

tic business woman. Her fair head with its golden curls was bent for many hours in the day over a crude kind of ledger, and she thought in terms of pickles, canned fruits, chocolate, and cigarettes. The spirit of commerce had bitten deep into Martha's soul.

More and more officers held impromptu dinners in the back parlour. Martha knew most of them, but only one interested her. Had he not shown her the system of double entry, and how to balance her accounts? He was a commercial asset.

As for Jefferson, it was a relief to him, after a tour in the trenches, to have an occasional chat with a moderately pretty girl.

One rain-sodden, murky January night, very weary, wet, and muddy, Jefferson dropped in to see, as he would have put it, "the baker's daughter."

Martha happened to be alone, and welcomed "Monsieur Jeff" beamingly.

Perhaps the dim light of the one small lamp, perhaps his utter weariness, induced Jefferson to overlook the coarseness of the girl's skin, her ugly hands, and large feet. Perhaps Martha was looking unusually pretty.

At all events he suddenly decided that she was desirable. Putting his arm around her waist as she brought him his coffee, he drew her, unresisting, on to his knee. Then he kissed her.

Heaven knows what possessed Martha that evening. She not only allowed his kisses, but returned them, stroking his curly hair with a tenderness that surprised herself as much as it surprised him.

Thereafter Martha had two souls. A soul for business and a soul for Jefferson.

The bleak winter rolled on and spring came.

About the beginning of April old Beduys received, secretly, a letter from a relative in Frankfurt. The contents of the letter were such that the small pupils of the old man's eyes dilated with fear. He hid the document away, and his temper for that day was execrable. That night he slept but little. Beduys lay in bed and pictured the sails of a windmill—his windmill—and he thought also of ten thousand francs and his own safety. He thought of the distance to the mill—a full two kilometres—and of the martial law which dictated, among other things, that he be in his home after a certain hour at night, and that his mill's sails be set at a certain angle when at rest. Then he thought of Martha. Martha of the commercial mind. Martha the obedient. Yes! That was it, obedient! Hans Beduys rose from his bed softly, without disturbing his heavily-sleeping wife, and read and re-read his brother's letter. One page he kept, and the rest he tore to shreds, and burned, bit by bit, in the candle flame.

High up on the hill stood the windmill—the Beduys windmill. Far over in the German lines an Intelligence Officer peered at it in the gathering dusk through a night-glass. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the sails of the mill turned, and stopped for a full minute. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, they turned again, and stopped again. This happened perhaps twenty times. The German made some notes and went to the nearest signalling station.

Five minutes later a salvo of great shells trundled, with a noise like distant express trains, over to the left of the mill.

There were heavy casualties in a newly-arrived battalion bivouacked not half a mile from the baker's shop. The inhabitants of the village awoke and trembled. "Hurrumph!" Again the big shells trundled over the village, and again. There was confusion, and death and wounding.

In his bed lay Hans Beduys, sweating from head to foot, while his brain hammered out with ever-increasing force: "Ten thousand francs — Ten Thousand Francs."

In the small hours a shadow disengaged itself from the old mill, cautiously. Then it began to run, and resolved itself into a woman. By little paths, by ditches, by side-tracks, Martha reached home. She panted heavily, her face was white and haggard. When she reached her room she flung herself on her bed, and lay there wide-eyed, dumb, horror-stricken,

until the dawn broke.

Jefferson's Battalion finished a tour in the trenches on the following night. Jefferson marched back to billet with a resolve in his mind. He had happened to notice the windmill moving the night before, as he stood outside Company head-quarters in the trenches. He had heard the shells go over—away back—and had seen the sails move again. The two things connected themselves instantly in his mind. Perhaps he should have reported the matter at once, but Jefferson did not do so. He meant to investigate for himself.

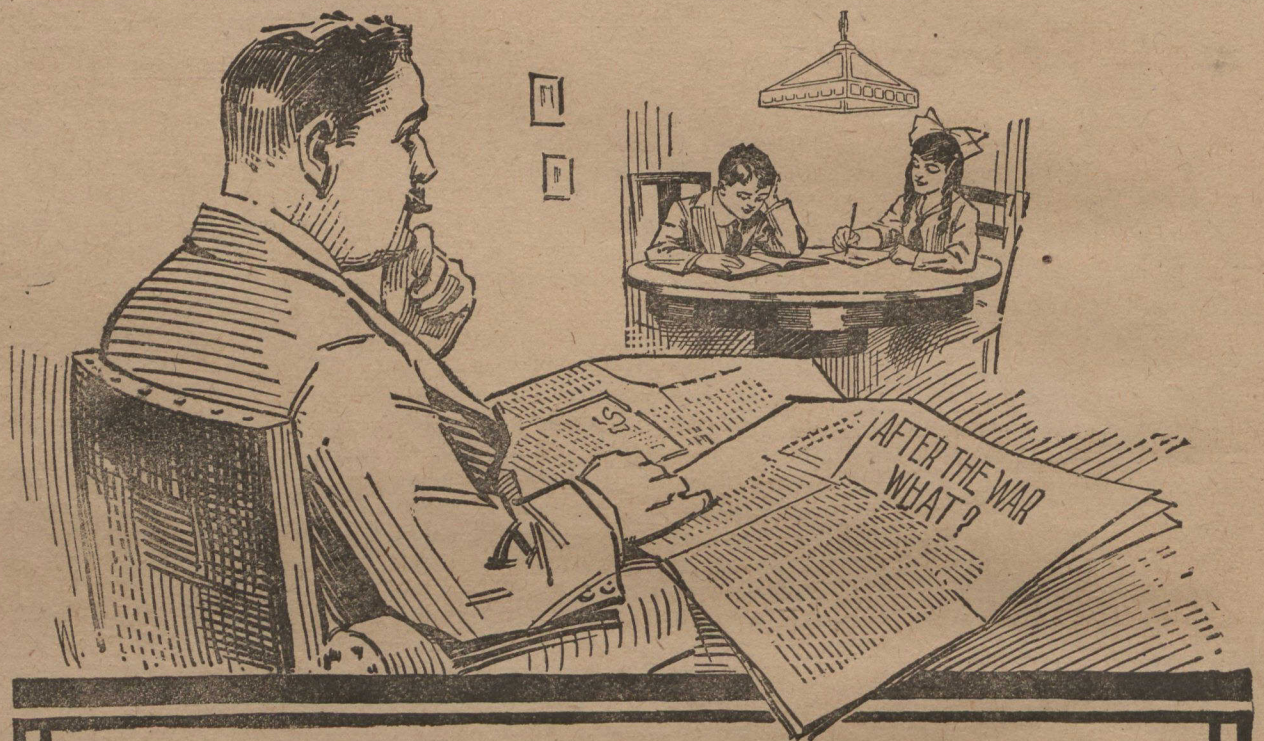
Two days later Jefferson got leave to spend the day in the nearest town. He returned early in the afternoon, put his revolver in the pocket of his British warm coat, and set out for the windmill. He did not know to whom the mill belonged, nor did that trouble him.

An Artillery Brigade had parked near the village that morning. Jefferson got inside the mill without dif-

ficulty. It was a creaky, rat-haunted old place, and no one lived within half a mile of it. Poking about, he discovered nothing until his eyes happened to fall on a little medallion stuck between two boards on the floor.

Picking it up, Jefferson recognized it as one of those little "miraculous medals" which he had seen strung on a light chain around Martha's neck. He frowned thoughtfully, and put it in his pocket.

He hid himself in a corner and waited. He waited so long that he fell asleep. The opening of the little wooden door of the mill roused him with a start. There was a long pause, and then the sound of footsteps coming up the wooden stairway which led to where Jefferson lay. The window in the mill-face reflected the dying glow of a perfect sunset, and the light in the mill was faint. He could hear the hum of a biplane's engines as it hurried homeward, the day's work done.



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