

"Do not babble!" he said heavily. "Save all your coquetries for Captain Clock. We Germans are not susceptible to the wiles of femininity. Bring the Captain to book—and you will have your reward."

CHAPTER VI.

WITHIN three days the major-domo was back from Berlin. He at once sent Clock a letter:

"You will come to see me at my headquarters this afternoon at three o'clock. Do not telephone me. It is forbidden. Employees of the German Government are not permitted to talk to superior officers except on personal appointment dictated by superiors."

"The old walrus!" muttered Clock. "I guess I got under his hide the day I got him up here. It's a wonder he came at all. Evidently I have to learn my place."

He was prompt on the minute set. Hanslick did not ask him to be seated. Clock helped himself to a chair. The major-domo instantly rose. Clock rose also.

"Sit down," thundered the major. Clock did so. "Thanks!" he said.

"I have shown your alleged syndicate stuff—to our experts at the War Office in Berlin."

He spoke the last few words with a measure of awe. Clock began to shift uneasily.

"They have not suspected their genuineness. Therefore I am at liberty to dictate to you your programme until further notice from this office."

"And what's the idea?"

"That you will leave Cologne at the precise time indicated in a sealed letter from me, signed by me, and proceed to whatever city is named in the letter. You will be escorted to the train by one of my men under arms, and no questions will be asked of you by the conductor. When you reach your destination the conductor will inform you of the fact. You will be met at the station by another of my men and taken to the hotel assigned you in advance. At the hotel you will be handed a sealed letter instructing you how long you are to remain, and the last day of your stay you will get another informing you what is your next destination. Is that clear?"

"Tolerably," coughed the Captain.

"You are to register everywhere as Captain Kluck."

"Minus the von, I suppose?"

"You will spend your time investigating each city and make a favorable report on conditions, to be left with the hotel proprietor for forwarding to me. I will see that the communication, properly censored, goes in your handwriting to Herr Thom of the *Rondeau Gazette*—who, of course, will attend to the rest. I am writing to him to offer him financial support in the syndicate, which, of course, will clinch him as a paid agent of Germany. And I hope your left arm will soon be sufficiently improved to allow you to use it."

"That's clear enough, Major. But suppose one of your men falls down, on the job?"

"Im—pos—sib—le!" said the Major. "See that you do not fail. If you do you know the consequences. There is no middle ground in Germany. Every human being in this country is either a soldier or a prisoner. You—*are* a soldier."

Hanslick pushed a buzzer and the Captain was ushered out, to the motor in which he was whirled back to Frau Bobel's.

Here the hospital surgeon—known of old—was already waiting to examine Clock's left arm, still in a sling.

"It is very strange," he said, "that you cannot bend that elbow. There is not a ligament out of place or tension."

"Sorry I can't oblige you," drawled Clock, who had practised on that arm's rigidity many an hour when nobody was looking. "I guess the only thing is to see what the mind cure will do, along with a change of scene. You see, Doctor, I'm going away."

"Take good care of that arm."

"I assuredly will," mumbled Clock. "They'll have to get Dr. Lorenz the bloodless surgeon from Vienna to make that arm able to write—I beg pardon, Frau Bobel, what did you say?"

He started up. The Frau was right near him. He had heard not even a rustle.

"How will your arm be, Captain?" she said—musically.

"Oh, stiff for a long while. Doctor can't explain it."

"Too bad! It makes your writing so awkward."

"Yes, I always was left-handed. And the right's

sympathetic with the left—goes by jerks. That's a well-established fact in surgery, I believe."

"I am so glad you are not going to rebel," she said. "You will be well treated. Indeed you are lucky to have such distinction as an agent of Germany, and to be allowed to wear the uniform of the enemy."

"Well, every yard of wool counts in this country, Frau Bobel."

"And everywhere else, I think. But the war will soon be over. When it is you will be an honored citizen of the country that rules the world."

He clicked shut his travelling bag.

"Gnadiges Frau," he said, thrusting out his hand. "I am glad you don't backbite the Kaiser. If you did I'd suspect you of being a spy."

"You are going first to Leipsic," she said. "Ja. Well, you will enjoy that city. Auf wiedersehen, Captain. I may see you soon, again."

CHAPTER VII.

PRIMARILY because he hated the whole idea of being a prisoner, Clock had started his system of code letters. All he wanted was a certain measure of freedom. He had enlisted for war because he believed human liberty demanded it. He had mentally preferred death in action to war imprisonment. The cards had played otherwise. From being a mere, obvious friendly informer and as such entitled to some consideration in an enemy country, he was now hitched up as a paid German agent to conduct a German propaganda as part of the Secret Service System. The Hanslick machine knew no half-measures. He must be a tool. The whole system was a colossal and complicated despotism. Every human being fed, and as far as need be clothed in Germany, must belong to the system. Men were not born to be free, but slaves. The greater the achievements of science and art the worse the slavery, because the whole genius of civilization became the bondage of mankind.

Clock's itinerary was begun precisely as intimated by the Major. He almost went to sleep in a train and woke up in a bedroom. He signed the name Kluck in the Leipsic register, but in his shaky handwriting it looked more like Clock. The clerk asked him no questions. A flunkey at his elbow took his luggage and the key and conducted him to the elevator. Without a word he was taken to his room. The room overlooked a court studded by a hundred windows.

"Where's the key, Hans?" he asked irrelevantly. The flunkey shook his head. He had the key. Clock examined the door. It was a catch lock that could be opened from the inside without a key.

"Switch on the light, old chap."

The attendant stepped outside and made a sign in the hallway. The light went on. But there was no switch in the room.

"Oh, I get you," said Clock. "When I want my light on and off, I make that sign at the door."

The flunkey nodded. Clock stepped to pull down the blind. There was none. Curtains only screened the window. There was an uncurtained quite transparent transom over the door. He looked for matches. None to be had. The room had no grate. There was no gas. All these were simple enough omissions, but from the thoroughness of the way in which he had so far been handled, Clock began to surmise that they all had a connection; that in every hotel he was sent to, he would find just such a set of verbotens. The awkward thing about it was that even if he should decide to write down something to relieve his feelings when not permitted to talk to anybody, he had no way of destroying the paper without eating it. Tearing paper to illegible bits every now and then in every hotel he went to would soon be recorded against him. Even if he should indulge the luxury of talking to himself there might be a dictaphone concealed in the wall.

He was completely guarded. In the restaurant the waiter took his order without a word. In the rotunda he was immediately watched by someone in the house. If he went to go out some one followed him. When he asked the location of any part of the city he was given a guide who kept at

his elbow, pointed out in a guide-book the place he wanted to know about and escorted him back to the hotel. After he had gone to bed a hand opened the door, somebody came in, with a small battery lamp, searched his clothes, and carefully put them back. He knew there was no recourse in the law, because he was under a regime that was a law in itself; and to throw the intruder out would be a bad break.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR the purposes of this narrative it makes no difference what Clock personally did in any city he went to, or what he thought of it. He was given the identical treatment wherever he went, and barring a few differences in streets and hotels and other things, he soon came to regard one city as much like another as the compartments in a train. There never was any hitch in any of Hanslick's arrangements. Town by town and train by train he was led through Germany when he soon lost all sense of the lapse of time and did not bother much even to read the newspapers.

With nobody to talk to he could never exchange any ideas except with his co-respondent Thom in Alberta. His only consolation on that score was that Thom was sleuth enough to suspect the combination and to play up to the part. Thom must not fail to get these letters "syndicated" and to send him regularly the newspaper clips as vouchers. And with very few lapses the syndicate clips always arrived. When there were lapses it must be due to submarines.

Clock's only hope was to maintain the left-handedness of his right arm—his left arm was systematically examined in every town by a surgeon—and to so vary the style of his peculiar handwriting that even in the letter answered by Hanslick he could convey some inkling of real news to his accomplice.

Clock saw himself as a mere odometer.

"By George!" he communed to himself—was it in Frankfort, Bremen or Hamburg, heaven only knew? "they just wind me up and let me run down. That's their idea of giving me the freedom of Germany. They think they've got me for good and that if they can drive me crazy I'll be sure to blow any scheme I might happen to have up my —"

At that very moment whispering in the rotunda a thick hand reached out a letter and somebody breathed down his neck. The adult bellhop bowed and with a flicker of covert intelligence over his somewhat simian face withdrew to his post of observation. He watched Clock as he opened and read the letter; saw him crumple it and his face twitch into almost a scream of discovery; saw him scud over the rotunda looking for somebody to whom he might break the news.



He whipped out his pipe and the same hand lighted a match. Whose?