

Clock flung himself into a lounge and read it again. He jumped up and went to the water tank—when a silent hand passed him a cup of water. In his excitement the left arm, which latterly he had carried crooked without a sling, dropped loose. He whipped out his pipe and the same hand lighted a match. Whose? It made no difference. He had seen the same hand in all the other cities; the deferential, infallible hand of the German machine dominated by the inscrutable Major Hanslick. He fervently yearned to fetch the owner of the hand a conclusive swat on the jaw. But he refrained. In his excitement he dropped the letter. The hand picked it up. He went to the elevator. The same hand rang the buzzer and the owner of the hand stepped into the car along with him.

Clock retained enough self-poise to realize that he had already relaxed his "stiff" arm. He let it go limp. The room was unlocked. He stepped in. The flunkey made his usual exasperating dumb-show bow—when he was suddenly struck by a human high explosive, picked up in some sort of comatose heap, carried along the corridor and flung downstairs to the first landing.

The tumult fetched half a dozen fire-drilled burlies to the scene. Clock retired to the door of his room, the nearest thing that he had to proprietorship except his clothes. Locking it, he stood back to the door. Weeks of mental torture had got him to the point he had been expected to reach some days before. He was ten men in one; stark mad with the strength of a maniac; a human tank confronted by half a dozen field pieces; democracy suddenly became sabotage.

The Hotel Kaiserhoch was like a battleship struck by a mine. Ever since Clock's arrival the entire innmacy of the house had been on the qui vive. This Kluck in khaki; this renegade propagandist—the moment the fury broke loose on his floor every cranny of the hotel understood what it was and began to gravitate to the scene; from cellarage and kitchen and court, from attic and corridor and staircase, a grand rush of nervous humanity in which the original rumpus soon became a small affair and nobody knew exactly what might be happening except that now and then a room was flung open and some unconscious flunkey was ported in to recover.

But there was one inmate of the hotel who managed to keep her nerves. She was not on the register. She had come on the same train as the Captain and ever since had occupied the room next to his, opened into by a heavy door which at length somebody found a key to open.



"You, Captain, are a prisoner of Germany—and of a woman's whim."

"Go out!" she screamed to the attendant. Locking her own door she swept into the Captain's room, undid the catch of the door and he fell in. She sprang in front of him and held up both hands. The mob in the corridor fell back at this unexpected vision. The Captain rose. She shut the door.

So far as she could see he was not even minus a button. But he was breathing heavily.

"Do sit down!" she said.

He did so. The sudden advent of Frau Bobel was even more mystifying to him than to the crowd. The house was quiet again. He felt like a fool.

"Excuse me for making such a racket," he said slowly. "I didn't know you were here."

He glanced at the door through which he knew she must have come.

"Ja," she said coolly, "you have guessed. I was in that room. I hope I did not appear too soon."

"No," he said bewilderedly. "I guess I finished the lot."

"How—is your poor arm?" she asked.

He had forestalled her. The left arm was again rigidly crooked at the elbow.

"Stiff as a stone," he said. "The excitement put it down. I was using it."

"A phenomenal arm, Captain."

She stood by the open window. He smiled and felt his pockets.

"You have a letter," she said. "Was that—?"

"Caused all the trouble," he interrupted in a fumbling way. He was beginning to relapse into his old state, the very thing she wanted to avoid.

"I wanted to tell somebody about it, and nothing but a pack of enemies to tell it to."

"It must have been a powerful letter, Captain."

He yawned and held it out.

"Read it for yourself. It's no secret."

"Oh! Your friend, the editor, from Alberta, Canada—appointed at the head of the British Bureau de Publicitie in Paris. This is remarkable."

"Oh, he deserved it," growled Clock, realizing how sore he was from top to toe and profoundly wanting to sleep. "He's a clever duck."

"And he will be far more useful to—us—now."

"Oh, heaps!" he admitted rubbing his face. "Yes, I'll back him against anybody in Germany for putting over propaganda—"

"Whose?" she asked sharply. "Tell me."

"Oh, the kind that fits the case best in the circumstances. Camouflage."

Half asleep in his easy chair Clock vaguely realized that the little woman in the room was the most human thing he had known since he left Cologne. The rustle of her gown, the delicate perfume from her hair, the shimmer of her voice all seemed to personify what was left of the human element in a stark staring mad country where hunger, rags and insanity were everywhere. The idle flip of the curtain at the window seemed to be part of that still surviving hope of the ultimate tenderness and naturalness and spirituality of all things even after the grim horrors of war. She glided into the starved and vacant crannies of his being as never he had known anybody do since he had left the foot-hills. She had the soft beauty of the land he had left, where the great Rockies heap themselves in the tenderness of heaven and the cool Bow river comes tumbling from its glacier bed.

"Tell me about the war," he said. "The truth. You know it. The newspapers don't, even when I read 'em. I don't very much. Understand—I've been put on mental iron rations, worse than solitary confinement. My brain is in a state of coma. I don't even know the day of the week, the month or the year. All I know about the war is that the armies are fighting now along the Rhine. Are they?"

"Yes. The last great battle—"

"You're right. Ja. Go on. Tell me that the Rhine is never to be crossed by our—by the Allies. Ah right. I guess that's true."

"My poor Cologne has been bombarded in the outskirts," she said tenderly at the window. "Bombs have hit the great cathedral."

"Air bombs?" he asked. "I thought so."

"That is all. But we shall soon stop that. Surely you have heard our Gothas?"

"Yes, hundreds," he mumbled. "And Fokkers and Albatrosses and the lord knows what. But what about Handley-Pages and the Avions and the Nieuports and the Capronis? What about Billy Bishop and Fonck and McCudden—all that crowd?"

"Sh! Not so fast. You are in Germany."

"Germany!" he repeated.

"My God, what a country!"

To the ears of any but Frau Bobel this would have been enthusiasm. But she suspected differently.

From somewhere below in the hotel came the broken strains of an orchestra playing the Tannhauser Overture. It was the first music he had heard in Germany except now and then a war band. It seemed to phantom itself in some sort of bodily aura about the

woman. She became the delicately swaying, immortally tender yet voluptuous transfiguration of the music. Could such ineffable beauty of suggestion in harmony belong to a nation unspeakably coarse, cruel, barbarous, sensual?

The music suddenly glided into speech.

"Captain"—she seemed to be speaking above him somewhere—"the world is greater than war. I love my country. You have loved yours—love it still. And there is love in some souls which passes all political boundaries. Like the rivers and the winds—"

"The winds," he mumbled. "Yes. I don't know about the rivers. War changes 'em. But the clouds and the stars and the winds—"

"Ah! Now you are poetic. Talk on."

"The ships of the air."

He was walking about the room, moving like a shadow with a voice.

"Ask my friend Thom," he said huskily. "Find him. You're free and clever. Go over to Paris—disguised as a Frenchwoman. Find Thom at the Bureau de Publicitie. Ask him—what he is going to send over here—"

He paused. A pair of very beautiful eyes seemed to be breathing and blazing into his. Some soft pressure on his arm. It was like a wing.

"Captain," said the voice, "have you written your letter from here, for Major Hanslick?"

He went to his travelling bag and dug out a paper.

"Here it is," he said, half angrily. "Not quite finished. Read it. A fool could write it. A fool did. I was no fool when I landed in Germany. I am now. And you—you're one of the—"

Slowly she scanned the runic puzzle that danced to the music below.

"Ah!" she said, with apparent unconcern. "It is such bad writing. Captain—read to me—read what you were really meaning to say here but did not."

"Don't ask me," he said, fumbling to light his pipe but glancing over his shoulder as if to anticipate the unseen hand of a flunkey.

"Here is a match, Captain."

He lighted his pipe and took the letter.

"Tell me," he asked suddenly, "what are Hanslick's crowd likely to do to me after this rumpus?"

"Whatever I ask them," she replied quickly. "That will be what you want. Jail?"

"I don't care. Jail's as good as this."

"I should go with you."

"Good heavens! Why?"

"To show them I am friend to both you and my country." Listen! Hanslick already knows—wherever he may be—that your lame arm is a ruse, and that you have beaten up some of his men because you were driven to it by the treatment you got. Enough evidence to land you in front of a firing squad at dawn. To-morrow if need be. The death of a traitor to Germany. But I shall oppose that."

"I thought you were a friend of mine?"

"You mean—that you would prefer—"

"Death to this, and who wouldn't?"

"But you can stop this, and still escape."

She pointed to the letter.

"Read what you really had in your mind when you wrote that and I will guarantee that you are no

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