

She buried her face in the pillow on the couch and sobbed. And he thought it well that she should.

"Aylmer," he said gently, when at last she was quiet, "I have a letter for you. Would you like to have it now?"

She sat up. "A letter — from — from —?"

"Yes, from Christian. When he went South he left it with me. You were to have it — in case — in case anything happened."

She took it — held it in helpless fingers.

"And in his last letter to me—See! you might like to read this—" he spread a page before her—what sheets there were, and how closely written. And not for her — not for her — that was the thought that stabbed.

"Look, it's here."

Above his finger the sentence stood out sharp.

"You will remember, if anything should go wrong, and here in this hellhole where men's lives are worth nothing, where only the machine is sacred, one never knows what may be the next moment—you will remember that Aylmer must have my letter at once. And some day she may like to read those that I have written you out of the depths of this experience."

Ah, Christian, Christian! She hid her face again.

"I guess I'll go off for a smoke," said Bronsart. She must be alone with her letter, he thought.

At last she opened it, and through blinding storms of tears, read the precious words:

"MY WIFE: — It's very late, and the house is so still — and so empty. I have a great deal yet to do, for to-morrow I'm going away for a long time.