streets of Mittau.

"Allow me to tell you, sir, that the powerful newspaper which I have the honour to represent will not tolerate such treatment of me——"

"One moment, one moment!" cut in Raschel, with uplifted hand. "We have had you brought here, Herr Erberhard, in order to ask you one or two questions. Now, then. Firstly, is Karl Erberhard your real name?"

"It is. My identification papers prove that!"

"Quite, quite! And you are War correspondent of the *Berlin Chronik*?"

"I am!"

"Then I am afraid, Herr Erberhard," said Raschel, "that I have some rather disquieting news for you. Someone is impersonating you on the Western Front!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"It is quite true," went on Raschel. "A Karl Erberhard is at present on the Somme with our Seventeenth Army. He claims to be War correspondent of the *Berlin Chronik*. This is strange, is it not, Herr Erberhard?"

Raschel leaned forward across the table. His eyes were fixed intently on the prisoner's face.

"Now, both of you cannot be Karl Erberhard," he said softly. "One of you must be an impostor. I wonder which of you is the impostor?"

The prisoner shrugged his shoulders.

"This man on the Somme obviously," he answered.

"Yes, yes," replied Raschel. "That is what you say. But unfortunately, my friend, the owners of the *Berlin Chronik* say different. They claim that the Karl Erberhard on the Somme is the real Karl Erberhard!

"They say that they sent their War correspondent, Karl Erberhard, to the Somme, and they disclaim all knowledge of any Karl Erberhard here at Mittau. That appears to place you in a somewhat unfortunate position, does it not?"

"It does!"

"Have you any explanation to offer?"

"Only that there must be an extraordinary misunderstanding somewhere."

"You still claim, then, that you are the real Karl Erberhard?"

"Yes."

"Then how"—and of a sudden Raschel's voice was harsh and strident—"do you account for these things having been found in your possession—in the lining of your

suitcase at the hotel?"

With the words he flung on to the table, under the eyes of the prisoner, a half-dozen pieces of pasteboard of visiting-card size bearing two words in black, embossed lettering:

“GREY SHADOW.”

Not a muscle of the prisoner’s face moved.

“Well, how do you account for it?” shouted Raschel. “We are waiting. How do you account for it?”

Something akin to grim amusement crept into the prisoner’s eyes.

“How do you?” he asked.

Raschel leapt to his feet, crashing a clenched fist to the table.

“How do I?” he roared, eyes blazing. “How do I account for it? Well, I will tell you. You are Grey Shadow. You are that confounded English spy. Do you deny it!”

There was a moment of tense silence. General Laufer and Major Falkenheim sat rigid and motionless. How would the prisoner answer?

“No, I do not deny it,” he spoke in drawling tones. “I am Grey Shadow!”

“I knew it!” Triumphantly the words leapt from Raschel’s lips, and gloatingly he surveyed the prisoner. “So we have got you at last, eh?” he gibed. “Got you at last, my fine Englander! And do you know how we have got you?”

“By chance, I should imagine,” drawled Grey Shadow.

“Yes,” retorted Raschel, “by chance——”

Abruptly he bit the words off, flushing angrily. He had not intended to admit so much. But, having made the admission, he continued wrathfully:

“By chance it was. An officer, here in Mittau, wrote to a friend of his attached to the intelligence bureau in the Wilhelmstrasse. In the course of his letter he remarked quite casually that Karl Erberhard, the noted War correspondent of the *Berlin Chronik* was in Mittau.

“The recipient of the letter happened to mention this fact in the Journalist Club in Berlin. He was at once contradicted, and was told by a colleague of Erberhard’s that Erberhard was on the Somme. You follow me?”

“We became rather curious,” proceeded Raschel, “as to the identity of this Karl Erberhard at Mittau. We caused inquiries to be made. The *Berlin Chronik*, as I have already told you, disclaimed all knowledge of any Karl Erberhard in Mittau. From that moment your arrest was certain and inevitable.”

“As a spy, of course.”

“Yes, as a spy!” blazed Raschel. “And you can believe it or not, but slowly the conviction grew on me that this Karl Erberhard in Mittau—you—was none other than Grey Shadow!”

He jabbed a quivering forefinger at the prisoner.

“And shall I tell you how I knew you were Grey Shadow?” he continued. “It was because this masquerade was so typical of you. The average spy does not parade himself—flaunt himself—before the public gaze. But you—you have always done that. In your

very bravado has lain your safety—your freedom from suspicion.

“First as adjutant to General Putz, at Buhl Aerodrome; then prison camp photographer at Landshut; then Zanderharn, the revolutionary firebrand of Königsberg. Those are but three of your roles. Well, you have played your last!”

He turned and spoke for a few moments with General Laufer and Major Falkenheim.

“You will be tried, in these barracks, at eleven o’clock in the morning,” he said harshly, turning again to Grey Shadow. “But”—vindictively—“I can tell you now what the verdict and sentence will be.”

“So can I,” said Grey Shadow evenly.

“Insolence will not help you,” interposed Major Falkenheim coldly.

“I am afraid, sir,” returned Grey Shadow courteously, “that nothing will help me now.”

“That is true—nothing,” broke in Raschel roughly. “There is one question, however, which I wish to ask you before you are taken back to your cell. With what purpose did you come to Mittau?”

“Must I tell you?” Grey Shadow hesitated.

“You must. I demand it.”

“Well, then,” explained Grey Shadow, with engaging frankness, “if you must know, I came to Mittau to try to make an honest pfennig by selling picture postcards of comic soldiers.”

“Comic soldiers?” repeated Raschel, staring.

“Yes,” assented Grey Shadow suavely. “A series of photographs taken on the steps of the palace of Potsdam. These postcards never fail, my dear sir, to produce roars of laughter. Now”—briskly—“I could do you half a dozen of them at ten pfennigs each. The usual price, I may say, is twenty-five pfennigs——”

“*Silence!*” roared Raschel, his face livid with rage. “How dare you try to make a fool of me, you insolent dog?”

He broke off, speechless with passion, his hands gripping the table until the knuckles showed white. Then he slumped down into his chair.

“Take—take him back to his cell,” he choked. “General Laufer, accompany the guard and see that this pig of a spy is safely lodged!”

The trial of Grey Shadow at eleven o’clock the following morning on charges of espionage was brief. It was, indeed, a mere matter of form. For the prisoner had already admitted his identity, and the evidence against him on count after count was overwhelming.

In spite of repeated questioning, however, by General Laufer, president of the court, Grey Shadow refused to say anything as to his real mission in Mittau.

“It is hopeless,” grunted Raschel at length. “I suggest that the business of the court be proceeded with.”

And thus it was that General Laufer eventually addressed the prisoner in grave and measured tones.

“The charges against you,” he said, “have been fully and most conclusively proved. It

is, therefore, the sentence of this court that you be shot in the barrack square at dawn tomorrow!”

Erect between his guards, Grey Shadow heard unmoved this sentence of death. And when he had been taken back to his cell his composure did not desert him.

“It is not nerve,” growled Raschel impatiently when General Laufer commented on this at lunch. “Always he has known what his fate must be were he to be captured. And, like every other spy, he has steeled himself to meet it. In the game which he has played he has gambled with his life—and lost. That is all there is to it.”

“Well, I, for one,” retorted General Laufer, “admire the manner in which he has lost.”

And at six o’clock that evening, accompanied by his aide-de-camp, the slim and elegant Hauptmann von Ruhl, General Laufer paid Grey Shadow a visit in his cell.

He was a humane man, and there was a certain pity in his eyes as they rested on this Englishman who was to die with the dawn.

“Is there anything you require in the way of food, tobacco, or reading matter?” he asked.

“Nothing, I thank you, Herr General,” answered Grey Shadow.

“As is customary in certain cases where arrest and subsequent execution are to be made public through the columns of the world’s newspapers,” went on General Laufer a trifle stiffly, “you are permitted to write two letters of farewell to any friends or relatives you may have in England. These letters will be forwarded to their destinations through either the Swiss or Danish ambassadors.

“You will leave both envelopes open and will, of course, first pledge your honour to put nothing in the letters in the nature of information which can be used by your Government, but will confine yourself entirely to any last personal messages you might wish to send.”

“I thank you, Herr General,” Grey Shadow said quietly. “Readily do I pledge my honour to write nothing which can be of any value or in any way be used by my Government.”

“Then my aide-de-camp will attend you at midnight to collect the letters,” said General Laufer.

With that he turned and, followed by the Hauptmann von Ruhl, quitted the cell.

For long moments after the cell door had clanged shut behind them, Grey Shadow stood staring at the stone floor with unseeing eyes. Then, abruptly, he squared his shoulders. Turning away he seated himself at the small wooden table with which the death cell was furnished, and picked up a pen.

He did not at once commence to write, but sat listening to the muffled tread of the sentry on duty outside. He heard the man’s steps pass the door and die away along the corridor. Then came a faint stamp as the man turned, and the tread grew louder again as he retraced his steps and re-passed the door of the cell.

Regularly, monotonously, the pacing went on, the only intermission coming when the clatter of a grounded rifle butt and a sharp command told of the guard being changed.

Promptly at midnight a key grated in the lock, the iron door swung open, and the

sentry stood aside to usher the Hauptmann von Ruhl into the cell.

Waiting until the sentry had withdrawn, and leaving the cell door ajar, Von Ruhl advanced to the table at which Grey Shadow was seated.

“You have your letters ready?” he said coldly.

“Yes,” answered Grey Shadow. Picking up two unsealed and addressed envelopes he slowly rose to his feet. His eyes were on Von Ruhl, but his ears were listening intently to the tread of the sentry who had resumed his pacing.

“Here are the letters,” he said. He held them out in his left hand. Von Ruhl extended his right hand to take them.

In that same instant Grey Shadow dropped the letters and seized Von Ruhl’s wrist in a vice-like grip. Simultaneously his clenched right fist whipped upwards, taking Von Ruhl full on the point of the jaw.

There was every atom of his strength behind the blow. With a grunt, Von Ruhl staggered back, saved from crashing heavily to the floor by Grey Shadow’s grip upon his wrist. But he did go down, sagging limply on to his knees and thence face foremost to the floor.

He was unconscious, and swiftly Grey Shadow went to work. There were four things of Von Ruhl’s which he wanted—field-grey hat, military cloak, grey trousers, and revolver.

More than once had Grey Shadow’s life hung upon his rapidity of action. But never had he worked so swiftly and so silently as he did now. And then he straightened up, Von Ruhl’s hat was upon his head and Von Ruhl’s cloak was buttoned around his neck.

Three quick, silent strides took him to the door. The tramp of the sentry was approaching along the corridor. Already the man was probably wondering what was detaining the Hauptmann von Ruhl.

Although the cell door was ajar it was not open sufficiently wide to permit of the sentry seeing into the cell. But reaching the door, the man halted.

He was listening. Grey Shadow, waiting with bated breath on the other side of the door, knew it. A moment passed, which seemed an age. The sentry on the outer side of the door did not move on. Grey Shadow, on the inner side, waited, tense and expectant. The sentry was suspicious. That much was very evident.

Grey Shadow decided to act. Adjusting his grip on the revolver, he called, quietly and evenly:

“Sentry!”

Instantly the door was swung open, and the sentry stepped into the cell. Simultaneously, the muzzle of the revolver in the hand of Grey Shadow was jammed hard into the man’s ribs, and the voice of Grey Shadow hissed:

“Drop that rifle!”

Without hesitation, the sentry allowed his rifle to fall with a clatter to the stone floor. The blood drained from his face, and he turned terror-filled eyes on Grey Shadow.

“Stand over there!” Peremptorily, Grey Shadow gestured towards the farther wall. There was no thought of resistance in the sentry. The alternative to obedience was a bullet. He knew it. So he obeyed, walking unsteadily across the cell towards the wall.

Before he reached it, there came a metallic clang behind him. Wheeling, he saw that Grey Shadow had gone, swinging shut the iron door.

With a hoarse shout, the sentry sprang forward. But before he could gain the door, there came the grating of a key turning in the lock on the outside and the thud of heavy bolts being shot home.

Once out in the corridor, Grey Shadow paused only long enough to pocket the key of the cell door and to holster his revolver.

It would take twenty minutes or more, he knew, to force the cell door once the alarm was raised. And if he could get clear of the barracks, he was safe from pursuit until the cell door was forced. For, until entry to the cell was gained, it was impossible for anyone to know just what had happened—impossible to know with certainty that Grey Shadow had escaped!

With Von Ruhl's grey military cloak wrapped closely round him and the peak of Von Ruhl's red-braided hat shadowing his eyes Grey Shadow walked swiftly along the corridor.

The death cell from which he had escaped was on the ground floor. As he turned into the short corridor which led to the main entrance, there sounded behind him the muffled report of a shot, followed by the clamour of a rifle butt being beaten furiously upon a door.

Grey Shadow knew what it meant. The imprisoned sentry was frantically endeavouring to raise the alarm. Swiftly Grey Shadow walked on, neither turning his head nor looking to right or left. Although he was in the Petrokoff Barracks, he was, he knew, in comparatively little danger, provided he kept his nerve.

For, to all outward appearances, he was a German officer of rank, and no sentry—unless he recognised him—would dare accost him.

So it was with almost ridiculous ease that he passed the unsuspecting sentry on duty at the main entrance, curtly, and with face averted, acknowledging the man's salute. Then across the darkened barrack square to the great iron gates, where again a sentry on duty sprang smartly to the salute.

He was out in the street now—free. And, like the elusive shadow that he was, he merged with the night and was gone.

III

1,000 TONS OF EXPLOSIVE!

By the side of the railway track, a quarter of a kilometre from Mittau Station, stood an old and disused platelayer's hut. To this hut, less than an hour after his escape, and when the whole of Mittau was being frantically combed for him, Grey Shadow came.

Pushing open the rickety door, he entered the pitch darkness of the interior. Gropingly, he felt his way to a corner of the hut, bent down, and from under some damp and rotting sacking took a small and tightly tied bundle.

Off then came the hat and cloak of Von Ruhl, and when next Grey Shadow emerged from the hut he was clad from head to heel in black. On his head was a black woollen helmet and black face-mask. Buttoned tightly round his neck were black silk overalls,

which reached to the ankle. His feet were encased in black rubber shoes, and his hands were black-gloved.

Pausing a moment to slip into the outside pockets of his black overalls Von Ruhl's revolver and another which had been in the bundle beneath the sacking, he set off along the railway metals, in the direction of the goods yard.

He moved entirely without sound, and in his black overalls, helmet face-mask, and gloves he was just part of the night.

The goods yard, illuminated by powerful electric bulbs on iron standards, was thronged with men, trucks and wagons. For day and night the work of loading stores and ammunition for the Western Front went on.

In a siding, its mighty black engine waiting with steam up, stood a long ammunition train, loaded with one thousand tons of high explosive shells.

The red tail light of the rear van was well along the track, far from the illumination of the yard.

Reaching it, Grey Shadow moved silently and swiftly along half the length of the train. Then suddenly he vanished into nothingness, slipping beneath one of the heavily laden wagons.

The remainder of the way to the engine he traversed beneath the wagons, straightening up when he reached the black and towering rear of the tender. For a moment he stood, listening intently. Voices, shouting, the clang of metal were very close. But, satisfied that there was no one within his immediate vicinity, he swung himself up on to the couplings.

Next instant, hand over hand, he was swiftly ascending the iron ladder at the rear of the tender. Gaining its top, he slithered over, to lie full length on, and become part of, the coal.

To his ears, as he lay there, came a murmur of voices from the engine cab, token that the driver and fireman were already aboard. Slowly the minutes dragged by, then came new voices and the creak of equipment.

It was the military guard of ten soldiers who were to travel with the train. Pausing for a jocular word and greeting with the driver and fireman, the guard trudged on past the tender and swung themselves up to their van coupled in the middle of the train.

Another wait, then the sudden rattle of a signal wire alongside the track, a piercing blast from the engine whistle, and slowly, jerkily, the long and heavy train began to move forward.

Back along the whole length of the train ran the crack of tightening couplings, followed by heavy jolting and jarring as the slow-moving wagons, drawn by the black and straining monster engine, crossed the points.

Fifteen minutes later, with the lights of Mittau well behind, the ammunition train was running smoothly on through the night, with track ahead cleared for her as far as Königsberg. Steadily the speed increased, and the darkened countryside whirled past, a strange, fantastic blur.

In the engine cab, eerily illumined by the ruddy glow from the open firebox door, the driver turned constantly from his scanning of the line ahead to peer searchingly at the gleaming dials of the gauges.

He knew to the full the value of the freight they carried—knew how urgently it was needed away yonder on the distant Western Front. Within the week, the high explosive shells packed in the wagons behind would be hurtling from the mouths of German guns—to burst on the trenches of the Englanders.

On and on through the night roared the train, past lonely farmsteads, over deserted crossings. Once the fireman straightened up from his eternal feeding of the fire box's hungry maw. Wearily with a piece of waste he wiped his perspiring face.

"How is she doing, Jan?" he asked.

"We are touching fifty!"

Taking a fresh grip on his long-handled shovel, the fireman turned again to his coaling. But next instant he touched the driver on the arm.

"Jan!" he said, and his eyes were startled. "There is something among the coal—I saw something move!"

"Nonsense!"

"There is, I tell you. I saw something!"

"Then go and find out what it is!" retorted the driver impatiently. Something amongst the coal—ridiculous! This was nerves. He was always jumpy, this fireman. Always imagining things. He would never make a driver. Never——

"Jan!" A wild scream from the fireman cut in on the driver's reflections. He wheeled. Next instant his heart missed a beat and his eyes dilated. For there, standing on the footplate, his back against the coal of the tender, was a slim, black-clad figure, holding a menacing gun in each of his black-gloved hands.

"Close down the steam!" Raspingly the words came from the stranger's lips.

The driver hesitated, gaping in dumb bewilderment.

"I will not ask again!"

Something in the harsh, metallic tones galvanised the driver into action. With shaking hand he gripped the steam control lever and pulled it across.

"I am giving you two men a chance of life!" Again the black-clad stranger spoke. "When the train has lost sufficient way, you will jump for it!"

The driver was beginning to get a grip on himself.

"Do you—do you mean we must leave the engine?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Yes!"

With amazing suddenness the driver hurled himself forward, clenched fist swinging viciously. But, as though he had foreseen the attack, the stranger side-stepped, the revolver in his left hand clattering to the footplate.

In that same moment his left flashed upwards. It took the driver under the chin, sending him staggering against the side of the cab. Convulsively the man gripped at the hand rail, missed it, and vanished backwards into the night.

"Now you!" said the stranger, wheeling with menacing gun on the cowering fireman.

"Wait—wait!" pleaded the fireman through chattering teeth. "Wait till she slows more—and I will jump—I swear it!"

"You will jump now. She has lost sufficient speed!"

His face showing deathly white through the streaky grime and coal dust, the fireman took a faltering step forward, keeping his feet only by his grip on the hand rail, so great was his terror. Another step, and another. Then, desperately gathering the remnants of his courage, he took a despairing leap outwards into the darkness.

Alone in the engine cab, the black-clad Grey Shadow retrieved his fallen revolver and, thrusting both weapons into the pockets of his black silk overalls, picked up the fireman's long-handled shovel.

The train was by this time running dead slow, and rapidly he went to work feeding coal into the fierce heat of the firebox. Then clanging shut the firebox door, he dropped the shovel and moved to the steam control lever. Gripping it, he swung it slowly and steadily across to wide open, and as the powerful engine began to gather way he dropped off the footplate into the night.

Swiftly the now driverless train commenced to pick up speed until she was rushing through the night, flame belching from her smoke-stack and her wheels thundering as she tore onwards to her doom.

One thousand tons of high explosive hurtling blindly through the darkness!

In the deserted engine cab the speedometer needle crept slowly from fifty-five miles per hour to sixty—sixty-three—sixty-five! Past wayside halts, through one great lighted station she roared, the scream of her passing leaving those who saw her white-faced and appalled.

On and on, hurtling remorselessly to her doom. Nothing could stop her. No power on earth could save her now. A train of death. A gigantic, thundering battering-ram roaring on blindly.

It was on the sharp curve through the Narym Wood that she left the rails, tearing up the track and crashing with terrifying force into the midst of the timber.

It seemed then as though the very earth opened. There came a long-drawn, deafening roar and in a terrific sheet of flame, trees, timber, and debris were hurled far up into the night.

Explosion followed explosion as the shells which had not been exploded by the devastating shock of impact were touched by the leaping flames which were devouring the fiercely burning wreckage.

And when morning dawned all that remained of Narym Wood was a vast crater littered with warped and twisted debris and fringed by gaunt and burnt-out trees.

The day which that dawn ushered in brought to Herr Raschel, Chief of the German Secret Service, a letter which had been posted in Mittau in the early hours of the morning.

“I am writing this in the death cell,” it ran, “in the hope and belief that I will live to send it to you.

“You asked me what my mission in Mittau was. I did not tell you.

“But maybe you will guess it when I say that if the ammunition train which leaves Mittau to-night for the Western Front ever reaches Königsberg, then I will have failed.

“GREY SHADOW.”

CHAPTER VIII
THE BUST OF PUTZ!

I
TO WORK A MIRACLE

IN the Nagelstrasse, a quiet and unpretentious street of Berlin, stands the President Hotel, catering for those in search of cheap and modest lodging. And to the President there came one evening, when dusk was falling, a short and stocky man carrying a heavy and bulging bag.

“You have a Herr Kronz staying here?” he said to the proprietress. “Good! He is my friend!” he explained, producing his identification papers. “We are commercial travellers for the same firm—Zobel & Schwarz, of Munich. He has, I think, booked me a room here. My name is Butendrift.”

“Yes, he has booked you a room, Herr Butendrift,” said the proprietress, pushing the register towards him to sign. “The one next to his. He is No. 41, and I have given you No. 42.” She pressed a bell and, in response to the summons, a fat youth in shirt sleeves, apron, and carpet slippers arrived from the rear premises.

“Otto!” ordered the proprietress, “take this gentleman’s bag and show him up to room No. 42.” The President Hotel did not run to a lift, and Herr Butendrift followed the fat Otto up a staircase and along a narrow corridor on the first floor.

“This is your room,” said Otto, opening a door and standing aside to usher Butendrift into a room plainly furnished with a bed, washstand, dressing-table, chair, and strip of carpet. Pocketing the dingy note of small denomination which Butendrift handed him, he withdrew, closing the door behind him.

Waiting until his footsteps had died away, Butendrift opened the door and stepped out into the corridor. A moment he stood quite still, scanning the corridor’s deserted length. Then he knocked quietly on the door of room No. 41.

“Enter!” called a voice. Opening the door, Butendrift stepped into a room furnished in similar fashion to the one he had just vacated.

A man, clad in shirt, trousers, and dressing-gown, seated in a chair reading a newspaper, leapt to his feet at sight of Butendrift and advanced with hand outstretched.

“So you’ve got here!” he exclaimed softly and in perfect English.

“Yes, I’ve got here, sir!” replied Butendrift, speaking also in English. “And the deuce of a job I’ve had!”

“Why?” exclaimed the other sharply, relapsing into German. “You haven’t been held up anywhere, have you?”

“Only by those confounded German trains!” grumbled Butendrift. “Before the War it was bad enough, but now——” He gestured hopelessly with his hands.

“When did you leave Holland?” the other asked, with a laugh.

“Three days ago!” replied Butendrift. “There was about six hours’ wait at the frontier whilst everyone’s papers were examined and re-examined. I tell you, sir, this game is becoming riskier every day. Hardly a bird can fly across the frontier without the Germans knowing about it.”

“Well, never mind!” responded the other. “The main thing is you’ve got here safely. And apparently without being suspected. You’re quite sure of that?”

“Quite sure, sir! The genuineness of my identification papers was never questioned.”

“Good! Now, what about Count van Splatz?”

“I have been his shadow,” replied Butendrift solemnly. “For three weeks I have walked where he has walked, lunched where he has lunched, dined where he has dined. Yes, sir, and I have danced where he has danced, although I hate dancing more than anything I know. I have sketches of him and photographs of him and can teach you most of his mannerisms and gestures.”

“Yes, but can you make me up like him?”

For a long moment Butendrift earnestly studied the face of his companion.

“Yes, I can, sir!” he announced at length. “I am afraid it will be a longish job, though. You will have to give me four days at least.”

“And in that time you will work a miracle, eh?” laughed the other.

“In that time,” said Butendrift impressively, “I will make your face and features so like those of Count van Splatz, of Holland, that even his friends would have a job to tell the two of you apart!”

General Putz, late commandant of Buhl Aerodrome, was home on leave and was thoroughly enjoying it. It was very nice indeed to get back into civilian clothes for a time and to supervise the management of his gardens, grounds, and estate, situated on the outskirts of the village of Harn, seventy kilometres from Berlin.

The only thing which marred Commandant Putz’s full enjoyment of his leave was the circumstances under which he had been granted leave. For the truth was that he had been superseded in his command of Buhl Aerodrome and was waiting for another appointment.

He would get another appointment all right. He had influential friends who would look after that part of the business. But he writhed and gnashed his teeth when he thought of that suave English spy, Grey Shadow, who, posing as his adjutant, had been directly instrumental in having him kicked out of the command of Buhl.

It was General Putz’s most fervent prayer that some day that insolent Englishman, Grey Shadow, would be captured, tried, and shot. And Putz promised himself that he would exert every atom of influence he possessed to obtain permission to attend both the trial and the subsequent shooting.

Rumour had it that Grey Shadow had indeed been captured, only a week or two ago. Posing as a newspaper correspondent he had been laid by the heels in the Russian town of Mittau. But he had escaped.

Putz’s rage had known no bounds when he had heard of this capture and escape. The fools—the stupid blockheads—to have allowed such a dangerous scoundrel as Grey Shadow to slip through their fingers! He only wished that he had been in Mittau. The

Englishman would not have escaped it if he had been there. No by thunder, he wouldn't! He, Putz, would have had the spy put behind double-locked doors and would have mounted a double guard over him.

Thus he had unburdened himself to his household, pacing furiously backwards and forwards in the breakfast-room whilst his family and his prospective son-in-law had watched him timidly from their seats at the table.

But on this particular morning Putz was not thinking so much of Grey Shadow as of the boar-hunt in which he was going to indulge with his prospective son-in-law, the Hauptmann von August—a slim and fair-haired dandy, with a slight lisp and an intense admiration for General Putz. He was attached to the staff of the Military School of Munster and was enjoying a thoroughly undeserved twenty-one days' leave.

"There is a boar in the Black Thicket," announced Putz, striding into the breakfast-room with a green shooting cap on his head, a muffler round his neck, and a gun under his arm. "A big tusker, Hans says. We will have his head on the menu at dinner to-night, eh, Von August?"

"Yes, certainly, Herr General!" lisped Von August.

"But you will be most careful, dear, won't you?" said Frau Putz, eyeing her husband anxiously. "You know how afraid I am of these horrid hunts!"

"Careful?" snorted Putz. "No, I won't be careful! He who is careful never shoots a boar. That's what I always say."

"Yes, but you know the last time you went shooting," said Frau Putz timidly, "you lamed poor Karl. It took the doctor over an hour to get the small shot out of his leg."

"That was an accident!" snapped Putz. "And I was shooting fowl, not boar."

"Which was lucky for Karl!" observed one of his daughters.

Putz glared at her and, propping his gun against the wall commenced an attack on the food set out on the sideboard, perusing at the same time the columns of the morning newspaper.

"I don't know what those stupid blockheads on our general staff think they are doing," he exploded furiously. "A concentrated thrust towards Paris along the banks of the Marne is being tragically delayed. I only wish I was out there on the staff——"

"Perhaps your new appointment will be on the staff, dear," interposed his wife gently.

"Don't talk rubbish!" retorted Putz savagely. "I am attached to the air service, not to the infantry!"

He crammed a hastily made sandwich into the capacious pocket of his shooting-jacket and turned to Von August.

"Well, if you are ready," he said, "we will be off."

"Yes, certainly," said Von August, rising. "I am quite ready."

Waiting outside the house were two beaters with four boarhounds. One of the men was old Hans, well over the age limit for military service. The other was Corporal Gast, the commandant's servant.

Followed by the two beaters, holding the hounds in leash, General Putz led the way in the direction of the Black Thicket, which lay in the depths of the woods about an hour's walk from the house. Just before getting there he halted.

“Now,” he said to Hans and Corporal Gast, “you will make a detour with the hounds and set them into the thicket. The tusker is sure to break cover in this direction. When he emerges I will shoot him.”

Hans and the corporal set off, leaving Putz and Von August to move stealthily nearer the thicket and take up position.

“We will take cover behind this tree,” wheezed Putz, when he and his companion were within twenty feet of the dense bushes in the midst of which, according to Hans, the boar was lying. Taking up position behind the tree, they waited expectantly. The stillness was suddenly broken by a furious whisper from Putz.

“Keep that confounded gun-muzzle away from the nape of my neck, will you?” he fumed. “Do you want to blow my head off?”

Apologetically Von August moved the offending barrel, and in growing expectancy the pair continued to wait. Suddenly there came to their ears a faint snapping of twigs, followed by a whimpering.

“The hounds are in!” whispered Putz, his voice quivering with excitement. For a few moments the whimpering and the snapping of twigs continued. Then a sudden, deep-throated bay was followed by a snarling growl and a heavy crashing.

“Here he comes!” whispered Putz, tightening his grip on his gun. The crashing grew in volume. Then from out of the thicket was thrust a boar’s head, with tusks a gleam, jaws foaming, and eyes wickedly aglint.

For a split second the boar hesitated. Then, galvanised into action by the baying of the hounds behind him, he dropped his great head and came charging forward in a line which would take him past the tree behind which General Putz and Von August were waiting.

“Leave him to me!” gasped Putz, bringing up his gun and catching the crouching Von August a smart rap under the chin with his elbow. Twice he fired, but the boar charged on unscathed and vanished into a dense tangle of undergrowth, through which he could be heard crashing his way.

“You’ve missed him!” exclaimed Von August.

“I know I’ve missed him, you fool!” snarled Putz, frantically reloading. “And it was your fault, you stupid blockhead. Breathing down my neck! I hate people breathing down my neck! I could not hit a hangar with anyone breathing down my neck——”

He broke off, head cocked in listening attitude; then demanded:

“Did you hear that?”

“Hear what?” inquired Von August, gaping.

“Two shots!” rapped Putz. “I distinctly heard two shots. And they came from there!” He pointed in the direction which the boar had taken. Then he gripped Von August by the arm.

“If someone has shot my boar——” he said, his voice thick with fury. He left it at that, releasing his grip on Von August’s arm and setting off at a waddling run in the wake of the vanished boar.

Von August, trailing his gun, followed and suddenly, panting and perspiring, they emerged into a clearing.

A sight met their eyes which almost caused Putz to have an apoplectic fit, so great was the rage which welled up in him. For in the middle of the clearing the tusker lay dead, and standing looking down at it most unconcernedly were two men in shooting kit and with guns under their arms.

Putz bounced forward.

“What d’you mean by it?” he roared, shaking a clenched fist under the nose of the nearer man. “What d’you mean by it, you scoundrel?”

“Mean by what?” the stranger inquired, and regarded him with raised eyebrows.

“Mean—mean by what?” choked Putz. “By shooting my boar, confound you!”

“Your boar?”

“Yes, my boar!” roared Putz. “This is my estate, and that is my boar! I demand your name this instant!”

“For what purpose?” inquired the other coolly.

“So that I can prosecute you for trespass!” roared Putz. “Now, sir, your name!”

Doffing his glove, the stranger drew a card-case from his inside pocket. Opening it, he tendered a card to Putz. Snatching the piece of pasteboard, Putz glared at it.

As he did so his expression underwent an extraordinary change. His eyes bulged, the blood drained slowly from his face, and his hand began to shake. For the card bore the name of one closely connected with the then reigning house of Austria:

“Prince Johann Friedrich of Salsburg.”

“Your—your Highness!” stammered Putz. “I—I did not know! A—a thousand apologies——”

“They are unnecessary,” cut in Prince Johann coldly. “I am trespassing on your estate, and I have shot your boar. If you care to go ahead with proceedings against me——”

“No, no, your Highness!” babbled the wretched Putz. “I beg of you—beseech of you—forget what I said! I did not know—I was not aware of your identity. My estate, my game, are entirely at your disposal. No greater honour has ever been done me! I plead with you, your Highness, to forget what I said——”

“We will think no more about it, then,” interposed the other curtly. “I and my equerry will withdraw at once, and will, whilst we are in the neighbourhood, seek our shooting elsewhere!”

“No, no!” almost wept Putz. “Your Highness must continue to shoot over my estate. It is the finest shooting in the State. My hounds, my beater, my horses, are entirely at your disposal!”

“No; we will withdraw,” declared Prince Johann.

“Please, please!” begged Putz. “Your Highness, I will never forgive myself! I—I plead with you——”

“Very well, then,” cut in the other, noting Putz’s distress. “It is possible that we will avail ourselves of your offer. But, in the future, do not be quite so hasty, Herr——” He paused invitingly.

“Putz,” volunteered the individual. “General Putz is my name. And,” he went on

ingratiatingly, “if you will permit me to have this tusker sent to wherever you are staying, I shall feel greatly honoured.”

“No, we will not trouble you,” Prince Johann said.

“Your Highness,” interposed his equerry, “might it not be very welcome at the inn? Food is very short these days amongst the people.”

“Yes, that is very true,” the prince said. Then to Putz: “Very good! Please have it sent to the inn in the village!”

“But surely your Highness is not staying at the inn?” Putz held up his podgy hands in horror.

“Yes, I am on my way to Berlin,” explained the prince. “I am travelling alone with my equerry, and he and I have broken our journey here for a few days’ shooting. What is wrong with the inn, Herr General, that you seem so astonished?”

“It is so dirty and so common!” exclaimed Putz. Then, nervously, but greatly daring: “Would you—I mean, I would be greatly honoured—that is to say, would it be possible for you to permit yourself to spend the remainder of your stay in my house?”

“I do not think that would be possible,” Prince Johann said curtly.

Putz, however, having once taken the plunge, was not going to give up without a struggle. Being a first-class snob, the thought of having a prince of the house of Salsburg staying with him as his guest was enough to send him almost crazy with excitement.

“But, your Highness,” he babbled, “you will be so much more comfortable than at the inn. My food, my wines, everything I have, is of the best possible. And I can promise you most charming society. My wife and my daughters will be most honoured.

“Your Highness, is it not possible to persuade you? Please, please, allow me in this manner to make some little amend for my most unforgivable rudeness to you a few moments ago.”

Prince Johann glanced at his equerry.

“Very good, Herr General,” he said, turning again to Putz. “I shall be most happy to be your guest to-night. I leave for Berlin to-morrow.”

II

“SOMETHING IN STORE FOR YOU!”

There was intense excitement in the Putz household when it became known that Prince Johann Friedrich of Salsburg, a scion of the reigning house of Austria, was coming to stay as the general’s guest that night.

Harassed domestics rushed hither and thither, cleaning, sweeping, and polishing, and getting in each other’s way. Putz, blustering and perspiring, supervised everything and got in everybody’s way.

“He’s going to have the east suite!” he roared, when his wife timidly approached him on the subject of which bedroom his Highness was to occupy.

“But the east suite has not been aired, my love,” said Frau Putz.

“Well, it can be aired now, can’t it?” bellowed her husband. “There’s coal in the house, isn’t there? And wood and sticks and matches to light it with? And get out the bed

linen which your aunt gave us when we were married. He is going to have that. It has got my family crest embroidered on it and it will impress his Highness!”

Then, summoning the chef and the cellar-master to his presence, he spent a heated hour in working out a menu and choosing suitable wines.

“Now parade the domestics and all the servants in the kitchen!” he barked. “Tell them I will speak with them in five minutes’ time!”

In five minutes he descended to the vast, stone-floored kitchen where his servants and domestic staff were ranged in an expectant line.

The domestics straightened up, and, having given them a brief inspection, Putz proceeded to address them. Bluntly and in his best army manner he told them of the great honour which would be theirs in having a prince of the blood-royal staying in the house that night.

And, he concluded, if one of them gave him, Putz, the slightest cause for complaint, then that particular misguided and thrice-condemned idiot would be sacked at a moment’s notice.

He dismissed the parade and marched off to spend the rest of the afternoon, assisted by his valet, in overhauling his stock of dress uniforms in preparation for dinner that evening.

At five o’clock he dispatched his car to the inn at the village, and at five-thirty it returned, bearing its precious burden, Prince Johann Friedrich of Salsburg, accompanied by his equerry. General Putz himself, with much apology for thus dispensing with formality, showed the prince to his rooms.

Then off he went to his own room, and very resplendent he looked in dress uniform, complete with medals, when eventually he descended to the lounge a few minutes before dinner.

In direct contrast to the magnificence of General Putz was the quiet, dark blue, semi-dress uniform of the Austrian Hussars in which Prince Johann appeared a moment or two later.

The introductions to Frau Putz and her daughters being concluded, and dinner being announced, a move was made to the dining-room, where the brilliant illumination and the heavy silver plate of the Putz family made a noble display. The dinner ran its course with a delightful smoothness, and by the time it was over, Putz was in high mood.

“Your Highness,” he said, suddenly rising, “we are honoured indeed in having your illustrious presence gracing our humble board this evening! And before the ladies withdraw”—this being a hint to his wife and daughters that they had better prepare to make themselves scarce—“I know they will never forgive me if I do not permit them to join me in a toast. Your Highness,”—with a bow in the direction of his guest—“ladies”—with another bow, rather curt, directed towards his wife and daughters—“and gentlemen”—with a jerk of his head towards Von August and the prince’s equerry—“I give you the health of our glorious ally, the Austrian Army in the field!”

Glasses were raised, and the Putz party drank the toast, with every sign of enthusiasm. They reseated themselves, and slowly Prince Johann rose.

“I thank you, General Putz,” he said, raising his glass. “I also will give you a toast. The health of the ladies!”

Putz stared, then hastily gulped down his wine. The health of the ladies, indeed! What the dickens was meant by that? Why had not the toast been to the German Emperor or to the German Army in the field?

Was this an insult—or was it a great and never-to-be-forgotten compliment to the charm of his Frau Putz and her daughters? Putz wasn't sure.

He knew that although Austria and Germany were fighting side by side, they were not really friends. There was a common cause, but, rightly or wrongly, Austria felt that she had been stampeded into war by Germany. And, beneath the talk of comradeship, there was, particularly amongst the common people, an undercurrent of bad feeling.

Glancing at his wife, Putz saw that her pleasant and good-natured face was wreathed in smiles. So, to save himself any further mental unrest, he concluded that the toast must really have been meant as a very high and personal compliment. Having come to that conclusion, he felt more pleased with himself and his guest than ever.

A few minutes later the ladies withdrew, leaving General Putz and his guest to their wine.

Seeing that the equerry and Von August were engaged in a discussion on the position on the Western Front, Putz turned to the prince.

"I do not know, your Highness," he remarked confidentially, filling up the other's glass, "whether or not you heard about that unfortunate affair at Buhl some little time ago?"

"No," replied Prince Johann; "I'm afraid I did not. What affair was that?"

"An infamous English spy named Grey Shadow," Putz explained, "came there as my adjutant. I had my suspicions of the man from the very first. But before I could act he had gone—taking with him a plan of my Gotha hangars, petrol dump, and ammunition dump."

"Really?" murmured the prince. "What extraordinary bad luck for you."

"Yes, it was bad luck," assented Putz, scowling at his thoughts. "As a matter of fact, your Highness, although you might not believe it, I was forced to resign my command."

"Forced?" echoed the prince.

"Well, hardly forced," responded Putz loftily. "The High Command instituted an inquiry, and so offensive were some of their questions and remarks that I resigned."

"And quite rightly, I do not doubt," asserted the prince. "These are strange times, Herr General, and many a man whom one would not recognise as one's equal in times of peace is now one's military superior."

"True!" growled Putz. "But another post is soon to be found for me. Only this morning I heard from a friend of mine on the General Staff that in all probability I shall shortly be given the command of the new School of Flying at Dusseldorf."

"That is excellent," responded the prince, watching the blue smoke of his cigar curling upwards.

Putz hesitated. Then, leaning forward in his chair, he said:

"Now, one word from you, your Highness, in the right quarter, and the appointment could be speeded up——"

"Say no more, Herr General," Prince Johann interposed gently. "Already I have made

my plans as to your future!”

“That is indeed most gracious of you!” exclaimed Putz excitedly. “Is it permitted to ask——”

“It is not,” cut in the prince, smiling. “Wait, Herr General, and you shall see. Something unique lies in store for you. That I can promise you.”

Stifling his disappointment, but mightily pleased at this gracious interest shown in him and these promises of something good in the near future, Putz leaned back in his chair.

“To-morrow,” he said, switching on to another topic, “I go to Berlin. I go to attend the great banquet which is being given by the Crown Prince in honour of the Count van Splat.”

“Van Splat is a Dutchman, is he not?” inquired the prince.

“Yes,” assented Putz. “He is an ardent politician with a great following in Holland. He is also,” he added slyly, “no enemy of Germany.”

“But Holland is a neutral country,” observed Prince Johann.

“Yes, Holland is neutral,” Putz replied. “But she will not be neutral much longer if Van Splat has his way. I tell you, your Highness, that if Van Splat has anything to do with it, before many months have passed Holland will have thrown in her lot with Germany and Austria and taken up arms against the Englishers!”

“And it is because of that that this banquet is being arranged in his honour, I suppose?” remarked Prince Johann dryly.

“Of course,” answered Putz. “We cannot do enough for him. All the time he is in Berlin he is to be fêted and lauded and treated as an honoured guest.”

“You know him, of course?”

“No, I have never met him,” replied Putz. “But I am looking forward immensely to meeting him, your Highness.”

“Yes,” nodded the prince, making a motion to rise, “he is one who can undoubtedly be a useful friend to us, Herr General. Shall we join the ladies?”

III

“ARREST THAT SPY!”

It was some considerable time later that the Putz household retired for the night. Having personally conducted his distinguished guest as far as his bedroom, Putz returned to his own room.

Putz lay long awake that night, thinking of his own good fortune in having met such an influential person as a prince of the house of Salsburg, and wondering just what appointment it was that the prince had in store for him.

At length he dropped into slumber. How long he slept he did not know, but it seemed only a few moments later that he was roused by his valet, who dashed into the bedroom and roughly awakened him by shaking him by the shoulder.

“What the dickens is the matter?” exclaimed Putz angrily. “Stop shaking me like that, you imbecile! What is the matter? What has happened?”

“Prince Johann and his equerry have gone, sir!” panted the valet. “Their rooms are

empty, and—and they’ve left a note for you downstairs.”

“Gone?” queried Putz uncomprehendingly. “Gone—and left a note, d’you say?”

“Yes, and it is signed ‘Grey Shadow,’ Herr General.”

“What?” roared Putz. He was wide awake enough now. Thrusting the valet aside, he sprang out of bed, struggled into a dressing-gown, and rushed from the room.

“This note!” he bellowed to the valet, who was following in his wake. “Where is it, you fool?”

“On your bust in the hall,” panted the man. “I—I left it where I found it.”

Down to the hallway on the ground floor rushed Putz, where, on a pedestal, stood a white marble bust of himself. But when Putz reached it he found it was white no longer.

During the night some sacrilegious hand had effected a startling change. The somewhat prominent nose had been painted red. The erect and sweeping moustache had been painted black. The face had been given a purplish hue.

On the head of the bust had been placed a helmet, cocked at rakish angles, and round its shoulders had been draped a greatcoat, buttoned tightly at the neck and down the whole length of its front, giving the bust and hidden pedestal a caricaturish sort of resemblance to Putz.

“Donner und blitzen!” exploded Putz, as his eyes took in this outrageous libel on himself. “I will make an example of somebody for this!”

“I’ll teach them to poke fun at me! If I catch the fellow who did this I’ll—I’ll have him shot! The scoundrel! The villain! The——” But Putz could say no more.

Shaking with rage, he snatched a note from where it was pinned on the breast of the buttoned greatcoat.

“MY DEAR PUTZ,” he read,—“Very many thanks for your hospitality, and my apologies to Prince Johann Friedrich of Salsburg—if ever you happen to meet him—for the unwarrantable use I have made of his name.

“Forgive me for having touched up a little the bust of yourself. I simply could not resist the temptation.

“Yours sincerely,

“GREY SHADOW.”

Then Putz went mad. With a bellow of fury, he hurled the bust savagely to the floor and jumped on the pieces. He had forgotten, unfortunately, that he was in his bare feet, and the howl he let out the next instant was one of agony as well as of fury.

It had the effect of wakening the whole household and, hastily donning dressing-gowns and wraps, they came rushing downstairs, headed by Von August, who turned pale at the sight of the purplish face and blazing eyes of his future father-in-law.

“What—what has happened?” he asked nervously.

“Happened?” thundered Putz. “What has happened, you ask? That dog of an English spy has been here again. That’s what’s happened!”

“Do you mean Grey Shadow?” gasped Von August.

“Yes, Grey Shadow!” roared Putz. “Passing himself off as Prince Johann Friedrich of

Salsburg. Oh, the impudence of the pig——” He lapsed into incoherency again, waving his arms and stamping ravingly about. Bewildered and incredulous, Von August gripped him by the arm.

“But how could he be Grey Shadow, Herr General?” he babbled. “You have seen Grey Shadow. For three days at Buhl, Grey Shadow was your adjutant. Did you not recognise this Prince Johann as him?”

Livid of face, Putz wheeled on him.

“No, I did not!” he roared. “I tell you this Grey Shadow is a devil. He can change his face—change his voice—change everything. He is a past master in the art of disguise—a wizard!”

They got him to bed then. But it took the combined efforts of his wife, daughters, prospective son-in-law, and valet to get him there. And when he had reached it they brought him his favourite breakfast of grilled kidneys with plenty of pepper.

The pepper, however, only served to heat his wrath the more, and when Frau Putz, in a misguided effort to soothe him, brought him his book of war photographs to look at he savagely flung it out of the window. And as the window was shut at the time a draught flowed in through the broken pane which, instead of cooling his wrath, only fanned it to greater flame.

The whole trouble was that he hadn't the faintest idea what to do. If he set the military on the trail of Grey Shadow, the horrible truth was bound to come out and everyone would know that for the second time he had hobnobbed, and been friendly with, the infamous spy for whom the whole of Germany was searching!

And if there was one thing which General Putz could not stand it was ridicule. So, through Von August, he gave furious orders to his household that not a word of the visit of the so-called Prince Johann was to be mentioned until he, their lord and master, had decided on the best course to be followed in apprehending the villain.

By midday he was so far recovered as to be able to rise and dress and prepare for his journey to Berlin where he was, that night, to attend the banquet in honour of the pro-German Count van Splatz, of Holland.

The banquet was being held in the famous Konigtum Rooms. Owing to the distance of the journey which he had to make and to his subsequent somewhat prolonged dressing, General Putz was amongst the late arrivals.

Dinner had not yet commenced, and in the brilliantly illumined ante-room were gathered many famous German soldiers, sailors, and statesmen, their resplendent uniforms making a glittering array.

On his entry, Putz was greeted by several old friends and was in the act of returning their salutations and handshakes when suddenly he became rigid, his eyes bulging in amazement.

For there, in glittering dress uniform and deep in conversation with Admiral von Pohl, was the make-believe Prince Johann Friedrich of Salsburg—Grey Shadow himself!

Putz did not hesitate. With an inarticulate shout of wrath and triumph he sprang forward, his eyes blazing. Next instant, in full view of that august assembly, his clenched fist took the villainous impostor full on the mouth, sending him reeling.

“Scoundrel!” bellowed Putz. “Impostor! Spy!” That was as far as he got before angry hands seized him and held him in outraged grasp.

“Arrest that spy!” he roared, glaring at the man he had struck who, white of face, was standing dabbing with a handkerchief at his lips. “Arrest that man—he is Grey Shadow, the English spy!”

He broke off as he found himself confronted by General von Stahl, aide-de-camp to the Crown Prince of Germany.

“Herr General,” said Von Stahl icily. “You are under arrest. You will be conducted back to your hotel and will remain there in confinement until you appear before a military court to answer for that blow.”

“But that man!” roared Putz. “He is Grey Shadow, I tell you!”

“He is the Count van Splat,” retorted Von Stahl. “The guest of honour here to-night!”

It was General von Stahl himself who presided over the hastily-convened military court before which General Putz appeared the following morning.

“General Putz,” said Von Stahl sternly, “last night, without the slightest provocation, you struck one who has always been a sincere friend of Germany. The harm you have done your country is incalculable. We make no secret here of the fact that it was with the hope that Count van Splat would persuade his countrymen to take up arms as our allies that the banquet of last night was arranged.

“But after the deadly insult he has received we can scarcely look for any further assistance from him in that direction. He is most deeply offended and, before remanding you to appear before a higher tribunal than this, we invite you to offer any explanation you have may to make.”

From his pocket Putz produced a letter.

“That is my explanation,” he said, and threw it on to the president’s table. “I received it this morning.”

General von Stahl stared at him a moment; then, picking up the letter, he unfolded it and read:

“MY DEAR PUTZ,—You are, I believe, under arrest. Well, that is unpleasant for you, but very pleasant for me. For it is token of the successful culmination of my plans!

“When you saw me as Prince Johann you did not know that actually my features had been made up to represent those of Count Van Splat. It was my colleague who did that—he is the most famous disguise expert in the British Secret Service—and it took him four long, laborious days to get my features to his liking.

“When you saw the real Van Spaltz at the banquet you naturally took him for me. And you insulted him—struck him. I thought you would do something rash, my Putz, and you did not fail me. By that blow you did what I have been working for—alienated against Germany her Dutch friend!

“The only blame that can attach to you, dear Putz, is that you are over zealous—a great patriot and a great fool. I hope, therefore, that the court which tries you will bear these things in mind and not deal too harshly with you.

“Yours sincerely,

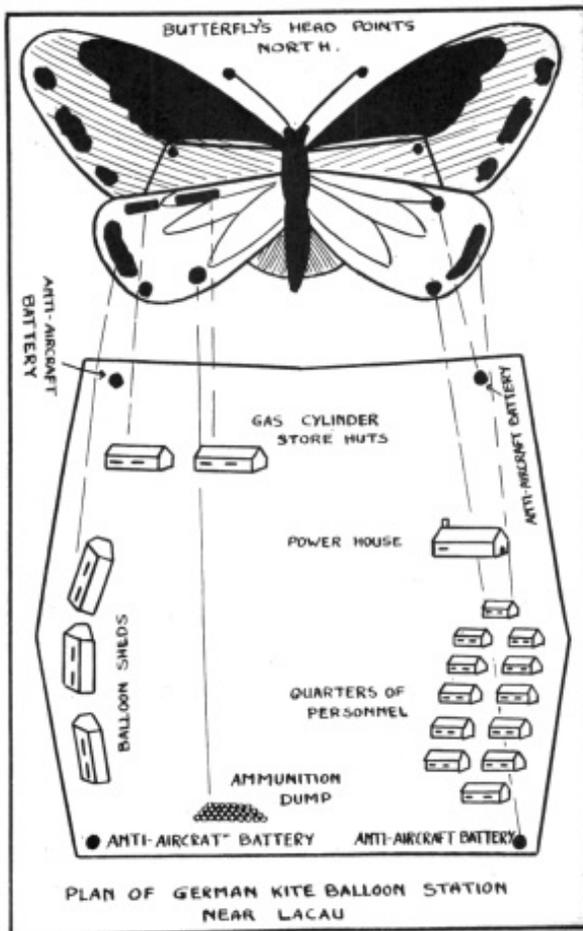
“GREY SHADOW.”

“You can show that letter to Count van Splatz,” said Putz, when he had explained to the court the reference in the letter to Prince Johann. “It will make everything clear to him!”

“Yes, that may be,” responded General von Stahl dryly, “but it will wipe out nothing. Count van Splatz, I am afraid, is too deeply offended to listen to any apologies or explanations. It is true what this Englishman says, Herr General. You are indeed a great fool!”

“But show Count van Splatz the letter,” urged Putz.

“That is impossible,” retorted General von Stahl. “Count van Splatz left for Holland this morning. And so disgusted is he that I do not think he will ever return!”



PLAN OF GERMAN KITE BALLOON STATION NEAR LACAU

CHAPTER IX
WINGS OF THE NIGHT

I

"AS PER INSTRUCTIONS"

DUSK was deepening into night and the dimly illumined canvas hangars of the British night-flying aerodrome of Xaffivilliers stood grey and ghostly in the creeping shadows.

Suddenly the stillness was shattered by the roar of high-powered engines, a roar which died away and grew again in volume as twin 250-h.p. Rolls Royce engines were run up on brief but searching test.

From the hangars lumbered a huge black Handley-Page night-bomber. Swinging into what little wind there was it paused a moment; then, as the engines thundered deafeningly under opening throttle, it tore with ever-increasing impetus across the aerodrome to soar up into the night.

Circling once with nose up it merged with the darkness and was gone, the pulsating beat of its engines dying gradually away as it headed eastwards towards the Line.

The pilot sat motionless, his gloved hands gripping the control stick whilst his eyes behind their goggles were fixed on the instrument board in front of him. By his side the navigation officer sat bent over a map, studying it by the feeble illumination of the shaded bulbs on the dashboard.

In the rear cockpit the sergeant gunner lolled against the gun-mounting, fingering the triggers of the double-mounted Lewis guns. The machine carried no bombs, but at eight thousand feet it crossed the trenches and roared on through the night, flying now over enemy territory.

Without warning there came a sudden whiplike crack, audible above the thunder of the engines. Flame spurted high in the sky around the bomber, and puffs of white smoke hung wraithlike for a moment in the darkness, then vanished. It was shrapnel from the German anti-aircraft batteries!

Then, stabbing swiftly up through the night, came the probing beams of searchlights. Criss-crossing like scissors they swept the sky, darting here and there in an effort to locate the bomber.

The machine was lit up for a moment in a blinding glare, as a wheeling beam paused on it then passed on into the night. Back came the beam, picking out the forepart of the bomber in every detail, and ray after ray darted across the sky, fastening on the machine and giving it the semblance of some huge silver monster of the night.

Shoving forward the control column the pilot took the bomber diving earthwards with engines thundering at full revolutions. But still the ray clung to him, and the flame of exploding shrapnel was very close.

Pressing on the rudder bar the pilot turned the bomber in a sickening downward sweep, taking the machine dropping down into the darkness and leaving the searchlight

rays groping aimlessly in the void above.

Levelling up, he brought the machine on to her former course and thundered on through the night. But he had lost two thousand feet of altitude in that wild downward dive.

Behind him the searchlight rays shut down one by one, and the anti-aircraft guns were stilled. The first enemy barrage had been successfully passed!

The sergeant gunner swung himself down to the platform in the bottom of his cockpit. Lying full length he thrust his head through the trap-door which permitted his lower gun to fire downwards, and peered at a long black box which was slung close up against the bottom of the fuselage directly beneath the bomb rack.

“Gosh!” he muttered. “I wouldn’t do it for a thousand pounds!” He shuddered. He was not a superstitious man. But to him there was something about that long black box unpleasantly suggestive of a coffin.

Straightening up again he swung himself up to the firing platform. Minutes passed, then around the machine came again the crackling of exploding shrapnel and the darkness was split by the searchlight beams of the second enemy barrage.

With engines thundering, the bomber tore on. Her nose was down, and ceaselessly the feet of the pilot pressed alternatively on the rudder bar, causing the machine to pursue a wild, zigzag course.

Once a blinding glare flooded the forward cockpit as a searchlight beam settled on the machine. Instantly the control wheel whirled in the pilot’s hands and, pulling a sharp wing-turn, he lost the beam.

The barrage was passed, and the bomber roared on. Leaning forward, the pilot drew the navigation officer’s attention to the compass. The navigation officer nodded and bent over his map. Then, rising to his feet, he checked the course of the machine by means of the drift indicator.

“Thirty-five degrees,” he said to the pilot. Under rudder, the nose of the bomber swung until the compass-needle steadied at the thirty-five mark. The altimeter was registering no more than four thousand feet. For a few minutes the pilot held her as she was, then suddenly the navigation officer touched him on the arm and pointed downwards into the night.

“We are there!” said the navigation officer. “There is a stretch of ground below us which will be suitable.”

The gloved hand of the pilot closed on the throttle and the roar of the engines died away. Pushing forward the control stick he threw the bomber on to its gliding angle, and with engines ticking over, the machine commenced to drop silently earthwards.

The sergeant, lying prone on his platform, was watching that coffin-shaped box slung beneath the bomb rack. At eighty feet the altimeter ceased to register, but the giant machine continued to drop slowly earthwards.

The navigation officer, leaning far over the side of the cockpit, suddenly straightened up. Turning, he nodded to the pilot. Then, crouching down in the cockpit, he gripped the handle of the bomb-release.

Lower and lower dropped the machine till the greyish blur of the ground below was

but feet away. The pilot, his eyes on the navigation officer, saw the latter jerk forward the bomb-release handle. Simultaneously the pilot opened the throttle and pulled back on the control column.

The engines roared into life and the bomber swooped upwards. But it no longer carried the long black box. Only the sergeant had seen the successful functioning of the bomb-release and had seen the box drop out of its steel grips and fall towards the ground. As he clambered to his feet he murmured:

“Good luck to you, sir!”

Before dawn the bomber was again over its aerodrome in France. Landing, the pilot clambered from the cockpit and made his way to the squadron-commander’s office. Entering, he saluted, and said:

“As per instructions, sir, Captain Guy Ellis has been landed in enemy country within four kilometres of the kite balloon station of Lagau.”

II

THE BUTTERFLY HUNTER

For a few minutes the black box which had been dropped by the bomber lay where it had fallen in a tuft of coarse grass. Then came the faint click of a bolt being drawn back on the inside of the lid.

Next moment the lid was raised and pushed aside and in the thickly cushioned and padded interior of the box, Captain Guy Ellis, of the British Secret Service, a man known throughout Germany as Grey Shadow, with a price of fifty thousand marks on his head, rose stiffly to his feet.

Rigid and motionless he stood looking about him in the darkness. But nothing stirred and, stepping out of the box, he moved up and down easing his cramped muscles.

It was not a difficult task, that which lay before him. It was more in the nature of a busman’s holiday than anything else. He was already disguised, and, as a bearded and bespectacled entomologist, his object was to get sufficiently close to the kite balloon station of Lagau to enable him to make a plan of the huts, balloon sheds and aerial defences for the use of the British bombing squadrons operating from Ouchy.

With ordinary luck he would have the plan made by sunset and that same night the bomber was to return, pick him up, and take him back to Xaffivilliers.

Having restored the circulation to his limbs, he made a search in the darkness and eventually found a moorland pool. Returning to the box he dragged it to the pool. Kicking a hole in the bottom he thrust it out on to the water and stood watching it whilst it sank slowly from sight.

Then, turning away, he set off in the direction of Lagau. Deliberately he moved, at a slow and easy pace, for he had plenty of time at his disposal. The sun had swung well up above the horizon by the time he arrived at a long, low, white-fronted inn on the outskirts of Lagau village.

Here he breakfasted, and, after a rest on the bench in front of the inn, he continued on to the kite balloon station. As he ambled along in his knickerbocker suit, the very essence of elderly and amiable respectability, his spectacles glinting in the morning sun, none

would have taken him for other than the harmless and enthusiastic “bug-hunter” which he purported to be.

In the haversack on his back was a flat tin specimen case, containing butterflies which he had placed in the case before leaving the aerodrome in France. And in the capacious pocket of his jacket was a sketch-book almost full of sketches of butterflies, moths, and other insects.

Mid-morning found Grey Shadow in the cover of a wood which fringed the kite balloon station. Gradually, aimlessly, it seemed, he worked his way to the fringe of the wood. Carefully selecting a suitable spot, he lay down in the shadow of a bush and produced his sketching block and pencil. The wood was situated on rising ground, and from where he lay in hiding Grey Shadow had an excellent view of the station. Four kite balloons were already in the air and, as Grey Shadow lay there sketching, two more lazily ascended, a grey-clad winch party of German mechanics slowly paying out the steel cables to which the balloons were attached.

The boundaries of the kite balloon station, together with the position of the staff quarters and the sheds, were soon marked on the plan which Grey Shadow was making.

The positions of the two tarpaulin-covered anti-aircraft guns, one at the north-west corner and one at the south-west corner of the flying-field, were also noted.

Although he could not see them from where he lay in cover, Grey Shadow felt that was a safe assumption that there were two similar guns on the other side of the field, one at the south-east corner and the other at the north-east.

But Grey Shadow was not there to work on assumption. What he wanted was fact. And he intended, if possible, to see the positions of the guns on the farther side of the field before marking their location on his plan.

There were, also, two long corrugated iron huts situated beside the balloon sheds which interested him vastly. It was possible that they contained the gas cylinders from which the kite balloon envelopes were filled. But again he did not intend to be content with supposition. If possible, he was determined to find out definitely what those huts contained.

Grey Shadow knew from long experience that the boldest course is very often the safest. So, slipping his sketch-book into his pocket and picking up his butterfly-net, he rose to his feet and walked boldly towards the flying field.

A notice, posted on a gate set in the low hedge which marked the nearest boundary, told him that admission to the station was strictly forbidden. Coolly ignoring the notice he pushed open the gate and smiling amiably, ambled up to the nearest winch party. A sergeant detached himself from the squad and approached.

“You have no right here, mein Herr,” the sergeant said abruptly. “This ground is the property of the military. You must go!”

“But all I want, Herr Offizier,” beamed Grey Shadow, mopping with a silk handkerchief at his perspiring brow, “is a glass of water. You will not refuse me that, surely? It is so warm this morning——”

“I am sorry!” cut in the sergeant firmly. “But you must go!”

“Well, if you say I must, I must, I suppose,” responded Grey Shadow humbly. “But I did not think, Herr Offizier, that a soldier of the Fatherland would be so discourteous as to

refuse one such as me a simple glass of water.”

With that he turned away. The sergeant, flushing under the rebuke, hesitated irresolute a moment, then called him back.

“I am sorry, mein Herr,” he said awkwardly, “but it is not I who am discourteous. It is the regulations. They are very strict. However, I will ask permission——”

Turning to the winch party he rapped out an order, and one of the dungaree-clad mechanics went hastily off towards the balloon sheds to reappear a few moments later with a young lieutenant.

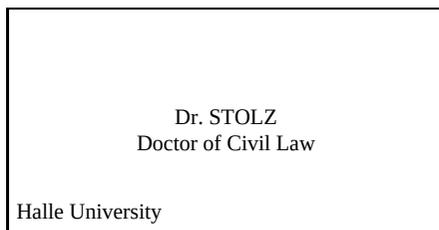
“This gentleman, Herr Leutnant,” explained the sergeant, rigid at attention, “approached me a few moments ago with a request for refreshment——”

“A glass of water,” cut in Grey Shadow. “That is all I require, Herr Leutnant. It is long since I breakfasted, and the morning is very warm.”

The lieutenant nodded, his eyes taking in Grey Shadow’s knickerbocker suit, butterfly-net and haversack.

“Why, certainly, Herr Professor!” he began.

“No, no,” cut in Grey Shadow smilingly. “Not professor, Herr Leutnant. Permit me—my card.” From a thin metal card-case he produced a card and handed it to the lieutenant. The latter took it and glanced with interest at the name:



“Butterfly collecting is my hobby,” went on Grey Shadow. “And, alas!” he sighed, “I have a preponderance of time to devote to it now, for the University is closed and the students to whom I should be lecturing are fighting out yonder on the Western Front.”

“Yes, Herr Doktor, I understand,” replied the lieutenant sympathetically. “But come, permit me to escort you to the mess where, instead of a glass of water, you will perhaps do me the honour of accepting a glass of wine?”

As he and Grey Shadow strolled across the withered grass of the flying-field towards the mess he explained something of the work which was being carried out on the station.

“We have a number of cadets here,” he explained, “undergoing a course of instruction as kite balloon observers before being sent to the Western Front. A certain amount of experimental work is also being carried out. It is very interesting, Herr Doktor.”

“Yes, quite, I have no doubt it is!” murmured Grey Shadow absently. “But look, what do you think of these?” From his haversack he produced his specimen case. Opening it he showed the lieutenant the butterflies inside.

“Are they not splendid?” he exclaimed enthusiastically. “See, here is an excellent specimen of a Red Admiral. And here is a Mazarene Blue.”

The lieutenant displayed a polite interest. But it was easy to see that he was just about as bored with the Herr Doktor's butterflies as the Herr Doktor apparently was with the kite balloons.

Save for the grey-haired adjutant and one or two ground officers, the sparsely-furnished and stone-floored mess was deserted at that hour of the morning. As was necessary, the lieutenant introduced his entomologist friend to the adjutant and explained how he came to be there. The adjutant, seeing no more harm in this amiable and elderly gentleman than had the lieutenant, insisted upon playing host.

"Well, gentlemen," said Grey Shadow at length, setting down his empty wineglass and adjusting his haversacks, "I am indeed deeply appreciative of your kindness, and if I may trespass upon it a little farther I would like to purchase a few sandwiches from the mess steward to serve me for lunch. There is no inn, I believe, nearer than Lagau."

But the adjutant invited the Herr Doktor to lunch at the mess.

After some hesitation, the entomologist gratefully accepted. When he sat down with the grey-clad officers at the long table in the mess he grimly wondered how they would act were they to know that the elderly and scholarly entomologist whom they were entertaining was the notorious British spy, Grey Shadow, on whose head the German High Command had placed a price of fifty thousand marks!

But there was neither fluke nor lucky chance about this invitation to lunch. Grey Shadow had foreseen it—had worked for it from the moment he had decided to emerge from cover and walk boldly on to the flying-field.

As he lunched he chatted away to his immediate neighbours, now talking enthusiastically of his hobby, now deploring the tragedy of the Great War. Once, when he got a really interested hearer, he produced his sketch-book and with almost childish delight showed every drawing and sketch in it.

So well did he establish himself that when lunch was over it was the adjutant himself who strolled with him towards the boundary of the flying-field.

"You do not mind my going this way, of course?" said Grey Shadow, taking a course which led him past the open doors of the two long, corrugated iron huts which had interested him earlier that morning. "But there is a stream beyond your eastern boundary which promises excellent insect possibilities, and if I go by the way I came I will be forced to make a rather long detour to reach it."

The unsuspecting adjutant had not the slightest objection at all, and as Grey Shadow passed the two iron huts a swift and sidelong glance through the open doors told him that they were filled with long gas cylinders for the balloons.

"What fine young fellows these cadets of yours are, Herr Adjutant!" he said suddenly. "It is indeed a terrible thing to think that many of them will so soon be killed out there on the Western Front."

"Yes," agreed the adjutant sombrely. "But war is like that, Herr Doktor."

They walked on in silence then for a little while—a silence broken suddenly by Grey Shadow.

"Well," he said brightly, "there is one thing, Herr Adjutant. Apart from your balloons, your sheds, and your uniforms, there is little here, in these peaceful surroundings, to

remind one of war. Why, there is not even a gun——”

“Oh, yes, there are guns!” laughed the adjutant. “Those tarpaulin-covered things over there, and there, are guns.”

“Really!” murmured Grey Shadow, with interest. “Then you have gunnery practice here as well?”

“No; they are for defensive purposes only,” explained the adjutant. “The Englanders, you see, possess long-distance bombing machines, and should they ever come here we must be prepared for them.”

Then suddenly Grey Shadow clutched his companion by the arm.

“See!” he exclaimed excitedly. “Look there! A perfect specimen of a——” With that he was away, running after a butterfly, with net upraised, leaving the adjutant smiling tolerantly.

“A pity—a pity!” he exclaimed, returning a few moments later and mopping at his brow. “I missed him! Still, I may find him again beyond the boundary.”

“Well, Herr Adjutant”—he held out his hand—“once again permit me to thank you very much indeed for your hospitality. I am more than grateful!”

“You have been more than welcome, Herr Doktor,” returned the adjutant courteously. Then, waiting until his guest had passed through the gate and out into the meadowland beyond, the adjutant turned and retraced his steps towards the sheds.

III

NO CHANCE OF ESCAPE!

Night had come, and not a sound disturbed the stillness of the sleeping countryside. Sitting at the spot where the bomber had dropped him nearly twenty-four hours before, Grey Shadow patiently waited.

He had had a highly successful day, and in the sketch-book in his pocket was a perfect and completed plan of the kite balloon station. Suddenly he tensed, his head inclined in listening attitude. From far away in the night sky had come the faint drone of powerful aero engines.

Rapidly the noise grew in volume, and Grey Shadow peered intently about him in the darkness. But none was abroad at that late hour, and, confident that he was alone on the deserted stretch of moorland, he lowered himself full length to the ground.

From the pocket of his jacket he drew a small electric torch. Holding it with outstretched arm so that the bottom of it rested on the ground, he pressed the switch. Once—twice—thrice the tiny beam of light shone upwards in the darkness. Almost at once the drone of the aero engines, high in the sky, died away.

There followed tense moments of silence, during which Grey Shadow, again on his feet, peered about him, searching the darkness with narrowed eyes. Then to his ears came the faint whir of propellers ticking over and the swish of wind through flying wires and struts. And down out of the night came gliding the black, phantom bulk of the machine which had come to pick him up.

Before it had come to a stop Grey Shadow was running towards it. For he knew full

well the peril which lay in delay. Reaching the machine, he gripped the edge of the rear cockpit.

“Right!” he rapped. “Carry on!”

As he swung himself up and dropped into the rear cockpit beside the sergeant gunner the engines roared into life again, and the machine swept forward into the night. Swinging on the climb, it turned westwards towards the Line, climbing as it went.

The sergeant, standing near Grey Shadow beside the gun-mounting, looked at him curiously. But beyond a respectful observation on the night, he made no comment nor asked any question.

For months now he had served on these night-flying machines which were specially detailed for Secret Service work, and this was far from being the first spy he had seen picked up.

On through the night, homewards towards France, roared the bomber. Then, suddenly, when the altimeter needle was registering eight thousand feet, the darkness was split by the beam of a searchlight, followed by another, and another.

Simultaneously flame burst around the machine, the whiplike crack of exploding shrapnel audible above the thunder of engines. The pilot took the bomber thundering earthwards. Then the machine zoomed up into the night again, to flatten out and roar on, leaving the searchlights groping wildly behind in the darkness.

That was one barrage safely passed! On thundered the machine, driving steadily towards the Line. Minutes passed, then again came probing searchlight rays, accompanied by the crackling of exploding shrapnel from German anti-aircraft guns.

Above and below the bomber, and to port and starboard, the darkness was split by a blood-red flame. Grim of face, the sergeant turned to Grey Shadow.

“They are very close this time, sir!” he shouted, his voice audible above the engines. “They’ve got our range!”

Next instant the machine lurched, flinging him violently against the gun-mounting. Simultaneously, the roar of the engines died away, the nose of the bomber dropped and, out of control, she went plunging earthwards.

In the forward cockpit the white-faced pilot was fighting desperately to regain control. He knew what had happened. A chunk of shrapnel had broken his petrol leads, and all he could hope for now was to make a landing.

At four thousand feet he got the machine on to her gliding angle and took her slipping down through the darkness. Deliberately he kept her nose toward the west, but he knew that he could never make the Line.

At eighty feet he removed his flying-gloves and raised his goggles. His navigating officer, sitting rigid and silent beside him, did the same. They might come out of the impending crash alive, and they were taking the elementary precaution of avoiding being blinded by broken glass from their goggles.

The altimeter needle had ceased to register now, and the ground, somewhere below in the darkness, was very close. Then suddenly, a dark and shadowy blur, it came rushing up to meet them. Next instant there came a terrific crash, followed by a splintering of wood and rending of fabric.

Three kilometres behind the German lines, the machine, which had been sent to bring Grey Shadow from Lagau, lay a wrecked and twisted mass.

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When Grey Shadow next opened his eyes it was to find himself lying in bed in a German field hospital. His head, which ached intolerably, was heavily bandaged, and on each side of his bed was seated a German soldier.

This much he realised before drifting off again into unconsciousness. There followed then what might have been—for all the grasp he had on things—hours or days of restless sleep and semi-consciousness.

Then, one evening at sunset, he awoke, terribly weak, but fully conscious. His head was still bandaged, and a slow and tender exploration with his fingers told him that his ribs were bandaged as well. Two German soldiers were still seated by the side of his bed, and, seeing him awake, one of them rose and moved quietly away and a few moments later returned in the wake of a German doctor and a bearded civilian.

Bending over Grey Shadow, the doctor gave him a brief examination, then spoke in low tones to the bearded civilian. The latter stepped forward.

“My friend,” he said quietly to Grey Shadow, “this is neither the time nor the place in which to ask you any questions. All we wish to know is your name.”

Grey Shadow was silent.

“Visiting-cards found on you,” went on the civilian, “bore the name ‘Dr. Stolz, of Halle University.’ There is no such person. That much we have already ascertained. Further, you are no German. If you are, what were you doing in civilian garb aboard a British aeroplane which was heading for the Line? What is your correct name?”

Again Grey Shadow was silent.

From his pocket the bearded civilian drew a sheet of paper which Grey Shadow recognised as being a page from his sketch-book.

“I am attached to the German Intelligence Bureau,” went on his inquisitor, “and as you do not appear willing to talk, perhaps this will interest you!”

He held the sheet of paper so that Grey Shadow could see it. It was a sketch of a butterfly, and from the butterfly there had been projected a plan of the kite balloon station near Lagau.

“It is we who have done this projection,” went on the civilian harshly, “after a searching and careful examination of your sketches. You are an English spy, my friend, and we are not in much doubt as to your identity!”

“No?” whispered Grey Shadow, his bloodless lips twisting in a faint smile.

“No!” retorted the other. “We believe you to be that notorious English spy, Grey Shadow, on whose head there is a price of fifty thousand marks. However, as soon as you are well enough to be moved, you will be identified by men who have met you here in Germany and you will be tried on charges of espionage against this country!” With that he turned and moved away.

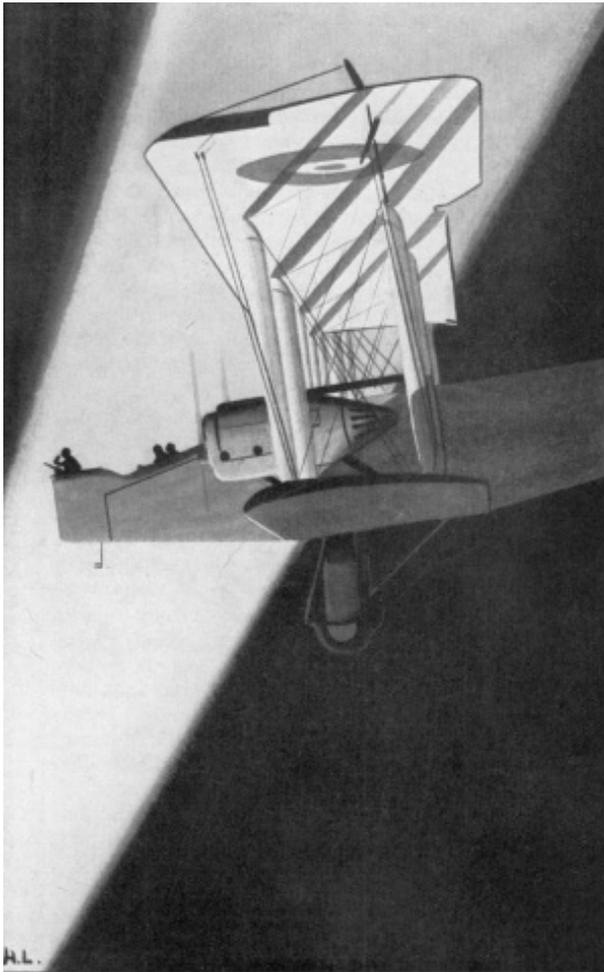
Grey Shadow closed his eyes. So this was the end. For long months now he had pitted his wits against those of the German Intelligence Bureau, and always he had known what

his fate must be should he lose in the game which he was playing.

Well, he had lost now. Weak and helpless as he was and strongly guarded as he would be, there would be no chance of escape. Gregorius Raschel, chief of the German Secret Service, would see to that.

As he lay there, Grey Shadow heard in his mind the crash of musketry which would spell his end.

With his back against a barrack wall, he would be shot as a spy!



ONCE A BLINDING GLARE FLOODED THE FORWARD
COCKPIT AS THE SEARCHLIGHT BEAM SETTLED UPON
THE MACHINE

CHAPTER X
THE MASTER SPY!

I

"MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE"

GENERAL OSTEN, MILITARY COMMANDANT of Metz, looked up from his paper-strewn table at the sergeant standing rigidly at attention in front of him.

"Sergeant Zworg," he said harshly, "you will take command of the escort which has been detailed to convey the English prisoner from the military hospital here to the fort at Strasburg.

"You will proceed at once to the hospital with the escort, and will take over the prisoner. A compartment has been reserved for you on a train which is leaving for Strasburg in"—he glanced at his wrist-watch—"exactly fifty minutes."

Leaning forward in his chair, he tapped the table impressively with his forefinger.

"You will take every precaution. Sergeant Zworg," he continued, "to see that the prisoner does not escape. We believe the man to be that notorious English spy, Grey Shadow, and I am holding you personally responsible for his safe delivery to the Commandant of the Fort of Strasburg!"

"I understand, sir!"

"I sincerely hope you do, Sergeant Zworg," nodded the commandant grimly. "The man has proved himself a slippery customer, and, if he escapes, you will be shot!"

The sergeant saluted, then, wheeling, strode from the room. As he marched from the barracks to the military hospital with the four soldiers comprising the escort, he condescended to tell them something about the prisoner they were to take to Strasburg.

"For you see, I know all about him," he said. "He is a spy, and they think he is that accursed Englander, Grey Shadow. He was found unconscious amidst the wreckage of a British night-flying machine which was shot down three kilometres behind our lines whilst flying westwards towards France."

"And we are taking him to Strasburg for trial, I suppose," grunted one of the soldiers.

"For trial, certainly!" snapped the sergeant, obviously vexed at this display of intelligence on the part of one who was not supposed to have any brains. "But General Osten did not tell me that he was being taken to Strasburg for trial. I happen to know it. It has been common talk in the sergeants' mess at the barracks here for the last forty-eight hours. And there is another thing I know, as well."

"And what is that, sergeant, if one is permitted to ask?" inquired one of the escort.

"Herr Raschel himself," said the sergeant, "is coming to Strasburg for the trial, and he is Chief of the German Secret Service!"

"It is a great honour then, to be selected as escort for such a prisoner," commented another of the soldiers. "Maybe there will be promotion for us when we have handed him

safely over to the Commandant of Strasburg Fort?”

“There will be a shooting party for me if we don’t hand him over safely,” growled Sergeant Zworg. “And that, I do not doubt, applies to the four of you, as well.”

Reaching the military hospital, the sergeant gave the necessary official papers to the officer on duty, and, with the escort, was taken along the corridor and to a room, outside the locked door of which an armed sentry was on duty. Entering, with his escort at his heels, Sergeant Zworg stared curiously at the civilian-clad man who rose to his feet at their entrance.

He still looked very weak and shaky, this prisoner. His head was heavily bandaged, and his clear-cut features were very pale.

“I am to take you to Strasburg,” said Sergeant Zworg harshly.

“I understand,” Grey Shadow replied quietly.

Turning, Sergeant Zworg barked out an order to the escort. They closed in about Grey Shadow, and, in their midst, he was marched from the room—just as he was, without hat or overcoat. For there were none who would be so stupid as to find such things as those for a miserable English spy!

The passage of escort and prisoner through the streets to the railway station did not go unobserved by either the civilians or the soldiers who thronged the pavements. And many were the questions put to the sergeant and his men.

To the majority of his questioners Sergeant Zworg returned very curt replies, telling them nothing. But to others, who were obviously of greater respectability, or of higher rank, he was civil enough, informing them that the prisoner was a captured English spy. And because Metz was being daily and nightly bombed by British aircraft, many was the bitter word and jeer that came Grey Shadow’s way from onlookers.

At the railway station, pausing only long enough at the barrier to have the papers of himself and his escort stamped, Sergeant Zworg hurried his prisoner to the reserved compartment of the waiting train.

“You will sit here,” he said to Grey Shadow, indicating the middle of one of the seats. “No, not in that corner. Between two of the soldiers.”

Having seen the prisoner safely seated between two of the escort, with the other two facing him, Sergeant Zworg turned his attention to the doors, taking the precaution of having both of them locked.

“There!” he said, dumping his haversack on the rack and settling himself in a corner. “Make yourself comfortable, my Englander, for you will remain where you are until we reach Strasburg.”

Out on the platform a bell rang, there came the hiss of escaping steam, the clank of couplings, and slowly the train for Strasburg slid out of the station.

With hands clasped between his knees, Grey Shadow sat staring out at the flat panorama of countryside slipping past the compartment windows.

II

“GET THE ENGLANDER!”

A week had passed since that fateful night when the machine which had been bringing him back from Germany had been shot down behind the German lines. And now, after six days spent in the military hospital of Metz, he was on his way to Strasburg to be tried—and shot!

He had no illusions about his fate, no false hopes that he would escape a firing-party. Whether or not the German authorities proved that he was indeed Grey Shadow did not matter overmuch. With the plan of the kite balloon station near Lagau on him, he had been caught red-handed as a spy. The evidence against him was overwhelming. The trial would be but a matter of form.

As he sat there, staring with unseeing eyes at the landscape slipping past, knowing full well what lay in store for him, one might have wondered what were his thoughts.

Certainly Sergeant Zworg did. For suddenly that individual said:

“In case you have forgotten the warning I gave you before you left the military hospital, my men have orders to shoot at the first sign of an attempt at escape.”

Grey Shadow paid no heed. It seemed, indeed, as though he had not heard. And that only served to render Sergeant Zworg vaguely uneasy.

Was this spy, he asked himself, turning over in his mind some plan of escape? No, that was impossible. What earthly chance was there of escape? The windows of the compartment were closed, and the doors were locked—and would remain locked until the train reached Strasburg.

Still, Sergeant Zworg wasn't going to take any chances, and so throughout the journey his watchful eyes rarely left Grey Shadow.

Under normal conditions the journey to Strasburg would not have taken many hours. But these were days of war, and time and again the train was shunted into some siding whilst crowded troop trains and heavy ammunition trains thundered past en route for the Western Front.

Night had come before the train from Metz steamed into Strasburg station. The door unlocked, Sergeant Zworg descended with his prisoner and escort to the platform. And he was heartily glad to find waiting for him a sergeant from the fort, accompanied by two soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets.

This addition to the escort, bringing its total up to six soldiers and two sergeants, definitely rendered escape absolutely out of the question, and it was in a much more comfortable frame of mind that Sergeant Zworg set off with his soldiers and prisoner for the fort, which was situated on the western bank of a canal which connected with the adjacent waters of the Rhine.

The night was dark and, save for an occasional military patrol, the streets of Strasburg were practically deserted at that late hour.

It was the sergeant from the fort who led the way. Reaching the tram terminus where the road petered out, he turned on to a wide towpath along which, half a kilometre distant, stood the iron gates of the fort.

Grey Shadow, with two soldiers in front of him, one on each side of him, and two behind, walked with head bent and shoulders slumped dejectedly. To all outward appearances, he was completely and hopelessly resigned to his fate. But his hands were clenched, and more than once he glanced covertly at the dark and silent waters of the

canal only a few feet away on his right.

Then suddenly and with amazing swiftness he acted, hurling himself against the slouching soldier on his right. Taken completely by surprise, the soldier staggered wildly, his shout of alarm terminating suddenly in a heavy splash as he went backwards into the waters of the canal, with Grey Shadow on top of him.

With such astounding rapidity had the thing happened that the escort were momentarily dumbfounded. It was Sergeant Zworg who brought them to their senses and to action.

“Fire, you stupid fools!” he roared, bullets from his own automatic zip-zipping into the dark and swirling waters. “But our comrade!” remonstrated one of the escort wildly. “He will be hit!”

“I don’t care if he is hit!” screamed Sergeant Zworg. “Fire, you stupid pigs! Get the Englander. If he escapes, every one of you will be shot!”

A ragged volley crashed out, then, bullets spattering into the water. The face of a swimming man, a grey blur in the water below them, brought a sudden cessation of the firing.

The man splashed in towards the bank, and raised a groping hand. Bending down, the escort clutched him and hauled him out. It was their comrade, spluttering and half-drowned, and minus his rifle and cap. Sergeant Zworg prodded him savagely in the ribs.

“Where is the Englander, you animal?” he shouted. “Where is he?”

But the answer to that question was known only to the dark and silent waters. For Grey Shadow was gone.

“Perhaps he has got a bullet through the head, sergeant,” suggested one of the escort shakily.

“Or perhaps he has managed by this time to swim across the canal,” suggested another. Next instant that individual staggered back from a savage blow from the clenched fist of the furious Sergeant Zworg.

III

INTO THE CABIN

Fat Johann Gruntz, part owner and skipper of the old tub-like barge, Prinzregent Luitpold, moored against the eastern bank of the canal, was finding life particularly satisfying that night.

Seated in his stuffy little cabin in shirt and trousers, and with beer mug, pipe, and tobacco-jar to hand, he was deriving vast entertainment from the columns of the three-days-old copy of the *Berliner Zeitung* newspaper which he was reading.

It was a really splendid newspaper. For was it not always telling of victories and of advances made by the field-grey heroes of the Fatherland? And, too, it was such a very funny newspaper, with its caricatures and comic pictures of the Englander soldiers.

Fat Johann suddenly tensed, head inclined in listening attitude. A tread of thickly booted feet on the short gang-plank which connected with the bank was followed by a heavier clumping on the deck directly above his head.

“Now, who can that be?” demanded Johann, laying down his newspaper and hoisting himself from his chair. Before he could reach the cabin door, it was thrown open, and a corporal, with two soldiers at his heels, strode in.

At sight of them Johann paled, his jaw dropped, and he clutched at the chair for support.

“You cannot take me!” he gasped. “I—I am too old. And, besides, my heart. Two military tribunals have refused me! Yes, at Heilbronn and at Heidelberg——”

“What’s wrong with you, idiot?” snapped the corporal. “Have you been drinking?”

“No, no!” wheezed Johann. “But I know who you are. You are a military picket conscripting river men for the army. But you cannot conscript me. You cannot, I tell you. I am ferrying important food supplies. And the tribunals of Heilbronn and Heidelberg have refused to pass me——”

“We’re not after your carcass this time!” cut in the corporal roughly. “An English spy has escaped, and every barge on the canal is being searched. You have seen nothing of him, of course?”

“No, I have not!” responded Johann. “An English spy, you say? Then that, I suppose, will account for the shooting and the shouting which I heard about an hour ago. I thought,” he added, with engaging candour, “that it was some of you soldiers from the fort having a quarrel!”

“Yes, that is the sort of thing a bladder like you would think!” snapped the corporal. “Well, we are now going to search this tub of yours. And if we find the spy, you will be shot for having harboured him!”

Turning, he rapped out an order, and he and his two men withdrew, clumped up the short ladder, and commenced a thorough search of the darkened deck and hold.

Fat Johann, in shirt, trousers, and carpet slippers, followed them up the ladder and waddled about in their wake. As the careful search revealed no sign of the fugitive, his apprehension lessened, his confidence grew, and he began to wax sarcastic.

“But you have not looked beneath that piece of rope,” he jeered, “nor in the stove in the galley. Perhaps he has squeezed himself up the smoke-pipe. Or perhaps he has hung himself on a hook behind the door and is pretending to be an overcoat!”

“Come, come, let us have a proper search, my corporal! Nothing slipshod or careless, you know. You have not looked in my sea-boots! See, I will hasten and get them!”

At that moment he got something else—a kick from the corporal which propelled him head-first into the galley.

“You—you do that again!” he spluttered, wheeling red-faced and wrathful and frantically rubbing the injured portion of his anatomy.

“I will, if you don’t shut that great dug-out of a mouth of yours!” promised the corporal gratingly.

“I suggest, corporal,” grunted one of the soldiers, “that we drop the pig into the canal before we go!”

“That,” responded the corporal grimly, “is what I intend to do!”

This threat had the effect of sending fat Johann hurrying frenziedly down the ladder and into his cabin, from behind the locked door of which he contented himself with

shouting rude remarks to the searchers up on deck.

The sudden heavy tread of the corporal descending the ladder caused him to retreat precipitately from the neighbourhood of the door.

“We are going now!” shouted the corporal through the panels, after having tried the handle. “But we will be back for you. The age limit is to be raised next week, and General Ludendorf has said that in future fat men only are to be used as shock troops!”

“Liar!” jeered Johann. “Yah!” Waiting until the corporal had ascended the ladder and all sound had died away, Johann unlocked the cabin door and cautiously mounted to the deserted deck.

“No wonder we are taking so long to win the War when such as they are in the Army!” he muttered. A moment or two he stood there, inhaling the cool night air. Then, descending again to his cabin, he picked up his newspaper and resumed his interrupted reading.

Minutes passed and nothing broke the stillness save the rustle of the newspaper and an occasional faint creak from the heavy mooring ropes above. Then suddenly Johann raised his head. What made him do so he hardly knew. But, deeply engrossed in his paper though he had been, there had come to him the sudden and unaccountable feeling that he was not alone.

As he stared in the direction of the cabin door his eyes suddenly dilated and his mouth opened, to remain foolishly agape.

For, standing in the doorway, was a hatless man in soaking civilian clothes, regarding him intently and holding in his hand a long carving knife which he had obviously taken from the galley.

“Donner und blitzen!” gasped Johann.

“One word from you,” whispered the stranger menacingly, “one move from you, and it will be your last!” With knife poised he stepped swiftly across the threshold into the cabin, kicking shut the door behind him.

“Who—who are you?” gasped Johann. Then came sudden, unnerving enlightenment, and he added hoarsely: “You are the—the English spy!”

“None other,” responded the stranger. “I was on the deck when the soldiers came, and I went overboard into the canal again until they had gone.”

“But—but what do you want with me?” stuttered Johann.

“Nothing, except prompt and implicit obedience to every order I give you,” replied Grey Shadow. “Stand up!”

Weak at the knees, Johann slowly rose.

“Now turn round and put your hands behind your back!”

“Aw-aw-w!” moaned Johann, his terrified gaze on the knife-blade, “you’re going to stab me——”

“I certainly am if you give me any trouble!” rasped Grey Shadow. “Turn round!”

Quivering with terror Johann turned.

“Put your hands behind your back!”

Again the terrified Johann obeyed, and felt a length of rope bite into his fleshy wrists,

binding them tightly together.

“Now sit down!” ordered Grey Shadow.

Johann reseated himself, and first one ankle and then the other was bound to the chair.

“Who helps you with this barge?” demanded Grey Shadow, straightening up from pulling tight the last knot.

“Only Hans Stugel!” quavered Johann. “No one else!”

“When do you sail?”

“At nine o’clock in the morning.”

“And this Hans Stugel. Where is he?”

“He is ashore at the house of his aunt in the Wasserstrasse.”

“When do you expect him back?”

Johann hesitated, wetting his dry lips with the tip of his tongue.

“I—I expect him back at any moment,” he muttered. “So you had better go. For he is big and strong, is Hans, and if he finds you here——”

“He will not find me here,” cut in Grey Shadow grimly. “And do not lie to me. It is now almost two o’clock in the morning, and as you do not sail until nine there is nothing to bring Hans Stugel aboard at such an early hour as this. Tell me the truth”—he fingered the knife suggestively—“when do you expect him?”

“An—an hour before we sail!” admitted Johann shakily.

“Come,” Grey Shadow laughed, “that is better. So long as you behave sensibly no harm will come to you. Which is Stugel’s locker?”

“That one, there,” replied Johann, with a jerk of his head towards a locker at the side of the cabin. Crossing to the locker, Grey Shadow flung back the lid and rummaged amongst the untidy clothes inside selecting a shirt, a pair of pantaloons and a blouse. Then, with a sudden exclamation he straightened up, a rusted automatic in his hand.

Carefully and thoughtfully he examined the weapon, then turned to Johann.

“Is this the only firearm aboard?” he inquired.

“Yes, it is,” answered Johann hastily, “And it is no good, either. It is old and the trigger-spring is broken.”

“That does not matter,” responded Grey Shadow, laying the gun on the table. “It may serve my purpose.” Stripping off his soaking clothes he donned the dry ones which he had taken from Stugel’s locker, then turned to Johann.

“It was my intention,” he said, “to keep you tied up only until I had got into dry clothes and had got myself a meal. Then I was going to release you, and together we were going to get this barge under way. The finding of this automatic, however, has made me decide to change my plans. I am going ashore for an hour or so.”

“But—but I am not to be left tied, am I?” wheezed Johann plaintively.

“I am afraid you are,” responded Grey Shadow, “and gagged, as well. Also, although you will undoubtedly find it very unpleasant, I must take the precaution of leaving you locked in here in the dark. Where do you keep your identification papers?”

“They—they are in that chest, there,” answered Johann, after frightened hesitation.

Finding the papers, Grey Shadow glanced at them, then slipped them into the ragged

lining of an old cloth cap with a black glazed peak, which he donned and pulled well down over his eyes. He had got rid of his head bandage, and he adjusted the cap to hide the scar which the bandage had been protecting.

A few minutes later, after promising to be back as soon as possible, he mounted the ladder to the deck and stepped ashore, leaving Johann Gruntz securely bound and gagged in the darkness of the locked cabin.

IV

AFTER THE REWARD!

Captain Umsatz, Chief of the Strasburg police, had been roused abruptly from his bed that night. The notorious English spy, Grey Shadow, had, it appeared, escaped from his escort when almost within the very shadow of the walls of the fort to which he was being taken for trial and sentence. And every available policeman was being mobilised to assist the military in the search for the man.

Seated in his office and keeping in constant touch by telephone with the fort and the other police stations, Captain Umsatz was suddenly interrupted by the excited entry of Police-sergeant Schlag.

“Well, what is it now, Schlag?” demanded Umsatz impatiently.

“Herr Hauptmann,” exclaimed the sergeant, rigid at attention, “there is a man outside who says that he knows the whereabouts of the English spy! But he refuses to tell me anything. He demands to see you.”

“Then bring him in!”

Sergeant Schlag hastily withdrew, to reappear a few moments later with a pale-faced, slouching fellow dressed in pantaloons and blouse, and with a dirty cloth cap with black, glazed peak pulled well down over his eyes.

“Well, who are you?” demanded Umsatz sharply.

“My name is Kaspar Haag, Herr Hauptmann,” responded the other jauntily. “Rejected for military service by the tribunals of Augsburg and Hatisbon and now on tramp in search of work.”

“Yes, yes,” said Captain Umsatz impatiently, stretching out his hand. “And you know something of this Grey Shadow, eh? First let me see your papers!”

“I have lost my papers,” the other announced, and shrugged his shoulders.

“Lost your papers?” repeated Umsatz angrily. “Do you know that to be without identification papers is a most serious offence and one which can earn for you a severe sentence of imprisonment?”

“Yes, I know all that, Herr Hauptmann,” jeered the other. “That is why I have walked in here to-night—to tell you that I have lost my papers. I have not come to talk about the Englander for whom you are all looking. Oh, no! I have come to be put in the cells for losing my papers!”

“Insolence will not help you!” rapped Captain Umsatz.

“No; and wasting time making a fuss about my papers will not help *you*, Herr Hauptmann,” retorted the other. “But”—with a shrug—“if you want to put me in a cell for

not having my papers, then that is all right with me. I do not mind. But I think *you* will be made to mind very much when the military learn of your stupidity in not listening to what I have to say about this English spy!”

“Well, what have you to say about him?” demanded Captain Umsatz, his voice quivering with suppressed anger. “What do you know about him?”

“I know where he is hiding,” the other grinned slyly.

“Where?” Captain Umsatz demanded eagerly.

“I am sorry, Herr Hauptmann,” was the response, “but I do not intend to tell you that. My news is for the ears of one man only. And I do not intend to tell even him where this Grey Shadow is hiding—until he promises that I shall have the fifty thousand marks reward offered for the spy’s capture.”

With an obvious effort Captain Umsatz kept control of himself.

“To whom are you referring now?” he demanded. “Who is this man who must promise you the reward before you will divulge the information which you say you have?”

“He is Herr Raschel,” replied the other coolly—“Chief of the German Secret Service, and at present in Strasburg.”

Umsatz leapt to his feet.

“What do you know of Herr Raschel?” he thundered. “And how does a scoundrelly vagrant like you come to know he is in Strasburg?”

“Because it is common talk amongst the soldiers of the fort,” explained the vagrant. “I was in the Geschutz Café to-night with the soldiers, and they were talking about Herr Raschel. He is in Strasburg specially to attend the trial of the English spy to-morrow, they said. But, unless I see him, there will be no trial. For the spy will escape.”

“You will tell me here and now!” said Umsatz gratingly, “all you know about Grey Shadow.”

“No, I will not,” refused the other stubbornly. “I will tell only Herr Raschel. And, I repeat, I will not tell even him until he has promised me the reward.”

“Do you—do you realise that you can be shot for withholding this information?” choked Umsatz.

“But, my dear Herr Hauptmann,” drawled the vagrant, “I am not withholding the information. Take me to Herr Raschel’s hotel, and I will tell him—yes, and in your presence, if you like—just where Grey Shadow is hiding.”

Captain Umsatz hesitated, staring hard at the shabbily clad man in front of him.

“There is just this question I wish to ask you,” he said harshly. “How did you come by this information which you say you possess?”

“That I will tell you,” responded the other. “After leaving the Geschutz Café I walked along the bank of the canal in the darkness, and I saw a man in civilian clothes drag himself out of the water. I followed him and saw him go to cover.”

Captain Umsatz hesitated no longer. Picking up the telephone, he spoke into it for a few moments. Then he turned to Kaspar Haag.

“I am to take you to Herr Raschel’s hotel,” he said briskly. “Sergeant Schlag, you will order a police car at once!”

On their arrival at the hotel where Gregorius Raschel was staying, Captain Umsatz and Kaspar Haag found Raschel's secretary, a pale and tired-looking young man, impatiently awaiting them in the hotel lobby.

"Will you please come this way?" said the secretary, with a curious stare at the slouching Haag. He led the way to a room upstairs.

Gregorius Raschel, in pyjamas and dressing-gown, rose from an armchair at Umsatz's entry.

"Well, Herr Hauptmann," he said sharply and without any preamble, "where is this man who has information about Grey Shadow——"

He broke off, his gaze travelling beyond Umsatz to the blue-bloused Kaspar Haag.

In that moment an extraordinary change came over Raschel. His hands clenched, his eyes blazed, and he took one involuntary step forward, then stood as though paralysed.

"You?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, me!" answered Kaspar Haag harshly, and as he kicked the door shut behind him, a revolver appeared as though by magic in his hand. "*And put your hands up—the three of you!*"

Umsatz and the secretary wheeled in amaze. Then, under the threat of that menacing barrel, their hands, like those of Raschel, crept waveringly upwards.

"And keep them up!" grated Kaspar Haag. "Now get back against that wall—and quickly!"

Raschel obeyed, moving like an automaton, his blazing eyes never for an instant leaving the face of the man behind the revolver.

"You—you rat!" he choked. "I know you——"

"Grey Shadow!" ejaculated Umsatz.

Kaspar Haag glanced at him.

"Yes, I am Grey Shadow!" he said. "No, keep your hands up! I will shoot the first one of you to make a false move!" With a jerk of his head in the direction of a small safe against the wall, he addressed the secretary. "Open that safe!" he commanded.

Avoiding Raschel's furious eyes, the secretary dropped on his knees by the safe and, with trembling fingers, commenced to fumble with the combination.

"You must be wondering, Herr Raschel," drawled Grey Shadow, "why I have come here like this to-night. I will tell you.

"When I cross the Line, I am going to take some information with me. And it occurred to me that amongst your private papers there must, without doubt, be something of more than passing interest to my Government. Ah, the safe is open! Give me those two sealed envelopes there," he ordered the kneeling secretary, "and also the contents of that leather portfolio!"

The secretary obeyed, and, still keeping the three men covered, Grey Shadow stuffed the papers into his pockets.

"And now, Herr Raschel," he said, groping behind him for the handle of the door, "and you, Hauptmann Umsatz, and you, Herr Secretary, I will bid you good-night!"

The two policemen, waiting in the police car in front of the hotel, saw the blue-

bloused figure of Grey Shadow dash out into the street. But before they could move, or even grasp the situation, Grey Shadow had gone, running madly along the deserted pavement towards the canal.

It was the darkest hour of all the night—the hour before the dawn. Avoiding the few nocturnal prowlers who were about, he reached the barge and descended to the cabin. Fat Johann was where he had been left, and after lighting the lamp and removing the fat one's gag, Grey Shadow addressed him:

"We are leaving at once—you and I, aboard this barge! How long I will remain with you I do not know. Maybe it will be only until we get clear of Strasburg. But whilst I am aboard I am your new hand. Remember that!

"Should you try to betray me in any way, it will be the last thing you will ever do. The military might get me—but, if it is through you, then I will get you first. Do you understand?"

"Y-yes!" quavered Johann.

"Very good! And as we do not want Hans Stugel taking a train and following the barge to find out why you have sailed without him, you are going to write him a note, with his wages enclosed, saying that you have shipped a new hand and will not want him any more.

"I am going to release your hands so that you can write the note. I will take it to the lock-keeper along the bank there, then come back here, release you, and help you to get the barge under way!"

Half an hour later, the barge Prinzregent Luitpold, bound for Mulhausen, moved slowly out of the canal and breasted the waters of the Rhine.

At the long-handled tiller, jerseyed and wearing a woollen helmet, lounged Grey Shadow, a pipe between his teeth. His eyes, as he stared ahead, were sombre and reflective. He was going to make for the Swiss frontier. He had already decided that. But he knew full well that it would take every atom of his skill and courage to win through.

For the Swiss frontier was always strongly guarded, and he might find it impossible to get across.

Although free for the moment, he was virtually trapped. And unless he found a way out of the trap—out of Germany—without delay, he knew that he would never live to see England again!

CHAPTER XI

GREY SHADOW ON THE RUN!

I

“IS IT A BARGAIN?”

As the hours had passed, however, Johann had seemed to become more resigned to the state of affairs existing aboard the barge. Grey Shadow, watching him closely, had noted a peculiar change. Johann's surliness had gradually passed, and now, as he sat facing Grey Shadow across the breakfast table, he was becoming almost jocular.

“You are staying aboard as far as Mulhausen, you say?” Johann asked. “Well, I have carried many strange cargoes in my time, and many strange passengers, but never anything or anyone quite so strange as you, mein Herr. What a story it will make amongst the river folk when you have gone!”

“Yes,” assented Grey Shadow drily. “But a story which you will be well advised to keep to yourself, my friend, unless you want to get into serious trouble with the authorities.”

“Ah, yes!” Johann winked. “I shall be most discreet. I shall say little until the war is over. Then I shall tell of how once I was forced to carry a British spy. What a story that will make along the Rhine!” He leaned forward in his chair, his fat arms, bare to the elbow, folded on the table in front of him.

“Tell me,” he said curiously, “do you really think you will escape? Do you really think you will get out of Germany?”

“Why do you ask that?” Grey Shadow demanded.

“Because I do not think you will,” answered Johann. “I am not a fool, and I know that it must be your intention to make for the Swiss frontier. Well, that frontier is so strongly guarded that you will never get across. There is high barbed wire running along its whole length. There are German soldiers on one side and Swiss soldiers on the other. And I will tell you something else:

“Many of these Swiss soldiers are in the pay of the German Government. Well, perhaps not exactly in the pay of the government. But they get so much money for every deserter and escaped prisoner of war whom they apprehend and return back across the frontier into Germany.

“I know it. Now, listen!” He glanced round the cabin and hitched his chair closer to the table, his voice sinking to a hoarse whisper. “What would you say if I were to tell you that I am prepared to help you?”

“I would say you were a liar!” responded Grey Shadow curtly.

“Ah, and that is where you are wrong,” went on Johann, his voice quivering with excitement. “I have been thinking deeply about this thing, mein Herr, and I say that I am prepared to help you—for a consideration. Your government is wealthy, and you cannot be a poor man——”

"I am an extremely poor man," cut in Grey Shadow.

"Well, that does not matter," responded Johann. "Your government has money and they will pay to see you safely out of Germany. A note from you, instructing the Bank of Switzerland or, perhaps safer for me, the Bank of Holland to pay me a sum equal to three hundred pounds in English money would be honoured, I do not doubt.

"For three hundred pounds I will help you to get out of Germany. My papers permit me to trade into Switzerland, and I have a friend at Mulhausen, a maker of wooden boxes and packing cases, whose goods I often carry across the frontier.

"I can get a small cargo from him and, passing you off as my nephew, can get you safely into Swiss territory. And I will do that for three hundred pounds. What do you say? Is it a bargain?"

"No, it is not," said Grey Shadow curtly as he thrust back his chair and rose.

"But why?"

"Because I do not trust you."

Lumbering to his feet, Johann waddled round the table and clutched the arm of Grey Shadow, who was making towards the door.

"For three hundred pounds," he breathed, his little eyes glinting greedily, "I would do anything. I have not that much liking for the military, for the war lords, that I would hand you over to them——"

"You seem to forget," cut in Grey Shadow, "that there would be fifty thousand marks reward for you if you did hand me over. That is more than three hundred pounds, my friend."

"Yes, I know it is," agreed Johann, "but I cannot hand you over. And you know it. Why, what am I but your prisoner aboard this barge? I am powerless to hand you over to the military and earn the fifty thousand marks.

"But I tell myself that I am not powerless to take the other course and, for three hundred pounds in English money, help you to escape. You follow me, eh?"

"Oh, yes, I follow you!" assented Grey Shadow. "But I do not require your assistance, my friend."

"And that is where you are so very foolish," retorted Johann, "as you will realise when you have failed to get across the frontier and are once again in the hands of the military. For three hundred pounds I can get you out of Germany. You are a clever man, and you know it. We reach Schlettst this evening and I will go ashore and telegraph to my friend at Mulhausen to have a cargo for Switzerland in readiness——"

"You will do nothing of the sort," interposed Grey Shadow. "You will stay aboard here!" Disengaging his arm from the other's grasp, he quitted the cabin and mounted to the deck, leaving Johann staring after him.

II

STARTLING VISITORS!

Lounging by the long-handled tiller of the lazily moving barge, Grey Shadow puffed slowly and reflectively at his pipe, pondering on Johann's offer. He could quite see the fat

rogue's point of view. Having come to the conclusion that he was not in a position to hand Grey Shadow over to the authorities, Johann was prepared, for three hundred pounds, to help Grey Shadow escape.

His aid, provided he was to be trusted, would be invaluable. And Grey Shadow knew that a three hundred pounds I O U on either the Bank of Switzerland or on the Bank of Holland would readily be met by the British Government.

Suddenly he straightened up. Knocking out his pipe, he shouted for Johann. In response, the fat, unshaven face of the master of the barge rose into view above the hatch, and he came aft.

"I have been thinking over your offer," commenced Grey Shadow, "and I feel inclined to accept it."

"Good, good!" exclaimed Johann delightedly. "You will never regret it, mein Herr _____"

"That remains to be seen," cut in Grey Shadow. "I am not over-sure of you, my friend, and I warn you that I shall watch you closely. If I see the slightest sign of treachery, you will never reach Mulhausen alive!"

"There will be no need to watch me—no need at all," Johann assured him eagerly. "I am an honest man, and my word is my bond. I have said that for three hundred pounds I will help you to get out of Germany. And I mean it. Now we must arrange about the payment of the money."

"I will give you a draft on the Bank of Holland when we are ready to part company," said Grey Shadow. "And not before."

"But how do I know I can trust you?" asked Johann.

"But how do I know I can trust you?" demanded Grey Shadow.

There was a moment of silence whilst Johann thought this over. Then:

"We must both trust each other. That is it, is it not, mein Herr? Well, I am satisfied."

"All right. Get below and get those dishes washed!"

"Certainly, mein Herr."

Johann hurried away. But once down in the privacy of the little cabin, his fat face became wreathed in an oily smile, and he finished the washing up in a more jovial frame of mind than he had known since they had cast off their moorings at Strasburg.

Dusk was falling when he and Grey Shadow tied up for the night beside the wooden swing-bridge which spanned the canal at Schlettst.

"And now," said Johann, when the last rope had been made secure. "I will go and tidy myself and go ashore."

"You won't!" retorted Grey Shadow. "You will not leave the barge until we reach Mulhausen."

"But, mein Herr," Johann protested, "did we not agree to trust each other?"

"Yes," replied Grey Shadow grimly, "but my trust in you is the sort which would expire the moment you were out of my sight. Get down to the cabin!"

"Oh, very well!" Johann said. "I do not mind. After all, except for the cafés, there are few places for one to go ashore here at Schlettst. But I am sorry you do not trust me, mein

Herr.”

With that he went below, and after a meal of soup, black bread, and coffee, he took off his waistcoat and sat puffing away at his pipe while he read an old newspaper.

As for Grey Shadow, he seemed to prefer the cool night air on deck to the stuffy, smoke-laden atmosphere of the small cabin. And there he sat, perched on a hatch, hands in pockets and pipe aglow, until long after darkness had fallen. Had it been possible, he would have insisted upon pushing straight on to Mulhausen. But there was a certain amount of the barge's general cargo to be unloaded at Schlettst in the morning, and that made a night's delay inevitable.

Still, things were not working out so badly. It was almost forty-eight hours now since he had escaped from his escort, and he was slowly but steadily nearing the frontier. The passage up the Rhine from Strasburg had been wholly uneventful, and the chances of his getting clear away were becoming stronger.

At length, knocking out his pipe, he slipped it into his pocket, and, rising to his feet, descended to the cabin.

“Not turned in yet?” he said to Johann, who was still sitting reading.

“No; but I advise you to,” Johann responded. “Get all the sleep you can, is what I say. For although I am going to help you, things might go wrong, and you will need to be fit and strong to win through.”

“What is in your mind, Johann?” Grey Shadow looked at him curiously.

“Why, what do you mean?” Johann demanded.

“I mean,” answered Grey Shadow, “that I do not understand you to-night. I looked for anger when I refused to allow you to go ashore. But I saw no sign of it. And I looked for sulking towards me when I entered the cabin just now. But, instead, I find solicitude for my health.” He moved closer, his eyes holding those of Johann. “What does it mean, Johann?” he demanded softly. “What is in your mind?”

“Nothing,” responded Johann hoarsely. “Nothing, I swear, except the making of three hundred pounds for getting you out of Germany. You believe me, don't you?”

“It is well for you that I do,” Grey Shadow said, cutting himself a thick slice of black bread and pouring himself out a cup of lukewarm coffee. A sudden step on the deck above, and the sound of shrill and angry voices, caused him to pause, tense and rigid.

“Who is that?” he rasped.

Johann, flustered and looking very guilty, lumbered to his feet.

“Why, I—I scarcely know!” he stammered. “Perhaps it—it may be my wife. You see, my—my home is in Schlettst. I—I forgot to tell you——”

Rapid footsteps descending the ladder outside cut in on his words, and the cabin door was flung violently open to disclose on the threshold a tall, muscular, and infuriated-looking woman.

“What is the meaning of this, Johann Gruntz?” demanded the lady furiously. “Why have you not been home?”

“Why, I—I—that is, I have been detained, my dear,” stammered Johann.

“He is here, Gretchen!” She raised her voice, calling to someone on the deck above.

“Come down!”

A second female then appeared in the doorway of the cabin. She was not unlike number one, and was accompanied by a small, snub-nosed boy with a fat, puddingy sort of face and a vacant expression.

“There!” burst out female number one, indicating with a quivering forefinger the fat Johann. “There is the scoundrel, Gretchen!”

III

ALL FIXED FOR ESCAPE

“Where has he been?” demanded Gretchen, eyeing the wretched Johann as though he were some poisonous reptile.

“Been?” snorted her companion, with a laugh which made Johann wince. “He says he has been detained, the beauty. Detained, indeed!”

She swept forward into the cabin and confronted Johann, eyes blazing and hands on hips.

“Now we will have an explanation!” she exploded. “Why have you not come home to see me and your sister-in-law, Gretchen, and”—she indicated the pudding-faced boy—“your son, Ludwig? Your barge has been moored here since six o’clock this evening, and Gretchen and I have been sitting at home waiting for you, you fat lazy good-for-nothing!”

“But, my dear,” stammered Johann, “I could not get away. Indeed, I could not. This gentleman and I”—he indicated Grey Shadow—“are engaged on the most delicate and important business——”

“Gentleman?” sneered the female, taking scornful stock of Grey Shadow’s shoddy garb. “He looks a gentleman, I must say. Who is he?”

“He is my new deckhand, my dear,” explained Johann. “This—this lady,” he informed Grey Shadow, by way of introduction, “is my wife, Frau Gruntz.”

“I am happy to meet you, Frau Gruntz,” murmured Grey Shadow, with a bow.

“And I am not happy to meet you!” snapped the other. She wheeled on her husband. “Where is Hans Stugel?” she demanded.

“Oh, he—he deserted at Strasburg, my dear!” lied Johann. He was beginning to get a grip both on himself and on the situation. “He deserted, the ungrateful pig. And this gentleman came aboard——”

“Gentleman?” cut in Frau Gruntz angrily. “Why do you keep on referring to this—this river rat as a gentleman?”

“Because he is a gentleman,” replied Johann, with a grimace, which was intended as a wink, in the direction of Grey Shadow. “He is a wealthy man who has been conscripted into the Army. He does not like being in the Army so he has deserted.”

“A deserter, eh?” snapped Frau Gruntz, staring at Grey Shadow with new interest. “And what is he doing aboard here?” she demanded.

“I am helping him to get out of the country,” replied Johann. “No, do not interrupt, my dear. Wait until you have heard what I have to say. I am getting well paid for this—yes,

five thousand marks!”

“Do you mean to tell me”—Frau Gruntz stared at him in amazement—“that you are getting five thousand marks from this man for helping him to desert?”

“Yes, I am,” answered Johann stoutly. “And it is a lot of money.”

“It is,” admitted his wife. “But has he got such a sum?”

“He has,” asserted Johann. “I have seen his bank-book. He has property in Munich.”

Frau Gruntz was silent. Obviously she was impressed. Had anyone ever voiced a doubt as to her patriotism, Frau Gruntz would have hotly asserted that she was a true daughter of the Fatherland. But five thousand marks was five thousand marks. And if she and her husband handed the deserter over to an escort they might not get so much as “Thank you!”

“But this aiding a deserter is dangerous,” she announced.

“I know it is,” admitted Johann. “But I am not frightened of a little bit of danger when there are five thousand marks at stake.” He took Grey Shadow by the arm. “Perhaps you will excuse us for a few moments,” he said, leading him towards the cabin door. “I would like to speak to my wife in private.”

Once outside the cabin, he whispered to Grey Shadow:

“You see my game? I am telling them you are a deserter. That is very clever. I will talk them round to my way of thinking. I know my wife. She will do anything for five thousand marks.”

“I do not see,” replied Grey Shadow, “why you should have mentioned our little affair at all.”

“But I had to,” protested Johann. “You saw what a fuss they were kicking up about my not having gone home. And, after all, my wife is a very capable woman. It is best that she knows. She might be able to suggest some other plan. There”—he patted Grey Shadow on the shoulder—“you go up on deck whilst I talk to them.”

Waiting until Grey Shadow had ascended to the deck, Johann re-entered the cabin and softly closed the door behind him.

“Ssh!” he breathed, a fat forefinger on his lips. “You must go at once to the police. That man is not a deserter. He is a British spy, and there is a price of fifty thousand marks on his head!”

“What?” ejaculated Frau Gruntz.

“Ssh, ssh!” begged Johann agitatedly. “It is true. I have lulled him into a sense of complete security by promising to help him. Now go, and bring the police back here quickly. There will be fifty thousand marks for us when the police have arrested him!”

“I thought you said he was a deserter?” Frau Gruntz snapped.

“No, I tell you he is not a deserter. He is a spy. Go and get the police!”

“Very well!” said Frau Gruntz grimly. “I will. I will bring them back here. But if you have been lying to me, Johann Gruntz——”

“Can you not believe me, woman?” cut in Johann frenziedly. “Go and tell the police that Grey Shadow is aboard the Prinzregent Luitpold!”

Frau Gruntz turned to her companion and snapped:

“Come! And you, Ludwig!”

“Yes, and keep your mouth shut, brat, on your way to the police station,” warned Ludwig’s fond father, “or I’ll lay a rope’s-end about you!”

Then up the ladder Johann went, behind his wife, sister-in-law, and pudding-faced son, and, having escorted them to the bank, he returned to where Grey Shadow was leaning against the hatch.

“Well, it is all fixed,” he whispered, rubbing his podgy hands together. “I insisted that you were a deserter, and they have agreed that I am to help you get out of the country.”

Straightening up, Grey Shadow laid his hand on Johann’s arm.

“You are very good, Johann,” he said softly, “and I would like to give you something now for your trouble. Come over here!”

He led Johann across the deck to the side farther away from the bank.

“Well, and what is it you want to give me?” demanded Johann.

“Just this,” replied Grey Shadow.

Releasing Johann’s arm, he stepped back. Next instant his wooden-saboted foot flashed up, taking Johann square on the copious seat of his pantaloons.

There was every atom of Grey Shadow’s strength behind that kick, and, with a howl, the astonished master of the barge vanished overboard and disappeared with a resounding splash into the dark waters of the canal.

Gasping and spluttering, he came to the surface, and, as he did so, the cool voice of Grey Shadow addressed him from the deck of the barge.

“I never trusted you, Johann. But I did wonder what your game was. And I found out when your wife came aboard. You knew she would come here to find out why you had not gone home. And when she came you meant to tell her the truth about me. I do not doubt that now she is hastening to either the nearest barracks or to the police station to tell them that Grey Shadow is here.

“It is all so obvious, my dear Johann, that I wonder you thought me stupid enough to be taken in by it. Well, good-bye! And many thanks for the trip!”

With that he was gone, swiftly crossing the deck to the canal bank and merging with the darkness.

IV

SEARCHER AND WATCHER

As Grey Shadow walked quickly on through the darkness, he realised that at the best he had but half an hour or so of grace. By the end of that time, if not before, the alarm would have been raised and a thorough combing of Schlettst for him would have commenced.

There were two courses open to him. He could either leave the town immediately and take to the open country, or he could risk remaining in the town provided he changed his attire. This latter precaution was very necessary, for a full description of him would be circulated and close search would be made for a man wearing pantaloons, blouse, sabots, and woollen cap.

Passing through several narrow and smelly streets, Grey Shadow reached the wider and better lighted main thoroughfares. Steadily he walked on, making for the outskirts of the town, and gradually the lighted cafés and shuttered shops gave way to residential houses. These in turn became more scattered, and at length Grey Shadow came to a dark, quiet, tree-lined avenue of gloomy houses standing well back from the road.

Some of the houses were lighted, but one or two were in complete darkness. Sauntering along the avenue Grey Shadow tried the gate of the first darkened house. It swung inwards, creaking on its hinges, indicating that the house had been long in disuse.

Passing on, he tried two more gates before finding one which swung open smoothly and easily. Standing close in against the black shadow of the fence, he scanned the front of the house. Not a light showed anywhere, but he could see the faint glimmer of white blinds and curtains. Satisfied that here was a house in occupation, he removed his sabots, and, placing them carefully where he could find them again without delay should it be necessary, he slipped inside the gate.

Swiftly and silently he crossed the garden which fronted the house and made his way round to the rear. There, motionless in the black shadow of an outhouse, he again scanned the windows.

Convinced that the house was at least temporarily deserted, he moved forward and tried a lower window. It was locked, and, coming to the conclusion that he would have no better luck with any of the other windows, he removed his woollen cap, wrapped it round his clenched fist, broke the window, and groped inside for the latch.

A few moments later he was standing in a room which he found, by the glimmer of a match, to be a large and spotlessly clean kitchen. Crossing to the range, he touched it with his finger. It was warm, evidence that even if the master and mistress of the house were not in residence, some servant was.

Quitting the kitchen. Grey Shadow groped his way up a short flight of wooden stairs. At the top he struck another match and found himself standing in a wide and carpeted hallway.

Before the lighted match burnt out he had got his bearings, and for a few moments he stood tense and motionless, listening with straining ears. Not a sound disturbed the stillness save the faint tick of a clock from a room on his left.

Turning, Grey Shadow felt for the balustrade of the stairs which led to the upper floors and softly ascended. By the aid of his matches he discovered a large bedroom on the first floor. First taking the precaution of lowering the blinds and drawing the curtains, he switched on the light and crossed to the wardrobe. A swift glance inside showed him an array of collars, shirts, neatly folded clothes, and well polished shoes.

Crossing to the dressing-table, he took quick stock of the case of razors, hairbrushes, and so on, laid out there. It was very evident that this room was in use, and there was deadly danger in remaining. The wisest course was to get out of the house at once.

But, turning from the dressing-table, Grey Shadow quietly and deliberately went to work selecting from the wardrobe a complete change of clothing.

Then he picked up the case of razors, and, moving to the wash-basin, commenced to wash and shave.

His every action was so cool and unhurried that a casual observer might well have

thought that instead of being a hunted fugitive, Grey Shadow was the householder himself.

Having shaved, he carefully wiped and dried the razors before returning them to their case. Then stripping off the clothes which he had worn aboard the barge, he set fire to them in the grate and proceeded to dress with immense care.

At last, neatly clad and looking in his well-cut lounge suit a vastly different person from the fugitive barge-hand, he donned a Homburg hat and heavy overcoat. From the dressing-room which adjoined the bedroom he took a leather travelling bag, into which he packed a few shirts, collars, and other articles of clothing.

Then, thrusting a pair of gloves into his pocket, he switched out the light and descended the stairs to the hall. What he wanted now was money, for cash was essential. And if he could find no money in the house, he was pretty confident that he could find a certain amount of jewellery or valuables which could be converted into cash, and no questions asked, by some pawnbroker.

Putting down the bag, he pushed open the door of the room on his left, and a match scuttered into flame in his hand. The room, the heavy curtains of which were drawn, was furnished as a sort of study and dining-room. A pile carpet was on the floor, and four carved and stiff-backed wooden chairs stood around a heavy polished oak table.

Against one wall was a desk, and, switching on the light, Grey Shadow crossed swiftly to it. For if there was any loose cash in the house, it was more than probable that it was here.

Trying the lid of the desk and finding it locked Grey Shadow looked about for something with which to force it. His glance moved from the fireirons in the hearth to a heavy brass paper-knife on a side table.

Deciding that the paper-knife would suit his purpose, he picked it up and inserted the point inside the lock of the desk. A quick wrench, a splintering crack, and the lock gave. Raising the lid, Grey Shadow bent over the pigeon-holes and drawers inside.

His search was swift and expert, and, with a sudden soft exclamation of satisfaction, he picked up a loose roll of notes—five in all, of one hundred marks denomination. Slipping them into his overcoat pocket, together with a pair of reading spectacles which had been thrust into one of the pigeon-holes, he closed the lid of the desk and turned towards the door.

As he did so, he suddenly froze rigid. For standing in the doorway, covering him with a heavy revolver, was a thick-set and muscular man, close-cropped of head, and wearing an unbuttoned overcoat over butler's livery.

“Put your hands up!”

The man in the overcoat spoke harshly and menacingly, and slowly Grey Shadow's hands crept above his head.

“So,” went on the fellow, his face twisting into a grin which was not reflected in his eyes, “I go out for the evening during my master's absence and when I return I find that a thief has broke in, eh?” He approached closer, eyeing the clothes Grey Shadow was wearing.

“And, unless I am vastly mistaken, those are my master's clothes. You will get a long sentence for this! I am going to telephone the police.”

“An excellent idea!” agreed Grey Shadow.

“Yes, it is,” said the other, his voice ugly, “and you will do well to remember that I have you covered!” He sidled towards the side table on which stood the telephone, his revolver unwaveringly covering Grey Shadow.

His free hand had closed on the receiver and he was in the act of picking it up when Grey Shadow glanced towards the open doorway, and said pleasantly:

“Keep out, Anton. There is a fellow in here with a gun!”

There was no Anton. There was no one out there in the hallway. Grey Shadow’s remark had been the merest bluff. But for an instant the startled eyes of the manservant turned towards the door.

In that fraction of time Grey Shadow acted. Dropping his hands he hurled himself forward his arms clutching in a perfect Rugby tackle round the knees of his captor. Simultaneously he jerked his arms upwards with every atom of his strength.

Swept off his feet, the manservant crashed face foremost to the floor, the revolver exploding as it flew from his grasp.

With an agility astonishing in one so heavily built the man scrambled up. But Grey Shadow was already on his feet and, as the other turned, Grey Shadow’s clenched fist lifted him backwards and sent him crashing in a senseless heap against the desk.

It was ten minutes later that Grey Shadow quitted the house, letting himself out by the front door. He was carrying the bag which he had taken from the dressing-room, and so cool and unhurried was his departure that none would have dreamt that this respectable looking citizen was a hunted British spy, emerging from a house which he had raided, and leaving behind him, locked in the scullery, a gagged, bound, and squirming manservant!

But his face as he walked was grim and set, for he had now embarked on the last stage of his perilous journey out of Germany. As he neared the main thoroughfare he hailed the first taxi that he saw.

“The railway station,” he said curtly. Through the streets of Schlettst he was whirled to the station. He smiled very wryly as he saw a military picket lounging by the station entrance. He knew why they were there—they were looking for the deckhand from the Prinzregent Luitpold!

Alighting from the taxi he paid the driver and picked up his bag. Then, and with no more than an interested glance in the direction of the picket, he walked past them into the booking-hall of the station and bought a first-class ticket to Karlsruhe, asking the clerk questions as to the time of departure of the train and the time of its arrival at its destination.

That done, and convinced that the booking clerk would remember his face, he went to the cloak-room and deposited his bag and overcoat. Still carrying a rolled-up umbrella which he had brought with him from the house, he walked to the end of the platform and mounted the steps of the bridge which spanned the track and led to the platform on the other side.

He walked quite slowly. And once he removed his hat, as though the better to enjoy the cool night air. By the time he reached the opposite platform his Homburg hat was pressed into a different shape, he was wearing spectacles, his jacket was unbuttoned, and his umbrella was unfurled.

Simple as these changes were they altered him amazingly. He looked an older and more slovenly man than the brisk and smartly-overcoated man who had entered the booking-hall a few minutes ago, and none but a trained eye would have recognised him as the same person.

Inquiry of a porter brought him the information that the next train to Mulhausen was the Swiss night mail from Karlsruhe to Basle, due in forty minutes.

Forty minutes! That was a long time. But things might be worse. He might have been faced with a longer wait than that. It was long enough, however, for by this time the bound and gagged manservant might have been discovered, and it was possible that some sharp mind in the police had already connected the well-dressed marauder with Grey Shadow—barge-hand and British Spy!

Well, he, Grey Shadow, had done everything he possibly could to cover his tracks. But he kept carefully in the shadow now, and ten minutes before the train was due in he recrossed the bridge and bought a first-class ticket for Mulhausen at the booking-office.

He was back again on the departure platform when the night mail steamed in. Entering an empty first-class compartment he placed his umbrella and hat on the rack, then settled himself in a corner and unfolded one of the newspapers which he had bought at the station kiosk.

Long moments passed as he sat there staring with unseeing eyes at the printed columns. Then a bell clanged on the platform, a whistle shrilled, and slowly the great engine and lighted coaches of the Swiss night mail slid out of the station.

V

“GOOD-NIGHT GENTLEMEN!”

Franz Skrenzy and Jakob Reuss, senior partners in the great Swiss dairy firm of Skrenzy and Reuss, had a first-class compartment to themselves aboard that same train.

Shortly after leaving Mulhausen the train made its usual halt at the Swiss frontier for the examination of papers and passports. But so prolonged was the halt on this occasion that when an official followed by two soldiers, did eventually enter their compartment they felt called upon to comment.

“We are a long time to-night, Herr Officer,” remarked Skrenzy.

“Yes,” responded the official taking Skrenzy’s papers and examining them. “A thorough search of the train is being made. A British spy escaped from Schlettst to-night and it is thought that he might somehow or other have boarded this train.” Stamping Skrenzy’s papers he handed them back and took those of Reuss.

“You two gentlemen have travelled from Karlsruhe I see,” he said, looking at Reuss’ papers. “This has been your compartment all the way?”

“Yes, that is so,” answered Reuss.

“Very good,” responded the official, handing back the papers. “There is no need to search in here then. Good-night, gentlemen!” He retreated slamming the door.

“A British spy, eh?” said Reuss, staring at his companion.

“It is a terribly dangerous job, that of a spy,” said Skrenzy. “He will be shot if they get

him. I am glad our country is not at war.”

“Yes,” agreed his companion, “so am I. Did you see those troops in Karlsruhe this morning? Just boys they were. But ready for the Line, I was told.”

They embarked then upon a discussion about the war and were still talking when the train began to move again.

“Ah, well,” said Skrenzy, “it is comforting to know that we are in our own country at last, away from all that militarism and officialdom of Germany which makes travel so tiresome these days——” He broke off staring open-mouthed at the figure of a man wriggling from beneath the opposite seat.

The stranger rose to his feet, and smilingly commenced to dust himself down.

“I am sorry to disturb you, gentlemen,” he said, “but there was no other way for me to get across the frontier. You heard the official say that the whole of the train was being searched.”

“You—you are the British spy?” stammered Jakob Reuss, staring in blank amazement.

“I am!”

“But how did you get in here?”

“When dinner was announced shortly after leaving Schlettst,” explained Grey Shadow, “you and your friend and various other passengers in this coach went along to the dining saloon, leaving me three or four tenanted—but temporarily unoccupied—compartments from which to choose. After a brief examination of the labels on your luggage I chose to travel with you. Excuse me, please!” Reaching up, he pulled the communication cord.

“What—what are you going to do now?” gasped Jakob Reuss as, with a grinding of brakes, the train began to slow down to a halt.

“As I have neither identification papers nor passport, nor a railway ticket beyond Mulhausen,” smiled Grey Shadow, “I might be the cause of some embarrassment to your officials at Basle. So I prefer to leave the train here. Now that I am on Swiss territory I am safe, and I can easily reach France.”

Swinging open the door, he stood a moment poised upon the footboard. Then:

“Good-night, gentlemen!” he said. And with that, Grey Shadow dropped down into the darkness and was gone!

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Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some illustrations were moved to facilitate page layout.

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[The end of *Grey Shadow* by George Ernest Rochester]