The Double-Walled Secret

The Girl and the Mystery

By Edwin Baird

Kelcey was 2,000 feet in the air, miles from any known habitation, and flying fast, when something went wrong with his engine. He sensed it immediately. Annoyed at the interruption to his cross-country flight, he volplaned earthward, his gleaming monoplane describing a wide, graceful spiral.

He glanced below, expecting to see nothing more unusual than Wisconsin pasture. But he saw something outer different amounting that made him.

thing quite different, something that made him work precipitately with his steering apparatus. Then an air-pocket caught him and he dropped through the vacuum, straight as a rock, to earth—

and lost consciousness.

When Kelcey's eyes unclosed he

When Kelcey's eyes unclosed he was lying under his upturned monoplane and his left arm was badly injured? Every fibre of his body ached with pain, but by sheer power of will he kept his wits.

"A lovely mess!" he muttered; and he was thinking, oddly enough, of that strange thing he had seen a moment ago—or was it an hour! He was rather hazy about the time. He tried to raise himself on his right elbow, but a spasm of pain sent him, gasping, back to earth.

Then he heard footsteps coming toward him, and in another minute the airplane was being lifted. Presently a girl's voice:

Presently a girl's voice:

"He must be dead.
sure he was killed."

This, somehow, enraged him.
"Easy there!" he said angrily. "Don't try to lift it.
Turn it over."

To his consternation and surprise, the monoplane was surprise, the monoplane was lowered upon him again and in such fashion that he was very neatly trapped. There was a brief silence; and then he heard the girl say something in a low voice and, although he spoke and understood several languages well, the tongue she used was quite strange to him. A masculine voice answered, apparently in the same tongue—and half a minute

tongue—and half a minute later young Kelcey could see the blue summer sky again.

He looked first at his deliverers—for there were three of them—and he surmised at a glance that they were the men he had seen when the airpocket caught him. They were tremendous black fellows, obviously natives of Africa, and were dressed in some white stuff that accentuated their blackness and enormous height. Then he looked at the girl. Her face had a certain pi-

Then he looked at the given the face had a certain pi-quancy that was charming. In his first hasty survey, however, Kelcey perceived only that she had pretty brown hair and expressive blue eyes. They express-ed coolness, if not downright displeasure, as they

rested on him.

"Are you much hurt?" she asked, nervously biting her lip.

"If you will send for a doctor—"

"There is none within miles," she said, "and we have no telephone." Her troubled eyes rested on him a moment longer travelling along his lithe suffering body. Then she spoke to the huge Africans and waved them away.

Turning his head Kelcey saw, looming large above him, a strange, long, high wall—or such at first

Turning his head Kelcey saw, looming large above him, a strange, long, high wall—or such at first glance it appeared to be. But he knew that twenty feet beyond hay a second wall of like dimension. Seen form his airship, the thing had looked like a double wall fully twenty-five feet in height and some 200 feet in length, closed at the top and ends with a heavy grating. The windowless structure was absolutely unlike anything he had ever seen before—it seemed unreal, uncanny, somber.

"I almost hit it," he remarked, indicating the strange structure with a nod.

"It would have gone hard with you if you had," said the girl, leaning over and looking keenly into his eyes. "What is your name?"

"Tom Kelcey."

"Are you a professional aviator?"

"Are you a professional aviator?"
He shook his head. "Only an amateur. It's a sort of hobby."

"I suppose you are from Chicago?"
"Yes."

"And wealthy?" she added.

He nodded. She had made no move to ease his position or minister to his hurts, and he was surprised at this and irritated by the antagonism in her voice.

"You chose an unfavorable spot, Mr. Kelcey,"

said she, "in which to have an accident."
"Bo I have divined."
He fancied the rich color in her cheeks deepened

slightly. She was no ordinary girl, that was plain. Her speech, her apparel, everything about her, be-spoke refinement and education. "My father—" she began, then stopped. "It

"My father-" she began, then stopped. "It will be dangerous for you to stay here," she went on. "Are you very badly hurt!"
"How do I know!" he rasped, beginning to lose patience. "My arm's broken, I think, and I may be hurt inside."

be hart inside."

Bhe turned and looked off across the flat ground—knee deep with grass—and he, following her gaze, saw the three Africans leave a squat, grayish house, forty rods distant, and come in his direction hearing between them a canvas cot.

The girl turned back to him. Her troubled ex-

pression was more pronounced.

'Mr. Keleey,' said she, 'at the risk of being more disagreeable than I have already been, I must remind you that your presence here is very distaste-

mockery of a human image. It stood less than four feet in height and was humpbacked. Pausing behind the girl's chair, it glared at Kelcey and hared two rows of crooked, yellowish stumps of teeth, and the grimace seemd so filled with evil intent that the young man felt a shuddering revulsion.

"The bandages, Miss Stryker," said the unsightly thing, and the girl, dropping the strips of cloth in her lap, asked quickly:

"Has he returned?"

"Yes, Miss."

For barely an instant she betrayed a sudden ago

"Yes, Miss."
For harely an instant she betrayed a sudden agitation, but she said evenly enough: "You may go, Toto." When the ugly being had departed she ran swiftly to the door and turned the key in the lock, then returned to Kelcey."
"My father is here," she said, almost in a whisper, "and when he finds you—"
"What about my arm?" cut in Kelcey, thoroughly exasperated now. "I don't like to appear peevish, but—"

"Your arm will be attended to. That's of secondary importance, however. At this moment your life is endangered."
"My life?"

"Not so loud," she caution ed whisperingly, "he may hear. When he comes in—and he will be here any moment he will be here any moment now—say nothing about your identity. Tell him you are an escaped convict. Imply that you were flying to safety in a stolen airplane. If you can talk like an anarchist or misanthrope, all the better. I know how faneiful all this sounds to you, but remember it's of the utmost importance. Your life depends on your Your life depends doing as I say." Before he could

Before he could frame a response in his mind he heard a quick, heavy footfall on the stairs outside and a stairs outside a stair outside a s stairs outside, and she sped to the door and opened it.

CHAPTER II.

"Ah, father?" he heard the girl say, and a deep voice answered. Then the door closed and he could hear them talking just outside in lower

It seemed to Kelcey that an age had passed—an age of sug-pense, pain, uncertainty and bewilderment—before the door opened to admit a tall, broad, white-haired man

white-haired man of indeterminate age. His ruddy skin and unclouded eye denoted a life lived largely out-of-doors, yet the lines in his face were plainly put there by suffering or hard toil, or both. As he came briskly into the room he removed his coat and then, sitting beside the leather couch, he rolled up his shirt-sleeves and fell to work on Kelcey's broken arm without speaking a word. His daughter stood behind him holding splints and bandages. His sinewy fingers moved with percision and skill, and presently Kelcey's arm was set as neatly as any surgeon could have done it. The man signed to his daughter to leave, and when she had gone he spoke to Kelcey for the first time. "What pen did you break from?"

"Joliet," came the prompt answer.

"Joliet," came the prompt answer.

"When!"

"Last night. I had friends outside. They got these clothes for me."

"And the airplane?"

"They got that, too. I was an aviator before I was sent up." Kelcey winced inwardly at the untruths, and felt thoroughly ashamed of himself. Was life worth purchasing at such a price?

The white-haired man frowned and said: "I believe you're lying. You don't talk or look like a jail-bird. However, I'll soon know." He arose. "In any case," he flung over his shoulder as he started from the room, "you don't leave this house. Understand that. If you're telling the truth you won't want to leave."

Kelcey lay staring at the frescoed ceiling, his mind busy with the things that had happened since that 2,000-foot drop. All of his thoughts converged at one point and that point puzzled him; his imagination, though fertile, could fathom no reason for the strange behavior of these people, into whose home ill luck had brought him.

He tried to rise, but a rush of blood to his head Continued on Page 40



American Troops Crossing Westminster Bridge, London. British Houses of Parliament in the Background.

ful to both father and myself. Anything we may do for you will be done unwillingly, against our wishes."

Kelcey, fingernails digging his palms, stared at er mutely, quite unable to understand the strange

girl. "When you enter that house yonder," she said, "you will be the first man to do so except my father and his servants." Then, deliberately, she turned her back on him, and when the Africans trotted up she was examining his monoplane with casual curiosity.

Kelcey, to his disgust, felt himself "going" when the enormous blacks lifted him and, though he ex-erted his strength to the utmost against swooning again, he was unconscious when they lowered him again, he wa upon the cot.

He was still on his back when he opened his eyes, and the girl was bending over him. Gradually he perceived that he lay on a leather couch in a darkened room and that the girl, sitting beside him, was cutting away his left coat-sleeve with a pair of scissors. By degrees he took in other salient things: the room was tastefully, even richly, furnished, and the air was heavy with a peculiar odor; there was no sound save the ticking, somewhere of a clock. As he looked up into the girl's pretty face he had the odd thought that she had been crying; but quickly he felt he must be wrong, for when she spoke her voice was curt with inhospitality.

"Don't move!" she commanded, busily snipping;

"Don't move!" she commanded, busily snipping; and, after a moment, "your arm is broken and your wrist appears to be dislocated."

He heard a door open and close behind him, and in another moment he beheld the most hideous being he had ever seen. He was not immediately sure of its sex, for its fantastic clothes might have been of any gender and its face either man's or woman's. The leathery skin was a dirty yellow and the features were misshapen, grotesque, a horrible

eapit mone visio work eomp labor were in the in

grou by star effi-fan

gro-acri mat

gro ave att of

ship, ment though for se

an app

Dur

were subdiv

inclus

come net