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By this time it had become apparent even to my slow intelligence why Dawson told me so much about himself and his methods. He had formed the central figure in a real story in print, and the glory of it possessed him. He had tasted of the rich sweet wine of fame, and he thirsted for more of the same vintage. He never in so many words asked me to write this book, but his eagerness to play Dr. Johnson to my Boswell appeared in all our relations. He was communicative far beyond the limits of official discretion. If I now disclosed half, or a quarter, of what he told me of the inner working of the Secret Service, Scotland Yard, which admires and loves him, would cast him out, lock him up securely in jail, and prepare for me a safe harborage in a contiguous cell. So for both our sakes I must be very, very careful.

"You have been most helpful to me," he said handsomely at parting, "and if anything good turns up on the North-East coast, I will let you know. Could you come if I sent for you?"

"I would contrive to manage it," said I.

Dawson went away, and the pressure of daily work and interests thrust him from my mind. For a month I heard nothing of him or of Cary, and then one morning came a letter and a telegram. The letter was from Richard Cary, and read as follows: "A queer thing has happened here. A cruiser which had come in for repair was due to go out this morning. She was ready for sea the night before, the officers and crew had all come back from short leave, and the working parties had cleared out. Then in the middle watch, when the torpedo lieutenant was testing the circuits, it was discovered that all the cables leading to the guns had been cut. Dawson has been called in, and bids me say that, if you can come down, now is the chance of your life. I will put you up."

The telegram was from Dawson himself. It ran: "They say I'm beaten. But I'm not. Come and see."

"The deuce," said I. "Sabotage! I am off."

CHAPTER V.

BAFFLED.

WHEN at last I arrived at Cary's flat it was very late, and I was exceedingly tired and out of temper. A squadron of Zeppelins had been reported from the sea, the air-defence control at Newcastle had sent out the preliminary warning "F.M.W.," and the speed of my train had been reduced to about fifteen miles an hour. I had expected to get in to dinner, but it was eleven o'clock before I reached my destination. I had not even the satisfaction of seeing a raid, for the Zepps, made cautious by recent heavy losses, had turned back before crossing the line of the coast. Cary and his wife fell upon my neck, for we were old friends, consoled with me, fed me, and prescribed a tall glass of mulled port flavored with cloves. My stern views upon the need for Prohibition in time of war became lamentably weakened.

By midnight I had recovered my philosophic outlook upon life, and Cary began to enlighten me upon the details of the grave problem which had brought me eagerly curious to his city.

"I expect that Dawson will drop in some time to-night," he said, "All hours are the same to him. I told him that you were on the way, and he wants to give you the latest news himself. He

is dead set upon you, Copplestone. I can't imagine why."

"Am I then so very unattractive?" I inquired drily. "It seems to me that Dawson is a man of sound judgment."

"I confess that I do not understand why he lavishes so much attention upon you."

"Your remarks, Cary," I observed, "are deficient in tact. You might, at least, pretend to believe that my personal charm has won for me Dawson's affection. As a matter of fact, he cares not a straw for my beaux yeux; his motives are crudely selfish. He thinks that it is in my power to contribute to the greater glory of Dawson, and he cultivates me just as he would one of his shown chrysanthemums. He has done me the honor to appoint me his biographer extraordinary."

"I am sure you are wrong," cried Cary. "He was most frightfully angry about that story of ours in Cornhill. He demanded from me your name and address, and swore that if I ever again disclosed to you official secrets he would proceed against me under the Defence of the Realm Act. He was a perfect terror, I can assure you."

"And yet he always carries that story about with him in his breast-pocket; he has summoned me here to see him at his work; and you have been commanded to tell me everything which you know! My dear Cary, do not be an ass. You are too simple a soul for this rather grubby world. In your eyes every politician is an ardent, disinterested patriot, and every soldier or sailor a knightly hero of romance. Human beings, Cary, are made in streaks, like bacon; we have our fat streaks and our lean ones; we can be big and bold, and also very small and mean. Your great man and your national hero can become very poor worms when, so to speak, they are off duty. But I didn't come here, at great inconvenience, to talk this sort of stuff at midnight. Go ahead; give me the details of this sabotage case which is baffling Dawson and the naval authorities; let me hear about the cutting of those electric wires."

"It is, as I told you, in my note, a queer business. The Antinous, a fast light cruiser, came in about a fortnight ago to have some defects made good in her high-speed geared-turbines. There was not much wrong, but her engineer commander recommended a renewal of some of the spur wheels. The officers and crew went on short leave in rotation, a care and maintenance party was put in charge, and the builders placed a working gang on board which was occupied in shifts, by night and by day, in making good the defects. When a ship is under repair in a river basin, it is practically impossible to keep up the beautiful order and discipline of a ship at sea. Men of all kinds are constantly coming and going, life on board is stripped of the most ordinary comforts and conveniences, there is inevitably some falling off in strict supervision. Lack of space, lack of facilities for moving about the ship, lack of any regular routine. You will understand. Just as the expansion in the New Army and the New Navy has made it possible for unknown enemy agents to take service in the Army and the Navy, so the dilution of labor in the shipyards has made it possible for workmen—whose sympathies are with the enemy—to get employment about the warships. The danger is fully recognized, and that is where Dawson's widespread system of counter-espionage comes in. There is not a trade union, among all the eight-

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