SPY

BERNARD NEWMAN

Title: Spy
Date of first publication: 1935
Author: Bernard Newman (1897-1968)
Date first posted: Jan. 23, 2021
Date last updated: Feb. 18, 2021
Faded Page eBook #20210160

This eBook was produced by: Al Haines, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at https://www.pgdpcanada.net

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

GERMAN SPY

MAGINOT LINE MURDER

SECRET SERVANT

DEATH UNDER GIBRALTAR

DEATH TO THE SPY

Etc., Etc.

S P Y

by

BERNARD NEWMAN

LONDON
VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD

First published February 1935
Second impression February 1935
Third impression February 1935
Fourth impression March 1935
Fifth impression May 1935
Sixth impression August 1935
Seventh impression November 1935
Eighth impression (first cheap edition) March 1936
Ninth impression June 1936
Tenth impression October 1936
Eleventh impression October 1937
Twelfth impression December 1938
Thirteenth impression January 1940

Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press, Ltd., London and Southampton

INTRODUCTION

IT is high time that this spy business was debunked. Several hundred books on secret service have appeared since the war; of these, about one per cent have been strictly accurate, a larger proportion founded on fact, but the greater part have been the sheerest of fiction—while pretending to be true! It is not difficult to sort out the three grades—for the average reader is not nearly so credulous as the sensational writer imagines or pretends.

There is a tendency in these days to romanticise everything: a straightforward tale must be so exaggerated that it becomes sensational. And, of course, every story must have its element of sex—many are founded on sex and constructed of sex. It is not enough that a man should manage to steal the enemy commander's plans—there must be a beautiful woman spy to help him, vamping the general's aide-de-camp, or drugging the chief's coffee. Once, when I was younger and more serious, I used to rave at these books which so blatantly travestied the profession I adopted temporarily and almost involuntarily; now I turn to them for light reading, and I can always get a good laugh when the "beautiful woman spy" enters the pages.

I do not wish to infer that there were *no* women spies—although they were not conspicuously successful. There was only one Mata Hari—and she did not do one-hundredth part of the things credited to her in works of fiction, or one-thousandth part of that suggested in more (alleged) serious works. There was only one Mademoiselle la Docteur—and she was neither beautiful nor alluring, as I well recall.

It is not a sex-bar which makes women spies so uniformly innocuous, but merely the type of education. For, overlooked as it so often is by popular writers, it is very necessary for the spy to know something of the subject of his spying. It is quite useless to send a woman into an enemy country to worm out details of a new howitzer, when if she met a howitzer and a yogi coming down the road together she would not know the other from which. A spy out of his (or her) depth is a danger rather than an asset to the employing country. As I shall show, I made a bad howler myself over a question of tanks.

The chief fault I have to find in the usual spy story, whether purporting to be fact or fiction, is a glossing over of essential details. The spy gets into

the enemy country in some mysterious way; sometimes this is vaguely indicated—it is usually a method which would lead to his arrest five minutes after landing. Then, a few days later, he is able by disguising himself as a plumber to gain admission to the general's headquarters. There the general has kindly written down all his secret plans on a piece of paper, ready for any enterprising plumber to steal. There is no attempt in these books to get down to reality—no attempt to reproduce *real* conditions and to give detailed accounts as to how the actual situations were tackled.

Disguise, too, always makes me laugh. The spy always carries a few sticks of grease-paint and a dozen assorted sets of whiskers with him. Authors who write of these things ought to walk along their local street wearing a little grease-paint or a set of assorted whiskers, and see what happens! Disguise is, of course, sometimes essential; disguise of character and mannerism is often invaluable; but physical disguise is too fallible to be of the slightest use to a man whose life depends on the avoidance of mistakes. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (which is *not* sensational) hits the nail on the head when it says: "False papers, disguises, secret ink, and all the other tricks beloved of the spy novel may form part of their equipment, but, in practice, the most dangerous and efficient spy is the least sensational in his methods; when arrested, he invariably has all his papers in order, and is the most plausible person alive." I strongly recommend a reading of the very workmanlike article on "Intelligence, Military," to all interested in spies and their work.

In my book I have tried to show, so far as is practicable, the *details* of my work as a spy—a history not only of *what* I did, but of *how* I did it. This book is not a record of my life during the war years hour by hour, however; for weeks and months nothing of special interest happened to me—of no special interest, that is to say, except to the technical military reader: the following pages, therefore, represent the high lights of my secret service career.

I should perhaps explain that I wrote the greater part of this record many years ago—very soon after the end of the war, in fact. Since then I have written nearly a dozen novels and travel books, and have naturally gained in literary craftsmanship. Looking over this, my first effort, I see obvious faults —a slow beginning, awkward constructions, an occasional missed climax. Yet I have left the manuscript largely untouched. The beginning may be slow, but it is very essential that my peculiar qualifications for spy work should not only be emphasised, but explained: I regard it as important that the reader should know why and how I came to be enrolled as a spy—for you would get the impression from some books that when the War Office

wants spies it advertises for them in *The Times*. And I do not altogether regret the missed climaxes—this is no sensational or conventional story.

I did not write my story for publication. In my innocence, I imagined that it was far too delicately important ever to be publicly revealed. But now that every general and politician engaged in the war has loosed his restraint and poured out torrents of words, mainly directed at each other, then I need be concerned no longer. Maybe it is better so; from their various—and very varied—stories, historians will make history. And, in any case, I have always held firmly to the theory that the best preventive of another war is a study of the last.

One other word ought to be written—then on with the story. On my return to England from Germany, I found some of my friends looking askance at me. I was a spy. Had I been a clerk at the War Office or an A.S.G. lorry-driver I might have returned with honour, but—I had been a spy. There was a suggestion of the dishonourable in the looks they gave me, and they hurt me furiously. I knew only too well the courage required—many a time mine had been strained almost beyond its limits. I recalled the speech made by Mr. George Elliott, counsel defending Karl Lody, the German naval spy: "I defend him not as a miserable coward or as a faint-hearted fellow, but as a man faithfully devoted to his native land, its history, its tradition. His grandfather was a great soldier who successfully defended a fortress attacked by Napoleon, and as a soldier he claims to stand before this court. I am not here to beg for mercy to him. My client is not ashamed of what he has done. Many would gladly do for England what he has done for Germany, and may actually be doing it at this moment. Whatever his fate may be, he will meet it as a brave man."

When Karl Lody was about to be led to his death, he said to the Assistant Provost Marshal in charge of his execution: "I suppose you would not care to shake hands with a spy?"

"No," replied the British officer, "but I will gladly shake hands with a brave man."

I was not ashamed of my profession then, nor am I now. Intelligence is vital to an army; without it, any quantity of thousands of brave men are impotent. It was universal since Moses sent his spies into Canaan till Wellington wanted to know what was happening on the other side of the hill. Throughout the nineteenth century its importance increased tenfold each year. During the last war its effects were tremendous—the fate of the British Army in France changed, in fact, from the day when an optimistic Chief of Intelligence Services was replaced by a sober realist!

There is an over-worn cliché about truth being stranger than fiction. This is highly accurate, not only because fiction so seldom appears or even pretends to be true. I have already known people who have found my story impossible of credence. As I shall show, I spent the last three years of the war not only in Germany, but at German General Headquarters! An Englishman at German G.H.Q.—it does seem absurdly impossible. Yet my feat was only unique in the comparative eminence of my position. A German spy found occupation in the British censor's office in London throughout the whole of the war, collecting priceless information.[1] A German spy was interpreter to the French courts martial for trying spies.[2] On the eastern front a Russian officer managed to serve on both sides! His story,[3] though confusing in its detail, makes fiction appear unimaginative. Yet it is fully confirmed. One German captain remained in France for over two of the war years—as a French officer; he was even invited to witness the trials of a new flame-thrower! Another German, Captain Preusser, three times penetrated British G.H.Q. at Cairo. His companion, Major Francks, was even bolder; he used to dress as a British Staff officer and wander about behind the British Palestine front; once, with supreme nerve and effrontery, he even inspected a regiment of artillery![4] But if any reader, in spite of these parallels, should be tempted to doubt my accuracy, there are a dozen obvious methods by which he can test it.

Perhaps I should emphasise that these feats were, however, exceptional. Many a spy scarcely experienced the mildest of excitement; the work of many was most uninteresting. The more normal and ordinary the method, the surer and the safer the result. Let me instance one of my own "exploits," the essence of simplicity. Early in 1918 I was, as I shall show, behind the German lines. I wanted to send the warning that General von Hutier and his army had been transferred from the Russian front to the west, and was concentrating about St. Quentin. How to do it? Secret inks—codes—carrier pigeons? I used none of these time-honoured methods. Instead, I simply sent an obscure Baden newspaper to an address in Switzerland—that was all. In this paper was printed a letter of condolence—the stock affair—which had been addressed to the parents of a young German pilot who had been shot down behind the British lines. And the letter was signed by von Hutier! Now follow my mental workings; the aeroplane was brought down behind the British lines—therefore the British would normally have identified the pilot. If they could but see this simple, printed letter, therefore, it would show them that von Hutier was occupying the sector in the neighbourhood of the casualty. So I sent off the newspaper—without marking it in any way—to an address in Switzerland where it would immediately be forwarded to our

Intelligence Office. There keen brains studied every line and every advertisement, knowing that the newspaper had not been sent for nothing. Soon the point was taken up, the inference seized, and the locality of the attack on the Fifth Army which developed on March 21st was at least no surprise.[5]

Maybe some of my friends will read my book—I believe they have been good enough to read some of my others. Perhaps then they will regret those askance glances they once gave me; for, if I have done my job, I have given a fairly complete picture of the life of a spy—a successful spy, I should add, and one whose circumstances can best be described by the newspaper word "sensational." That was my luck, not my virtue. The man who did a humbler job—watching railways, listening in pubs to the casual conversation of soldiers or sailors, or noting the arrival and departure of ships—he knew no sensations, but deserved well of his country. The hundreds of people in occupied Belgium and France—including dozens of women[6]—who helped the Allied cause, particularly by acting as "postmen"—that is, passing on information to and from active spies—theirs was a perilous and thankless job. The only spy, in fact, who deserves anything but honour is the "bought" spy—the neutral who plies his trade for hire or, far worse, the man who sells his own country. For the first I have only contempt; the second is beneath it—for him I have only pity. Colonel Nicolai, chief of the German Intelligence Service, often used to say to me: "Spying is a gentleman's job." It is very true—there is no need for noble birth, but the task definitely demands unusual patriotism and a queer kind of courage. Kipling's "Spies' March" is not one of his happiest versifications, but its sentiment is true enough:

There are no leaders to lead us to battle, and yet without leaders we sally,
Each man reporting for duty alone, out of sight, out of reach of his fellow.
There are no bugles to call the battalions, and yet without bugles we rally,
From the ends of the earth to the ends of the earth . . .

---

[1] See *The Invisible Weapons*, by J. C. Silber.

[2] See *Spy and Counter-Spy*, by Richard W. Rowan.

[3] *K. 14—O. M. 66*, by Colonel Kaledin.

[4] See *Spy and Counter-Spy*, by Richard W. Rowan.

[5] See *The Fifth Army*, by General Sir Hubert Gough. He mentions this incident on p. 228.

[6] Louise de Bettignies, of Lille, was an outstanding example. See *Spies*, by Joseph Gollomb.

CHAPTER I

MY story really begins forty-five years ago, for if my father had never met my mother it would never have been told at all. This sounds rather childish: what I mean is, that had my father married an ordinary English girl I would have been born an ordinary English boy and not a cosmopolitan medley. My father at the time was on a walking-tour with a friend in the Black Forest. A generation ago, it will be remembered, the Black Forest was the favourite venue for walking-tours. The Victorians were very conservative in their Continental journeyings, and new trails were rare. My father and his friend had strayed slightly from the usual path, however, and had arrived at the little town of Donaueschingen; to give an object to their wanderings, they had been busily engaged in trying to determine the true source of the Danube, which is officially classed as being at Donaueschingen. They found the actual spot, which is suitably distinguished by a circular piece of statuary, and just at the time when they visited it two German girls were there. One of them had a hand camera—a great novelty in those days. They were arguing as to which should hold the camera and which should be in the picture, each wanting to give the place of honour to the other. My father, who knew a little German, naturally volunteered to take the picture for them, so that both could be in it at the same time.

In the country districts Mrs. Grundy has never reigned quite so solidly as in towns, and it was the most natural thing in the world that my father and his friend should get into conversation with the two girls. When, after ten minutes' talk, my father discovered that the name of both of the girls was Newman (spelt in the German fashion, of course, as Neumann), it seemed too remarkable a coincidence to be missed. They had tea together in the town and, the friendship ripening apace, they were invited to dinner at the home of one of the girls. This must have been quick work, even allowing for the clean freedom of the German moral code.

It appeared that the other girl was not an ordinary German at all. She was an Alsatian girl from Strasburg (as it was then called; it has now included an "o" in its name since it became French again). She was staying at Donaueschingen, visiting her cousin.

The little party, chaperoned by the father and mother of the local girl, talked gaily and animatedly of the charm of the Black Forest. The Alsatian cousin, however, claimed that the Vosges Mountains on the other side of the Rhine valley were just as beautiful as anything that the Black Forest could show. Further, as they were off the beaten track, and little visited by tourists, anyone travelling on foot could put up at village inns remarkably cheaply. In fact, a holiday of several weeks would cost no more than a few pounds. She went so far as to suggest to my father and his friend that on their vacation the following year they should visit the Vosges. They did. They visited the Vosges and Strasburg too. Their stay in Strasburg had been intended to occupy but two or three days, sufficient to see the sights of the city, but when the end of the vacation came my father declared that he was going to stay on a few days longer. His friend had to return to England, and was not really surprised when my father followed a fortnight later announcing that he was going to marry the girl whose acquaintance they had first made by the source of the Danube.

At this point I ought to make a few notes about my mother, since, I am told, I inherit most of my outstanding features from her. She was good-looking without being particularly beautiful, intelligent without being outstandingly clever. Her outlook on life and on affairs distinguished her, however, very strongly from the equivalent English girl of her time. She was an Alsatian—she was very fond of declaring that. I can hear her now, with her emphatic tone, saying, "I am neither French nor German. I am Alsatian!" When we used to argue about Alsace-Lorraine, she used to explain that it was natural that the same race should settle on *both* sides of a river valley. And, when you look at it, that is very true. In the old days, when Europe was settling itself, the human swarm came from the east. When it arrived at the River Rhine it did not suddenly stop, for the people who found pleasant pastures on the right bank naturally sent the good news to their friends and relations, who promptly came and settled on the left bank—or, more usually, pinched the land on the right bank and flung their relatives over on to the left bank to find new pastures there. So you find along the banks of the Rhine (or any other river, for that matter) that you have, generally speaking, the same race of people occupying both sides of the valley. So my mother used to argue, claiming that although Alsace had been French for a couple of hundred years, and although French influence had been very strong—for you must remember that during those two hundred years there had been no such thing as Germany, but only a collection of miscellaneous German States—a good many Alsatian families were at least German in origin. I have already remarked that my mother had a family of cousins over in the

Black Forest region. They were many times removed, of course, but the kinship had recently been cemented by an intermarriage between my mother's uncle and one of the girls from the other branch of the family.

One of the principal effects of my mother's ancestry was that she spoke both French and German perfectly, and when I say *perfectly* I mean it, for she was equally at home in either language. People who live in places like Alsace, I suppose, must have an aptitude for languages, for within a few months of her arrival in England my mother was speaking English as if it were her native tongue.

I don't want you to infer from the foregoing that my mother favoured the German occupation of Alsace. It galled her beyond words to think that Alsace and all its people should be torn from France and passed over to Germany just like a flock of sheep is sold in the market. Although German in origin, the hereditary instinct resulting from the effect of two hundred years of lackadaisical French rule made her revolt against the petty tyranny of German local government. She was even ready to admit that German rule was far more efficient and even more beneficent than had been that of France, but nevertheless she hated it merely because it was a rule based on force.

I must also introduce my father, for some at least of his characteristics have been passed on to me. He was what used to be called at that time a gentleman farmer. He despised the term himself, because he said it made him appear to be an amateur; that was the last term in the world to describe him, for he was one of the most practical and up-to-date farmers in the Midlands. For very many generations a Newman has occupied Lodstone Hall, in Leicestershire. The name sounds grand—it is a corruption of Lodestone, of course—but actually the Hall is nothing more than a very large farmhouse situated in the midst of several hundred acres of excellent land. My father, in fact, was one of the last men you would have expected to have taken a foreign wife, or even to have travelled abroad at all; for the latter he had to thank the influence of his friend—and as it led to his marriage, which was a very happy marriage, his friend was a welcome visitor to the end of his days.

It was, therefore, into a somewhat unusual family that I was born—my father, a typical Englishman of the soil, one of the famous middle class which for many generations raised and kept England in a position of honour throughout the world: my mother, a cosmopolitan, for she often used to say that she was a woman of no country. She welcomed my appearance in the year 1893 very heartily, not only as the fruit of a happy marriage, but as a

further and indelible tie to England. In fact, after I was born she used to say, "I have given birth to an Englishman. Therefore now I am English." A sister and a brother followed me in rapid succession—which is just as it should be, for we were able to play together. We were a very happy family.

The first twenty years of my life were of no outstanding interest. I held my own at school without creating any sensation. I was strong, healthy, and took part in most games without achieving first-class success in any. It was the same when I went up to Cambridge. My degree was good, but I did not get a First. In athletics I failed to get a Blue, although in the running at both cricket and soccer. In my final year it was, of course, essential to make some kind of decision. What was I to do? I had no thought of taking over my father's farm, lucrative though it was. At first my father had been rather sad at the thought, but obviously I had no aptitude for farming, whereas my younger brother was a born man of the soil, and even in our early teens it had been tacitly assumed that he would take over the farm while I passed into some profession. Nevertheless, even my mother, of artistic temperament herself, was surprised when I announced my intention of becoming an actor. True, the profession then was not quite so honourably esteemed as it is now. I suppose at least a quarter of the entrants to the stage in these days are university men, but before the war a degree man on the stage was a rarity. If my parents had thought back a little, however, their surprise might not have been so great. My mother was a singer—had even sung professionally—and her grandmother had been an operatic *prima donna* in the days of the First Empire. Further, my mother had always encouraged any dramatic instinct she found in us. One of our favourite amusements during the winter evenings was the playing of charades, in which my mother, sister, and I excelled, while the histrionic efforts of my father and younger brother would not have impressed a fly.

It was not just the glamour of the stage that attracted me. I believed with Tchekov that the theatre is higher than universities and books or any form of art. I believed that there was nothing that could replace the stage and so strongly and surely affect the human soul. When I wanted to go on the stage I was not thinking of provincial melodrama of the "Unhand me, villain," type, but of real acting. Young though I was, I had determined to make myself a master of character parts—for even in those pre-war days there was already a tendency to forget that half the art of acting is variety, and to class actors and actresses as "types" and to cast them for nothing else.

My dramatic education was very thorough. I forget whether dramatic academies existed in those days, but, if so, I never heard of them. I managed to get an introduction to that grand old man of the stage, Sir Frank Benson. I

joined his famous company at a nominal salary, purely with the idea of learning my art. At first it seemed that the apprenticeship was unduly long. For months I played in practically the whole range of Benson's extensive repertoire. Often I played several parts on a single night—perhaps a gravedigger and two assorted soldiers—but as my part usually consisted of two lines, or sometimes no lines at all, naturally my appearances created no furore. All the time, however, I was learning, and learning a lot. I watched the older players—how they got their effects; the tricks of speech, some of which I admired and some despised. I studied particularly their make-up, at which some of them were masters. So, when my turn came to be promoted to the playing of minor parts, I don't think I let the company down, and in time I had the supreme satisfaction of playing lead. True, it was only on a few occasions when a principal happened to be taken ill, but it was what I wanted—not just a chance to show the world what I could do, but to show myself. At the end of two years I was convinced that I was an actor. I left the company with regret, for my sojourn there had been very happy, and came to London determined to throw myself into the West End.

All this time, and for the next few months, I was practically supported by an allowance from home. Nor did my first West End engagement enable me to inform my father that I could now stand on my own feet. My first play ran for exactly a fortnight! The second was decidedly better. It ran for nearly five weeks, but unfortunately I had got into the hands of a rogue manager and only received two weeks' pay. My third effort, however, was much more successful. I had a very good part, a reasonable salary, and the play had a long run. What young actor could wish for more? My Press notices were good and I was frequently referred to as "that coming young actor, Bernard Newman." When first I read the phrase I went out immediately to buy a new hat!

My play finished its successful run at the end of June, 1914. I decided that I had earned a holiday. I had the promise from my present manager of a good part in a new play which he was going to stage in September. So off I went with my brother to visit our relatives in Alsace. From there we strayed over to the Black Forest to renew acquaintance with our cousins (many times removed) in the Baden region. We had a wonderful time, as may well be expected. We had completely lost touch with England, wandering as we did about the Black Forest valleys, then back again to the pine forests of the Vosges. It was not until, I think, July 29th that one of my uncles mentioned that the European situation was serious and that there was a strong possibility of war. Surprised, we got hold of newspapers and learned about the Austrian demands on Serbia; we were amazed, for the last accounts we

had read were not particularly startling—indeed, the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand had occasioned surprisingly little comment. It was two or three days later that we felt an atmosphere of alarm, and when, on August 1st, one of my cousins received his mobilisation order, we shook hands with him, wished him luck, and made a bee-line to France, as the nearest friendly territory; for we knew well enough—as every intelligent man must have known—that if Germany and France went to war, England must join in on France's side.

The journey back to London took two days, for the congestion of mobilisation had already begun to affect the working of the French railways. The day after our arrival in London, England declared war on Germany.

I remember the next day very well. I was young, active, and healthy, and, like hundreds of thousands more of my type, was immediately anxious to get into the middle of the excitement. My only fear, in fact—again like that of thousands of others—was that the war would be over long before I could get into it, for it must be remembered that in those days Kitchener was the only man who thought of a three-years' war. Most of us thought it would be all over in six weeks. I even anticipated the famous appeal for the first hundred thousand. I had at first thought of joining the army on the spot, but on consideration dismissed the idea for the reason that I have stated. I had no thought of drilling monotonously in barracks while other men were fighting in France. I did not want to be one of the people to do the cheering when the heroes came home. I wanted to be one of the heroes being cheered. Maybe it was my experience as an actor that demanded a little adulation. So on the evening of August 5th I went round to the flat of an old Cambridge friend of mine, Willoughby Mason. I went to him because he was a man of fertile imagination and, furthermore, being now in the Foreign Office, he ought at least to know something.

I found him of the same mind as myself—that the war would be over before we could get in it, but also, as I had hoped, not without ideas. He recalled that another Cambridge man of our acquaintance had sat with him for that stiffest examination in the world, the First Division of the Civil Service—an examination which I myself had completely funked—and had on appointment gone to the War Office. So on the spot we rang up Barclay, demanded to know what was happening, and also what method there was whereby we could join the Expeditionary Force, which we knew would be certain to be despatched to France.

Barclay was a great sport. He couldn't tell us anything at the time, as things were scarcely on the move. He promised to let us know as soon as he

could, and he kept his word. Two days later he rang up to say that the prospects of our going out with any line or cavalry regiment, untrained as we were—for our O.T.C. experience was disdainfully dismissed—were just nil, but that men of intelligence who could ride motor-bicycles were urgently required as despatch-riders. That was good enough.

Mason and I, who had both ridden motor-bicycles for several years, immediately rushed round to Old Scotland Yard, which was the central recruiting depôt. There was a huge crowd there, all clamouring for enlistment in the various arms, but after a lot of pushing and shoving we eventually reached a recruiting sergeant, and by giving him a heavy tip were taken in to meet the recruiting officer long before our turn. In after years both Mason and I smiled very often when we recalled that we had bribed the sergeant to allow us to join the army!

Our information, however, was correct. Despatch-riders were urgently required, and a number of them would go out with the original force. The recruiting officer looked us up and down, thought for a while, and was apparently satisfied that we should meet the bill. We should have to pass tests of ability in motor-cycling, of course, but these held no terrors for us whatsoever. On the morrow, therefore, we proceeded under orders to Aldershot, and the next day were duly sworn in as members of His Majesty's Forces. Thus Mason and I joined the Corps of Royal Engineers, and were proud beyond measure of the blue and white armlet of Signals which we wore around our sleeves.

I need not describe our life as despatch-riders through the early weeks of the war. It would make an interesting story, but one of our number has already told it.[7] It was probably the finest life of the war. There was plenty of excitement and just enough danger to whet the appetite without the hard drudgery which is the inevitable lot of the infantryman. I must mention two casual incidents only, which have little to do with despatch-riding, but which had a good deal to do with my subsequent career.

The first was on the very day of our arrival. Our transport was alongside the dock at Havre. Everything was in a state of apparent confusion as the horses and transport wagons of the brigade to which I was attached were being disembarked. Our Brigade Major was in charge of the operations, and he was greatly handicapped by the fact that his French had been learned at school and promptly forgotten. Even at this stage he might have been able to have asked for the pen of the gardener's aunt, but he was quite incapable of telling a dozen French navvies to get a bloody move on and run those blank-blanking wagons off the quay. I came to his assistance; probably had I been

a professional soldier I would never have dared to have so approached a high and exalted personage like a Brigade Major. But he welcomed me profusely when he found that I could speak French. I had learned my French, not at school, but at my mother's knee. My first phrases were not about gardener's aunts, but the little fairy stories and nursery rhymes which should be the beginning of all childish language. As I grew up, my French, thanks to my mother's care, had developed until it was, I think I may say in all modesty, just about as good as an Englishman's French ever can be. However, in my frequent trips abroad I had learned a good many additional words which my mother had never thought to teach me. They were very useful on this occasion, however. I introduced three or four of them into my first sentence, and the way those bloused Frenchmen sprang to their job with a look of amazement in their eyes completely captivated the Brigade Major. He kept me on the job for several hours, and even thanked me when it was all over! Considering that I was a lance-corporal (I had been given my stripe for "protection" purposes only, of course), this was really remarkable, although I was too young a soldier to notice it at the time.

The second incident was at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, over a fortnight later. The Battle of the Marne was in full swing; we were now advancing instead of retreating. I happened to report at brigade headquarters just as a batch of prisoners was marched into the village square, which faced the Mairie which our headquarters occupied. There was my old friend the Brigade Major. When he saw me he shouted across the square, and I rode towards him. "I suppose you don't happen to speak German as well as French?" he asked.

Well, of course I did, for I have already remarked that my mother considered German as her real native language. Furthermore, it is easier for an Englishman to speak really perfect German than perfect French, and I think I could claim that (as I was able to prove a few months later) my German was real German. So I asked the Brigade Major what it was he wanted. "I want to ask these Fritzes a lot of questions," he said rather testily, for he had naturally been tremendously overworked during the retreat. "I want to know what regiment and division they belong to, where they come from, what they were trying to do when we caught them. I want to ask them dozens of things. All I have been able to ask so far is, '*Vo ist seinen regiment?*' which I made up by myself from a dictionary, but the devil of it is that although they seem to understand my question I can't understand their answers."

This was the easiest of tasks. He gave me the question and I asked it. I entered into my job keenly. I even tried to size up the psychology of each man I questioned. Should I ask him gently and persuasively, or try third-

degree methods? Most of the prisoners, of course, refused to say anything that would have been of the slightest use, but one or two of them did either by accident or through fear let slip several useful details.

We sorted out the information, then I had to hurry off, for despatches were waiting to be carried. When I left, the Brigade Major called out to me. "When this present stunt is over," he said, "come back and report to me. You're too useful to be careering about on a miserable motor-bike."

I remembered his words a few weeks later. By this time the front had become more or less stabilised from Switzerland to the sea. There were no more exciting journeys across country, never knowing at what moment you might run into an enemy patrol. Our messages were regular and unvaried. In fact, as Mason said, we had ceased to be despatch-riders and had become postmen. Obviously, if the Brigade Major had meant what he had said, this was the time to approach him. We did—for I insisted on dragging Mason along with me. The Brigade Major, after half an hour's talk, said that we must be commissioned at once. Mason would be posted to a battalion, but he would try and grab me himself for Staff work. This sounded all right and we left well pleased, while the Brigade Major made the necessary report. Alas, two days later he was severely wounded while on a visit to the support line.

Nevertheless, our application for commissions went through without a hitch. The only part of his recommendation that seemed to have been overlooked was the possibility of a Staff appointment for me. I was not sorry about that. Knocking about different headquarters as I had done as a despatch-rider, I had seen some of these alleged Staff appointments and had noticed how officers, some of them intelligent and some of them dunderheads, but all drawing good pay and wearing brilliant red tabs, appeared to be used as little more than clerks. Some of them were not even good clerks. So I was relieved rather than otherwise when I was informed that Mason and I were to be commissioned right away and posted to an infantry battalion. After all, how could I hope to do Staff work unless I were thoroughly acquainted with the duties of a regimental officer?

We had only two days' warning. Second lieutenants were very badly needed, for it must be remembered that the little British Army had lost practically the whole of its executive officers in the retreat from Mons, the Battles of the Marne and the Aisne, and particularly at Ypres. We had both served in the O.T.C. for a while, of course, but had never taken the training very seriously. Now we sat down to think it out, we had forgotten the greater part of the drill which we ought to have known. We did the best we could in twenty-four hours, however. First we found an infantry sergeant-major

whose battalion was out at rest, gave him ten francs and asked him to give us instruction in words of command. Then Mason and I went into a field—a long way from anywhere, I need hardly say—and drilled one another. It must have been indescribably comic to hear one man shout to another man, "Form fours!"—and to see the second man doing it! As a final training effort we selected a couple of haystacks, stuck up impromptu targets, and put in some rifle practice.

Mason and I set off to join our battalion in great spirits; twenty-four hours later there were no more depressed second loots in the whole of France. I will not mention the name of the battalion we joined, for most of its officers died a gallant death at Neuve Chapelle. When we joined it we understood that officers were urgently required—the battalion had suffered heavy casualties at Ypres. We visualised a welcome with open arms; instead, we got the biggest snubbing of our lives. As we entered the orderly room, the adjutant looked us up and down like a lady inspecting a particularly cheap and nasty fur coat. In the mess we were ostracised: we were intruders—mere "temporary gentlemen," scarcely fit to mingle with the *élite*. Mason, whose family was as good as any of theirs, and who had certainly more brains than the lot of them put together, fumed with rage, and only his training in tact as a junior diplomat prevented him from showing it.

I don't want you to think that all battalion officers were snobs; they weren't. But many young officers, eager to help, knew what it was like to have their enthusiasm squashed in a night, to be treated like blacklegs who have somehow got inside a trade union. One of them has written up his experiences far more forcibly than ever I could.[8] So I will say no more than that the following six weeks were the most miserable of my life—a continuous succession of snobbish insults and innuendoes. This, I should emphasise, was in 1914. Later, relations were not nearly so strained. At the time my hate of my fellow-officers was far more venomous than my feelings towards the Germans. I have forgotten it now, for I saw some of them die. The pre-war regular officer may not have been over-endowed with brains, but no one would ever deny him a great courage.

Few even of the millions who later served in France can visualise the miseries of that 1914 winter. No preparation, of course, had been made for trench warfare, and our appliances were pitifully inadequate. The trenches were haphazard ditches, often running deep in slime. I hated the filth of it all far more than the danger. After all, during the retreat our fighting had at least been clean; now, if a man fell wounded, he might drown in the liquid mud. The parapets of the trenches had been constructed of the nearest available materials—sometimes the dead bodies of our comrades. The smell of the

putrefying corpses, the rats feasting on what once had been men, the shock, when I leaned on the parapet, to find my elbows sinking deeply into a hideous mass of decomposed flesh—this sort of thing made my stomach heave. I wanted to protest: this was not the war I had visualised. Where was the excitement, the thrill? To be cooped up in a muddy ditch, while guns pounded at you from three miles away—was this the romance that had made men soldiers through the ages?

I could have stood it better had I felt among friends, but apart from old Mason I had none. There were some rattling good men in the ranks—my platoon sergeant commanded a battalion before the end of the war—but authority frowned heavily on the slightest association; the precious "discipline" might be impaired. And I can still see the stark horror on our colonel's face when he came to the front line on Christmas Day and found his battalion in No Man's Land, fraternising with the enemy! I thought he was going to throw a fit.

I find, by the way, that many people doubt whether the "Christmas Truce" ever existed. It did. Of all my memories of the war, that day provides some of the most vivid. The movement seemed to spread from the south; battalion after battalion strayed over the wire, meeting the Germans in No Man's Land. Usually officers went as well; naturally, Mason and I did, for such a novelty could not be missed. I had a most interesting chat with a Bavarian officer who had been cut off on the Marne, but after hiding in the forests for a week had crawled through the French lines at night. He was very startled at my German when I spoke; at last he drew me on one side.

"Anything you want me to do?" he asked.

"How?"

"Why—you are German, aren't you? Are you over there on Intelligence?"

It was about the best compliment to my German I had ever received; I thought it over from a very different angle some time later.

He was a very decent fellow indeed; he even invited me to have a drink in his dug-out, where he introduced me to some of his fellow-officers; he showed me a few ideas for making trench life more like that of humans than sewer-rats. His dug-out interested me most; it was deep and secure, with two entrances. There he was safe from any bombardment; he could just pop up as the infantry came over. Later, when I had some little authority, I suggested time and time again that we ought to model our dug-outs on the German pattern. I was told that "deep dug-outs were not good for morale; the men would feel safe there, but would refuse to come up." I argued that

the Germans came up all right—as we knew only too well—and surely our men were as good as theirs; but it was useless. I suppose this decision must have cost us at least a quarter of a million totally unnecessary casualties.

Late in the afternoon the men began to trickle back to their trenches. I shook hands with the Bavarian, after arranging with him that there should be no fire on either side during the night; we exchanged cards and promised to look up one another after the show was over. In 1920 I did visit his home; his mother handed two documents to me. One was a letter dated Christmas Day, 1914, telling of his meeting with me in No Man's Land; the other was a telegram from the German War Department announcing his death in action—on December 26th, 1914. I remembered then how one of our snipers had that day claimed a German officer. Such is war!

But I digress; I should have returned to my own trench. There I found a colonel with a redder face than I would have believed possible. His moustache and chin had in his rage assumed incredible shapes. I have often wondered if H. M. Bateman found his original in my colonel. I was for it; it appeared that I had been the first officer of the battalion to climb out of the trench—instead of shooting down the enemy on the right. I was threatened with courts martial, hell, and eternal damnation. I was not greatly disturbed. The colonel did not seem to me to be sufficiently angelic to hold any control over the gates of hell, and as for a court martial—well, apparently he would have to court martial half the junior officers of the British Expeditionary Force. However, he did manage to make it quite clear that he didn't like me a little bit; I was necessarily restricted by having to stand to attention and say "sir" at the end of each sentence, but I expect that I managed to convey the impression that I would willingly subscribe to his wreath.

Mason and I condoled that night.

"This is getting impossible," he said. "Something has got to happen, or I shall do something drastic. What's the penalty for punching an adjutant on the nose?"

"Oh, make it the colonel," I suggested. "They can't shoot you more than once. I'd rather be mooching about on the old bike than this."

"To think I left the Foreign Office to take petty orders from ignorant squirts!" he complained. "I might have picked up a decent job by now—Emerson's been sent to Rumania, to persuade or bribe her to come in. Instead of dabbling in high politics, mixing with leading figures in current history, I find myself up to the knees in the mud, ordered about by men who remind me of those wriggly things you find in a really ripe Gorgonzola! I'm fed to the teeth. How long, O Lord, how long?"

But our deliverance was nearer than we knew. Nor could we anticipate that it would come in such a manner. We came out of the line on December 28th for a tour in rest billets. We had a padre with us named Noel, one of those energetic people who are never tired and cannot appreciate that other people may be; he had a heart of gold, however, and we forgave him his energy as we hope he forgave us our language. We had been disappointed of our Christmas festivities, he argued (he had missed the truce), so we would have them on New Year's Eve instead. There would be a special dinner for the men—he had bought three pigs—("Why bother?" Mason asked. "Why not use the colonel?") and had borrowed the local Y.M.C.A. hut for a subsequent concert. I was cast for important parts. Of course I agreed; the men had little enough amusement, God knows; they had given me of their best of their trade—I would give them of my best of mine.

The hut seemed to be packed with about a hundred men more than it could possibly hold. In the front rows sat the officers; even the colonel looked almost human. With them were the guests—Staff officers from brigade and division, and from other units of the division. There never was a battalion which could not put up a good show; we had one or two reasonably good singers, a concertina turn, and a batman who revealed unsuspected talent as a contortionist! We had half a dozen comedians; the success of them all was a sergeant who dressed as a woman, sang one of Marie Lloyd's songs, and added extra verses which would have made Marie blush. I did some character sketches, which went down very well; in one I suggested a mannerism of the regimental sergeant-major's, and brought the house down.

In the second half I played in a serious sketch—I rather think it was written by Noel himself; I know I had to hack it about to make it usable. I played the part of a German officer, and Mason that of an English officer taken prisoner. There were some good lines and one good situation in the piece, and I put all I knew into the playing. At the end of the show the Divisional Commander sent for me and said nice things; he also recalled that he had seen me in my last show at the Royalty. I could see my stock with the colonel going up; to him an actor was little higher than a vagabond, but if the G.O.C.——

By the side of the G.O.C. stood a colonel wearing the red tabs of the General Staff. I didn't know him, but he beckoned to me.

"That German of yours—are you really as fluent as that, or was it just swotted up for the sketch?" he asked.

I could safely assure him that my fluency was natural; I explained why.

"Good!" he said. "Report to me at Divisional H.Q. to-morrow."

"Very good, sir. What time?"

"Oh—well, suppose we make it lunch?"

You may guess that Mason and I talked for a long while that night in the little one-storey cottage which we shared as a billet.

When I arrived at D.H.Q. next day, I suddenly realised that I did not know who to ask for! A few tactful words to an orderly put me wise.

"Oh, that would be Colonel Hylton, sir. He's G.S.O.I.[9] Took over from Colonel Miles when he left last month to command a brigade. He's hot stuff, is Colonel Hylton."

An hour later I agreed. Over lunch we talked of everything but the war. Then we went to his office.

"Sit down, Newman," he said. "Ever thought of Intelligence work?"

"Often!"

"Ha!" He seemed surprised. "Well, that German of yours is too damned good to waste. I applied for an Intelligence Officer the day after I came here; I haven't got him. I may never get him. Half the divisions in France have no Intelligence. It's mad! An army without Intelligence is like a man without a brain."

I agreed.

"I've looked up your record. Your battalion commander speaks well of you."

This amazed me. I had never yet heard him speak well of anyone—me least of all. But I concealed my surprise; maybe this was the colonel's method of getting rid of me—many an unwanted man has been cleared out of the way by promotion.

"And I was very impressed by your performance in that sketch last night," he continued. "I know you're an actor—you must be a damned good actor. You didn't act that German soldier—you *were* a German for the time. I've got ideas I want to work out. When we take prisoners, we ask a lot of questions, but get nothing much out of them. Do you know what I'm going to do?"

I hadn't the faintest idea.

"I'm going to dress you in German uniform, and chuck you in the cage with the rest—as a prisoner! Are you on?"

Of course I was. This was a job after my own heart. And what a man to work under—what a change from my own colonel.

"Of course, you've got to get through a lot of work first," he said. "An Intelligence Officer needs three qualities; Intelligence—they haven't all got it, but I think you have; Language—you pass easily in that, and your acting makes it doubly valuable; Military Knowledge—you haven't got that. So you must get busy quickly. I'll put you through a sort of Staff course here. I take it you're game?"

Only after my eager acceptance did I think of poor old Mason.

"I suppose you couldn't take two of us, sir," I faltered. "My friend in the battalion, Mason; his German isn't so good as mine, but it's very useful—he's a Foreign Office wallah. He could question prisoners—it would be a good idea to let him examine me, in front of the rest. He could bully me; then, when I refused to talk, it would give me caste with the others."

"That's an idea," he agreed. "But I can't take two regimental officers from the same battalion. Wait till we get more reinforcements; then we'll haul him out. I'll write a note to your battalion now—about you."

The colonel, in spite of his favourable report, was furious when I told him. He didn't approve of young officers "flap-doodling" about at headquarters. I had no intention of flap-doodling, whatever that might mean, I told him. We wanted to win the war; I wanted to help in the most effective way. There were hundreds of thousands of men with sufficient courage to stand in a muddy trench and be shot at, but not many who could speak German like a German. He said a lot of nasty things about the staff, and even 'phoned the Brigadier. I don't know what the Brigadier said to him, but the conversation closed very abruptly. So, when I left the battalion the following day, no bands played. I said good-bye to my platoon and the mess, and *au revoir* to Mason; the colonel was missing. I can only vaguely remember now how I hated him then. Time softens memories, and I can always forgive a man of courage. He died a man's death in 1918; by that time he was commanding a brigade. He was ordered to hold his positions to the last—and he did.

Whatever success I had in Intelligence work, I owe it very largely to Colonel Hylton. His thoroughness was a lesson to me; I worked directly under him for some weeks, then studied the "Q" side of Staff work—that is, the questions of supply and organisation, as opposed to operations. Fortunately I was given a chance to show my potentialities within a week of taking up my new job; one of our patrols in No Man's Land had surprised a German patrol, killing three and bringing in a wounded prisoner. Hylton and I dashed by car to the Field Ambulance.

"I shall leave this to you," he said. "Work it your own way; he'll probably be one of the 38th Saxons. I particularly want to know when they're going to be relieved."

Now a captured soldier is bound to tell his name, rank, and regiment, but no more. The rest is left to the interrogating officer. He may employ many methods—the friendly, the bullying, or the know-it-already. I decided on a combination of the first and last.

The man was shot through the leg; his wound had already been dressed. I asked Colonel Hylton to wait outside; I borrowed a tunic from one of the R.A.M.C. officers. Then I went up to the German—as a doctor; an orderly moved the blanket and I gravely examined the wound.

"Oh, that will be all right," I pronounced. "This is the end of the war for you, but you'll be about again in a couple of months. Now, let's have details so that we can report you prisoner. Name—— age——"

I took his particulars; the atmosphere was easy, for he had been well treated since his capture.

"Nevertheless, it was bad luck getting a packet like this just before you were relieved," I chattered casually as I wrote down his details.

"Just before!" he exclaimed, off his guard. "More probably just after! I was on a patrol covering the relief; we should have withdrawn in another ten minutes, if your men had not run into us."

"Hard luck! Still, you're well out of it," I commiserated. "Now we shall have to look to our laurels, with the Prussian Guard opposite us."

"No, it's only the Prussian Guard Reserve Division," he corrected, innocently enough. "It's time they did some work. They've been in the line near Reims, where the trenches are clean and dry. Oh, their advance party did curse when they saw our front line!"

I pumped him further, but he had nothing useful to tell; he was not overburdened with intelligence. Colonel Hylton was delighted when I reported to him that the 38th Saxons had been relieved by the Prussian Guard Reserve from the Reims front. It was just what he wanted to know.

"You're just made for this job," he said. "An actor and a linguist in one—what a combination for Intelligence work! I've got some big schemes in view. And I shall tell the G.O.C. how well you handled this job."

It isn't every senior officer who will pass even a fraction of the credit to his junior, so I was duly grateful.

Soon after this, my first success, I was officially appointed Intelligence Officer to the Division, while still going through my "Staff course." From this time onwards I was responsible for the collection and the dissemination of information on our Divisional Front. I find in England a complete misapprehension as to the work of the average Intelligence Officer. I remember at the time of my appointment (that is to say, when I was definitely transferred from my own regiment to the Intelligence Staff), that a dear old lady, an old friend of my father's, greeted me in my new uniform complete with green tabs and demanded to know what I was doing. When I informed her that I was now an Intelligence Officer she remarked, "Oh, dear, and do you have to be intelligent *all* the time?"

Well, of course, that is the one thing that is essential, though the word Intelligence in the title applies somewhat differently. My work was tremendously varied and not without its danger. I had first to keep an eye on the morale of our own troops, which I did by the rather distasteful method of reading occasional letters home, taking them at random here and there after they had passed the Regimental Censor. I had also to receive information from neighbouring divisions, corps, and from our army headquarters. These I used to summarise every day in a daily *communiqué*, which was issued to all units in the Division. My little effort at military journalism was not received with such gravity as it deserved in some quarters, for the popular name for my concoction was *Comic Cuts*! Whenever we took prisoners, of course, I was very busy, sometimes drawing a complete blank but occasionally picking up whole volumes of information. My methods, like those of every other Intelligence Officer, were very varied. My stage training was a great asset; to one prisoner I was a bully, to the next a friend in whom he might confide. Very soon I learned to size up my prey—half the art of an interrogating officer.

Nor did I have many scruples in going about my job. War knows no conscience, and every man does things for his country that he would never think of doing for himself. If I met a business rival to-day, for example, I would never think of getting him drunk so that he should tell me his secrets, but I did this on many occasions with German officer prisoners. I took advantage of the strange *camaraderie* which seemed to exist between the German Air Force and ours. It was quite the usual thing, if a German airman came down in our lines, that he should be entertained to dinner at the nearest Royal Flying Corps mess. I liked to attend on those occasions because it was customary, of course, to give the visitor something to drink, and if he was not a man who could stand more than a moderate quantity of wine he often became, under the influence of good company and good wine, more

talkative than a good soldier ought to have been. One young man in fact inadvertently gave away in his cups the exact position of the aerodrome from which he had flown—a piece of information which we had been wanting for weeks. Needless to say we acted on it at once, and the aerodrome was severely bombed a night or two later.

Least welcome and most dangerous of my tasks was that of listening-in. Accompanied by a covering guard of two or three infantrymen, from time to time—perhaps once a week—I would crawl out of our front line, cross No Man's Land (at night, of course), and get as near as I could to a German post. There would usually be two or three men on guard, and I had to listen to their conversation, from which obviously I might get a good deal of useful information. The dangers of the task are equally obvious! Sometimes I had to approach within four or five yards from the sentry post before I could hear what was being said. Had I been discovered my covering guard would have been quite helpless. They might have got my body away, but there would have been no me left inside it. The winter of 1914-15 gave no help to men who wished to crawl about the plains of Flanders, which were now several inches deep in mud, and after I returned from one of my nocturnal expeditions it used to take my batman two or three days to get my clothes fit for wear once more.

It was not until March, 1915, that I had a chance to put into operation any of those schemes which Colonel Hylton had discussed with me in our first talk. But immediately I saw the signs of battle on the horizon I prepared for a new stunt. My chance came with what is called the Battle of Neuve Chapelle. On March 10th, after a sudden and terrific bombardment, our infantry advanced to the attack. The first stages of the battle, as often, were very successful, but later, due very largely to bad Staff work, the attack broke down. It had been a success in a way in demonstrating the power and effect of a surprise heavy bombardment, but, unfortunately, the high command only read a part of the lesson that was offered to them. They appreciated the effect of the bombardment without appreciating the effect of the surprise. Consequently, when planning subsequent offensives they adopted long and heavy bombardments which were no surprise at all, and so achieved practically no result whatsoever.

However, we did take nearly two thousand prisoners at Neuve Chapelle, which gave me my chance; and as the prisoners were herded into the great barbed wire cage which had been prepared to receive them I was flung in amongst them, for I was dressed in a German uniform and, what is more, my shoulder strap proclaimed that I belonged to a regiment only slightly distant from the scene of the battle—just to the north of Fromelles, to be exact.

Thus no question would be asked, as it would be assumed that I had been captured in the northern sector of the battle, for it was quite certain that these prisoners, captured early in the day, would have no idea as to the length of the battle front.

My stratagem was very successful. At first all of us were silent in the indignity of defeat. We were called up one by one before Intelligence Officers belonging to the different divisions involved. To my amusement, when it came to my turn the task of interrogating me fell to Mason! How we kept a straight face I don't know, but I class it as one of the best pieces of acting on both our parts that we ever accomplished.

After examination, the prisoners were herded back into the pen and given something to eat. After that our spirits began to return, for a well-fed man soon forgets the horror and indignity behind him. We began to talk, comparing notes of our experiences in the battle. It was then that I began my real operations. I had joined a little group of the more intelligent looking men. Gradually I got them to talk. They had no suspicion of me whatsoever, of course, and talked quite freely, and, as they thought, confidentially, of military things. I don't want to infer that they told me all the secrets of the German General Staff. That only happens in fantastic books of fiction. Naturally they knew nothing of German Staff ideas, but they did know what units were in the vicinity, they did know of back-area work that was being done and, what was more important, one of them gave a hint—for he could do no more, having heard nothing further than a hint himself—that very soon the Germans had a new weapon which they were going to exploit on the Western Front. He said that poison gas was being manufactured in German factories, and was to be flung in shells far behind the Allied lines, there to do terrible execution. (I should say that I passed on this warning later to the Army Command, but it was practically ignored. It was not thought possible at that time to manufacture gas shells. It is interesting to note, too, that the Germans had no faith in the idea: they refused its inventor the necessary facilities for the manufacture of gas shells, so that it had to be discharged—as it was a month later at Ypres—from cylinders in the front line; that is to say, it became a very erratic and unreliable weapon. But this is by the way.) Suffice it to say that Colonel Hylton was delighted with the result of my adventure when three days' later I threw off my German uniform and returned to my khaki with green tabs.

For the next few months my life was a very varied one. Not only did I carry out my normal routine duties as an Intelligence Officer, but half a dozen times I went as a German among prisoners. If we had taken none I used to go to an internment camp well behind the lines in France where

German prisoners were being used for labour purposes. It was not in such camps that I would get a great deal of information, but I was thinking of bigger things, and I wanted to make absolutely certain that my details were right. I wanted to get inside the skin of the German soldier. I knew his language, but I wanted to learn his modern slang. An educated Englishman going suddenly into the ranks of the British Army during the war might not have understood more than two words in three which he heard spoken about him. So from these prisoners I got slang, the technical talk and its abbreviations, and also—and this might be most important—the current and most popular swears. That my work was appreciated was shown by the fact that I was suddenly promoted to the rank of captain, and placed on the Intelligence Staff of the First Army, which was commanded by Sir Douglas Haig, who of course later became Commander-in-Chief. It was while on the First Army Staff that I first heard of the preparation of what was later to be known as the Battle of Loos.

Immediately I began to study the projected advance, for I had ideas myself. We were to attack to the north of Lens, while the French attacked to the south. There was a gap of a few miles in between the two offensives, and it was hoped that between us we would be able to pinch out Lens and advance into the open country beyond. The whole success of the scheme, so far as I could see, depended upon whether we could reach open country behind the two organised trench lines before the Germans could bring up reserves—there would be local reserves on the spot, of course, but we ought to be capable of dealing with them. So I began to study railway maps. The railway system around Lens is rather complicated, for it is a mining district and there are a good many branch lines and sidings. But Lens itself was an almost essential point for any reinforcements reaching either battlefield. From Lens they would march either towards Hulluch or towards Vimy as the situation demanded. There was no other railway except the two main lines leading into Lens which could carry reinforcements on any scale. Now these two lines formed a junction about a mile to the north of the village of Avion. If, therefore, that junction could be put out of action—even for twenty-four hours—during the first day of the battle, then such an event might lead to decisive results. I put forward my idea to my Chief, who was a man of imagination. Nevertheless, he was something of a pessimist. He said he didn't see how it could possibly be done, but he was quite willing for me to try. He gave me the fullest possible liberty to carry out the scheme, and promised his whole-hearted help in its preparation. Nor did he let me down.

My adventure actually started three weeks before the battle. We had taken a small group of prisoners in a subsidiary attack between La Bassée

and Givenchy. As usual, I mingled with these prisoners, suitably uniformed. There was one man among them of about my own height and not unlike me in face; what was far more important, he had an outstanding distinctive feature—his hair was so blonde as to be almost white. Some such characteristic was essential to my purpose. How do you recognise a man? Not by his normalities, but by his abnormal characteristics.

Immediately I saw him I decided that he was my quarry. Consequently, although all the rest were reported as prisoners to the Germans, this particular man was not; and when other prisoners wrote to their families mentioning that Ernst Karkeln was with them their letters were held back for some weeks until my experiment had been completed. For I proposed to take over the identity of this man. I was going over to the German side—as Ernst Karkeln.

For three weeks I lived with the man. I waxed confidential to him, and he talked freely in return. He had no suspicions. Why should he? Particularly since I conversed not on military questions but personalities. He talked for hours on end about his family—about the girl who was waiting to marry him. He showed me her photograph—told me all details about her. He talked of his battalion—which officers were good and which had a very mixed ancestry, dating back for several generations, in which cows and pigs played apparently a very important part. There was little, so it seemed, that I did not know about him. In fact, at the end of three weeks almost literally I was no longer Captain Bernard Newman but was Private Soldier Ernst Karkeln, of the 138th Bavarian Regiment.

Before I went into the prison camp I had instructed Mason to prepare the remainder of the details of my scheme. How was I to get over the line? That was my difficulty. It might be possible at night to crawl over No Man's Land and gain the German trenches. Nevertheless, it was a very risky proceeding, for I was just as likely to be shot down by Germans as by English. Furthermore, it would not perhaps fit in with my plans. If I did actually reach the German line, having apparently escaped from the English, surely I would be sent direct to my unit, which would be of no use to me at all. This I gave as the official reason for deciding against the scheme. Actually (I may as well confess it now), what really influenced me was the fact that I would be carrying two or three sticks of dynamite or other suitable explosive, and it needs no imagination to estimate what would happen if a stray shot should chance to strike my pack.

I decided, therefore, to attempt an aeroplane landing behind the German line. It had been done before on three or four occasions when we had desired

to land an Intelligence Agent—or shall I call him a spy outright? The difficulty was the getting back by this same method. But Mason worked out a detailed scheme with a very keen young pilot of the Flying Corps, and was able to assure me that it stood a good chance of success.

Timing was all important. As soon as I knew the exact day of the battle I proposed to go over. Yet I did not intend to do any work on the junction until the night before the battle. Otherwise the damage might easily be repaired before the critical point of the conflict had been reached. This, then, was my scheme. Three or four days before the battle I would be flown over and dropped behind the German line. My pilot had been on several observation flights and reported that there was a good flat area a mile to the south of Bois-Bernard where he could land without difficulty and which seemed to be well away from view. He also pointed out—for many of his kind were great believers in luck—that there might be an omen of good-fortune in the name of the village. He, of course, would leave immediately, without stopping his engine, and I would drop at once into my new part. The landing, I need hardly say, must be accomplished at night—not an easy task in those days with no ground flares to guide us—but he was a smart pilot; there was half a moon, and he was quite confident that he could do it. I would then be Ernst Karkeln, a German soldier just returning from leave to rejoin his unit. Were I challenged, immediately I had a story ready—that I had been put in the wrong train at Douai and had found myself at Arras instead of Lens. My papers were in perfect order—our Intelligence Staff had seen to that, for our forgery department was second to none—and as a final guarantee of my identity I carried the actual papers of the real Karkeln, including the photograph of his girl Irma. I was quite ready to describe the charms of Irma to anyone who came along.

The attack, at first dated for September 15th, was eventually postponed until September the 25th. On the night of the 21st I got into the aeroplane and my pilot, flying very high, crossed the German lines. He went far beyond our destination before he came down almost silently (for he had switched off his engine), towards the spot he had observed. Several times he swooped in great circles around the field. There was no sign of any life. The rising moon gave him sufficient light and he chanced the landing. It was certainly bumpy. At first I thought that he must have broken his landing wheels, which would have been very awkward for him, as he would have been unable to take off. However, a hurried examination proved that there was nothing amiss. He gave me a handshake and a final whisper of good luck, and a minute later his aeroplane was again speeding through the sky. And there was I—an Englishman, but now a German; no longer on the

English side but on the German side. I felt excited but very confident. I could explain everything to everybody—except to my own regiment—because, of course, they were under the impression that I was lying dead beyond the German line. I was Private Ernst Karkeln, complete with abnormally blonde hair.

I lay down in a wood until it was light, then stepped out boldly towards Lens. Why should I hide myself? Had not a German soldier a right to walk behind his own line? At Mericourt I was challenged by a military policeman. I showed him my papers and told him my story about having got the wrong train; he was perfectly satisfied and allowed me to proceed. Early in the afternoon I reached Lens. The first thing to do was to find some place where I could take shelter for a day or two. My leave, according to my papers, had not yet expired,[10] so I had sufficient time to scout round and find out the potentialities of attack.

I had been given the addresses of three civilians who were acting as British or French agents in Lens. Yet I hesitated to declare myself to them, because a false word would have ruined my plans. In any case I was never so certain about the integrity of these civilian agents as were some of our Staff officers. I did walk round, however, and have a look at the three houses, and when I found that one of them was an *estaminet* in which eight or ten German soldiers were sitting drinking, I had no hesitation in entering. Even then, however, I gave no hint as to my identity or purpose. All I did was to ask the fat old lady behind the bar if she could recommend some house where I might stay for the night. I pointed out that my leave had not yet expired, and who wanted to return to the trenches a day before they need do so? I wanted a place, I said, where I could rest and be quiet. I emphasised the quietness. I whispered to her that I did not wish the military police to know that I was staying in Lens. Otherwise they might ask too many questions—although I had a proper and satisfactory explanation. She said at once that she knew the very place for me. The girl of the house—her father was a railwayman—hated the military police just as much as I did, for she had had to suffer their insults on more than one occasion. There was an alternative house, the old woman said, where I might stay. There were two girls in that house: beautiful girls, and if I wished—her wink was more than suggestive. But the moment she had mentioned that word “railwayman” my mind was made up. Obviously this was the place I wanted.

I shouted a good-bye to the men with whom I had been drinking and went out to find my billet. The man was at home eating his evening meal. He explained to me that he was on night duty and just about to set off for work. His wife was bedridden and he left it to his daughter to arrange the

necessary terms. She was a typical girl of the district, not particularly good-looking, but strong, bigly built and very active. Her name was Suzanne, and she proved to be a very good friend to me.

I did not go abroad that evening in case there should be some system of patrolling the streets which might lead to my discomfiture. Instead, I stayed in and talked to Suzanne. Immediately I had told her that the landlady of the *estaminet* round the corner had sent me to her she looked at me very curiously. Suddenly, after I had talked to her for an hour or so on every subject under the sun—although she had kept me at the distance proper between a French girl and a German soldier, she had been perfectly friendly—suddenly she exclaimed: "Since when have you been a German?" I was flabbergasted as she continued, accusingly, "You are no German, you are French!" Of course I protested vehemently, but she would not hear me—although I could insist with truth that I was not French at all.

"We have been talking about dancing; now say to me in French, 'I want to dance with you twenty times.' " I said it, and immediately she gave a cry of triumph. "I knew it," she said. "There, no German could ever say *danser* properly—and certainly he can never get the *v* in *vingt* right. In any case," she continued, more seriously, "when someone is sent to me by Madame Sophie I am looking for something. You might just as well be honest with me, for I knew immediately I saw you that you were not what you appeared to be."

This naturally gave me a bit of a shock. I wished at first that I had left Madame Sophie and her damned *estaminet* a mile behind, and had sought out quarters entirely for myself, unassisted by French Intelligence agents. But as it happened I had no cause to regret the chance which led me to Suzanne.

There are some people whom you trust almost implicitly from the first hour. Suzanne was one of these. I discovered later that—although she had done no actual intelligence work—she had, on occasions, carried messages from Madame Sophie to someone in Douai. As Suzanne was quite unsuspected, she could do this without inviting the attention of the police.

Before the end of the evening I decided to confide the whole plan to her. It might be a risk, but it had to be taken. Already, by some intuitive instinct, she had guessed that I was something unusual. If she were a traitor she could denounce me already. But Suzanne was no traitor.

She agreed that neither her father nor mother must know anything whatsoever of what was happening. Although we wanted information from her father it must be got in a roundabout manner. Yes, she said, he would be

able to tell us anything that was wanted. He had been a shunter at the sidings at Avion, within half a mile of the main junction, for a good many years.

The next day, walking casually along by the road which led by the railway, I spied out the land. My first choice, which I had made by the map, was the obvious one. My next task was to find how it was guarded. There was a signal-box close by, and I noticed a sentry on guard. Apart from this one man, however, there seemed to be no question of interference, for the next sentry was a good quarter of a mile away.

That evening over the meal we pumped Suzanne's father for all we were worth. I let her ask the questions, since already she knew half the answers from previous conversations, and she knew well what I wanted. Soon I found out several important facts. One, that while troop trains came by the northern Douai-Lens line, supplies were usually transmitted by the southern line, which branches off the Douai-Arras line a few miles south-west of Douai. I learned also that the ordinary divisional supply trains worked to fixed routine and were seldom more than a few minutes out of their time every night. What was more important, I found that the man on sentry at the signal-box had formed an unofficial habit of going into the signalman's cabin about two o'clock in the morning, when the signalman made coffee, and taking coffee with him. He would only be away from his post for a matter of five or ten minutes; and all the while, if he cared to look, he could watch the line through the windows of the signal-box. Nevertheless the fact was well worth remarking.

So far my plans had proceeded literally without a hitch—unless my unmasking by Suzanne could be called a hitch—but on the actual day of my attempt to wreck the railway I had the fright of my life. For that day I wandered about Lens for an hour or so, looking out for useful details without the slightest interference. Any town behind the line on either side naturally contained a large number of unattached soldiers who might legitimately be in the streets on all kinds of errands. The military police could not possibly detain everyone. Nor would it be policy to do so, for official business would become impossible. But even as I was returning to Suzanne's house for a last meal I was halted by a sergeant of military police. He was perfectly friendly, however—in fact, he was a surprising contrast to some of the military police I had met in our own army, whose conduct was not always particularly edifying on all occasions. Indeed, when I considered that this man was a German and the German discipline was supposed to be about ten times as severe as ours, I pondered very deeply. For, after examining my papers, he was perfectly satisfied, but pointed out that I would have to hurry if I was to join my regiment by midnight, for this was

the hour that was marked on the papers which I showed—I have mentioned that I carried two or three of these leave papers each with a different date. He was good enough to tell me the nearest way to Hulluch, and actually put me in touch with a lorry-driver who was taking a load of barbed wire to an engineer's depôt that same evening. Naturally I thanked him very much for his information and advice, and promised to avail myself of it. So I went into the nearest café, ostensibly for a final drink, and then moved on in the direction that he had indicated. After half an hour I reversed, and got back to Suzanne's house by a roundabout route.

One thing I was very disturbed to notice in Lens. Our attack was ostensibly a secret, yet everyone knew about it. Already local reserves had been warned to be in readiness; yet I saw no sign of army reserves in the neighbourhood. Maybe it was not too late, although either our over-zealous and easily-seen preparations (or more probably loose tongue-wagging somewhere in Staff or political circles) had given the Germans the hint that the attack was about to come off. When I say Staff circles I don't necessarily mean English Staff circles: my experience was that eighty per cent of the information which found itself in German hands and which ought not to have done came from French G.Q.G., for many of their officers were far too talkative: their politicians were quite incorrigible, even at the most critical phases of the war.

About one o'clock in the morning I left the house, prepared to do or die, or even both. Suzanne wanted to come with me, but of course I would not hear of it. This was no woman's job. It might even not be a man's. I made my way without challenge to the railway and hid myself in a ditch beside it, keeping a careful eye on the sentry. He had a beat, and was walking up and down, for the night air was chilly. In fact, in my ditch I was deadly cold, for the grass was wet and my feet were in water. At two o'clock, however, the expected happened. I saw the door of the signal cabin open and one of the signalmen came to the door. The German went inside. I could see him drinking his coffee. Even if there was official connivance in taking the coffee, certainly this man failed in his duty, for his back was turned to half of the track which he was supposed to guard. This was my opportunity. I had, of course, everything prepared. Very quickly I slipped two charges under the rail nearest to me, and prepared the fuse. Then I went back to my ditch to wait for something to come.

I knew I ought not to have long to wait. A supply train was due at half-past two, but actually it arrived nearly half an hour late. This accident, however, helped my plan, for, to my joy, I saw another train advancing on

the other line. If the engine-driver were alert it might be possible for him to pull up in time. Otherwise disaster would be certain.

It was. I timed my fuse so that the charge did not explode until the engine had passed. Necessarily it was only a light charge, since I had carried it in my pack, but it was quite sufficient to twist the metals and fling the trucks with violence on to their side. In fact, it was a hopeless smash, and to my glee the leading truck fell over the actual junction—that is to say, it would be quite impossible for a train on either track to pass until the line had been cleared. Then I watched; would the other train pull up in time? No, it was impossible. It was but a hundred yards away, and with an even louder crash the engine ran at a good speed straight on into the maze of shattered trucks all over the line.

The confusion was redoubled. Already men were shouting and running from all directions. I myself rushed to the scene. There was no reason whatsoever why I should not see precisely what damage I had done, and in any case it would not do for me to be found hiding in the ditch. Before I reached the actual spot where the troop train had derailed and some of the coaches had turned over, however, there was a terrific explosion. I was flung backwards, and it was lucky for me that I was still on comparatively soft ground. As it was, when I got up I found myself bleeding in half a dozen places, although on investigation the wounds proved to be the slightest of abrasions.

What had happened? It was soon fairly obvious. The engine of the troop train had charged right into the middle of a truck loaded with ammunition, and two or three trucks of heavy shells had exploded. The scene was appalling. I ought to have jumped for joy, because now there was no question of a mere twenty-four hour delay. Even with hundreds of men and dozens of cranes available it would be at least a week before this track could be cleared and relaid. My job was done and well done. Had I not been a sentimental fool I would have cleared out at once and gone back to Bois-Bernard, there to pick up my pilot and to return home. But, alas, although I had been in the army for over a year I was still a civilian. I simply could not face the appalling scene about me. There must have been several hundred men in the train, and the greater part of them were killed or wounded by the explosion. On every hand men were groaning, screaming and hurt. It was more than I could stand. Foolishly I allowed my better nature to get on top of me—better nature is a poor comrade in war; I went to some of the men and began to give what help I could. I tore up the clothes of dead men to make bandages for the living. I worked at frantic speed. Every few minutes I said to myself, “You idiot, you *must* get away. You’ll get caught, as safe as

houses. Everyone will be suspicious now. They might easily round up all the men on the spot. Get away, you fool!" Then I would catch sight of some poor brute lying maimed and helpless, and would go to his aid.

By the time the situation was in hand I was completely all out. The mental strain, the physical work and the revulsion of the scene had affected me greatly. By now, of course, hundreds of men were on the spot, and medical officers were attending to the wounded. An orderly came to me, seeing that I was exhausted, and not only insisted that I should cease work but led me off to a medical officer who roughly bandaged my wounds and ordered me to hospital. As he was dressing me, a major who had taken charge of the relief operations came up to him. "This man deserves recognition," the doctor said after a little conversation. "He has worked tremendously hard and has done a lot of good work." The major turned to me and demanded my name and regiment, which of course I had to give, and he promised me that my colonel should know of my good conduct. I might even, he said, be recommended for a decoration. The fat was properly in the fire now, I thought, as I was hauled up in an ambulance to hospital for further treatment. What an idiot I had been! Why had I not followed my second instinct, rushed at once to Suzanne to have my wounds dressed, and then made a bee-line to Bois-Bernard? Now I was going into hospital, and it might be the very devil of a job getting out.

At hospital I was treated remarkably well. Apparently the driver passed on the word that I had done useful work on the spot. The doctor who treated me took the greatest pains with my small wounds. Then I was put to bed, and in spite of my mental agitation, so great was my exhaustion that I slept for an hour. When I woke up I stared hard at the man in the next bed. It was the sergeant of military police who had offered to find me the lift to Hulluch!

Immediately I had to think of excuses. He wanted to know, of course, why I had not done as he suggested. I told him that I had lost my way and had missed the man with the lorry. Even that did not explain why I had not set out on foot. There could be no explanation to that, so I pretended that I was still confused. It was quite obvious that he was suspicious—not that I was anything but what I professed to be, but that I had deliberately neglected to join my regiment. Fortunately he too had heard the story about my conduct on the scene of the smash, and he hinted that it was a good job that I had such a record to show to get me out of trouble when eventually I did report to my battalion.

Maybe he was waiting for my brain to clear a little. But if so he waited too long, for suddenly there came through orders to clear the hospital at once. The expected attack had materialised, and hundreds of casualties might be expected within the next few hours. I, of course, was not a wounded case at all. My scratches, if they could only be kept clean for two or three days, would not cause me the slightest trouble. So I was fitted up with a uniform—for my own was soaked in blood—and actually given a letter of recommendation to the colonel of my regiment. So once more I set off, not towards Hulluch, but towards the regimental depôt at Carvin. By this time, I was told, Hulluch was in the hands of the English. I had to restrain my jubilation.[11]

I was at any rate glad to see that there was apparently no suspicion whatsoever but that the disaster had been a pure accident. That was where the second explosion—that of the ammunition trucks—had been a godsend to me, for the destruction it caused would, I hoped, completely eradicate all traces of the small explosion which had started the affair. So I set off on the road towards Carvin with a light heart, determined at the earliest possible moment to turn south to my rendezvous with young Palmer.

I was very intrigued to see the great confusion behind the German front—I had imagined that we on our side had a monopoly of confusion, but it was obvious that some of their commanders were really rattled. Troops were being hurried towards the front along the very roads down which other troops were streaming back. I talked with as many as I could of the latter. They said that they had suffered a tremendous defeat, that the English had broken right through, and that the *fräulein* soldiers (as they called the Highlanders), were actually in the suburbs of Lens. I chuckled beneath my anxious face. It was obvious that the minimum of reserves were on the spot if our attacking forces had already reached the suburbs of Cité St. Auguste. Then all we had to do was to throw in our reserves and Lens was ours. Behind the town was open country—and no reinforcement on any large scale could arrive for many hours.

At nightfall I turned about and began to make my way south. Several times I passed military police, but no one had any questions, so great was the confusion of troops passing and counter-marching in all directions. I had no map and had to depend upon memory and intuition, and in the darkness I lost my way and found myself on the outskirts of Lens again. There seemed to me to be something wrong. If we had been in the suburbs of Lens in the morning, why were we not in the place itself by now? Then another idea came into my head. If we were so near occupying Lens, why should I not lie

low in a cellar and wait until the English did arrive? I decided to call in at Suzanne's house for further information.

I did, but she had none. She was tremendously concerned to see me. She fully realised the danger of my position and urged me to go at once to the clearing near Bois-Bernard. I needed little urging when I found that the noise of battle had come no nearer to Lens during the day—in fact, it appeared to have largely died out—and off I set again on my lonely journey. My path led close by the junction, the scene of my exploit. As I was passing I saw officers examining the line by the light of great flares and, to my discomfiture, a witness was the sergeant of military police, who was evidently giving his version of the events of the previous night.

At once I turned about, intending to make a big circle around the scene; but my luck was out—that police sergeant was indeed my albatross. He sent one of his men running towards me. He must have had keen eyesight, for I was a hundred yards away at the time, and although the light of the flares was strong, it was by no means daylight. Now, I said to myself, I am surely done for. This is the third time this man has hauled me up; although he won't have any suspicions, he will have me arrested as a deserter. And that is precisely what happened.

The officers were endeavouring to ascertain the cause of the disaster, for the Railway Transport Officer at Lens had apparently refused to believe that it could be by accident; and then, by an atrocious piece of bad luck, they had found a small portion of fuse which had not been consumed when I had fired my charge. I saw a Staff officer holding it in his hands, looking at it with great curiosity. Yet I retained my calm. How could he tell that the fuse had anything to do with me?

But I had to face at once the catechism of the police sergeant. "What the hell are you thinking of, man?" he cried. "You do yourself a good turn and then undo it all again by not obeying orders. Don't you realise that you have overstayed your leave in such a manner that you are now classed as a deserter? What have you to say for yourself?"

I began telling him a long story about how I had got to Carvin, and had found that my regimental depôt had moved back and nobody knew where it was, so that I had returned to Lens to get further orders. By this time he was suspicious—that is to say, he refused to believe that I had made any serious effort to get in touch with my regiment. Naturally, he had no suspicion otherwise. He turned to one of the Staff officers. "This man, sir," he said, "says that the depôt of the 138th Bavarian regiment has been moved from Carvin. Can you confirm that?"

"No, that isn't so," the Staff officer replied. "I was on the 'phone to them there only this afternoon."

The military policeman looked at me very sourly.

"I think you had better come along with me," he said. "I'll hand you over to my Chief."

Without ceremony one of his men and himself escorted me to the office of the German equivalent of Town Major. By this time I knew that the slightest slip would mean complete exposure. The only thing to do was to brazen things out. Soon the telephone was humming. The Town Major laid down his receiver, turned to me and said, "Why did you say your depôt was no longer at Carvin? It is. I am just talking to your adjutant now."

"Then I must have got lost. I got to what I thought was Carvin, but there is such confusion on the road to-day owing to the battle that I might easily have been mistaken."

He got on to the telephone again and I heard one end of his conversation —which disconcerted me, yet gave me an idea of what to say next.

"Your adjutant tells me that you were reported missing five weeks ago," he said.

"That's quite right," I agreed, "I was taken prisoner by the English, but I escaped a week ago and was then given leave. I am just on the way to rejoin my regiment. Evidently the adjutant does not know that I escaped."

He asked a good many more questions of the same type, punctuating them with telephone conversations with my adjutant. At last he turned to me and said: "There's obviously only one thing to do. I shall send you under escort back to your unit for trial. It's a very lucky thing for you that you have this letter of recommendation with you, because at the time of a battle courts martial are apt to make the first example that they possibly can."

So off along the Carvin road I passed again, this time in a light lorry with an armed policeman on guard over me. Naturally I made no attempt to escape. All the while I sat quiet, chatting only very occasionally to my escort, but thinking deeply of what I had learned from the man I was impersonating. I felt fairly confident, because surely I had pumped Ernst of everything of his family history. From his description I recognised the adjutant as soon as I saw him, but my heart fell when by his side I saw a Staff officer. I had seen him before—by the light of the flares at the scene of the smash, holding a small piece of fuse in his hand!

It was the Staff officer who opened the investigation. "Do you recognise this man?" he asked of the adjutant.

“Certainly I do, he is Private Ernst Karkeln, who was reported missing after the little attack five weeks ago.”

“You have not seen him since?” said the officer.

“No.”

“He has never been reported to you as having escaped, or having been sent on leave?”

“No,” the adjutant confirmed, “certainly not. That is what amazes me. Surely we would be informed at once in the event of his escape.”

“You are quite satisfied that this is the man?”

“Quite,” said the adjutant, “at least, so far as I can see. I don’t know him too well: his hair is distinctive. But if you want to be quite certain, let us bring in some of his immediate non-commissioned officers to identify him.”

“Better still,” the Staff officer pointed out, “let us see if he can identify some of the officers or men in his battalion.”

This remark frightened me intensely, for I knew from that moment that he was definitely suspicious of me.

However, I came through my first test with flying colours. I affected some show of disciplined indignation. “But, sir, this is absurd,” I cried to the adjutant; “of course I am Ernst Karkeln. Do I not know you, Captain Norden? Do I not know Sergeant-Major Lyck and Orderly Room Clerk Heide? And of those men outside is not the sergeant with the ginger moustache Sergeant Thurowen? I forget the name of the corporal with him.”

“Well, that sounds all right!” said the adjutant. But the other officer was still unsatisfied. He was a cute man—after my own heart, except that I would far rather have had him on my side than on the other.

“Send for some of his personal friends,” he commanded, and I waited anxiously. About five minutes later I felt happier, for four men were marched into the office—and three of them, either from description or from photographs which my involuntary tutor had shown me, I knew at once—and, what was more, knew a considerable amount about them. The fourth, unfortunately, I could not place. It was strange to see their eyes light up at the sight of me. Great grins spread across their faces in spite of the foreboding presence of the two officers. They had, of course, given me up for dead as I had not been reported a prisoner.

“Do you know this man?” asked the adjutant of them.

“Of course!” they replied almost in unison. “He is Ernst Karkeln.”

“And do you know them?” asked the Staff officer of me.

"Of course!" I echoed. "The first man on the right is Henrik Domnau. His father is a baker in Munich. He has a wife and two children, but he forgets his wife occasionally. He can tell you a very good story about a brothel in Lille." Henrik looked hard at the ground. The others grinned, and even the adjutant lost his stern expression.

"I seem to have heard something about that," he remarked; "something about the man's clothes being taken away, was it not?"

"That was it. And next to him is Josef Friedlander. When I was taken prisoner he was serving a sentence of seven days' punishment for dropping the officers' coffee."

"Is that so?" asked the Staff officer. The adjutant agreed that it was so.

"And the third man," I said, "is Peter Mayr. He and I have been in the regiment together since the beginning of the war. He can tell you all the campaigns we have made. We fought against the French in Alsace, where he was wounded, but very soon came back to us. Then we were transferred to Arras and later to here. I can tell you any details you like." I did, in fact. I gave them quite as much detail of the regimental history during the war as ever a private soldier would be expected to know, but the Staff officer did not seem to be interested, and I knew I was making no headway. These things could be found out from other sources, as both he and I knew very well. He interrupted me in the middle of a sentence. "And the fourth man?" he asked. There he had got me. I did not recognise the fourth man at all. I thought back of all that Ernst Karkeln had inadvertently told me. I had a detailed description of fifteen or twenty people and some casual notes about another hundred stored away in my memory, but none of them fitted this man—a mere youth of eighteen or so who was grinning at me in friendly fashion.

"Of course I recognise him," I explained, "but I can't just think who he is. I had a nasty knock when the English took me prisoner, and it may have affected my memory."

"That means that you don't know this man at all?" suggested the Staff officer. "Yet you know the others!"

"Of course I do," I protested. "I recognise him quite well, but I can't think who he is."

"I see," he said. Then he ordered the four men to march out of the room. There was no one left but the adjutant, Staff officer and attendant police.

"I think you may as well confess at once," he said, "that you are not what you appear to be. In fact, you are an English or French spy."

So it had come to that! Although I knew throughout the whole of the interrogation how thin was my line of safety, I had not quite realised that his suspicion was so certain.

"Listen," he continued. "A night ago there was a terrible train tragedy at Lens at which you assisted in helping the wounded. Where were you when the collision occurred?"

"I have explained before," I said, "that I had a toothache and I was taking a walk because I could not go to sleep. I can show you the tooth, if you like."

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "There is no doubt, I suppose that it was a genuine collision? You heard no sound of an explosion just before the supply train crashed?"

"None at all. I saw the trucks turn over on to the line, and then a few seconds later the other train ran into it."

"Oh!" he continued. "Then you would be surprised to know that the rails under the supply train were blown up?"

"Very surprised!" I agreed.

"You have never seen anything like this before?" He laid the small fragment of fuse on the table before me.

"Yes, I have," I declared, for I saw that I must be very bold. "It looks like a piece of fuse."

"It is a piece of fuse," he said. "What is more, it is English fuse. It is a part of the fuse that was used to blow up the supply train. Now have you anything further to say?"

"Nothing at all," I protested. "Why should I?"

"Because," he continued, every word firmly emphasised, "a few threads of fuse like this were found in your pack by the Town Major of Lens."

This was a bombshell. Nevertheless, I had a story ready. He laid a few thin strings of cotton on the table beside me.

"There is nothing peculiar about that," I claimed. "We captured quite a quantity of explosives from the English some months ago, and quite a lot of us kept back small lengths of fuses. They are very useful for blowing out rat holes. Some of us are very keen on ratting and there is plenty of good sport about here."

"You have a tale ready for anything," he complained, "but this last one is not very convincing. Is it true that you captured explosives from the English?" he asked the adjutant.

"Yes, we did, though I did not know that there were fuses among them. We captured rifle ammunition and some very strange home-made bombs made out of jam tins."

"Exactly," I broke in. "These fuses were used to explode the bomb."

"Very well. We will pass over that for the moment. Now you say again that you do not recognise that fourth man?"

"No, except that I do know him of course," I agreed. "I can't just place him."

"You have a fiancée back in Munich, I believe, named Irma Donau?" he suggested.

"That is so," I agreed. "I have her photograph here." I pulled it out and showed it to him.

"You have known Irma for a good many years?" he continued.

"Why, yes," I said. "We have been affianced for three years, but I have known her practically the whole of her life."

"And her family, too?"

"Of course," I agreed. "I used to go round to supper every Sunday evening before the War."

"Then how comes it," he cried triumphantly, "that you did not recognise her brother, whom you must also have known for the whole of his life?"

This was a shocker. I suddenly recollected that Ernst had told me surprisingly little about Irma's family—principally because he had not got on with them very well. But now with Irma's brother on the premises—well, the danger was only too obvious. For just a fraction of a second my mask slipped and the Staff officer had dashed in and penetrated my defence. Any police officer will tell you that you are half way towards proving a man guilty if you are certain that he is guilty. That was my unhappy position as the guilty man. Irma's brother was brought back. The Staff officer had a private conversation with him, and the youth began to ask me all sorts of intimate questions about Irma's past. I was immediately out of my depth. I pretended that I was confused, that the knock I had received when captured had upset my memory. I knew that it was a poor story. My memory had been good enough to reel out a list of engagements in which the battalion had taken part. It would not so suddenly go phut now. After a very unhappy twenty minutes the Staff officer dismissed Irma's brother and turned to me.

"I think you might as well throw up the sponge. You have done very well and have done an enormous amount of damage. Nevertheless, I think you

now stand completely unmasked. There is ample evidence. You will be tried by court martial either to-morrow or the day after."

I was marched off and placed in a hut under heavy guard. I tried hard to think of a way out, but it seemed to me that I was completely trapped and cornered. The only thing to do was to play upon my supposed confusion in the mind—if necessary, to pretend that I was mentally deranged. But, alas, all my schemes fell to pieces when I was marched into the room where the court martial was to be held. The customary three officers sat in their places: a grave and rather elderly colonel, a young subaltern and a captain—and as I gazed at the captain I had a fit of cold shivers. I had seen him before—he was one of the Bavarian officers with whom we had fraternised on Christmas Day.

Would he recognise me? I have said that I was not disguised in any external way, except for my hair. I had merely adopted the personality of the other man. Would he recognise me? The question was soon answered. Even as my guard were stamping their rifles to attention he glanced up from his papers and saw me. I saw a look of astonishment spreading over his face. I gazed at him calmly and steadily, showing no trace of recognition whatsoever. But it was too much to be a coincidence: I could almost see his mind working—he knew I spoke fluent German, for at the time I had had no reason to conceal it. The look of wonderment passed from his face: a cold calculation replaced it.

The court martial opened. The first witnesses gave their evidence. The Bavarian captain did not appear to be listening; he was still thinking hard. Suddenly, in an interval between witnesses, he whispered to the President, whose eyes stared in surprise.

"Could it be done?" I heard the captain ask.

"Yes, it is possible"; the President seemed hesitant. "It is unusual, but ——"

"It would settle the case, would it not?"

"Yes, that is so. Very well, I agree. The court is adjourned for an hour."

What was in the wind? I knew by now that my position was hopeless. I was almost certain to be condemned on the existing evidence, but if the Bavarian captain claimed to recognise me——

I was marched back into the room.

"Have you got them?" the President asked of a military policeman.

"Yes, sir. The commandant of the prisoners' enclosure asked that they might be returned."

"Of course. Put them on the prisoner."

And I saw through the scheme as the policeman produced a British officer's cap and greatcoat! I protested—why should I be forced to wear an enemy uniform? But of course it was useless.

"Well?" asked the President.

The captain had no hesitation. "Yes," he said, "it is quite definite. He is a British officer. We talked to him during the unofficial truce on Christmas Day. I remember him particularly because of the fluency of his German—one of my colleagues, in fact, was convinced that he must be one of our agents working on the British side."

"You are quite certain?"

"Absolutely, sir. Only the colour of his hair is changed—that is what made me hesitate at first. But now I am certain. If you wish, I will retire from the court and give evidence on oath."

That finished me, of course. I need not describe the rest of the trial in full because the result was obvious right from that moment. After half an hour, in fact, I saw the hopelessness of trying to argue it out and threw up my hands completely. I should emphasise that I was treated very fairly and was given every opportunity that I could possibly want of asking questions or cross-examining witnesses. But of course it was quite hopeless. I would have had a very difficult job in getting round the circumstantial evidence of the fuse, the non-recognition of Irma's brother and my other little lapse, but my recognition by this officer had made all these pieces of evidence trivial in comparison. At least by confessing everything I would be treated as an officer and not as a paid spy. But I wonder what instinct prompted me not to reveal my name?

The President of the Court did, in fact, so treat me with dignity and fairness. He informed me that all my wishes would be scrupulously carried out. Nevertheless, of course, there was but one verdict and one sentence. The verdict was "Guilty," and the sentence "To be shot at dawn the following morning."

I was hurried back to Lens, where the civilian prison was now occupied by military police; it was already late afternoon. I had something like twelve hours to live. I sat in my cell and began to think again.

Rather strangely, I found myself not afraid of certain death. That is not really so strange as it may sound. Actually, I have found in battle time after time that the soldier's fear is not so much of death as of pain. I was perfectly cheerful as I prepared my thoughts for my fate the following morning. I

have never been so calm. At first the end seemed absolutely inevitable, but naturally I spied around to see if there remained one chance, however minute, of escape.

It was not very hopeful. My cell was one of a series in a long corridor. It was securely locked and it was quite impossible to force the door. In the passage outside patrolled an armed soldier. I timed his patrol and found that he passed my door about every ten minutes—and as I was an interesting and unusual prisoner he peeped in through the wire-guarded little hole in the window every time he passed. Evidently he had the strictest orders to look after me. So, considering everything, I decided that the end had come. I had now only to look forward to death. As the soldier passed on his patrol I called out to him and asked him to send the Governor of the prison to me.

He came. He was a very decent old fellow, sorry indeed to see an English officer in such a plight. It was obvious that he held a strong admiration for what I had done. He was a fairly elderly man, and, doubtless, for him the war would pass without any outstanding military glory. He bore me no spite at all. We talked about such things as *esprit de corps* among officers. I told him, for example, of how the submarine officer who sank the *Aboukir*, *Hogue*, and *Cressy* was held in high esteem in the British Navy, despite the tremendous damage he had caused. The Governor, for his part, did his utmost to make my last hours easy. He told me I could command what food I wanted, and any wishes within reason he would be only too glad to carry out. As I could think of absolutely nothing to ask for that would help me in any way to escape, I could only ask for writing materials to pen my last letters home; but I did also ask that he would take some steps to procure an English uniform, that I might be shot in my own uniform and not in that of my "adopted" country. He promised to do this without fail. It was long after dark when he left me, and by the time he had returned with the writing materials all about was very quiet: the uniform would be ready before the morning, he promised.

It was he himself who made the suggestion which was to have such tremendous consequences, for he asked if I would like to see a chaplain. Strangely enough, I had never thought of this, although it is the usual thing to do when a man is about to die. Nor, for I must confess it frankly, was I tremendously keen on seeing a chaplain as such, for in his last hours (as at any other time) an ordinary man is just as capable of communing with his Maker by himself as by the assistance of any outside person. However, in my state I was rather glad to see anyone. There were a lot of small commissions which I would like to be done, and a chaplain would probably

be able to execute them better than the Governor of the prison. In fact it was his job, so I agreed at once that I would like to see him.

While I was awaiting him I began my last letter home, and it was not until I was in the middle of my letter to my mother, who was dearer to me than anyone else in the world, did I realise how near to death I stood. I experienced a sense of futility. I felt as I had often felt before when I saw young men going to their death in battle—that my life was being wasted. After all, there must be a great deal which I could do for England and for humanity, and now I was to disappear into the void. I had done something, it was true, but I felt I could do even bigger things. I left off writing in the middle of the letter, and once again paced about the cell. Was there absolutely no chance of escape? Was there any possibility of a last minute reprieve? The answer to those questions was an obvious and very emphatic negative. Had I built a cell for a prisoner myself I could not have done it more strongly and securely; and as for a reprieve—well, the damage I had done and the lives I had caused to be lost gave their own condemnation to such a vain hope.

But at the moment the chaplain entered my cell once again I felt a gleam of hope. The Governor, having ushered him in, left us alone. I asked how long I was to be allowed and the Governor replied that there was no time limit. Doubtless I had a good many last commissions, which the chaplain would be only too glad to attend to. I thanked him very heartily, and said that I hoped my business would not occupy more than an hour or so, as I did not wish to deprive the chaplain of his night's rest.

Even before the Governor retired, leaving us alone, I was taking an acute stock of my new visitor, for in the sight of him some new hope had been born in my brain. He was a man ten or fifteen years older than I was, not quite so tall, and of a slightly lighter build. His looks did not resemble mine in the least, for his hair was very dark whereas mine was dyed fair. In addition he wore a dark moustache of the tooth-brush variety so popular at that time in both the British and German Armies: he also wore spectacles with a powerful lens. Nevertheless, my experience as an actor told me in five seconds that, given a supply of hair dye, crepe hair and spirit gum, I could easily pass myself off as this chaplain. This alone was enough to create a new hope in my heart.

He began to talk to me very quietly and sympathetically. Naturally he spoke of matters of the soul, endeavouring to prepare me for the eternity which I must face in the earliest hours of the morning. I listened to him seriously, looking hard at him the while. Actually, I scarcely heard a word of

his homily; all the time my brain was a whirling activity. My scheme, which took less than five minutes to evolve, was doubtless crude, but my position was desperate. Even if it failed I could be in no worse position.

Under the pretence of getting a better light I moved the small camp table with which I had been provided. The patrolling sentry rushed to my door at once when he heard the movement of the table, but I set him at his ease by asking him to fetch another chair for the use of the chaplain. This brought, we both sat down, under the eyes of the sentry, at the table; and very casually I so arranged things that we both sat with our backs to the door. Then, before the sentry marched off on his ten-minute patrol, we were both immersed in the letters which I had been writing, and I was giving the chaplain my last instructions.

At all costs I must play my part, thinking well ahead. Everything must be done in ten-minute intervals. So, when the sentry next returned and peeped through the little window my head was in my hands, bowed over the table. Evidently my spirit was failing me, for the chaplain was addressing me seriously and sympathetically. The moment the sentry had passed I recovered. Then, standing up and talking over the chaplain's shoulder, I began to point out one or two details that I had written down to which I would like attention to be given.

The first critical moment had arrived. I was thinking back ten years to my boyhood days at Lodstone Hall. There in the village lived a poacher named Zicky Porter. He had made so many appearances before the local magistrates that he himself had lost count of the number of his convictions —although he was, as he used to say, a centurion. But, in spite of his many deviations from the path of rectitude as laid down by man-made laws, Zicky was a great fellow, naturally popular with the youth of the village and even with the elders, since he was such a wonderful man with animals. There never was a dog for ten miles around which would not leave its master to run at Zicky's beckoning whistle. He had always been a great favourite of mine and, though I ought to blush to confess it, I had been out with him more than once on his nocturnal patrols—I had even committed the heinous crime of poaching my own father's rabbits! And as I stood behind the chaplain I recollected one of the little tips which Zicky had given me, seated in a ditch in the middle of an autumn night. We had just caught a rabbit. He held up the rabbit by its ears, administered a sharp slap with the side of his hand, and the rabbit was dead. He went on to show me the exact spot on the neck where you must hit the rabbit. He also declared that there was a similar spot in the human neck which, if slapped sharply, would not indeed kill a man but would knock him completely unconscious. He went so far as to

show me on my own neck the exact spot on which the rabbit punch must be used—a short jerky slap hard with the side of the hand on a spot about half an inch below the lobe of the ear. I had never actually tried this rabbit punch on a human being, for want of a suitable subject, but it was the only possibility available to me now. I could have laid out the padre with a struggle, but not without noise, so I determined to risk everything—including my life—on Zicky's rabbit punch.

The chaplain, bending over my papers, could not have put his neck in a more favourable position if he had tried. Twice I lifted my hand and twice I hesitated. Was it some old ingrained inhibition that restrained me—was there something inside me which forbade me to strike a man of God? But when a man is approaching certain death such inhibitions are easily suppressed. The third time I raised my hand there was no voice of conscience—or anything else—to stop me. His face fell sharply on to the table before him; he made no further movement. Zicky's rabbit punch had indeed justified itself.

Now I had to work very quickly. I had about five minutes left. Very hurriedly I stripped the chaplain's greatcoat from him and donned it myself: hastily I added his heavy-lensed glasses. Then I put him in my own chair and arranged him in the last position in which the guard had seen me—that is, his head sunk in his hands. I turned my own head away so that he should not notice my hair. There was no time to do more—if you find it difficult to believe that this occupied five minutes, just try to take an overcoat off an unconscious man. The guard came, peeped in, but saw nothing to rouse his suspicion. So far as he could see, I was still rather overcome, and the chaplain was still droning his melancholy sympathy—for it was quite easy for me to assume the voice of the chaplain, which was a high-pitched, rather a monotonous, and certainly a distinctive tone. Then I hurried. Had I had my make-up box from the theatre my task would have been easy, but here I had nothing except the things actually before me. However, if your hair is light and you want to make it dark, you can make some sort of a show with ink. It is not a commodity whose use I recommend for ordinary social purposes, but in the ill-light of a military prison it might pass. Very quickly I took the bottle of ink with which I had been so kindly provided by the Governor, and daubed it on my hair. I searched the chaplain's pockets and found there one of the small steel mirrors which most soldiers used to carry. The effect was quite passable—certainly enough to deceive an unsuspicious observer.

My crucial question was the moustache. Crepe hair costs about sixpence a yard and spirit gum costs twopence a bottle. An inch of crepe hair and a spot of gum might mean life and death to me. Yet these—of an intrinsic

value of about a farthing—were the very things which I had not got. Therefore I must find substitutes. Now it was more important that my moustache should be above suspicion than my hair, since the hair would be largely covered by the military cap. Hurriedly, therefore, I searched the chaplain's pockets again—I should have said that in the meantime the sentry had passed once more: I could only do one job in each ten minutes interval. I wanted a knife, for my own had naturally been taken away from me. To my joy I discovered something better. The chaplain was an officer very correctly turned out, and in his waistcoat pocket was a minute pair of toilet scissors. I cut off a small lock of his own hair for although he wore it short in correct military fashion, he had a forelock of considerable length. Here, then, was my moustache.

How to fix it? How to fix it so that it would stay on just for three or four minutes while I got out of the prison? Well, I had no spirit gum, but I had envelopes—and on the back of envelopes is gum. My fingers, once so experienced with this kind of thing, cut the hair into suitable lengths; then I licked a dozen envelopes so that the gum was loose, then rubbed them on to my upper lip. I put the hair in position. Would it stay on? I moved about, jerked my head from side to side. A few hairs fell out, but most of it held. I looked again in the mirror. Yes, the effect was quite passable. I felt a great excitement and a dawning confidence. There remained only the difference of height, and that the greatcoat would help to disguise, for I could affect a stoop within a greatcoat which would be immediately detected were there no coat to hide it.

I had a few minutes left. Hastily I scribbled a note apologising to the chaplain for my churlish behaviour and collected all my own papers. I arranged him finally with care and precision, his back to the door, his head in his hands, so placed that the colour of his hair could not possibly be seen through the little window. As the sentry approached the door I rose, donned the chaplain's cap and patted the unconscious man on the shoulder, calling to him in his own distinctive voice some final consolation. Then I strode towards the door which the sentry unlocked. He gazed curiously at the recumbent form.

"Leave him there," I said in the chaplain's voice. "He is rather overcome, but he is now prepared to meet his God. He will meet his fate bravely."

Quite unsuspicious, the sentry locked the door after me and escorted me down the corridor to the office of the Governor. I did not enter the office, which was well lighted, but suggested that I wished to regain my billet

immediately. I reported that I had left the prisoner well prepared, and that he still had one or two more letters to write which doubtless the Governor would forward to their destinations. As I made to move off he thanked me; then to my consternation he said, "Well, I'll just go and have one final look at him and see if I can persuade him to lie down. He's a brave man and I know he would like to meet his death bravely; but a man who has been pacing about all night often appears nervous. I'll just go along and have a final word with him."

This was rather disconcerting. I had estimated that it might be an hour at least before my trick was discovered. Still, it only made action all the more urgent. I said good night, saluted stiffly, and one of his men took me to the gate of the prison. Happy moment! I stood there under the starry sky and the hunter's moon. Free again! the impossible had been accomplished! I had escaped! How long would my freedom last? Even now the Governor was walking towards my cell. Within five minutes, perhaps, the alarm would be raised.

In my extremity I thought, as I had thought before, immediately of Suzanne. It was strange, I commented to myself as I hurried down the almost deserted street. Here was a girl I had only known for three or four days, and yet willingly I would place my life in her hands. It is fortunate that there are people like that in the world. I scarcely stopped to think of the risk that I was bringing upon her, because I knew very well that that was the last thing she would wish me to consider. Her house was but a few hundred yards from the prison. I did not knock at the door, but at her bedroom window. Was she asleep? I doubt it, for in a few seconds she was at the window, calling in a whisper to me. And strangely enough she did not ask who was there: it was as if she were expecting me.

She opened the door and, as I entered, flung her arms about me. She had heard, as had the whole town, that the terrible collision had been engineered by a British officer disguised as a German. She had heard, too, that I was to be shot at dawn. It was a moment for tears, yet she was far too practical for that—in fact, I have never known a woman with such an instantaneous grip of a situation. In two sentences I whispered to her what had happened. My present problem needed no explanation. It was fortunate in one way that we were alone in the house; her father was as usual on night duty, and her mother (who was, as I have previously mentioned, I think, an invalid) had been taken to hospital two days before.

First to dispose of the chaplain's wardrobe which I had borrowed so effectively. In a thriller the hero would have dissolved it in acid, or

something ingenious like that, but I had no acid—and no time. Further, there was one obvious method of destroying the clothes which would not be mentioned in an ordinary work of fiction. Yet many hundreds of thousands of men who served during the war in Flanders will remember those antique and insanitary lavatories which were the sole form of sanitation in most of the country towns in this region. They were mere sumps which were cleared out periodically by a municipal machine which looked like a Shell-Mex lorry with a giant vacuum cleaner tube attached to it. If you had a nose, it was unnecessary to see the lorry to know that the work was being performed. In a moment, therefore, I had stripped off the chaplain's greatcoat, his cap and his glasses, and had stuffed them through the lavatory seat. To remove the moustache was the work of a second—it was precarious enough already. My hair I left as it was. There was no time to wash it with the thoroughness which would be necessary if my head was not to be completely piebald.

All this took but a few minutes, yet we were not too soon. We heard a small commotion at the end of the street, and to our dismay found that it was caused by a patrol of German soldiers. Suzanne opened the door an inch or so, and reported that they were obviously going to make a systematic search of the street. She heard one man calling out: "I tell you I saw him come down here." Yes, once again urgent action was necessary.

It was Suzanne who saved the situation. Maybe all my inventive ideas had been used up in my escape. Maybe the sensation of achieving freedom had damped my thinking capacity. I stood and I trembled—I must frankly admit had it not been for Suzanne I might have given up the attempt. But she hurriedly took me into her bedroom. We had not shown a light in the house. There had been no one about as I had entered, and if the Germans were going to search the whole street there was no reason why they should suspect this house any more than any other.

"Get undressed quickly," she commanded, "and get into bed—with me."

"But what's the idea?" I began.

"Leave it to me," she said; "get undressed."

I did. I flung off my clothes and dumped them on the ground. I was still, of course, wearing the German uniform in which I had been arrested. Then, clad only in my shirt, I climbed into bed beside Suzanne. What a strange situation! I had never been what is usually known as a man of the world; this was the first time I had ever shared a bed with a woman, and under what circumstances! Yet I felt no thrill of sex as the warm body of Suzanne pressed close by my side—for the bed was narrow. We could hear those

soldiers in the street; in another minute or two our ordeal would have begun. I could feel Suzanne wriggling about beside me.

"You've got the idea, of course?" she whispered. "You are a German soldier on the bust—I'm a prostitute. Play up to that. Let me do as much of the talking as possible. You can be half-tight."

I was only too content to leave it to her, for I had the utmost confidence in her mental agility. The investigating patrol wasted no preliminaries. They did not knock at the door, but burst it open; almost before we realised that they were in the house they were in our room. I played my part. I sat up in bed blinking and looking about me stupidly, as a man who has just wakened from the heavy stupor of a love sleep.

But Suzanne went for them tooth and nail. How dare they come into a lady's room, she stormed. Her voice had lost its softer tone, and she had assumed the hard shriek of the professional girl. Then I took up the story.

"Yes! Bloody fine pals you are!" I complained sleepily. "Can't a chap have a bit of skirt without other people coming barging in in the middle of the night? Go away. I've hired the girl for the night and I'm going to have her!"

The two men stared, yet their astonishment was nothing to that which was to follow a second later when Suzanne got out of bed. Now that mysterious wriggling revealed itself—she had been slipping out of her nightdress and stood naked before them, the complete prostitute, brazen and unashamed.

"You go away," she wheedled in the pigeon German which all the professional girls behind the German line naturally learned. "You go away. Me engaged for to-night. You come again to-morrow."

The two men stared at her youthful body, well-built and pleasantly rounded. They saw also the invitation in her eyes. Their own were literally staring out of their heads. They were not used to receptions of this kind. But one of them made up his mind very quickly.

"Yes, mademoiselle," he agreed. "We come again to-morrow. To-morrow night, eh?"

"Yes, to-morrow night," called Suzanne after them. "Five francs for a whole night, two francs for one hour, eh?"

We heard the broken door slam behind them as they proceeded to the next house. Never were soldiers so convinced as these two. The patrol moved further down the street. Immediate danger was over. I sat on the edge of the bed, an incongruous figure in my rough army shirt. Then, as Suzanne

turned to me, I put my arms around her warm body and kissed her. She clung to me and I kissed her again, and I meant every word I said when I told her that there was no other girl in the world like her.

I would have left her. She had risked enough for me already, but she would not hear of my going. She argued truthfully that the streets of Lens would be ablaze with patrols—that it would be impossible to miss them, and that every man abroad on the streets that night would be under suspicion. She insisted that I should remain with her throughout the whole of the following day. So I spent the rest of the night washing ink from my hair. It was not entirely satisfactory, so in the morning, while I hid in the attic, Suzanne went to a chemist's and bought a hair dye which turned me into a medium blonde.

I remained in the attic throughout the day. Nothing happened. Although there were reports of great police activity, our street was not further troubled. Apparently a cordon had been drawn about Lens during the night, which might make my escape all the more difficult, for I was determined that come what may I would leave Suzanne's house that night. If I were discovered it would mean death to her as well as to me.

Yet before I left there was a further scene to be played. Soon after nightfall a soldier knocked at the door and entered without invitation. He was one of the patrol who had visited us the previous evening. He had now come to take advantage of Suzanne's invitation. She put him off cleverly, but it was agony for me, who saw the scene through a crack in the door which led to the attic stairs. Half a dozen times I was tempted to come out and strangle the sensuous brute and dump him where I had dumped the chaplain's overcoat; but, there again, that would have been more chivalrous than wise. He didn't like it a bit when Suzanne put him off by telling him that she had already engaged herself for the night to a sergeant. He wanted to know why he couldn't have two francs' worth before the sergeant came. She naturally wouldn't hear of it. Nevertheless, in her character of a prostitute she could not object when the man kissed her and pawed her about in a disgusting fashion. My blood boiled as I saw his clumsy fingers feeling her rounded breasts and straying sensuously over her body. Never did a good girl play a braver part, and never did that man realise how near he was to sudden death when finally, still grumbling at the bloody sergeant who always picked out the best girls, he decided that he had better retire before the sergeant arrived.

She rushed to me as soon as he had gone. I held her in my arms in that dark and miserable attic while she sobbed out her heart; but such was her

spirit that she soon pulled herself together, and it was she who wiped the perspiration from my brow, for I believe that my ordeal of watching and restraining myself had been almost as great as hers. Then we planned the final details of my escape. Her father had slept in the house throughout the day but had known nothing of my presence—we had considered it just as well that no unnecessary person should be involved. It was the sight of him—unknown to himself—that had given me an idea. Surely a railwayman could walk about with greater freedom than most others. So Suzanne picked out some old working clothes of her father's. At nightfall she went to the woman of the *estaminet* who had first sent me to her, and demanded the loan of one of the *laissez-passer* which the Germans insisted that all civilians behind their lines should possess. Thus disguised and armed, I was well prepared to take my chance. Actually, my most terrifying moment was my parting with Suzanne. She tried to make me promise to enter into no more adventures. I, for my part, endeavoured to persuade her to come with me; but she would not leave her father and particularly her mother, so naturally I did not insist. Then I kissed her for the last time and strode confidently down the streets of Lens.

At the *octroi* I was halted by a military patrol, but my papers were passed without hesitation and two hours later I had reached that open space near Bois-Bernard where Palmer would pick me up. But would he? Was he still keeping the rendezvous night by night? I waited until the agreed hour, one o'clock in the morning. Yes, high up above there was an aeroplane; whether it was German or English I could not tell. I made no attempt to signal, for it was too high above. Lower and lower it came, and I knew that Palmer had not deserted me. I lit an automatic cigarette lighter which Suzanne had bought for me—for my torch had naturally been taken away in the prison—and five minutes later the aeroplane had come to rest in the green field. Twenty seconds after that I was inside it, and immediately we took to the air again, rising high in our flight over the line. Thus I came home.

I slept at the aerodrome and went on the following morning to Army Headquarters. There I was received and overwhelmed with congratulations. They had known that my exploit had succeeded, but not of subsequent capture. Sir Douglas Haig himself was good enough to compliment me on what I had done, and Colonel Hylton informed me that I was to be awarded the D.S.O. So on the whole I felt fairly satisfied with myself—and particularly glad to be alive—as with a voucher for fourteen days' special leave in my pocket the wheezy train jogged its way towards Calais.

It is advisable at this stage to gather up the thread of this first part of my story—Suzanne, what of her? Had this been the conventional spy fiction I would have returned to her after the war and have married her: lowly rank would have been no obstacle; she would probably have turned out to be a long-lost heiress. Unfortunately, this is not fiction. I did indeed return to her after Lens had been captured in the British advance in the last weeks of the war. I started when I saw her. Was this emaciated creature, thin and pale, the round-bodied Suzanne who had so excited the sensual admiration of that German patrol? I was no doctor, but it needed little medical knowledge to see that something terrible had happened to Suzanne. Not only to Suzanne, but to hundreds of thousands of unfortunate civilians who had remained in those parts of France and Belgium which were behind the German lines. Not all the Relief Commissions in the world could have saved them. Four years on a diet of nothing stronger than cabbage soup can lead only to complete emaciation, and very often to the dreaded tuberculosis. That is what had happened to Suzanne. As I saw her, only her eyes were the same—those keen, friendly, intelligent eyes which had won my confidence the very first moment.

I rushed her off to hospital at once. A few days later I returned, and talked to the doctor-in-charge. He shook his head gravely, and uttered the saddest words in the world—"Too late!" A year earlier, he said, and there might have been some hope. But now—well, the disease was galloping in its progress.

I asked if he would object to a second opinion; he welcomed it. During the last month of the war I was (as I shall explain) a person of some little consequence at British Headquarters. A very famous physician—a world authority on tuberculosis—was a brigadier-general in the R.A.M.C. at Tréport. I took him to see Suzanne, though I knew instinctively that his journey was useless.

Suzanne's mind remained as alert as her body grew frail. I visited her frequently; always she had a smiling welcome for me. Only once she broke down.

"I would have liked to have lived, so as to have my memories the longer," she whispered. Nor were my eyes drier than hers.

She died on June 27th, 1919. I was acting as an interpreter at the Peace Conference, and could see her almost every day. That evening she seemed in great spirits; I had been detailing the terms of the Peace Treaty which the Germans must sign at Versailles on the morrow.

“So this is the end of the war!” Her voice was so faint that I had to strain to hear her words. “And France has won! Well, my Bernard, we did our bit to help, didn’t we?”

Nothing so pleased her as when I talked of those exciting days at Lens; so I prattled of our thrilling memories till she tired. I smoothed her pillow, and settled her to sleep. Did she know, I wonder, that the end was near? To me she looked the same as yesterday and the day before, but in the intensity of her last handshake I felt the bones of her hands bite into my palms. Even before I left her room she was almost asleep, still smiling.

My car waited in the courtyard; the chauffeur reported a fault—the engine would not start. He located the trouble, but it took half an hour to put it right. Just as the recalcitrant engine decided to function, I saw the matron of the hospital descending the steps. She said no word, but at her beckon I got out of the car. We went back to the room; Suzanne was dead; she was still smiling, even in death.

I went outside and walked away—anywhere; I forgot the car. I walked through the night, alternately crying like a child and cursing furiously.

This was the real end of my Lens adventure. I did not think till afterwards—I got the D.S.O. for my share, Suzanne got nothing for hers. Many French and Belgian women received British decorations—it would have been easy to have obtained one for Suzanne. It was my fault that this was overlooked—but neither of us cared for honours of this kind. But England—and France—ought not to forget. The war has a rare gallery of brave and resourceful women. In its Roll of Honour the name of Suzanne Bocquillon of Lens deserves a very high place.

And was it worth it? Was the result worth my chance of a firing party? The world now knows the story of Loos—how the Highlanders of the 15th Division swept over Hill 70, and charged impetuously into the suburbs of Lens. There was a complete gap in the German line—with no other organised fortifications for forty miles. Why, then, was the battle lost? Why was the gap not exploited? Was it because German reserves came up? No, it was because *our* reserves did *not* come up. Due to circumstances which I shall describe later, I did not hear the true story of Loos until after the War. How Sir John French kept the reserves under his own control, handing them over to Haig hours too late. A friend of mine on his staff told me how the taciturn Haig, discussing the battle soon afterwards, had exclaimed with unusual bitterness, “if there had been even one division in reserve close up we could have walked right through!”

When I heard all these things I was stricken again with a sense of futility. Here I had risked (and nearly lost!) my life in a successful effort to prevent the arrival of German reserves, while we actually lost the battle because of the absence of our own! I may be pardoned if I thought—and said—hard things about the Staff work involved. No wonder that the British method of fighting a war is known as "muddling through."

---

[7] *The Adventures of a Despatch-Rider*, by W. H. L. Watson.

[8] See *Good-bye to All That*, by Robert Graves.

[9] i.e. the principal Staff officer to the division.

[10] Actually I had with me several sets of papers bearing different dates.

[11] Premature!

CHAPTER II

As the leave train rattled and bumped its leisurely course across France I thought hard—not of the few carefree days before me, but of what would happen when I came back. What was I to do? It was quite certain that I should be asked once again to go behind the German lines, for although my success had been perilously near a disaster for myself, high officers have a nasty habit of overlooking such questions of detail. However, undoubtedly I had the right to refuse if I wished. No compulsion was ever employed on jobs of this kind—obviously, for it would be only too easy for the man concerned to give himself up. It was realised in all circles that a different kind of courage is needed in the man who pushes his head into the noose alone, as compared with that bravery which makes a man advance against heavy fire—but alongside his comrades. So on all occasions the most dangerous form of Intelligence work, that behind the enemy line, was always undertaken by volunteers.

So I pondered. Had I already done my share? After all, so far as I knew, no Englishman had yet done as much in that particular direction. And yet, could I sit back and resign myself for the rest of the war to the mere interrogation of prisoners—a job which could be well done by hundreds of other Intelligence Officers, of whom few or none possessed just those added qualifications which fitted me for special work behind the enemy line. I argued out the question with myself at great length. But when that grand old castle of Dover appeared on the horizon I forgot all about personal trivialities. This was England, the England which a week before I had certainly never expected to see again. So I postponed judgment. Let me have my leave first.

My natural intention had been to hurry home at once, but on the train from Dover to Victoria I ran into a brigadier from my own division who knew me and had heard of my exploit. When we arrived at Victoria there were telegrams awaiting us both, stating that His Majesty the King was holding a levee on the following day and that we were to attend for our decorations to be presented (for the brigadier had received the C.M.G. for his services during the recent fighting). I was dismayed, for my uniform was an old one and I was in no fit array to be presented to the King. The brigadier (who very kindly insisted on my staying the night with him), knew

the unlimited facilities of London better than I did: he pointed out that there are excellent shops where they specialise in hiring out attire for all state occasions—I might even hire a Court dress if ever I wanted one. I'm not likely to. I think it is rather a silly costume; but the firm he took me to fitted me immediately with a spick and span uniform. So I received the King's handshake and was admitted to the Companionship of the Distinguished Service Order.

The brigadier insisted that I should stay another night with him and, as I had a fair length of special leave before me, I agreed, particularly when he told me that his wife was throwing a party in honour of his return and that there would be a good many well-known military men present. So that night I went to the party, which was held in his house in a fine street just to the north of Hyde Park. I met a good many people who had hitherto been only names to me—people I had certainly never dreamed of meeting on terms of equality. Yet, strangely enough, I have forgotten all about them, although some of them were world-famous men—for this brigadier, although of comparatively humble rank amongst the crowd of brass-hats, was a member of a very old and honoured military family and of the highest social standing.

I palled up with a captain of the Royal Flying Corps, with whom I discovered a mutual acquaintance in young Palmer. He, too, was a man of family and seemed to know everybody. As they entered the room, he told me their names and gave me a potted history which was very useful when I came to be formally introduced. There was one man among the whole crowd whom I did not forget and whom I have not forgotten to this day. He was not distinguished-looking from the military point of view. He wore the badges of a captain, but he looked far more like the cartoonist's idea of a learned professor than a military man at all. Tall and exceedingly thin, the only distinguishing feature about him was the great, broad forehead which crowned an exceptionally small face. It was as if nature had stinted him right up to the brain-box and then had let herself go properly. Beside him was one of the most beautiful girls I ever remember seeing, magnificently dressed in a stylish taste which made everyone turn to look at her. I turned to my companion and asked who that couple might be.

"Ah! You must meet him," he said, "you will be very interested to know him. He's a coming man."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Hart."

The name meant nothing to me. To the best of my knowledge I had never heard it. But as soon as this Hart had got clear of his formal greetings my friend slid up to his side, drew him away and brought him over to the corner where we had been sitting. He introduced me, mentioning to Hart that I was the man who had carried out the raid on the Lens railway—of which everybody apparently had heard. Hart showed signs of great interest, and I was very struck by the fact that instead of indulging in sentimental rhapsodies, like most of the people I had talked to, he immediately got right down to the root-idea underlying the plan I had endeavoured to carry out—that is, the importance of keeping reserves from the field of action, not just for the first hour, but for the first twenty-four hours; and he commented somewhat caustically on the other side of the question—that it is just as essential for the attackers to have all their reserves handy so that they can be used while the enemy reserves are missing.

I took to this man at once. It was obvious that his cranial make-up did not belie the truth, for he seemed to me to be literally bulging with brain. It was delightful to listen to him. I had been mingling for some months with Staff officers and highly placed generals who were thinking hard over problems involving the capture of a few square yards of ground, and who seemed to be incapable of thinking further than a couple of miles behind the German line. But here was a man who saw the war in perspective—as he explained things to me, it seemed that for the first time I saw the war as a whole and not as a mere side-show. I made lots of mental notes as he talked, determined to ponder at leisure over the ideas he suggested. Sometimes he quoted from military authorities, but more often he was expounding his own ideas. I particularly remember a kind of sermon which he preached from the text of Napoleon's axiom—that the aim of an army was the mind of the enemy commander—that is to say, that the object of a general is not merely the defeat or even destruction of the forces opposed to him, but loss of nerve and confidence in the mind of his opponent. A war is not won until you have persuaded the enemy commander he is beaten. To do that it is not always essential to defeat his army. On the other hand, even if you have beaten his army, it does not necessarily follow that you have won the war. For war is a matter of nerve, and often of stamina. The winner of the first battle does not always finish on the right side. M. Venizelos knew a bit of something when he decided to join us because: "The English in a war always win one battle—the last!"

I ought to say at this juncture that my friend of the Royal Flying Corps was quite right. Hart was one of the men who was destined to go a long way. Not only during the war, when he commanded a battalion, was his reputation

made; since then he has become famous—indeed, he is at the moment, I should say, the best-known military writer in the world. He is better known as Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, the famous military correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*.[12]

I thought of this conversation often and often during the next few months. I thought of it very forcibly only a couple of days later, for as soon as I reached home and had got over the joyous welcome, my mother exclaimed excitedly, "Well, have you heard the news? Your cousin Adolf has been taken prisoner and is in a camp at Holyport, in Cheshire!" This was, of course, interesting, and later in the week I got a permit to go and see him. I thought it might be useful to get his viewpoint, and in any case I was very fond of Adolf, with whom I had passed very many happy weeks. Now that he was a prisoner, he could do us no further harm, and I could not see that I was doing my country ill-service if I offered to do any little thing for him that would lighten his captivity.

I found him at Holyport grinning and making the best of it. He told me how he came to be captured—how he and the remnant of his company were completely surrounded near Hulluch—strange that he should be within five miles of me and neither of us know it—and he concluded his recital by saying: "Yes, it was damned hard luck, and the hardest luck of all that this would have been my last battle."

"Why, how do you mean?" I asked.

"I had been gazetted to the Staff," he said. "I had been given a Staff appointment and it is highly probable that I would never have had to serve in the line again. So that's damned hard luck, you must agree."

And as I took the train back home I was thinking back hard. There was Adolf, prisoner in England, yet who ought to be on the German General Staff. "The aim of war is the mind of the enemy commander," Hart had insisted. Was there any connection between the two ideas? *Suppose I and not Adolf could take up that position on the German Staff.* What an opportunity it would be! I was excited as I thought of it. Yet my natural caution returned. I remembered that only a few days before I had been tried by court martial and condemned to death. I had gone behind the German lines quite convinced that I could hold my own against anything, and yet a couple of trifling details had floored me. The same thing might easily happen again—and this time there might be no chaplain to comfort me in my last moments!

Nevertheless, the idea stuck. There was something in my blood, I suppose, which drove me on, never thinking of the more ordinary forms of

warfare. Human hybrids, I have remarked, are seldom quite normal in outlook. Even before I reached home I had the rough outline of a scheme ready planned, and the next day I rushed up to London, routed out my friend the brigadier, and got him to take me to see a very responsible officer in the War Office to put the plan before him.

My scheme was promptly pooh-poohed: the War Office always held large reserves of cold water: their attitude towards the tank and its development will be well remembered. But the more opposition I got, the more determined I was to carry it through. Once again my mixed ancestry was a blessing. My mother's brilliant effervescence might have faded before such a rebuff, but I had also the hard-headedness of the Midland farmer, priceless inheritance from my father. I sent a telegram to my Intelligence chief at G.H.Q. in France, and the following day he was in London. Together we went to the War Office, and this time saw a man of higher authority. My chief adopted my scheme in every detail, and insisted that at least it should be given a chance. He pointed out that its cost if it failed was negligible (i.e., merely my life!), but its results if it succeeded were incalculable. So at last I was given more or less a free hand, and proceeded to work out all my details.

This time I felt on absolutely firm foundations. Previously I had assumed the identity of a man who was almost unknown to me—I could only talk of things of which he had talked to me, and as it had turned out these limitations had in part led to my undoing. But I knew almost as much about Adolf as he did himself. I could talk intelligently and with certainty of every member of his family and of every detail of his daily life. Furthermore, I had a strong family likeness to my cousin. Once in Germany I could play his part with the utmost confidence. My only anxiety—in fact, my first determination—was that I must arrive in Germany in such circumstances as would completely disarm the possibility of suspicion. So I got to work.

Adolf in his camp at Holyport suddenly received the order that he was to be transferred to Donnington Hall. This was my first step. Adolf set out under armed guard, but he never arrived at Donnington Hall. Instead, he was sent to a military prison up in Scotland and detained there. I was sorry for Adolf, for now none of his letters could be sent home—for obvious reasons. For, while Adolf was taken to Scotland, I took his place on the journey from Holyport to Donnington Hall. The guard were cautioned that in no circumstances must they say a word. I was handed over formally to the Governor of Donnington Hall, who was in the secret, but who treated me exactly the same as he would have done any German officer.

It had been necessary of course to transfer Adolf, since it might be dangerous for me to take his place in the Holyport Camp. There he might have formed acquaintances of whom I had no knowledge, and I might easily have given myself away. I chose Donnington not at random, but because the War Office already had a report that two naval officers were planning to escape. They had been on the point of ordering their removal to another and more difficult camp when my scheme burst upon them. As the situation was just as I wanted, I adapted it to meet my own plan. The two naval officers, I found, were not old friends but had joined together in their scheme—one because he had the ideas, and the other because he could speak English. I had the second one removed, therefore, knowing full well that the first man would immediately look round for another partner. And as I was going to air my knowledge of English in speaking to the guards, the first part of my plan ought to work very smoothly.

I was received at Donnington naturally without the slightest suspicion. Very soon I had picked out the naval officer whose plan to escape was already known to the authorities. He was a lieutenant of the submarine service named Freiberg. Nothing happened for a few days, and I was wondering in fact if I should force the issue by beginning to talk publicly of escape. Yet I waited awhile, for it would obviously be stronger if the suggestion should come from him. All the while I aired my perfect English extensively, and I saw from the first moment that I had excited his interest.

Donnington Hall was, of course, an old English mansion in Leicestershire which had been converted for the purpose of housing officer prisoners of war. I knew the place of old, for it was not more than ten miles from my home. A portion of the extensive park was allotted to the officers for exercise, but around it were several belts of barbed wire. The question of escape was obviously going to be a difficult one, though in emergency the War Office could play into our hands. But I did not want this to happen. I wanted to get away by purely natural means.

Freiberg fell right into my trap, as I knew he would. He got me alone one day while we were walking around the house, and asked me to meet him later when the other officers were turning in prior to dinner. I did so, of course, and then he sounded me very cautiously, asking if I were game to make an attempt to escape. Naturally I said that I was; had he any ideas? Yes, apparently he had, a very novel idea. After getting out of the camp, he would go to a secluded part of the coast where he would arrange a rendezvous with a submarine. This was something new to me. I had not expected anything quite so melodramatic. Actually, I found that the idea had been unsuccessfully essayed only a few weeks before by a prisoner from the

Dyffrynaled Camp near Denbigh.[13] Freiberg had first been confined in this Denbigh Camp and had talked over the idea with Tholens before the latter tried it out.

His preparations were in an advanced stage. A few weeks previously an officer had been invalided home, exchanged for an English wounded officer prisoner. Through him Freiberg had sent a message to the German Admiralty, asking that a submarine should be sent to the same spot where Tholens had so narrowly escaped success—Great Orme's Head near Llandudno: he had selected the same spot because the authorities would never expect such a repetition. He had duly received a reply, purporting to be a letter from his sister in which she informed him that she expected her baby to be born on October the 29th; that meant, of course, that the submarine would be there on that day—or rather that night. Freiberg's present concern was time—it was now October 20th. He had everything prepared for escape; he had even managed to procure the very essential pair of wire clippers, which had been sent to him from Germany concealed in a cheese, but when the authorities removed his partner they knocked the bottom right out of his scheme because Freiberg scarcely spoke a word of English, and would certainly be discovered long before he reached Llandudno. So he asked me to come in, and I agreed. He was very nervous lest we should be discovered or lest any detail should go wrong, but I assured him confidently that we could pull it off—as of course I knew we should.

I may say that my chief had a big struggle with the Admiralty before he was able to persuade them to allow the scheme to be carried out. The Admiralty complained that it was very dangerous to allow a submarine to come unhindered right up to the very coastline. They wanted to take advantage of my information, and to sink or capture it—never mind about my plan. A very high political authority had to intervene, finally, to decide that it was my idea which must go forward. For, as I argued, if we succeeded in escaping by this method—as certainly we should—then other German officers might be tempted to repeat it, and it should not be too difficult to make them act as unconscious decoys, leading submarines to their doom.

Freiberg was delighted when, without hesitation, I agreed to throw in my lot with him. There was only one detail which needed to be settled—my clothes. For himself he had no fear, since the German naval uniform is very similar to the British and a little amateur tailoring would suffice at the very last minute to turn his uniform into a passable imitation. But my own case was different. I had no plain clothes whatsoever. For trousers there would be no difficulty, since he had a spare pair, but he could not complete the

uniform. Nor, as it happened, was there another naval officer in the camp. But I made a suggestion to him. I had already explained my command of English by mentioning the fact that I had a distant cousin in England—I thought it wise to make that clear right from the start, lest there might be suspicion if it were found out accidentally. Inasmuch as my cousin's home was not very far away from Donnington Hall, suppose I asked him to come and visit me? Then we might be able to steal some part of his clothes. So I wrote to myself at my own home and two days later my brother (purporting to be myself) came to see me. Naturally we tried no melodramatic method—there was no drugging or stunning and stealing his clothes, but he did wear a fawn trench coat of the kind universally popular at that time; when Freiberg saw it he gave me violent nudges. I pretended to see his idea, though actually I had asked my brother to wear this coat when he came. So, when he rose to go, he asked me if there was anything he could do for me. I did ask for one or two luxuries in the way of food. "But, above all," I said, "I want something in the nature of a coat to keep out this wretched climate of yours, for when I was taken prisoner I had only the clothes I stood up in, and nothing has yet arrived from Germany. If you could get me a coat of the type you are wearing now, that would tide me over the time until my greatcoat arrives from Germany." My pseudo-cousin went one better than that. He offered to lend me his own. I thanked him profusely and asked him not to mention it to the guard, as they might think that I had arranged the whole thing. After he had gone Freiberg and I shook hands and danced round the room in joy. With this raincoat I could cross England without fear.

Several escapes from Donnington Hall had already been effected—although in every instance, I think, the prisoners had afterwards been recaptured. Not until the last moment did we let other officers into our secret, for it was essential to have someone to get us past the roll call after we had got away, in order to give us a longer time before the pursuit started. The details of our escape were not original, but in spite of all the efforts of the guard it was almost impossible to upset our plans. Before evening roll call we hid in the grounds. At roll call we had arranged that when our names were called we would be reported as sick in bed; then two of our comrades, immediately the parade was dismissed, would dash off and get into our beds, so that the orderly sergeant on going to confirm this report would be quite satisfied.

It was a dark night, and the rain which poured down kept the sentries to their boxes. After roll call, naturally, every officer was confined to the Hall and the sentries guarding the wire were very few, most of them having been brought in to the inner circle of wire guarding the house itself. At half-past

six we heard from the Hall a lusty chorus of voices singing *Deutschland über Alles*; this was the signal to us that all was well and that the roll call had passed without suspicion. We had arranged that the roll call the following morning should be similarly faked by two officers rushing round from one room to the other and being counted twice.

We waited until nearly midnight, so that there would be no one about except the sentries actually on duty. Freiberg did not know that the sentry normally patrolling near the point where we were to cut through the wire had been withdrawn for that particular night. The wire was brilliantly illuminated with arc lamps, and in the absence of interruption did not give us nearly so much trouble as one would have thought. The barbed wire we cut through laboriously, but without difficulty. One problem was to get through the electric alarm wires which completely surrounded the camp: this we solved by scraping narrow crawling channels beneath them.

By two o'clock we were free. Freiberg thanked his lucky star time and time again that he had chanced upon me, for not only did I know English but I had at least a fair idea of the country, having visited my "cousin" some ten miles away on several occasions. So we walked through the night into the little town of Coalville. As soon as the shops opened, I bought a civilian hat and then took first-class tickets on the morning train to Burton-on-Trent. Here we spent the rest of the day, for there was a through train at tea-time to North Wales, and this we boarded. Everything was going well. So well, in fact, that Freiberg became nervous. There was an old lady of the aggressive type in the carriage as far as Crewe. She wanted to talk with Freiberg very badly to get first-hand information from a naval officer; but he pretended to be suffering from a terrible toothache and left it to me to do all the talking.

We were two days early, so I thought it best not to make for a small town like Llandudno, where we might easily be spotted, but to spend the time in a big city where we could hang about in freedom. We read in the newspapers about our escape, and Freiberg chuckled when I translated to him that we were supposed to have made for London. I put one of the newspapers in my pocket. It contained a photograph of me, and might be very useful evidence. So we stayed the two days in Manchester, putting in most of our time at cinemas—which not only keep out the rain but are conveniently dark. I even did a bit of shopping there, and fitted myself out with more serviceable clothes.

In the afternoon of the 29th we took a train for Llandudno, arrived there before dusk, and set out at once for Great Orme's Head, for we knew we must climb down the cliff before it was yet dark. We passed only one man

on the cliff. He was a coastguard look-out man of some grade, but instead of suspicion he gave to Freiberg a most effusive salute, imagining him without doubt to be a naval officer on some mysterious mission. Not until the night was halfway through did we venture to signal; then with a little electric torch I had bought in Manchester we made the agreed flashes. Nothing happened. Again and again we shone our faint light out to sea: no response.

I was even more alarmed than Freiberg. Suppose something had gone wrong at the critical moment? Suppose the German Admiralty had not sent the submarine after all? Or, far more likely, suppose the submarine had met with an accident or had been destroyed by a British warship? But while we were considering all the possibilities we saw, to our relief, an answering signal about two hundred yards from the bottom of the cliff. We flashed back, and very soon heard the soft tap of paddles on the water. A little collapsible boat was approaching. Yet the cliff was so steep that it was impossible for us to board it. There was only one thing to do. We had to jump into the icy cold water and swim to the boat. It was only a matter of a few yards, but it seemed more like miles to me, who am but a moderate swimmer. When we reached the boat, too, it was such a frail cockle shell that it was impossible to think of getting into it from the water, so a rope was trailed behind and the sailors rowed as quickly as they could back to the submarine. There we were immediately taken on board, given hot drinks and rolled in blankets, for even the ten minutes' immersion in that icy cold sea was no joke, believe me!

I went to sleep, and woke up next morning with a strange feeling of exhilaration. Once again the first part of my scheme had been a triumphant success. Whatever happened, Freiberg would be prepared to swear on his life to all the world that I was Captain Adolf Neumann—certainly not Captain Bernard Newman. I looked forward to my journey—one of the strangest I had ever made. It took over ten days, for the submarine went right round by the north of Scotland, since its commander was afraid to make the perilous passage along the English Channel. But at last we passed through the minefields and entered the port of Wilhemshaven. There my job began. What was to happen next?

My first movements were soon decided. Immediately the captain of the submarine had reported his success to the German Admiralty, an order came by telegram for us to proceed to Berlin, since the Kaiser himself wished to see the two young officers who had carried out such a marvellous exploit. And it tickled my sense of humour as I stood before him stiffly while he asked us question after question. Only a few weeks previously the King of England had presented to me the medal of the Distinguished Service Order.

Now the Kaiser of Germany pinned a medal on the same spot—the Iron Cross of the German Empire![14]

---

[12] Last year I was travelling in Rumania and Bulgaria. Talking there with officers of the two armies I found their knowledge of the war on the western front very strangely limited. I found officers who had never heard of French and Haig; Joffre and Foch were the only names they knew among the western front generals; but they all knew Liddell Hart, and when I mentioned that he was a friend of mine every door was immediately opened.

[13] You may read, if you wish, the actual story of this attempt told by Captain Hermann Tholens in that fascinating book *Escapers All*, published by John Lane, The Bodley Head, Ltd.

[14] The Iron Cross was awarded almost automatically to all German officers who escaped from England—necessarily a far more difficult task than that of an English officer escaping from Germany into Holland or Switzerland; the sea crossing was, of course, the greatest obstacle to be overcome. Ours was the first and last escape by submarine—although, as I have said, Freiberg was not the originator of the idea.

CHAPTER III

I WAS, of course, offered a week's leave to visit my family. I need hardly say that Donaueschingen was the last place I thought of visiting. I was confident of my ability to deceive casual acquaintances and military comrades, but I was quite certain that once I got in the arms of Adolf's family I would naturally be found out in about five minutes. So I wrote home and explained that I had escaped, but that the exigencies of the service prevented me from returning at that time; I stayed in Berlin. I should say that before I left England—in fact, before I impersonated Adolf at Donnington Hall—I had taken a rapid course of training in handwriting. Under the guidance of an expert I had learned to imitate Adolf's writing so that nothing less than the keenest scrutiny would reveal the difference. Even if it were queried I could always plead a wound in my hand. To make my excuse foolproof, a doctor—a very skilful man at this kind of thing—had made a small incision over the first knuckle of the first finger of my right hand. It was nothing more than a skin wound, but he treated it in such a way that when it healed it left a considerable scar—and still does to this day—so that any vagary in handwriting could be easily and reasonably explained.

My first anxiety was of course about my job. I hoped that my capture and imprisonment would not have lost me my chances of the Staff appointment which had been promised before the Battle of Loos. I was even thinking in terms of Adolf by now. I could almost convince myself that I had served in his battalion and had really been promised the Staff appointment. My enquiries were anxious and forcible, therefore. I pointed out that now I would be doubly valuable on the Staff, since apart from my knowledge of the German Army I now knew something of the British Army too. However, I need not have worried, for when my leave had expired and I returned to the War Office in Berlin I was ordered, to my secret delight, to report at once to General Headquarters, then situated at the little town of Mézières-Charleville, just over the French border, on the Meuse. And thither I hurried. What would be my fate? To what section would I be posted? Naturally I hoped for an Operations appointment, for there I would be in the closest touch with the German intentions.

I ought at this stage to make my own position perfectly clear. I was now for all practical purposes a German. My life depended on the successful

living of the character I had adopted. Any slip would obviously be fatal, and I could not again expect the stroke of luck which had served me so well at Lens. Here, in the unhurried atmosphere of a headquarters, there would be none of the flurry of the war area. Things would be done deliberately, and it would be impossible to depend upon chance. It was obvious, too, that I had to do the job I was allotted, and had to do it well; otherwise I could never succeed in holding my appointment—for it was not sufficient in the German Army, as it was sometimes in the British, for a man to be of good family in order to receive and retain an appointment on the Staff; he must show evident signs of ability too. He must in addition have passed through the Staff College, where the most thorough military training in the world was given. This was one of my anxieties. Adolf had taken this course, and I had not. On the contrary I had been a soldier but fifteen months! Nevertheless, fifteen months of actual service to a man who kept his eyes wide open might be more valuable than three years even in the most efficiently conducted Staff College.

I was determined too, not to hazard my position for a mere trifle. It would be very easy for me to pick up fragments of information which would be valuable, nay, invaluable, to the British or French command, but I was determined right from the start (and had stated my intention categorically to the War Office in London) that I was only going to risk my job and my life for something of major importance. It would go against the grain, doing my job as a Staff officer efficiently, and thereby perhaps helping to take the lives of Englishmen and Frenchmen; but nevertheless there was always the great possibility that I might at some time or other do my country a service that would far outweigh such minor calamities; for, alas, what is a life in wartime? A dead soldier means a great deal to his relatives and friends, but you have to talk of the dead in thousands before you make any impression on a military mind. I had, for the purpose of my job, to drop my humanity and become a real professional soldier, considering, as the professional soldier does, men as so many pawns in the game. If he thinks otherwise, if he allows his human side to come out on top of him, then he will not be a tremendously successful commander. At the very moment when he should be stern, his heart will speak instead of his mind, and the battle will be lost.

This then was my intention: to do my job well and thoroughly in the proper German manner, and by doing so to gain the confidence of my superiors. If I could do this, then one day vital information would almost certainly fall into my hands. On such an occasion, but only on such an occasion, I would risk everything.

It might have been easy, had I not been nervous about the potentialities, to send a whole series of messages to England. After all, how would it be possible to trace the sender? But I distrusted very strongly a good many of the agents employed in France and Belgium. One out of every three, perhaps, was a sincere man (or woman!) who was undertaking spy work for love of his country and not for British gold; but who was to say which was the one man and which were the other two? For this question of communication is the spy's greatest difficulty.[15] Again I complain of the standard spy story, which shows how information is most ingeniously obtained—usually too ingeniously—but passes lightly over the bigger problem; how to pass that information to his base. I decided at the outset that only in the most exceptional circumstances would I use the organised "postmen," and never the codes and secret inks so beloved of the fictional spy. I had worked out my own methods of communication—much simpler than those of popular fancy, but very effective, and almost impossible of detection by the German censor. They depended on keen brains and intelligent minds in the receivers; but, contrary to the prevailing idea of the day, the War Office was *not* entirely staffed by congenital idiots. Certainly every message I sent home was correctly deciphered.

I had been instructed to report to Major-General Zoellner, who was Chief of Staff to General von Falkenhayn who, of course, was Chief of the General Staff—which means that he was the real Commander-in-Chief of the German Armies. The titular command, of course, rested with the Kaiser, but his influence throughout the whole of the war was almost negligible, and nobody seemed to make the slightest pretence of consulting him. It might be as well here, in fact, to explain to the ordinary reader something of the German method of command. Every German army had a commander who was usually a royal prince, or otherwise some general of dignified character. As an assistant he had a Chief of Staff, and for all practical purposes the Chief of Staff commanded the army. When the Army Groups commanded by the Crown Prince of Germany and the Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria were preparing a battle, it was not their royal commanders who met to discuss it, but the respective Chiefs of Staff; and surely all the world knows by now the relationship between Hindenburg and his Chief of Staff. [16]

I could not expect to be lucky always. I was not posted to the Operations Branch, as I had hoped, but to the Intelligence Branch. This, however, was a second best, particularly in the German Army, where the branch was strongly developed and where more attention was paid to its prophecies and warnings than in the Allied Armies. I had already discovered to my cost that

the Intelligence Branch of the British Army might do a great deal of honest work and make a remarkably accurate forecast, only to be completely ignored by the Operations side. In the French Army the condition of affairs was almost worse.

I found as my chief Colonel Nicolai, who was probably the most successful Intelligence Officer on either side throughout the whole of the war. He received me very kindly, and explained that he had asked for me purposely because of the knowledge of England which I possessed—not only during the few weeks of my captivity, of course, but because of the visits I had paid to my distant relatives in England before the war. He had heard, too, of my fluent English; he tried me out and was naturally very satisfied with my prowess in this direction. Thus I found that my first job was one which I feared might come along—I was to work directly against my own country. However, it had to be done—and, of course, it might always be possible to leave out something vital in my reports.

After a few days, in which I was instructed to accustom myself to the routine of Headquarters, I found myself posted with two other officers in a small room. Here we dealt with masses of reports which came in from the German divisions, corps and armies operating against the British. There were captured British orders, reports on units in the line, reports of examination of prisoners and so on. My own job for the first month or two at Headquarters was to prepare the battle order of the British forces facing the Germans—that is to say, to identify the positions of the various British divisions along the front, numbering them whenever possible and stating their exact location. Whenever I was in doubt, I could always ask the army concerned to take drastic action to secure an identification—which usually meant a trench raid to capture a prisoner. Any fears that I had held that my lack of Staff College training might be fatal to my chances immediately disappeared. I had already done this actual job on the British side of the line, and was quite confident of my ability to do it on the German. In fact, before I had been so employed for a few weeks I had already received several compliments. This pleased me immensely, for Colonel Nicolai was not a man who flung away bouquets. He was a tremendously hard and efficient worker himself, and expected all his Staff to follow his example. He had no place for the slacker and no place for the man of routine. He wanted men with ideas, and anyone who did not come up to his standards was ruthlessly thrown aside. I was glad, therefore, that my first impression was a good one, for I wanted to hang on in this interesting place. Certainly something was bound to turn up before long.

In my first week nothing happened to disturb my equanimity. All these officers were strangers to Adolf and to me, and naturally they accepted me without any question. The details of my escape were now well known throughout Germany and had been published, with my photograph, in most of the newspapers. The photograph reproduced on the coarse surface of the German newspapers resembled me as much as it did any man, but also resembled Adolf to the same extent. To clinch matters, assuming that they needed any clinching, Freiberg, the naval lieutenant with whom I had made my escape, came down on a flying visit to see me after his leave was exhausted, before he rejoined the submarine base at Wilhelmshaven. As he happened to be a relative of General Groener, the Director of Field Railway Services at General Headquarters, the introductions which he made were of the greatest value. After his visit, certainly the General Staff would as soon have thought of suspecting Falkenhayn himself as of suspecting me.

It was not until my second week, then, that I had my first shock. For then, walking along the streets of Charleville from my office to the house which served as a mess, I heard hurried footsteps behind me and turned round to face a young officer who was glowing with excitement. He flung his hand out and grasped mine, wringing it so heartily that my fingers felt the strain.

"Well, by all that's good and beautiful!" he cried. "Now isn't this great! Just the man I was looking for!"

Now although I had got Adolf to talk as long as I could about all his friends and acquaintances, and had secured all his photographs, I could not trace this man. I did not know him from Adam. All that I could be certain was that he was not one of Adolf's friends from Baden, because I must have met him in the days before the war. Probably he was a military acquaintance. There is, however, an ancient device to adopt on such occasions. It often happens that you are accosted by some acquaintance—a man you know you ought to know, yet can't exactly place him. The obvious thing to do is to let him go on talking; then some time or other he is bound to say something that will give you the necessary clue to identification. I did this. I let him talk on in his excitement. He had read about me in the papers, he said. He would have welcomed me himself to General Headquarters, but he had been on leave at the time. He had only come back the day before, and was waiting for an hour's leisure to ferret me out, and now here at lunch-time he had walked right into me, and so on, and so on.

I did not give myself away. I was as enthusiastic as he was. I was very careful to mention no names and to keep the conversation general.

"Are you still on the same job?" I asked at length.

"No," he replied. "My old leg wound troubled me again, and so I had to transfer to a clerical office. I am in charge of the Chief Bureau now: a very important job—although it isn't quite what we thought of that day when we walked into action for the first time at Charleroi, is it? Do you remember how we were going to win the Iron Cross together? And now you've got it and I haven't. Dear, dear! Never mind. It's all in a wartime."

Another two minutes and I had him completely placed. His name was Conrad Ammer, and as soon as he mentioned it I recalled that Adolf had spoken of him on several occasions. He was a young subaltern who had served under Adolf but had been rather severely wounded in the early battles of 1915, and now apparently he too had a Staff job and one which, if not so interesting, and if offering no scope for individuality, definitely controlled the innermost secrets of the German Command. Obviously this stroke of luck must be exploited. I arranged to meet Ammer that night. During the afternoon my eyes were staring at the report I was supposed to be considering, but actually I was thinking very hard—how I could best use this happy opportunity. Nevertheless, nothing must be rushed: my first efforts must be thought out most carefully. I had already made up my mind that this war was going to be a long one. I knew that Joffre and Foch would disagree with me very violently—although Falkenhayn would not. If, therefore, I risked everything on one throw, I might win a battle, but if the war was to go on for another two or three years that would be no great advantage. For it was certain that never again would an English agent find himself in such a happy position as I was now. It would be folly to waste such a chance for a mere detail of espionage. I was thinking all the while of bigger things. Not of stealing plans or trifles of that kind, but of Liddell Hart's words: that the aim of the battle is the mind of the enemy commander. It would take me a long time to penetrate to such a depth, but I was certain that it could be done. In the meantime there were other trifles of useful information that I might possibly be able to get over without risk. One of them came my way just before Christmas 1915.

Since mine was a reporting and not a directing branch, I could not expect to get any absolutely vital information from my own work. Accordingly I studied the possibilities of getting stuff from Ammer's office. I palled up to him warmly—and, I may say, sincerely, for he was a very likable fellow—and made a habit of calling for him at least once a day at his office. Thus the whole of his staff—numbering some fifteen or sixteen clerks—got to know me very well by name and sight, and I could walk into his office without any question. He had three rooms. One, a large room occupied by the general

clerks; in a corner of it, partitioned off, was a smaller room where three military clerks worked. Here were prepared documents of the most secret kind. No one except Ammer, his personal clerk and certain officers of the General Staff were ever allowed to enter. The third room was Ammer's, adjoining the other, with a communicating door. My first job, therefore, was to get the entrée to this confidential room. This was easy, since Ammer was in charge of it and was a friend of mine. It was helped too by the fact that my escape from England gave me a certain notoriety among the men, for it will always be remarked that soldiers who are employed on clerical work have always a big grain of admiration for men who have actually faced danger.

About three days before Christmas, 1915, Ammer and I were conversing over dinner. Both of us had had visions of leave. For my part I didn't want it, but Ammer did—most emphatically. However, he complained that his high hopes looked like being dashed, for the chief—that is to say, Falkenhayn—had been busy for some days getting together an appreciation of the situation and a forecast of future operations. This, said Ammer, would have to be typed and distributed to a number of people, a very responsible task which he himself would have to supervise personally. He was just hoping that Falkenhayn would get the job done quickly.

Naturally this interested me greatly. I kept my eyes very much open whenever I invaded Ammer's office. Two days later, when I called for him at lunch, I found him in the confidential room. A big table was strewn with papers, which one of the clerks had just typed. Ammer himself was going carefully through each sheet, checking it off against a draft beside him on the table. I needed to be no Sherlock Holmes to know this was the report at which he had hinted. Nor did I need to be a Minister of State to guess that it might be a thing of the utmost importance—worth perhaps even the risk of my position to find out its purpose.

"What's happening?" I asked Ammer, who looked rather worried.

"Oh, this damned report of the Chief's," he said. "I've got to get it out this afternoon. I'm afraid I shan't be ready for lunch for an hour or so yet."

"Shall I give you a hand?" I asked.

"I wish you would," he said. "I've been instructed not to let any of the clerks see it except the chief confidential typist, so I've got to do the rest of the clerical business myself. I'm just finishing the checking of it, but now I've got to number the copies."

I sat down beside him. If only I could purloin one of the copies, as the fictional spy would have done! But at once I dismissed the idea. It was quite

impossible. Every one must be scrupulously accounted for. Every one would be numbered and would be sent to some high dignitary, being marked out in a confidential register as it moved from place to place. So that was hopeless; but at least if I helped Ammer to number the sheets I could get a glimpse of the contents.

I did. As he called out the registered numbers to me I inserted them on the top of each sheet. Seven copies had been stamped through on the typewriter, and each one had to be numbered separately. I did it leisurely in my best handwriting—which meant I had the chance of at least a glance at each sheet, and when I got the idea of the contents of the report my hair almost stood on end with excitement. Yes, this was definitely something of first-class importance.

I was still in difficulty, however. Obviously by the time I had numbered all the sheets I would have in my mind a fairly accurate précis of what Falkenhayn had written. I knew immediately that this would be invaluable to the Allied Commands. Yet it was essential that I should have some documentary evidence to back up my report, for few Intelligence services trusted the word—which might only be the opinion—of any agent, however reliable he might be.[17] Before information could be acted upon it must be checked. As I have said, there was no hope whatsoever of stealing one of the copies, but I had already noticed in previous visits the neat and tidy habits of the elderly soldier who did this side of the clerical work.

Now typists have two methods with carbons when typing a long report. Some use one set of carbon papers only, changing them from sheet to sheet as the page is completed. This is perhaps the more economical. Others use half a box of carbons for one job, inserting fresh sheets of carbon paper between the separate pages and keeping all together until the whole job is completed. The advantage of this is that the checking can be left until the end, and any corrections can then be made without a fresh insertion of carbon papers. This was the method that the soldier clerk had used. Before I numbered the different pages I had to slip the six carbons from between the different sheets. Here immediately was an idea. When I came to the last page I saw that it contained the crux of the whole matter. What was easier, then, as I pulled the carbons from the sheets, to drop two of them carelessly on the floor. Immediately I made a dive to pick them up, but I replaced only one on the pile; the other, crumpled maybe but nevertheless intact, found a resting place just inside the side of my boot. As soon as the job was done, I shuffled the carbons into position and replaced them in the box; assuredly no one would ever think of counting the carbons.

Nor did they. After helping Ammer to address the copies which were to go out—including one which went direct to the Kaiser—and registering them under the numbers I had just affixed to them, I went out with him to lunch with a light heart. I had now something tangible and desperately important to show for the risk which I had been running for the past few weeks.

Yet how to get it over to England? That night in my billet I straightened out the carbon and carefully pressed it flat between heavy books. It was of course a new carbon, and bore but the one imprint; by holding it to the light or the mirror it was quite easy to decipher. In any case I had already got a very good idea of its contents from my look-over while numbering the copies. For the report that I had read—or at least skimmed—was one of the most remarkable documents penned during the whole of the war. In it Falkenhayn reviewed the war up to date and the possibilities of the future. He affirmed in his appreciation that England was the main enemy, but that it was almost impossible to reach England because of the strength of her navy and the strip of water in between. He argued that England was pursuing her historic policy of maintaining a foreign army on the Continent to fight her battles for her. The army on this occasion was French—not German as had happened a hundred years before. Therefore, he said, before we can get at England we must strike her sword out of her hand—her sword being France. So he argued against a big offensive on the Russian front—which had been advocated by Hindenburg and Ludendorff—and declared in favour of a tremendous onslaught on the French. The last page summarised his views. It read: "(Within our reach) behind the French sector of the western front there are objectives for the retention of which the French General Staff would be compelled to throw in every man they have. If they do so the forces of France will bleed to death—as there can be no question of a voluntary withdrawal—whether we reach our goal or not. If they do not do so, and we reach our objectives, the moral effect on France will be tremendous. For an operation limited to a narrow front Germany will not be compelled to spend herself so completely that all other fronts are practically drained. She can face with confidence the relief attacks to be expected on those fronts, and indeed hope to have sufficient troops in hand to reply to them with counter-attacks. For she is perfectly free to accelerate or draw out her offensive, to intensify it or break it off from time to time, as suits her purpose.

"The objectives of which I am speaking now are Belfort and Verdun.

"The considerations urged above apply to both, yet the preference must be given to Verdun. The French lines at that point are barely twelve miles distant from the German railway communications. Verdun is therefore the

most powerful *point d'appui* for an attempt, with a relatively small expenditure of effort, to make the whole German front in France and Belgium untenable. The removal of the danger, as a secondary aim, would be so valuable on military grounds that, compared with it, the so-to-speak 'incidental,' political victory of the 'purification' of Alsace by an attack on Belfort is a small matter."[18]

My only difficulty now was to get the carbon and my report across to England. I typed out from memory the gist of the whole appreciation which Falkenhayn had written, using his actual phrases when I could remember them. On comparing this report years afterwards with the full document I found that I had done very well—probably my training as an actor made rapid memorisation possible. This I despatched, utterly devoid of any means of identification, to an address at Brussels where lived one of the most enterprising of our secret service agents. In order to ensure that a copy reached him I sent a second three days later.[19] The carbon, however, I decided to send myself, and not to trust in transit to any intermediary, however honest and able he might be. The English Intelligence Service directed against Germany had its centres in Holland and Switzerland. There our agents worked in the guise of perfectly ordinary merchants—as indeed they were in their spare time. I had memorised half a dozen addresses to which letters might be addressed. Yet there was always the danger, of course, that one of these addresses might have been found out by the Germans, who would naturally watch and inspect very carefully all letters addressed to it.[20] It so happened, however, that an old friend of my father's was working as a technical expert at the great electrical works of Maas & Co., at Eindhoven in Holland—a firm now known almost as well for its wireless equipment and continental broadcasts as for its electric lamps. This old family friend had, of course, no connection whatsoever with any espionage business,[21] nor did he wish to have, for a more quiet, inoffensive little man never lived. But before I had entered Germany, scenting the possibility of such an occasion, I had got my father to write to him. If he received any letter of any kind which he did not understand, he was asked to send it on at once to England. I had not heard from my father that his friend had consented, but I had no doubt about it. Although the old man would have fallen stiff with horror at the idea of being used as a spy, he could have no objection to re-addressing a letter which reached him.

My plan then was this. I took Ammer to celebrate Christmas—for his leave after all had not materialised—to a hotel at Liège. There I wrote one or two letters, and in the course of writing purloined one or two sheets of paper and envelopes bearing the name of the hotel. I wrote to Messrs. Maas & Co.,

in the guise of one of their commercial travellers—of whom they must have had dozens touring Belgium and Germany even during war time. I said that I was on the track of a very good order—a big concern in Liège had had a breakdown with an electrical apparatus and wanted a complete refitment. I enclosed a complete schedule and specification of their requirements, and asked for an estimate to be sent to me right away, giving the address where I would be in a week's time. In order that they could get all branches of the estimates section working at once, I said, I had typed out the specification in triplicate and enclosed all three copies. This I did, copying out a specification from an electrical catalogue—a perfectly normal affair that any firm could quote for. Then I attached the letter to the three copies of the specification, and by accident one of the carbons used was left in between the second and third copy. This I hoped and assumed would be the opinion of the censor when he opened the letter. It was not an absolutely foolproof scheme, but it seemed to me to offer a good chance of success—at least as large as those of the normal methods of communication, in which I had no great faith.

Anyway it did come off. My father's friend received the letter, wondered what on earth it was all about, and almost took it seriously at first—until he realised that it was absurd that such an enquiry should have come from a commercial traveller to him instead of to the costing side of the business. Then my father's letter came to his mind, and immediately he sent it on to England. Two days' later my father walked into the War Office triumphantly, for his natural curiosity had led him to examine the carbon intently, and he had had no difficulty in deciphering its message. Nor was he disappointed at his reception, for the usually phlegmatic Intelligence officer who received him grinned all over his face when he saw that little penny-halfpenny sheet of carbon paper which my father placed before him.

Although perhaps it should not be I who says it, this was one of the most complete disclosures of the whole of the war. Not only was Falkenhayn's plan to attack thoroughly revealed, but I was able to give an approximate date—weeks before the actual day of battle was decided. In my covering letter I had pointed out that the whole equipment would be required to be delivered before the end of February.

So when, by means of a field postcard sent to me (ostensibly from a brother officer in an English prison camp) I knew that my plan had not miscarried, I sat back in my chair at my billet and chuckled aloud. I felt that I had really done something big. Here Falkenhayn had planned to surprise the French at Verdun. Now I had been able to give them at least six weeks'

warning. In that time they could make such preparations as would pulverise and annihilate the threatened attack.

But did it? All the world now knows the story of Verdun: how the place had been declassed as a fortress by Joffre so that he could obtain the command of its garrison; how the troops on the spot saw signs of an imminent offensive; how the Governor of Verdun, General Coutenceau, shared this view but was immediately dismissed when he expressed it; how Colonel Driant, the Deputy for Nancy and a well-known military writer, sent the warning direct to General Galliéni, who was Minister for War; how Joffre pooh-poohed the idea and in his famous reply (which ought to serve as the standard example of ridiculous red-tape throughout history) exclaimed, "But since these apprehensions are founded on reports which allege defects in the state of the defences, I request you to specify their authors. I cannot be a party to soldiers under my command bringing before the Government, by channels other than the hierarchic channels, complaints or protests concerning the execution of my orders. It is calculated to disturb profoundly the spirit of discipline in the army."

What a state of affairs it was—that a commander should prefer to receive no information at all rather than that not rendered in the official and red-tape fashion!

If Joffre took no notice of the warning of Colonel Driant, naturally he would take even less of mine. My report, together with the carbon paper, was duly passed on to the French commander with the covering expression that they came from a British officer who was to be trusted in every respect. Actually the War Office made a mistake. They should have sent my report to Galliéni, and not to Joffre. Then something drastic might have been done, for Galliéni was a man of action—not one who went to sleep every afternoon and every night whatever the state of the battle. Naturally, it piqued my personal pride when later I found that no advantage had been taken of the risk I had run; and it hurt me to the quick when I heard, as I did in succeeding weeks, of the cruel losses which the gallant French *poilus* suffered through complete lack of preparation. Everyone now knows how near was the French line to crashing. Everyone now knows that only the narrowest of margins separated the German onslaught from complete success—a victory which would have changed the whole course of the war. How easily the cruel losses of the desperate defence might have been avoided! "Might have been"—that is the saddest phrase in any tongue.

[15] All the German spies caught in England during the war were betrayed by their methods of communication! Sir George Aston considers this one of the most hazardous parts of a spy's job. See his very interesting book, *Secret Service*.

[16] This was while Hindenburg and Ludendorff were on the Russian front. When promoted to General Headquarters, Hindenburg became Chief of Staff to the whole German Army, while Ludendorff—the real commander—was styled as Quartermaster-General.

[17] One bright spark at the War Office, when (after the war) I complained that insufficient notice had been taken of the information I sent, explained: "Well, after all, you know you were only a temporary officer!"

[18] You may read the whole report if you wish in General von Falkenhayn's *General Headquarters and its Critical Decisions, 1914-16*.

[19] How he got it across to England I did not learn until much later: his method would have delighted authors of spy stories. With the aid of a magnifying-glass he copied it on a comparatively small sheet of rice paper. Then he got a milliner to make up a woman's hat with a double crown—short of cutting the hat to pieces it was impossible of detection. With the report in position, a girl carried it on her head into Holland, where it was despatched to England. The agent got over dozens of messages, by a variety of similar ingenious methods, but was inevitably caught out at last, and was shot. I always suspected the fallibility of such schemes, preferring much simpler alternatives.

[20] Such traps were the downfall of most of the German spies caught in England, including Karl Lody.

[21] Nor, of course, had the eminently respectable firm which employed him.

CHAPTER IV

BUT, of course, not until weeks afterwards did I know that my warning had been disregarded. For some time after my scoop I was the happiest man at German Headquarters. I thought that I had done a really big job. I walked about Charleville as if I owned the place. For by this time I was so self-confident that I had no fears whatsoever. Definitely now I was no longer Captain Bernard Newman, but Captain Adolf Neumann. I had good reason to be confident. I was getting on very well in my job, and it was obvious that my superior officers thought well of me. For weeks I did not experience a single moment's anxiety. Judge then of my consternation when, on returning late one evening from a visit to one of the armies in the field, on arrival at my billet my batman informed me that my father was waiting to see me!

It was, as may well be imagined, a hectic moment. This was one of the things I had certainly never expected. Adolf's father was a major who had been retired years before the war, but had been called up to command a Landwehr battalion which had been engaged on the Russian front. What on earth was he doing here? Was there anything wrong? But of course I had to pull myself together immediately, and to walk into my room with every show of surprise and affection. Yet, could a father be deceived in his own son?

Apparently he could. At any rate Adolf's father greeted me as Adolf—and why should he not? He had already been speaking to some of my friends. Remember, too, that there was absolutely nothing which might lead him to suspect that things were otherwise than they appeared to be. So, feeling myself very quickly on firm ground again, I turned the conversation from myself and asked why he was here. His explanation was a perfectly simple one. His brigade had been withdrawn from Russia to serve on the Belgian frontier, for the troops who acted as guards were having the greatest difficulty in preventing communication across the frontier, and reinforcements were urgently necessary. As the men in my "father's" brigade were all comparatively elderly—for soldiers, at any rate, nearly all being on the wrong side of fifty—they had been withdrawn from the minor actions of the Russian front for this purpose. My "father" chuckled with delight at the thought that now he would only be some twenty or thirty miles from me, for his headquarters were to be somewhere in the region of

Louvain. Maybe I was not quite so excited at the thought, but at least I did not show it.

After we had talked for some time I asked him to excuse me for a few minutes, as I had to make my report to Colonel Nicolai. He asked if he could come with me, for he had known Colonel Nicolai in his own soldier days. The colonel greeted him most warmly, was good enough to say nice things about me, and even threw out a hint that I might be appointed very shortly to more important service. This pleased both me and my "father" for vastly different reasons. It helped me considerably in another detail, too. My "father" had mentioned how much my mother wanted to see me. (I will drop the quotes and consider Adolf's parents as mine.) He was sure that I should be getting leave soon, but I was now able to point out quite naturally that if I was to be put on to an important job I might still have to wait a long time before I was able to go home. My father, to whom military duty came first, second and third, agreed without question. He himself, as soon as he had settled down his battalion in its new post, would be proceeding on leave. At least, he said, he would be able to tell my mother and sister that I was well, and doing well too.

A week later my Chief gave me details of my new job. He had always treated me in a most kindly fashion. There was nothing of the pre-war picture of the Prussian militarist about Colonel Nicolai. I sat at ease, smoking one of his excellent cigars, while he gave me a little lecture on the German Intelligence work—a lecture which was fascinating in its interest. He explained to me how the greater part of the German agents operating in England prior to the war had been arrested immediately on its commencement. (Incidentally, I found out that their numbers were comparatively small—perhaps one thousandth part of the quantity existing in the minds of nervous old ladies and imaginative journalists.) It had thus been necessary for Germany to build up a new system. On the naval side it was working fairly well; several agents had been discovered and shot, however, notable among them being Karl Lody, who died a hero's death in the Tower of London; but so far as the military side was concerned, the Intelligence Service in England was very nearly non-existent. To date that had not been particularly serious, for the British Army was so comparatively small that its operations could not seriously inconvenience the German Command. Incidentally, I should point out that the German Intelligence Service differed entirely in its direction from ours. We had a national service controlled by the War Office. In Germany the service was controlled by the Chief Intelligence Officer at General Headquarters, and the German War

Office had comparatively little control over it. There were advantages and disadvantages in both systems.

To come to the point, Colonel Nicolai said that he had decided to engage neutral agents to go into England to gather information. He didn't like the idea: as he always proclaimed, spying is a gentleman's job. But there were so few German officers who were capable of undertaking such work. Unfortunately, a German, even if he does not look like a German, invariably talks like a German as soon as he tackles a foreign language. Even to-day, I suppose the number of Germans who can speak English without any trace of accent is remarkably small.

But neutrals, of course, were in a different category. They could go over to England, providing their own national passport was in order, without hindrance. The great difficulty so far had been to discover men of sufficient ability and intelligence who were willing to undertake the job. This work was what he wanted me to do—to go to Holland, select a dozen or even twenty men and offer them a suitable payment if they would go to England and find out the things we wanted to know.

He gave me a rough sketch of our principal requirements. They related to the new armies which England was then raising, and also the position as regards man-power, which was engaging the most serious attention of the Government. It was already known that the Allies were planning a tremendous offensive against Germany during the summer. As a result of the forthcoming operations against Verdun it was doubtful whether the French would be able to sustain their share of the attack, which the British would have to deliver alone. We must have details—particularly how many new divisions were to be sent to France.

The men I selected must, of course, be able to speak English fluently. They must be prepared to take a risk, although an intelligent man might be able to pick up a good deal of useful information by hanging about the military camps—or, perhaps I should say, hanging about the hostelries about the camps. Doubtless one such report would not be of any use, but a large number suitably collated would yield a lot of information to a discerning examining officer.

That then was my commission. My Chief could see that I was pleased with the job, but he did not know the reason for my satisfaction. Had he tried he could not have played better into my hands. True, I would be leaving German Headquarters for awhile, but I could at least make sure that my report about Verdun had received proper treatment, and could take the opportunity of being in a neutral country to send a whole shoal of invaluable

information home—including extremely useful details about the German Intelligence Service in France.

Even at this stage, however, I had just sufficient foresight to get in an excuse which might be very necessary. I pointed out that neutrals who do Intelligence work purely for the money are not very dependable persons. Colonel Nicolai appreciated my comment: it was his own opinion. He agreed that it was a stiff task that he was asking of me. He knew how intensely difficult it would be to find the right people and to keep them up to scratch. He would give me all the necessary credit if I succeeded, but would not blame me unduly if I failed. This was the sort of assurance that I wanted, and a few days later, when my immediate chief had gone into great detail with me, I crossed the frontier into Holland with a light heart—and with civilian clothes. I was now liable myself to arrest as a spy—though not, of course, to condemnation to death; for espionage in most countries, even when not directed against the country, is a punishable offence.

But what was such a risk after those which I had run? Besides, everything was perfectly prepared for me. I was a junior partner of the firm of Dierks & Co., which had its headquarters at Rotterdam. Thither I hastened, and was duly received by the managing director. I was allocated a private room, a secretary who was a German girl, and an almost unlimited banking account. Thus I began my job. I did it very well, too. In all, from the numerous applicants who answered the vague inquiries which I spread out in all directions, I selected sixteen men. I trained them in a little school. I trained them so well that out of the sixteen no fewer than thirteen were arrested in England! Of these, twelve were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The three who escaped did so with official connivance, for obviously it would not do for the whole lot to be roped in, but the information they brought, although it appeared to be a lot, actually amounted to no more than newspaper gossip.

When I reviewed the position, however, it seemed to me that I had been a little too drastic and wholesale. In spite of my Chief's assurances, an officer who returned with so complete a story of failure would not be likely to be given a big job again. So I decided that I must do something desperate to justify my appointment. "Spying is a gentleman's job," I remembered my Chief's pet phrase. Accordingly I sent a note to Colonel Nicolai, telling him that I was so disappointed at the efforts of the neutrals that I had decided to make an effort to slip into England myself and have a look round. Although, of course, slipping into England was actually the simplest thing in the world for me, I necessarily took every precaution. I travelled as a Dutch merchant, and wore the heavily-built clothes which are characteristic of their kind. I

even carried a Dutch passport. (Passports were utterly useless as methods of identification, for every belligerent country had its little factory which would manufacture any quantity of passports of any other nation—and manufacture them very efficiently too, so that only an expert with plenty of time at his disposal could possibly detect the difference.)

On my arrival in England, as soon as I had made perfectly certain that I had not been noticed by anyone, I ran down into the country to my home—where, needless to say, my parents were surprised and delighted to see me. Then I donned my own uniform and reported to the War Office. There, naturally, my reception was also of the warmest. Not only did I confirm that my Verdun report had arrived, but I was able to give lots of further information, particularly about the work of the German General Staff and also about the number of effective divisions on the western front, including details of those about to be brought over from Russia. In fact, my cross-examination at the War Office almost resembled third degree in its intensity, for half a dozen departmental chiefs wanted to talk to me, and I had the honour of a long conversation with Lord Kitchener himself. He was a very remarkable man. Like Haig, he was not a good talker. He would sit looking at me for a full minute—which seemed very much longer—and then would ask me a question in a sentence which comprised not more than half a dozen monosyllabic words. Yet verbosity is not everything, and when I thought it over afterwards I found that generally those half-dozen simple words had penetrated right to the root of the question in hand.

I asked for some information which I could take back to show that I had done a good job. This was easy to arrange. There were three of the new army divisions about to leave for France. It could only be a question of weeks before the Germans actually discovered their presence in the line. There could be no real reason why the information should not be given a little in advance—particularly, as I was able to point out, since the forthcoming attack was already no secret, even its location being known to the German Command. Therefore this tit-bit of information would not actually do the Allied cause the slightest harm, and my apparent spectacular success would certainly help me to consolidate my position more strongly than ever.

I had come over entirely on my own initiative, and without connection with the organised secret service already in England. Before my return, however, I made a call on one man whose name and address I knew already—he was the man who had endeavoured to pass on the reports of my unfortunate agents. It was a strange coincidence that this man should have

been arrested the day after my visit to the barber's shop which gave him a *raison d'être*!

My return to Holland was made without difficulty, and after a day or two at Rotterdam clearing up my affairs, I rushed back to General Headquarters. Nor had I miscalculated when I foresaw that my escapade would receive the fullest connivance if I returned in successful mood. Comparatively meagre as my information actually was, it was something absolutely definite. I had seen the three divisions in their camps; I had even ascertained the exact date at which they would be sent to France; I had seen the men in training and reported that they were a fairly poor lot, not nearly so good as those which had taken the field at Loos during the previous autumn. This, of course, was deliberate deception on my part, as the three divisions were as good as any England ever turned out. But my argument was that if I dismissed the prospective attackers as of poor quality, the German Command would naturally allot a smaller number of divisions to meet the attack. This, for that matter, is what actually happened, but unfortunately the cumbrous plans of the British Command and the individual determined resistance of even the smallest German unit completely destroyed any hope which I had held in this respect.

I seemed fated to deal in comparative contrasts. Only a few months before I had been presented to the King of England and the Kaiser of Germany; now, only a few days later after a long interview with Lord Kitchener, I was closeted for an hour with General von Falkenhayn himself. He was not unlike Kitchener in many ways—he was a much better talker, but had the same cold, calculating, military brain. I often thought afterwards that, if only Kitchener had had Falkenhayn's advantages, what a marvellous Commander-in-Chief he would have made! But then Kitchener knew absolutely nothing of European affairs. His heart and soul were in his beloved Egypt, and it only needed the threat of a few hundred Turks to distract whole armies to its defence. Had he been trained along the same lines as Falkenhayn—thinking always in terms of European and not Colonial wars—and in particular had he (and all our other generals, for that matter) become accustomed in his junior days as a commander to the handling of large bodies of troops instead of the miserable brigades and scratch divisions which could be raised for manœuvre purposes, then the history of the war might have been written very very differently.

As soon as my report was complete, and I had undergone the inevitable cross-examination from the chiefs of different branches of the Staff, Colonel Nicolai naturally suggested that I would want to go on leave. It was a strange position; in the German and every other army, 99.9 per cent of

officers and men were always wanting to go on leave, and one of the biggest complaints was that there was not enough leave. Yet here was I, being offered leave every week or so, and refusing it! Yet soon I would have to face the problem, for my excuses of pressure of duty and military ardour would soon begin to wear a bit thin. On my flying visit to England, in fact, I had already taken one precautionary step. I had visited Adolf. The poor old chap was spending the rest of the war in a prison in the Isle of Wight. He was not, of course, treated as a convict; as a matter of fact, in many ways he was better off than the average prisoner of war. He had quite a little suite of apartments in the Governor's wing and had all kinds of privileges—except one. Although he did not know it, none of the letters that he wrote ever reached his home.

I obtained the necessary permission and visited him in his prison. He, of course, could not understand what on earth had happened. Why should he be picked out for solitary confinement of this kind? I couldn't tell him, but suggested that he must have made himself a nuisance in the prison camp—had he ever thought of trying to escape? Why, yes, he said, of course he had. Every officer had. Then, I pointed out, he must at some time have spoken of it. He must have been overheard, and somehow or other it must have got to official ears. This, then, must be the reason for his imprisonment. Adolf scratched his head and presumed that it must be so in default of any other explanation. What he would have said had I told him that I was actually impersonating him at German Headquarters I don't know. Certain he would have thrown a series of fits.

It was an easy matter to get him to talk about his home, for he was already greatly concerned that for the last three months he had received no news—naturally, since all his letters from home came automatically to me. I fancy I was always a shade on top of Adolf, and I am certain that he did not see through my continuous pumping. I fired queries at him, on the grounds that my mother might be able to do something in the way of making inquiries through her relations in Alsace. So I asked all sorts of leading questions, supplementing the large amount of information about him and his home life which I possessed already. Poor old Adolf! He complained bitterly that the English had stolen all his private papers and his wallet of photographs. He little knew that both reposed in my pocket—that his papers and letters had been of the greatest assistance to me—that those in his own writing had formed the basis of a rapid course of instruction, and that his photographs had provided me with a series of mental pictures which I would never forget. I was glad to follow up the subject, however, for it gave me an opportunity. There were two or three photographs of regimental groups and

so on, and I thought it might be just as well if I were to know the names of the other men in the groups in case I should meet them at any time: I recalled my temporary discomfiture when I first met Ammer. Their faces I had already committed to memory. Accordingly I said that I would ask the Governor if his photographs and papers could be returned. I withdrew and very soon returned with the whole lot—the photographs I had naturally had copied previously. Adolf was delighted. He was like a child with a new toy going over the photographs again. And I took the opportunity to ask the necessary questions and to get the answers wanted. Altogether the three hours, including a meal, which I spent with Adolf were extraordinarily useful.

Could I now risk going on leave? I had deceived Adolf's father, it is true, but proverbially a mother's eyes are far keener. However, the problem solved itself for me. About a fortnight after my return I had a telegram from my father (that is, of course, Adolf's. This tale is apt to become a little confusing). My mother was seriously ill—he himself was going on special leave at once. If I could arrange it, would I go with him, meeting him at Liège at noon the following day? I did not hesitate for a moment. It was a heaven-sent opportunity. Not even a mother would deny a son who was introduced to her by his father, and the fact that my mother was ill would not sharpen her critical faculties.

I may seem to harp continuously on this point, but friends to whom I have described my war experiences always ask a lot of questions around this more than any other. They can understand that I could deceive military acquaintances, but they cannot imagine how it was that I could pretend to be Adolf to his own family. Yet, as I pointed out, this was far simpler than it actually seems. Many an English mother almost failed to recognise her own son when he returned from the war, so changed was he—his body sometimes stooping with weariness, sometimes far healthier than ever before, sometimes a nervous wreck. Were there not many cases of wives not knowing their own husbands? Now I was nearly an inch taller than Adolf—well, was not the army life calculated to add to height? Furthermore, I was slightly bigger, so that the mere difference in height was not so remarkable. My hair was the same shade—to all external appearances, anyway—and, what was most important, my eyes were almost of the identical shade of his—for it is the eye which gives the character to the face. My complexion was certainly ruddier than Adolf's, but here again the war was a sufficient explanation. My greatest advantage lay, of course, in the fact that no one had the slightest cause for suspicion; yet I felt that fortune had after all done me a good turn in providing the emergency and its consequent opportunity.

I met my father at Liège the following day. He was tremendously worried—I remembered that he and my Aunt Gretchen had always been of the Darby and Joan type. The train was slow and was side-tracked on the slightest provocation in favour of any other train going towards the front, and it was in the early hours of the following morning that we reached home. There we found my mother certainly very ill, but not quite in such a desperate condition as the telegram to my father had suggested. She was, however, very weak and could not open her eyes for more than a few minutes at a time. Although, of course, I was tremendously sorry for her—I was very fond of her even before she became my mother—yet while I hoped that she would make a good recovery, I blessed her illness in that it so effectively covered up the situation which I had been dreading. With my sister I had no difficulty. I knew her fairly well, and Adolf had talked a lot about her: the letters I had received from home were tremendously useful. I knew the man she was engaged to marry, and was able to ask all the necessary and expected questions. She, too, was so concerned about her mother that, even had her critical faculties turned to me, they would have been completely dissolved for the time.

As I sat back in my chair at the dinner that evening, in fact, I gave myself a mental pat on the back. This was almost too easy. I should have known that it is often at such moments that fate chooses to administer a nasty shock. The servant girl—a clean buxom Baden peasant—was clearing away the dinner things. I had remained behind to smoke a cigar—my father and sister had gone on before me to mother's bedroom. The girl closed the door after them and I saw that she did it very carefully. This alone ought to have put me on the alert, but whether it was the effect of the good dinner, or of so successfully surviving my anticipated ordeal, I don't know, but my mind was not working with quite so much agility as it ought to have been; and when eventually the girl tiptoed to my side and whispered, smiling all over her face, "Hansi will meet you at the bathing-hut at seven to-morrow morning," I regret to say that I showed strong traces of surprise.

Who was Hansi? For I had been very careful to sound Adolf thoroughly about his amorous adventures, if any. I was now quite convinced that after my conversation with him, the photographs I had seen, and my pre-war visits to his home, that I could be at ease and with assurance with any of his male friends. Of his women, if any, I was not nearly so sure. Yet were there any? I had decided no. Before the war Adolf had been a naturally shy, rather reserved young man. There had been no hint at the time of any of my visits of any *affaire*, honourable or otherwise. He was neither engaged to be

married or likely to be. I had pumped him as hard as I could during my recent visit.

"It's very tough luck being kept here alone," I had said to him. "It's bad enough being without male company, but it's even worse being without women."

"Oh, women don't trouble me," Adolf had replied. "They never did."

I had believed him in face of the lack of the slightest piece of evidence against him. Yet I ought to have known that even shy, reserved men may have some little romance hidden up their sleeve; and, in any case, I ought to have been acute enough not to have shown surprise even if the servant had come up and whispered to me that the house was on fire. A man living in the situation and circumstances which surrounded me ought to be ready for anything.

The moment I raised my eyebrows so involuntarily I knew that I had made a mistake, for I saw a second's look of wonder cross her face. Immediately I recovered myself—I had not been an actor for nothing.

"Ah!" I whispered. "That was what I was wondering. So it's seven o'clock to-morrow morning! Good! I shall be there!"

Immediately her look changed. She was all smiles again, looking at me roguishly out of the corners of her eyes as she moved about the room, smiling the while. In fact, so loving was her regard that had it not been for her own remark I would immediately have assumed that she had had some love passages with Adolf herself. However, that was obviously not the case; but who was this Hansi?

I pondered over my cigar. What was the best thing to do? Should I ask leading questions of my sister? Yet that might lead to all sorts of complications, and in any case might not take me very far forward—for Hansi is a common enough name, and there must be a hundred Hansis in the little town. No, I decided, the best thing to do was to go along to the bathing-hut at seven to-morrow morning and see for myself. At least this time I was forewarned. I knew that I had to meet someone named Hansi, and obviously from the circumstances of the appointment it was with romantic intent. So I said no more except to mention to my father on going to bed that I proposed to get up early in the morning and go for a swim in the lake. He shuddered at the idea—and so did I—for it was still very cold, and the temperature of the lake could scarcely be thought of, fed as it was by mountain streams—mountains on the tops of which snow still lingered. But, of course, there was no need for me to bathe, only to go to the hut.

I was there early enough the following morning, but Hansi was there before me. I entered the little wooden hut and found her standing there, eager love written all over her face. At least that needed no explanation. As soon as I appeared she rushed to me and flung her arms around me, half murmuring, half sobbing, how glad she was to see me again. What this terrible war meant to her, and so on, and so on—the loving murmurings of many a million wives and mothers during that terrible period. So this was Adolf's secret! Well, he had made a fairly good choice. I must give him credit for that. I took such glimpses of her as I could as she pressed herself closely to me, and I must say that she was a very good-looking girl—slightly on the buxom side, as many of the Black Forest girls are, but exuberant with health, and with a clean and pleasant face. Yet why had Adolf given me no hint of this? However, for the moment a love scene had to be played. Well, I could do that! Not for nothing had I played Romeo and half a dozen other equally romantic parts.

I comforted her. My protestations of affection were ordinary enough, but they satisfied her very well. There is something in the way in which you say such things; even a non-committal phrase can mean a good deal if it is properly put over. (For that matter, that is one of the earliest difficulties of a dramatist—that he writes his dialogue in too strong a fashion, not appreciating how the tremendous art of the actor will help, never guessing how the most ordinary phrase can sound tremendously strong from the lips of a man who understands his job.) Certainly Hansi played up to me well, and I was quite confident that she had not the slightest misgiving. It was of course rather necessary to find out something about her, but this would doubtless come. When she had got over the first shock and joy of meeting, her tongue would naturally begin to prattle, then I ought to learn things.

Alas, it did not work out quite so easily as that. All at once she broke off from her sobbing, pulled me by the arm and cried, "But, come! Come! Look, I have brought him here!"

She pulled me through the door in the partition which marked off the girls' portion of the hut. There, to my amazement, was the local version of a perambulator, and in it reposed a sturdy infant of, I should guess (although I am inexperienced in such matters), about a year old! Taking me by the arm, Hansi led me proudly to the side of the pram. The infant was asleep. She made to wake it up, but I gently restrained her.

"No, no, let him sleep," I whispered. I was very very grateful that in her phrase she had given me an indication of the sex of the baby, otherwise I might have made an unforgivable howler.

So, after I had gazed wondrously on the infant, and had called it all the goo-goo names appropriate to such an occasion, we withdrew again to the adjoining room and the love scene was continued. This girl was certainly desperately fond of Adolf, I decided. But he must be a real dark horse, for she was prattling away of the things he had said to her—using phrases which I would never have dreamt that he could have mouthed. But there, a man in a love affair will talk in a style which would make him blush on any other occasion.

"You remember that night in July?" she said. "When you first knew that the war was near? How we sat up there on the mountain by the waterfall, and how you told me how you loved me?"

"Of course, I remember," I whispered, embracing her fondly. "Do you think I could ever forget?"

"Oh, it seemed so strange," she continued, "for you had always been so silent and so reserved. It seemed so strange to hear you talking of love and of passion. Oh, I was surprised!"

So was I! I had never suspected Adolf capable of things like that.

"I had loved you for a long time," I protested, "but I had been afraid to tell you. You seemed so beautiful and I, as you say, was so shy."

"Oh, but why should you be so shy?" she murmured. "You, a noble, and I a servant girl! Oh, this war has brought much evil, but at least it brought happiness to me, for surely you would never have told me of your love had it not been for that overwhelming shadow of the war. And surely had it not been for that shadow and the atmosphere that came with it—surely then you would have been too shy to have loved me, and I would never have borne a child for you."

"You do not blame me too much, then?" I suggested, beginning now to see the course of events fairly clearly.

"Blame you?" she cried. "Of course I don't! Why, did I not offer myself to you? I was so bold that my shame almost torments me now. Yet I dismiss it, since it gave you to me and our baby to us both. Blame you! Why, it was you who resisted, talking of marriage—don't you remember? Blame you! Why, it was the happiest moment in my life—just you and I."

The position was getting slightly hectic. She was clinging close to me, visualising again that scene by the waterfall—a very pretty scene, a very natural scene, and one which I suppose was played by a thousand waterfalls and in hundreds of thousands of other places in similar circumstances. But it was soon evident that she expected a repetition of the play right here and

now. I admit to being troubled. Not that my views are necessarily narrow. Here was a very pretty girl asking for love: it was my duty to give it to her in order to sustain my part—there was no great difficulty there. But I was thinking rather of Adolf. There are surely limits to the things a spy may do; he may take a man's place, take his father and his mother, but should he take his lover? I knew how the Victorian dramatist would have settled the problem, but his solution scarcely fitted my present circumstances. This episode troubled my mind bitterly for a long time; I felt that it was the dirtiest trick my profession had played on me.

Since Adolf is still alive and fairly well-known in his home town, it may be considered bad taste on my part to publish this incident—although it was, as may well be imagined, one of the most hectic moments of my career. I would like to say at this stage, therefore, that I would never have published it without the fullest permission from Adolf—and, even more important, that of his wife. Suppose again I pause to gather up the threads. It took Adolf some time after the war to pardon me for my impersonation of him, but he was too good-hearted a fellow to harbour animosity for ever. So for many years now we have resumed our old friendship, and visit each other regularly. Now he is happily married—not to Hansi, but to a girl of his own station. For Hansi, alas, is worse than dead. During an air-raid on Freiburg—by British aeroplanes—she was in a cellar under a house which was shattered by a bomb. The cellar was packed with people—a dozen or more in a confined space. Half of them were killed immediately, the rest buried alive. Picture the scene—six dead and six living huddled in a dark cellar. Hours passed; survivors have described the agony of waiting for the rescue which might never come. Before eventually the cellar was dug out from the debris forty-eight hours later, two more had died—mad! And Hansi had not died, but was insane.

Adolf did all a man could do: he was very fond of the girl—although I believe his *amour* had been a matter of an emotional moment on the eve of war. The greatest alienists in Europe saw Hansi, but could do nothing for her. So Adolf placed her in a private home, where she has every attention. That is all that could be done—until man is allowed to be as merciful to his fellow creatures as he is to his dogs.

Naturally, Adolf did the proper thing by his son. The boy received an excellent education; like many another love-child, he has a fine brain, and I do not hesitate to prophesy that within the next few years he will prove to be the most brilliant physical chemist Germany has yet produced—which is saying a good deal. Nor does he suffer shame, for he bears Adolf's name, and is treated as his son.

Not until 1925 did Adolf marry. When I heard his news I hesitated for him—until I met his wife. After dinner in their house—in the same room where the serving girl had whispered her dramatic message—I sat ill at ease, as a man does when he carries another man's secret. But it was Adolf's wife who made me happy.

"You have not asked after Adolf junior, Bernard," she remarked. Then, seeing my confusion, she added: "He is growing into a fine boy—very like his father. He comes home on holiday next week."

Impulsively I got up and kissed her; it was such a delight to meet a girl with so healthy a mind.

Later in the evening I discussed these Memoirs, which I had already written.

"Of course," I said, "I have left that episode out."

"But why?" she asked. "It is the most piquant incident in your story."

"I agree. But——"

"You need not think of Adolf—need he, dear one?"

"No, I'm sure I don't mind," Adolf agreed.

"I think of you more than of Adolf," I said. "For some reason a man can have an *affaire*, and no one thinks the worse of him. The girl has the harder part—but not the hardest. The deceived wife gets most of the sneers. You are not exactly a deceived wife, since you were not married then——"

"Nor was I deceived at all," she broke in. "Adolf told me all about this long before he married me. But, Bernard, your story is important—it is history. The history of the war is the story of the war from a thousand points of view. We must not tamper with history—my old professor taught me that, if nothing else. Besides, how can your story harm me, since I have already acknowledged Adolf's child? I don't like subterfuge. I like the clean truth."

That was Anny all over. As she gazed at me with her clear honest eyes, I hesitated no longer.

"But mind you do the same!" she teased me roguishly. "Mind you tell the whole story to your wife before you marry her!"

Then we were rather sad and silent, thinking of Hansi. I thought of Suzanne, too, but was sorrier for Hansi. Suzanne is only dead; Hansi still suffers every night the agony of that air-raid, a pillow clasped to her breast instead of her child.

CHAPTER V

ON SEPTEMBER 15th, 1916, the tanks made their *début* in the war. They were a complete surprise—no secret of the war was better kept. I knew that for certain, because although we had vague hints from our agents in England that the British were preparing some new weapon, not all the efforts of the German Secret Service had been able to penetrate the mystery. The only reports of the slightest value that we received were from one agent who said that the English had invented some machine which could cut barbed wire. He could discover no details, however, and had evidently supplied them out of his own imagination. He described a sort of mechanical rabbit which would crawl across No Man's Land and cut the wire by some unspecified method.

Of the forty-nine tanks available for duty on that famous day—one of the landmarks in the history of the war and of warfare—only nine actually succeeded in fulfilling their mission. And, as we knew then, what a tremendous effect they had! Immediately discussion arose—ought the secret to have been exposed for such comparatively puny gains? If nine tanks could accomplish so much, what would have been the effect of nine hundred, and so on. The debate continues until this day. While there is a lot to be said for dealing the Germans every possible blow as the opportunity offered, and while there is something to be said for the necessity of trying out the tanks under actual war conditions, in my mind there is no doubt whatsoever that had we kept the secret a little longer until a few hundred tanks were available, then we might have unloosed them in one stroke which might have been decisive.

As I have said, military experts—and others—have debated this question almost *ad nauseum*. But there is one query that you will find running through their discussion—how was it that the Germans, thus forewarned by the introduction of a mere sprinkling of tanks, took no effective counter-measures? How could they thus be so thoroughly surprised at Cambrai over a year later? I don't think that any of the debaters have yet succeeded in supplying the right answer to that very pertinent question, but I think that what I have to say will be of considerable interest to them.

During the summer of 1916 momentous changes took place in the German High Command—changes which were destined to have a considerable effect upon my position and upon my chances of doing useful work for England. I remember one August morning when Colonel Nicolai burst into my office and ordered me to pack my kit at once preparatory to going to the eastern front. I was astounded. I could think of no reason why I should go to the eastern front. I spoke no Russian. Of what use could I be on the Intelligence Staff there? I asked. (I did not mention, of course, that to go to the Russian front meant that my usefulness would naturally drop by about eighty per cent.) But he had no time to argue with me. He simply gave orders, stating that I would receive full instructions when actually on the train. He also gave me full details of documents which I was to take with me. With his usual thoroughness he had already had them sorted out ready for me. Consequently, a few hours later I found myself rolling eastward. In the train with me were three or four officers from General Headquarters—most of them considerably senior to me. It was in conversation with them that I found out the purport of our mission. Apparently General von Falkenhayn, the Chief of Staff of the German Army, and virtually therefore the Commander-in-Chief, was almost in disgrace. The Kaiser had now lost confidence in him. (I remember noticing from some of the English newspapers of the time that his fall was attributed to the British victory on the Somme. This, however, is not the case. Falkenhayn fell not because of the Somme—where, as we found to our cost, the German defence was better than excellent—but because of his failure at Verdun.) If Falkenhayn were dismissed there could only be one alternative commander—Hindenburg, whose fame resounded throughout Germany as the victor of Tannenberg. Of course we knew very well that Hindenburg meant Ludendorff, though I doubt if at that time more than one German in three had ever heard Ludendorff's name. Thus the purpose of our journey became obvious. Hindenburg and Ludendorff would be coming to General Headquarters in a few days' time, as soon as they had been able to hand over the command of the Russian front. Naturally they wanted full details about the position in the west, and consequently we—representing all sections of G.H.Q. organisation—were to go to Russia at their disposal, and probably to travel back with them a week later.

Had I had any doubts before about the relative position of Hindenburg and Ludendorff they were immediately dispelled on arrival. Hindenburg received us collectively and in a most friendly fashion, taking us in to dinner immediately. But when we got down to real business it was Ludendorff who took us into his office, received our reports and cross-examined us at great

length. My own interview with him lasted over three hours. I was at great pains to appear at my best, for naturally I wanted to impress him very favourably—it was not very often that a junior officer got such an opportunity. Subsequent events proved that I succeeded fairly well.

I saw Ludendorff many times during the succeeding days and during the journey back across Germany.[22] He was always very civil to me, but we never became friendly—there was too big a gap in our rank, and Ludendorff was a German officer before everything else. With Hindenburg things were vastly different. I grew to be very fond of this rather portly old gentleman who had no military genius but a tremendous amount of moral character. Yet it was seldom that Hindenburg asked me questions about my job—all the practical side was dealt with by Ludendorff.

In passing I ought to say that Ludendorff made the greatest mistake of his life when he left Hoffman on the Russian front. I notice that to-day the keenest military students are proclaiming with justice that Hoffman, of all commanders during the war, was the only one to show real signs of military genius. That was my impression at the time, although I only saw him for a few days. A keener brain I have never yet met in my life. While it is true that the conditions on the eastern front could not be compared with those prevailing in the west, where Germany was confronted, not with ill-armed and ignorant levies, but with the powerful and well-equipped armies of England and France, yet I was glad for our sake that he was left behind. From the German point of view, however, it was a disaster. I fancied from conversations I heard that Ludendorff was just a little bit jealous of the brilliance of his junior. Maybe he could not forget those dispositions made before Tannenberg. Maybe he knew that when historians came to look things up and work things out they might give the credit of that great victory not to Ludendorff or to Hindenburg, but to Hoffman. However that may be, Hoffman was left behind and given the important position of Chief of Staff to the commander on the Russian front.

The coming of Hindenburg and Ludendorff—or "HL" as I see Winston Churchill rather aptly describes this combination of character and brain—meant a great difference to the status of the Intelligence Staff at General Headquarters. Not that we had ever had any reason to complain—for that matter we were certainly held in higher esteem—far higher esteem—than our opposite numbers on the British Staff. But Ludendorff was a man who depended tremendously on accurate intelligence. Nor did he believe in talking only to the chief. It was fortunate for me that Colonel Nicolai was not a jealous man, and raised no objection whatsoever when Ludendorff consulted me directly on one or two points with which I was specially

qualified to deal—that is to say, the organisation of the British Army, which I had made my pet study. So he asked me a good many questions about the tanks—I will not use the German word, which occupies about a line and a half of type. We were to do everything possible, of course, to obtain full particulars of these machines and the details of their construction. Ludendorff did not seem to be vastly perturbed—after all, the tanks had only appeared in small numbers and very few of the Germans who saw them had come back alive to spread panic reports—nevertheless it was essential that we (that is to say, Ludendorff) should know more about this new factor in warfare, however insignificant it might be. Naturally, therefore, our agents in England were sent urgent instructions that they were to try and get hold of plans and constructional details of the tank. I sent off the letters in code and by roundabout routes with a cheerful heart, never believing for one moment that any of them would succeed. I even sent over two or three special men with the same object in view. I reported this as proof of my energy in the matter; it could hardly be taken as being my fault that all the men I sent over were arrested before they had the chance of doing anything.

It is at this stage that I have to report one of my failures. That such were comparatively rare throughout the whole of the war was not due to my ability but to the foolproof nature of my position. But one morning to my amazement I found in the post, addressed personally to Colonel Nicolai, a letter from one of our agents in England enclosing a full set of blue prints covering apparently the essential parts of tank construction! I was flabbergasted. It was only the happy accident of Colonel Nicolai being on leave for a few days that had brought these into my possession. Otherwise the secret must inevitably have been given away to the Germans, who would be able to construct tanks *ad lib*.

I had to take a chance. I was not aware whether anyone else had seen this letter, which was fairly bulky and which had come into Headquarters through Holland, but I didn't care. Within ten minutes of the plans being received they were destroyed. If any questions were asked I would have to think out some excuse—they must have been lost somewhere or other, and I had never seen them at all. For several days I was very worried about the whole affair—surely the agent would write in again, probably claiming payment for his wonderful scoop. I might find it very very awkward to tell the necessary tale.

But I need not have bothered. A week later I had a note from Mason—who, having been rather nastily wounded during the previous winter, had now a staff job at the War Office, where he was working under General Cockerill of the Special Intelligence Section. He had found a method of

getting in touch with me through a Belgian merchant at Liège. It had been agreed that this method should only be used at the rarest of intervals; although the risk of detection appeared infinitesimal, I did not wish to risk my position for a trifling thing. Mason's letter was a trifle, apparently. It was not really wise judgment on his part, but his sense of humour was so strong that he could not resist it. The only pity was that his postal method took a week longer to reach me than did the plans sent by the German agent.

"A great joke!" wrote Mason. "We ran down one of your agents who was trying in most childish fashion to obtain plans of our new tanks. Well, he's got them! We've seen to that! They will probably arrive with you any day. I only hope the Germans spend a few million pounds building tanks to the specification your man has got, and then you can have the pleasure of watching their faces when they find that the tanks won't go!"

Yes, it was a great joke! I would certainly have longed to see the faces of the responsible Germans on such an occasion. Unfortunately I had destroyed the plans a week before! I suppose I ought to have had more confidence in the authorities at home—although a good many people who knew our administration during the war will forgive me for my error of judgment.

Nevertheless, I was very annoyed with myself. Here was a chance of completely misleading the Germans, and in my haste I had destroyed it. Why had I not kept those plans instead of ripping them up and burning them? I walked round my room vainly endeavouring to kick myself. Consequently, when a fortnight later an opportunity arrived to retrieve my lost reputation, I seized it with both hands.

It was Ludendorff's suggestion. He sent for me one morning and asked if I had been able to get the details of the tanks for which he had asked. I had to confess failure—furious with myself all the while. I had no need to point out to him the difficulties. He knew them well enough, but at the end he threw out a gentle hint. It was obviously almost vital that we should know more about these machines and—well, he said no more, but without waiting for him to conclude his sentence (if ever he meant to) I at once suggested that I should go to England myself in a desperate effort to do something drastic.

So once again I crossed to England. It was one of the most annoying moments in my life when I had to confess to Mason that I had ruined his pretty little scheme.

"Now," I said, "we must think out something just as good, or even more effective. What about these tanks?" I asked. "What are they like?" For remember I had not even seen one, although on Colonel Nicolai's orders I

had made a journey to the Somme to see if it would be possible to organise an attack to recapture Flers together with the derelict tanks lying about the valley. But the local commander had assured me with reason that the possibility of success of such a counter-attack was precisely nil. The only glimpse of a tank I had had was from an aeroplane a good many hundred feet up above—which meant that I had seen nothing at all. So I plied Mason with questions, and he gave me all the information he had.

"But it doesn't seem that they are much good," he said. "G.H.Q. have reported very strongly against them."

"What!" I cried, "but that's absurd! I understand that only a few were in action on September 15th, and they certainly did a terrific lot of damage."

"Well," he continued, "I know that's the position. Forbes told me—a long report has been received from G.H.Q. calling the tanks complete failures and worse. Why! I know that we had an order for a thousand of them placed with the Ministry of Munitions, and this report recommends that the order should be cancelled, which I believe has already been done. However, let's have Forbes in and talk to him."

Instead, at my suggestion, we went round to Forbes' room. If possible I wanted to see that report myself. I did. It certainly damned the tanks right and left. They were inefficient and useless, it said, to the extent of several thousand words. It finished up by proposing the complete abandonment of the tank programme. The War Office had indeed accepted this report and had placed a cancellation on the Ministry of Munitions. It was a lucky chance for England, Forbes explained, that the officer in charge of the Tank Department of the Ministry of Munitions was a temporary soldier—Major Albert Stern, a well-known city man who was not subject to the disciplinary fear which might have daunted a regular soldier. When he received the order of cancellation he refused to accept it, and went direct over the head of his superior to Mr. Lloyd George who was then Minister for War, and, having made certain of Mr. Lloyd George's opposition to the cancellation, he coolly informed the War Office that he was not prepared to accept it.

(Needless to say, Major Stern received the reward of his invaluable action, for at the earliest possible opportunity he was relieved of his post—and the control of the Tank Department was given to an admiral who had never seen a tank in his life! This was the way in which England "muddled through.")[23]

This was the intriguing story which Forbes told, but even before he had finished an idea was already running through my brain. A copy of this report was all I needed. Better still—the original, signed by the very highly placed

officer at General Headquarters. If I could get hold of that and take it back to Germany, then surely I would have made amends for my previous error. For with this report in his hands Ludendorff would certainly dismiss the tank as a total failure—he would be more than surprised when, the thousand-tanks programme having materialised, the great land battleships again returned to the charge.

I put the idea to Forbes and Mason, who enthusiastically agreed. It was necessary, of course, to consult their superior officers, but as I have suggested before, I think, not every officer at the War Office was a fool: there were a great many of the biggest brains in England working there. The trouble was that only too seldom were they given a chance. However, no one would ever accuse Major-General Cockerill of lack of intelligence or vision, and he readily agreed to the scheme which I put forward.

I would have liked to have seen Colonel Nicolai's face when he received my letter asking that I should be supplied immediately with a fully qualified burglar! I had to wait a fortnight before the man arrived, which I put in at home in a welcome spell of leave. Then I got into touch with another of our agents in England, a Dutch Jew who had been living in London since well before the war, quite unsuspected by anybody; I informed him that I should need his help. He demurred. He was merely a postman, he said. His job was to send on communications, not to take any active part; but I insisted, and under a threat of exposing him to the British authorities he agreed to come in. When my burglar arrived—he was a Swiss, actually, who was officially classed as a watchmaker—I was ready for action. I had arranged with Forbes and Mason that the original document should be stored in the London house of the Assistant to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. On the night I named the family were all to go out together. There would be left in the house a butler, a footman, a cook, and two maids. These people knew nothing whatsoever of our plan. It was essential that everything should appear to be done in genuine fashion.

It was a typical November night as a car skimmed through Hyde Park towards Kensington. Driving the car was the Dutchman, disguised as a chauffeur. His job was to keep a sharp look-out and to warn us by tooting on his horn should any danger threaten. The burglar and I proceeded to enter the house. It was an easy job—there are few houses that even an amateur housebreaker cannot enter if he wants to—and within a few minutes we had gained access to the basement. Then the fun began. First in the hall we surprised the footman, and I can still remember his look of childlike amazement when he looked up from his newspaper to find two revolvers pointing at him. We did not give him a chance to speak. In a couple of

minutes he was gagged, bound, and placed inside an adjoining room. One of the maids was the second victim, but unfortunately she did manage to throw a scream before being over-powered. In charged the butler, an old man, but game for all that. Ignoring our revolvers he dashed towards the telephone and we had a terrific struggle with him—in fact, we had to lay the poor old chap right out before he would give in. The other women, of course, were easy work. The whole episode so far had taken less than ten minutes—which was just as well, for when we examined the safe in which the document was stored, my burglar friend announced that it would take him a good hour to get it open.

So he got busy with his blowpipe. I alternately took a walk round the house to see that everybody was still helpless and then returned to watch the burglar at work—which I may say was rather interesting. In a little more than his scheduled time—like all really good workmen—he had got through the steel lining of the safe. His hand was inside and soon he was pulling out a bundle of documents. I searched through them. It was rather important that I should do that, for he would make an invaluable witness for me should anything be questioned. A lot of them I put on one side as personal papers. But at last I gave a subdued whoop of joy and waved the little bundle of documents in the air. Here it was, I announced to him. A report on the tanks, together with a bundle of photographs! Oh yes, our boss would be very pleased with us and would doubtless express gratitude in a financial form. The burglar grinned. He, of course, had done the whole job for a fee—a very high fee at that.

A few minutes later we were outside in our car, being driven back to our hide—which was not in East London but in a West End hotel. The Dutchman was mighty pleased to be out of it all—particularly when he saw the reports the next day, for the papers hinted very openly about vital documents being missing from the Kensington house; some of them even added leaders about criminal carelessness of army chiefs, and so on. I took copies of these newspapers back with me when, a day later, I sailed for Holland. My Swiss clockmaker was actually on the same boat, but travelled quite separately.

I felt very happy. Of the impression that report would make I had no doubt. Although I had no plans, I had a whole series of photographs of the tank. These actually were interesting but quite valueless. The main secrets of the tank were two—one, the powerful motor operating in so confined a space; two, the armour, which had been specially designed by Admiralty experts to resist considerable force without being overwhelmingly heavy. Assuredly, not a scrap of information on these two points would be gained

from a year's perusal of the photographs. In any case, as the result of the try-out on the Somme, the design of tank was being very drastically altered, and the new production would be vastly different from those nine pioneers which waddled into the battered streets of Flers.

Again I need hardly describe my reception on my return. My chief shook my hand, and even Ludendorff's unemotional face exhibited some hint of excitement. He said very little to me—he was not a man to throw compliments about—but he was very obviously pleased; and so was I. For I had come to the conclusion that I ought now to get myself transferred to the Operations side of G.H.Q. There I would be in the Inner Circle, so to speak. There I would get Ludendorff's intentions at first-hand, and not through the all-unconscious Ammer—now a bosom friend.

---

[22] He returned to the east later, establishing G.H.Q. at Pless. This was found to be hopelessly inconvenient, particularly as operations against Russia faded out, and G.H.Q. came to Kreuznach.

[23] See *A History of the World War*, by Captain B. H. Liddell Hart.

CHAPTER VI

AMONG the throng of refugees who poured into England from Belgium in August, 1914, was a young girl named Hortense Jourdains from Antwerp. After a period in the care of the Relief Committee, she had found a position as a sewing-maid to a lady living in a country house near Guildford. Early in February, 1917, however, she was astonished to get a letter bearing the Brussels postmark, written in a typical continental handwriting, but nevertheless from some person of whom she had never heard; in fact, the whole letter was a strange and confusing medley of things she knew nothing about. The first two closely-written pages were a mass of family detail, inquiry after so-and-so and so-and-so, refugees in England, then a series of snippets about those left behind in Belgium—how so-and-so had died, so-and-so had had a baby, so-and-so was expecting one, and the like. In the last paragraph, tucked away in a maze of this chit-chat, was a short note saying that the family had decided to return to Cambrai as it seemed to be quite safe there now. They would return, they expected, about the middle of March, and hoped to settle down nicely without hindrance from anyone. The German censor had of course opened the letter, but had seen nothing to attract his attention. The girl would probably have ripped the letter up had she not been warned some months before that if ever she received a letter which she did not understand, she was to hand it to her mistress. This she did, and within a few hours the letter was in the hands of Mason at the War Office—for the girl's mistress was the mother of Mason's wife, and I had arranged such a scheme of communication with him on the occasion of my last visit to England.

Mason spent many hours on the letter, reading it from every point of view. He knew, of course, that it was from me, and he knew that it contained a message. He was a little puzzled as to where the message would be hidden. At last, however, by a process of elimination, he concentrated on the vital sentence.

By this time the battle on the Somme was ended. At the cost of nearly half a million men we had wrested a few square miles of ground from the gallant German defenders. The expectation was that the battle would reopen in the spring, when fresh attacks would perhaps capture a few more square miles of comparatively unimportant ground. Though the ground might be

unimportant, it was argued, this was a war of attrition. We were forcing the Germans to fight, for though our casualties were high in attacking, theirs were higher in defending. (That was the argument. It was by no means accurately founded. Actually the German casualties were only something like half our own.) But the Allied Command gave no heed to the great change which had come over the German war direction. No longer was the cautious Falkenhayn in charge. Instead, there was now the victorious Hindenburg-Ludendorff combination, straight from its triumphs on the eastern front.

Now one of the greatest differences between the war in the west and the war in the east was that of movement. In the west, if either side advanced a mile, it could claim a considerable victory, whereas in the east it was quite common for armies to move backwards and forwards not one mile, but fifty or a hundred. It is strange that neither the British nor the French Command ever thought that a German general would deliberately give up ground of his own accord—they would certainly never have thought of doing such a thing themselves. But Ludendorff was not one of those men who worshipped ground unless that ground had some purpose. Driven from the strongest of his positions on the Somme, he was in no mood to continue the fight where accident had left it when winter closed down the hostilities. No, he argued, let it be transferred to a ground of our own choosing. There was more than that in his scheme, too. He knew very well that the Allies were preparing an offensive on a tremendous scale for the spring. It was reasonably certain that a portion of it at least would fall along the disputed territory of the Somme. Very well, he argued again, let us evacuate this sector. Then the whole of the weeks and months of preparation will be lost. If they want their offensive, they will have to mount a fresh attack. They will probably hurry over it in an endeavour to keep to scheduled dates, and it will be a very haphazard affair. That was his argument as he put it to his staff, and the world knows how sound it was.

Consequently, when on March 12th, 1917, British patrols moved out in front of their line, their curiosity excited by the lack of movement opposite to them, they found that the Germans had gone. Only ruined villages and devastated fields were left behind. The main German Army covering this sector was already safely ensconced in the new Hindenburg line as the British called it, or the Siegfried line as it was officially termed. This was the manœuvre of which I had, of course, known weeks before, and of which I had warned Mason in my letter. If you will look on the map, you will find that the Hindenburg line runs just in front of Cambrai, so my hints about moving, about Cambrai, and about being safer there, were quite enough to

give Mason the strongest of hints. There were already other indications available at General Headquarters—but not yet communicated to the War Office. Our airmen flying over the German lines had reported activity along the arc of the Lens-Noyon salient. Several of our agents behind the German lines had reported the mobilisation of French and Belgian civilian labour, together with Russian prisoners of war, for gigantic earthworks in the same area. My own report, coming on top of all the rest—and coming from such a position as that which I held—ought to have given General Headquarters in France the widest of warnings. But alas, once again reports were not credited. There was more than one high officer on Sir Douglas Haig's Staff who was an optimist, and who fondly imagined that the German would allow himself to be fought as and when the Allies pleased. Thus little notice was taken of these reports which came flowing in. The attack had been planned for the piercing of the present front, it was argued, and there the attack must be delivered. It was a very common fault, I found, in wartime, in every Staff of every country—but particularly in the British Staff at General Headquarters in France—of accepting only such information as happened to fit in with the plans of the particular Staff. Anything else was dismissed as untrustworthy or inaccurate. Had the Staff learned by their mistakes one would not have been so disturbed. Actually, perhaps it was fortunate for me that I did not find out until after the war that the greater part of the warnings which I sent over—always at the greatest of risk to my life—were disregarded. Had I known this I would not have been quite so ready to hazard my neck.

Not only on the German side had there been a change in command—it will be recalled that in December, 1916, the ever-optimistic Joffre was promoted to the rear and Nivelle, who had done so well at Verdun, was placed in his high position. Joffre's idea had been that from 1917 onwards the British Army must play the greatest part in the war. But Nivelle ridiculed this. The French Army was the finest in the world, he declared, and must have the biggest hand in the great and final victory which was now near. Except that he was a far better talker than his predecessor, his phrases had the same ring. But his talking meant that he got into the Press, perhaps, more forcibly than did old Papa Joffre, and as the French papers all found their way to us in Germany we were able to get some idea of his inclinations. Students and those who followed events at the time will remember that Nivelle was all for the *offensive brusque et brutale*. There were to be no nibbling attacks, but one great onslaught—a break-through on a vast scale. Well, forewarned was forearmed. We agreed at Headquarters—which had

now been removed to Kreuznach—that the only thing that remained to be confirmed was the locale of this great offensive.

Now a good many of Nivelle's ideas were good. One of them was that the soldiers taking part in a battle ought to know more about it. Then, when their commanders were killed or wounded, they would not be so completely lost and helpless as was often the case. They would understand what they were supposed to do, and would go on and do it even without leaders. I personally think the idea an excellent one, infinitely preferring it to the cannon fodder alternative. I agree that it is a highly desirable thing that even a junior non-commissioned officer should have an intelligent idea as to the course and intention of the battle. But that is a very different thing to handing out indiscriminately complete battle directions—*in writing*!

Another of Nivelle's ideas was even sounder. He insisted upon the essential value of surprise. Now surprise has been one of the biggest factors in victory throughout the whole history of warfare, and no military student will disagree with Nivelle on this point. But, nevertheless, you do not get surprise by talking about your scheme with every officer, and particularly with every politician, with whom you happen to come into contact. Nevertheless, it was not from this latter source that our first intimation of the scene of attack came. It arrived in such a fashion that it was scarcely believed. In the middle of February, 1917, the German Third Army undertook a local operation in Champagne. There was no purpose in this operation except to make a local improvement in the position, for as a result of the battle of September, 1915, the Third Army along this particular sector happened to be holding very unfavourable ground. The attack was successful, and two or three miles of trenches were captured. The documents taken not only from the bodies of the dead and pockets of the prisoners, but from the dug-outs, were first sifted at the Third Army Headquarters and then sent on to G.H.Q. One of them, found in a company headquarters dug-out, was a remarkable document. It was a divisional order issued by the General Officer Commanding the 2nd French Infantry Division, dated January 29th, and it pointed with the utmost clarity to a tremendous offensive in the coming April along the Chemin des Dames front.[24] This was complete news to us, for there had been strong rumours that the attack was to materialise in the hitherto quiet centre about Saint-Mihiel and to the south through Lorraine.

I was very concerned as I studied this captured order. My first inclination was to argue against its authenticity. I could have said: "This is a blind. The French, anticipating our local attack, have left this document behind solely to mislead us. Therefore the story in it is a fake. The offensive

will *not* fall on the Chemin des Dames; we must look out on some other front." This would have been quite a feasible argument, and I am fairly confident that even had I not convinced Ludendorff as to its truth I could have shaken his confidence in accepting the order at its face value. But, unfortunately, I was actually stricken with the same doubt myself. Remember that I had never met Nivelle, knew nothing of him except what I had read in the Allied newspapers. His first opinions, as they had filtered through, bowdlerised as they might be in the Press, seemed to me to be good ones. I could not think that he would be so suicidal as to adopt methods of this kind. So, thinking it over, I persuaded myself that the whole thing was indeed a subterfuge. This Nivelle, I said, is a man after my own heart. Surprise? Yes, the Allies must have surprise. This is one of his methods—an ingenious trick to throw the German Command on the wrong scent. So I kept my argument to myself, and even went the other way—accepting the captured order without question and suggesting the early concentration of reserves behind the Aisne front. How I kicked myself when I found out how wrong I was! But then, I could scarcely be expected to understand that the Allied Command would use methods which would normally only be conceived in the mind of a congenital idiot.

For some weeks, however, I was quite happy. I was convinced that the order was a blind, and saw the German reserves concentrating on what was, I thought, the wrong sector of front. But on April 5th, 1917, I don't know how I concealed my agitation. For, during the previous night, the Third Army on the same front carried out a raid. Among the prisoners taken was a French sergeant in command of a small post actually in the front line, and in his pocket was found a document which gave the order of battle of all the troops north of the Aisne, and the objective of the various corps in the coming attack!

Never were a commander's plans so hopelessly given away. What incredible folly—that the plan of battle should be carried in the pocket of a man in the front line, at the mercy of any raiding patrol! Then, for the first time, I saw my foolishness. This time there could be no mistake, for the preparations for attack were already revealed. It was far too late for me to advance my argument of a blind. The only thing I could hope to do was to stop the proposed offensive. Otherwise, it was obvious that those gallant Frenchmen would be mown down like rabbits by the guns and machine guns waiting for them, knowing their plan almost as well as they did themselves. [25]

A few days later the Belgian maid near Guildford received another letter. This time it took Mason only a very few minutes to decipher its meaning. It

would appear that the Belgian girl had written to her mother in Belgium announcing a possible change of position. This letter was the mother's reply. It forbade the girl to think of moving at all. The whole idea was dangerous, the mother said. She was very well off where she was. Why not stay there? and so on. On no account whatsoever was she to move yet, said her mother. Or if she were determined, then she must move somewhere else—never in the direction which she suggested. No, she must never think of moving north, it was most unhealthy. If she wanted to move at all let it be further to the east.

Mason, as I have said, made short work of this. It was very easy for him to deduce that it was the French attack to which I referred, since the English attack was already directed towards the east, while the French were facing directly north along the Aisne. The War Office duly sent off the warning—with the usual fate, as I found out afterwards, which attended so many of my messages. Unfortunately, once again my warning was sent direct to the French General Staff, who thus knew that their plans were completely revealed to the Germans. What did they do? They simply took no notice. They ignored it as an inconvenient fact, not even mentioning it to the French Cabinet. Why? Because a commander who had planned a great offensive regards it as a child of his own. It ceases to become a mere plan. It becomes a passion. The more it is opposed the more it is to be maintained. Any difficulties which may arise must be ignored. Any disagreeable fact must be suppressed. And if further cause for alarm were needed, it was to be found in the fact that Nivelle had not only lost the confidence of his Government but of the very competent generals who were actually serving under him. Yet he persisted, knowing that his subordinate generals were certain that he could not succeed, fully aware that the Germans knew everything about his plans—this in itself ought to have been enough. He had already seen during the course of the war how stubborn was the German defence even when surprised. What then would it be with ample warning? But he took no notice whatsoever.

The French advanced to the attack with their usual gallantry. They responded to the inspiring words of their leader. This was to be the break-through, the final great battle of the war, which would drive the Germans back in confusion to the Rhine. They did not know, as they light-heartedly leaped from their trenches, that the Germans knew every detail of the attack. Consequently, by the end of the day, fifty thousand gallant Frenchmen lay dead and maimed about that bloodiest of battlefields.

The succeeding month was perhaps the most serious of the war to the Allies, for the French soldiers, utterly disgusted at the failure of the high

hopes and rash promises of their leaders, refused to carry on with the fight. There were mutinies in dozens of divisions: in some the men refused to fight at all, in others they would defend the trenches, but not attack. It was a very strange commentary—that the spirit of the *poilu*, which had never been broken by the fiercest German attack or the most desperate defence, should falter at last before the incredible stupidity of its own commander.

It was shortly after this melancholy episode that I made my next and my last visit to England during the war. Such visits were not normally within my province since my transfer to Operations, but this was deemed to be a matter of such importance that I was asked to make use of my special capabilities as regards visiting England and to take it in hand. It raises, by the way, an interesting point—the comparative immunity of leaders during warfare. If you will look down the Cabinet lists, for example, of all the leading combatant countries, you will find that scarcely a politician concerned suffered any damage throughout the whole of the war. It is, in fact, a stock argument to-day that if the leaders of the country had to undergo physical danger themselves, they might not be quite so keen on "giving" their sons—and other people's—or of leading their nations into war. Personally, I don't think there is much in the argument. I have met a fair number of the political leaders of a good many countries in Europe, and although I could accuse some of them of a good many things, there are very few whom I would charge with being deficient in physical courage.

But from time to time, I need hardly say, they were actually in danger—not from the ordinary buffetings of war, but from assassination. How many Englishmen—or more particularly, Englishwomen—held the view that the Kaiser was the villain of the piece and that if only he could be bumped off the war would be soon finished? They marvel that no one was courageous and ingenious enough to find his way into the Kaiser's palace and to execute this man who was rolling Europe in blood. (The idea, of course, was quite fallacious because, I think I have already said, whatever the Kaiser's influence may have been previously, during the war itself it was almost negligible.)

Nevertheless it was an idea, as contemporaries will readily recall, that was very widely held. And it would not have been at all impossible. There would have been no difficulty whatsoever in finding volunteers for such a mission, though it would have brought certain death to the volunteer. The British Government did, in fact, receive many such offers, particularly in the early days of the war. Why, then, were they not accepted? The answer is simple. While the removal of the Kaiser might or might not influence the conduct of the war, it would definitely and certainly unite Germany in a way

in which she had never before even contemplated, in the resultant horror at such a ghastly deed. After such a calamity, after such a dastardly deed, even the most pacifist among the German people would be utterly and wholeheartedly for the war. Thus it would have been a very bad stroke of business on the part of the British Government had they allowed the Kaiser to have been assassinated in such fashion.

In the same way the Germans were tormented by volunteers who wished to murder the principal exponents of the Allied cause. All offers were rejected for precisely the same reason. On both sides such offers were considered in cold blood—for after all there was no more reason why the Kaiser should not be killed than any other German soldier—but the Germans turned them down on exactly the same grounds as we did. In the middle of 1917, there arrived at General Headquarters at Kreuznach a suggestion which differed from the rest in that it was obviously put forward by an educated man—the others almost invariably were made by fanatical but ignorant enthusiasts. The letter which he wrote ran to several pages of closely reasoned argument—very logical argument, too. He pointed out that, in spite of the entry of America, Britain was the greatest of Germany's enemies. If only we could shake Britain to her foundations then victory would very soon be ours. And, he argued, for all practical purposes Britain is now one man—Mr. Lloyd George. Therefore he suggested that he should be commissioned to proceed to England to assassinate Mr. Lloyd George.

As I read and studied his appreciation at length I marvelled at its completeness and accuracy— for, whatever you may say about Mr. Lloyd George now (and a good many people who hailed him as a marvel in wartime are only too ready to decry him to-day for causes unknown even to themselves) you must not only give him credit for what he did during the war, but you must admit that, as this German pointed out, for the last two years of the war at least Mr. Lloyd George *was* England. He was in a position of power that had been unequalled by any British statesman throughout the course of history. Put the matter this way. Suppose by an unhappy chance Mr. Lloyd George *had* been murdered in the summer of 1917; look around the whole of the statesmen available, and see if you can find a possible substitute who could step into his place and prosecute the war with the same vigour and at the same time carry the country with him. Think of the statesmen of the day: Balfour, Bonar Law, Robert Home, Curzon, Asquith, and so on. Can you see one of these stepping into Mr. Lloyd George's shoes? I don't think it is possible. During the man-power crisis scandalous use was sometimes made of that phrase "an indispensable

man," but of all the people in England Mr. Lloyd George surely deserved it the most.

As usual the offer was turned down. The author of the letter received a very polite but formal note informing him that it was quite impossible to take advantage of his suggestion, and instructing him that he must not think in any way of pursuing it further.

When I sent off this stock letter—Ammer told me that earlier in the war such offers were so frequently received that he had considered the possibility of printing or duplicating a suitable reply—I thought that I had heard the last of the matter. But a fortnight later I was informed, on returning to my office, that a Herr Schleicher was waiting to see me. The name sounded familiar, but is common enough in Germany; but after a minute's conversation with my visitor I discovered that he was the man who had written such a logical appreciation of the situation and had volunteered to murder Mr. Lloyd George. I looked at him in some surprise. He did not fit the conventional picture of an assassinator at all. He was a little man—not perky as some little men are, but very meek and mild. I could easily imagine him being bullied by a large and strong-minded wife, but I could not see him taking part in any action which required force—either of character or physique. He would be nearly fifty years of age, I should think, and this, combined with his low physical category, doubtless explained why he was not engaged on any form of military service.

He explained that he was totally dissatisfied with the letter he had received. He was convinced that Mr. Lloyd George was the key to the whole opposition front, and if once this key could be removed that front would collapse. I might even have agreed with him had I spoken my real mind. He demanded to know if there were any further reasons why his suggestion should not be carried out, complaining that he was by no means convinced. I argued with him for some time—and meant every word I said—when I first persuaded but later commanded him to dismiss the whole idea from his mind. I suggested other ways in which he might help his country—for it was obviously a patriotic complex which had him in thrall. This line seemed to be successful, and when he left me I certainly thought that I had convinced him that the scheme was dangerous and impracticable. So much so that I did not even trouble to report his visit to anyone, or to put him under police supervision.

Judge my surprise and concern, therefore, when a week later I received a further letter from him in which he said that he had considered all my arguments, but after pondering them very carefully he remained convinced

that his own suggestion was the best. He quite appreciated it was impossible for General Headquarters or the Government to be associated with such a plan, so he proposed to carry it out by himself. Then the German Government would be able to plead complete irresponsibility. He had found out a way of reaching England, he said, through the kind offices of a cousin who occupied a consular position in Sweden, and by the time this letter was received, he continued, he hoped to be in England; within a very few days we should hear that our greatest enemy was no more!

There was great consternation in the Staff circles. The fool had played right into the enemy hands, they said. Evidently he did not realise what the ramifications of police work meant. Assuming that he did succeed in assassinating Mr. Lloyd George, the English police would without difficulty trace back the method by which he had entered the country, and if they once traced him to the cousin who was a consul—that is to say, a German official—in Sweden, well, then it would be absurd for the German Government to deny responsibility. For although it would be true, yet not a single person in the wide world would believe it.

What was to be done? There were obvious objections to direct communication with the British Government, although one officer did suggest a warning message via the King of Spain or the Queen of Holland. But he was overruled by higher opinion, which demurred from action which might so easily be misinterpreted. During the conference I saw my late chief, Colonel Nicolai, looking at me; I had been so long with him that I knew what was in his mind. I did not wait to be invited, therefore, but made the suggestion myself—that I should hurry to England with all speed and should endeavour to get hold of this idiot Schleicher myself. After all, suppose we did warn the British police of the anticipated attempt: we could only send a description of Schleicher, and there must be thousands of little men answering to that description in England. It is true he would have been specially remarked as he landed, but his consul cousin would have been able to have given him proper documents—no doubt passing him off as a Swede without great difficulty. I had already discovered in the course of my interview with him that he spoke English with reasonable fluency, and once clear of the interrogation at the English port—well, it ought to be a very easy thing for a little man to lose himself among the forty odd million inhabitants of England. My only hope—and I must confess that at first my misgivings were not very great—lay in the fact that I knew Mr. Lloyd George must be carefully guarded by the Special Service Section of Scotland Yard, whether he wanted it or not. Yet a guard can relax, and

Schleicher was such an innocent looking individual that certainly no one would ever suspect him at sight.

So it was agreed without discussion that I should get to England as quickly as possible, and should hang about the district where Mr. Lloyd George happened to be; then I should be sure to see Schleicher as he approached for his attempt—although none of us had the slightest idea by what method he proposed to accomplish the assassination. Once I had discovered him, it would have to be left to my discretion how I dealt with him. If I could bring him back, that would be the best solution: he could be thrown into prison for the remainder of the war. Or I could, if circumstances permitted, knock him out. I was promised complete exoneration even from the charge of murder if I should kill him in the doing of it—although I pointed out that such exoneration was worth very little, inasmuch as the crime would be committed on British soil. Only in the last emergency was I to denounce him to the British police. Then I myself would have to take my chance. They had a perfect right to arrest me as a prisoner of war, if not as a spy. My only hope was that, having done them such a good turn, they would let me go in return. Even as these suggestions were thrown at me I propounded a fourth—the possibility of framing up some comparatively minor crime on Schleicher, causing him to be arrested and imprisoned for this.

My great difficulty, however, was getting to England. Not that I could not have used my ordinary route through Holland, but this took more than three days, whereas Schleicher, according to his note, might already be in England. It was Zwink of the Air Staff who came to my assistance. For some months, as I had previously known, the Germans had been experimenting with parachute descents from aeroplanes (these are quite common to-day, but it is important to realise that seventeen years ago they were practically unknown and always a matter of tremendous risk).

Zwink got for me a special parachute which had been evolved but had not yet passed its final tests—although the preliminary trials had been comparatively satisfactory, particularly when the pilot or observer was able to drop from the aeroplane at a considerable height. He suggested, therefore, that I should go to England by aeroplane which, flying very high, would be able to evade the defences lying about the coast and the fringe of London. Then, at a suitable spot over open country, the pilot would descend to a proper height, and I would jump out of the aeroplane; the parachute would do the rest. The descent would of course be made by night, and I might be unlucky and come down near some habitation or people; in order that I should have a complete story ready, he proposed that I should go over in the

uniform of an officer of the British Royal Flying Corps. Then naturally no one would have any suspicion, but on the other hand would be ready to give me any assistance I wanted.

I agreed to everything. I was genuinely anxious to get to England as early as possible. I did not share the doubts of some of the others who thought that I would certainly be arrested on arriving in such a fashion—I knew very well that I ran no risk of that. What I was concerned about was that parachute descent. I am a landsman pure and simple; even on the sea I am never tremendously happy, and in the air I am and always have been very miserable. Now, in addition to a rather hazardous flight through the night, I was without practice to undertake a parachute descent—and even its godfather did not claim for it that it was anything but risky! But as I would gain at least forty-eight hours by the adoption of this method, and as this might mean life or death to Mr. Lloyd George and consequent peril to the British cause, I felt that I ought to take a chance. On one thing I did insist: that if the pilot of the aeroplane did not receive my signal that I had landed safely, immediately on his return the alternative suggestion should be implemented—that is the British Government should be informed by the medium of the King of Spain or some other eminent neutral of the possible attempt, and a full description of Schleicher be given.

An hour later I was at the aerodrome near Kreuznach, climbing into a high-powered bombing machine—which, however, carried no bombs on this occasion. Previous to this I had been given the fullest instructions for the use of the parachute. I had only to keep my head for ten seconds—it was quite enough—and the parachute would do the rest. It sounded simple enough when they explained it to me, but I was to find it a tremendous nerve-strain when the actual moment came. I believe that in these days every Air Force pilot is obliged to jump from an aeroplane and make at least one parachute landing as part of his ordinary training, I don't envy them their job, although of course the methods and devices have been vastly improved since my time.

In the early hours of the night we were over the English coast, flying very high so that it was utterly impossible for us to be spotted. My pilot then began a gradual descent. On the near horizon we could see the shaded lights of London—not the bright yellow glare of peace time, but a sort of dull, red haze which lifted London from its surroundings; for, in spite of all lighting restrictions, I can say from experience that it was the easiest thing in the world for a raiding aeroplane to find London. A quarter of an hour later the pilot signalled to me that we were at the right height, and I prepared for my ordeal. Nervously I fingered the straps about me. Would they hold my fairly

considerable weight? Would the parachute open—what a miserable death if it failed! I tried to pull myself together.

"Steady yourself, you fool," I said to myself. "You've only got to keep your head for ten seconds. Just jump, count ten, and then pull the cord which opens the parachute. That's all. Just count ten." Nevertheless, could I in my state of nerves keep my head long enough to count ten? It sounds easy enough, but to those who may laugh at my fear I can only recommend that they should try it for themselves. Even to-day, after this lapse of time, I shudder at my fright at that moment. I tried hard to think of protective prayers, yet I was so rattled that no deity could ever have understood my invocations.

My pilot, when I saw him weeks afterwards, agreed that I looked very scared as I climbed to the spot which had been shown to me, and prepared to drop overboard. Scared was not really a strong enough word. I was tremendously frightened. I am not more nervous than any other man on land, I think, but this was something right out of my line—it must be a nerve-racking job even if you are used to it, but to me it was sheer torture.

Yet it had to be done. I let go, and immediately began to count ten. It seemed as if I were freezing with horror as I shot down towards the earth at a terrible pace. I was tremendously tempted to pull the cord long before I reached ten—at this rate surely I must hit the ground within the ten seconds! But I waited—at least until nine—when I pulled the cord as I had been directed. To my horror I shot down and down. Had the parachute failed to open? My poor brain whirled round and round, and for several seconds I could not experience conscious thought. When my mind at last became rational, I found that I was now sailing down at a comfortable rate. Above me against the blackness of the sky I could see a great, white, ghostly shape. So, like the navvy who fell out of the ninth storey window, I was all right so far!

Actually I was all right all the way—except that I had no idea that the ground was so near, so that when I did land it was with such a bump that I bit my lip and shook myself up severely. However, there I was—very, very thankful and happy to be on solid earth again—and, what was more, in England. Hurriedly I unstrapped the parachute, took out my torch, and signalled to the pilot circling round up above. Immediately on receiving my signal he made off to the south, and I was alone.

I had only the faintest idea where I was. Somewhere in the middle of a field certainly, and I could hear the rustling of trees not very far away. The ground was rather hilly, and I guessed from the direction our aeroplane had

taken that I must be somewhere about the North Downs. By this time it was very nearly midnight, but I wanted to get to London immediately. I walked on, therefore, through two or three fields until at last I came to a farm lane. Following this along, just before I hit a main road I saw on the bank above me a house of considerable size. There were no lights showing—everyone had long since gone to bed, but I had no hesitation in knocking the people up. It was the owner of the house who eventually came to the door, wondering what on earth had disturbed his peaceful slumber in this quiet corner of England. I explained to him that I was a Royal Flying Corps officer who had been making an experimental descent by parachute, but unfortunately I had been blown right off my anticipated course and had completely lost touch with the R.F.C. tender which should have met me. Could he therefore tell me where I could get a car as it was essential that I should go back to London at once to report the result of the test?

There was no difficulty about this. The man was of some means and had a car of his own in the garage. Like most of his class—the English country gentry—he was a man of tremendous patriotic fervour; he had two sons in the navy, and he himself was engaged in administrative war work of some kind in Whitehall. He asked me only to wait while he dressed, and he would drive me up to town himself. Leaving me with a selection of drinks, he went off to put on some clothes. Although I am naturally a very abstemious man, I don't mind confessing that this was one of the few occasions in my life when a stiff tot of whisky did a tremendous lot to restore my nerves to their normal steady condition.

I had landed near Oxted, I discovered. The road at this time of night was clear. My host knew the way, and in little more than an hour I found myself in Whitehall. He was rather concerned when I asked him to drive direct to Scotland Yard instead of to the Flying Corps Headquarters in the Strand. There I dismissed him, after taking his name in order that he might be thanked for his invaluable assistance at a more suitable time.

I had naturally determined to take the Special Branch of Scotland Yard into my secret immediately—my conversation with the German Staff on this subject was mere eyewash. True, I still considered that it was my job to tackle Schleicher and that I had the best chance of anyone of catching him. But at least I wanted to put Mr. Lloyd George's personal guard on the *qui vive*. The first man to whom I spoke at Scotland Yard was rather inclined to take no notice of me. I could scarcely blame him, for they received rumours of assassination or similar reports about twenty times a day. I asked, therefore, for a telephone call to be put through to Sir Basil Thomson, who was doubtless by this time in bed. He was, but I got through to him and a

few words put matters right. I was to be given every assistance, and full note was to be taken of anything I had to say and the necessary action taken immediately.

First I asked about Schleicher. Had he landed in England yet? All the records received from the ports were examined, but there was no trace of any man answering the descriptions I gave—for naturally he would not attempt to enter England under his own name, but would doubtless take a Swedish patronymic. I asked that instructions should be sent out immediately to all ports, particularly those on the east coast, to keep the sharpest look-out for such a man arriving from the direction of Sweden; immediately he arrived he was to be arrested and I was to be notified. It will be seen that I had already deviated considerably from the method suggested at General Headquarters, but I was playing for safety. Once I had got Schleicher into my hands I could easily think out some suitable story that would satisfy G.H.Q.

The existing records showed no trace of such an arrival, but those of the previous day had still to be received. After assuring myself that Mr. Lloyd George's personal guard—he was at the moment at Downing Street—had been warned and reinforced, I thought myself entitled to a few hours' sleep, which I took at Scotland Yard itself. No mention of the matter, I should say in passing, was made to the Prime Minister. As I have said, threats of assassination were reported frequently to Scotland Yard, and had the intended victim been told of all of them he would always have been on tenterhooks. For, courageous as a man may be—and Mr. Lloyd George has never shown himself short of courage—he cannot be expected to produce his best brain work if he is continually haunted by the thought that an assassin's bullet lurks around the next corner. I did ask, however, that I might be kept closely in touch with the Prime Minister's movements during the next few days, in order, that I myself might always be somewhere handy, so that if Schleicher put in an appearance I would be ready to identify him.

Nothing happened during the next day. At Scotland Yard it was reported that Schleicher apparently had not yet landed in England. The records had now been more carefully examined, but no man answering his physical description and claiming to be a Swede or any other Scandinavian had arrived. The only one whose description in any way fitted Schleicher was an American Government official who had been visiting Sweden on some minor war service, and was returning to America via England.

I spent the whole of the day at Downing Street; for the time being I was a member of the Special Section of Scotland Yard. Mr. Lloyd George was

engaged in conference for the whole of the morning and afternoon. In the evening he went over to the House of Commons, and I went with him—although he did not know it. There were quite a number of people about Whitehall, but no signs of Schleicher. Possibly I had come on a fool's errand after all. Perhaps he was merely indulging an idle boast when he said that he was coming to do the job. Alternatively, perhaps he had found it more difficult to get into England than he had thought—maybe his consul cousin in Sweden had been sensible enough to send him home.

The next morning, however, I got the shock of my life. Sundry small parcels had arrived at 10 Downing Street, and Mr. Lloyd George's manservant was sorting them out. Among them was a box of cigars.

"Mr. Lloyd George is fond of a good cigar, I hear," I commented casually.

"Yes," said the man, "he is, but I don't know where these can have come from. I certainly didn't order them. They must be from some admirer of his." He was opening the package as he spoke. "Yes," he continued, "and someone who knows his taste, too. This is his favourite cigar. Strange though," he went on, "there isn't any note inside. There usually is. I wonder who sent them!"

He fingered the brown paper cover and examined it. There was no postmark, for the parcel had been delivered by hand. He called to the hall boy.

"How did these cigars get here, George? Did anybody leave a card with them?"

"No," said the hall boy. "A messenger boy brought them. Just handed them in. Said, 'For Mr. Lloyd George,' and popped off again. I had to sign a receipt, of course. That was all right, wasn't it?"

The butler asked him one or two more questions, but I was not listening. I was looking hard at the address which had been written on the brown paper. The easiest way to find out the nationality of a man is to study his handwriting, for nearly every European country has a different method of teaching writing. There is the widest of deviation, for example, between the writing of an Englishman and the writing of a Frenchman. Even if they were writing out the same words in the same language, there are always some letters in particular which are written in a manner peculiar to the country concerned. It is the same with the English and German calligraphy. And, as I looked at this address, carefully printed, I saw just two or three things which made me certain that no Englishman ever wrote it—what was more, that it

had been written by a German. Immediately, therefore, I picked up the box of cigars.

"I shall take charge of these," I said to the amazed butler.

"But what's the matter?" he complained—perhaps such things were one of his perquisites. I don't know.

"I'm not satisfied about them," I insisted. "I want to find out where they came from. George!" I called to the hall boy. "This messenger, who was he? Did you know him? What company?"

"An ordinary District Messenger," he said. "They've got an office just by Trafalgar Square. He may have come from there. I've seen him about often enough. I don't know his name."

I called one of the plain-clothes men to me. "Take George up to the District Messenger Office at once," I ordered. "It is essential that we find out who handed in this parcel to be delivered."

That did not take very long. Within half an hour he was back—with the alarming news that the parcel had been handed in for despatch by a meek-looking little man wearing a blue serge suit—a man who answered in every particular to the description of Schleicher! Nor was my consternation lessened when, about two hours later, I was notified by the Government Laboratory that the cigars were impregnated with aconite poison!

I realised now that I had made an elementary and fundamental error. I had completely under-estimated the capacity of my opponent. I had never imagined that the meek little man I had interviewed at Kreuznach would ever have the initiative to find out which were Mr. Lloyd George's favourite cigars, much less to make the attempt which I had detected almost by accident. From this moment onwards I decided on drastic measures. Schleicher had proved to be no mean innocent, but an opponent of cunning. He must be treated accordingly.

Although Mr. Lloyd George did not know it, his household that night was reminiscent of fiercer and eastern times. For, before his dinner was served, a portion of every one of the dishes—he had one or two important guests to dinner—was previously fed to one of the domestic cats or dogs to make perfectly certain that it was innocuous. I have often tried to imagine what the fiery and courageous Welshman would have thought and said had he witnessed this strange scene. But I was taking no risks.

He did not go out that night, and after he had retired to bed I contented myself with posting a double guard about the house. Actually I had no fear of nocturnal attempts, for the approaches to Downing Street literally bristled

with uniformed and plain-clothed policemen, and nobody but a fool would attempt to penetrate the cordon with malicious intent. And I had now found out that Schleicher was no fool.

This was a Saturday. Mr. Lloyd George's arrangements for the Sunday were immature until his dinner party was over. Then he instructed his man that he would be going to his country house at Walton Heath first thing in the morning. Immediately I was anxious. I knew something of Mr. Lloyd George's habits—how he loved to roam alone about the Surrey Hills—and in them were excellent opportunities for a prospective assassinator, no matter how vigilant a guard might be. I must assume that Schleicher knew of the Prime Minister's normal week-end custom—that is, to go to Walton Heath whenever the affairs of state were not too pressing. He would probably have ascertained this interesting detail from the same paragraph of society chit-chat which told him of Mr. Lloyd George's favourite brand of cigar. The following day, therefore, I decided inwardly, was one of danger.

As I thought it over, suddenly I had an idea. I went to the telephone and tried to get through to Clarkson's, on the off chance that someone might be working there on a rush order. The shop, however, was closed, so I got through to Willy Clarkson's private address—for I had known him well in my actor days before the war; every actor was bound to know Willy Clarkson. I told him what I wanted, emphasised that it was urgent, and although he was just about to go to bed he very sportingly agreed to run back to Wardour Street and fit me up with what I wanted. An hour later I met him there, and then this supreme artist in his own line got busy.

My scheme will already be obvious. I wanted to rig myself up as Mr. Lloyd George, to take a walk about Walton Heath the following morning in the hope of attracting Schleicher's attention. So far as the features of the Prime Minister were concerned, the disguise was child's play to a man like Clarkson. Within half an hour I was arrayed in the flowing grey locks and rather ragged moustache which typified the Mr. Lloyd George of that day. I could use no grease-paint if I was to work in the open air, but a little imperceptible powder and a few dark lines added the necessary years. My only physical difficulty was that I was very considerably larger than Mr. Lloyd George. Fortunately, however, he had a well-known habit of promenading in a loose cloak. It would be easy for me to get hold of this cloak at his house and thus arrayed I could, by stooping, suggest the necessary shortage of inches. In any case, this question of detail was not so important as it might have been in other circumstances, for Schleicher would probably never have seen more than photographs of Mr. Lloyd George and

although he might know that he was on the short side, he would certainly have no idea to within an inch or two.

So I left Willy Clarkson with sincere and grateful thanks. Having taken off and packed up my disguise, I went down in a car closely following that of Mr. Lloyd George to Walton Heath the following morning immediately after breakfast. I made discreet inquiries as to the Prime Minister's plans for the day. I was told that he would probably rest and read in his study for the morning, although he might take a sharp walk to give him an appetite for lunch.

The Special Service men from Scotland Yard, who acted as Mr. Lloyd George's almost unknown and apparently unseen bodyguard, were a very fine lot of fellows, specially selected for such a delicate task. I picked out one who appealed to me, a Sergeant Marshall, and instructed him to come out with me, first of all revealing my intention. Suitably disguised as Mr. Lloyd George I proposed to take his favourite walk over the hills—which it would have been quite easy for Schleicher to have ascertained. Marshall—in very plain clothes, of course, and apparently a local tradesman taking his country walk—was to follow me at a distance of a hundred yards or so and to see what happened. As I made the arrangement I thought that I was indeed playing for safety first, for I knew very well that I could deal with a little whipper-snapper like Schleicher without any difficulty. However, a second man might be handy when I had knocked him out.

Marshall was armed but I was not. I instructed him that only in the gravest emergency was he to use his revolver. We wanted to attract no attention: if possible, the arrest must be carried out without observation at all. Above all, Mr. Lloyd George must have no hint of the proceedings. As I have already said, a man who is controlling the ship of State in such heavy seas as raged about it in 1917 ought not to be bothered by personal details—especially a threat of assassination which might prove to be ludicrous in its execution.

I drove in a closed car to the end of the town, well clear from all the houses—for although I ought to be able to deceive a foreigner like Schleicher, I could not so easily take in one of the locals, who might have seen the Prime Minister a hundred times. Clear of all traces of human habitation, however, I took up my part. Well enveloped in one of Mr. Lloyd George's voluminous cloaks, and wearing one of the rather nondescript hats which he favoured at that time, I strode with his Celtic energy across the rolling Downs before me. Facially my make-up was perfect. My stoop meant that my back was necessarily a little bent, but this was a detail which

I felt certain Schleicher would be too unobservant to notice. A good hundred yards behind trailed the faithful Marshall, strolling casually along as if neither time nor anything else mattered.

Five minutes later I met a man—evidently a local gardener—returning to the town. Without hesitation he raised his hat and gave me an obsequious good-morning. I returned to him one of Mr. Lloyd George's famous smiles. This gave me the necessary confidence.

For another mile I met not a soul. I admired the Premier's choice, for surely the little hills about Walton Heath are the finest piece of pleasantness within fifty miles of London. I decided if I ever became a rich man, somewhere in this district would be my country retreat.

Enthusiastic as I was at the pleasant beauty about me, I naturally did not allow my mind to stray from the task in hand. From time to time I loitered, so that Schleicher, if he were about, should be tempted to reveal himself. Only in passing trees and hedgerows did I proceed with caution. Here a man with a revolver might be lurking—and although I wished to save Mr. Lloyd George's life, I had no desire to lose my own. Just as I had decided, in fact, that my method of approach had been wrong—that I ought to have had Marshall a hundred yards in front of me instead of loitering behind, Schleicher was upon me!

I had just passed a great tree, whose branches spread far over the path. I had deliberately wandered in my walk as I approached it, so as to be certain that no one was hiding on the farther side. I had neglected to look up above—once again under-estimating my opponent, a vital fault that I am afraid has been mine on more than one occasion. But a second after I had passed the tree I heard a thud on the ground behind me. I had only time to turn round before I found myself faced with my would-be assassin. It was obvious what had happened. He had concealed himself in the branches of the tree and jumped down immediately after I had passed.

When I thought it over afterwards I decided that his scheme was a very poor one. He would be under the impression, of course, that Mr. Lloyd George knew nothing of his projected attempt. If, therefore, he had come walking towards, or even behind his victim along the path, no notice would have been taken of him; but everyone is on the *qui vive* against a man who drops unexpectedly from the branches of a tree. However, at the moment I had no time to think of this, for in a fraction of a second he sprang towards me, and I saw the flash of steel in his hand. I was rather relieved, as a matter of fact. No strength can prevail against a pistol bullet, but if he were going

to attempt to stab me—well, I ought to be strong enough to deal with two Schleichers.

Again I found out my mistake. With my left hand I grabbed his right wrist and held it tightly, but he jumped in the air, swinging his other arm over my right shoulder. His legs closed about me as he kicked and fought with a strength and power which I would not have believed possible. His right wrist wriggled with such intensity that it was all I could do to keep it imprisoned. At last, however, I managed to twist it round so sharply that he gave a cry of pain and the knife dropped from his fingers. Now, I thought, it's all over. Now I've got the little fool.

I was too previous. With a howl of rage he flung himself again upon me, clinging to me viciously with arms and legs. I tried to push him away—to get him a few inches away from me so that I could get in a good blow that would knock him out—but, however hard I struggled, I could make no headway. He clung like a leech and, rather concerned, I grappled with him, hoping that Marshall would come and tear this human limpet from me. There was no sign of Marshall; I would have been even more concerned, perhaps, had I known that in his hurry he had miscalculated the height of a stile, had caught his feet on the top rung, and had temporarily knocked himself silly.

As I looked for Marshall, I felt a sudden pain in my neck. For a moment I was too startled to realise what it meant. Then I found that the little brute had bitten me, and bitten me hard! It was not until this moment that I realised what I ought to have known before—that Schleicher was no meek and mild patriotic fool, but a madman. There was no room for doubt as he struggled and scratched. One fist pulled a handful of hair from my head—it was very fortunate that it came from the wig and not from my scalp, or it might have been very painful. The other hand, with fingers curved like claws, made a grab at my right eye; only by a withdrawal of an inch did I avoid its vicious clutch. Even then his finger-nails left deep scratches down my right cheek.

This was absurd, I decided. I was big enough to take on a man like Schleicher with one hand and, mad or no mad, I must do something desperate, or whatever reputation I ever had would completely disappear. So I left off the use of brute force for the moment and resorted to strategy. Still hugging one another like a couple of loving marmosets, I retreated a couple of yards to the tree. Propping my back against the trunk, I used an old trick which all-in wrestlers know very well. I lifted my right knee between his legs with considerable force. With a howl his grip relaxed just for a moment,

and in that moment I had pushed him free and caught him a terrific uppercut under the chin. It was the sort of blow that would have knocked out a heavyweight, and Schleicher went like a fallen tree to the ground. I took no chances but rushed to his side. Yes, it seemed as if I had done the trick this time. Then I looked anxiously again down the path for Marshall, for certainly I would need some help. In any case, I couldn't go back to Walton Heath a bleeding mess like this. But still there were no signs of my assistant, and I had the horrible thought that perhaps Schleicher had accomplices who had disposed of the Prime Minister's guard!

I took a step or two down the path to see if I could see anything of Marshall. It was a foolish thing to do, perhaps, although I had thought that the blow I had given Schleicher would put him to sleep for a considerable time. But suddenly again I heard movements behind me. Turning round I saw Schleicher scrambling to his feet, and if I had any doubts before I had none now as I saw his eyes; he was utterly and completely mad. Those eyes glaring at me were not the eyes of a man but of a beast—it is an insult to most beasts to describe them so. I went for him; I went for him hard.

I was careful not to let him get too near. I had the longer reach, and as he rushed in I gave him blow after blow. I felt his nose crush beneath one of my straight rights. Blood spurted from it and from a cut over his eye. Once I knocked him literally head over heels, but before I could get to him and sit on him he was up again, snarling like a cornered wolf. At last, flinging himself forward in a Rugby tackle, he caught me off my balance and we went together to the ground. This, however, was his misfortune. I think I have mentioned that I am something of a heavyweight, and I came down with full force across the pit of his stomach, completely winding him. As he fought for his breath I had no mercy on him whatsoever. This was no time for Queensberry rules. He did actually struggle to his knees, both arms pressed against his tummy, the wind wheezing in his throat. But, even as he knelt, as it might be in an attitude of supplication, I bent down and gave him another knock-out. This time I knew he would not rise.

A minute later I was very relieved to see Marshall running up the path. He was cursing himself for his clumsiness, which indeed might have been rather unfortunate. However, all's well that ends well, as Shakespeare said, and now our job was done. Keeping a very wary eye upon the recumbent form of Schleicher, Marshall began to give a rough dressing to my wounds. Neither of us was quite certain about those ugly bites in the neck. We knew that the bite of a mad dog is dangerous; well, the bite of a mad man might be equally so. We decided that we would carry Schleicher down to the village at once, so that my wounds could receive immediate and proper attention.

When we came to pick him up, however, I found that I had very little strength left. Whether it was due to my apprehension about the bites, or whether the fight had taken more out of me than I knew—and I assure you that it was by no means a pleasant experience, particularly from the moment when I realised that Schleicher was a madman—but when I picked up my end of our victim I scarcely had the strength to hold him. Marshall, however, was a man of activity and in excellent training, and he got a Nelson grip of Schleicher and carried him easily, fireman fashion, over his shoulder. We made no attempt to bring him round; he was better off for our purpose as he was.

We had covered about a quarter of a mile in this fashion, when suddenly I saw Mr. Lloyd George himself coming up the hill. Evidently he was taking his morning's constitutional a little earlier than we had anticipated. Had he come a few minutes earlier he would have had the shock of his life, for he would have met himself, bleeding from wounds in the neck and face! As it was, there was just time to bundle Schleicher behind the hedge and for me to go with him. Marshall remained on the path. He was well-known to the Prime Minister, of course, and in case the Prime Minister should have seen someone on the path it was as well for at least one man to show up. Mr. Lloyd George walked by, throwing Marshall a cheery greeting, and stopping to talk with him for a minute or two. Then he passed on at a spanking pace, never realising what lay behind the hedge, and never realising—perhaps to this day—how near to death he had been.

Schleicher was never tried. As I had expected, he was found to be mad and unfit to plead, and was consigned to Broadmoor for the rest of his life. In order that I might have a good story to take back with me to G.H.Q. at Kreuznach, one of the leading newspapers was asked to print a small paragraph stating that the man who assaulted an army officer on the Downs near Walton Heath had been found to be mad and had been sent to Broadmoor. I took a cutting of this back with me and still have it in my possession. I would give you the actual date so that you could turn it up for yourself, but foolishly I did not keep a record and have not troubled to look it up; but it was certainly some time in September, 1917, and the paper was the *Daily Telegraph*.

By a strange coincidence—for there are coincidences in spite of their misuse in romantic fiction—Schleicher died on the afternoon of November 11th, 1918, while great crowds of people were paying exuberant homage to the man who he had tried to assassinate. It would be an interesting study—to trace the course of the war had Schleicher succeeded in his attempt. I do not think there is much doubt—had the war been conducted by someone less

energetic than Mr. Lloyd George—it would never have ended in 1918. There is quite a possibility that when it did finish the issue might not have been quite so successful from our point of view as it was. As we have gained precious little from the actual peace, goodness knows what would have been our lot under the possible alternative!

---

[24] See Ludendorff's *Memoirs*.

[25] I notice that Mr. Lloyd George, in the fourth volume of his *Memoirs* is so righteously indignant about the giving away of the French plan that he suspects treachery. I think I can assure him that that is not the case. There was incredible stupidity, but no deliberate treachery, otherwise, I should certainly have known of it. At the same time I ought to say that we frequently received news of the utmost value from the Allied capitals, and particularly from Paris, where political and military issues were mingled in a confused medley, and where tongues wagged freely.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER I had made certain that my wounds were of no consequence, and after I had faced the inevitable cross-examination at the War Office and had made some new arrangements with Mason as regards communications, I got back again to Germany—where once again my reception was of the brightest. My story—how I had disguised myself as a British Army officer, had met Schleicher and had knocked him out, how he had been carted off as mad—was naturally accepted without question, supported as it was by the newspaper cutting, and I was delighted beyond measure when not only my immediate chief but General Ludendorff himself hinted how pleased he was with what I had done. An invitation to dine with Field-Marshal Hindenburg was another consequence of my little effort. These dinners with the old Field-Marshal always appealed to me, for I liked the old man tremendously. (He is still a pleasant memory with me; since the war I saw him from time to time; towards the end he was a very, very old man; it was difficult to visualise in him the victor of Tannenberg and the man whose courage stood up even against the strain of defeat in the last days of the war. A few months ago I had the melancholy duty of attending his funeral: I represented an English newspaper. I sat in that impressive memorial at Tannenberg; all around me were men I recognised. Every German wartime leader who is still alive was there: all except Ludendorff.)

By this time I was firmly established on the Operations side. My appointment was only a junior one, however, and I badly wanted to move up a step or two so as to get further into the inner secrets. Now there was a custom in German Staff circles which was a very good one, and I cordially recommend it to our own headquarters in the event of another war—that is, that all junior Staff officers at any rate should from time to time serve a few weeks, or even months, with the fighting units. The advantages are too obvious to discuss. As I was now well in Ludendorff's good books, I suggested that the time had perhaps come when I ought to take my refresher course—I pointed out that I had not served in the trenches for two years, and might perhaps be rather out of touch with actual conditions. He agreed that I should do my front line course without delay as, he said, he had a job waiting for me on my return. So I was appointed temporarily as second-in-

command of a battalion of Jagers, and a few days later found myself once more on the Ypres front.

The battle which is known as that of Passchendaele was in progress, and when I saw the conditions under which it was being fought I bitterly regretted my impetuosity. Why had I not waited a few weeks until the front settled down into the normal winter stalemate? I had imagined that our 1914 winter was as near to Hell as anything on earth was ever likely to be, but it was green and pleasant pastures compared with the abomination of desolation in which we now fought. On the German side conditions were intolerable, but we at least had solid concrete pillboxes, which had replaced the impossible trenches. For my countrymen opposite I had nothing but pity—yet a disquietening fear that our High Command had somehow taken leave of its senses. Otherwise, surely it would never ask men to fight in conditions which might possibly have suited frogs and toads but never human beings. But I need not linger on this miserable episode—I lingered long enough in its mud: it has been described often enough—yet it can never be described too often. Suffice it to say that Passchendaele almost broke the spirit of the British Army—a thing no German onslaught or defence had even approached. A new commander emerged on the field of war; the Russians in 1812 pinned their faith on their "General Winter": in 1918 the German General von Zwehl acutely commented: "It was not the genius of Marshal Foch that beat us, but 'General Tank.' " And at Passchendaele in 1917 the British were certainly decisively defeated by "General Mud."

A few weeks later I was hurriedly recalled. The Battle of Passchendaele had now completed its weary course and the British were in temporary possession of a few square miles of utterly useless bog: the price at which these gallons of mud had been purchased can scarcely be calculated. When I reached Corps Headquarters I was instructed to go south at once. Apparently the front was ablaze in a new sector. I was surprised to hear this, for we had heard none of the usual booming of cannon which inevitably heralded a battle. When I reached Cambrai, however, I found the reason—for the battle was, of course, the great tank attack of November 20th, 1917.

The battle has been the subject of as much argument as any in the war. It has been claimed, and rightly claimed, that if only the tank method had been used earlier and in greater force—that if the half million casualties of Passchendaele had been still in the ranks, ready to push home the initial advantage, then the Battle of Cambrai might have been the greatest success of the war. This is all very true. Yet I think it just as well to emphasise that even had all those things happened, Cambrai would not have finished the war. We should not have completely broken the German line but merely

have indented another huge salient. For we must remember that we had been stationary so long that we had forgotten how to move—as we discovered to our cost the next year: further, by this time Russia was as good as out of the war, and already German divisions were being brought from the east to the west. It was the chance arrival of one of these divisions at Cambrai, in fact, which prevented the British from achieving a spectacular success.

What struck me most about this battle however—the first time the Allies had succeeded in surprising the Germans—was the conduct of Ludendorff. I have never known him in better form. He had never differed so vitally from those Allied commanders who let their optimism run away with them. After the results of the first day of battle were known, Ludendorff candidly admitted that he had sustained a severe defeat, but at the same time he announced his intention to the Staff—and indirectly to the world—of wiping it out; we learned to our cost how well he fulfilled that intention.

At the time of my last visit to England it had been obvious that in the near future Germany would begin to transfer troops in considerable numbers from the Russian front. This was one of the principal things which the War Office and G.H.Q. wanted to know—in what quantity the troops were coming over and where they were being concentrated. And it was with these ends in view that I had made a new arrangement with Mason, whereby he would be enabled to decipher such messages as I was able to send. For, as I have often said, I had no faith in the ordinary official methods, nor did I believe in using fantastic ciphers which would only attract the attention of an intelligent censor. I preferred rather the device which I had found so effective hitherto—that is, a fragment of news concealed in a perfectly harmless and inoffensive letter: nor were such letters sent at all frequently. It presumed a keen intelligence on the part of the man who was to read it, but by this time Mason and I knew each other very well, and I was perfectly confident that he would get to the bottom of anything that I sent over.

I have already described one of the methods by which I was able to give the necessary warning of the impending storm—how that harmless Baden newspaper revealed information of vital importance. In half a dozen similar simple ways[26] I was able to get my information to the proper quarter, and when the first great German attack broke against the English line on March 21st, 1918, at least it was no surprise. The Arras-St. Quentin area had, for that matter, been forecasted as the scene of the expected attack by a good many thinking officers—only Sir Henry Wilson's estimate was, as usual, very wide of the mark—and on receiving my confirmatory messages the Staff were fully prepared. In fact, the commander of the Fifth Army—which was to bear the brunt of the attack—shows quite plainly in his book[27] that,

although perhaps surprised by the force of the attack, he was not in the least unexpectant of the attack itself.

I remember March 21st very well because I was attached to the entourage of the Kaiser for the day. From time to time I had met the Kaiser, for reports were sent to him every evening direct from Hindenburg. When the Kaiser was in the vicinity of Headquarters—which was quite frequently—Hindenburg would usually report the position on the different fronts himself, but when the Kaiser was at a distance one of the Staff had to travel to do this job: this had fallen to my lot more than once.

I know that it is fashionable to decry the Kaiser as the villain of the piece, and to put the blame for everything upon him. That he was to some extent responsible for the coming of the war I suppose no one can deny: in any case, I am not more competent than anyone else to discuss it. But at least I could prove, I think, that he did not do one-hundredth part of the things during the war that in popular estimation he was supposed to have done—in fact, I think I have already mentioned that his influence on the conduct of the war was strangely negligible. Once the war had started all the power in Germany was concentrated in General Headquarters. The Reichstag and even the Chancellor had to occupy subordinate positions.

General Headquarters had now been moved to Spa, in Belgium, with Avesnes as a kind of advanced headquarters. We arrived there only a day or two before the breaking of the great attack. I had played a fairly considerable part in the necessary organisation, particularly of infantry-artillery liaison. I was quickened with admiration for General Bruchmuller, the German artillery expert who had returned with von Hutier, flushed with the victory at Riga. He was, I think, the most painstaking man that I have ever met, and at the same time one of the most brilliant. I have certainly never known a man who could so see actual scenes in his mind's eye without visiting them, and who could think so far ahead. Many and many a time as I worked with him I wished that his services could be acquired by the other side!

In the afternoon of March 21st I drove by car into St. Quentin. In the car were the Kaiser and his aide-de-camp; my job was to look after the Emperor and to answer any questions. We advanced over what that morning had been the battlefield. The unburied dead lay about in hundreds. Although the British line had been captured, it had obviously been well defended, for never before had I seen the German dead so thickly strewn. At this moment, I may say, I had no idea that the German advance would go so far. I naturally expected that the British battle positions would be captured. That

was quite a usual thing. Even the Allies had captured the German battle positions times without number. But of course I expected that the British had other positions prepared in the rear. Nor had I the faintest idea of the weakness of the British along the front. Although our line of battle showed only fourteen divisions in the actual Fifth Army battle area, I presumed that there were at least a dozen other divisions within easy call, of whom we had no exact knowledge. I know now how wrong I was.

However, to return to the Kaiser—for one incident of the afternoon has always remained fixed in my memory. He looked sorrowfully at the dead lying about on every hand. He was obviously affected at the sight, although he had seen it many times before. Not only did the German dead so sadden him, but the British too. I saw him take out his own handkerchief and spread it over the mutilated face of a British soldier—not an act of great utility on a battlefield, but very decent in idea, nevertheless. Then we came across columns of British prisoners. It was then that I got my first shock, for I had not thought that so many had been captured. Inside one of the barbed wire cages was a group of British officers, looking very sick and sorry for themselves, as may be well imagined. Although one or two fairly elderly men were included, most of them were youngsters—obviously almost straight from school, and with only a few months of army service behind them. What an end to all their hopes of glory—to be confined like rats in a wire cage! No wonder that their heads hung low and that they sat silent.

But the Kaiser went up to them and began to speak to them—it is well-known that his English was as near perfect as can be. He made quite a little speech in intimate fashion. He commiserated with them on their misfortune. At the same time he congratulated them on their bravery—on the way in which they had held their posts. He pointed out that the bitterest ignominy of warfare—that of capture by the enemy—was often the lot of those who had shown the greatest courage and had hung on grimly to their positions until they were completely surrounded. In fact, he made a jolly good and invigorating speech, and he certainly put a new courage into the hearts of those youngsters—who stood in amazement when they recognised that it was the Emperor of Germany who was so speaking to them. I have always remembered that afternoon, and although people may revile the Kaiser as much as they like, I claim that what he did that day was the action of a sportsman.

Actually, I think the Kaiser had a deeper humanity than anybody knew. Maybe had he not in his early days been under the influence of such a “man of iron” as Bismarck, his development would have been vastly different. When you have an intelligent and ambitious man who is treated rigorously

as a child, the moment it is possible to revolt he will naturally do so. Had Bismarck been a little more understanding, his reign might have lasted longer—and the subsequent history of Europe might have been enormously changed. This, however, is only my own impression of the Kaiser, based on the little incidents which I saw. I hold no special brief for this much-discussed world figure.

Another leading figure on the German side, too, was a man of humanity. In fact, if I were asked to mention the greatest point of difference between Hindenburg and Ludendorff it would be this. For Ludendorff was a specialist. He was a man of war and had no thought for anything else. He was a ruthless man because war is ruthless. It was not that he was a bad-hearted man—on the contrary, his conduct was always straightforward—but he had been brought up in the old Prussian school, and knew no scruples where the success of his country's armies were concerned. Hindenburg, on the other hand, although first and foremost a soldier, was an ordinary man at the same time. I noticed the difference in one incident which happened the same day. When I got back to Headquarters I was describing to Hindenburg the journey with the Emperor, and I mentioned some little scene which I had witnessed. It was in St. Quentin itself. Although the front had now moved several miles away, the town was still under British fire. German columns passing up to the front blocked the bombarded streets, while streams of wounded, the more serious cases carried by British prisoners, were moving slowly back through the town. Close by me four very weary English soldiers laid down the stretcher which they were carrying. The wounded German lying upon it was groaning, and one of the Englishmen bent over him. I too heard the German muttering—continually he repeated the one word: "Mutter!—Mutter!" (It is a very strange thing—that although men may love their wives and their children, it is for their mothers that they call at the moment of death.) The Englishman understood the word, so closely akin to its English equivalent. The German was almost unconscious, and the Englishman, with the quick wit that distinguishes the Cockney mind, took his cold hand in his own and caressed it softly, whispering gently, "Mother! Yes, Mother is here."

As I told this little story to Hindenburg I could see how very deeply he was affected. For some minutes he did not speak; maybe he was thinking of the dying soldier's mother—and maybe of the mother of the Englishman, too. Or maybe he was thinking that war after all is not the greatest thing in life, and that humanity is greater than war. I don't know, but I do know that he was very fond of telling this story for a considerable time afterwards. I notice, in fact, that he has included it in his Memoirs.[28]

Among others he told it to Ludendorff—who was not even interested!

As the days went by, I was alarmed at the rapid retreat of the British forces in the Somme area. It might even be possible to knock out the Allies before the Americans arrived in any force. It was with great delight, therefore, that I heard a few days later that the advance had unaccountably slowed up. I was instructed to go to the front as quickly as I could get there, and to see for myself what was happening—for it was the custom on the German side for Staff officers to go direct from General Headquarters to any part of the front that might be active. Compare this with the famous epistle of General Joffre on the subject of the complaint about the defences of Verdun!

Now military experts have argued, and probably will argue for a good many generations, about this battle on the Fifth Army front. It was easily the biggest defeat suffered by either side on the western front. Obviously, too, it was within an ace of being decisive, since only improvised and skeleton units in the latter stages of the battle opposed the advancing Germans, while between the British and the French—and also between the British Third and Fifth Armies—great gaps had developed. The Germans had only to march onwards and Amiens lay well within their clutch—and with Amiens gone it would be tremendously difficult for either the French to the south or the British to the north to retain their positions. If the Germans got through Amiens, indeed, it would mean that the forces in front of them had become so entirely disintegrated that the rupture between the French and British Armies would have been complete. Battles would have been fought on two fronts, the British defending the Channel ports and the French Paris, and in such circumstances the Germans might easily have achieved a decisive victory.

Yet they did not. They were faced only by a few thousand tremendously tired and dispirited men. A dozen times a day gaps appeared in the line. All kinds of oddments of men were gathered up by the British Staff to make up the deficiency. Cooks, batmen, clerks, labourers—all these were hastily armed and put into the line. Many of them had never fired a shot in anger in their lives, but nevertheless they did remarkably well in very difficult circumstances. However, against a concentrated attack by a trained, powerful, and overwhelmingly superior enemy, obviously such a line, feeble and precarious, could not expect to survive. Yet it did. Why? That is the question that historians have to answer.

Practically all of them to date have tried to find the explanation in the examination of technical details. They have closely scrutinised all the orders

that were issued in the course of the battle and the events which followed those orders. They have drawn all kinds of deductions, some sensible and some absurd. Their study, in fact, has been exclusively of the military side of the battle. Scarcely one of them has given a thought to the human side. Yet, as I could show, it was the human and not the military element which failed the Germans at this critical moment.[29]

I left my car about three miles to the east of Albert and took to the road, ready to drop into the maze of trenches at the slightest provocation. Actually, there appeared to be *no* provocation. One would scarcely have thought that a battle was in progress. The shelling was most casual and intermittent. On the British side there was scarcely any sign of life at all. Suddenly I saw something which startled me—an incident of tremendous meaning. A few hundred yards in front of me was a company of German troops marching up towards the battle. A little to the right of the road was a group of hutments—and the moment they reached them, the Germans as one man broke from their ranks and rushed into the huts! I saw their officers standing and cursing furiously, commanding them to return to their ranks, but not a man took a scrap of notice. I saw one of the officers even draw his revolver and threaten to shoot the man nearest to him if he did not return to his duty, but everything was of no avail. When I reached the spot I found that one of the huts was a canteen, and the troops were helping themselves liberally to its contents. This was the first time throughout the whole of the war that I had seen such insubordination in the German ranks, and it struck me as being highly significant.

Nor was this the whole of the story. The men were marching along loaded by all kinds of "souvenirs" that they had collected from the British back areas. Mostly these took the form of food, but some men were actually carrying about with them such oddities as brass taps! When eventually I reached Albert I found even stranger scenes. Men were rolling about the streets blind drunk, saturated in body and clothing with the wine which was being ladled out of barrels in the cellars of the many *estaminets*. Others were searching for loot among the abandoned houses, and hundreds were trying to get into the Expeditionary Force canteens near by the station. And as I looked at them I suddenly realised that here was the explanation of the halt of the advance. *For I noticed by their shoulder straps that these were the very regiments who were actually supposed to be in action*—who the General Staff fondly imagined were half way to Amiens! Instead, they were gorging themselves in British canteens, drinking themselves sodden from the copious supplies of wine—and accumulating useless loot!

How did it all come about? The explanation is very simple. On the British side we knew very well that the German submarines were a decided nuisance. A rationing system of food had had to be initiated, but at the same time there was no trace of any starvation. On the material side, too, although there was a shortage of a good many things, there was no vital necessity that was missed. Now transfer attention for a moment to Germany. Germany right from the very first moment of the war had been almost utterly shut off from the outside world. From the very minute of the declaration of war the British Navy had maintained that effective strangle-hold known as the Blockade. Scarcely a ship could enter Germany—except from a Baltic port—without undergoing the close scrutiny of our examining officers. Consequently, before the war had been in progress for many months, all kinds of shortages were noticed—particularly on the industrial side. Fortunately for them, the Germans are an inventive race, and when there was a shortage of anything their clever scientists invented something else that would do almost as well. What British soldier does not remember those marvellous things that the Germans made during the last year of war out of paper—sandbags, string and rope, all of them quite effective enough for their purpose?

Now the German Government had eased the public mind on the question of these shortages—which later in the war spread to food—by saying that although Germany was in a fairly bad state, the Allied countries, and particularly England, were in hopeless condition. It was pointed out that scarcely a ship could enter Britain at all owing to the activities of the submarines, that the British nation was slowly starving, that the British Army rations had been vastly cut down, that all sorts of things were completely lacking, that British commerce was being ruined for lack of essentials, and so on and so on. It was a tale easy to tell and easy to believe, and there were few Germans who in the early weeks of 1918 were not fully convinced that, on account of German submarine activities, Britain's plight was appalling. And now, advancing so suddenly into the British front area, the Germans on the spot had found that all the stories told to them were merely fairy tales! Here, every mile or so, was a canteen stocked with luxuries such as they had only vaguely imagined. Here was equipment lying about in quality far surpassing anything that Germany could show. Here in the water-tanks by the wayside were brass taps—used for most ordinary purposes, whereas in Germany brass was almost as precious as gold.

Propaganda is a dangerous weapon, however skilfully it is used, and one always liable to hurt the user as much as the recipient. Lies always come home to roost. Furthermore, their effect is far-reaching and never-ending.

Travelling about Central Europe to-day, I find that Germans have forgiven the English for most of what they did during the war—for all the German casualties that they inflicted—even for the blockade. But one thing they can never forget—that campaign of lies and calumny which went by the name of propaganda. They have forgotten about British successes on the Somme and at Arras. They have forgiven us for beating them in the last hundred days of the war; but they have not forgotten, and will not forget for a long time, those lies which we circulated to the world about atrocities, corpse-factories, and the like. Bullets only damage the body. Propaganda wounds and taints the mind.

In this instance, however, it was the German propaganda which recoiled against its authors. And nothing is so upsetting to the morale of a grown man as when he finds that he has been lied to like a child, and has believed lies as a child will, never suspecting that his seniors are deceivers. A man in such case is first furious with himself; then, as a natural corollary, he turns to the other side, and loses his confidence in his superiors once and for all. Now in spite of all that has been said and assumed, German discipline was not entirely founded upon force. To a very large extent, in fact, it depended upon the confidence which the men had in their officers—as it must always depend in any army. (It must be added in parenthesis that this confidence was generally very well founded, for it is admitted on all hands, even in France, that the German Army was the best officered of all.)

I think it will be generally admitted that if an army—even composed of brave men—is to fight its way to victory, two things are essential: good officers and good food. Of general officers the Germans had an ample supply, but of junior officers there was, towards the end of the war, a very serious deficiency—as in the Allied Armies—owing to the large casualties among the subaltern class. Even then, however, the German officer type was particularly good, and the promoted non-commissioned officers in most cases did excellent work. But, due largely to the effect of the strangling blockade imposed and maintained by the British Navy, German food supplies began to be seriously diminished. Only the Rumanian campaign in the autumn of 1916 relieved the situation, otherwise Germany might have been brought to her knees, despite the subsequent collapse of Russia. But by the beginning of 1918 things were really serious. In all the towns large numbers of people were perilously near starvation point. It was not a question of lack of money, but of actual material. Essential foods were tremendously scarce, and although the soldiers at all times received preferential treatment it became essential to cut down their rations from time to time, until the food which the German soldier received during the last

year of the war bore no comparison to that issued at its outbreak, either in quality or quantity. Now, although it will be agreed that the Napoleonic axiom about an army fighting on its stomach is one of the truest in war, yet the German spirit was so strong that it might have been maintained so long as the belief was firmly founded that the enemy was in even worse fettle—for there is no better sedative to offer to dispirited men. But the moment that the truth was revealed—the moment that the break-through into the British back areas showed to hundreds of thousands of Germans that, so far from starving, the British soldiers were very much better fed and clothed than themselves, then the whole basis of the propaganda recoiled with a crash upon its instigators. The report of the scenes in the Somme area travelled like lightning along the front. We actually had applications from divisions in Alsace asking to be transferred to the Somme battle area—a request, I may say, which was very seldom received. On examination it was found that officers and men alike were impelled by the desire to get among this land of plenty, of which they had heard so much. (Captain Liddell Hart wittily but no less searchingly suggests that had the British High Command had the necessary imagination it would have paid them to have organised "conducted tours" of Germans behind the British front, and then have sent them home to tell their friends! And there is more than an amusing fancy in his suggestion.)

During the next few months, as I have said, I sent messages from time to time to Mason by many and varied methods, giving information and even details of projected operations. Yet at the same time I had ceased in my own mind to regard this, important and essential as it might be, as my main task. For by now I was firmly ensconced on the Operations side. I had worked my way (I think I may claim it) into the esteem of Ludendorff—at any rate, he frequently employed me as one of his travelling officers, a thing he never did unless he had complete confidence in a man. This was the opportunity for which I had been working for so long. "The mind of the enemy commander"; that was my object. Ludendorff was the enemy commander for really practical purposes. I now had at least some sort of entry to his mind: it was up to me to widen the breach, so that my suggestions might be heeded and considered. Obviously it was a thing to be done very, very carefully, and if I were to detail the slow stages by which I helped to weaken Ludendorff's confidence in the magnificent army which he commanded, it would make a tremendous book in itself—a book, however, of more interest to psychologists than to the general reader.

Nor do I claim that my suggestions would have carried much weight unless they were backed by a solid foundation. Ludendorff wanted not

merely opinions, but facts. Fortunately the events of the spring of 1918 gave me facts in plenty: the real point is that at least two opinions can be based on every fact. I would visit a division which for some reason had not done well in an attack and would report on its condition. My report would err on the pessimistic side—I was very careful not to overdo things. Whenever I could, I got the divisional commander to agree with me—and this was not so difficult as I had expected, particularly as I generally visited the division immediately after a general action when morale was usually at its lowest ebb. So very slightly and, I hope, subtly, I exaggerated the effect of the decreased food rations on the men. I exaggerated, too, the incidents I had seen in the Somme area, where orgies of loot had held up the success of the advance. I must admit that at first Ludendorff found this difficult of credence. I reported to the same effect after a visit to the "Georgette" attack on the Lys, where again I saw men looting farms instead of advancing against an enemy who scarcely existed except in the mind of the semi-starved victors. This time Ludendorff's confidence was shaken. But when, on the occasion of the third great attack in May, when the Germans advanced to the Marne, I painted the same picture, this time supporting my reports by means of photographs which I took at Soissons, of soldiers lying drunk in the road or rolling about the streets with their officers vainly trying to get control over men who had had sudden access to unlimited stocks of free champagne—then even Ludendorff was convinced. Although he had a purely military mind, even that appreciated something of the elements of human psychology, and he knew that there was something radically wrong in such a state of affairs, which could never have existed in 1914.

If I wished for a complimentary analysis of my influence upon Ludendorff's mind I could not find a better than in his *Memoirs*, where the gradual change in his opinions is seen. Sometimes he is very contradictory, quite confident of defeat and victory almost in the same phrase, but the truth is that in his own mind Ludendorff knew by midsummer of 1918 that only a miracle could bring Germany victory by battle. He was, however, quite confident then that he could hold out well into 1919, presenting an unbroken front to the enemy. Knowing the critical military and political state of affairs in France, he hoped (and with justice) that long before America made itself felt in any force, the French front would crumble—for in truth it must be admitted that at this time French morale was not tremendously high. When we discussed the question afterwards we decided that our attack ought to have been directed against the French front and not against the British; for the British, although inferior as technical soldiers to the French, have a tenacity which the more highly excitable Latin races never possess. But the

British front held even after being broken. That might not have been the case had the offensive been directed against the French.

This was the theme on which I improvised continuously. In my summaries of reports from armies and other units, I emphasised on every possible occasion the low morale of the troops. I was thrilled at my contest with the great military mind opposing me—unconscious of the duel though it might be. I looked back upon my earlier efforts at Lens as a mere melodramatic episode. This was real work: brain work. Never have I written so carefully as I did then, rewriting reports until every word should have a subtle meaning.

Gradually I saw some slight result of my labours. No longer was Ludendorff the supremely confident man of a few months ago. No longer were his Staff with him in his confidence—for I had discussed all kinds of matters of morale most seriously with them. Other visiting officers had confirmed my reports. They had not put things quite so strongly as I had, but I was able to enlarge on the ideas which they presented. Early in June I was able to write to Mason a letter containing the perfectly innocuous sentence, "Our affairs have been in rather a bad way, but seem to be mending rapidly. I think that the tide has turned." Mason has told me since that he thought my opinion at that time to be very premature, for the second battle of the Marne was still in progress, and the Germans had conquered huge tracts of territory. The final offensive of July 15th had yet to come, but when it did it was almost a complete failure. For the first time the German Army, in the flush of its 1918 attacks, achieved almost nought. On that day the initiative passed from Ludendorff and was taken up by Foch. Perhaps I do not possess a military mind, and maybe it was the fact that I wanted this to happen that made me see it three days before Ludendorff. He was still toying with the idea of a grand "final" offensive against the British on the Flanders front. Yet his confidence was greatly weakened. A few weeks before, he had affirmed definitely that the Marne attack was only a side-show to distract attention; then the greatest battle would begin. Now he was hesitant, wondering if he could really keep up the onslaught. Naturally I prompted him as best I could in his decision, and on July 18th Foch gave me a helping hand, in his counter-attack which, although it failed to destroy the German forces in the huge salient which the battle had created, did at least have a decisive influence on the future conduct of the war.

The effect was electrical. Even those among my fellow Staff officers who had believed that I was a little too pessimistic, now walked about with terribly serious faces. They knew from the wastage of troops in the previous battle that the whole idea of mounting any other great attack must now be

abandoned. I seized my advantage and rammed it home. We were sent out to visit the divisions and report on their condition. If I had the slightest foundation, I reported that the division was in bad fettle and badly needed a rest. My colleagues may not have been quite so drastic as I was, but it was perfectly true that a good many of the divisions were completely exhausted. Yet, obviously, the line must be held. So many divisions were reported to Ludendorff as being unfit for active warfare that he was seriously concerned: for the moment I thought he was almost rattled. Yet he soon recovered. Instantly he adopted urgent measures. More men must be combed out from civilian occupations. The army in Russia must be reduced to a mere fringe, however dangerous the operation might be. The German stiffening in the Balkans must be withdrawn, or at least reduced. The Austrians must be prepared to lend divisions and artillery. I could not help but admire his stern spirit when I saw the way in which he faced up to the crisis. He was not like some other generals I knew, who only welcomed cold facts when they supported their own theories.

His difficulties were enough to dispirit any man. In the Allied counter-attack on July 18th, not every point on the German front had been so firmly defended as it ought to have been—food, lack of confidence, propaganda, all these things together if you will, had caused the German soldier to lose that nerve and spirit which had so distinguished him throughout the war. Or maybe he felt that this great salient was dangerous—that he might so easily be cut off from his friends; or, more likely, he thought—as he certainly did a little later—that all these attacks after all had brought nothing. He had something of the sudden realisation which the French experienced in 1917, when Nivelle promised them immediate victory and did not win it. With the German soldier the contrast was even more emphatic, for he had won tremendous victories—victories whose like had not been seen throughout the whole of the war. And yet peace seemed to be no nearer!

I should emphasise, however, that at this time Ludendorff was still confident that he could at least fight the war to a draw: that, although he might not march to victory, he could sell the enemy ground which he occupied so dearly, yard by yard, that the enemy would be glad to offer him equable terms of peace. As the days passed and no enemy offensive developed, he was confirmed in that view. Continually I strove, by subtle suggestion, to destroy his confidence in his own ideas. Day by day I wished something would happen, for I began to fear that Ludendorff's reasoning was right—for although the Germans had lost heavily, perhaps the Allied losses were so severe as to prohibit the resumption of the offensive! If the Allies were going to sit on their heels and wait for the Americans, I thought

that his opinion about the French might be only too solidly founded, for interrogation of French prisoners recently captured supported everything he said. So his confidence gradually regained its forceful purpose.

The rest of July passed without even a minor crisis of defence. The German Army recuperated to some slight extent—on the surface at any rate—from the mauling which it had received. Ludendorff was cheered to see the apparent recovery in its condition—he went so far as to twit me about my pessimism of a few weeks back, and even criticised my lack of psychological understanding in that I had failed to realise how quickly troops can regain their strength and spirit if given a little rest. While professing to him the liveliest satisfaction, I was actually gravely agitated. It looked as if all my insidious work was being undone: my great scheme had failed! The mind of the enemy commander was as firm as ever. In the last week in July, in fact, he so far recovered his early confidence that he ordered Staff preparation for four fresh attacks—including the postponed Flanders offensive. True, these attacks were on a very moderate scale compared with his earlier anticipations, but he calculated that they would show the Allied leaders that the German Army was still a tremendously formidable fighting force, and that any hope of a runaway victory, Americans or no Americans, could be thrown to the wind. Eagerly he threw himself into a new reorganisation of the western front, by which the Second, Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Armies were to be formed into a new group commanded by General von Boehn. Then suddenly, out of the blue, came surprise and disaster.

Ludendorff writes in his *Memoirs*: "As late as the first days in August I was able to tell General von Boehn that I hoped to hand him over a well consolidated line. Unfortunately events proved me wrong, and while still occupied with these readjustments, the blow of the 8th August fell upon me."

"August the 8th was the black day of the German Army in the history of this war," writes Ludendorff in his *Memoirs*. What does he mean? Rawlinson's attack to the east of Amiens came as a tremendous surprise—not even I, receiving occasional information from Mason, had the faintest idea of its coming. The surprise was certainly a nasty shock, but Ludendorff had been surprised many times before. So that was not his reason for classing the day as decisive. It was a considerable British victory, too. The British advanced twelve miles and captured 21,000 prisoners—easily their best success of the war—and yet poor in comparison to the German attacks of the spring. So the reason did not lie in this. The battle did not in any way weaken the German line—it merely flattened out the nose of the Somme

salient—and not in the slightest degree did it threaten the German communications. Certainly, from this point of view Ludendorff had not the slightest cause for alarm. Why then does he say that August 8th was the black day of the German Army? I think I can supply the right answer.

After the first reports came in, I was sent with one or two other members of the Staff, working independently, to the scene of battle to ascertain what had happened and to report as to the local situation. I found that while some units had played their part well, the resistance of others had been of the feeblest character—that is, according to previous German standards. Their commanders were very dispirited—and I encouraged them in their mood. I so played on the nerves of one army commander, in fact, that only the personal intervention of Prince Rupprecht prevented him from ordering an immediate retirement behind the Somme.

I was the first on the scene. Other members of the Staff in some cases visited the same units later. Nor did they find their mood less chastened. So I hurried back to Spa and made my report. As others followed—all to the same effect, though not so forceful as mine, maybe—I grinned inwardly, although my countenance was apparently bathed in gloom. Ludendorff asked me a lot of questions, then sat silent, thinking hard. I looked at him and decided that the moment had come for me to play one of my trump cards—what is the use of being an actor if you don't act? So with my head in my hands, leaning over the report that I had made, I burst into tears. It is not an easy thing to do—any actor will tell you that. You have to work yourself up inwardly to produce any realistic effect. At any rate, I did it well enough to startle Ludendorff. He strode over to me and asked what on earth was the matter. I replied brokenly that I was afraid for our cause—that I was now sure that we had lost the war. If he thought this would injure my work, I added tentatively, of course he could dismiss me from his Staff and send me to the front, where I would hope to die bravely. I played the part of a man completely broken, and any psychologist will tell you that if a certain type of man, whose nerves are already frayed to the limit, finds himself in the company of a broken man, he is very liable to break himself. Ludendorff was of that type. His outward calmness was misleading to the world. He was not a real "man of iron." Many times I had observed the chinks in his armour—had seen him roused to fury so uncontrolled that I had expected him to fall in a fit.[30] So I judged that Ludendorff could be rattled, and played my trick. I would never have tried it on Hindenburg, whose solidity was immovable. But an excitable man is always liable to break—if only temporarily.

Ludendorff did. There were no tears. There was no loss of control. He sat staring at the report and at me, making up his mind. There was no hope wherever he looked—not one spark of brightness to which he might turn for light and consolation; and, watching him, my heart burned within me, for I knew that I had got him. Yet all the time I must admit to a small sense of shame that I, by what might be called underhand methods, had undermined one of the strongest spirits which the war had produced.

How far did I really influence him? Did I really get inside his mind—shake his confidence? Ludendorff himself supplies the answer; in his *Memoirs* you may read this paragraph:

"The report of a Staff officer I had sent to the battlefield as to the condition of those divisions which had met the first shock of the attack on the 8th perturbed me deeply; whole bodies of our men had surrendered to single troopers, or isolated squadrons. Retiring troops, meeting a fresh division going bravely into action, had shouted out things like 'Blacklegs!' and 'You're prolonging the war,' expressions that were to be heard again later. The officers in many instances had lost their influence and allowed themselves to be swept along with the rest. Everything I had feared, *and of which I had so often been given warning*,[31] had here, in one phase, become a reality. Our fighting power had suffered. . . . I had no hope of finding a strategic expedient whereby to turn the situation to our advantage. . . . The fate of the German people was for me too high a stake. The war must be ended."

The war must be ended! Those were Ludendorff's words to me as he rose from his chair. The war must be ended! Oh, how I retained my gloomy countenance I don't know! The war must be ended! Ludendorff walked slowly from the room. I knew where he was going—to offer his resignation to Hindenburg. The Field-Marshal would naturally refuse to accept it. Yet this was definitely the beginning of the end. Three more August 8ths—maybe one more—and Germany might be beaten. For "the mind of the enemy commander" was already beaten. *The war must be ended.*

Another officer of the General Staff joined me—so agitated was my mental state that I cannot remember who it was. With deepest gloom I told him what was happening; he sat biting his lip, hard. Yet my shocks were not yet over. In less than an hour Ludendorff returned. We both looked at him expectantly.

"The Field-Marshal takes a more optimistic view of the situation than I do," he announced. "Nevertheless, I am convinced that I am right. I have prepared the report for His Majesty. You, Neumann, will take it to him: you

can answer any questions. I have suggested a conference on the situation, which His Majesty will doubtless attend."

I read that report on my journey—taking a spare envelope with me to allay any possible suspicion. I found the Kaiser already perturbed. (He has since confessed that the failure of the June 15th offensive disintegrated his hopes.) Ludendorff's appreciation was gloomy enough, yet did not go far enough for my liking; there was no use of that phrase burned on my brain "The war must be ended!" I could see the influence of the more stolid Hindenburg. Yet there was no opportunity to tamper with it; nor did I consider the risk worth while—Ludendorff's mind was my quarry, not the Kaiser's.

But with what joy did I hear that beloved phrase again! For the Kaiser, after asking me a number of questions, was calmer than Ludendorff. Yet his conclusion was the same; he was never so dignified as when he said to me, very quietly and composedly: "I see that we must strike a balance. We are at the end of our resources. The war must be ended."[32]

The war must be ended! The wheels of my car bumped out this joyous sentence a thousand times as I speeded towards Spa. At first I was all jubilation—could hardly restrain myself from singing aloud. Then I began to think: what next? What should be my next move? The one essential was that the Allies should mount a succession of attacks *immediately*—there must be no resting on laurels. I must get a message through to Mason at once—yet would it receive sufficient heed? I had by this time discovered that not all my messages were considered as important as I thought they were. Ought I to get back to England at once—then I could ram home my arguments—maybe I could get hold of a copy of Ludendorff's report. Other things too, I knew—that the Bulgarians were wanting to walk home; that the Austrian front was now a mere egg-shell, to collapse at the first crack. Yes, I was tempted to go at once. If the Allies did not ram home their advantage *at once* —if the winter could be gained—then Ludendorff might regain his lost nerve.

Yet at the same time it was vastly important for me to remain at his side against such an eventuality. Surely, surely, Foch would see the true state of affairs—surely such an "offensive" spirit as his would never miss its chance! So I argued with myself, deciding at last that it was my duty to stay.

Yet fate settled the argument for me in another way; I could not grumble —fortune had been very kind to me ever since Lens. The following day I was ordered to return to the battlefield; commanders were rattled—there was no cohesion. I was to bully or persuade them into renewed confidence.

The battle was in its last stages. German skeleton forces held an improvised line, but the British advance had exhausted itself except in one or two isolated sectors. But when local commanders suggested withdrawals, I agreed; sometimes I protested, but always agreed. Near Proyart I went up to the front line myself to see the position; I really wanted to be sure that the British patrols were lively enough in following up the withdrawals.

They were! Too lively for me. All my plans went west in one unlucky second. With an orderly as guide I scoured a rough trench which the orderly swore was the front line: where were its defenders? Surely they had not retired without orders? I decided that we must move forward to explore—there was no sign of the British. But the moment we crawled cautiously from the trench a machine gun spluttered. My orderly fell dead by my side, and I crashed to the ground, with a bullet through my thigh.

For some moments I was half-stunned by the fall. Then I pulled myself together, ripped open my breeches, and bandaged the wound roughly with my field dressing. It was a trying process, for suddenly I felt strangely weak, and took a long time. I had scarcely finished when I saw two khaki figures crawling along the ground, a hundred yards to my right. Yes, the British patrols *were* alive.

"Hullo there!" I called out, yet scarcely recognising my own voice. "Come here!"

One of the men left his companion, and hurried towards me.

"What's up?" he asked: then suddenly and astonishingly finding that I was a German, he raised his rifle.

"Don't shoot, you fool!" I cried. "Help me with my wound—I'm English!"

"Well, I'll be damned!" he ejaculated; admittedly, he might well consider himself so.

"Come on, Nobby," I heard his companion call. "What's up?"

"Why, there's a bleedin' Jerry horficer 'ere what says 'e's English! What shall I do wif 'im?"

"Oh, you can't believe a word them Jerries says. Put 'im out of mess."

"But 'e's wounded!"

"All the more reason." The second man had now come close to me; the N.C.O. who taught him to accompany bayonet fighting with ferocious expressions had done his work well.

"So you're English, are yer?" he sneered.

“Yes, I am,” I declared. “I must get to your headquarters at once. One of you find your officer, and ask him to send a stretcher party for me.”

“You got some bloody ’opes!” he comforted. “Stretcher parties for bloody Jerries, eh? Come on, Nobby, we got to get on. We want to get into the canteen area before them bloody Aussies get there. I’ll put ’im out of ’is misery, then there’ll be no shootin’ in the back for us.”

He raised his rifle: I was really frightened—I had never anticipated this.

“Don’t be a bloody fool!” I yelled. “I tell you I’m English—don’t I talk like an Englishman?”

“ ’E does that, Bill,” said Nobby.

“Oh, English is easy to learn; that don’t mean nuffink,” the other commented. “I expect ’e’s took a langwidge course.”

I saw his finger on the trigger. Was it sheer fright, or did I have an inspiration?

“Don’t you pull that f—— trigger, you b—— f—— pig, or you’ll be b—— well sorry for it for the rest of your b—— life. You b—— c——, pull that b—— trigger and you’ll get a b—— bayonet shoved right up your b—— a——!”[33]

The man’s jaw dropped: so did his rifle, to my relief.

“Blime, Bill, ’e’s English all right,” quoth the astounded Nobby. “No Jerry could swear like that.”

“No, they don’t teach you those words in language courses,” I put in.

Even the reluctant Bill was half-convinced.

“Well, I’ll be b——!” he exclaimed. “I don’t know what to make of this.”

“Anyway, get me an officer,” I ordered, now quite confident again.

“Yes, that’s the best thing, Nobby,” said Bill. “You stop ’ere, and I’ll go and fetch Mr. Maynard.”

“No,” I contradicted. “You stay here and Bill will fetch Mr. Maynard.” I was not at all keen on being left alone with the bloodthirsty Bill: he might change his mind again.

“Anyway, tip up your revolver,” he ordered. “There’s going to be no dirty work.” I handed over my automatic pistol, and he examined it critically. “Ah, that’s a good ’un,” he commented. “I can get thirty francs for that: fifty-fifty, eh, Nobby? Bowcoo vin blanc, eh? I won’t take your ’elmet. There ain’t no sale for them now. All the A.S.C. ’as got one already.”

He shambled awkwardly off. Nobby began to ask me questions, and his eyes opened wide at my replies. Half an hour passed before Bill returned, bringing with him a youthful officer—he could not have been more than eighteen. He was very puzzled—not knowing whether to believe me or not. And, of course, I could understand his bewilderment. However he agreed to the obvious thing—I must be taken back at once. He had brought more men with him, but there was no stretcher at hand. So, with my arms around the necks of two hefty Cockneys, I hobbled on one leg from my last battlefield. Nobby and Bill stared at me as I went. I heard Bill explaining me to one of the newcomers.

"Blime!" he exclaimed. " 'E swears like a f—— sergeant-major! Never 'eard such a flow since old Slogger found as the pack 'ad got five aces in it."

Bad language is of no social or commercial value, yet I do believe it saved my life that day!

---

[26] I do not describe all these in detail lest my story might become boring. Looking through Mason's records, however, I find that only one device was used more than once. This was the "expecting the baby" method—so simple and ingenuous that no censor would ever suspect. I used it in this instance—helped by the German passion for giving code names to their operations. Thus the St. Quentin attack on March 21st, 1918, was labelled "Michael"; the subsequent attack on the Lys was called "St. George." Thus, when Mason (knowing the code words) received another Belgian refugee letter which gossiped that "Georges and Yvonne expect their baby about April 9th. The doctor says that it will only be a little one," it was a simple indication of the date of the attack, and also that its original scope had been reduced. (At German G.H.Q., in fact, the code name was wittily changed from "St. George" to "Georgette!")

[27] See *The Fifth Army*, by General Sir Hubert Gough.

[28] See *Out of My Life*, by Marshal von Hindenburg, p. 362.

[29] Had I published this book when first written, I think I should have been the first to have revealed this strange sidelight on a decisive battle of the war, but now I notice that it has been described—very effectively described—by a German writer. Not a military writer, incidentally, but a literary man. Anyone interested should read Rudolph Binding's fascinating book *A Fatalist at War*. The military historian, however, has been very slow to realise the real significance of the incidents he

describes, and so far as I know Liddell Hart has been the only one to put his finger right on the spot and say with confidence that this was the significant feature of the battle.

[30] This did actually happen at a critical moment a few weeks later—September 29th, when the British broke through the Hindenburg line.

[31] My italics.

[32] See *A History of the World War*, by Captain Liddell Hart.

[33] I believe in realism, but I regret that it is quite impossible to print the actual words used.

CHAPTER VIII

THE rest of my story is quickly told. As soon as I had reached "civilisation," I was rushed in an ambulance to Montreuil. There, while a surgeon was probing for the bullet—an excruciatingly painful process—an officer of Sir Douglas Haig's Staff was asking me innumerable questions. The next day Sir Douglas himself came to see me. As fate had now settled my dilemma for me, I took up the alternative with vigour. I described the actual position—the condition of the German Army—reports from Bulgaria and Austria—above all, the state of Ludendorff's mind. I insisted that attacks should be rammed home—that the war must be finished before winter set in—before the Germans could retire to the frontier, where they would defend their native soil with all their old spirit.

Haig gave me confidence. He was a poor talker, and said little. But no one could mistake his tenacity—the British Army had once or twice regretted it. But now he was on the right lead; he would hold on—nothing would make him swerve. I was sure of that: and as he pressed my hand I was very happy. *The war would have to be ended.*

Incidentally, my story may perhaps throw light on another curiosity which has excited some critics—why Haig, in August, 1918, sent home urgent requisitions for mobile troops, reporting to the Government that the character of the conflict had changed, and that a decision was imminent. At this time Foch was still planning his grand offensive for the spring of 1919!

I stayed in hospital near Montreuil, so as to be available for consultation by officers of the Staff. Yet for me the war was really over. I had done my job. All that was left was to gather in a sheaf of decorations—including some foreign medals of which I had never even heard! As I lay on my bed, my leg rapidly healing, I thought back over my exciting days; those acute moments of exhilaration and despair at Lens; the thrill when I first fitted myself into Adolf's place: the Verdun carbon; those sensational seconds with Hansi and her baby; my fight with Schleicher.

Looking over my Memoirs now that I have completed them, I am afraid that they do not really show my work in true perspective. My exploit at Lens might have been useful; many of the messages I sent from German G.H.Q. were certainly invaluable. I do not think that any other spy in any country

obtained *and sent home* so much information—for no one else had all my advantages. Yet military historians will agree when I claim that all these are minor compared with the task which I describe at comparatively short length because it does not make particularly interesting reading; my influence on Ludendorff was worth a hundred wrecked troop trains. The aim in warfare is still the mind of the enemy commander.

My story is finished. I have already gathered up the threads of its earlier incidents.

I repeat; I am not ashamed of having served my country in the way I did. Spying is no more ignoble than shooting; the cause is the thing that counts. In similar circumstances I would do the same again—except that now, I am afraid, I have no longer the controlled nerves I used to have.

For the reader will have judged for himself the continual nerve-strain my task imposed upon me. Firmly ensconced as I was, one ill-judged word might have led to suspicion—and death. Since then I have played in some long runs, but none so lengthy as my part at German G.H.Q., from November 1915 to August 1918.

By the end of September I could return to England. No one had need of me any more. Under a continuous series of hammer-blows the German front had crumpled—the end could not be many days away. My flesh was clean, and the wound had no complications; very soon I would be hobbling about. So I went home tremendously happy; I had not yet seen Suzanne. Maybe my head was a little swelled; maybe I strode too vehemently over my triumphs; maybe I put too high a valuation on my services. Maybe I needed a corrective. In any case, I got it.

I proposed to take my whole family on a long holiday, so wrote to the War Office about my account. I had drawn no pay since October, 1915, so they must owe me a tidy sum, I calculated. But a very zealous clerk at the War Office pointed out that, although I had drawn no pay from the War Office, *I had been paid all along by the Germans*! Thus he proposed to credit me only with the difference between the two rates of pay!

I had to laugh! I needed an anti-climax like that to bring me to earth—to return me to the world as an ordinary sane and sober citizen.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A cover was created for this eBook and is placed in the public domain.

[The end of *Spy* by Bernard Newman]