

8 THE WEB OF THE GOLDEN SPIDER

kept at her back until she began to totter, and then he paused.

"A little further," he said. "We'll go on tiptoe."

They stole on, pressing close to the wall which bounded the small back yards, making no more noise than shadows. Finally the girl fell back against him.

"You — you go on!" she begged.

Wilson drew her to his side and pressed back against one of the wooden doors, holding his breath to listen. He could barely make out the sodden steps and — they were receding.

The mist beat in damply upon their faces, but they could not feel it in the joy of their new-found freedom. Before them all was black, the road indistinguishable save just below the pale lights which were scarcely more than pin pricks in black velvet. But the barrier behind seemed to thrust them out aggressively.

Struggling to regain his breath, Wilson found his blood running freer and his senses more alert than for years. The night surrounding him had suddenly become his friend. It became pregnant with new meaning, — levelling walls, obliterating beaten man paths, cancelling rusty duties. In the dark nothing existed save souls, and souls were equal. And the world was an uncharted sea.

Then in the distance he detected the piercing light from a dark lantern moving in a circle, searching every nook and cranny. He knew what that meant; this road was like a blind alley, with no outlet. They had been