

Yet after all he had dismissed such suspicion as utterly absurd. To suspect Lewin Rodwell of any dealings with the enemy was utterly ridiculous. No finer nor truer Englishman had ever breathed. The very thought of such a thing caused him to ridicule himself.

He rose at half-past eleven, and, warmly shaking his friend's hand, asked:

"Will you dine with me to-morrow at the Club?"

Rodwell hesitated; then, consulting his little pocket diary, replied—

"I'm awfully sorry, my dear fellow, but I am due to speak in Lincoln to-morrow night. Any other night I'll be delighted."

"Thursday next, then, at eight o'clock—eh?"

"Good. It's an appointment," and he scribbled it down.

Then Trustram strode out and, hailing a passing taxi, drove home to his quiet rooms off Eaton Square.

The moment he had gone Mrs. Kirby, wearing a small, close-fitting hat and blue serge walking-gown, quickly joined Rodwell in the hall.

"I've learnt something of importance, Molly. I must get away down to old Small's at once. Gott strafe England!" he added very seriously.

"Gott strafe England!" the woman repeated after him in fervent earnestness, as though it were a prayer. Then she asked in surprise, "Going to-night? It's a long way. Why, you won't get there before morning!"

"I must be there as soon as possible. Our submarines can get some troop-ships—if we are slick enough! Every moment's delay is of the utmost importance," he exclaimed hurriedly. "Ring up Penney, will you, and tell him to bring round the car at once. Then come into the dining-room and have a snack with me before I go. But to what do I owe a visit at this hour? Have you anything to report?"

"Yes," she said "I'll tell you when I've been on the 'phone," she answered. "It's something urgent, and very important. I don't like the look of things."

CHAPTER XVII.

The Super-Spy.

DAWN was breaking, chill and stormy, over the grey North Sea. On the far, misty horizon showed four little puffs of black smoke at regular intervals upon the sky line—four British destroyers steaming on patrol duty.

Beyond, as Lewin Rodwell approached Tom Small's cottage, he also distinguished two trawlers moving towards the left, off Sutton-on-Sea, engaged in the perilous work of mine-sweeping.

Rodwell, wearing a thick and somewhat shabby overcoat, and a golf-cap pulled well down, had trudged across from those branch roads where Penney had dropped him after his night run of nearly a hundred and sixty miles. He was tired, yet he plodded forward through the mud, for the little low-built old tarred cottage was at last in sight.

"If we can get those troop-ships it will be a grand coup for us. Molly is quite right," he exclaimed to himself in German. "From Norddeich they can wireless away to Pola, on the Adriatic, and the Austrian submarines can go out to meet them in the Mediterranean—providing we have no un-

dersea boats there just now."

Old Tom Small was outside his door mending a net when Rodwell approached.

"Hulloa, Tom!" cried the visitor cheerily. "Didn't expect me—eh?"

"No, sir," grinned the bronzed, wrinkled-faced old fellow in the tanned smock—tanned in the same tub as his lines and nets. "This is unusual for you to come 'ere at this 'our—isn't it?"

"Yes. I've just come from London," he explained, as he entered the little sitting-room, which smelt so strongly of stale fish and rank tobacco. "Where's Ted?"

"E's gone along to Skegness to get me some tackle. 'E only started 'arf an 'our ago."

"Well," asked Rodwell, throwing off his coat and cap, and flinging himself upon the old wooden arm-chair. "Anything happened since I was here last week?"

"Not much—only that there Judd, the coastguard from Chapel Point, seems to be always a passin' or comin' in to smoke—as though he suspects summat."

"Ah, you're getting nervy again, Tom, I see," laughed Rodwell. "What the dickens can he suspect if he doesn't see me, and you and Ted are both discreet and keep still tongues! why, there's no more respectable fisherman along the whole coast here than Tom Small," he added.

"Well, sir," replied the old fellow, "I've tried to keep respectable always, till now. And I wouldn't ha' done this dirty work—no, not for a fortune, had I known what was intended."

"No, I don't really suppose you would," remarked Rodwell with quiet sarcasm. "But, having begun, you've got to go on—or else be shot, both of you, as traitors to your country. Nevertheless, don't let's discuss that: it serves no purpose. I must get to work. Is the line all in order?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "I tested just before six—as soon as I got up. Mr. Stendel is on duty on the other side. He asked Ted if we'd seen you

lately, and 'e told 'im you 'adn't been down this week."

"Did he want to speak to me?"

"Yes, sir. I think 'e did."

OLD SMALL did not know the Morse code, except the testing signals, but young Ted had, before the war, been sent for a course to a wireless and cable school in Glasgow, on the pretext that he wanted to act as wireless operator on board a Grimsby trawler. Therefore Ted always transmitted and received messages.

When they wanted to speak urgently from Wangeroo, the German operator rang up Ted and informed him. Then Ted would walk into Huttoft, Alford, Chapel St. Leonard's, or one or other of the neighbouring villages where was a telegraph-office, and despatch a perfectly innocent-looking message addressed to either the chauffeur Penney, or to Mrs. Kirby, such as "Received your letter—Small," "My daughter left yesterday—Small," "Thanks, am writing—Ted," or "Will send fish to-morrow—T. Small." The wording of the message did not matter in the least; as long as Rodwell received the name "Tom," "Ted," or "Small," he knew that he was wanted at the end of the secret cable.

The gentleman from London passed into the stuffy little bedroom, drew aside the old damask curtain and took off the top of the big tailors' sewing-machine displaying the instruments beneath. Through the little window the grey, dispiriting light grew brighter as the dawn spread. The tide was out, and there was very little wind. The sea lay unusually calm in the morning mist. In the air was a salt smell of seaweed, and when he seated himself upon the old rush chair he could hear the low, monotonous lapping of the waves up and down the beach. That February morning was raw and chill upon the bleak, open coast of Lincolnshire, and while old Tom bustled about to get "Muster Rodwell" a slice of cooked bacon, the spy of the "All Highest of Germany" busied himself in looking through the intricate-looking array of cable instru-

ments, the hidden batteries of which he had recharged a week ago, spending a whole night there working in his shirt-sleeves and perspiring freely.

Presently, settling himself down to his work, he touched the ebonite tapping-key and in dot-and-dash he sent under the sea the letters "M.X.Q.Q.," the German war-code for "Are you ready to receive message?"

Thrice he despatched the letters, and then awaited the answering click. There was no response.

"Stendel is always so slow!" he growled to himself. Already the appetizing smell of frying bacon had greeted his nostrils. Old Tom's daughter was away. Indeed, he kept her away as much as possible, as Mr. Rodwell had no desire to have women "poking their noses into things that did not concern them"—as he once remarked.

THRICE again did the man at the end of that unsuspected cable tap out those four code-letters.

At last, however, came the answering sound upon the receiver.

"B. S. Q.—B. S. Q.," came up rapidly from the depths of the sea. "Who are you?" Wangeroo was asking.

"Rodwell is here," tapped out the spy. "Is Stendel there?"

In a moment came the answer.

"Yes. Stendel is speaking. I have a message for you."

"Mine is most urgent. Please put me through at once to J. A. J. 70."

"Your signals are good. Cuxhaven is engaged with Copenhagen. Wait, and I will put you through. While waiting will you take my message?"

"S. S.," answered Rodwell, which meant, "All right. I understand." Then he added "O. O.," by which the German operator on the island of Wangeroo knew that he was to proceed.

After a few seconds' pause the recorder began to click, and upon its green receiving "tape" there came out the following:

"J. No. 6834115. Berlin, February 21st, 1915.



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