

Anchor on Saturday night. Bill Chesney was out fishin' an' got right near 'er. I think one o' the patrol boats ought to ha' boarded 'er."

"She was seen off the Spurn, and was then flying the British flag," remarked Judd's superior officer.

"Ah! There you are!" cried Small. "I was certain she was up to no good! Those Germans are up to every bit o' craft and cunning. Did you gentlemen think that Mr. Jennings, from Lincoln, was a German spy?" he asked, naively. "No, not particularly," replied his visitor. "Only when strangers come along here, in the prohibited area, we naturally like to know who and what they are."

"Quite so, sir. An' if I see any stranger a-prowlin' about 'ere in future, I won't fail to let Mr. Judd know of 'im."

"That's right, Small," was the officer's response. "There are lots of rumours around the coast of our fishermen giving assistance to the enemy by supplying them with petrol and other things, but, as far as I can gather, such reports are disgraceful libels upon a very hard-working and deserving class. We know that some of them put down tackle in Torbay, and elsewhere, when they learn the fleet is coming in, so that they may obtain compensation for damage caused to their nets. But as to their loyalty, I don't think anyone can challenge that."

"I 'ope not, sir," was Small's fervent reply. "There ain't a fisherman who wouldn't bear his part against the enemy, if he could—an' bear it well, too."

THE clean-shaven officer reflected for a few moments.

"You've never, to your recollection, seen a pale grey closed-up car anywhere about here, have you?" he asked at last.

"Never, sir."

"Quite sure?"

"Positive, sir. The roads about 'ere are not made for cars," was the old fellow's reply. "I certainly did see a car one night, about six weeks ago. The man had lost his way an' was driving straight down to the sea. He wanted to get to Cleethorpes. They were Navy men from the wireless station, I think."

The old man's manner and speech had entirely disarmed suspicion, and presently the pair rose, and bidding him good-bye, and urging him to keep a sharp look-out for strangers, they left.

The moment they were safely away, Rodwell emerged from the bed-room, and in a low, apprehensive voice, asked:

"What does all this mean, Tom—eh?"

"Don't know, sir. That Judd's been about here constantly of late. 'E's up to no good, I'm sure. I've told you, weeks ago, that I didn't like the look o' things—an' I don't!"

Rodwell saw that the old fellow was pale and alarmed. He had preserved an impenetrable mask before his two visitors, but now they had gone he was full of fear.

Rodwell, as he stood in the low-pitched little room, recollected certain misgivings which Molly had uttered on the previous night, just before he had left Bruton Street. His first impulse now was to leave the house and slip away across the fen. Yet if

he did somebody must certainly see him.

Shall you get off now, sir?" asked the old man, suddenly.

"Not till to-night," was the other's reply. "It would be a bit dangerous, so I must lay doggo here till dusk, and then escape."

"Do you think they really suspect us, sir?" asked the old fellow, in a voice which betrayed his fear.

"No. So don't alarm yourself in the least," replied the gentleman from London. "I suppose I've been seen about, and my car has been noticed on the roads. There's no danger, as long as I'm not seen again here for a bit. I'll get through to Stendel, and let him know that I shan't be back again for a fortnight or so."

"Yes; you must certainly keep away from 'ere," Tom urged. "They'll be a-watchin' of us, no doubt."

"I've got a lady coming here, as I told you—Mrs. Kirby, to whom you telegraph sometimes. She won't get here till night, and I must wait for her. She'll have some urgent information to send across to the other side. Penney will meet her in Lincoln, where she'll arrive by train, and he'll bring her on by car."

"You'd better keep to the bed-room," urged the old man. "They might come back later on."

"Yes: I won't be seen," and returning to the stuffy little room, he reopened the cable instruments and soon got into communication with Stendel, in order to pass away the time which he knew must hang heavily upon his hands, for even then it was not yet nine o'clock in the morning.

He sat smoking and gossiping with the old fisherman nearly all the day, impatient for the coming of darkness, for his imprisonment there was already becoming irksome.

It grew dusk early when, about four o'clock, a footstep outside caused them both to start and listen. In answer to the summons at the door Tom went, and was handed a telegram by the boy messenger from Huttoft.

Opening it, he found it had been despatched from London, and read:

"Impossible to leave till to-morrow.—M."

He gave it to Rodwell, who at once saw that the woman he expected had been delayed. Probably she had not yet been able to gather that important information which was wanted so urgently in Berlin.

The telegram puzzled him. Was it possible that the arrangements which he had made with such cunning and forethought, and had left to Molly to carry out, had broken down after all?

Lewin Rodwell bit his lip, and wondered. He seemed that day beset by misfortune, for when at five o'clock, Ted having returned, he tested the cable as usual, a call came through from Berlin.

Rodwell answered it, whereupon "Number 70" flashed the following message beneath the sea.

"Your information of this morning regarding troop-ships leaving Plymouth for Dardanelles is incorrect. Desborough was torpedoed off Canary Islands on Jan. 18th, and Ellenborough is in dry dock in Belfast. Source of your report evidently unreliable."

Rodwell read the words upon the long green tape as it slowly unwound, and sat staring at them like a man in a dream.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### Days of Darkness.

ON the same afternoon that Lewin Rodwell was stretching himself, impatient and somewhat nervous, in the lonely little house on the beach, Elise Shearman, pale and apprehensive, was seated in Sir Houston Bird's consulting-room in Cavendish Square.

The spruce, young-looking pathologist, clean-shaven and grave, with hair streaked with grey, was listening intently to the girl's words. It was her second visit to him that day. In his waiting-room were half a dozen persons who had come to consult him, but the blue-eyed young lady had been ushered straight into the sanctum of the great Home Office expert.

"Curious! Very curious!" he remarked, as he listened to her. "That anonymous letter you brought this morning I have already taken to Whitehall. The whole affair seems a complete mystery, Miss Shearman. No doubt the charge against young Sainsbury is a very serious one, but that you should have been given warning is most strange. Since I saw you this morning I've had a visit from Mr. Trustram, whom I called up on the 'phone, and we have had a long consultation."

"What is your opinion?" she asked, breathlessly.

"WILL you forgive me, Miss Shearman if, for the present, I refrain from answering that question?" asked the great doctor, with a smile. He was sitting at his table with one elbow resting upon it and half turned towards her, as was his habit when diagnosing a case. The room was small, old-fashioned, and depressingly sombre in the gloom of the wintry afternoon.

"But do you think Jack will ever clear himself of these horrible charges?" she asked, pale and anxious.

"I hope so. But at present I can give no definite opinion."

"But if he can't, he'll go to penal servitude!" cried the girl. "Ah! how I have suffered since his arrest! Father will hear no word in his favour. He daily tells me that Jack is a spy of Germany, and as such deserves full punishment."

"Mr. Trustram has found out from the War Office that his trial by court-martial begins at the Old Bailey to-morrow."

"Yes, I know. Mr. Pelham, his counsel, called on me just after lunch, and told me so," said the girl, tearfully. "But oh! he seemed so hopeless of the result. The prosecution, he said, would bring forward the most damning evidence against him. Can it be true, Sir Houston? Do you really think it is true?"

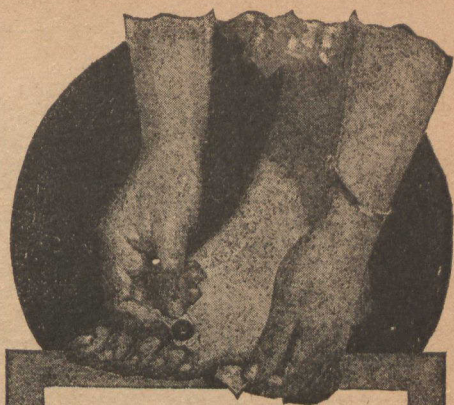
"No, I don't," was the prompt, straightforward answer. "Nothing will ever cause me to suspect Sainsbury to be guilty of espionage. He's far too good an Englishman to accept German gold."

"Then you believe him to be innocent!" cried the girl, her fair countenance brightening with a ray of hope.

"Yes, I do. He's the victim of some dastardly plot. That's my firm belief. And yet it is so strange that his friend Jerrold committed suicide."

"But was Dr. Jerrold a spy? That is the question!"

"It seems quite true that a warrant



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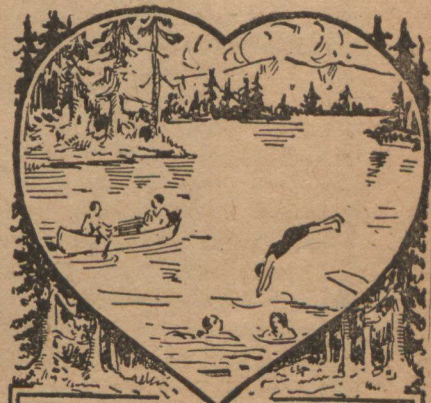
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