THE FAITH OF A BELGIAN

CAPT. S. N. BANCEY

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See Page 11.

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A Romance of the Great War.

BY

CAPT. S. N. DANCEY, C.E.F.

AUTHOR OF

"Paddy O'Rourke, the Irish Emigrant," "Eleanor Dean, the Gleneveron Heiress," etc.

Illustrations by Crabtree.

Printed by
The Dadson-Merrill Press, Limited,

DEDICATED

to

My dear little Belgian Fiancée

YVONNE

Her simplicity of grace, strength of character and unswerving fidelity to honor, have taught me to better understand how the women of Belgium have borne, with such unflinching courage and valor, the trials and sufferings which this terrible war has imposed.

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PREFACE.

In presenting "The Faith of a Belgian" to the reading public, I do so with a firm conviction that it may awaken a deeper interest in our heroic Belgian allies.

The fact that all incidents involved in this story, are founded in actual happenings, that they did form a part of the tragedy marking the early days of the war, should give an important significance to the work.

My months of experience at the front have enabled me to develop the fabric of the romance, while my knowledge of the sentiment and character of the Belgian people, has proved invaluable to me.

Never can I forget the picture of suffering humanity as I saw it during the first few months of the struggle—men, women and children brought under the iron heel of the Prussian brute. It has left an indelible impression on my mind.

The Allies ultimately stemmed the tide of Hun invasion, but at what a sacrifice. The world has never yet learned half of the truth respecting the methods of terrorism and frightfulness employed, with such a ruthless hand, by the terrible "Boches," but the day of full knowledge will surely dawn.

I only hope and trust that my fellow Canadians will appreciate, in some measure, my effort to reveal to them the internal machinery of a world that is passing through the cauldron of a bitter war, with all its attendant sorrow and pathos, suffering and despair, heroism and sacrifice.

Jeanne Desirée and Joseph Vandenbroeck are living characters. They have lived a thousand times and more and their brave spirit has been breathed into thousands of hearts. The world will yet realize in a fuller and deeper sense, the magnificent bravery of the Belgian women, in common with the women of France and England and other war-ridden lands.

Sincerely yours,

S. N. DANCEY,

Capt. 207th Battalion, C.E.F.

Ottawa, Oct. 15, 1916.

CHAPTER 1

A Sinister Shadow Appears.

It was a beautiful night in August. The moon looked down from a clear blue sky and bathed the earth in brightness. A cool, refreshing breeze swept across the city and kissed all nature in a moment of gladness. Brussells lay wrapt in slumber, the monotonous peace broken only by the late and early traffic which always meet at that particular hour when most of the world is asleep.

Midnight was long since passed, but still Jeanne Desirée could not find that sweet repose for which her soul and body yearned. Her mind was not at rest. For days, a persistent rumor had circulated to the effect that Belgium was shortly to be plunged into the horrors of war. The efforts of certain sections of the press to discourage this fear, carried all the earmarks of official censorship, and, for that reason, had lost its influence with the people.

To Jeanne Desirée, war meant more than the thrilling sensation of living in the heart of a veritable hell. It meant the sacrifice of a heart and a hand that secured to her that happiness and joy which are the very essence of a life of love and devotion. Joseph Vandenbroeck would have to go to war, and it was this knowledge that forced the heart of Jeanne Desirée into a state of fathomless remorse. The mere thought of the parting was more than she could bear.

Silently she crept to the window and pushed back the curtains. Looking out over the city, she seemed to read tragedy into the quiet, peaceful lines of buildings that stood out against the night sky. Would there really be war?

Would the cruel hand of fate tear from her the only one in all the world whom she loved? Her father, ever optimistic to a fault, had endeavoured to convince her that it could not be so, but, then again, the persistency of the reports that came to the knowledge of the world on the wings of every new morning, absorbed that small measure of optimism which had been developed in her innermost soul.

And looking out into the night, her bleeding heart sought that haven of peace in which it would find sweet content. But it was not to be so. The lights of the city seemed to laugh at her in a spirit of mockery. Down in the street below, some passersby were indulging in a moment of mirth and the contrast of life stung her to the very quick.

But why shouldn't she make the sacrifice? The thought burst in upon her and flooded her whole heart and mind. If Belgium was going to war, the women of Belgium would have to endure suffering and make sacrifice, in common with the menfolk. The spirit of the whole nation would and must be reflected in each individual citizen. God only knew what the measure of that trial and suffering might be, but the women of Belgium must be prepared. The fire of patriotism had been kindled in her soul and it brought new life and vigor to her tired body.

She crept back to bed, thoroughly comforted in this new thought and theory. But, still, sleep would not come to close her heavy eyelids. The fire of patriotism was burning low again as the spirit of love forced its way to the surface of her thoughts, crushing the life out of the tiny spark so recently kindled, and bringing in its train that pain and suffering so inseparable from true devotion.

What if this war should rob her permanently of him whom she loved with almost passionate fervour? What if it should

plunge her father into ruin? Through his own enterprise and industry, Antoine Desirée had builded a most successful business. He was one of those men who had started at the very foot of the ladder, and, by dint of sheer perseverance and hard labour, had mounted just to the summit. The magnificent home, in the very heart of the exclusive residential quarter, was, in itself, one of the best evidences of his success. What if all this should be taken from them, and they should be left in poverty and want, thrown on the mercy of a cold world.

Joseph would go to war. That life, which had been given to her in sacred trust, was now to be passed into the safekeeping of the God of War. Had she no longer the right to claim it for her own? It belonged to her. The plighted word of her lover was engraved on her heart. What power had the right to deprive her of the influence and beneficence of that life? She became irresistibly sad.

The outer world was cruel and could not understand the sentiment of a woman's heart. She did not believe in the theory of the men who determined that international disputes should be settled by the sword. Sooner did she cling to the principle that true happiness finds its sweetest expression in that love which knows both reason and understanding.

Jeanne crept back to her position at the window. She looked out again into the night and it had become impenetrably dark. The moon was hidden away behind big, heavy black clouds. The overcast sky was most foreboding in its aspect. The street was plunged into a stillness that was gripping in its tragedy. The chirping of a few birds in a tall, stately oak tree, was the only evidence of life. The whole world was asleep, although at intervals, could be heard the distant stir of the early traffic which passes before the

sleeping world awakens. It was the darkness that comes immediately before the dawn, and Jeanne Desirée wondered if the waking dawn would bring new hope and courage to her aching heart.

The first gray streaks of morning light broke over the housetops, and in the dimness of the street beyond, could be seen the figures of the passing workers, hurrying to their early toil. The machinery of the city life was running on uninterruptedly. No, there could be no war. That was only the murmuring of the alarmist, ever eager to agitate humanity.

But what was that long, dark streak which threw itself against the light that opened into the far end of the boulevard. It was full of life and action, and, as Jeanne leaned far out of the window with eager eyes, she could see that it was moving towards her. Then followed those moments of tenseness which only an anxiously waiting heart can know. It was the prelude to a great life drama.

The clear, sweet notes of a clarion broke in upon the morning stillness. Music was carried on the wings of the early morning to awaken the sleeping city. The tramp of the heavy feet became more and more distinct, as the advancing troops pushed along the street.

"My God, it is true! This means war! The troops have been ordered out! It is the call to arms!" And, even as these thoughts surged through the reeling brain of Jeanne Desirée, the echo of the clarion seemed to sound the same sentiment.

She plunged back into the darkness of her room, afraid and full of anxiety. The tragedy of the incident was gripping her with sickening effect. She called to her father, who rushed into her room, followed immediately by the other members of the family.

"What is the trouble?" The anxiety of the father was reflected in his words and most depressing they were to the young, wounded heart.

"War is declared! It means war, father. The troops have been called out. Hark, don't you hear them in the street?" The girl sank on the bed.

Antoine Desirée listened intently. He approached the window and pushed back the curtains. At that moment, the clarion notes of the trumpets broke in upon him. The troops were passing his very door. He could hardly believe his own eyes. His face turned deathly pale. He knew, even better than did his daughter, what war meant to Belgium.

And, as he looked again at that long line of swinging troops, he saw a young soldier, quietly leave the lines and break into a run towards his own home. When he reached the curb, he turned and looked up.

Antoine Desirée rushed across the room to his daughter She had fallen into a light sleep. Would he awaken her? Yes, he must.

"Jeanne, Jeanne, come quickly, someone is at the door."

Jeanne Desirée almost sprang from the bed. Hers was now a supernatural strength. She rushed to the window and looked out.

"God help me! It is Joseph! He is going to war!"

Before the father could catch her in his arms, she had fallen back in a swoon. At that moment there was a heavy tapping on the door below.

CHAPTER II.

Joseph Goes to War.

When Jeanne Desirée recovered consciousness, she was looking into the eyes of Joseph Vandenbroeck. It was an eager group that had gathered about the bed, but interest was lost in all others. For several minutes she had laboured under the effects of the restorative measures, and as her eyes gradually opened, she gazed about her in apparent bewilderment until her searching expression found the face of him she loved so well.

"Joseph!" The cry escaped her lips almost unconsciously and with that she threw her arms about his neck and drew him closer to her. "Why that uniform? Tell me the truth, does it mean war?"

During his brief span of five and twenty years, Joseph Vandenbroeck had parried many thrusts, but this question placed him in the most difficult position he had ever known. Deep down in his heart, he knew that war between Belgium and Germany was only a matter of hours, but still he could not reveal that painful truth to his sweetheart. He knew just what the effects of the shock might mean to her, and, although she would have to learn, sooner or later, that the worst had come to the worst, still it were far better that this knowledge came to her by gradual process.

Jeanne, feeble as she was from the effects of her swoon, was not slow to recognize the tardiness with which her fiancé considered her question.

"Answer, Joseph. Give me the truth. I promise that I will be strong. Why are the troops leaving the city?"

Jeanne withdrew her arms, and fell back on the pillow. Those pallid features revealed the bitterness of the struggle that was taking place in her heart. The members of the family had retired from the bedside and were now forming a silent group near the window.

Joseph Vandenbroeck drew himself up to his full height. In that moment he would have given all he had in the world to avert the tragedy which might take him forever from her to whom he had sworn life allegiance. He looked again upon those sad, wan features and his heart was stirred to the very depths. Impulse almost forced him to throw himself into those arms, which, so often, had held him in the spell of love, but he knew that, soldier as he was, he must act the part of a soldier.

He presented a striking picture in his gaily decorated uniform, as he drew himself up to full height. The bright colors of his rank of lieutenant were conspicuous on his arm. Those clear blue eyes held a new expression that morning. Love and duty were there reflected as the spirit of a true patriot's soul. One would scarcely know that the heart within was burning with the unquenchable flame of love, that before him on the pillow was the figure of she, whom he loved and adored above all things else in the world. But a new force was required in this critical moment. That force might be interpreted by unthinking ones as a change of sentiment, but not so, it was the dictates of the love that reasons and understands.

Those moments of silence that passed seemed almost interminable and they hung as a mighty pall on the heart of everyone in that sick chamber. But Joseph saw at a glance that the tenseness was working indescribable pain in the heart and soul of his sweetheart, so it was that he gathered

together sufficient strength to provide an answer to the question she had posed.

"No, my little darling, chase those villainous thoughts from that little head." He was on his knees at the bedside and had taken her in his big, strong arms. "There will be no war. We are only going away for a little drill. The situation is very serious, but Belgium will never have to fight. Didn't you see the statement in the press last night. It was made in the Riechstag at Berlin, and it was to the effect that Belgium would not be drawn into the war, but that she could stand by and see the star of her neighbor burning?"

Those words had a wonderfully reviving effect. If Joseph said that there would be no war, there would be no war. Other opinions were lost beside that of him whom she loved with all the force of her young heart. There was a tightening of the arms about the young Lieutenant's neck, and as she drew him to her, she kissed him. The wealth of true love was buried in that fond embrace. It was the expression of a heart to which relief had come after a long, bitter struggle.

"Oh, Joseph, I am so glad. Then you will come back to me soon. I will see you again. I thank God for that, Joseph." She kissed him again with all the fervour of her soul. "You are all I have in the world and I know that God will not take you from me."

Joseph Vandenbroeck felt ill at ease. He knew that he was committing a grievous wrong in not telling his sweetheart the whole truth, as bitter as it was. But then he knew that, in her feeble state, she could not support it. There was a battle in his heart, a battle between plain Joseph Vandenbroeck and Lieutenant Vandenbroeck. Honor as a man demanded that he answer the call of his country in the hour

of need. Honor as a lover told him that he should commit no act which would bring an atom of pain or suffering to the heart of her whom he would make his wife. What must he do. The moments were racing on, and he would have to say farewell to his sweetheart and strike out again on the path of duty.

"Should war be declared, Jeanne, and . . ."

"But you told me that there would be no war." The anguish that was written on the face of Jeanne Desirée bore evidence of the pain that was tearing and tugging at her heart. She burst into tears. "No, no, no, Joseph. Tell me that there will not be war."

The soldier lover held her more firmly in his arms.

"Jeanne, Jeanne, listen to me. There, there don't cry like that. Listen to what I have to say."

The sobbing ceased and Joseph proceeded.

"I was just saying that should there be a possibility of a war in Belgium, then . . ."

Almost breathlessly, Jeanne had drunk in the words of her lover as they fell from his lips, but her inner instinct told her that Joseph knew even more than he was telling her. She interrupted him.

"You are not telling me the truth, Joseph. I can read it in your eyes. Don't be afraid to tell me. I will be brave."

The young lieutenant paused. He knew not what to say. The other members of the family drew a little nearer. A sickening silence fell over all. Joseph Vanderbroeck bowed his head. He was in deep thought. It seemed an age before the silence was broken, and he was the first to speak. Every ear was strained in an effort to absorb the words that would follow. It was as the moment immediately preceding

the pronouncement of a sentence on a prisoner who had just been tried.

"If you must have the truth, I will tell you. War will be . . ."

He could proceed no further. A cry, almost hysterical, broke from the lips of Jeanne Desirée. "Ah, Joseph, Joseph, my Joseph, don't . . don't . . don't say any more I know now."

"You promised to be brave, Jeanne." This challenge from her lover brought her back to a state of calm.

Between the sobbings that seemed to rise from the very depths of her heart, Jeanne Desirée promised her sweetheart that she would be brave. "It will be a bitter experience, but I will try. If God spares you to me, I know that we will again be happy. In anticipation of that happiness I will live through all those sorrowing months that must follow. Duty calls you to arms, Joseph, and my heart will follow you right into the midst of the strife."

He grabbed her into his arms with renewed enthusiasm. "Thank you for those words, Jeanne. I will carry them with me wherever I go. They shall be my inspiration and your sweet image shall be my guiding star." He kissed her as he spoke.

For several moments they were locked in silent embrace and then he withdrew. "Good-bye, sweetheart, be strong and brave. You can thus show your love for me." He gathered her in his arms for a last, fond farewell.

"I will be brave. Good-bye, Joseph, and God bless and keep you, and bring you safely back to her who loves you with an undying love."

He passed to the door. The other members of the family had descended before him. He turned at the threshold of the room, and with all the fervour of his soul, he threw a last kiss.

When he was again in the street, he looked up at the window, and there was his sweetheart, eager to the last moment for that presence that meant so much happiness to her. He waved many a farewell to her and then he was lost to view.

For some time she rested in silence, her eyes fixed upon that turning in the street where he had vanished from her view. They had parted. Her worst fears had been realized. Little they knew whether or not they would be brought together again. War was a terrible thing. It knew neither sentiment or pity. He was doing his duty, but what might be the cost. The future alone could tell her what she wanted most to know but that future was a sealed book. Only a page could be released at a time and how often that one page was misinterpreted and brought unnecessary sorrow. In deep meditation she laboured and she was only awakened from that reverie by the shrill, piercing blast of the bugles in a neighboring street. She watched at the window, hoping that possibly she might get another glimpse of her soldier lover.

A line of troops swung into the street. No that was not his company. She studied the faces. Fine, manly young fellows, going to war. It was a terrible thing to rob a land of its best manhood.

"He has asked me to be brave and I promised that I would. But God knows the pain that effort may cost me."

With a deep sigh she withdrew from the window. She gazed into the mirror and the palor of her cheeks almost

frightened her. The sad expression of her eyes was more than she could bear. Straightening herself up, she threw back her shoulders and raised her head to a high poise.

"Yes, I will be brave . . . for his sake I will be strong in this hour of trial."

CHAPTER III.

When Love Meets a Barrier of Steel

War had been declared. From every nook and corner of the capital of the City of Brussels, men were rushing to the recruiting bases, until the highways and byways of the great metropolis echoed and re-echoed to the tread of marching feet.

Antoine Desirée had just re-entered the house, after a tour of a little more than an hour into the heart of the city. The household was astir and eagerly they questioned him as to conditions, as they obtained, down in the centres of activity.

For a moment, the father was lost in silent thought. He had been born and raised in Brussels, but never could he recall an incident paralleling that which he had just witnessed. In 1870, there had been a little excitement as a result of a partial mobilization, but it was of but mere passing interest, as compared with the almost indescribable spirit of activity which had seized the Belgian capital.

The declaration of war had come as a bolt out of the clear blue sky and it found the Belgian people in a state of incredible stupefaction. But quickly, this condition had changed, and on the wings of a terrific wave of indignation against the Germans, there had been developed an atmosphere of enthusiasm and patriotism, in which the whole world seemed to live and thrive.

And this spirit of enthusiasm seemed to grip the father, as he explained to his family, that which he had just witnessed. Soldiers were marching to the stations, singing and cheering. The streets were congested with dense throngs of

people, everywhere flags were flying to the breeze. In front of the "Gare du Nord," there had gathered an indescribable mass of humanity that cheered as the troops swung by into the station. It seemed as though the whole world was reeling drunk—intoxicated with a new spirit of patriotism. Into that spirit Antoine Desirée could read a new Belgium and a more united people, and, for that reason, it appealed to him even more strongly than it otherwise would.

"Oh, papa, let us go into town with you and see those things." It was pretty little Marie who had made the request and the other members of the family offered enthusiastic approval. Jeanne Desirée, who had just descended, stood back by the big, stately window, looking into the street. She was silent and in deep meditation.

She was wondering if she could catch another glimpse of her warrior sweetheart, should she go down into the vicinity of the big depot. But, no, that could not be. His company must long since have left the city and was being whirled to the scene of the struggle between the German frontier and Liége. No, she would remain at home. She knew that she could never endure the test of witnessing the departure of the troops. As much as she had promised to be brave, this would be just a little too severe, at least until she had become stronger and better able to carry the burden of her sorrow.

So it was, that Antoine Desirée, with the other members of the family, took their places in the big family auto, and the chauffeur received instructions to tour leisurely about the city.

They had not gone far until they were brought face to face with the war. An officer, mounted on a fiery charger,

had stopped the car, and asked Mr. Desirée to get out. The latter obeyed the request.

"We will have to have that car. Sorry to trouble you, but the government requires all autos, horses, heavy drays, etc. We will pay you a reasonable price." It was the cold, matter-of-fact manner in which the officer presented the proposition, that interested Antoine Desirée more than anything else. Others were meeting with the same fate as himself, for, looking round, he saw here and there, first a big, heavy truck, then a fine, big limousene halted by a mounted officer and the same explanation, as he had received, was following in each instance.

The place of delivery was named, Antoine Desirée received the official voucher bearing the agreed sale price, and the incident was closed. It brought home to Antoine Desirée and his family, however, the fact that war would impose its tax on all classes of citizens. But, before delivering his car, the different points of interest in the city were visited.

The almost illimitable mass of humanity that swung through the streets was the object of unusual interest. "Vive la Belgique." "Vive le Roi." "Vive l'Independence." Frequent and varied were the cries that broke from the reeling, surging crowds. "Vive le Sang," shouted some soldiers en marche to the depot and the enthusiasm of that outburst portrayed unmistakeably the feeling of indignation against Germany and the German people.

The police agents were carefully studying this same sentiment, fearing that, at any moment, riots might ensue which would threaten the lives of German citizens and the destruction of German property. Nor were their fears ill founded. Popular resentment was soon to find a breath-piece and, so it was, that later on in the day, a few of the more tumult-

ous ones, led an attacking party against the German cafes and places of business, and general demolition followed. The police and military were powerless to resist.

Mobilization was completed in good order at Brussells. The schools and other public buildings had been pressed into service as recruiting bases, and it seemed as though the whole city shared the spirit of enthusiasm on the wings of which the organization work was carried out so successfully.

Nor were the womenfolk unmindful of their tasks. The various departments of the Red Cross Society were soon busy scenes of activity and not a soul there was, in the whole of the city, whose nimble fingers could work a needle, but that those willing hands were soon occupied in the making of comforts for the soldiers and articles that would be useful in hospital work. Large workshops and big stores turned over their entire staff to this noble work, and soon the storehouses of the various hospitals were well filled with the product of this worthy toil.

And all the while and anon, there was but one sentiment in the heart of the Bruxellois. Never for one moment did they believe that the Germans would ever enter the capital city. Never once did the women of Brussells believe that those thousands of useful articles being stored in the different hospitals, and which represented many hours of devoted labour, would fall into the hands of the enemy to be employed by German doctors and German nurses.

So profound was the spirit of optimism that pervaded the capital that anyone suggesting more than one month as the possible duration of the war, was regarded as weak-minded and unknowing. Into every department of the social and industrial life had this sentiment penetrated. In the

shops and the factories, in the cafes and in the drawing rooms, it was one uninterruppted wave of optimism.

The forts of Liége were impregnable. That was the popular opinion. This was confirmed by the reports of early victory that inundated the capital. The Belgian armies had scarcely reached the point of contact before news of triumph commenced to reach the watching, waiting thousands back in Brussells. On one occasion the Germans lost over sixty thousand men, the following day their losses were upwards of eighty thousand—and so it ran until it began to seem that the total military strength of Germany had been exhausted. It was the typical state of mind intoxicated, but it served well to strengthen the spirit of patriotism which was to be so severely tested during the months that would follow.

The more serious ones were, however, involved in the consideration of another problem. Great Britain had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium. That neutrality had been cruelly violated by the German armies. Would Britain come to the assistance of Belgium? That was the problem which developed the most serious thought. And this same problem burst asunder the cords that held it in the minds of the more sober and serious citizens, and it invaded the whole city, until Brussells fairly reeled with anxiety as to what course Great Britain would pursue. King Albert had been prompt with his reply, and never once had he faltered in his judgment. Would King George be the same? The moments lengthened into hours and the suspense grew.

Britain had envoyed an ultimatum to Germany and with that ultimatum was kindled the hope of the Belgian people. Some claimed that Britain would never go to war, but the great majority were convinced otherwise. Germany replied to the British ultimatum but the reply was not satisfactory

"Answer yes or no, will you respect the neutrality of Belgium?" So ran the British challenge and all Belgium watched in feverish anxiety.

And then the crash came. The news was flashed across the channel that Great Britain had declared war on Germany. The biggest empire in the world would come to the assistance of Belgium. Contrary to the usual practice of Germany first declaring war, as she had done with Russia, France and Belgium, Great Britain had taken the initiative and this fact earned great admiration amongst all classes of Belgians.

And so commenced the long hours of watching for the British to come. Reports had it that they had landed at Ostend. They had been seen just outside the city. Several trainloads would pass through Brussells during the night. British soldiers had actually arrived. And so ran reports. Never once did the whirling public mind pause to study conditions and thus learn when the arrival of British troops would be really possible. Military strategy so often ignores and refuses the popular demand.

And into the Desirée home this same, popular sentiment had become firmly rooted. Every member of the family was labouring in the spirit of the times. Knitting socks for the soldiers, and the making of hospital comforts took up the greater part of the day. The first consignment of wounded had already arrived and they were being cared for in the military hospital. Jeanne Desirée had been somewhat anxious at first, but this had been chased away by the publication of the first official lists of wounded. The name of Joseph Vandenbroeck was not there and she drew a deep sigh of relief.

The varying career of the Belgian armies at Visé and Verviers awakened new interest and added fresh fuel to the

The first consignment of wounded had already arrived. —See page 18.

fire of patriotism. Superiority of numbers had driven them back to the defences of Liége, but they were fighting with conspicuous gallantry and bravery.

The Desirée family was awakened early one morning by a courier who had just come from Liége. Already the great majority of the population was in flight from the fortress town, but this lad had come with a message from Joseph Vandenbroeck.

Jeanne had never accomplished her toilet so promptly as she did that morning, and when she entered the salon there she met the young courier who had brought her word of her soldier sweetheart.

"How is he? Is he well?" The courier had scarcely time to offer the necessary salutations before he was deluged with anxious questions.

Never a word did he utter, but he calmly handed over a letter. Jeanne regarded the envelope. Yes, the writing was that of Joseph, but there appeared to be a laboured effort on its face. She feared at first to open the missive but repeated assurances, on the part of the courier, that her lover was in good health, finally induced her to open the envelope.

Eagerly she devoured the words. Yes, he was well. He had already passed through three engagements, but had succeeded in avoiding the flying lead. Brief was his description of the fighting, but it was sufficient to convince Jeanne of its bitterness. "Don't worry, sweetheart, I will soon be back in Brussells. The Germans will never pass Liége. A few more days, and all will be over. Remember, you promised me to be brave." The closing words brought tears to the eyes of Jeanne Desirée, but she took on again new courage, determined to be brave.

"Where did you last see him?" Not content with the letter the eager fiancée was again occupied in offering a veritable fusilade of questions.

"I met him in Liége. He was just going into the trenches with his company. He seemed to be in good spirits." The lad was most enthusiastic in his description of the absent lover, so much so that he awakened a greater courage in the heart of Jeanne Desirée. Pressing a five franc piece into his hand, she gave him the letter which she had hurriedly written, and implored him to deliver it at all costs. Then he was ushered out into the street.

For many moments Jeanne Desirée sat in silent reverie, the letter clutched firmly in her hand. She could see the battlefield and there, in the thick of the fight, was Joseph. With uplifted pistol he was leading his men on in a charge. The bullets were flying all about him and comrades were falling on every side. But still he pressed on. His was a charmed life, it seemed, and Jeanne Desirée became almost deliriously happy under the influence of this mental vision.

Days passed and the wave of patriotism and optimism which had swept the capital in the early moments of the war, grew and increased in volume and force. The whole world was standing back in amazement as the gallant little Belgians drove back the Germans time and time again. The forts of Liége were still intact. Never once had the German War Lords thought it possible that little Belgium could have become such an insurmountable obstacle.

But the superiority of numbers was slowly but surely having a telling effect and the introduction of big, heavy guns were changing the aspect of the whole situation at Liége. News was flashed across Belgium that the forts had fallen, but the whole world refused to believe it. Brussells was con-

vinced of the impregnability of those forts and her mind could not be changed.

Francois DeRidder, a neighbor, was in the Desirée home when the first intelligence from Liége was received. He drew the family to one side, apparently to reveal a great secret to them. The low whisper in which he spoke gave out this same impression.

"It isn't true and I'll tell you why," he commenced. Pressing a finger to his lips as though to advise complete secrecy, he proceeded. "Don't say a word about this, but I have been in those forts at Liége, and I know that they are impregnable. There is an affair that rises and then falls again out of sight. I have it, too, from a high authority that there isn't a gun in the whole world big enough to destroy those forts."

The family withdrew in silence. The new secret had made them unusually confident. Nothing in all the world could now convince them otherwise. The report that the forts at Liége had fallen was the work of an alarmist. It was absolutely impossible. And in a moment of pride, Jeanne Desirée drew from her bosom the letter which she had received from her soldier lover. Francois de Ridder, ever eager to glean fresh news, listened intently as she read: "The Germans will never pass Liége; a few more days, and all will be over."

"Just what I told you," added Francois de Ridder, and, with that he picked up his hat and said his adieu to the Desirée family. Behind him he had left an increased spirit of hope and confidence. In his own heart he felt as one who had just accomplished an act of heroism.

But the forts of Liége had fallen. There was now no doubt of that. Thousands of refugees were reaching Brus-

sells, having been driven from their homes in the fortress town. Some were scantily clothed, having grabbed up only those things that were ready to hand before the flight. Others there were in bare and bleeding feet, the expression of terror imprinted conspicuously on their faces. It was a precipitous flight and with it had come those stories of indescribable cruelty which have since staggered the whole world.

Thoughts of the older inhabitants immediately turned back to 1870, when the Prussians invaded France. The Prussians had practised horrible cruelties, almost beyond the power of words to describe. And the Belgian people were convinced that they had not changed in character, that the Prussians were even as brutal now as they were then. These stories of massacre and crime, brought by the tide of refugees from Liége, only served to send Brussells reeling, in a new fear and apprehension.

There was always the comforting thought, the compensation to the tired and tried heart of the capital. Liége had fallen, but the Belgians had held the Germans back long enough to allow the French to mobilize and to permit the British to land an expeditionary force. The whole world was resting in silent awe and admiration of the heroic achievements of the defenders of Liége.

It was impossible to learn fuller details as to the fall of Liége, and, so it was, that Jeanne Desirée was plunged anew into the depths of sorrow. She knew not the fate of her lover. Perhaps, he had fallen in battle, or, perhaps, he had succeeded in escaping the clutches of the Prussians, and was still fighting in another part of the field. He would advise her sooner or later. Of that she was certain. But it was the growing suspense that was weighing her down.

She knew that it might be difficult for Joseph to send a messenger, but that he would do so at the first opportunity. But why this continued absence. Days were passing and still no word. What could it mean?

And as well founded as were her hopes, that foundation was being slowly but surely undermined by the growing absence of news from him whom she loved with all the power of her girlish heart. Could he be dead? No, that was not possible. Joseph would come back to her. He had promised that he would. But she could not understand his silence.

One evening she was alone in the salon. Her head was bowed in her hands. Before her on the table was stretched promiscuously the pages of the letter which Joseph Vandenbroeck had written from Liége. She had read and re-read that letter until, now she knew each word by heart. They were written indelibly on her mind.

Antoine Desirée entered so quietly that his daughter had not heard him. His sudden presence startled her, but not so much so, as the expression on the face of her parent.

She sprang from her seat and rushed towards him, fairly throwing herself into his arms.

"Father, there is something wrong. Tell me what it is. Have you heard from Joseph?

The father paused. He drew his daughter more closely into his arms. "No, no, there is nothing wrong, my child. It is only a headache that I have. Don't worry over Joseph, he is well, and he will write the first opportunity. Remember it is difficult to pass letters at this moment."

Jeanne Desirée was not at all satisfied with the explanation of her parent. She could read into his features that

something serious had come to pass. She kissed him with all the fondness of a daughter's love. "Father, tell me, do tell me. You know that I promised Joseph to be brave, and I will be brave."

The father was reasoning in his mind and did not answer for several moments.

"You will promise me to be brave, and—", here he paused as if to better urge complete silence . . . "you will not tell your mother . . . until . . . I feel that she is strong enough to listen."

Jeanne Desirée, now prepared for almost any blow, it mattered not how crushing, drew back from her father, and waited in breathless anxiety. Her nodding head alone satisfied the parent that his daughter would hold silence.

A deep lump came into the throat of Antoine Desirée. Tears were already bathing his eyes and trickling down his cheeks. The burden of his duty was almost too great to bear, but he straightened himself up for the trial.

"Jeanne, my child, I want you to be brave. The Germans are coming to Brussells." The father watched for the effect of his words.

"To Brussells!" Jeanne Desirée fairly gasped the words.

"Yes, they will be here in two days' time. It is official."

Father and daughter stared at each other in painful silence and through the fevered brain of each was racing a train of thought. Antoine Desirée was absorbed with the incident as it might affect the life and freedom of his own family.

Jeanne Desirée was thinking of her soldier lover. He seemed even farther away but still fighting heroically for his King and Country. But she was almost stricken with fear and anguish as she saw, growing up between them, a barrier

that became, with each succeeding day, a little more difficult. If the Germans came to Brussells that barrier would be complete. It would be insurmountable.

Her heart and mind seemed to labour in harmony. There was but one question and it came from the depths of her soul.

"Could love melt that barrier?"

She was brave enough to hope that it could.

CHAPTER IV.

Face to Face With the Foe.

When Lieutenant Joseph Vandenbroeck was comfortably seated in the train that was whirling him, with several hundreds of Belgian soldiers, to the frontier to meet the oncoming Germans, his thoughts turned back to the scene in the bed chamber of his sweetheart. Painfully did the truth press down upon him to the effect that the long dreaded separation had come and that, with each succeeding minute, he was being carried farther and still farther away from her whom he loved.

The enthusiasm of the thousands who had thronged the big station as the troops took their departure, had buoyed him up. He felt a little given to pride as he had led his company through the cheering masses in the streets. The inspiring strains of martial music had stirred up in his heart a new and still grander love of duty. Flowers had been thrown, farewells exchanged—in fact, it seemed as though he had lived in a veritable trance.

One kindly faced old lady had come down to the station to say good-bye to her boy who had been called to the colors and who was going away to fight for the freedom of his native land. The splendid spirit of pride and courage that illumined the features of that old woman had offered an example to be emulated. Brothers and sisters had come to bid adieu to departing ones and here and there, Joseph could depict a sweetheart caught up, possibly for the last time, in the arms of him whom she loved. How often had Joseph wished that his own Jeanne had been there that he might have taken still another loving farewell. But, perhaps, it was better to leave

matters as they were. The moving scenes all about him held him as in a spell, but now, alone with himself in the train, his thoughts became more absorbing. The other soldiers in the same compartment might just as well have been in another part of the train. Their presence did not weigh on the mind of Joseph Vandenbroeck.

So intense became his passion of love, at times, that the impulse to jump from the train, seized him. He would give much to have the privilege of retracing his steps of the early morning. Never once did the impression force its way into his mind that that tender farewell, taken in the midst of almost tragic circumstances, might indeed be the last. He had asked Jeanne to be brave and he must himself be brave. He struggled valiantly to chase away those moments of sadness and to be the true soldier. The others in his compartment lent a willing hand and it was not long before all were engaged in an interesting game of cards.

Hours and hours, it seemed, were employed in making that journey from Brussells to Liége. How often had he covered that same ground in a little over two hours. But now the afternoon was wearing on and the train apparently crawled on, indifferent as to whether it rested one or two hours in any small, wayside station. In the late afternoon, however, Liége was reached and there the troops were detrained and marched to a huge camp on the eastern outskirts of the city.

What a wonderful change between Brussells and Liége. In the Capital, the people were living in an atmosphere of enthusiasm that might wrongfully be interpreted as being somewhat frivolous. But here in Liége, the sober, serious faces of the populace suggested that they knew and understood, even better than the Bruxellois, what war really meant. And why not? They were many leagues nearer the scene of con-

flict, and the groaning of the big guns, distant but nevertheless distinct, told them that the Huns were battering away to force a passage to Liége.

Preparations for the defence of the town were almost completed. In the capable hands of General Lehman every detail had been studiously treated until now, the low lying forts which encircled the city, lay in waiting for those who would dare to challenge their prowess. Hundreds of men were busily employed in digging trenches around the base of the forts, barbed wire entanglements were being set up—in fact, one had but to study hurriedly to be convinced that if the forts of Liége were to be mastered, that Belgium would exact a terrible price. But the German machine was pressing on. It was impossible to hope that little Belgium, with a mere handful of men, could permanently stay the progress of the Prussian machine, although they were forcing the invader to bitterly contest every inch of the ground. In the path of the Hun, defenceless towns and villages were being razed to the ground, men, women and children were being put to the sword, all laws of humanity were being trod underfoot—and these crimes only served to stir the Belgians and to force them to even greater deeds of gallantry.

Lieutenant Vandenbroeck and his company were ordered into the firing line shortly after their arrival in Liége. The enemy was then trying to force a passage through a small village not far distant from the fortress town. Light-heartedly did the young officer and his men push along the road to grapple with the foe.

Far in the distance the heavy black columns of smoke told in language, stronger than words, of the destruction of the village. "Fierce hand to hand and house to house fighting is taking place," reported one of the scouts who had just

Lightheartedly did the young officer and his men push along the road to grapple with the foe.
—See page 29.

returned from a point of eminence where, by aid of powerful glasses, he could see and understand the situation. The reinforcements pressed on. A German aeroplane swooped over their heads, apparently gathering knowledge of the strength of the supports. Returning to the base behind the German lines it was seen to descend.

The young lieutenant knew that if he could succeed in getting his men up to the firing line before the Germans could bring up additional men and guns, that there was some hope of effecting a serious check. Behind him, he knew that thousands were following on. So it was that he counselled his men to increase their pace. On, on, ever, "en avance," they pursued the path of duty until, when almost within striking distance of the village, the Belgian line in front of them, was seen to waver and fall back. The Germans took advantage of the opportunity and dealt a terrific blow, directed at the retreating Belgians.

Lieut. Vandenbroeck detailed a platoon to fall back and, when the retreating lines would reach them, they were to hold them and to stand back as a second line of defence. He took the remainder of his men and deployed them along the roadsides, careful to secret them in the long grass and behind the stalks of wheat that had already been systematically arranged in the neighboring fields. The machine guns were well placed and the defenders waited for the Germans to come on.

So telling was the stroke that the enemy dealt on the centre and both flanks of the wavering Belgian lines, that the latter broke under the strain and retired in apparent disorder. The pursuing Huns harried the retreating Belgians and, as the latter swept by Lieut. Vandenbroeck and his party, the secreted reinforcements never once revealed themselves. The

Huns pressed on, and two or three companies of infantry had already passed the ambushed Belgians when the order was given to 'fire.'

The mitrailleuse rattled and snorted as they spread a solid sheet of fire and flame across and along the narrow roadway, pouring death and destruction into the enemy's ranks. The Prussians wavered under the terrific ordeal and not once did the fusilade of lead weaken. And while the machine guns were completing their share of the havoc, Lieut. Vandenbroeck gave the order to his men to charge those of the Prussians who had already passed along the road in pursuit of the Belgians.

Fierce and bitter was that onslaught, wholly unexpected, but so effective that the few companies of the enemy, caught thus in a trap, were mowed down as seasoned hay will fall before the reaper. By the carefully arranged plan the retreat of the Belgians was brought to an abrupt halt and they turned on their pursuers. Then followed the most startling feature of the fight, thanks to the foresight and strategy of Lieut. Vandenbroeck.

The retiring lines of the Belgians carved their way through the masses of German dead and struggling infantrymen, and breaking into a brisk run, they soon came up with Lieut. Vandenbroeck and his men scattered along the road and through the fields. The gallant young officer had been wise enough not to send all of his men into the assault.

The fire of the machine guns ceased, then followed a deathlike silence. The situation revealed itself in an instant. The Germans were disorganzied. The young lieutenant grasped the opportunity most eagerly. "Up men and at them!" His voice rang out clear and commanding. Joined by the other troops who had just come up, the Belgians, with

fixed bayonets, charged into the heart of the remaining enemy, Lieut. Vandenbroeck at their head. With revolver in hand he called wildly to his men to follow him and then plunged into the thick of the fray. Once or twice a German bullet almost trapped him, but the diligence and watchfulness of his men about him precluded that possibility. On one occasion a young Belgian trooper valiantly threw himself in front of his gallant leader and fell with the ball that had been destined for the officer.

The Germans never did like cold steel. Lieut. Vandenbroeck knew this and, for that reason, he was striving heroically to inspire as much fire and vigor in his men as was humanly possible. The effect was soon in evidence. The Prussians broke and turning, fled in disorder. The Belgians pressed on their heels, careful to bring up the machine guns so as to provide for any exigency. Not until they had been completely driven through and beyond the village, and far into the heart of the country, did the Belgians desist.

That evening, when a number of Belgian officers were gathered together on the terrace of a small cafe in the village, a big limousine pulled up alongside the curb. It was covered with dust and, from all appearances, had just completed a long, tedious journey. Jumping down from his seat beside the chauffeur, a sprightly lad advanced and opened the door. Two officers stepped out and, after looking about them for several minutes, approached the group of officers on the terrace.

"Is Lieut. Vandenbroeck here?" queried the older of the two officers.

Lieut. Vandenbroeck drew himself up to attention, and, with a graceful salute, replied, "At your service, Sir."

The visiting officer returned the salute. "I am Colonel Lagroonig, aide-de-camp to General Lehman. Our aeroplanes have just brought in a report of the operations of this afternoon in which your conspicuous bravery and strategy succeeded in scoring a notable triumph. General Lehman has asked me to come out and personally thank you for what you and your gallant men have done."

A murmur of approval passed through the little group of officers who had been eager auditors of the official statement.

"I thank you from the very depth of my heart. My men and myself have only done our duty, but we are so glad to know that we are appreciated. You can convey to General Lehman, not alone our best thanks, but also our warmest greetings." Lieut. Vandenbroeck was somewhat embarassed at first, but he finally mastered himself and his reply was greeted with a spontaneous outburst of applause. The love and esteem in which the gallant young officer was held by his comrades, was voiced in this expression.

The visiting officers accepted the courtesy of the patron of the little cafe, and a few minutes later, they were again comfortably seated in their big limousine and en route back to Liége. Felicitations were bestowed upon Lieut. Vandenbroeck most generously, once the visiting dignitaries had departed. But soldier as he was, the young hero accepted the proffered praise in the spirit of the soldier.

The evening wore on but no effort did the Germans make to recover the lost ground. Orders had come from Belgian headquarters that a general retirement was to be made during the night to carefully prepared positions two miles in the rear. It was decided that the move should be made just before dawn, that being the darkest hour of the night.

Lieut. Vandenbroeck was passing along the village street with the avowed intention of turning in for the night. His better instincts seemed to hold him back and to persuade him that he should not retire. The atmosphere seemed charged with a tenseness that was almost forewarning. "Ha! Forewarned is forearmed!" Tossing his head lightly to the side he made up his mind that he would wait up for a time, at least, to see if any developments followed.

In the cafe, where the Belgian officers had been drinking and eating, was an elderly woman. She had been most friendly with the men—in fact, a few jokes passed at her own expense had only served to increase the familiarity with which she moved in and out amongst the guests. The old lady was most gracious in her manners and her kindliness had earned more than one gratuity.

As Lieut. Vandenbroeck stood in the doorway of his temporary home, this same elderly woman came out of the cafe. The whole of the village was asleep, in fact, the stillness was almost oppressing, save for the movements of sentries here and there. She crossed the street and, passing through an open field, entered into a small opening, in the centre of which was situated one of the windmills which have made Belgium almost poetic in its reflection of the past.

Looking about her, she made sure that she was unwatched, although her keen eyes were not sharp enough to detect the presence of a Belgian officer back in the shadow. The latter was following every movement on the part of the woman. She crept silently into the darkness of the big windmill and, after searching out two lanterns which, for some unknown reason, were ready at her disposal, she climbed the old, wooden stair, spiral in its design and creaking and cracking through old age—until she reached the summit.

Lieut. Vandenbroeck followed quietly in the path of the woman. He was now convinced that he was tracking a German spy. Stealthily he crept up behind her. Once at the top, the old woman lighted the two lanterns and was just in the act of setting them as signals for the German gunners, when a terrible blow was dealt from behind and she fell in a huddled heap, the lights extinguishing in the fall.

Drawing a flashlight out of his pocket, Lieut. Vandenbroeck studied the features of the victim at his feet. He pulled back the dirty soiled waist and there, revealed to his astonished gaze, was the tunic of a German soldier. Further investigation proved that the spy was a Prussian infantryman who, dressed in the garb and guise of a woman, had been prosecuting his nefarious work. A well poised knife thrust, and the harmfulness, as well as the suffering of the spy, was ended. Lieut. Vandenbrock descended again to the open night.

Down in his own heart, he knew that the Germans would shell the village, but, waiting as they undoubtedly were for the signal from the windmill, there was no early possibility of early bombardment. He stole back to his quarters and, searching a dozen good, trusty men, he turned back into the night. Important and urgent work had to be accomplished, and Joseph knew that there was no time to lose.

It was almost an hour later when the party returned to their quarters. Not one word was passed as to what had transpired, although the presence of one or two of the engineers offered a suggestion that some work of defence had been prepared. Each man's lips were, however, sealed in silence.

A general retirement was ordered and, although the men were a little grouchy at first, because of their premature awakening, they carried out the orders in the same good

cheer and enthusiasm as had characterized their previous efforts. The troops were placed in charge of the original command and Lieut. Vandenbroeck thus found an opportunity and, in the darkness, there was no difficulty in absenting himself from the ranks.

Once the village was cleared of troops, the young Lieutenant came out into the silent street and, stealing along, using the walls as a guide, he soon reached the old windmill. The lanterns were lighted, and swinging them far out into night, he waited patiently for a reply. Far off, he could just detect the shooting of a rocket. That must be the response. He stood back in silence, watching and waiting for the bombardment which, he knew, would follow.

The guns boomed vigorously far off to the east and the young Belgian officer was soon the spectator of a spectacular bombardment. It was thrillingly impressive to watch the shot and shell bursting in the air and turning night into day with the brightness of each flash. Instinct told him that no shells would fall in the vicinity of the windmill. That was to have been the place of security for the spy.

More than once did the thought fire his mind as to how happy his comrades must be in realizing that they had escaped an almost certain death—one of those deaths that comes as a thief in the night and robs you of the privilege of fighting for your life. But, in contrast, he laughed in almost boyish glee, as he contemplated the disappointment of the German officers when they would learn that they had shelled an open and empty village. It was so much ammunition wasted.

Morning light was just breaking over the eastern horizon but still the bombardment never ceased. Surely did they know that they had spent sufficient ammunition to accomplish

the purpose which they had in mind. Lieut. Vandenbroeck tried to reason with himself as to what was the next best move. Grabbing up the two lanterns he again swung them out into the night. Almost simultaneously the guns in the distance were silent.

"And now for the charge. I see their plans now." The words escaped his lips almost unconsciously. He crept back down the old stairway and out into the night again. His duty was plain and he moved briskly to prosecute it.

Long and anxiously he waited. Day was rushing on and might even yet beat the Germans into the village. But no, what was that sound that broke in on the stillness. He placed his ear to the ground and listened. It was the beat of the horses' hoofs. The Prussian cavalry was coming on to complete the ghastly work which, as they thought, the heavy guns had overlooked.

It seemed almost an interminable time before the Uhlans entered the village and swung lively down the cobbled stone street, carefully avoiding the debris that was scattered about promiscuously. There was about them that spirit of arrogance so characteristic of the Prussian. Soon the street was filled with cavalrymen and not a few of them were giving vent to their indignation in finding that their plans had been foiled.

At that moment there was a terrific explosion. The whole floor of the street lifted into the air, carrying men and horses in general confusion and throwing them, in almost indescribable masses, into eternity.

The mines had worked splendidly. Lieut. Vandenbroeck stole out from his hiding place where he had so successfully operated the electrical apparatus which had forced the explosion. The air all about him was full of thick, heavy

smoke, almost suffocating in its effect. The cries of the wounded and dying rent the stillness of the atmosphere.

He crept up behind the wall of a cottage that was still standing, and peering into the faint, morning light, he perceived that a number of Uhlans had not been killed, that they were extricating themselves, as best they could, torn and bleeding, from the debris.

The young Belgian officer made up his mind that it would be suicide to rush into the street and attempt escape. He determined that a circuitous route would be much more feasible, and while a little darkness lasted, he would make an effort.

He was just creeping along under the protection of a kindly wall, when a second explosion occurred. Before he could find a place of security, he felt a stinging blow on the head and sank to the ground. A flying piece of wreckage had caught him. He was anxious to learn the direct cause of the explosion, but the pain in his head forbade him.

Gathering together all his available strength, he crawled on all fours in an endeavor to get beyond the confines of the village. He was just nearing his goal when a cold, stern voice challenged him.

He looked up and, as dim as was the light, it was sufficient to reveal to him the fact that he was looking into the face of a Prussian Uhlan.

CHAPTER V.

The Enemy at the Gates.

The announcement of her father, to the effect that the Germans were coming to Brussells, struck terror to the heart of Jeanne Desirée. For several moments absolute, almost tragic, silence obtained between the two. Their eyes were fixed intently, the one upon the other, but neither dared to disturb the calm.

The declaration of war had, in itself, brought a world of sorrow and bitter remorse, but had it not been that this same war had cruelly torn from her side the one whom she loved with such passionate devotion, it might have left her even a little indifferent, once the first sensation were passed. Continued absence of news from Joseph had caused her indescribable pain and suffering, but now that the Germans would invade Brussells, it appeared as though hope had taken wings in flight and left the world resigned to a terrible fate.

The horror of the crimes which the Huns had committed in other parts, the massacre of innocent women and children, the destruction of peaceful homes and the mal-treatment of non-combatants—her mind was sent reeling with apprehension. Would the Germans come to Brussells for the avowed purpose of killing the inhabitants and destroying the city? It was difficult to believe. If there was a God in heaven above, He would not permit the perpetration of such a grievous wrong against His children. No, it could not be so. Even if the Germans had succeeded in battering down the forts of Liége, still they could never force a road to the

capital. It was a physical impossibility. In her girlish mind, Jeanne Desirée had but one conviction: the Belgians would never allow the enemy to enter the City of Brussells—the pride of every Belgian. Joseph had told her that all would be over in a few more days, and she believed him. Never once could her mind of love contemplate the amazing strength of the German war machine.

And after these moments of reflection, she refused to believe. She turned upon her father. He had been studiously regarding her.

"I don't believe a word of it, father. It is too absurd to be true." She paused as though to study the effect of her words.

Deep down in his own heart Antoine Desirée wished that his daughter would believe the truth. In that way the burden would be considerably lightened when it came to the serious matter of apprising the mother. He must make her believe.

"Jeanne, my child, what I have told you is the absolute truth. Know that I, your father, would not tell you otherwise." He had withdrawn a few paces, apparently to leave his daughter greater freedom in grappling with the problem.

"Yes, father. You are sincere. I see that in your eyes. But you have been misinformed. How many times have I heard the rumor that the Germans were coming to Brussells, and where are they?" With a well placed emphasis, she reiterated her refusal to believe.

The father was plainly disconcerted. It was too late to play with a mere caprice. He must take other methods in order to force the truth upon his daughter.

"Jeanne, my child, if you will arrange your toilet and come with me, I will show you something that will prove the truth of my words."

Right eagerly did the daughter accept the challenge. She embraced her father and turned towards the door.

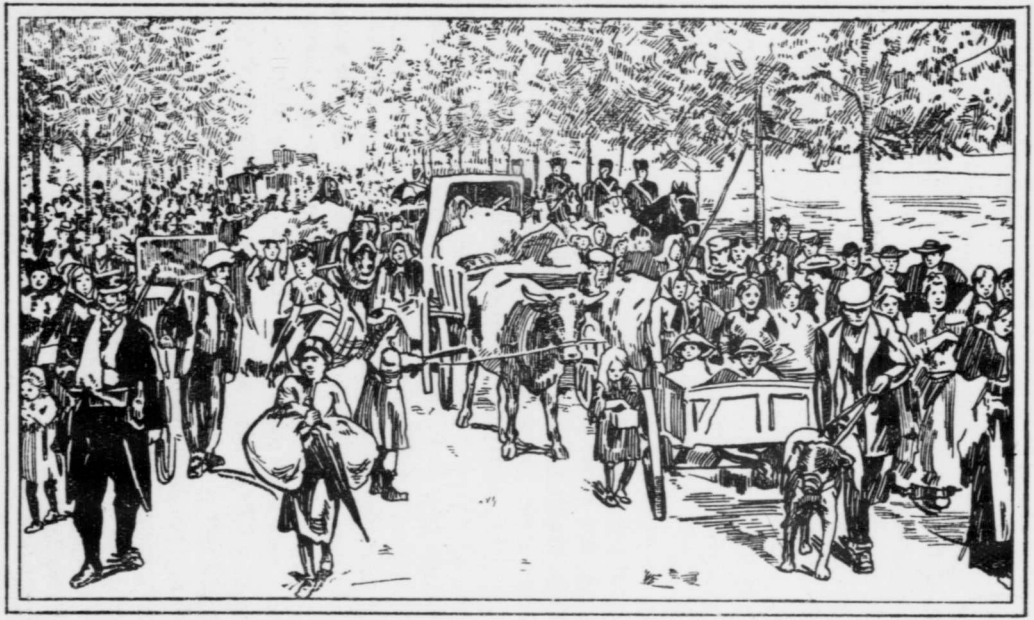
"Remember, Jeanne, perfect silence. We are going for a little promenade. That's all." Antoine Desirée was emphatic in his warning.

Jeanne returned and embracing her father the second time, looked up eagerly into his eyes. "Father, you can trust me." Before he could offer any further counsel, she was gone.

A few minutes later, Jeanne returned, dressed for the street. She had visited her mother and had informed her that she was going with her father for a short walk, that they would shortly return.

When Antoine Desirée and his daughter entered into the streets, it seemed as though the whole world had changed. The atmosphere was charged with a tenseness that appeared as the harbinger of something serious that would assuredly follow. Caught up in the swirling traffic of the street, it was increasedly facile to interpret the spirit of the people. The news that the Germans would occupy the city had spread with the rapidity of a prairie fire. Thousands of refugees were reaching Brussells, coming from the direction of Louvain. With them came fresh stories of atrocities perpetrated by the German troops.

Louvain had been put to the fire and sword. The educational centre of Belgium had been laid in ashes and ruins. Hundreds of the inhabitants had been cruelly massacred. The terror stricken refugees, rushing into the Capital, were the personification of abject misery and despair. Their



The terror-stricken refugees, rushing into the Capital, were the personification of abject misery and despair.—*See page 42.*

drawn features reflected a state of mind that bordered on tragedy. And these same refugees had kindled a fire in the heart of the Bruxellois that was burning with a fierceness beyond the power of words to describe.

In the vicinity of "la gare du Nord" it seemed as though pandemonium had been let loose. The world was rushing hither and thither with apparently no right decision as to where it was going. Troops were being rushed to the station. Already the tide of exodus from the threatened city had assumed serious proportions. But still, out of this order of chaos, a well defined path was appealing to the great majority of the maddened throng. They were turned towards the royal palace and thither they rushed.

And once before the palace it was a spectacle of indescribable wealth. The people had gathered before the palace in dense throng, so much so that every available inch of space had been usurped. They were loudly acclaiming their sovereign. "Vive le Roi!" "Vive la Belgique!" Great enthusiasm prevailed and in the spirit of this exuberance the world forgot the danger that threatened.

Finally, the beautiful big windows, opening out on the royal balcony, were pushed back, and a man appeared. He was tall and graceful and in a richly decorated uniform, presented a most attractive picture. His head was bared but the smile that lighted his youthful features was not the smile of a man with a heart free of sorrow and suffering. A murmur ran through and it grew and intensified until it became as the surging waters of a tempest torn sea, beating with wild fury against the immovable rock. The tempest broke with a force that suggested the maddening spirit within.

"Vive le Roi." As a mighty tide, those thousands of throats joined in the swelling chorus until the heavens threw

back in echo, the sweetness of that acclaim. Patriotism found expression in the singing of the national hymns and then, again, the voices called in perfect sympathy and harmony: "Vive le Roi." The figure before them on the balcony, remained motionless. He was visibly touched by this remarkable ovation. That figure was Albert, King of the Belgians.

The curtains were pushed back a second time, and a woman was ushered out on to the balcony. Frail and meagre she appeared, while her beauty was bathed in the veil of a sadness that left its impress on the wan features. The people accorded a magnificent reception to this woman who, robed simply but tastefully, bowed gracefully in acknowledgement. The spontaniety and enthusiasm of that acclamation brought tears to her eyes. It was Elizabeth, Queen of the Belgians. By the side of her husband King she too rested in silence as the applause continued with unabating vigor.

Finally the hand of the King was raised as though in benediction. Perfect silence reigned, a silence that seemed fraught with a history making force. His Majesty would like to say a few words.

For days, the apprehension of the Bruxellois had grown and developed until it had almost reached the breaking point. Rumour had it that the King and government would be moved to Antwerp and that the money from the local bank coffers had already been transferred to that point for greater security. This alone had precipitated a near panic involving a rush on the banks, the depositors eager to withdraw their funds. Rumor had worked the people into frenzy, but, now that the King would speak to his people, a perfect calm ensued.

"I have come to say adieu to my beloved people. Her Majesty will go with me to Antwerp, but we promise to come

back to you soon. It is not without feelings of bitter sorrow that we quit the Capital, but military strategy demands that it must be so for a little time. Our fatherland is passing through the most critical pass in its history, but my love and confidence in my dear people tell me that every Belgian will be prepared to make whatever sacrifice necessary to meet the exigencies of the occasion.

"I ask you to be calm and brave, worthy of the highest traditions of our forefathers, those men who went through fire and blood to gain for us that immortal liberty which we, as a people, enjoy. That same precious liberty is threatened again, but every vestige of physical and moral strength will be employed in that noble effort to protect and maintain it."

The words of the King were as incense on the altar of patriotism. Every soul was fired with the potency of that message and every heart breathed a new and stronger love for that man into whose hands their destinies had been given. Then followed an expression of that love and appreciation which shook the very foundations of the earth. As the tongue of the lightning will lash and curl in its fury, just till it has spent itself in space, so did this same wave of popular enthusiasm lash and curl in its ever increasing vigor, until it finally was absorbed in a calm that reflected a seriously thinking world.

And in that silence a new hope and courage were born, a hope which taught the beauty of a certain victory; a courage which brought a greater strength of purpose and a fuller power to undertake. The King and Queen retired, but for some time the throng remained motionless and speechless. Slowly they turned away, but as each bade adieu to that memorable scene, it was with the beauty and impressiveness of the incident indelibly printed on the mind and heart.

Jeanne Desirée and her father had found a splendid place in the forerank of the people which had enabled them to drink in more fully the words of the Sovereign. Tears came into the eyes of both as they studied the significance of those words. The truth had been forced into the young heart of Jeanne with most depressing effect. The tears that trickled silently down her cheeks were but the overflow of a well of sorrow. She would liked to have broken down completely and wept until her breaking heart could weep no more. But then again, there echoed and re-echoed in her mind those words which she cherished so dearly. "Promise me that you will be brave." She dried the tears that bathed her eyes and resolved to be strong and more courageous.

And while this battle was spending itself in the heart of Jeanne Desirée, her father was eagerly studying the faces about him. Tragedy was written there but more convincing than that, was that unmistakeable spirit of determination which illumined every countenance. New hope had been born of that spirit and that hope was developing into a wealth of confidence that would brave any danger.

Father and daughter turned away from the scene, the one laboring in the spirit of a serious problem, the other in the atmosphere of a great hope.

"Jeanne, do you believe me now?" asked Antoine Desirée, and his voice was fraught with a fervor that could not be misinterpreted.

"Yes, father, I always believed you, but it was so hard to do so. The Germans may come to Brussells, but even that is not yet certain." In spite of what she had seen, Jeanne Desirée still clung to that hope that it would not come to pass. The encouraging words of her own Joseph were ever ringing in her ears.

"Don't you think that it would be wise to advise your mother at this moment. It would come with far better grace from us, than from others." The father was only testing his daughter.

She thought for a minute before she replied. "No, father, I would not do that. It would be better to wait until we are positive. The King made no reference to the coming of the Germans."

Antoine Desirée was non-plussed. He could not understand his daughter. At one moment she could grasp the significance of the occasion, only to lose it a moment later as it would be swallowed up in the boundless confidence she reposed in Joseph Vandenbroeck.

"Good, we will wait a little while," he advised, and this policy was generally agreed upon.

So it was, that the farewell words of King Albert had inspired a wonderful confidence in the hearts of the Bruxellois. There was a growing belief that the Sovereigns had left with the government for Antwerp, merely as a matter of strategy. They lived in the spirit of the teaching that "an ounce of preventative was worth a pound of cure."

And the amazing rapidity with which this confidence developed awakened in the heart of Jeanne Desirée a confirmation of the hope which she had cherished for several days.

The following morning Francois de Ridder was again a visitor in the Desirée home. He always carried good news with him, everywhere he went. He was an optimist of the brightest calibre. And his entrance into the Desirée home seemed to inspire a little more sunshine and thus drive away some of the clouds of despair that were gathering on the horizon.

Anoine Desirée was just ready to leave, but the arrival of his neighbor stayed him in his purpose. It was not many minutes before the entire family was gathered about the big table in the drawing room. Glasses were spread out and under the influence of a good glass of wine, the situation was carefully reviewed.

"I have just seen a high government official and he told me that the Germans would never pass Louvain. A large force of English have landed at Ostend and the French have come up as well and the progress of the enemy has been permanently halted." Francois de Ridder spoke in measured tones adequate to carry conviction with his words.

"But are you sure about that?" asked Antoine Desirée.

"There is absolutely no doubt about it. The source from which this news comes is indisputable. He is a high government official, but I am not at liberty to give his name." The second assurance had the desired effect.

"One thing of which you may be certain," continued Monsieur de Ridder. "The principal station of the wireless telegraph is still intact and the government would not leave that in a state of usefulness if the enemy was going to take possession of the city."

"Just what I heard myself," interposed Jeanne. "You know Madame Dervier, the little brunette; she lives in Rue Marie Christine; well she told me the same thing. Her husband is in the War Office and she is in pretty close touch with events. It was her opinion that the King and Queen, as well as the government, would not be long absent from Brussells."

And while Jeanne Desirée was explaining, Monsieur de Ridder was occupied in developing a spirit of approval with his vigorous gesticulations of affirmation. More than once he was on the point of interrupting, so as to add a word that

might strengthen the sentiment involved in Jeanne Desirée's important statement, but with a strong effort, he succeeded in holding silence until the speaker had finished. Then he eagerly grasped the opportunity.

"Why, yes, when one thinks of it, what ridicule to think that the Germans would ever be allowed to enter the Capital."

"But they are already at Louvain, and God knows what they have not done there by way of crime." Antoine Desirée was the sole pessimist in the litle group, and he was promptly reprimanded by his wife who, for the first time, joined in the conversation.

"You always look on the dark side of everything, Antoine," she hastened to advise him. "I don't see how you can hold to your belief. What are the French and English going to do between here and Louvain. It is common knowledge that thousands of troops are being rushed into the breach." Madame Desirée took up a position much closer to her husband, there to continue her attack. "Think a moment, Antoine, my dear," with a hand resting on his arm; "think a moment, what you say is absolutely impossible. It is ridicule."

Monsieur de Ridder was on his feet immediately. His enthusiasm was too great to contain itself. Wildly gesticulating he sat in to review the whole situation, so as to convince Antoine Desirée that his position was impossible. Calling for a map, he hurriedly spread it out on the table. The anxious ones gathered about more closely, eagerly anticipating an important announcement. Monsieur de Ridder, with an all too aggressive finger, traced the line of operations.

"There, there, you see that point just this side of Louvain. Well, I will tell you in confidence—not a word of this is to pass out of the house—but there are over one

hundred thousand French and British troops in that vicinity. I know what I am talking about when I say, over one hundred thousand, and, if anything, I am a little conservative in my figures. They will turn the Germans back, and then they are going to swoop down and cut the enemy's line between Liége and Namur. It's as plain as can be. Look, follow that line and you will see for yourself."

Monsieur de Ridder paused for a breathing spell, during which moment, all expressed hearty approval of his theory, with the exception of Antoine Desirée. His skeptical mind was still laboring to grasp the possibility of his friend's plan. With a doubtful turn of the head, he drew a deep sigh that might be interpreted as being anything but an expression of approval.

His wife was quick to the point.

"Antoine, I don't understand you today; you, who have always been such an optimist. Monsieur de Ridder is right in what he says and I don't understand why you refuse to believe."

"Yes, father, a little reason would tell you that Monsieur is justified in what he says," added Jeanne. "I have heard a similar plan discussed by parties who know pretty well what they are saying."

Monsieur de Ridder came over to his friend, and laying a kindly hand on his shoulder, implored him to be a little more reasonable. There was absolutely no possibility that the Germans could reach Brussells.

"All things are possible in time of war," was the response. "You others can believe what you may, I am convinced that the enemy will occupy the Capital before many hours." Antoine Desirée thought this a splendid opportunity to advise his wife of the seriousness of the situation. He

believed in the sincerity of Monsieur de Ridder. He understood the love saturated mind of Jeanne, which refused to acquiese. For his wife and the others, it was only a mat ter of a woman's mind, quick to lend itself to a spirit of exuberance. But, in his own heart he cherished his own belief, and hung tenaciously to it.

But Jeanne Desirée was not to be outpointed. Her firm faith in the words of her lover had founded in her heart an optimism that naught could destroy. The farewell of the King and Queen, so dramatically enacted before her own eyes the previous day, was but a matter of ordinary interest. The arrival of thousands of refugees from Louvain and vicinity, bringing with them stories of horrible atrocities was but the product of fear-ridden minds. Over and above all was the encouraging word of Joseph Vandenbroeck.

And as these thoughts flitted through her mind, her enthused heart was preparing another attack in an effort to destroy the pessimism of her father.

"Why, father, just to prove to you how absurd are these stories that chase each other about the city, remember in the early days of the war. The inhabitants of the city were wild with fear and apprehension, as a result of a report that the water had been poisoned. I will never forget that scene of riot that ensued. The citizens went almost mad. You believed that report, if you remember, and what was there in it? Absolutely nothing! It was the work of the canardists." With an emphasizing snap of the finger, Jeanne Desirée turned aside after she had opened up her own soul to the party. Expressions of approval met her on every hand. The father remained silent, his head bowed in thought. He was regretful that he could not bring his wife and family to see the fact that the situation was critical, and that what

he had told them was true. But it seemed useless to attempt such a policy.

At that moment the door bell sounded and, as the servant hurried to admit the callers, every ear in the salon was strained in an effort to recognize the voices. They were soon rewarded. The callers were Monsieur and Madame Martin-Bohon, intimate friends and neighbors of the family. Monsieur de Ridder was more than pleased. The arrival of this couple was in the form of reinforcements for him. Monsieur Martin-Bohon was of the same mind as himself, and his wife was a well known optimist and enthusiast.

Most hearty were the greetings that passed between the newcomers and their friends. Additional glasses were passed and the empty ones refilled. The exuberance of the occasion was temporarily lost and all sat down to more passionately discuss affairs in general.

But the spirit of Monsieur de Ridder was not long to be suppressed. Hurriedly he explained to the late arrivals that which had passed, and he was more than recompensed by Monsieur Martin-Bohon, who immediately not only confirmed what he had said, but amplified it with a further statement of a big victory that the French and British had scored over the Germans in the region of Louvain. Intense enthusiasm was aroused by this latest announcement.

Monsieur de Ridder vied with the others as to who would claim the honour of being the first to offer the assurance that he had anticipated this, and that it was just in line with the position they had taken up in the argument.

"What did I tell you, Antoine. You see we were not so far wrong; were we?" Monsieur de Ridder rose and approached his neighbor so as to better emphasize his word. Jeanne and her mother joined in the chorus of approval,

until Antoine Desirée was completely besieged. It seemed as though his position was no longer tenable, but he persevered.

"Is that official?" He turned to Monsieur Martin-Bohon.

"Absolutely official!" replied the author, somewhat abashed to learn that Antoine Desirée, optimist and ever sanguine, had cast any shadow of doubt on his credibility. Madame Martin-Bohon confirmed the official character of the despatch which had reached the city but a few moments before.

Antoine Desirée was almost convinced, but still there lingered in his mind a doubt which he could not remove. His heart yearned to believe that this inspiring news was true, but his mind forebade it. Try, as he might, he could not chase away that doubt.

Glasses were filled again. Monsieur de Ridder had risen to propose a toast in honour of the big victory. Glasses were clinked, each countenance was illuminated with a new born hope. Confidence was supreme and immovable.

Only one heart beat out of sympathy and harmony. That was the heart of Antoine Desirée. The cold, bitter truth had crushed the will of his heart and he looked into the unknown future with a mind well trained to grasp and understand the fundamental truths.

As the glasses were raised to lips, there was a blinding crash. The foundations of the house were shaken with terrific effect. Stupefaction gripped the little group in the drawing room and they stared at each other in open amazement. A loose pane of glass fell out of a small window in the rear as a result of the detonation, and dropped in a thousand pieces on the paved court beneath.

Simultaneously all made an effort to reach the front door and look out into the street. Commotion followed the first shock. Once in the open, amazement only served to grow.

The inhabitants were rushing into the street with that spirit of frenzy which clearly portrayed their bewilderment. Everywhere the same conditions of panic were in evidence.

A man was running as though seeking to avoid a pursuing enemy. He was coming towards the group before the Desirée home. Monsieur de Ridder, ever eager for news, called to the man as he dashed by.

"What's the trouble? Why that explosion?" he asked.

The runner turned slightly from his course to answer.

"The wireless station has been blown up." And he ran on.

In a stony silence, the members of the little group before the Desirée home, regarded each other. Not a word was passed. And all about them, the air was full of murmurings, growing and intensifying, until it seemed as though a terrible storm was to break over the community. The fondest hopes of the people had been dashed to the ground.

The Germans were coming to Brussells. Of that there was no longer doubt.

CHAPTER VI.

The Way of the Unspeakable Hun.

As Lieutenant Joseph Vandenbroeck lay helpless on the ground before the Prussian Uhlan, his heart beat with a furiousness most painful. His thoughts of danger were absorbed in the reminiscences of his sweetheart back in Brussells. Would he see her again? How her girlish heart would be crushed if she were to see him in his present critical position. For her sake, he thought he would beg for mercy from his captor; but no, it would never be said of a Belgian ,that he craved mercy of a German.

Fortunate it was for the young Lieutenant that he could speak fluently the German language. Thus, it was, that he kept the Uhlan engaged, and finally interested him. He didn't know whether the Prussian believed his story or not, that he had been left behind when the Belgians evacuated the village; that he had fallen asleep in a small cottage and had been awakened by the explosion, a piece of debris having wounded him in the head. Never once did he fear that the Uhlan understood that the wounded Belgian, lying before him in a wounded state, was the sole author of the disaster that had befallen the German plans.

Lieutenant Vandenbroeck had already thrown down his arms and the enemy would be worse than brute, should he take advantage of his victim's impotency.

"Where are you wounded?" The coarseness of the man's voice would never arouse hope in the most optimistic heart.

The young lieutenant carefully exposed the wound which he had sustained, though refraining from the real explana-

tion as to how he was stricken down.

"Stand to your feet until we get a better look at you!" The command was in an unusually firm tone.

Weak though he was, the wounded man crawled to his feet, and resting himself against a supporting wall, stared straight into the eyes of the Uhlans.

"You Belgians are fools, if you only knew it. Why don't you let us pass through your country. You'd be far better off if you did. But now, as it is, you'll pay dearly for your foolishness." The Uhlan was bent upon exposing the sentiment of his race, respecting the resistance of the Belgians.

Lieutenant Vandenbroeck remained silent. The twitching of his lips was not imposed through any desire to speak, but as a result of the exposure which had left him in an almost benumbed state. The German waited a minute for a reply.

"Well, say something. Answer my question. You are not dumb." The Uhlan gave the Belgian a vicious thrust with his left arm, but happily the reach was a little too much for him and the blow spent itself in the thrust.

"I have nothing to say in that matter." Joseph was not to be lured into making a statement for which he might be punished.

But the Uhlan was insistent. "You must say something," he commanded, and it was plainly evident that he commenced to anger. Doubtlessly, the bitterness of the disaster into which he and his comrades had fallen, irritated him not a little.

"If I must say something, it must be as my heart dictates," said Joseph with never a falter in his voice. "We oppose the Germans because honour demands it. We must

defend our liberty and our independence. We thought you friends, but you have turned out to be traitors."

"Villain that you are. You call us traitors. You will pay for this." The Uhlan raised his sword, as though to strike, and then he paused. "No, you must be tried properly before a court martial. Personally, I believe that you are a spy."

The very word spy carried terror to the heart of Joseph Vandenbroeck, although he showed no evidences of it to his captor. Were he to be tried for a spy? He would be shot, because everything was against him.

The Uhlan blew a shrill whistle. Almost immediately a number of cavalrymen dashed up. They regarded the Belgian with an air that was, by no means, comforting to the prisoner.

The men dismounted and approached him. In the moments that followed, they sneered and scoffed at the unfortunate young lieutenant, and more than one poured out the vent of his fury with a stinging blow. Joseph remained silent and accepted this punishment in the spirit of a soldier. Never would he assume a solicitous attitude towards his captors. His pride as a Belgian forebade it. He knew that Jeanne would never forgive him if he did.

Explanations were passed between the first Uhlan and his comrades and the formal charge of an enemy spy was levelled at the head of Lieutenant Vandenbroeck with little hope of refutation. The cruel reverse with which they had met had stirred up in the hearts of these cavalrymen a bitter hatred and spite, and, powerless as they were to exact the penalty from the whole of the Belgian army, they were resolved to avenge themselves upon this lone, defenceless Belgian officer.

Joseph answered the questions briefly but pointedly, but he saw at a glance that his explanations were not to be accepted. The worst of his fears were to be realized, for the enquiry was immediately suppressed by the officer in charge, a verdict of guilty was found, and arrangements for the execution were already under way.

With his arms pinioned behind his back, Joseph Vandenbroeck was led along a small, narrow street, until he reached a cottage that stood out a little more prominently than those around it. This part of the village had not suffered from the bombardment so much as had other sections, so it was that the Germans had selected this homely little cottage as headquarters.

The firing squad was appointed and had already backed away to the required distance. Joseph was placed against the stone wall, securely bound. His head was lifted and he straightened himself up to his full height, resolved to die the death of a hero. And, in that tragic moment, his heart was bleeding for his brave little sweetheart, many miles away in Brussells, but whose image was ever before him and, even now, more beautiful than he had ever seen it before.

The German commander came out of the cottage and thoroughly regarded the Belgian. It was a look of viciousness, more so than anything else, so much so that Joseph wondered if they had learned the truth that he, alone and single handed, had been responsible for the severe losses which they had just suffered. But then, if this were so, he felt a little prouder and ventured to hope that this knowledge was within their keeping.

"Hound that you are! We'll teach you to respect your superiors better than that. You'll all rue the day that you took up arms against your true friends." The bitter tone

of this commanding officer robbed Joseph of any sympathy he might have aroused in the hearts of one or two of the Uhlans, who had occasionally regarded him more friendly than the others.

"Get back to your places and do away with him as quickly as possible. The sooner he is out of my sight, the better." This command was directed to the firing squad and immediately they levelled rifles and awaited the word to shoot.

But they never had an opportunity to shoot. Dashing at full speed around the corner, was a squadron of Belgian Lancers, bearing down upon the Germans. The latter were so disconcerted that many of them immediately threw down their arms. Others were bold enough to open fire, while not a few turned to flee, hoping to find protection behind some of the walls that were still standing. They, too, were outwitted, because they ran full into a number of Belgian infantrymen who were entering the village from another point, bayonets fixed and ever alert for the enemy.

It was a brief but spirited skirmish that took place before the little cottage headquarters of the German army. Those who were not killed or wounded were made prisoners and during the succeeding minutes, fresh detachments of Belgians arrived from all points of the compass convoying additional prisoners whom they had rounded up. The commanding officer, who, but a few moments before, had been so heartless in his criticism of the Belgian lieutenant, had endeavored to escape by a rear door, but he had run into a number of Belgian bayonets that were waiting there patiently for him.

Lieutenant Vandenbroeck was released and, once free, he was grabbed up by his comrades and carried in honour, to the outskirts of the village, where was found the tempor-

ary base of the Belgian staff. He explained the tragic circumstances through which he had passed, but no reference was made to his accomplishments by way of destroying the plans of the enemy and incidentally a large number of Uhlans as well.

"But how did you come to return? You were just in time to save me." Lieutenant Vandenbroeck spoke with a heart full of gratitude as he sought this information.

"Corporal Robert will tell you everything you want to know," ventured a strange officer, whom Lieutenant Vandenbroeck did not recognize.

The Corporal was called. Entering the headquarters he graciously saluted the assembled officers. As a mark of honour a special salute was accorded to Lieutenant Vandenbroeck.

As Joseph listened to the dramatic story of this corporal, his heart burned time and again with pride as he heard his own name mentioned so often as the real author of the triumph. Never once had he estimated the wonderful value of the services he had rendered to his fatherland. His life had been placed in jeopardy, that was true, but after all, it was worth the while.

The assistants, who had aided Joseph in placing the mines beneath the cobblestones of the narrow village street, had never been content to leave the lieutenant alone with the duty of discharging those mines and running the risk of an escape. So it was that they had explained the circumstances to their chief and the latter had organied a relief expedition sufficiently strong to cope with any early numbers of the enemy that might come into the village after the bombardment.

Upon their arrival on the outskirts of the village, they had secreted themselves behind a sheltering wood. A number of scouts had gone out to reconnoitre the position and they came back to report that the headquarters of the German officers had been placed in a small cottage in the nearer part of the village. No trace had been found of the missing lieutenant, until a member of the scouting party, through mere accident, saw him being led down the village street en route to the headquarters. The fact that his arms were already pinioned suggested that he would be shot.

Lookouts were placed in advantageous positions and the charge was withheld for the purpose of more closely studying the plans of the German officers. Once evident that Lieutenant Vanderbroeck was to be executed, the Belgians received orders to close in on the enemy from every available avenue.

Tears were running down the cheeks of the gallant young Lieutenant as he followed the recitation of the Corporal. Once finished with his tale, the latter extended his hand and congratulated the Lieutenant with a fervor that was not to be mistaken. The others followed in like manner, the last to grasp his hand being this strange officer, he whom Joseph could not recognize.

The officer spoke. "I have come from the headquarters staff at Brussells to inspect the different branches of the army. I was fortunately here in adequate time to become familiar with the remarkable act of courage which you have performed. I understand that this is the second time that your conspicuous gallantry has rendered invaluable service to your King and country. But, on this occasion, it is well for you to know that you have saved this detachment of the army, disorganized the plans of the enemy and incidentally destroyed

and captured a large number of Prussians. I will congratulate you now, on my own behalf, but you will hear of this later. I propose to recommend your name to the headquarters staff."

There was something unusually sympathetic in the voice of this officer. Any embarassment which Joseph might have felt at first was really removed. The warmth of his handshake, as he congratulated the young hero, was only in keeping with the fervour of his words as he explained the importance of the Lieutenant's act. He handed Joseph his card, but, not until he had returned his sincere thanks and refused to acknowledge the glory of his act, did he study the card. It bore the name of General Fernand Bourgeois, Aide-de-Camp to the King.

The success of the Belgians in this little wayside village had a more telling effect than was at first believed. It permitted the defenders of Liége to better prepare for the enemy and to strengthen the fortifications in the weaker points. Berlin had been seriously disturbed by the reverse, and began to realize that the resistance of the Belgians would be more serious than their arrogance and over-confidence allowed them to grant. More men and heavier guns were rushed into the breach and plans were laid that would provide against any further delay in the progress of the march on Paris and the crushing of France. But they had systematically overlooked the presence of a circle of forts around Liége and the same stubborn spirit as had driven them out of the village was the animating force in the trenches and the forts that girted the city.

The Belgians withdrew their forces as conditions forced them to do so, but not without bitterly contesting every inch of the ground. The policy of fire, pillage and massacre

which the Germans had initiated only whetted the Belgian steel and strengthened the determination of the men. The atrocities which were committed in the small villages lying between Liége and the German frontier were horrible beyond description. Ofttimes did Joseph Vandenbroeck wonder in his own mind how it was that he escaped death at the hands of that Prussian Uhlan who had first discovered him. There must be some good hearts in the German ranks, else this man would have destroyed him.

Once back to the outlying fortifications of Liége, Lieutenant Vandenbroeck secured leave to go into the city. His company had been ordered into the trenches which flanked the forts. The Germans were penetrating into the region under all conditions of forced marches, and so it was that outer trenches were ever occupied in detecting the presence of the enemy and driving him back.

In Liége, Joseph had ample time to better arrange his affairs. His first duty was to write a long, loving letter to Jeanne Desirée and recite to her the news that would comfort her and bring joy to her aching heart. He realized the anxiety with which she must have waited and watched for some word from him. The tragedy of the war, the bitterness of the contest, the confidence in the impregnability of the forts of Liége—these were discussed but Joseph Vandenbroeck was too modest to make any reference to his own acts of bravery and heroism. That would have to come from another source. Protestations of his love were written in that spirit of sincerity which proved that his heart beat true above the din of the battle. The letter finished, he bowed his head in silent thought and a prayer for the safety of his loved one escaped his lips. How he longed to be with her again, to gather her into his big, strong arms and tell her

how he loved her and how much she filled his life with gladness. Her image in his heart had inspired him in all that he had accomplished and he longed for an opportunity to convince her of this in language more persuasive than cold written words.

But that was not to be. His duty to his country demanded his presence at the danger point and, after all, he was fighting for the liberty and safety of her whom he loved. He knew that, as painful as was his absence to Jeanne, that she joyed and prided herself in the knowledge that her soldier lover was doing his duty as a true patriot.

Calling one of the bell hops of the small hotel in which he was located, Lieutenant Vandenbroeck asked for information respecting the letter service between Liége and Brussells. He was informed that the post was disorganized, but that a system of couriers had been established which would deliver a missive in the Capital for five francs. Monsieur would find the bureau in a cigar shop a little distance up the street, the lad explained. He thought it was the Melior cigar. Joseph set out in search of the bureau and he had no difficulty in locating it. Before the shop was a big board announcing the service and scheduling the departure and arrival of each courier. He was successful in finding a courier who was leaving that same night. He told him that he was going into the trenches with the company and pressed a five-franc piece into the man's hand. Never did he more gladly dispose of five francs.

Walking hurriedly down the street, Joseph made up his mind that it was mature time that he left the city. He was overtaken by a messenger who carried a despatch from headquarters' staff. It advised him simply that his company was

to stand back as reserves and that they would relieve the first line trenches at a given point at 11 o'clock that night.

"I've been chasing you all over the city," gasped the messenger, almost out of breath after his spirited run to overtake the Lieutenant.

"Sorry to have given you so much trouble," returned the officer, and he continued along the street.

Time weighed heavily on his hands until he left the city shortly after sundown to join his company. He was welcomed back by his men in a most kindly spirit, and soon the short respite from duty was forgotten in the multitudinous affairs which occupied his mind preparatory to taking the trenches at 11 o'clock.

Far off in the distance heavy guns were barking and behind them the bursting of the shells told them that the forts were in action with the enemy artillery. A belch of flame and deafening roar burst from the forts at intervals. The Belgians were replying. The battle increased in vigor and intensity until all about them conditions became naught but a screeching and tearing hell. Powerful searchlights swept the landscape for miles around as the defenders searched diligently for any German infantry that might be creeping up under the protection of the heavy gun fire. In this way the men in the trenches could not be surprised.

So it was, that in trailing their way through the meshes of the barbed wire entanglements and other defence works that had been constructed about the forts, Lieutenant Vandenbroeck and his men were exposed to a murderous fire in carrying out their relief to the first line trench. But they succeeded in making the shift without any loss of men.

Through the long hours of the night and the terror of the bombardment, the men in the first line trench watched

and waited for the enemy who might come at any moment to surprise them. Once or twice did they detect objects in a neighboring field, by aid of the searchlights, but these objects were not men. They were simply stocks of ripe corn which had been thrown up ready for the garner but which would now serve as cover for advancing columns.

The defence of Liége lasted many days and during those dark and murderous hours of onslaught and repulse, Lieutenant Joseph Vandenbroeck acquitted himself with marked gallantry. Ofttimes had he rescued a wounded comrade from the fire zone, crawling out on his hands in face of a withering fire and returning safely with his charge. More than once had he given the order to charge and had driven back the enemy as it had advanced in an effort to capture his position.

The varying career of the forts played a mighty influence on the lives of the men who were holding the trenches. Without food and drink for many hours had these brave men held their posts owing to the temporary disablement of the protecting fort. But the heavy guns were slowly but surely accomplishing their terrible work. The beaten and battered forts became more and more feeble until one day, the keystone fort capitulated and the line had been broken.

Then followed a reign of terror as the trench warriors fought their way back to more secure ground. As Lieutenant Vandenbroeck quitted his trench with his men, he drew a deep sigh of anxiety for he knew the danger to which they would be exposed before reaching safety. His men fell thick and fast, but they were exacting their toll of the advancing Germans. A pile of German dead was left before the trenches as a tribute to the good marksmanship of the company under command of the gallant young lieutenant. The goal was

finally reached and as the men crawled in under the protection of heavy guns, they were almost exhausted through fatigue. Lieutenant Vandenbroeck was showing the impress of the terrible strain, but weak as he was from lack of food and strenuous fighting, he had still enough strength to carry in a wounded soldier who had fallen with many wounds in his body.

One by one, the forts of Liége were falling under the destructive and demolishing fire of the big German guns. Hundreds of the garrison were being buried under the wreckage and it was a scene of carnage and chaos before these forts where the trench armies fought for their lives and very existence. Liége once overpowered, the invader turned his armies into two channels, one headed along the Meuse towards Namur and France; the other along the line leading to Tirlemont, Louvain and then Brussels and Antwerp.

Joseph Vandenbroeck was sent with the remnants of his company to the defence of Namur. He had hoped that he might have been included in the detachment that was falling back along the Brussells line and holding the Germans in check and delaying them as best possible against overwhelmning numbers. It had been the original plan to defend Brussells and there had been the glimmer of a hope in the heart of the young Lieutenant that he might have been permitted to see again her whom he loved so passionately. But fate was against him and he must follow the path of duty wherever it called him.

The decimation of the different fortress regiments before Liége had necessitated a re-organization of the army. The remnants of various regiments were welded together for the purpose of making one consistent whole. So it was that

Joseph Vandenbroeck found himself at the head of a newly organized regiment with the full title of Captain.

One evening, a little later, he was called from duty in the trenches and asked to visit the headquarters staff in Namur. He knew not what might be the purpose of this strange request, but he went. Entering the presence of the staff, he was surprised to see the same officer who had so generously complimented him for his bravery back in the little frontier village.

The officer rose to greet Joseph as he saluted.

"If you remember, I told you that you would hear from us again," he said. "Well, the opportunity has arrived. I learn with pleasure that you have continued your gallantry with marked success before Liége and for this I want to thank you. But my purpose in addressing you this evening is to present to you a medal and an honour known as the 'Order of Leopold.' It is with the best wishes and at the behest of your King, that I make this presentation.

Joseph was non-plussed for the first time in many moons. He knew not how to answer. He was overcome by the unexpectedness of this rich reward. How he wished that his Jeanne had been there to witness this honour which had been conferred upon him. He knew that she would appreciate it as much as he, and possibly more.

"I don't know how to thank you for the honour." He stumbled over the words in a spirit of real embarrassment.

"No thanks are due, excepting to yourself," the officer assured him.

"I only did my simple duty as any other man would have done it," answered the young Captain. "I can assure you that this will be an inspiration to me in future duty and I will fight as I never fought before."

The incident was closed and Joseph returned to his post in the trenches. There he was greeted with enthusiastic expressions of appreciation, for the news of his well earned honour had travelled before him. But Joseph was not in the least robbed of his modesty in this season of honour and it was this that intensified the love and esteem in which he was held by his men and comrades.

The Germans were pushing on relentlessly. With heavy guns such as the world had never before known, and with almost numberless hosts of men, they were battering at the forts of Namur. It was only a matter of time before the crushing blow would be dealt which would break down and destroy these walls of defence which had ever been held as impregnable. And despite the gallantry of the Belgian armies, the fall occurred. Two French regiments had come up to the assistance of the fortress and, although driven back by the terrible carnage through which they had to pass, they succeeded in rescuing many of the fleeing Belgians, who were obliged to break for liberty, once the defence works had been crushed.

Lieutenant Vandenbroeck did the only thing that an officer could do under the circumstances. He saw that the fight was useless, but that there was a moment of opportunity while the Germans were occupied with the recently arrived French. He ran through the lines telling them that it was a matter of every man for himself. They could go and "God be with you and protect you" were his parting words. He was just in the act of arranging for his own welfare, when the cries of wounded men fell on his ears. He ran over to a neighboring trench and peered into the depths. There were a number of wounded. They were not of his company but they were Belgians. He hurriedly thought out the best

possible solution of the problem. To leave them there they would fall into the hands of the Germans and God only knows what their fate might be. The Prussians had so often killed the wounded that it was a serious matter to leave these poor creatures to the mercy of such a foe. They had fought for their King and country and had fallen in the fight. There was but one course to follow. They must be carried to a point of safety.

There were seven in all. Two of them were strong enough enough to assist in carrying the others. The gallant Captain picked up another of the unfortunates and started in pursuit of the retreating Belgians. He overtook a regiment and into the care and keeping of that regiment he committed his charge. Back and forth he ran, rescuing and placing in safety the wounded. The Germans had opened fire upon him, but he persevered. There remained but one man and Captain Vandenbroeck had just picked him up in the trench, when there was a terrific fire turned upon him.

They dug themselves in more securely and there they lay awaiting, they did not know what. It might be death. It might be liberty. Darkness was falling and a little aggressiveness on the part of the supporting French had withdrawn the attention of the German gunners. It was the moment to escape.

Picking up the wounded man, he started back towards the city. The forts had fallen, but the city was still shut out from the enemy by virtue of the big fortress guns that held a commanding position over behind the city, on the top of a hill. But what a perilous road of escape. The torn and tangled masses of barbed wire were lost in confusion amongst the gruesome dead. Never was there a more appalling spectacle for a man to brave. The cries of the wounded and dy-

ing were soul stirring in their pitiful tone. These men had been left to the mercy of the foe—fed as fodder into the fury of his lust to kill and destroy.

Time and time again did Joseph nearly despair. The task was almost beyond his power. Alone he might have succeeded more easily, but he would never forsake his human burden. The appealing hands that were raised in supplication as he pushed his way through the valley of death almost unnerved him, but his was a stout heart.

Almost exhausted through fatigue he reached the outskirts of the city and there he commandeered a carriage to carry the wounded man to the hospital. He accompanied the charge, nor did he leave him until placed safely under the care of the hospital physician.

The city was all commotion. The world had lost its head to all intent and purpose and was rushing about in a spirit of madness. The fall of the forts had been a crushing blow, even more so because they had been believed to be even more secure than those of Liége. The city itself would soon be in the hands of the enemy and God only knew what calamity might follow. The shells were bursting over and above with a fury that betokened complete destruction. Burning buildings here and there suggested that the deadly and ghastly work had already been initiated.

But these things did not interest Joseph Vandenbroeck. There was only one purpose in his mind. He must escape at all costs. It would be necessary to find a civilian costume and lose himself in the long and endless trains of refugees that were pushing out along the different roads seeking immunity from the ferocity of Prussian militarism.

He walked hurriedly along the street until he entered what he thought to be the residential district. Many of the

houses were in darkness, but here and there the glimmer of a light suggested that the inhabitants were either preparing for a hasty retreat or were huddling together in awaiting their fate, whatever it might be.

One rather imposing home suggested the most plausible place to find a change of clothing. He climbed the big stone steps leading up to the main entrance. Two big dogs came rushing out at him from the rear of the house, but a few kindly words and they were calmed. The commotion had, however, roused the members of the household and they came to the door.

Once in the cheerful light of the inner hallway, Joseph hastened to explain his situation.

"I am Captain Vandenbroeck of the Belgian Army. I am caught as a mouse in a trap unless I can find a civilian costume to escape. Could you accommodate me?" He waited with anxious breath for the reply.

"Only too glad to do that for you. We have already outfitted over twenty soldiers and they are now on the road." The head of the household was a most congenial figure and Joseph was soon at his ease.

The other members of the family had come out into the open of the hallway, having previously secreted themselves in a back room, fearing that the caller might have been a German.

The wife of this man approached and extended the hand to the officer. "This is terrible. God help us in our misery." She spoke as one with a heavy heart. Continuing, she explained how she had lost two sons at Liége and now that their own home was to be invaded by the enemy, she felt broken and beaten. But out of her wounded heart there crept now and again an expression of bitter scorn for the

foe that had entered in and destroyed the peace and happiness of her country. "Sals couchons!" she said time and time again. It was her estimate of the Germans.

Joseph was hurriedly supplied with a costume and it fitted him perfectly. "Yes, you and my Pierre are about the same in build," the kindly women of the house suggested. "Aside from the facial features, it would be difficult to tell you apart."

Time was pushing on but they would not let their official visitor part without a good, hearty supper. Lack of adequate food for some time had given Joseph a splendid appetite and he ate so heartily that, at times, he feared that he was bringing disgrace on himself. "Just eat all you can, my friend. It may be a long time before you have another good meal." The counsel of the host put him completely at his ease.

And further and more important counsel was to follow. It effected the plans of the fleeing captain once he was free of the house. "Remember, the town is full of German spies. You will be carefully watched, so for God's sake, don't betray yourself." Apparently the man knew about what he was talking. "This very house may be under surveillance at this very moment," he continued. "It is impossible to do as we have done without being finally detected. But speak to no one. Pursue quietly your way and, above all, do not interest yourself in any quarrel you may encounter in the streets. These quarrels are being organized for the purpose of trapping our soldier lads."

Joseph was deeply grateful to his host and hostess for the great kindness they had bestowed upon him. His military uniform would be buried, and, if, after the war, he

wished it in return they would be only too glad to comply with his request.

Many hearty good wishes were exchanged. The departing officer was wished God speed over a good glass of Bordeau, and he took leave of this kindly household. They had been friends to him and he would never forget them.

Every step, after leaving that home, was picked. Here and there Joseph could see figures lurking back in the shadow of the trees, and more than once did he witness the attempt of soldiers in civilian dress to escape but who were pursued by German spies. They had been previously tracked and their plan exposed, so it was that it had developed into a race between the fleeing soldier and the spies, and light and liberty lay at the end of the course for the soldier who avoided his pursuers.

Suspicious eyes were cast upon Joseph Vandenbroeck as he passed along the streets. Once or twice he was questioned by parties who were searching quarries, rather than information. But he pushed on, heedless of everything that revolved about him. Going into a small shop he purchased some supplies, placed them in a cloth bag which he was fortunate enough to find, and set out on the road along with hundreds of other refugees. He knew not to where that road would lead, but he was content to trust his fortunes in the hands of those who were also seeking freedom from the treacherous Hun, those who were fleeing for their lives.

Here and there they encountered small detachments of German infantry and cavalry, but, strange to say, they did not molest the refugees. The latter pushed on regardless of the presence of the enemy, although, for the great majority, the first view of the terrorizing Prussian, awakened a fear that was not easily shaken off.

Long through the dark hours of the night, the mottley crew pressed on. Old men and women, children in arms, every conceivable form of humanity was there, and all had gathered together what worldly possessions they could easily carry, and these had been thrown over the shoulders of the weary traveller and refugee, securely fastened in a sheet or bag. Some were fortunate enough to have a cart, oftimes drawn by dogs and now and again by a horse they had saved from the army. Many were the scenes of pathos that were enacted along the route. Tired and exhausted, some would fall by the wayside, while others with bare and bleeding feet forgot their suffering in a desperate effort to escape the terrors of a Prussian occupation.

Joseph was glad that there were many other young men in the train of refugees, else he would have been conspicuous and easily apprehended. This same fact gave him a new sense of security, and, tired though he was, he seemed to find a supernatural strength. Nor was he too fatigued to stoop occasionally to the aid of a more unfortunate one. Many mothers found in him an invaluable aid in moments of distress and old and young alike came to know that there was a generous heart within the frame of that young man.

Dawn was just breaking when a village was cited. Many others had already been passed, but in the darkness no one had shown an inclination to rest. They preferred the clear light of open day, now that a cruel foe was at large in the country. Whatever joy was inspired in the first faint glimpse of that distant village was rudely shattered shortly afterwards, when the shining helmets of the Uhlans were flashing in the early morning sun along the streets of the village.

The refugees entered the village with misgivings in their hearts. It was the first time that they had encountered the

enemy in the brightness of day. They feared him more by day than they did by night.

There had been evidently some difficulty in the village prior to the arrival of this latest train of refugees. Guards were rushing here and there and a systematic search of the houses was being strictly carried out. Rumor had it that a battle had occurred between the civilians and the troops, that the latter had been driven back, and that the Uhlans had just come up to reinforce.

The refugees were held up by the armed scouts and, after careful inspection, were passed along the road. Doubtful ones were pushed to one side, to be dealt with at a later period. Joseph Vandenbroeck approached the sentries with a firm step. There was naught in his actions to betray him, but how his heart did palpitate—it was almost sickening. Would he succeed in passing? That was the question of all questions in his mind. He was now before a tall, rather good looking officer. The latter carefully surveyed him, turned aside for a word of counsel with a brother officer. The second officer studied Joseph until it seemed as though his eyes had penetrated into his very soul and there was reading the truth of his tragic circumstances.

It seemed almost an interminable time before the inspecting officer told Joseph to go on. At last he was free to pass, and how his heart did leap for joy. Never for a moment did he think that joy could be converted into sorrow so speedily as it sometimes comes to pass in war.

Farther down the road, the refugees were being herded together as so many sheep. A number of officers were shouting orders to their men, but few there were who could understand those words in a foreign tongue. But Joseph Vandenbroeck realized the meaning of the commands that were being

hurriedly passed along the lines. The refugees, men, women and children, were to be locked up in a small church building until the search of the village was completed.

Off to the right could be seen the little church. It was to be the temporary prison of the refugees. Those who had fled before the enemy had now walked into his arms. What the future held for them, God only knew. They could only hope and pray for deliverance. There were scores of others already in the church building. They were citizens of the little village who had been gathered together and thrown in confusion into the confinement of this small edifice. Many were the stories of brutal treatment at the hands of the Germans, and when the newcomers sought the reason of this, they were assured that the inhabitants had committed no provocative act.

Joseph Vandenbroeck soon became the centre of an interested group. He was eagerly seeking information so as to better understand the temperament of the Germans.

"It is rumored outside that the inhabitants fired upon the troops. They are now searching the homes for everyone they can find."

A storm of protest was hurled at Joseph as he revealed to them the murmurings of the outer world. A score of voices joined in the repudiation of this vile slander. One rather elderly man, one of comely appearance, essayed to act as spokesman.

"It was impossible that the inhabitants fired upon the troops. They were completely disarmed yesterday. There is not a rifle or pistol in the entire community. It is only another German lie in order to justify their crime." The heated passion which burned in his soul found expression in those well spoken words. He was the Burgomaster and, as Joseph soon learned, he spoke authoritatively. A wave of approval

ran through the closely packed mass of citizens who had crowded as near to their chief as possible. "They grabbed us up as so many beasts of the field," continued the Burgomaster, "nor did they show respect for women or children, or old age."

The refugees soon became intimate friends with the inhabitants of the village. They were brothers in suffering and they were determined to stand together and face the end bravely, whatever it might be.

All day and all night, and far into the following day was that prison closed to the outer world and liberty. So densely packed as it was, it soon became suffocating. Men and women fainted, and bereft of food and drink at the hands of their captors, sickness soon developed and scenes of indescribable suffering ensued.

Joseph Vandenbroeck could not understand this madness on the part of the Germans. It was either a well organized effort to impress upon the people the terrors of Prussian law, or it was a well defined plan to force these innocent men, women and children into a horrible death. His efforts to converse with one of the guards was fruitless and he received naught but a cold stare but no response.

Late in the following day conditions became so painful that a small committee was appointed to interview the German officer commanding with a view to securing, if not liberty, at least food and drink.

The door was opened, letting in a stream of light, and many hearts prayed that the stream of light would broaden until it embraced the open day of freedom for them. But they were to be cruelly discouraged in that hope.

A big, burly officer appeared in the doorway. His was by no means a kindly face, but rather did it appear to em-

body all the wickedness for which the Prussians are so famed in this and other wars. He asked in a gruff voice what was wanted of him.

The Burgomaster stepped forward with the other members of the committee. He hurriedly explained that food and water were an absolute necessity, else deaths would assuredly follow. Joseph also added a few words, speaking in perfect German, in an effort to emphasize the need.

The officer turned on his heel, a sneer of contempt on his ugly lips.

"Food and drink?" He laughed with a bitterness that chilled every heart. "Food and drink?" He looked into the heart of the mass of humanity and he laughed as though well pleased with the results of his fiendish work.

"You'll get all the food and drink you want tomorrow morning; perhaps a little too much for some of you." He turned to go.

"Tomorrow morning!" It ran as a failing tide through the throngs of the unfortunate victims of this man's brutality. It kissed every lip and crept down into the heart. A little hope was kindled.

The officer was not unmindful of the murmurings of his captives, but that little sunshine of hope that seemed to flicker in the midst of a darkness he himself had imposed, did not serve to awaken even a human sympathy in his cold, unthinking heart.

He turned back again, and there he stood in the big, open doorway, a perfect picture of tyranny and depotism. Once more he laughed, but it was the laugh of one who, having given his hand to a foul deed, gloated over the ghastliness of his act.

"Yes, tomorrow morning!" There was cruelty in his voice and the spirit of hope changed into despair.

"For God's sake, tell us what you mean. Don't keep these poor, suffering creatures in eternal suspense."

It was the voice of Joseph Vandenbroeck that rang out clear in the foul air. He immediately became the centre of attraction and, incidentally, found himself the object of a close scrutiny on the part of the German officer.

"What I mean is this," shouted the officer after he had completed his inspection of Joseph Vandenbroeck. "What I mean is this. You will all die tomorrow morning, miserable hounds that you are."

The door slammed behind him as he went out. Nor did he see the terror that his inhuman words had inspired in the hearts and minds of his victims.

"To die tomorrow morning!" Joseph Vandenbroeck contemplated that warning in all its seriousness.

He knew what it meant to face death. He had never yet experienced its icy grip. And he calmly waited to see what the morrow would bring forth.

CHAPTER VII.

The Bitter Trial Intensifies.

The wireless station had been destroyed.

With almost incredible rapidity did the fateful news spread throughout the city. Brussells was doomed to German occupation. The fond hopes which had been cherished were now crushed to earth. Optimism was supplanted by a despair that was most painful in its character.

Antoine Desirée rested motionless in the centre of the group of friends before his home. Just to the last, Monsieur de Ridder had refused to believe the discouraging turn events had taken, but now that he had satisfied himself through frequent questioning, he concluded that the privacy of his own home was most conducive to the temper of his mind.

Monsieur and Madame Martin-Bohon also took leave of the Desirée family. The toast which had been in process of making, was forgotten, and the glasses of wine abandoned on the table within.

Overhead aeroplanes were hovering and it required but the glance of a moment to see that they were Taubes. Over the Royal Palace a big German air machine had maintained a careful watch, not knowing, apparently, that the King and Queen were safe in Antwerp. At different points throughout the city, pamphlets were dropped from the aeroplanes, advising the population that the Germans would be with them before many hours.

Panic seized the Capital and in the throes of a terrible commotion the Bruxellois passed many hours of unrest. Eternal vigilance was maintained in the trenches about the

city where the Garde Civique was watching and waiting for the enemy that must surely come. Along the road leading to Louvain, earthworks had been constructed, barracades of sacks had been thrown up—in fact, every conceivable means of defence had been initiated.

That night Brussells had lost its gaiety and brilliance. In the cafes and homes, absolute quiet was maintained, while the population locked themselves in with fear. So many and horrible had been the atrocities committed by the Germans in other centres, that a terror was struck into every heart with the approach of this cruel and barbarous foe.

Jeanne Desirée could no longer restrain the tears. Since the departure of her soldier lover, she had remained brave and stubbornly had she fought to drive out of her heart and mind those fears and terrors which would have reduced her to the point of failure.

But now the supreme moment had come. She spoke not a word, but quietly passing into the house, she ascended to her bed chamber, and there she poured out the burden of a heart that was filled to overflowing. She wept as she had never wept before. It was not so much the danger of German occupation that reduced her to this state of suffering, as it was the certain knowledge that, so long and diligently as she had watched for news from her own Joseph, that this would be no longer possible.

That barrier which she had feared, and which she had seen rising from its very foundation, though ever refusing to believe, had now reached a towering height and had shut out the outside world with that heart of love which beat so passionately for her. She could never endure the pain of that separation. It might be easier to carry, were she to know that Joseph was safe and that he had not been cap-

tured by the enemy, but this could not be so.

"Surely, if there is a God above, He will not make me to suffer as I do." Time and time again did this prayer escape her lips.

With her head buried in the pillows, she sobbed until the well of tears had been dried. Pains racked her body and she felt as one who had been tossed helplessly about in a tempest, only to be thrown against an immovable wall. Grief had stricken her down and, as she looked at herself in the mirror, she was horrified to see the strange expression which had gripped her features. She appeared as one hunted and hounded, the deep sunken eyes reflecting terror, and the highly fevered complexion betokening within a battle that no medical means could conquer.

Looking out into the streets, she saw the people rushing to and fro. Hundreds were passing her door carrying with them large bundles and packages of clothes and effects, which they had gathered together. They were leaving the city, fleeing before the approach of the Huns. A number of trains were pulling out of the city, laden with human freight. The exodus had now become a material thing, and, God only knew, how long these fugitives would be forced to remain in other lands before they could return to their homes in Brussells.

Jeanne had read much of the flight of refugees in other parts of the world. Her young heart had often been moved as she had studied the headlong rush of the Armenians before the cruel and relentless Turk, and how the latter showed no quarter in carrying the fiery sword of destruction throughout the land. Yes, there were many similar incidents in history, but never had she believed that she would ever have lived to witness the tragedy in her own home.

For some time she studied the hurrying figures in the streets, and then she withdrew. The resolution to be brave had again become her master and her heart beat wildly as she recalled the circumstances under which her lover had made that request of her. How he had labored to withhold from her the sorrow of the real truth, how, when he saw that it must be, how he struggled to make the force of the blow fall as lightly as was humanly possible, how he had ever cheered her with words of optimism. If her father regarded her as being too much of an optimist, he must charge the responsibility to her fiancé. It was he who had awakened in her heart that unquenchable spirit of trust and confidence.

Jeanne looked at her watch. It was after six o'clock and she knew that supper would be ready. She went down stairs and found the rest of the family seated about the table. There was not that same spirit of gaiety in the family circle, the spark of joy and comfort had gone out; Jeanne made up her mind that she would not question her father. He was already weighed down with a deep sorrow.

She quietly took her seat and silently she proceeded to eat. But her appetite had left her, and she could not eat with the same relish. She saw that the others were of the same disposition.

The silence was at last broken by her father.

"Jeanne, we have just been discussing the matter of leaving the city until the Germans are driven out. Your mother is in a quandary and doesn't really know what to do. Thousands of people are fleeing and the stations are crowded with a seething mass of tumult. What do you think, my child?"

Jeanne did not answer for a minute. She had been brought face to face with the most serious problem she had ever confronted. To leave their home and to be thrown on the cold world as refugees; it was an experience of the most trying order. If it was only a matter of a few days, all well and good, but who knew how long they would be held as strangers in a strange land.

"I wouldn't like to answer that question, father," she replied. "I must have time to think it out."

"But if we are going we must go no later than tomorrow morning," advised the mother. It was evident that she was very anxious in her own mind, but that there was a bitter struggle between the forces of the affirmative and negative as to whether they would join in the flight from the threatened city.

"Monsieur and Madame Martin-Bohon are leaving tonight. They have gathered their things together and are going to Holland." Antoine Desirée had only returned from the city and he was more in touch with the situation than the others.

"Have you seen Monsieur de Ridder?" questioned his wife. So impressed had she been with the optimism of their friend and neighbor, that did she learn that he was leaving with his family, there would be no longer any doubt in her mind. She would advise her husband to go.

"Yes, I saw him a short time ago. I do not believe that he will go at present. He says that there is a possibility that the Germans will not come into the city. He had learned from a high official source, that they would simply pass through the city, but that they would not rest." The father's statement carried conviction with it. Personally he would rather retain his family in his home and he could think of

no more persuading method than to quote the unfailing optimism of Monsieur de Ridder.

But Jeanne was not worrying about their friends and neighbors. The question that agitated her mind respected one who was not present in that family circle; nor was he to be found in Brussells. He was far away on the battlefields, fighting for his King and Country, and fighting for her, his sweetheart and his wife to be. Should she leave Brussells, she feared that Joseph would find it impossible to locate her should opportunity present itself. If she remained at home, so great was her confidence in the ability of love to pierce the greatest barriers, that she was convinced in her own heart that Joseph would reach her sooner or later.

"I don't want to leave, father," ventured Jeanne after many moments of silent thought.

"I think that you are wise, Jeanne, my child." The father was glad that Jeanne had come to his support. He felt certain now that his wishes would be realized and that they would not be forced to leave the shelter of their own home.

"Perhaps, it is best, Antoine," added the mother. "We will wait and see. If Madame de Ridder is going to stay, I will do the same." Never would Madame Desirée have it said of her, that she had been driven out by fear, when her neighbor and intimate friend had been held by courage. No, that could never be.

So it was decided that the Desirée family would not flee from the city, but that they would remain in their home, calmly awaiting their fate, whatever it might be. There was not one in the family group who had yet been given over to that sense of fear which cannot be shaken off, but which often drives men to desperation. No, they were calm and quiet, although

there were not unmindful of the seriousness of the danger which threatened.

The Desirée family went to bed to sleep that night, but eyes were not closed for long in slumber. All night long Jeanne was absorbed in deep and oftimes painful thought. Her mind would sometimes turn to the more tragic incidents, then she would be plunged into the depths of remorse, only to be lifted again into the heights of hope and optimism. The light of confidence could not be smothered. It would flicker and almost go out, only to burn again with stronger flame and more radiant light.

Next morning the family was early astir.

The whole city had been thrown into a state of commotion from which it would never recover. The Germans were already at the gate. The civic guards and refugees were falling back into the Capital at an almost incredible pace. With them came still later stories of cruelties at the hands of German troops. Aged men and women, children and non-combatants were being maltreated in other towns and villages. The inhabitants fell back in terror, recoiling from the danger which seemed so imminent to them. If these barbarous methods had been practised elsewhere, there was good reason to believe that the people of Brussells would be subjected to the same treatment.

As a man, stealthily creeping through a thick undergrowth, fearful of a ravenous beast of prey that might spring upon him at any moment, so were the inhabitants of Brussells. They lived and watched with terror ridden hearts.

Burgomaster Max with the American Minister, Brand Whitlock, had gone to the outer gate of the city to confer with the German Commander. Through the instrumentality of Mr. Whitlock, the city had been saved a bombardment. The

Civic Guards and troops had been withdrawn from the outer defence works, and had left the Capital undefended. And now it was a matter of arranging with the foe, the best terms possible to protect and safeguard the weal and welfare of the inhabitants.

It was early in the afternoon before that conference was finished. The German troops were to pass throught the city, but they were not to interfere with the inhabitants. The people were much more comfortable in mind and heart, but, still there lingered with them that doubt in which they held the sanctity of German promises. Germany had promised to protect the neutrality of Belgium, but now that sacred convention was but a mere scrap of paper. So it was, that, while the people of Brussells felt a little more secure, they were, by no means, freed of fear and apprehension.

The mere spectacle of a foe entering the Capital City of the Fatherland, and that that foe should be Germany, whom they hated and detested above all other people. Their thoughts turned to the King and Queen, who had been driven from the peace and happiness of their palace home, and were now in greater security in Antwerp, a barrier raised between them. They thought of the thousands of citizens who had already taken to flight, driven from their stricken homes; they thought of the hundreds of innocent men, women and children who had been cruelly massacred for no other reason than to satisfy a lust to kill. No wonder it was, that the Bruxellois lived in terror, notwithstanding the concessions obtained from the German Commander.

Jeanne and her mother were at the door of their home. They were carefully studying conditions in the street. Their hearts bled with sorrow as they witnessed the pathos which this world of erstwhile gaiety now portrayed. Others of their

neighbors were also at the door, and many words were exchanged, although the tenseness of the atmosphere forbade lightheartedness.

Agents were rushing through the streets, calling wildly to all the inhabitants to withdraw their Belgian flags, as the Germans would shortly be passing through the city. The tension grew and increased. One aged lady refused to remove the tri-colour, boasting that she preferred death to that disgrace. And so the flag continued to float to the breeze.

Two peasants came rushing up. They were almost laboring for breath, so briskly had they run. They were immediately surrounded by an anxious group.

"The Germans are here. We have seen them." There was something of hysteria in their voices.

The listeners refused to believe. More than one essayed to question the newcomers.

"Is that right, what you say, or are you only bluffing?" More than once was the query posed.

And it was always the same response. "Yes, we are telling you the truth. We passed them in the outskirts of the city. They are perfectly harmless. They didn't bother us at all"

"Why here's one coming down the street!" The peasant pointed excitedly towards one end of the long, narrrow thoroughfare.

It was only too true. Mounted on a spirited horse, a Uhlan was riding towards the little group. As he passed along the street the inhabitants slunk into the protection of their doorways, fearing that he might do them injury.

The cavalryman rode into the midst of the anxious group. A tremor of fear ran through every heart. They were face to face with the enemy.

"Can you show me 'la gare du Nord'?" asked the German in a voice that was by no means threatening.

All eager to comply with his request, feeling that congeniality was the better means, a score of fingers were pointed in the direction of the station which he sought. He thanked them and rode on.

People rushed into the streets and a thousand eyes trailed the Uhlan as he rode along the route leading to the North Station.

Jeanne Desirée had seen a Prussian. The same foe which her soldier lover was fighting, had come to her own door. How she had feared him, and how her heart had beaten with terror, as the crucial moment aproached. But, now that she had seen him, her fear was lessened. She was more at ease.

Antoine Desirée expressed a desire to go into the city and witness the passing of the troops. All others shrunk from the possibility of so exposing one's self to danger, but Jeanne Desirée decided to accompany her father. Not one could understand her courage. It had blossomed forth in all its beauty.

Once into the city, Jeanne and her father were soon swallowed up in the dense throngs who filled the streets and open places. Along the Avenue de Boulevard, was the greater interest centered, for there would the troops pass. Already reconnoitering parties of Uhlans and motor cyclists had come into the city, and had taken up headquarters at the city hall.

As these advance parties had approached, the people had turned to flee. A wave of derisive laughter broke from the on-coming Germans.

But this danger well passed, the world was asking itself if that was the sum and substance of the enemy forces.

"If that's all there is to it, we have nothing to fear!" exclaimed one immediately behind Jeanne and her father. Almost a full half hour passed, and it looked as though there might be some reason in this man's statement.

But far up the boulevard, so faint that it was scarcely perceivable, could be seen the flying pennants of the Uhlans. The clarion notes of the trumpets were carried on the breeze until they smote the watching and waiting thousands.

On, on came the columns until they were within a few hundred yards. The suspense grew apace. Terror seized the populace.

"The dirty hounds that they are! I'll plunge this knife into the heart of the first that I see. Miserable cowards and beasts!"

It was a woman who spoke and she had taken up a position alongside Jeanne Desirée. In her right hand was a long knife and it flashed dangerously in the sunlight.

"Silence!" A score of voices warned her at the same time. Antoine Desirée turned also to admonish the maddened spirit of the woman. "Keep quiet, you know," he counselled seriously. "Others will suffer through your folly as well as yourself." Reluctantly she placed the knife back in its hiding place, but for some time afterwards suppressed words and curses could be heard emanating from that wild and uncontrollable spirit. Thousands there were of the same mind, but they found that wisdom was the better part of valor, and wisdom taught them that perfect calm was best. Had the King and the Burgomaster not counselled the same thing?

The invading army was now passing before the bewildered thousands. The infantry came in files of five, two hundred men to each company; the Lancers in columns of four with

not a pennant missing; the quick-firing guns and heavier field pieces occupied an hour at a time in swinging by, each gun with its caisson and munition carts requiring twenty seconds.

The infantrymen on march sang national songs, between each line taking three steps. The melody ceased and then followed the tramp of the iron-shod boots as they crossed the cobblestones, and then again the song arose. Bands broke forth in music and it seemed as though the swelling tide of music found rythm in the rumble of the siege guns, the creaking of the wheels, the clanking of the heavy chains against the cobblestones and the shrill, bell-like voice of the bugles.

For seven hours the army passed in incessant column. The wheels of the trams and vehicular traffic had been stopped to allow this river of steel to flow by, gray and ghost-like. It was evident that the line of the invader was interminable.

It was an amazing spectacle and at night when the forms of the men were invisible, then could be seen the sparks of fire that came from the contact between the cobblestones and the tramping feet and clanking chains. But the beauty of this scene was swallowed up and absorbed in the gripping pain which the entry of an enemy within the gates of the Capital had evoked.

Jeanne and her father stood back amongst the throngs until fatigue urged them to return to their home. As Jeanne had witnessed the exposed strength and organization of the German war machine, she wondered in her heart how the Belgians had held them back so long at Liége. She was certain that her Joseph had fought with marked gallantry and heroism and that he had contributed much towards the delay of this endless army. The greater grew the strength of

the invading force, the more intense her pride. She was glad that she had made this sacrifice for her native land. Joseph would come back to her. Of that she had little doubt. But he would come back a hero and a patriot, his duty well performed. And what pride that would create in her heart.

Once back at the house, Jeanne and her father were besieged with anxious questions by those who had feared to go into the city and witness the entry of the troops. Already that part of the city in which the Desirée family lived, was full of Germans. They were in the shops, they were laughing and singing in the streets, new columns of men were passing at almost every corner; houses were being visited in search of billets. It was naught but the glittering helmets of the foe that seemed to attract the fading sun and spread its rays about.

The Desirée family was seated at the supper table. They had become somewhat resigned to the presence of the Huns, although deep down in their hearts they held that same lingering fear which taught them that they were thrown on the mercy of a cruel and unthinking foe.

There was a heavy rapping at the door and at the same moment the bell rang out clear and long. Antoine Desirée stared at his wife, but never a word passed between them. He knew that there was little else in the streets but German soldiers.

The door opened and the gruff voice of a German officer broke in upon them.

"I want lodgings for forty men," he declared. "I must look over the house."

Antoine Desirée rose to go to the meeting of the Prussian.

Their home was to become a lodging house for German officers and soldiers. God only knew whether or not they would develop those drunken orgies which had been responsible for much of the crime.

It was not a pleasant situation to contemplate.

CHAPTER VIII.

Joseph Finds That Revenge is Sweet.

Long through the dark hours of the night did the terror-stricken mass of humanity, so closely packed in between the four walls of that small church building, watch and wait for the dawn.

They were to be murdered in cruel blood. Could it be possible that the heart of man could conceive so heinous a crime. Men, women and children had been thrown together in confusion and now they were clinging to each other with a tenacity which betokened their common suffering.

The awful suspense of those moments gnawed at the heart and soul with such incessant fury that long before the dawn broke, they were praying that some kindlier death would come to rescue them from the savage hands of a barbarous foe.

Joseph Vandenbroeck retained his perfect calm and his brave spirit flitted through the crowded edifice as an angel of peace, here consoling and there administering to the craving passions of a torn and bruised heart. His own soul was born down with a sorrow that was deeper than words, but for the sake of the suffering ones about him he would be brave and persist just to the bitter end.

How many times that night, as he lay back with his head cushioned on a little pile of straw, did a vision pass before his eyes. Heavy with sleep, he would almost sink back into unconsciousness, and in that moment of a flickering light, he could see again Jeanne Desirée. Never had she appeared so beautiful as she did in those moments of reverie. Her arms were outstretched to him and the appealing spirit which was

so gracefully impressed on her sweet face, told him that she was watching and waiting for him.

If he could only break down the barriers that had been placed against him, he would go to her and rescue her from the tyranny of the same foe who had thrust him into the gloom and suffering of this tiny prison. He had ever loved his sweetheart, yes, even more than he had ever dared to tell her, but if fate spared him to return to her, he would cherish her as only one can cherish a love that was all but taken from him.

And as his soul revelled in the ecstasy of these happier thoughts, he forgot the trial and the suffering of which he was a victim, in common with the unfortunates all about him.

And then he would awaken to the cold, stubborn truth of it all, and how his heart would beat wildly as this one joy would be snatched from him. He would turn to aid the weaker ones, the women and children, and his calm and appeasing manner was, in itself, a balm to many an aching soul.

The night wore on. The cold, grey streaks of dawn were just throwing their rays against the windows to the east. How they longed for the warmth of that sunshine which would, at least, bring comfort to their cold and suffering bodies. The day was breaking and it bade fair to be a day of brightness and warmth. How that sunshine would be mocked by the cruel, awe-inspiring events that were unfolding themselves in its very radiance.

At last the fatal hour had arived. The door was opened, and as the clanking chains that had held it secure, fell to the paved floor, the restless souls within fell back in horror. The fresh air that forced its way in by the open door was refreshing, but the lungs that breathed it had been so long poisoned

by the foul atmosphere of the tightly closed prison, that the mixture brought an unpleasant taste to the lips.

The same big, burly officer was in the doorway. Behind him were grouped a number of other officers.

"Bring the hounds out!" he commanded and, immediately, a number of soldiers crowded into the narrow space and started forcing the poor victims into the street.

Once into the open, the women and children were separated from the men, and the latter were sent rushing down the street with the warning ring in their ears, that, at a given word, the quick-firing guns would be turned upon them. The mittrailleuse had already been placed in position.

So many were weak from the loss of food and drink, that their tired bodies could not support a spirited race for life. Others gathered together their last vestige of physical force and made a superhuman attempt to escape the terror of the Huns. Joseph Vandenbroeck, young as he was, found a new strength as he set out along the perilous road. He knew that it was a race between life and death, and that, at the other end, would be found the liberty and happiness for which his heart longed.

The women and children stook back in horror, their cries piercing the heavens as the officer gave the command to open fire. The rattle of the mittrailleuse was to them as death music and they turned their backs upon the horrible scene that was being enacted in the roadway not far from them.

Scores of the poor, unfortunate victims of Prussian barbarism were falling with bullets in their worn bodies. Others were stumbling over the prostrate forms of friends and others who had been stricken down in their path. And over and above, the shrill, piercing, almost whistling effect of the bullets made their feet heavy and unable to continue.

Joseph Vandenbroeck had fallen flat as he heard the first ball sweep over his head. There was a perfect fusilade, tearing, ripping, exacting its tolls in these unfortunate victims of the assassins. Slowly, but keeping well to the ground, he crawled along, his moving form hidden by the walls of bodies thrown up behind him, as they had fallen in confusion.

On and on he crept until he succeeded in reaching the cover of a big tree. There, he rested a moment, and then, with a flying leap, cleared the hedge that stood between him and the open field, and ran briskly towards the open country. Often did he turn back to see if he was being pursued, but it was evident that he had eluded the watchful eyes of the gunners whose duty it was to kill and massacre as many as possible.

He had abandoned himself to a brisk walk, and thus he continued until the rising smoke of a homestead a short distance away, told him that he had, at last, found evidence of life. The other homes along the road had been, as far as he could see, evacuated and the inhabitants in flight.

The farm house was reached and the kindly face of a Belgian peasant greeted him at the door. Joseph asked for food and drink, and both were soon placed at his disposal. How long he ate, he did not know, but it seemed to him that he would never be able to appease the hunger which had, for so many hours, gnawed at his stomach and almost driven him mad.

"Have the Germans passed by here?" demanded Joseph, once he had satisfied himeslf and was sitting back in an easy chair enjoying a cigar which his kindly host had proffered him.

"I have just seen a few Uhlans, that's all," was the response. "They haven't had time to get up through here

very much as yet. They must finish with Namur before they come this way."

"Finish with Namur?" The curiosity of Joseph was fully aroused. "Have they not yet occupied the city? The forts have all fallen."

The peasant shook his head doubtfully, but, after a few further minutes of conversation, it was evident that this man was discussing the actual events as the ordinary misleading mind will develop them. It would be cruel to disabuse him of the belief that Namur was still intact, although, on the other hand it would be criminal to keep him in ignorance and allow him to fall into the hands of the enemy. Yes, he would advise him.

And as Joseph recited the story of the fall of Namur, and the terrible carnage which ensued before the forts, tears bathed the eyes of this big, strong peasant. He could read into the story of the destruction of the forts of Namur, the destruction of his own hope and happiness.

"But that is not all," continued Joseph, and the host leaned forward eager to drink in each word. "The Germans have just massacred over two hundred in the village a few miles down the road, and it would be well for you to flee for your life."

The peasant regarded Joseph in open amazement. Already, he had sent his wife and children on so as to be placed in the care of some friends at Antwerp. And now, the moment had come for his departure. He had never believed that it would come so soon.

Anxiously did he question his guest, until he learned all the facts associated with the killing of the men inhabitants of his neighboring village. Many he had know there, and, doubtless, a large number of his friends perished.

It did not require many minutes for the peasant to prepare his travelling kit. It consisted of a big sheet, filled with clothes and food. The horse was hitched to the cart, and into this rather slow and tortureous vehicle did Joseph climb to take a place beside his new found friend.

Along the road they trudged, the peasant explaining that if they followed this course sufficiently long, they would reach Brussells. But he was careful to add that it would not be wise to consider Brussells as a destination.

"And why not Brussells?" It was Joseph's turn to seek information.

"Because the Germans will be there in a day or so. They have already passed Louvain, and, I understand, completely destroyed it." The peasant spoke with a conviction which led Joseph to believe that it was really true.

For some time they discussed the situation along the line leading towards the Capital. The Belgians, it seemed, had been beaten back from the line of Diest to Tirlemont after a bloody fight. Then, they had retired from Aerschott, then Louvain, and now they were before Brussells. Joseph was keenly interested in the recitation of happenings, as the peasant had learned them from day to day.

For some hours they continued along the highway, until they drew up before a wayside inn where, they thought, it might be well to eat something and feed the horse. It was a somewhat forbidding place in general appearance, this cafe, but the weary travellers and refugees entered. They called for sandwiches and beer and they were readily served.

They were just in the midst of their little meal, when two Uhlans rode up before the cafe, dismounted and entered. They took seats off at the other end of the little cafe. Drinks were called for and, over a glass of beer, they entered into a

discussion of events for no other reason than to impress upon those who would be within hearing, the fact that the Germans were ever advancing.

"Oh, yes, we'll be in Paris in a few days now," declared one of them. Liége and Namur are out of the way, and the other obstacles will be removed as quickly. Nothing can stop us, once we get started." With a toss of his head, he laughed as though enjoying his own reasoning.

Joseph and his peasant friend listened keenly, but made no pretense of hearing anything that passed. They would not by any means allow themselves to be drawn into the conversation.

One thing they did notice, that these two Uhlans spoke almost perfect French, which led Joseph to believe that they must be Alsatians. Nor was he mistaken for, a few minutes later, as the result of a few extra glasses of beer, they became somewhat boisterous.

"To hell with the Kaiser!" shouted one of them, and the other cautioned him to remain calm.

"I don't care if the whole world knows it. I am an Alsatian, and I will cry 'to hell with the Kaiser.' What do we care?" He was not to be silenced, so his comrade turned aside, refusing to listen further.

And the wild words of the intoxicated Alsatian continued. "I have still eight cartridges in my belt—five are for the stars and three for the Prussian officers. He rose from his seat, and, with a vicious swing of the arm, demonstrated his ability to carry out his threat.

Joseph and the peasant remained absolutely indifferent to the ravings of this Alsatian cavalryman, that is to all outer appearances, but in his own mind, he was eagerly absorb-

ing the significance of the sentiment exhibited by this drunken man.

The Prussians finally left the cafe, and, mounting their chargers, pushed on along the road over which the two refugees had just come.

"We must be getting away, too," declared Joseph, always anxious to put as many miles as possible between him and the scene of that wholesale massacre in which he had been a near victim. A few minutes later, they had resumed their journey.

For many days were the weary travellers on the road. Beaten and buffeted here and there by adverse and favorable elements, theirs was a varying career. It soon became evident that the horse and cart were too burdensome, particularly so in view of the fact that it was often necessary to pursue a circuitous route so as to avoid the Germans. They were sold for a nominal price to a number of wealthy refugees, whose automobile had been taken from them by the enemy, and who had been left helpless in transporting the goods necessary and essential to their departure.

Time and time again were Joseph and his companion tramping leisurely along a road when they would encounter a number of refugees fleeing in the opposite direction. The terror written on the faces of these poor, unfortunate victims, was sufficint to arouse fear in the most stoic heart. A change of route was made, and, again, were they thrown many miles wide of their beaten course.

"War is war!" declared the peasant once when they had found it imperative to retrace their steps and to locate a road leading off to the north, so that they might escape the possibility of harm, at the hands of a treacherous German officer who had already grossly maltreated some of the inhabitants

of the village a short distance along the road.

It was the fifth day out, when the firing of heavy guns could be distinctly heard, off in a north-easterly direction. As far as could be determined by Joseph's geographical knowledge of the country, it would be in the vicinity of Louvain, or, possibly, between that and Antwerp.

Heavy, black columns of smoke were rising on the far horizon. It was not the smoke of guns. A town or city was in flames. They had seen small villages burning here and there along the route, but, never before had they witnessed such dense quantities of smoke. Joseph made up his mind that the scene of destruction would not be far from Louvain.

Footsore and weary, they pushed on. Darkness was falling, and it would be necessary to find shelter for the night. Once, approaching the enemy's lines, it would not be the safest thing in the world to be found prowling along the road under the cover of dark. A farmhouse stood off to the right, carefully shielded by a cluster of trees. Towards this they walked hurriedly.

The doors and windows were barred. There was not a sign of life about the place. A lone dog came running out of his kennel in the rear, and vigorously wagging his tail, begged in his own dumb language for food and water. The family had fled from the house two days before, when the countryside became infested with Uhlans and other enemy detachments.

In a big, scrawling hand on the back door had been written a message in Flemish. Apparently, it was intended for a member of the family, who might possibly return. He was, evidently, in the army, and the parents thought that possibly, he might pass that way again.

"We have gone to Antwerp. Find us with Paul. Couldn't stay any longer. Terrible! Marie and Jacque shot by Uhlans. Good-bye and God bless you."

As Joseph and his peasant companion read that tragic message it made their blood chill as they thought of the treacherous character of the foe who had invaded their land. What a world of suffering and sacrifice was represented in that brief, but convincing message. It was bad enough that the Fatherland should be invaded and that thousands of the best brains and manhood should be sacrificed in an effort to drive out the foe. It was cruel beyond description, when that same foe should be so atrocious and relentless as to drive from their peaceful homes, the peasants and farmers, and oftimes destroy their homesteads and belongings.

But, when it came to a matter of destroying innocent men and women, killing harmless little ones, then little wonder there was that the inhabitants of this home, like thousands of their kind, had fled in an effort to escape the hand of the destroyer. To Joseph, the import of that hastily scrawled message, was easily interpreted, after his experiences in the field and the gruesome tragedy which had been enacted not many miles back. To the peasant, however, it carried a world of terror. He had never yet encountered any of the foul deeds of the Huns.

The barricading of one of the windows was removed and Joseph crawled through the opening, into the kitchen. A scene of indescribable chaos greeted him, conditions that pointed clearly to a terrific struggle. Blood had been bespattered against the walls and on the floors. Joseph called to his companion, and the big, burly form of the peasant soon filled the narrow opening.

He did not succeed in getting all the way through, before he sprang back with a cry of horror.

"God no! What's that I see? No, I'm not going in." The tragic setting within had brought a chill to his blood that made him shrink back affrighted.

It required much earnest pleading on the part of Joseph to induce the peasant to enter into the farmhouse. More than once was he just in the act of clearing the window sill, when the bloodstains would drive him back. At last he entered completely and a systematic search of the house was undertaken.

As far as circumstances would prove, the enemy had entered the house at night. There was every evidence of a precipitous flight from the bed chambers. What crime might have brought the Uhlans there? It couldn't have been the sheer delight of killing: it must have been to commit one of their fiendish acts, through which so many young Belgian girls have been destroyed.

That visitation of the farmhouse decided one thing in the minds of the Belgian Captain and his friend. They would not sleep there at night. They would find as much food as possible, and, then seek another place of greater security to repose.

Victuals of various kinds were found in the house and a fairly good meal was enjoyed. Once, the inner man was satisfied, they crawled back into the open. It was already dusk and, so, they contented themselves with a friendly haystack, where they soon fell asleep.

They were awakened by voices a few hours later and, looking, they perceived four or five figures moving about the farm house. Two of them were carrying lanterns. They were, at that moment, engaged in trying the various doors

and windows. At last they came upon the open window where Joseph and the peasant had already removed the barriers.

For several moments they paused, not knowing whether to enter. Voices now became audible as they exchanged ideas and it was all too evident to the listening two, that they were Germans. One lantern was held aloof so as to better permit the first man to crawl through the opening, and the shining helmet of the Uhlan glittered in the lamplight.

"God, I'm glad that we didn't stay in that farmhouse!" exclaimed the peasant. "What would have become of us if they had found us sleeping there." The thoughts of the blood-stains on the floor and walls of the inner room now held even greater terror for the peasant. "They would have killed us, the same as they did the two members of that family."

The five cavalrymen had now entered the house. It was time for the wayfarers to make secure their hiding place. It was not likely that the Uhlans would pass that way, but, if they did, it would be well to be under cover.

The straw of the stack was loosened and the two men burrowed their way far into the bed. Holes large enough for both of them were dug, and, there they lay, silent and watching.

A few minutes later Joseph crawled out into the darkness again, only to satisfy his curiosity as to what the Uhlans were doing. It was a pitch blackness, impenetrable. He crept along under the cover of the stack, marking well his course so that he could easily return to his hiding. The peasant was fast asleep and Joseph had left him in peace with his dreams.

Nearing the house, Joseph listened. A drunken orgy was in progress and the language of the men was now becoming so boisterous that it could be easily interpreted from without. Joseph's knowledge of German enabled him to follow every word.

It was soon evident that others had come up to join the original party. This must have been during the few moments that Joseph was enjoying his second sleep. "There must be at least a dozen in the farmhouse," thought the young captain as he listened intently. Off to right, in the darkness, could be heard the stamping of the horses as they awaited the return of their drunken masters.

It was difficult at last to understand with consistency the thread of the conversation in the farmhouse. Wild and extravagant were some of the words and frequent pounding of floor and table suggested that some of the Uhlans, at least, were no longer sane and reasonable as a result of excessive drink.

Joseph could distinctly interpret the general sense of the discussion, however, and it was plain that these men had just returned from the destruction of some town or village. Women and children had been persecuted as well, as could be gathered from the statement of one to the effect that "if the women and children persisted in getting in the way of the bullets, so much worse for the women and children."

Joseph trained his ear more closely to follow this tragic conversation. These men, who had been brutal enough to strike down and kill poor, innocent women and children, were now gloating over their crime. Could human nature be so debased as to be guilty of such a vile heart. Joseph wondered in his own mind what driving force had made of the German

soldiery, such relentless brutes. They were drunk with the lust to kill and destroy.

And as the horrible tale of this latest crime unravelled itself, incoherently but nevertheless capable of comprehension, the ears of Captain Joseph Vandenbroeck burned and his heart and soul stirred to revengeful hatred for these men who were thus striving to lay his own fatherland in ashes and ruins. His thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the calling of one of the men, in a voice which rose above the din and tumult of the orgy.

"Let's all rise and drink a toast to Louvain!" he cried.

There was a heavy shuffle of feet, glasses were clinked, and one by one the men could be heard resuming their seats after the toast had been honored. The clanking of the swords and the rattle of the spurs gave the incident a distinct military character, despite Joseph's inability to see all that passed.

"Louvain! Louvain!" How that word did ring in his ear. It echoed and re-echoed in his heart. Joseph was at a loss to understand the significance of that toast. It could not have been drunk to mark the capture of Louvain, because that city was already in the hands of the Germans.

"Can it be that the subject of that toast is associated with the crime which these drunken brutes have just discussed?" Joseph asked himself more than once. "If so, that means that they have destroyed Louvain."

It required a full moment for the force of this terrible truth to sink into the mind of Joseph Vandenbroeck. If they had destroyed Louvain and killed so many of the inhabitants, what, in God's name would they do in Brussells? He was at once anxious for the safety of his sweetheart. Could it be that she had been foully treated as had so many others? His blood was coursing through his veins with heated fury. His

soul cried out for revenge and, looking up to heaven, he asked for protection in the dangerous undertaking to which he was about to give his hand.

Crawling along the wall of the fence, Joseph hung well under the shadow of that barrier. The night was so intensely dark that, at times, he was forced to pause and better study his course. At last he reached the horses and they snorted and pawed furiously as he went in amongst them. Searching in the saddle bags, he at last found some fuse and explosives. A number of rifles were still strapped to the saddles, and removing the cartridges from these, he threw them into the neighboring field, with the exception of two that he, himself, carried.

It was a long, tedious task to arrange the explosive so as to secure the best possible results with the limited supply at his disposal. The heavy snoring of a number of the men told Joseph that at least a few of them had fallen into a deep sleep. At last the preparatory work was completed and the fuses were set.

The light was set to the fuse and Joseph was just getting ready to make a getaway, when the sounds of horses' hoofs fell on his ears. Far down the narrow lane, which led into the open roadway, he could hear voices, and as they approached they proved to be more Uhlans. Could it be that this farmhouse had been selected as an official base? "If so, so much the better!" exclaimed Joseph as he plunged off into the darkness.

A little difficulty was experienced in retracing the path leading to the hiding place in the straw stack. Once or twice he completely lost his way but only to find it again a moment

later. The two rifles that he was carrying made it even more cumbersome for him to make progress.

He saw, what he believed to be, the haystack off to the right, and was just making for it, when there was a blinding crash.

The farmhouse seemed to be lifted up into space and then to fall with a sickening thud into a torn and mangled mass of wreckage. Flames immediately broke forth and in the bright glare of the fire, could be seen the moving forms of Uhlans. As Joseph believed, these must belong to the recently arrived party. Out of the stillness that obtained now and again, with the crackling of the burning wood and the tumult of the hurrying men in and around the wreckage, could be heard the moans and cries of the wounded and dying. Joseph was certain that, at least, all the men in the house at the time, had been blown to pieces, and he hoped that the explosion had also trapped a few of those who had just ridden up.

Once, the wounded men were removed from the path of harm, a systematic search of the farm was commanded and the men set about to carry out their instructions. With lighted lanterns they visited every outbuilding and every nook and corner of the big yards. Their curses and boisterous threats, as they passed about, could be distinctly heard by Joseph as he was now preparing to climb back into his hiding place.

At the mouth of the secret opening he encountered his peasant friend. The latter had been awakened by the explosion. He had missed his companion and was just coming out to see what had become of him.

"Silence! The Germans are all around us," cautioned Joseph. "Take this rifle. We may have to fight for our lives. Look! Look! See what I've done."

The peasant, with trembling hands, took the rifle from Joseph. He didn't relish the idea of a fight with the Germans, but if it came to a pass, he would fight for all that was in him. Looking towards the burning farmhouse, he gave a low, suppressed cry of surprise, and, turning to Joseph, he asked how it had all happened.

"I'll tell you later. We better get into our hiding place and cover well the opening. They may be coming this way at any moment."

And, following Joseph's advice, the peasant turned back into his straw fortress, closely followed by Joseph, who did not overlook the important duty of so arranging the straw that it would not be evident that any one inhabited the stack. There they watched and waited, while, almost in a whisper, Joseph related the story of the ill-fated farmhouse.

It must have been fully a half hour later, that the heavy tramp of iron-clad boots was heard, and the voices of men came closer and closer. Joseph bent an ear to listen.

The prowling Uhlans had searched everywhere in the hopes of finding the men who had destroyed the farmhouse with a number of their comrades. They had failed, and their disappointment was finding expression in an almost endless string of oaths and curses as the men stumbled over the broken ground by aid of a dimly burning lantern.

"It's useless to continue," declared one of them. "They have made good their escape, but just to show that there's no hard feelings in the matter, we'll finish off everything else before we go."

"Burn every damn thing on the place!" advised another and a murmur of approval ran through the little group. They had now taken up a standing position just outside the hiding place of Joseph and the peasant.

A few further words were exchanged and they commenced pulling straw from the very stack in which the two refugees were secreted.

One or two of the Uhlans were engaged in carrying the straw, as the others busied themselves in loosening it from the hold of the stack.

"This other stack is much more easily pulled down," called one, who had, apparently, gone over to the other to investigate. They quit the stack in which Joseph and the peasant were buried, and turned their attentions a little to the left. The two men in the fastness of the straw stack drew a sigh of relief.

Suddenly a Uhlan came running back to join the others. He informed them that they had sufficient straw and that fire had been set to all the outbuildings and effects.

"I brought the torch over here, because I thought that it wouldn't be wise to leave so much good straw standing." The significance of his words smote Joseph and his companion with sickening effect.

Already they had touched the torch to the stacks and their bitter, chilling laugh as they stood about to witness the realization of their work, made the hearts of their two unknown captives, beat furiously against their narrow walls.

The suffocating heat which was gradually creeping down and forcing its way into the frail home of the fugitives, told them that their danger had become so real, that they shrunk in horror as they contemplated what the end might be.

Outside, the voices of the Uhlans, sounded to them as the fiendish exultations of men who had perpetrated some atrocious work. They were evidently enjoying the crackling of the flames as they leapt high into the sky.

The crisis had been reached for Joseph and the peasant. The heat was becoming too intense, and the fumes of the smoke were choking them in the fastness of their prison home.

To seek to escape, meant that they woud fall into the hands of the waiting Uhlans. To stay, meant to be burned to death.

There was not a moment to lose.

CHAPTER IX.

Under the Wing of the Optimist.

Consternation reigned in the Desirée household when it was learned that forty German officers and soldiers were coming to take up their abode. It meant that the privacy of the home would be a matter of the past and the presence of these foemen meant constant danger to Antoine Desirée and his family.

Jeanne was completely beaten. Never, for one moment, had she anticipated that her own home would be invaded and its sanctity destroyed. It was with these thoughts of mingled sorrow and indignation, that she contemplated the new situation.

"When are they coming, father?" she asked, once the father had returned from dismissing his unwelcome guests at the street door.

"Nine o'clock tonight," was the laconic answer.

"Two more hours of independence and happiness!" declared Jeanne, with a deep sigh that must have come from the very depths of her heart.

And so it was that the Desirée family were to be brought into even closer touch with the war. They were to know just what it meant to have Prussian officers and men in the same house with them. Tyranny and despotism were to set up a throne in their very midst.

The time passed rapidly and the darkness of night fell heavier and heavier upon the earth. The streets were almost deserted with the exception of the soldiers who were passing to and fro. The shops were all closed, the big, heavy shutters

having already been put up. The creaking and cracking of the wheels of the gun carriages as they moved slowly over the cobblestones in a neighboring street, bore evidence to the fact that the troops were still passing through the city. Antoine Desirée did not feel at all impressed with the dismal aspect of things in the outer world, and he entered again and closed the door.

Nine o'clock struck, and never before had the Desirée family heard the hour more distinctly than they did that night, as they were seated about the big sitting room, watching and waiting for the Germans.

There was no tapping at the door. Perfect silence greeted every effort to hear something. The moments weighed heavy, because it was thought that the self-invited lodgers were only a little late, and that they would soon come.

The seconds lengthened into minutes and the minutes were just rounding into the full hour, but still the visitors had not returned.

"They must have forgotten us or perhaps they don't remember the number of the house." Antoine Desirée thought it well to turn the painful suspense to advantage with a suggestive remark.

Up till a late hour the family waited and watched, but towards eleven o'clock, it became apparent that the plan to place forty men in billet had been abandoned. No one there but drew a deep sigh of relief, when that truth became all too apparent.

* * * * * *

As each succeeding day passed and no news came from Joseph, a deep sense of anxiety developed in the heart of Jeanne Desirée. She knew that it was difficult, almost impossible, to pass letters into the city, but others were receiving them, and why not she. Her personal friend, Yvonne Brocqueville, had just been the recipient of a long and interesting letter from her brother. He had left with Joseph, was a member of the same company, but still he made no reference to him. What could that mean? Could it be that he had fallen in battle? Could it be that he was lying wounded in some hospital, or perhaps on the field of battle where care and attention are impossible? How she longed to go to him and nurse him back to health. But no, that couldn't be, because his name had never appeared in the list of killed, wounded or missing. No, he must still be alive and well. Of that she was almost certain.

But why that eternal silence? He must be in the army defending the forts at Antwerp. Perhaps he was fighting only a few miles away and still unable to come and see her. Or, could it be that he had been sent to the defence of Namur? She had learned only the previous day that the fortress armies from Namur had been, for the greater part, destroyed or taken prisoners. Reports had it that the carnage was frightful, and how she would suffer, were she to know that her own Joseph had been subjected to those horrifying conditions which obtained amongst the garrison armies at Namur. But, then, that couldn't be. It was now several days since Namur fell and there had been ample time to prepare the lists of the losses. Thousands of names had been published but never once had the name of Joseph Vandenbroeck appeared.

Jeanne opened the drawer of the little desk which she had always used for her correspondence and withdrew a big

bundle of papers. Carefully untying the string that bound it, she turned over paper after paper, until she came to a small packet. She opened it up. It was the official lists of the Belgian killed, wounded and missing, complete just to the previous day. Once more she studied those names, seeking diligently on each page for the name which meant so much to her. But it was not to be found. She tied up the packets again and put them back into the drawer.

And the more she thought, the more depressed she became. At times, she wondered if it would not be much better to know that Joseph was killed or wounded, than to rest under the shadow of this eternal fear and doubt. It was this same suspense which was dragging her down and down and reducing her to a sickly, frail and ever fretting creature. Not for some time had she felt like her former self.

With her head buried between her hands, she reviewed the whole situation from the very beginning. Here and there her suggestive mind would find a small glimmer of light which would pierce the obscurity of her doubt and sorrow just till it illuminated her soul with a new hope and happiness. But this confidence was but short lived. A moment later it would be chased away by the ever evident fact that things could not possibly be as her mind had pictured.

A system of letter carriers had been organized between Brussells and different other points. At times it cost five francs and at other times much more than that to carry a letter from a friend in the outer world and to penetrate the German cordon about the Capital so as to enter the city. Many and varied were the means and methods employed by these men who practically laughed at death in the form of execution by the German government.

With their letters closely tucked away in an invisible sack, they would await the fall of darkness at a point outside the city, and then undertake the perilous task of passing the sentries. Oftentimes would they be held up, but as often would the letter sack be thrown over a neighboring fence or hedge, there to lie until the danger was passed. The incoming trams and trains were often visited by German soldiers and the passengers searched for letters and other prohibited articles. Severe were the penalties meted out to those who would dare to transgress the law and carry a letter or a copy of any of the outside papers into the city. But in spite of this, the letters continued to arrive, and it seemed that everyone in the world received a favor but Jeanne.

With all these things in her mind, her wonder grew and increased, why it was that Joseph had not come into contact with one of these letter carrying agencies and thus forward news to her. She devined in her own mind, the obstacles that might arise in such a course, but she was persuaded enough to believe that love would laugh at these obstacles and remove them.

One day when Jeanne was deeply absorbed with the problems that beset her mind, the door bell rang, and a few minutes later Monsieur de Ridder was ushered in. Quiet and morose as she was, the visitor endeavoured to brighten and cheer her. He understood fully the reason of Jeanne's sorrow and immediately he suggested that he might devise a means through which they could get into communication with Joseph.

Jeanne fairly grasped at the proposition, so eager was she to make any sacrifice, or to undertake any duty, if she only thought that her effort would bring back to her him whom she loved so dearly. Together, Jeanne and Monsieur

de Ridder took seats before the table, and the neighbor hurriedly explained how he was in touch with a letter agency that was undoubtedly the best in the service. He had received letters from the most difficult points through this same agency, and he knew of many others in the same position. It was organized and operated by a company of Spaniards. "They are neutral, you know, Jeanne," suggested Monsieur de Ridder, "and, naturally the neutrals can get through places where all others would fail."

It was finally agreed that Monsieur de Ridder should employ this agency in an effort to locate Joseph Vandenbroeck. A hope was kindled in the heart of Jeanne and she really commenced to believe that it might come to pass as her heart desired.

Antoine Desirée entered at that moment, to be followed by his wife. Glasses had just been passed when the door bell sounded again, and Monsieur and Madame de Brinner, intimate friends and neighbors, arrived to join the circle.

The wine poured and the general review of conditions affecting the war was undertaken. No reference was made by Monsieur de Ridder to his false prophecy as to the arrival of the Germans at Brussells, or as to his reported victories at different points—better grace taught that those matters should be left carefully to the past. Others had interpreted that spirit of intense optimism as a means of buoying up those of waning courage.

Antoine Desirée had received that morning a typewritten copy of the news of the day. These news bulletins were published each and every day and represented exerpts from the various papers smuggled into the city, together with the other news that percolated through the German barrier. Once, perfect quiet was assured, the bulletin was drawn from his

pocket and he read. Intense was the interest that his bulletin aroused, so much so, that Monsieur de Ridder could not refrain from an expression of enthusiastic affirmation from time to time, as news of a fresh victory would be recited.

'You see, that official bulletin is just as I heard this morning," he commenced. "You remember, yesterday, how Monsieur VanBerger ridiculed the idea that the forts of Walheim had not been taken, but that they were still intact. Read that despatch again, Antoine, just to show our friends here that I am right sometimes at least."

Antoine Desirée re-read the despatch. "The report that the forts of Walheim had fallen, is not true," ran the report. "It is true that the Germans did gain a little advantage, but the Belgians recaptured the lost ground a short time afterwards."

"What do you think of that, de Brinner?" asked de Ridder of his friend, at the same time slapping him on the back so as to better impress his own enthusiasm.

"That's good news, all right, my friend," returned the other, and at the same time asked Antoine Desirée to read it a third time, if it was not too much trouble, so that he could better grasp the wording.

Monsieur de Ridder was again to the fore. "Yesterday, I met a French officer, a man pretty well up in the ranks; he passed through Brussells travelling as a refugee. Well, I had a long talk with him and he gave me to understand that the French and British were driving the Germans back at every point. The German losses, he said, were enormous. Down in the battle of the Marne, I believe he said that the enemy lost nearly two hundred thousand."

"I only hope it's right, de Ridder," added Monsieur de Brinner.

"Right? Why there's absolutely no doubt about it. This officer of whom I speak has just come from there. I understand that he was in Brussells on official business, and, of course, disguised." Monsieur de Ridder was most emphatic in pronouncing the truthfulness of this important piece of news.

"Did you hear anything about Lille being captured by the Germans?" asked Antoine Desirée. "I heard that report this morning."

"Don't believe a word of it, Antoine," replied Monsieur de Brinner. "I understand from a splendid source, that Lille is holding out well against repeated attacks."

"Of course, there's not a word of truth in that report," Monsieur de Ridder hastened to assure them. "There hasn't been a word about it on the German bulletin boards, and, you bet, they would be only too willing to publish a good piece of news like that. God knows they publish enough lies there from day to day."

Not once had they thought of the question in that light, but how plausible it seemed as they turned it over and over. "It's perfectly good sense that Monsieur de Ridder tells you." It was Madame Desirée who spoke. Nothing pleased her more than to have an opportunity of supporting a real optimist.

At that moment the roaring of the cannon became unusually distinct. For several days and nights, the groaning of the big guns had been almost incessant. It had lulled the inhabitants to sleep at night and they awoke with it the following morning. But never before had it been so pronounced, the detonations shaking the foundations of the house, causing every window to rattle.

"That's good news!" ventured Monsieur de Ridder. "You see, the closer the cannon, the nearer the Allies. As they drive the Germans back onto the Capital, the cannon will naturally become more distinct." There was a moment of silence as each one listened most intently.

"Hark!" declared Monsieur de Ridder. "That big heavy gun that you hear is the fort of Walheim. Now what more do you want than that. If the forts of Walheim had fallen, you would never be able to hear so clearly."

"That may be all right, but what are we going to do when the Germans are driven back on Brussells. I am afraid that they'll do the same things here as they have done at Louvain. Why have they mined the Palais de Justice and other buildings, if they don't intend some devilment?" It was Madame de Brinner who had spoken. She was plainly serious in what she said. Her fears in this matter were shared by thousands of others.

"Madame de Brinner, listen to me a minute and I'll tell you something that you should really know." Monsieur de Ridder would never allow his neighbor to rest under the shadow of a doubt or fear. "Listen to me! When the Germans have to leave Brussells, they will have to leave in such a hurry that they will not have the time to do any damage. Get us a map, Antoine, and I will better explain—and, a pencil, too, if you have one handy."

The map was found, together with the pencil and paper, and Monsieur de Ridder started in to explain just what he wanted to convey to his interested audience.

With his finger tracing the line, he pointed out how the German line would be cut somewhere in the vicinity of Liége, and how the huge enemy force now in and around the lines

before Antwerp, would be completely cut off and taken prisoner or destroyed.

"How do you make that out?" eagerly asked Antoine Desirée.

"It's as plain as can be," added the enthusiastic de Ridder. "It's well known that there is a big force of French in the vicinity of Ninove at the present moment. Why, the other day, it was the English who drove the Germans out of Alost, in a hand-to-hand fight. I tell you things are moving rapidly all about us, and we'll wake up some fine morning to find the Germans gone."

"That's strange!" declared Monsieur de Brinner. "It's only today that I heard from a good source, that the Germans were getting everything in shape to leave the city. There's surely something on foot, all right."

Monsieur de Ridder was allowed to continue, once his friend had added this small word by way of confirmation.

"There was a report came in this morning to the effect that the line between Brussells and Liége had already been cut. I know for a certainty that the Belgians have destroyed two or three important bridges along the route."

"That explains why the German government refused to issue any 'laisser-passer' today," interrupted Jeanne for the first time during the progress of the discussion. Up to that moment she had been a silent, but none the less interested, listener. "The little Marie Groggenbeck was going away to Holland today. You know, her parents are Dutch, and she has no trouble in passing backwards and forwards most freely. Well, she told me down street today, that they would issue no laisser-passer today, that all routes by railroad and wagon road were completely closed."

"Why, there's no other reason in the world, Jeanne," Monsieur de Ridder was quick to explain. "The Germans may be bright in lots of things, but they can't deceive us all the time. Their official bulletins! Why, they're nothing but a laughing stock. Who is there that believes a word of them?"

Taking up the pencil again, Monsieur de Ridder continued to demonstrate the situation by means of the map.

"You see that point there?" All gathered eagerly around. "Where?" asked Madame Desirée. "There, where you see my first finger." Yes, they all saw it. The point in question was not far from Alost. "Well, they're pushing a big army of French and British up through there, and they'll get in behind the Germans from this direction—pointing again and tracing with his finger and pencil. "Then down through here—he paused a minute as he sought the point he required—"ah, there, you see that line through by that little river?" Everyone saw it clearly—"that's the other road by which they will force in enough men to practically drive the Germans back in the direction of Antwerp. The whole of the Belgian army is there and they'll just fall into their arms. The English have sent a strong force over to Antwerp as well, and there are two corps of the Russians there—"

"Russians?" It seemed as though all voices joined in perfect harmony in posing this latest question.

"Yes, Russians," assured the speaker. "They brought them around by way of Archangel and England. Why, they've been in Belgium for some time. It's only the other day that a number of Cossacks were seen near Ninove." Words could never explain his pride in having been the first to make this important announcement.

"Are you sure about that?" queried Antoine Desirée, never too ready to believe his friend. "Who saw them near Ninove?"

"You know Francois Comer? That's he who runs the cigar shop down on the Place Broquer—a small man, sandy complexion, and a long beard."

"Oh, yes, I know who you mean now," declared Antoine Desirée. "His wife is a sister-in-law to Jacque VanGeben."

"That's the man, Antoine," continued de Ridder. "Well, he came up from Ostend the day before yesterday, and came by way of Ghent and Ninove. He saw Cossacks in the vicinity of Ninove. They passed them not far from the village."

"And he was sure that they were Cossacks?" asked deBrinner.

"As sure as he is living today," was the prompt reply. "He talks a bit of Russian himself, and he overheard their conversation. They were speaking Russian. And then, they weren't dressed a bit like the Germans. And they weren't English or French. No, they were certainly Cossacks."

The map was resorted to again and for several minutes de Ridder interested his friends as he sketched for them the probable line of campaign on the part of the Allies. There were a number of questions, that was only natural, but he had little difficulty in convincing them that there was more truth than fiction in what he said.

"Yes, it's all very well to chase the Germans out of Brussells, but as long as they stay here no harm can come to us through bombardment. I'm afraid that when they leave they'll burn everything and kill us all." Madame de Brinner was always worrying about that phase of the problem.

"Ridicule, Louise," urged Madame Desirée. "It's just as Monsieur de Ridder says, they'll have to get out of here so

quickly that they won't have the time to do anything. What could they do, anyway?"

"Oh, they could do a lot in a few minutes," retorted the first lady. "Look what they did the other day, drove a pack of old men and women before them along Avenue Bokstael, the noses of their horses in the poor victims' backs. If they happened to fall, they were prodded with a lance. See what they did with the doctors at the hospital, drove them out and then arrested them when they came back for their instruments—and how about the veterinaries, stole them away from their wives and families and kept them for days—but that is nothing alongside what they have done in other places. I tell you those brutes don't hesitate at killing a woman or child. They show no respect for sex or old age. They are brutes of the worst character. No, I'm really afraid and I won't be satisfied until I see with my own eyes, that they have done no harm at Brussells. What would they like better, than to burn the Capital?"

"What do you think of their latest trick?"

What's that?" asked Madame Desirée, determined that when another woman was talking, she should also share the conversation.

"Why the Gardes Civiques! They have been asked to report at the Military School, and for what reason, no one seems to know. Perhaps, they will be held as prisoners of war."

"Not at all," ventured Monsieur de Ridder. "Nothing of the sort. I heard the same thing, but it is simply to demand of them to sign a paper binding them never to take up arms against the Germans."

"Ah, I see; it's not so bad as I thought," Madame hurried to assure her friends. "But, of course, you can never tell."

And so the discussion in the home of Antoine Desirée continued, now intensely interesting and again lapsing into ordinary, every day interest events.

Jeanne could not refrain, at times, from turning her thoughts back to that early morning in August, when Joseph Vandenbroeck had come to say good-bye. Tears welled up in her eyes as she traced the incidents associated with that parting and what wouldn't she give at that very moment to know that Joseph was alive and in good health. At different moments, Monsieur de Ridder would arouse Jeanne from her melancholia with a remark of more or less interest to herself personally. That only soothed the aching heart for the moment, however, and she would lapse back into that sad thought from which there appeared to be no escape.

A few days after this discussion had taken place in the Desirée home, the news was flashed throughout Brussells that the forts of Antwerp had fallen, and that the Germans had already entered the city.

There were the usual minds of optimism that refused to accept the report, under any conditions, but reserved to themselves the right to contend that those forts were absolutely impregnable, that it would require at least eight months to reduce them.

Others there were, who were satisfied that the report was true. It was only reasonable to believe that if the forts of Liége and Namur had succumbed to the big, heavy guns of the Germans, why could the same not be true of Antwerp? One thing was certain, the heavy booming of the guns which had continued night and day for some time past,

could no longer be heard. Off to the north, in the direction of the seaport fortress, all was quiet and peaceable.

Monsieur de Ridder was hurrying along Rue Royale one day when he encountered his friend, Anotine Desirée. The latter was accompanied by a stranger who was presented to Monsieur de Ridder as an American, a War Correspondent, and a particular friend of the Desirée family.

"Monsieur, my friend has just come from Antwerp, and he tells me that the Germans have been there for several days." Antoine Desirée always enjoyed an opportunity to expose the fallacy of his neighbor's position.

"Is that so?" quickly demanded Monsieur de Ridder, who had always strongly protested the impossibility of such a thing.

"It's all too true," explained the American. "They jumped from the first ring of forts just to the third and it wasn't long before they were bombarding the city itself. One good thing is that the whole of the Belgian army with the few English got safely away, and the supplies and provisions that couldn't be carried, were destroyed. The boats in port were, for the most part, sunk. In fact, the Germans found an empty city."

Monsieur de Ridder was not altogether satisfied with this brief explanation. If Antwerp was really occupied by the Germans, it would be necessary that he know and understand all the details. In that way, he could justify his position as an authoritative agent of news. So it was, that he besieged the correspondent with questions of varying importance.

When Antoine Desirée returned to the house, he explained to his wife and family, how they had met with Monsieur

de Ridder, and how that they were able to explode some of his pet theories.

"I don't think that's a bit nice of you, Antoine," counselled Madame. "Monsieur de Ridder may be right or wrong, but he is at least, sincere. What would it be like if the whole world was a pessimist? Oh, no."

Days passed and no news came from Joseph Vandenbroeck. The service, which Monsieur deRidder had so enthusiastically endorsed, and to which Jeanne Desirée had pinned her hope, had, to all intents and purposes failed, and the failure only served to aggravate the situation, as far as the pretty young fiancé was concerned. Her sorrow deepened, and brave as she endeavoured to be, there were moments when she felt so completely discouraged that she was indifferent as to those conditions of danger that developed in her own midst.

All other means had been of no avail, she must conceive a method through which she could succeed. The days were becoming so monotonous to her. The presence of the Germans in the city had long since ceased to interest her. If a Prussian sentry threw himself under the train and committed suicide, that was of but passing concern.

The long trains of wounded that passed her door almost every day became as a long, gray, ghostlike stream. The prisoners who arrived occasionally had, at one moment, proved a source of intense interest to her. The food and drink and tobacco which the inhabitants had hastily sought in order to donate to the unfortunate victims in the hands of the enemy, she could easily recall the day when she was equally as enthusiastic as the others to give. How her heart had thirsted for revenge, that day where the guards refused to allow the donation of any article to the English prisoners,

while to the French and Belgians he offered no objection. Yes, she had even studied carefully the faces amongst those prisoners as they passed, always hoping to see the face she loved so well, and when, not finding, ever joyed to know that Joseph had been smart enough to elude the clutches of the Huns.

But that interest had long since passed. If only she were to know that Joseph was still in the fighting line, that his heart still beat for her, and that he did not write for the reason that it was impossible to do so, then she might find again that interest which the new life had evoked in the earlier days. It seemed as though she was destined to disappointment and suffering. She became almost desperate.

That night, she tossed restlessly upon her bed. Her mind was at work. She was devising some means or method through which she could accomplish the end for which her heart bled. Many were the suggestive thoughts that trained through her brain, only to be dismissed as infeasible and impracticable.

At last she was decided as to what, she believed to be, the only possible means that offered any serious measure of hope. She must go to Ostend. She undestood that the Belgian army had retreated to the seaport town, and there had been reorganized. Joseph would be with the army, and there was little doubt but that, at that very moment, he was in Ostend or, at least, not very far away from it. She would have no difficulty in locating his company.

She arose early the following morning. The other members of the family were already astir. At the breakfast table she announced the decision which she had reached. It created consternation.

"Why, Jeanne, you are certainly not going to risk your life in an effort to reach Ostend." Her father was overwhelmed by the indifference of his daughter to her own personal safety. "If Joseph is there, he will doubtlessly get word through to you. If he is not there, then it would be absurd to go. It is very dangerous on the road at the present moment, and I wouldn't think of letting you leave in the midst of such conditions."

"Father, I tell you I must go," declared Jeanne. "I have waited and waited for word from Joseph but no word has come. It has reached that point now, where I can no longer endure the suspense. Father, if you love me, you will let me go. Mother will come with me, and surely the Germans would do no harm to two lady travellers, particularly so when we were alone and undefended. No, I must go."

"Tell me, Jeanne, just how you would get to Ostend," continued the parent. "Of course, you know that by railroad, it is impossible, and that by wagon road every avenue has been closed by the Germans. Since the fall of Antwerp, the German government had discontinued the 'laisser-passer' in the direction of Ghent."

But Jeanne was by no means defeated. She was more closely in touch with the situation than her father knew. Her answer was brief but to the point.

"If we go down to Place Rouppe early in the morning, we will be able to get a conveyance to Grammont, and from there the tram is still running into Ghent. From Ghent we can reach Ostend by train." Jeanne was more than convinced of the value of this route, because some of her own friends had used it not many days previous, and had passed without any difficulty.

There was an animated discussion respecting the advisability of undertaking the voyage to Ostend. Madame Desirée was, if anything, anxious to go with Jeanne, because, as she explained, she would give anything to be able to see the uniforms of the little Belgian soldiers again.

"You know it must be grand to be with the Allies once more," she declared enthusiastically. "I believe that I would be so overjoyed that I would embrace the first Allied soldier I met."

It was at last determined that Antoine Desirée would go into the city and learn, if possible, if the route by way of Grammont and Ghent was possible. If so, Jeanne and her mother would leave the following day. There was no time to lose, because it was generally understood that the Belgian army would soon be withdrawing its base from Ostend. And there was another thing that urged them on as well. The brother of Madame was a member of the Civil Guards. They were all prisoners on parole, but he had never gone to sign. We would have to flee from the city and, so it was agreed, that he should leave with Jeanne and her mother.

A little while later, Antoine Desirée came back to report that the way of Gammont was closed, that the Germans refused to allow anyone to pass. But a train service was to be inaugurated between Brussells and Antwerp, via Louvain, and that, after all, would possibly be the best course to follow. They could come round by way of Holland to Ostend.

That night before they retired, everything was ready for the journey. Now that Jeanne was going in search of her missing sweetheart, she felt strong enough for almost any task. In her heart there was developing a new hope and courage.

The following morning the baggage was carefully carried to the station. Places were found in the train after some difficulty, and punctually at the hour the long line of carriages slowly pulled out of the depot.

There were tears in the eyes of the mother as she bade good-bye to her husband. To her, a separation during the moment of a terrible war, was full of tragedy. God only knew if they would be re-united as soon as they hoped to be.

But Jeanne was of another disposition. The strange spirit of romance which seemed to animate her whole being, appealed to her in no mean sense. The knowledge that she might soon again be in the big strong arms of the man she loved so devotedly, beckoned her on.

Little did she know the treachery of the path that lay before.

CHAPTER X.

Back on the Firing Line.

As it became apparent to Joseph Vandenbroeck and his peasant companion, that it was a matter of life or death, whether or not they sought an exit from the burning straw stack, the hand of Joseph unconsciously clutched more firmly to the rifle which he had succeeded in stealing from the Germans.

"We'll have to make a break for it, all right, old man," he advised his friend, at the same time urging him to have his rifle in good shape for instant use.

"Just wait a moment until we find out which side of the stack is the least difficult to tackle," he cautioned further. It was evident that the Uhlans were now occupying a position on that side of the stack directly opposite the opening through which the two men had burrowed their way. This gave the fugitives an even better chance for their lives.

Joseph led the way. Cautiously he groped along, pushing back the straw and opening up a path of escape. The cool, fresh air beat back upon his face telling him that, already, he had reached the open. He listened more intently, and was able to discern the fact that there were now four Uhlans in the party which they would have to grapple with. Under those circumstances, it would be much better that his companion be at his side when the battle commenced. The wild crackling of the flames made it impossible for the Germans to hear any movement that might be created by the two prisoners of fate.

At last both of the men were free from the straw entanglements, and made ready for the crucial moment. It was agreed that each would crawl stealthily around either side of the stack, and once the enemy was in sight to pick off the two men nearest him.

Breathlessly they crept, keeping well under the cover of the straw, until they were within shooting range. The four men were standing in a splendid position to offer a target.

It was the rifle of Joseph Vandenbroeck that first blazed away and the Uhlan closest to the line of fire, fell to the ground. Consternation had been struck into the midst of the unsuspecting Uhlans, but the remaining three quickly drew their revolvers and commenced firing. In their original bewilderment, they did not know the direction from which the telling shot had come, and, to make matters a little more difficult for them, Joseph and the peasant were well secreted by the protecting walls of straw.

A second time the rifle in the hands of the young Belgian Captain spoke, and one more Uhlan paid the penalty of being exposed to good marksmanship, Then the battle opened in real earnest, the location of the assailants having been discovered.

The remaining two Uhlans rushed into the face of the fire, firing wildly, and swearing vengeance on those who had thus surprised them.

Lying prone and steadying their rifles so as to make sure of a deadly aim, Joseph and the peasant waited for their men to reach that point where they would be most easily disposed of. It was now a matter of getting the other two Uhlans, else they would be upon them, and God only knew, but that others would hear the firing and would come run-

ning to the assistance of their comrades. For that reason alone, it was necessary to make sure of their marks.

The two rifles discharged almost simultaneously, and the two Uhlans fell dead at the feet of the two marksmen.

Jumping to his feet, Joseph ran over to make sure that his victims were really dead, that they were not feigning death and only awaiting a chance to spring upon them. No, they were absolutely dead. Of that there was no doubt. All four had died instantly as the bullets had found the mark.

Off towards the farmhouse all was still. The smouldering ruins of the building reflected on the night, giving forth a weird, strange effect. If any other Uhlans were still in the vicinity, they must be fast asleep. But Joseph was convinced that they had left the place.

Satisfying themselves that there was no further danger from the enemy, they prepared to escape as best they could from the ill-fated farm. They would have to change their course, and, now while it was still dark, there would be a splendid opportunity to cross the fields until they came out on another highway. It was only reasonable to expect that the route leading along in front of the farmhouse, would be slowly watched the following day.

The darkness had become unusually intense. It was only a short time before dawn, and the travellers were convinced that there was not a moment to lose. Taking a course that would cut the main road diagonally, they entered the nearest field. The ground had just recently been ploughed, which made the going very difficulty. They were more kindly favored in the next field, however, where they found the stacks of corn still standing as the farmers had left them to flee before the invader. This field led right up to the roadway, so that should the enemy be along the road, it would be pos-

sible to use a stock of corn as a shield and protector. The two men had already thrown away their rifles, knowing that it would be suicide to be found with them by the enemy.

At last the main road was reached. Eagerly did the fugitives listen in an effort to locate any sound, but it was a cold, gripping stillness that struck back at them. Yes, the way was clear, and with one or two flying leaps, the men were across the road and already far into the bordering field. It was now only a matter of continuing until the paralleling highway should be reached. Once safely there, it would be possible to continue their course, as they had originally planned it before the mysterious farm was encountered.

Dawn had already broken before the weary travellers reached the far roadway, but once on its firm, inviting bed, they struck out at a lively pace in the direction of their prearranged goal. There was still a rising column of smoke on the horizon, which suggested that the destruction of Louvain was not yet complete. Joseph was now convinced that the Uhlans who had died in the burning farmhouse, had contributed towards the destruction of Louvain, and he was glad in his own heart that he had been able to exact a little retribution and revenge.

The two men had not gone very far before they came into contact with a large number of refugees. They were in a panic and their ill-clad state suggested a precipitous flight. Some were in their bare feet, others so scantily clothed that they must be suffering from exposure, while on the countenance of each was stamped that spirit of terror which reflects a world of suffering.

Joseph soon interested himself in the welfare of these poor, unfortunate victims of Prussianism. He went in and out amongst them, seeking eagerly the information which

would give him an intelligent understanding. Fright had driven some of the pitiable creatures almost mad; others were in such a state of nervous tension, that it was impossible to secure a coherent story; not a few were given to gross exaggeration and too many were absolutely silent, refusing to talk. At last Joseph found one man, a tall, stately appearing man with every evidence of a striking intelligence. This man had been a professor in the University at Louvain.

Slowly and laboring under great effort, he told the tragic story of the destruction of Louvain. How the Germans indulged in the drunken orgy, how orders were issued to burn and sack the city, how the drunken brutes ran wildly into each home, carrying a lighted torch so as to fire the premises; how, when the frantic inhabitants fled from their homes, they were shot down at their very doorstep; all these things the professor recited and the tragedy of it all so gripped Joseph that he was silent for several moments after the professor had concluded.

At last he ventured a comment. "Did they give any reason for committing this terrible crime?" he asked.

"Only the same, stock-in-trade reason," replied the professor, "that the inhabitants fired upon the troops. But that was absolutely impossible. The inhabitants had been disarmed long before the Germans came into the city."

"Was much of the city destroyed?"

"There are very few houses left standing, the streets are full of debris." The professor's head was bowed as he answered this question and when he raised it, there were tears in his eyes. "Words would never describe the scenes that passed," he continued. "The university, the library, all, all is gone. How many of the inhabitants were massacred, I couldn't say exactly, but it must be up in the hundreds. I

know of one instance where they buried over twenty in a well. God, it was a gruesome spectacle. It looked as though the worst instincts of man had been let loose. Ah, it was terrible."

Joseph Vandenbroeck could scarcely believe his own ears, as he followed the thrilling story of the college professor. It was so serious in its character and effect, this crime, that it was difficult to comprehend. Anxious thoughts were developed in his heart for the welfare of his sweetheart. Jeanne had remained in Brussells. Of that he was almost certain. If the Germans had destroyed the city and massacred the inhabitants at Louvain, what must they have done at Brussells? He dare not face those thoughts. As thrilling as had been the experiences through which he had passed himself, he would regard them as mere passing incidents, as compared with the crime of Louvain. But as to Brussells—well, he couldn't just relish the thought. Time would tell him. It was his duty to get back to the ranks as soon as possible. Belgium needed every one of her sons, and never would it be said of him that he had shirked his duty.

"Have you heard anything from Brussells?" Joseph asked of the college professor. The latter had turned aside as Joseph was occupied with his own thoughts.

"No, no news seems to get through. The Germans are very strict in their censorship. I hardly believe, however, that they have attempted anything serious in the Capital." If the professor had known what a comfort those last words brought to Joseph, he would have reiterated them over and over again.

And all the while that Joseph was engaged in conversation with this refugee professor, his peasant friend had interested himself in the cases of two or three humbler citizens and their families, who had shared the same fate as had the university

man. Joseph turned to him at last, and advised that they continue their course.

"We will have to alter our plans a little," he advised. "It would be madness to go into Louvain at the present moment. The Germans are still in their lustful spirit, and God knows what they might do with us. We will turn off a bit towards Tirlemont, and work in a northerly direction so as to reach the vicinity of Aerschott. I understand that the Germans are battering away at the first line of forts around Antwerp, and we should be able to avoid the enemy lines sufficiently well, as to get through to the Belgians."

The peasant was satisfied to leave the matter in the hands of Joseph. His sole ambition was to reach Antwerp and once there he would see his wife and family, after which he would join the army. As he explained to Joseph there was always one good resource in reserve. If they found the German lines impassable in that vicinity, it was not such a long journey across to Holland by way of Hasselt. Once there, they could get a train, and go around to Rosendaal. From that point, it would be an easy matter to reach Antwerp.

They tramped along the road for some hours, stopping only at one point to search food. It was a scanty dejeuner that they received, but sufficient to continue the two men in good physical state. The roads became so confusing that it was impossible to determine which lead into Aerschott. No German sentries had been encountered, although once they had found it necessary to secret themselves under the shelter of a hedge while a number of Uhlans passed along the road.

It must have been late in the afternoon before the lines of a village rose on the horizon. It did not seem to be big enough to be Aerschott, but, nevertheless, they pushed along, determined to enter the village so as to better learn their own

whereabouts. The closer they came, the better they saw that the village was not so small as it originally appeared, in fact it was a good sized town.

On the outskirts they met a number of peasants coming leisurely along the highway. They stopped and asked them what village it was, and they were immediately informed that they were entering the village of Haelem.

"That means that we are equally as handy for Hasselt, as we are for Aerschott," observed Joseph. "We will find out from the inhabitants of Haelem just how conditions are, and from that we will be able to determine which route we will follow."

The fringe of the village had not yet been touched before the helmets of the German soldiers could be seen far far down along the narrow street which served as the main thoroughfare. The travellers were a little discouraged, but upon seeing the natives pass to and fro so freely, they thought that they would easily pass as residents of the village or peasants from the neighboring district.

With the presence of the enemy, questioning was a little more difficult than it otherwise would have been. It required many minutes of careful research to locate a party that was absolutely safe to interview. This was the patron of a small cafe and in his occupation he had excellent opportunity to hear what passed between the German officers and soldiers who visited his place.

"I understand that conditions at Aerschott are similar to those at Louvain," he informed the stranger, after first satisfying himself that they were real Belgians, and not German spies seeking to trap him. "Scores of the inhabitants have been murdered and destruction has been carried out on a wholesale basis. It's a mighty good thing for us that the

Germans who are in Haelem are of a more peaceable mind than those who infested Louvain and Aerschott."

Joseph and the peasant were now thanking their lucky stars that they had confused the highways, and that fate had led them into Haelem instead of Aerschott. "Looks as though we have a bit of good luck following us," he declared with a long drawn sigh of relief.

Conversation continued for some little time, and over a glass of beer, Joseph learned from the patron of the café the latest developments affecting the situation. The Germans had been driven back several times in the vicinity of Alost and Termonde, and, smarting under these reverses, they were making desperate efforts to break the first line of defence around Antwerp. Hundreds of trains of reinforcements were being rushed into the field and no effort was to be spared to effect the success of their plans.

The armies pushing south and towards the coast from Brussells, were practically held up until Antwerp was disposed of. It was planned to make a big sweep down the coast carrying everything before them. The scheme looked pleasing from the German standpoint, but, as the patron explained, they would have a hard way to go before they accomplished their ends.

The situation once in mind, Joseph and his friend decided that it would be much better to cut across country towards the Holland frontier and then come around by way of Rosendaal. A few sandwiches carefully placed in their pockets, and they struck out along the road leading to Hasselt.

Two days later, they pulled into the big railway station at Rosendaal. They had been on neutral land for several hours and taking advantage of the opportunity, had under-

taken many little duties which they could never have done in the territory occupied by the enemy.

To their great pleasure and satisfaction, they easily secured communication with Antwerp, the trains running not so regularly or so systematically, but nevertheless giving a usual wartime service between the two cities. There were thousands of refugees in Rosendaal, and Joseph had little difficulty in learning much additional information respecting the events that passed in the heart of Belgium. One fact that joyed his heart was gleaned from a refugee from Brussells. It was to the effect that all was quiet in the Capital, that nothing serious had developed. "I thank God for that!" he breathed, as he turned aside to look after his train.

Once in Antwerp, Joseph and his friend separated, the one to go to his wife and family, and the other to report at the headquarters of the army. Antwerp was then the general base. When he reached his destination, he found that he was not alone in the class of prodigal. Hundreds of Belgian soldiers, who had been missed from the lines for days, were drifting back into Antwerp by every conceivable means and method.

Joseph was fortunate in finding General Fernand Bourgoeis, aide-de-camp to the King, present at headquarters when he called. He immediately enquired for him and, a moment later, was ushered into his presence.

"You wanted to see me?" enquired the general as Joseph entered.

Joseph made no immediate reply, but, turning, faced the distinguished officer. It was evident that the latter was making an effort to recognize the visitor but, apparently found it difficult in civilian clothes. Had Joseph still been in his uniform, recognition would have been immediate.

"You don't seem to recognize me," laughed Joseph, after waiting a full minute. "I am Captain Joseph Vandenbroeck."

The General stood back in amazement. He was as one who sees the ghost of a friend, long since believed to be dead, rising in human form before him. With the fingers of his right hand nervously twitching the little goatee on his chin, he studied the visitor from the soles of his feet just to the top of his head. At last he advanced and extended his hand.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to see you. We were just preparing to include your name in the lists of the missing. We had searched diligently for you but without success. We feared at first that you might have been killed but your body could never be located. It was only yesterday that we came to the conclusion that you had fallen into the hands of the enemy." General Bourgeois rang a bell, an orderly appeared, and he asked to have Colonel Gresser sent to him at once.

Colonel Gresser came into the office a moment later.

"Who do you think we have here?" demanded the General of his assistant.

"Couldn't say at all," was the reply after the Colonel had carefully studied Joseph.

"You remember the young officer who distinguished himself near the frontier, and who received the Order de Leopold at Namur?"

"Yes, I recall the incident very clearly."

"Well, allow me to present the same officer, Captain Joseph Vandenbroeck."

Colonel Gresser took the hand of Joseph and shook it with a warmth that betokened the pleasure he experienced in meeting the hero, as he was commonly known amongst the members of the General Staff.

Joseph was then asked to explain the happenings of the past few days, since the fall of Namur. As he traced with tragic effect, the incidents and events of which he had been the active centre, the General often struck the table with his open hand and uttering a cry of delight, would always exclaim, "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, I knew that the Germans could never get the better of that lad."

His own experience carefully exposed, Joseph was anxious to hear from official lips, the truth of the situation before the defences of Antwerp.

"Things are not going any too good, Captain Vandenbroeck," declared the General. "We can't do anything with the big guns they are constantly bringing up. Then, too, we have to fight treachery in our own ranks. Scarcely a day passes but we have to execute a number of spies. We find them in the windmills, everywhere, signalling to the enemy. The Huns know every inch of ground before Antwerp and that makes it hard for us. We want a few more men like yourself, to change the complexion of things."

"I am at your service, Sir." Captain Joseph Vandenbroeck straightened himself up and saluted.

That same night, Joseph was placed in command of a detachment, sent out to relieve the garrison forces at Walheim. The position had become intensely critical. Once, the fort had been taken by the enemy, but in a hand-to-hand encounter, the Belgians took it back. The men in the trenches surrounding the fort, had been subjected to a most trying ordeal, and it was necessary to send out reinforcements.

The varying fate of the struggle between the Belgians and the invading Germans as it unravelled itself through the succeeding days, devoleped many distressful conditions for the defenders of the forts. The numerical superiority of the

enemy would never have succeeded in penetrating the lines, had it not been for the heavy guns and the perfected system of spies.

Joseph led his men into the thick of many a bitter fight but their efforts were of no permanent avail. The heavy 42 centimeter guns were slowly but surely destroying the forts behind them, and with the supports cut away, it was only a matter of flee or fall into the hands of the treacherous Germans.

During a critical pass when the whole garrison was threatened with annihilation, it was Captain Vandenbroeck with his men, who held the enemy back sufficiently long time to allow the imprisoned men to get away, and then, fighting a desperate rear guard action, reached the second line of defence in good condition.

But Antwerp was doomed. It was only a matter of time before the downfall of the fortress would be an accomplished fact. It was evident that the Germans were sparing neither men or ammunition, and once the first line of defences was broken, they never deigned to consider the second, but turned their attention immediately to the third or inner line of forts. This they were able to do with their long range pieces.

Provisions were being shipped out of the doomed city; every preparation was being made to evacuate in good season. Those supplies that could not be transported were destroyed. The ships lying in the harbour, a large number of them being German vessels, were sunk. The inhabitants were in flight, the Germans having advised them by means of circulars dropped from aeroplanes. that the city would be bombarded.

In fact Antwerp had the appearance of a deserted city, save for the troops. Plans had been completed for their departure, and already they were en route to Ostend.

The big oil tanks were burning as Captain Vandenbroeck and his men left the city and turned their backs on the last great fortress of their land. It would be necessary to fight back the aggressions of an advance party of the enemy in the region of Saint Nicholas Van Waes, but this did not prove so cumbersome as had at first been anticipated.

Ostend was reached after a long, weary tramp. Thousands of refugees, filled the roads and it was most pitiable at times, as the big, strong, physically perfect soldiery swung by a train of fugitives made up for the greater part of aged men and women with scores of children. But the escape of the soldiery was imperative, so they had to push on.

The re-organization of the Belgian army at Ostend occupied many hours, and all the time the enemy was pressing on the lines between Ghent and Brussells, seeking to force his way just a little nearer the coast. Nearly thirty thousand British had landed at Ostend and they had been rushed up country to hold the Huns in check long enough to permit the re-organization of the Belgian forces.

The Belgian Government was ready to transfer its base to La Havre, in France. The inhabitants of the seaport town were preparing for flight, as the enemy was not many miles distant. The thousands who had been pouring into the city from Antwerp and other parts, seeking refuge from the terrorizing Hun, would now again be obliged to make another move, across the channel into England or over the frontier into Holland. Hundreds and thousands of the last line troops before Antwerp, unable to reach Ostend, had fled into

Holland, so that many of the refugees had friends already there.

The army once again on a good, substantial footing, was ready to participate in the fight. The Germans were pushing down along a line leading through Thurout and Thielt. It was necesary to check. The last little corner of Belgium was not to be taken without the bitterest fight in the history of the war.

King Albert addressed his soldiers before the royal residence in Ostend. His Majesty had been asked to accompany the government to La Havre, but, brave man that he is, he refused to leave his soldiers.

"My men, the whole world is standing out in silent awe and admiration of your gallantry and your pluck. You have been opposed to a formidable foe, but you have acquitted yourselves in a manner worthy of the best traditions of your fathers. Success rests momentarily with the enemy, but not for long. Our noble Allies are coming to our aid and together we will drive the treacherous foe from off our sacred soil. You have been re-organized and re-equipped. Many of you are going into France for a brief rest, others are plunging back immediately into the fray. My prayers go with you, wherever you go, and may victory soon crown our banner."

The words of the King aroused wonderful enthusiasm and the men were inspired to even greater sacrifice and nobler endeavour.

Captain Joseph Vandenbroeck was a conspicuous figure in official circles at Ostend. One of the last acts of the Belgian Government before leaving for La Havre, was to gazette a number of promotions and appointments. Captain Vandenbroeck was advanced to the rank of Major amidst the

congratulatory expressions of his brother officers. As Major Vandenbroeck he was to be known in the future, perhaps the youngest in the army.

Routine work was at an end. The troops were pushing out of Ostend, some along the sand dunes towards Dunkerke and others inland in the direction of Thurout. A line was being thrown across from Dunkerke which would hook up with the Allied line reaching just to the Vosges. Major Vandenbroeck was to be given control of an important point which he was to hold at all costs.

He summoned his forces together and bidding farewell to the sea, he turned towards the oncoming foe. Thurout and then Thielt, after which Ypres, and on to the sea and England. That was the cry of the Prussian leaders. But an obstacle was to be set in their path, and, knowing his wonderful gallantry and courage, Major Vandenbroeck had been selected to hold one of the most trying points.

The detachment was pushing along the dusty road. The men were in splendid spirits. They asked nothing better than to fight under the direction of the gallant Major. It would have required a tremendous force of the enemy to conquer the will of that Belgian force as it rushed along the path which was leading it into contact with the enemy destested and hated with such a vigorous heart.

Cross roads were reached. Joseph knew that he was not far from the enemy's lines. It would require a little caution at this critical point. Perhaps it would be better to consult a peasant as to the various roads leading from this junction.

He crossed the road and entered a peasant cottage, his men resting and stretching leisurely along the dusty way. The peasant came out a moment later, having willingly volunteered to lead his fellow Belgians to their destination. It was

a complicated system of roads through this district, and a good guide would be invaluable.

They had been marching scarcely an hour when they were suddenly surrounded by a superior force of the enemy. The latter had trained a withering fire upon Major Vandenbroeck and his men.

The Belgians had been led into a trap like thousands more of their kind. Annihilation seemed imminent to them at that critical moment.

And they had been led by a German spy.

CHAPTER XI.

Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining.

When Jeanne Desirée and her mother were face to face with the cold, indisputable fact that they were in a train speeding from Brussells, that the train was of a military character and occupied, for the most part, by German officers and soldiers, that they were leaving behind in the Capital a state of war which imposed the eternal presence of the enemy, that their father and husband had been left to the mercy of the war's caprices . . . their hearts became heavy.

Not that Jeanne regretted her decision—far from that—it was that same fact that she was going in search of the only man in the world she loved, that buoyed her up and mingled joy with the sorrow. But it was the tragedy of it all, the war itself with all its trains of trial and suffering—it was that which weighed her down. Had there not been a war, she would never have found it necessary to leave her home and go in search of her sweetheart. That same sweetheart had been torn from her side by the fate of war and now she must go to him, it mattered not where he might be. He might be in perfect health and the best of spirits; he might be lying wounded in a hospital or on the field of battle; he might be a prisoner in the hands of the enemy; he might be dead, but she didn't like the sound of that word. Be it what it may, she determined that her duty demanded that she be near him. War had made it impossible to communicate and physical and mental force still offered the means of reprisal.

In the same compartment with the travellers were three German officers. They were very courteous and gracious in

their manners, notwithstanding the fact that once conversation was established, they endeavoured to justify their own ends as Prussian Militarists. Jacques, the brother of Madame, and uncle of Jeanne, preserved silence as often as possible, prudence requiring that he should first be safe on neutral or Allied soil before he made himself conspicuous. He was a prisoner on parole, fleeing from his captors, and he found that silence was golden.

One of the German officers, an elderly man, was most congenial in his treatment of the ladies. He discussed the war situation with a reason and fairness that astonished the Belgians. The pathos of the war had begun to impress itself upon him, like millions of his countrymen, and he accepted a viewpoint considerably moderated in tone from the average Prussian.

"There is only one thing that I would like to tell you, Madame," he said. "We love our Kaiser and we would die for him. If it should so happen, that a republic would be established in Germany, you can rest assured that our Kaiser would be the first President."

And Madame nor Jeanne took any serious objection to that sentiment. She knew already that the German people loved almost to adoration, their Kaiser. And she knew as well that all Belgians hated and detested him with the same fervor. She was contented to leave it at that.

One hour after leaving Brussells, the train pulled into the station at Louvain. For some distance before entering the depot, it was possible to witness the ruins of the great educational centre of Belgium. They had heard much of the crime of Louvain, and now they were in the presence of the horror and chaos that were wrought in the heart of that community. True, they could not see again the lives that had

been so cruelly blotted out, massacred for no other reason than to gratify a fiendish lust, but the ruins of the fine big buildings were there. It would be necessary to change trains at Louvain, in order to make connections for Antwerp, and this was a splendid opportunity provided for seeing Louvain as German Kultur had re-arranged it.

As Jeanne and her mother, together with the uncle, passed through the long lines of debris, the crushed and battered structures on either side, and as they silently passed through the avenue of hellish destruction in search of an eating place, there arose in their hearts a measure of pity and sympathy the like of which they had never known before. They in Brussells had much with which to contend, but what could be said of those in Louvain.

There came back to her mind the spectacle of that unusual train that passed into the Capital, the day after the crime of Louvain. It was a train-load of drunken brutes wearing the Kaiser's uniform. The variety and ridicule of the decorations was truly typical of a drunken orgy. The savage cries and the wild, almost indescribable character of the raving animals could only have been the aftermath of such a crime as this. They had never believed that it were possible to indulge to such inhuman lengths, but, there before their eyes, was the evidence, plain and irrefutable.

Jeanne and her mother, as well as the uncle, were well contented when the hour for departure came. It was then four o'clock in the afternoon and, although the distance between Louvain and Antwerp was not great in point of mileage, still they were in a military train and time was never considered by those men who operate such an institution.

The voyage was full of interest, in so far as the passing countryside revealed the terrors of the war that had raged in

its very heart. The destruction on every hand, the peaceable farms razed to the ground; the homes, the factories, all, all gone to gratify the war spirit of one man. The inundations here and there, and particularly in the vicinity of Lierre, told in impressive language of the utility of this weapon with which the Prussians never reckoned.

Here and there were to be seen heavy locomotives, entire trains driven into each other with headlong speed for no other reason than to create a barrier for a tunnel, or to blockade the line in general. Bridges had been blown up along the route, but they had been replaced by structures not so substantial but nevertheless good enough to serve the purpose.

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when Jeanne and her friends reached Antwerp. It was too late to undertake the voyage into Holland, the last train had already left, so a comfortable hotel was located, and in a good, cosy bed they passed their first night dehors of their home. Nor was it to be the last night that they would sleep in the midst of strange conditions.

Early they were astir, and in the coolness of the bright winter's morning, they took a carriage which would convey them to the point just outside the gates of the city where they would find a train for Rosendaal. Up to that moment the bridges had not been repaired which would permit the entrance of the trains into the heart of the city.

No difficulty was experienced with the sentries, although a number were turned back. Hundreds there were who were seeking an exit from the world of misery which the enemy had imposed in Belgium, while in each returning train were as many who returned, tired of the life in a foreign land. They preferred Belgium with the Germans, than a strange land without a home.

But to Jeanne, it was the first experience, and if Joseph Vandenbroeck could only be located, she would be prepared to endure any measure of suffering or sacrifice. To the mother, it became really romantic to pass the lines of an enemy and to escape into the outer world. To the uncle, it was only a matter of reaching neutral ground where he could publicly declare his opinion of the Germans and German culture.

Rosendaal was reached, there was a short wait for a train to Flushing, and that same evening the seaport was reached. A second repose in a strange bed and in a strange city, and the following morning, boat was taken to a point where a tram was found which conveyed them to the Belgian frontier in the vicinity of Knocke. Once at Knocke, the electric trains ran frequently to Ostend and even beyond that to Westende.

Disappointment awaited the tired travellers at Ostend, however, because the whole of the Belgian army had already retired. There were still thousands of refugees in the city, clamoring to find a place in one of the boats that would carry them across the channel to England. Many were already satisfied of the impossibility of that route, and were now trudging along the pike that would lead them into Holland. At the same moment, the Germans were pressing nearer and nearer the gates of Ostend. They had already occupied Ghent and were on the outskirts of Bruges.

"We left the Germans at Brussells, mother, and if we stay here a little longer, we will be with them again." Jeanne was thoroughly disheartened. She had come in quest of the most precious thing in the world to her. She had again been the victim of a cruel fate. The army was away and owing to the reorganization, it would be impossible to determine just what company Joseph would lead.

They were sitting on the duige discussing the situation, when a rather attractive young man came up to them. He enquired if they would like to get a place in the last boat that would be leaving Ostend. The Germans would be taking possession of the town within a few hours, and every effort was being made to give preference to the women and children, in getting the refugees away from the city. The young man was an American War correspondent and he was going to stay and witness the arrival of the Huns.

"But we are not refugees. We only arrived in Ostend a short time ago." The protestations of Jeanne aroused the interest of the American. He was more than ever perplexed. Knowing that they must be Belgian or French women, he could not understand why they should come into Ostend at the very moment when the whole world was striving to effect an exit.

"I am very sorry, Madame, but I thought that I might have been of assistance to you." Raising his hat, the American was just turning away when a happy thought seized Jeanne.

"Have you been in Ostend for many days?" she asked.

"Yes, I have been here more than a week," was the response.

"Then you witnessed the arrival of the Belgian army and the subsequent reorganization."

"I did that, Mademoiselle, and I can tell you that the Belgian army is as good and better than it ever was." He was quite enthusiastic in his estimate of the Belgians.

"You didn't happen to hear mention of an officer by the name of Vandenbroeck?" Tense anxiety followed this question and the heart of Jeanne almost ceased beating in anticipation of the reply.

"Vandenbroeck? Vandenbroeck?" The American was searching his mind for any knowledge of that name. At last he found it. "Ah I know who you mean, Major Vandenbroeck. He's a young man, possibly not more than 25 years. I understand that he started in the rank of Lieutenant and he has been promoted to Captain and then Major. He has had a wonderful career and, I believe that at Namur he was decorated with the cross of the "Order de Leopold"."

Jeanne could not restrain herself longer. In her wild joy she embraced her mother. Tears came into her big blue eyes, but they were not tears of sorrow. "At last! At last!" she cried, and all the while the young man was standing back, an interested spectator of this little drama. He thought he saw material for a war romance and his interest deepened.

"You know Major Vandenbroeck?" he asked when Jeanne was more composed.

"He is my fiancé. I haven't heard from him for a long time. It is for that reason that we have come to Ostend. You don't know how I thank you for this valuable information." Jeanne was somewhat embarrassed, once that she had explained her case to this man, who was naught but a stranger to her.

"Where could he be now, do you suppose?" If the journalist had thought that he would enter upon a raft of questions he had been very much mistaken, because he had yet to satisfy the young heart of Jeanne.

"He left here yesterday in charge of a battalion. Of course, I couldn't say just where they have gone. Nobody gets wise to that information. They always leave nowhere for nowhere and once there they have still another "nowhere" in mind." There was not so much satisfaction in this answer.

"Is there no way of finding out?"

The young man thought a moment before he replied. "I might see what I could do in the matter, but it may be necessary that you go to Dunkerke. The base has been transferred to that point and all information emanates from there. Ostend is no longer a Belgian base. It lies in "no man's land" for the time being, but it will shortly be German."

And as if to emphasize the truth of the American's words, a huge aeroplane flew low over the city at that very moment. "See! See! That's a Taube! The Germans always send their airmen in advance of their troops." The journalist was eagerly pointing with his cane in an effort to expose the aircraft to the quicker view of Jeanne and her mother.

"Well, I guess that we are here to stay, mother," Jeanne suggested. "We are so accustomed to the Germans that it will do us no harm to see them again. Of one thing I am glad, that uncle Jacques stayed back in Flushing. It would never have done for him to come here."

"But I am rightly disappointed that I didn't get a chance to see our little Belgian soldiers again," declared the mother. It was that to which she had looked forward with such pleasureable anticipation.

"Why, you'll have a chance yet, if you stay right where you are," interposed the American. "The last detachments have not yet left. They stay until the very last moment and then they make a get-a-way in automobiles."

"Good! Good!" and Madame Desirée almost sprang for joy.

A few moments afterwards, a number of automobiles drew up before the hotel near where they were sitting. There

must have been seven in all. They were filled with officers and men, all Belgians. They paused but a moment, and then they were whirled away towards Dunkerke.

Joy turned quickly to remorse with Madame. "I was so anxious to see them again, and now that I have seen them, I feel real sad and it might have been much better if I could only have lived a little longer in that spirit of anticipation. God knows what I will be able to look upon our little Belgian soldiers once more."

Conversation returned to the question of Joseph, much to the pleasure of Jeanne. How her eyes did sparkle with delight as the American recited, as far as he knew personally, the record of the gallant Major whom he had met only the previous day and who might now be shut out from them by a barrier of German steel. Never was Jeanne so proud of her sweetheart and how she longed to see him again and to claim him for her own before the whole world.

It was finally agreed that the War Correspondent should learn as much as possible respecting the missing sweetheart and, if possible, word would be sent through to him. He left them to go hurriedly to his hotel.

That same night Jeanne and her mother stopped in what proved to be a veritable hell of confusion. Thousands of refugees still swarmed through the streets of the city, praying, beseeching for some means of exit before the Germans would arrive. Aeroplanes were flying over the city and dropping bombs and a reign of terror obtained.

The last boat had gone. Soldiers with fixed bayonets had stood at the gang planks to ensure the safe conduct of the women and children. Many had been crushed in the terrible congestion, others had been pushed into the water and drowned; hundreds there were who made a rush for the fishing

smacks and coaling boats, throwing themselves into those crafts and cutting loose the lashings that held them to the quay. Indescribable were the sufferings of these maddened creatures who asked but one end, to be free from the same inhuman wretches who had killed so many of her friends.

Early in the morning the American returned to the hotel where Jeanne and her mother were stopping, to report that it was impossible to learn anything definite respecting the movement of troops, but that it would be necessary to go to Dunkerke.

But now another question arose. By what means were they to reach Dunkerke. All communication between the two towns had been cut, and the voyage was now regarded as extremely dangerous. The Uhlans, in their policy of penetration, would often reach the coast line and they were ever lingering in the vicinity of the dunes.

Every conceivable means was exploited but it was finally obvious, that to attempt to reach Dunkerke under existing circumstances, would be practical suicide. The fond hopes which Jeanne had so enthusiastically nourished in her heart, must be dashed to the ground. The joy of a possible reunion would have to be deferred, and for how long, God only could tell.

The same wall of German steel which had been thrown up between Jeanne and Joseph at Brussells, would again be placed between them at Ostend. It seemed as though the irony of fate was pursuing her wherever she went. As a ship bereft of its helm and tossing helplessly on the waves of a boisterous sea, so were Jeanne and her mother. They were helpless in their plight, unable to attain the goal toward which they had turned so full of hope and courage.

"I don't want to go back to Brussells, until I see Joseph," declared Jeanne. The tears that filled her eyes mirrored the battle that was raging in her heart and reducing it to a state of laceration.

"I am sure that I cannot solve the problem, Jeanne," replied the mother. "Can we gain anything by staying here? To tell you frankly, I have a little fear of the Germans here. It would be so much better if your father were here."

"How would it be if we went up into Holland? We would be in good touch with events there, possibly better than here. You know what the Germans are, once they occupy a town. They give only their own news to the eager and hungering public." Jeanne was determined that she would not go back to Brussells until she had seen her sweetheart and she was almost prepared to meet any measure of cost in the quest of her soul's desire.

"Good, that will be fine," added the mother. "We could also be near Jacques, and, thus, we would have at least some one of the family with us."

So it was agreed. But the question of transportation had yet to be discussed. In the meantime the electric railways had been closed down, every horse and vehicle had been taken away, and not an automobile was left in the town. But they would consult their American friend. He would surely have some solution to offer.

Accordingly, the American journalist was sought out at his hotel, and their plans laid before him. For a moment he stood in silent thought, and then he made a suggestion.

"Why not ask the American Consul to run you up as far as the frontier in his car. He is a splendid chap, and would

gladly do it. From the frontier, you can always get the 'vicinale' to Breskens and then a little boat will carry you to Flushing."

"Good!" exclaimed Jeanne. "We will go directly back to Uncle Jacques."

The party then repaired to the American Consulate where the proposition was presented to the Consul himself. The latter agreed to undertake the responsibility of placing them safely on the Holland frontier.

One hour later a big limousine swung out from a garage in the vicinity of the consulate. On the bonnet it carried a big American flag, and painted in bright letters on the sides of the car were the words "American Consular Service." In the car were two ladies, two gentlemen and the chauffeur. The American journalist had, at the last moment, accepted the invitation of the consul to accompany them.

The big, wide pike that led along the coastline towards Blankenburg and Heyst was almost deserted. As the car whirled along the paved way, it was only the whirr of the engines that harmonized with the distant roar of the sea. Coq sur Mer, Wenduyne, Blankenburgh, Heyst—all these attractive watering places were empty, the inhabitants driven out through terror of the incoming Germans.

How Jeanne's big blue eyes followed intimately the lines of the coast as the car swept on. Since she had been a little child, she had passed her summers with her parents in those same parts, and there was much of the pathetic in seeing this world of happiness converted into a sphere of trial and suffering. It was in those same sand dunes that she and Joseph had spent so many happy hours, and she thought she could depict, here and there, a spot which she recognized. And all the while that Jeanne was lost in this reverie, her mother was

entertaining the Consul and the journalist with a recitation of the incidents associated with the life at Brussells. The Consul informed Madame that he often went to the Capital, and the latter advised him that she would only be too pleased to have him call.

"Why, I expect to be going up to Brussells in a couple of days," he declared.

"Oh, you don't know how I would thank you if you would go and see my husband. He lives at—but, oh, I will give you my card. You can tell him that we will be at the Grand Hotel in Flushing and that we are well."

Here, Jeanne was disturbed in her thoughts. The mention of the fact that the Consul would be going to see her father, made even more keen the disappointment she felt in not having found her sweetheart. How she would have longed to tell the Consul that he could inform her father that she had seen Joseph.

But, then she would have to communicate some message. It was only natural that he would be looking for some word respecting the missing sweetheart. The mother had made no reference to Joseph, having preferred to leave that matter to Jeanne. She, herself, was content to get word through to her husband.

With a voice almost choked up with tears, Jeanne recited to the Consul, the story of her suffering, how she had left home to find her fiancé, how she had lived in suffering for so many weeks without word from him; how, when she had reached Ostend, he had left only a few hours previous, and how she was determined that she would never return to Brussells until she did see him.

"May I ask who this young man may be?" The Consul was most gracious in his manner.

"Why it is Lieutenant Vandenbroeck—Joseph Vandenbroeck. Monsieur, the American, just told me yesterday that he had been promoted to the rank of Major."

"Well, I should say he has," enthusiastically returned the Consul. "His record is one of the best in the army. I understand that he saved the army more than once and his pluck and gallantry are passwords in official circles now. Why, I know him so well. We had supper together the other night. Isn't it strange how things do develop. He just left here two days ago with his detachment. He has been given one of the most difficult points along the entire line, to hold."

Jeanne listened with intense interest. Here was still another man who had seen Joseph, and had actually supped with him. She was jealous of these two men who had held the place that she, herself, should have filled.

Madame Desirée was busy searching in her effects for one of her cards. At last she found one, and, hurriedly, she wrote the address of her husband. Then she handed the card to the consul, at the same time impressing upon him the welcome that would be extended to him when he called.

The Consul studied the card carefully. When he had been first presented to these two ladies, the name had not aroused any unusual interest in his mind. But the address was so familiar to him. At last he recognized it.

"Why, I just sent a letter to that address, day before yesterday, with one of my couriers," he announced. "The letter was given to me by Major Vandenbroeck."

What a joy did this news carry to the heart of Jeanne. How she longed to have that letter in her own hands, how she would fondle it, and how she would read it over and over again. Joseph had written to her at last, and God only knew, perhaps he had written oftentimes, but that the missives

never reached her. She was certain of one thing, that he would never neglect an opportunity to write her, and the fact that he made no special reference to the matter with the Consul, suggested that his letter was but part of an ordinary routine.

They were just pulling into Knocke and the Consul announced that it would be well to eat something before crossing the frontier into Holland. "There are so many refugees the other side of the line, that it might be difficult to find anything to eat," he counselled. "Better to make sure of it here."

The streets of Knocke were deserted. Perfect calm reigned supreme. How it had changed from other days. The population, for the greater part, had fled in fear of the threatened German occupation. Fortunately one or two restaurants were still in service.

The party found a comfortable place in the Grand Cafe, and there they sat down to dinner. The service had been so seriously disorganized that orders were not filled so promptly as previously. But this fact did not in any way discourage the travellers.

Jeanne had picked up the copy of a journal lying on a nearby chair. It was the *London Daily Mail.* She knew just enough English to understand the general sense of the phrases.

A big, bold heading stood out against her startled gaze. It spread across no less than four columns of the paper. It carried consternation to the heart of Jeanne Desirée. She reeled on her chair and would have fallen, had not the promptness of the Consul intervened.

"Why what's the trouble, my child?" The mother sprang anxiously from her seat. There was no answering word from Jeanne. She had fainted.

The mother picked up the paper, and there she read:

"The fighting Fourth, under the gallant Major Vandenbroeck, surrounded by the enemy and annihilation is imminent. They were trapped by a spy."

Madame Desirée looked at the date line. It was the issue of the previous day.

She looked pitifully at her daughter. She was just coming out of the swoon.

"There, there, my child, be calm, its not so bad as you think." She gently caressed the fevered brow.

"Poor child! Will this persecution never end?"

It was a heart full to overflowing that uttered that appeal.

CHAPTER XII.

Back Home, But a Prisoner.

Joseph Vandenbroeck had always been a young man of splendid resourcefulness; his mind was ever quick to grasp a problem, and, once determined in a policy, the whole force of his physical and mental energy was employed in the realization of his will.

So it was, then when he found himself, with his men, completely surrounded by the Germans, his brain immediately absorbed the seriousness of the situation. It required not the eye of an expert strategist to see that the position was hopeless, that complete destruction was the only other alternative for surrender.

They had been led into a trap, a bold, cleverly conceived trap, from which there was no escape. A traitorous spy, one of those despicable creatures who lurk in the shadow of all armies, seeking to lead them to destruction, and all for a piece of money; it was a man of this type who had dragged them into the dust of defeat.

The Belgians might have fought to the last man, they might even have laid down their lives in a sacrifice that would have shone as a bright, spectacular star in the national firmament, but no military value would be attained. It would be but a criminal waste of good lives. Regard as they could, there was only one solution, surrender to the enemy. It galled to the very quick, but there are moments in the lives of soldiers when reverses must be met in the heroic spirit. A hero is such in defeat as well as in victory, in fact, history records the

fact that some of the greatest of all acts of gallantry have been accomplished by men who went down to bitter defeat.

Had there been the least hope of reinforcements coming up to their aid, they might have held out, notwithstanding the presence of innumerable machine guns and an enemy that outnumbered them twenty to one. But that could not be. The general staff had never reckoned on the possibility of a trap. If so, they would have guarded against it.

A murderous fire that came from all four sides, was being poured in upon the Belgian ranks. Major Vandenbroeck ran in and out amongst his men, cheering them and calling on them to stand their ground at all costs. They fought back with the desperation of men who knew that they could not win, but who thirsted for revenge.

Many had fallen and Joseph had, himself, suffered a slight wound in the right arm. Even darkness was too far remote to come to their aid so that they might carve their way through the German wall of steel and escape as best they could. No, there was only one avenue open to them, and slowly, but reluctantly, the white flag was run up. The German fire ceased and a number of the enemy came forward to meet the Belgians. The latter had already thrown down their arms.

There was no humiliation for the gallant Major and his men. They were in an impossible position and war offers no relief from such circumstances. As he handed over his sword, there welled up in the heart of Joseph, a deep, almost irreconciliable remorse. Once in the hands of the enemy, he wished that he had chosen death to that humiliating fate. Would he be sent into Germany as a prisoner of war, or would he be retained with the other prisoners at different points in Belgium. Of one thing he was certain, that he preferred

confinement in Germany to imprisonment in Belgium, where he might might be exposed to the painful scrutiny of his fellow countrymen.

One thing he knew, however, that it mattered not what might be his desires in that important matter, the Germans would suit their own wishes. They had such a happy faculty of doing things generally opposite to the desire of most men, that it would not surprise him at all if he were held in captivity in his own land.

That same night at a very late hour, when most of the world was fast asleep, a train pulled into the station at Ghent, carrying the prisoners rounded up in that fatal sortie. Joseph occupied a special compartment with a number of other officers. The train was heavily guarded. It must have been several hours that they rested at Ghent, before leaving for Brussells. Joseph had fallen asleep, fatigued, as he was, his tired body soon collapsed under the terrible strain to which he was being and had been subjected. He awoke to find himself in "la gare du Nord" at Brussells and the guards were running along the platform awakening the sleeping prisoners so that they might be escorted to the barracks, where they would be interned.

"Back in Brussells!" Once he had gathered his thoughts together, thanks to the cool, refreshing morning air which chased away his intense drowsiness, Joseph found himself in the most peculiar position he had even known. He was in the city of his nativity, the city where lived the only girl in the world whom he loved. That sweetheart had watched and waited many long and sleepless hours for his return. He had returned, but they were never to know the joy of that reunion. They would have to live within a few metres of each other,

but that separating distance was secured by a barrier which neither could penetrate.

It would be an even greater hell to him, knowing these things. Jeanne could live on in the hope that her sweetheart was still in the ranks of the Belgians, fighting for his King and country—and for her. He was certain that she found a world of comfort in the knowledge that he was doing his duty. If she only know how that sphere of duty had been closed, and all the result of a treacherous spy. How he would like to steal in on her, without warning of his approach, gather her into his arms, and tell her how he loved her. But that was now impossible. That inexpressible joy was to be denied to them. Surely would their happiness come back to them some day, when darkness would turn to light and the sadness of their heavy hearts would be converted in gladness. What a precious day that would be to both of them.

But Joseph had not a long time to indulge in reverie. The guards were already dragging out of the compartments some of those prisoners who still chose sleep rather than action. It was time to move, and a minute later he was standing in line with his fellow officers on the station platform, awaiting further orders.

Passing through the streets to the barracks, there were, fortunately, very few of the inhabitants to be seen. Here and there a German soldier, a sentry, was encountered but, for the greater part it was a picture of emptiness that marked every avenue through which they passed. At last the barracks were reached, "la caserne du petit chateau." Officers were separated from men, and once installed under the care of a double guard, they were left to themselves. It gave each an opportunity for reflection.

The food rations were not as good as they should have been, but, as Joseph explained to a number of his fellow officers, they were fortunate in securing anything from the race that was so lacking in humanity as to massacre the innocent women and children. This remark aroused in the mind of each of those officers, the countless number of incidents they had experienced where brutal treatment had been meted out to the helpless ones by the barbarous Prussian soldiery.

"I find that the Bavarians are possibly the worst offenders of all," declared Lieutenant Lapanne. "I know that I have seen enough to convince me that they are really inhuman and without heart. I may be wrong, but that is my opinion."

"I wouldn't say that," added another young officer, his youthful heart full to overflowing with reminiscences. "In my estimation, the Prussians are the worst of all. History proves that they always were given to cruelties, in every war in which they have been engaged."

Opinion was generally divided, although, if anything the majority was inclined to the same belief as this youthful officer. Discussion became more and more interesting as incidents were recited exposing the treachery of the Huns. Almost indescribable in their horror, were some of the thrilling tales that were unravelled by these men who had passed through the hardest part of the fight, and had seen with their own eyes so many of those barbarities which have staggered the whole civilized world.

Joseph here related the story of his escape from the Huns when they murdered in cold blood upwards of two hundred civilians, in the little village not such a great distance from Namur.

"The more I think of it, the more horrifying it seems to me, and I can assure you that I have only God to thank for my miraculous escape from an almost certain death.

"I can see again those pitiable wrecks of humanity, enfeebled from lack of food and drink, fairly dragging themselves along the road with the last ounce of physical strength they could summon, and then they would fall with a bullet in their tired bodies. Oh, it was terrible, I can see it to this very day as vividly as though it were yesterday.

"But the most vivid impression of all, is the terror-stricken faces of the women and children, as they shrunk back in horror when the mittrailleuse opened fire."

Intense interest followed Joseph as he told of that gruesome spectacle of the dead and dying lying along the roadway, in indiscriminate masses. "God, I was glad to get away." The expression of his voice gave evidence of the truth of that sentiment.

"But that was not all," he continued after allowing sufficient time for the horror of the other incident to sink deep into the minds and hearts of his fellow officers. "I met with a peasant, and together we trudged along the road, until we came to a farmhouse. There we found the doors and windows barred, but, after removing one of the barriers, we saw something that almost turned us sick. Blood was bespattered on the walls and floors, and there was every evidence of a bloody struggle. A tragic message on the door told of the murder of two young members of the family."

Modesty forbade that Joseph tell of the heroic part he had played in the later drama, when he exacted a penalty for the crime which the Huns had perpetrated.

"Ah no, we could never begin to tell of all the things we have seen," commented another officer, a deep sigh reflecting

the heavy heart within. "I could inform you of an incident that occurred—"

"Get ready for dinner, there, you slaves!" A rough voice here interrupted the conversation. It was one of the Prussian guards who had appeared in the doorway. He had anything but a congenial air about him. "Don't keep the mess waiting, or, by God, you'll pay for it, every one of you."

It had been the same guard, who, earlier in the morning, had been somewhat brutal in handling a number of younger soldiers, who, overpowered by the loss of sleep, had been difficult in awakening. His facial features exposed a wicked heart.

In another part of the barrack, were a large number of civilian prisoners confined. These unfortunates had been thrown into prison for trivial offences. Some of them had simply laughed a little when reading the ridiculous reports that were published in the German bulletins, but that had been sufficient. It was a crime to mock their German masters. Others were there for selling papers in an effort to gain a livelihood. Two police agents had been sentenced to long imprisonment simply because they sought to exercise their duty in face of the unreasonable protests of a young and arrogant Prussian officer. Many and varied were the offences, as variable as the characters of the prisoners.

So it was, that when the military prisoners were paraded for lunch they encountered, for the first time, their civilian fellow convicts. Many were the recognizing looks that were passed from one line to the other, but the strictness of German discipline prohibited the renewal of acquaintanceships, particularly on parade.

Dinner over, the prisoners were returned to their quarters. They were escorted by the armed guards and, for some time

afterwards, the latter remained hard by, as if to impress upon their captives the power which they held; or, it may have been to convince them of the impossibility of violating any of the iron laws of the prison.

In the days that followed, Joseph found ample time to reflect on the situation in which he found himself. The sweet image of Jeanne Desirée was ever before him, and he made up his mind that, if some day he could find a means of communicating with her, he would do so. He knew that her heart would be rendered unutterably sad, should she learn of his fate, but then again, he believed that it was better that she know the truth.

Would it not be far better that she know of his presence in the barracks, a prisoner of war, than to labor under that terrible suspense that he may have fallen in battle. As a prisoner, there could be no serious danger, with the exception of maltreatment at the hands of the guards, but against the latter contingency he could easily convince her that he was well cared for. No, he would look for the first opening.

The overpowering force of love held him in its grip and Joseph became unusually contented in the knowledge that in this big, cruel world, there was one heart that beat for him, there was one life devoted to him, there were two tender arms ever open to receive him back. There was someone who was all his own, his to have and to hold. Love had its joys and its sorrows, but the greater the trial, the greater the happiness that followed. He knew that the day must come when Jeanne would be restored to him, when no human force could again come between them. His inner soul seemed to tell him that.

The inhabitants of Brussells had learned of the arrival of a large number of prisoners, and, after much difficulty, they found that they were confined in the 'caserne du petit

chateau.' Reading matter, food, tobacco and other comforts were subscribed through the agency of a number of more energetic citizens, and these were handed over to the German government for distribution amongst the prisoners.

In due season, this consignment reached the prison, but it fell first into the hands of cruel and selfish guards. A large share of the food so carefully prepared by willing hands, was consumed by the Prussian guards, the reading matter was withheld just to that point where the guards had previously read. So it was, that charity had been balked again, just as it is so often disorganized by the Prussians in the Belgian capital, where fifty per cent of all the monies subscribed for charity must be handed over to the German government.

It was merely through accident that Joseph learned of this perversion and fraud on the part of the guards. He was determined that he should bring the matter to the attention of the German governor, in the hope that it would reach the ears of the citizens of Brussells. The matter could then be taken up with Mr. Brand Whitlock, the American Minister, and a second offence of a similar character would be precluded. The influence and power of Mr. Whitlock was exceedingly great, and, as champion of the common rights and liberties of the people, he had already succeeded in conserving to the inhabitants of Brussells privileges which were theirs by every right of human law, but which the Germans sought, nevertheless, to take away from them.

Joseph was alone in the small guard room, the other officers having gone out in the larger hall. The guard was sitting at his table, the very picture of law and tyranny. Joseph feared to make the request for writing material, but he knew that he must brave the ill-temper of his guardian.

Going over to the table, he waited for the chance to open the conversation. The guard sat motionless and obdurate.

"Do you suppose that I could make a request of the chief guard?"

"What do you want?" A voice that was fraught with an almost terrorizing power answered Joseph.

"I want some paper and pen and ink, if it is possible to get same." Joseph was not to be frightened by the brutal manner of the guard.

"You're not allowed to write letters. You should know that by this time." The reply was not encouraging. Joseph knew that it would be impossible to explain the character of the letter which he proposed to write, because the very guards who had committed the offence against the rights and privileges of the prisoners, would never allow the matter to come to the knowledge of the governor.

But, on the other hand, the governor must be advised, and now that the difficult task was once undertaken, it would never do to let it go by default.

"If you want to know, I desire to write to the governor, but the letter is strictly confidential."

Nothing confidential is allowed to pass from this caserne." The guard was playing his cards skilfully.

"Very well, I will write the letter and hold it just until the governor or some high officer visits the prison and I will then deliver it personally. Or no, I believe that it would be better to present my request verbally."

"If you think for one moment, that the governor will waste his time in talking to the likes of you, then you are very much mistaken." The guard evidently was convinced that he could discourage the Belgian officer in his desire.

"We'll see about that," declared Joseph, as he turned away, preferring to close the interview, rather than submit to the insolent spirit of the guard.

"The paper and writing material will be here at once—I will go and get it myself." The guard rose from his seat. He still held in his designing heart the hope that Joseph would write the letter, and that he would be able to intercept it. He knew that the idea of the letter had been inspired because there must be a grievance. The guard shared the stolen food and had even read some of the literature which had been sent in to the prisoners and he felt guilty in his own mind of an offence, that the governor might possibly punish severely.

"No, thank you very much. I prefer to state my request verbally, when the governor visits the prison." Joseph left the guard alone after this parting shot, but if he could have looked behind him, he would have seen the face of the guard turn sickly pale and then flush up with a feverish red. He jumped from his seat and striking the table viciously with his clenched fist, he fairly cried:

"And, by God, if the Governor does come to the prison, I'll make good and sure that he doesn't see Major Vandenbroeck!"

The incident closed, but the following day a number of the German officials were visiting the prison. They were inspecting the various quarters and were, apparently almost at the point of quitting the caserne. Standing in a group in the court yard, the eyes of all the prisoners intently fixed upon them, they were discussing the result of their findings.

Suddenly one of the officers turned abruptly on his heel. His tall, slender form, so unlike the average Prussian, made him conspicuous amongst the others. He paused a moment

and then he spoke. It was evident from the character of the hearing he enjoyed, that he must be the governor himself.

"Amongst the prisoners who have just arrived is Major Vandenbroeck. He has a most wonderful record, from what I can learn. He has been decorated more than once by King Albert. His division was known as "The Fighting Fourth." We rounded them up down near Thurout."

"I have heard much of the same man," added another officer.

The Governor spoke again. "I would very much like to see him. We must recognize bravery in our enemies, as well as in ourselves. I would like to accord special privileges to Major Vandenbroeck."

After a little further discussion, it was agreed that they visit the distinguished prisoner.

Joseph was lying on his bed of straw, when the guard came to inform him that the governor and a number of officers would like to see him. Joseph lifted himself quickly and after arranging his uniform, so that it might be a little more tidy, he followed the guard.

The official group was just outside the barrack, in the court yard. As Joseph approached, the officers saluted.

Joseph refused to salute, having decreed in his own mind that never would he salute a German. The guard became very indignant over this insult to his superiors, and hungering for an opportunity to humble the brave Belgian officer, he sprang at Joseph with a vicious threat on his lips.

An officer standing at the side of the governor drew his sword, and jumped between the onrushing guard and the defenceless Belgian.

"Back with you!" cried the officer. "Leave this man in peace."

The guard turned away, his teeth fairly grinding with rage.

"Major Vandenbroeck, we have heard much of your gallantry, and although you are still our enemy, we would like to tell you that we, too, can appreciate bravery. While prisoner of the German army, you will be accorded special privileges."

It was the governor who addressed Joseph, and the careful manner in which he chose his words, suggested that he was striving to maintain the strictest diplomacy under this cloak of generosity.

"I thank you very much." Joseph's reply was brief, but he was not inclined to accept too much at the hands of these men.

A moment passed, and then he decided that he would take advantage of this opportunity to present the grievance, which he and all his fellow Belgians shared. He was certain that, in his present frame of mind, the governor could never refuse the request.

"I have a very serious complaint to make," he commenced. "My fellow Belgians and myself have been deliberately robbed by the guards in this caserne. Food and tobacco, as well as reading matter sent to us by friends in the city, and accepted by yourself on our behalf, have been stolen for the greater part, by the guards. It works a serious wrong on my fellow Belgians, particularly so, the ordinary soldiers, and I wish that you would investigate the matter, and also advise the American Minister, who is the trustee of all articles subscribed for our comfort and well being."

The charge against the German guards caused considerable surprise amongst the officers. They could scarcely believe that their own soldiers would be guilty of such a crime. The

Governor promised a rigid investigation into the matter, and, with that, they parted, leaving Joseph to return to his quarters alone and unguarded.

Two days later it was rumored that there would be a complete change of guards in the prison. True to his word, the German governor, had conducted an investigation into the charges of theft preferred by Major Vandenbroeck, with the result that the present guards were to be removed, and a number of them were to be confined as a penalty for their offence.

That same evening, the old guards were paraded in the court yard, and were marched through the big, towering gates into the street. Almost simultaneously, a new company of guards entered the courtyard to take over the duties of guarding the prisoners.

They lined up in the centre of the courtyard, and were addressed by the officer in charge. Consternation reigned amongst the prisoners. This officer spoke in perfect French. This may have been as a warning to the prisoners that their new keepers were fluent in the French tongue, but to Joseph as well as the other who could appreciate the significance of it all, it conveyed another meaning.

The new guards were Alsatians. The incident in the little café along the road leading to Namur, was vividly recalled to the mind of Joseph. If Alsatians were all of the same sentiment as he who had caused the disturbance in the cafe, then there was some hope for the Belgian and French prisoners given over into their keeping. These same Alsatians, once away from their German lords and masters, were only too willing to employ the French language, if for no other reason, than to show their contempt for the German.

The Belgian prisoners were not conscious of the events that were passing in the outer world, but the inhabitants of Brussells knew well that friction had developed between the Prussians and the Alsatians, that more than one Alsatian regiment had been taken out of the western field and sent against the Russians, because they had shown a spirit too friendly towards the French and Belgian. At that very moment, the Alsatians were being used mostly in sentry and guard duty, the German commanders fearing to trust them in the fighting line against the French and Belgians.

Joseph was very much pleased to know that they were to be placed in the keeping of Alsatian guards, because he knew that from them they could, at least, anticipate a little sympathy and humane treatment. This belief was confirmed a little while later, when one of the Alsatian officers selected Joseph for a little conversation. His attitude was unusually friendly and many were the statements he made that reflected a spirit of bitterness towards the Germans.

A new life was developed in the heart of the prison. A larger measure of liberty was accorded to the prisoners and many things, which previously had earned a severe reprimand at the hands of the Prussian guards, now passed unnoticed.

News reached the prison one day to the effect that all Alsatians were to be removed from Belgium and sent into Poland and Galicia to fight against the Russians. The reasons for this were given out as being the growing spirit of friendliness between the Alsatians and the French and Belgians. Whole regiments were throwing down their arms before the French and inviting capture. The French government was making special provision for these prisoners and according them unusually good treatment. Many of them were returning in the ranks of the French to oppose their

former comrades. A general spirit of unrest had been developed in the heart of every Alsatian regiment.

The guards in the prison were deeply incensed over this latest insult tendered to their compatriots. Very bitter were some of the remarks that passed between them, and their hatred for the Germans continued to grow and increase. Official advice reached the chief guard that he and his company would be relieved the following day, but no explanation was offered.

"Yes, we'll be relieved tomorrow," declared the chief as he read the message, "but others will also be relieved. We'll teach the Prussians that they cannot tramp on the toes of an Alsatian."

That same evening, Joseph was called into the office of the chief guard, and there a plan was laid before him, which he could accept or reject.

If the Belgian prisoners desired to escape, the guards would arrange matters to meet their convenience. It was a remarkable offer, but Joseph was not in the least surprised, knowing full well the sentiment of the Alsatians. He promised to consult his fellow prisoners and return in a few minutes with the verdict.

Great enthusiasm greeted the announcement of Major Vandenbroeck, but perfect quiet was maintained after a vigorous request by Joseph. "If we are going to undertake this affair, remember it requires great tact and, above all, perfect silence."

The chief guard was waiting for Joseph when he returned. He was very much pleased to learn that the prisoners had accepted his offer. Revenge on the Prussians was what he sought, and revenge he must have at any price.

Plans were quickly completed for the wholesale delivery that same night, and early sky conditions suggested that darkness would favor the effort of the conspirators. The chief guard had, himself, secured a civilian costume for Joseph, but the others would be dependent upon their own skill in avoiding the sentries in other parts of the city. It would be possibly the best plan to find a place of hiding just until civilian clothes could be found for them. One or two would be selected to make the canvass of the private homes in search of clothes.

It was shortly after midnight, when the guard came into the sleeping quarters to arouse the prisoners. The opportune moment had arrived to make the break for liberty. The gates would be found unlocked and all sentries had fallen into a deep sleep and would not molest the escaping prisoners in any way.

Joseph hurried in and out amongst the men, cautioning them to be ever on their guard, and whispering into the ear of each, the place of hiding to which they were to find their way. Having already been supplied with a civilian costume, he would arrange the matter of finding clothes for the others. In that way no one in uniform would be exposed. Silently, the men filed out of the prison. In the fresh, bracing air in the outer courtyard, they paused a moment to fill their lungs, and to gather their courage for the last, desperate effort.

Joseph made up his mind that he would never leave the prison, until every one of his men was free. With the electric lamp which he had received from the Alsatian guard, he visited every nook and corner of the big caserne where there might be a possibility of a Belgian soldier still asleep, unconscious of the liberty that had been offered to him.

The civilian prisoners had not been released. Locked into a different part of the caserne, they were not aware of the delivery of the military prisoners that night.

Time was creeping on, most of the prisoners had already passed into the open freedom beyond the gates, and Joseph was just making a final round of inspection, when the thought seized suddenly upon him, that he could not afford to lose any more time if he was to secure his own personal liberty.

News of the wholesale escape of prisoners would soon reach the ears of the Governor and soldiers would be rushed to the prison in an effort to intercept the fleeing convicts. Time meant freedom, possibly life itself, to him and he must move quickly.

Flashing his light along the walls of the prison to assure himself that none of his men were lying in the shadows of the big prison structure, the rays of the powerful lamp penetrated through the windows of different compartments where civilian prisoners were confined.

At one window was the figure of a man, his face pressed hard against the iron bars which shut out from him the liberty of the outer world. There was a world of pathos in the pale, wan features of that face, and pity moved Joseph to approach a little closer in the hope that this man might wish to convey a message to his friends in the outer world.

The electric lamp almost fell from the grasp of Joseph Vandenbroeck as he studied that figure before him. His brain reeled with amazement and his heart beat with a furious action.

It was the face of Antoine Desirée.

CHAPTER XIII.

Jeanne Desiree Reaches Old London.

It was several minutes before Jeanne Desirée was restored to her normal self. She had fallen into a complete swoon, but kindly ministering hands soon rescued her from that state.

Her mother had, at first, been almost frantic with fear. She had feared that the shock had weakened the heart of her daughter and had reduced her to a condition of grave danger. How her face did brighten with hope as she could see the first faint signs of returning consciousness.

She turned to the doctor who had been hurriedly summoned, just as he was ready to quit the village. "This is bad business, doctor. The poor girl is almost worried to death, and now, this affair in the paper—well, it's more than she can bear."

"We must discourage her in believing that that report is true," returned the medical man. He had hastily read the report in "The Daily Mail."

Jeanne was just recovering from the effects of her weakness. The pitiable sobbing told of a heart that had suffered a terrible chagrin. "Ah, my God, my God, what have I done to merit this sorrow? They will kill him, they will kill my Joseph. No, no, I must go to——"

"Hush, hush, my child, you mustn't agitate yourself like that." It was the mother who sought to sooth the aching passions of her daughter. "That report is not true. Joseph is not in danger. The doctor says that it isn't so."

Jeanne turned feebly to the doctor, her pleading eyes asking in language stronger than words, for that simple expression of hope for the safety of the man she loved. Never had she loved Joseph as she loved him in that moment, when she thought that he was in danger. She would go to him, it mattered not where he was. She felt that she would have strength adequate to any task.

"You can't believe a word of that report, Mademoiselle," advised the physician. "Nobody believes The Daily Mail. It is known as The Daily Liar. It carries naught but sensational matter. I have never been off the coast these past few days, and I would have heard of that disaster to the Major, had it been true. I am sure that there isn't a word of truth in it."

The comforting assurance of the doctor had the desired effect and Jeanne began to reassert her wonderful confidence, that confidence which had ever maintained her in that spirit which oppossed the possibility of harm befalling her sweetheart. The color in her cheeks brightened, she drank a good cup of coffee which had a stimulating effect, and she talked more freely and more contentedly.

The American Consul and his friend, who had retired when the doctor arrived, now returned to enquire if there was anything further they could do. They had already done everything in their power and Madame Desirée thanked them most cordially for the noble assistance they had rendered her in caring for her daughter.

The dinner was then undertaken again, the cook, out of a heart of sympathy, having prepared anew the food which had been ordered. Together, the party sat down to the table, the doctor having retired, once he had refused to accept any fee the moment he learned that the young lady was the fiancé

of Major Vandenbroeck, known as one of the greatest heroes in the history of the war.

The repast finished, plans were immediately made for the departure. The patron of the hotel was consulted respecting the connection that the travellers could make, once across the Holland frontier. He assured them that they could take the 'tram vincinale' as far as Breskens, and from there the boat sailed regularly for Flushing.

Once the frontier was reached, the American Consul immediately occupied himself in finding a place in the train that was almost ready to pull out of the queer little village station. He was sorry to say goodbye, but he gave Madame Desirée as well as Jeanne, his full assurance that he would go and see their husband and father, once he visited Brussells. The young American correspondent was also loathe to quit his new found friends, but expressed the hope that he might be able to see them again in the course of a few days. It was likely that he would be visiting Flushing.

And as he bade adieu, he handed to Madame his card, and reading it, she found that the American was Mr. Frank Wright, of Chicago.

Notwithstanding the fact, that every effort had been employed to convince Jeanne that her sweetheart was not in danger, her hope at times almost vanished, and she was prone to believe that the report in the journal might be true. She made up her mind that, the following morning, she would do all in her power to confirm or deny, officially, the report.

That night, Jeanne and her mother were reading in the hotel salon, having finished supper, when their uncle Jacques came to see them. He had been stopping in Flushing in another part of the town, but, now that his sister and niece were here, he thought that it might be well to find a small

cottage somewhere and there the three might live. In that way, they would be always together.

Jeanne was undecided as to whether or not she could accept this plan, though, as she thought a little later, they could take a cottage, and then, if they found it necessary to leave for a few days, the uncle would always be there to care for things in general about the house. The idea most favorably impressed Madame Desirée, and, after many minutes of discussion of pros and cons, it was decided to do as the uncle had suggested .

"Tell me, uncle, did you read a report in the papers, saying that Joseph and his division had been surrounded, and were threatened with annihilation?" Jeanne would now never neglect an opportunity to learn the truthfulness of this amazing report.

Her uncle was a little reticent at first, but a knowing glance from his sister, forced him to make up his mind quickly.

"There was a report of that character, but it has since been denied. I understand that there isn't a particle of truth in it." Most cleverly had the uncle interpreted the regard of his sister, and the latter drew a deep sigh of relief. She feared that the uncle might have made a statement which would have brought a recurrence of the same weakness with which Jeanne had been afflicted at Knocke.

And in order to change the topic of conversation, Madame Desirée explained to her brother how they had made the trip from Ostend to Flushing. She was most generous in her praise of the American Consul as well as the young journalist.

The following morning, Jeanne made up her mind that she would devote her time to research so as to learn the truth respecting Joseph. It placed the mother in a difficult position,

but she determined that she would play her cards cleverly so as to avoid possible disaster. With her mind full of the horrible stories of German atrocities which they had learned at Ostend, Jeanne was not in a position to suffer the frightful shock which would be forced upon her, were she to learn the truth. The uncle had already informed his sister, that Joseph and his division had been surrounded and that later reports said that they had been taken prisoners.

In the same hotel was the correspondent for a number of English papers. This fact the uncle had learned through conversation with various persons in the hotel lobby. And he had made it his business to meet this journalist and enlist his services in the common effort to disabuse the mind of Jeanne of the fear that her fiancé had fallen into the hands of the enemy. A most congenial man was the correspondent, and he readily agreed to aid in the noble work.

It had been pre-arranged that while the family group was engaged in conversation in the salon, that he was to wander into that apartment, almost aimlessly. Then the uncle was to summon him.

So it was, that while Jeanne was still wondering in her own mind that following morning as to just what would be the best means to follow, into the salon there entered a young man, graceful and attractive in general appearnace. Jeanne was standing alone before the window. Her mother and uncle were occupying easy chairs before the fireplace.

"Good morning, Mr. Jamieson!" It was Uncle Jacques who spoke first.

The newcomer advanced towards him, advanced his hand, and with a hearty shake, bade him good morning. Then the stranger was presented to Madame.

Jeanne was called over from her solitude, and she, too, was made acquainted with the journalist.

"Mr. Jamieson is a journalist, Jeanne. He is correspondent for a number of English papers." The uncle opened the conversation, and Mr. Jamieson bowed several times in confirming the explanations offered.

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Jamieson," said Jeanne. "It is possible that you may be able to be of great assistance to me."

"Would be only too glad to aid you in any way," returned the journalist in his broken French.

Jeanne told him the story of her experience and then, turning a pleading face towards him, she asked him to tell her truthfully if it was true that Major Vandenbroeck had fallen into a trap. There was no mistaking the anxiety and the sincerity written in that figure.

The correspondent thought for a moment before replying. Then he developed an idea.

"We did get a report to that effect and we published it. I write for "The Daily Mail" and I wrote that report you read. Well, we found out afterwards that there was no truth in the story, that it had been another section of the Belgian army that had been led into the trap and had since been made prisoners by the Germans."

Jeanne felt much easier after this explanation from a man who should know. And he was the author of that sensational paragraph in "The Daily Mail." She was sure that, had he known the pain it had caused her, he would never have written it. But, of course, it was his business to find news. He had only done what any other reporters would have done, under the same circumstances.

"Where do you suppose Major Vandenbroeck is at present?"

"That I couldn't answer, Mademoiselle. Anything affecting the movements of the army is always held in strictest secrecy." He knew that he was speaking the truth. It had been an evasive answer.

"And there is no means of finding out?"

"None, whatever!"

"If I only knew that he was well, I wouldn't worry so much."

"Oh, from what I have heard of Major Vandenbroeck, there is very little danger of the Germans getting him. He seems to lead a charmed life." The correspondent knew that, although he was not adhering strictly to the line of truth, still he would be pardoned by those who were only too anxious that he free the girl's mind of any apprehension or fear.

The interview ended and it had accomplished its purpose. The Englishman bade adieu to his new found friends, and quickly retired from the salon.

"You can never realize how much easier I feel, since Monsieur has assured me that it is not true. The fact that he wrote the original report encourages me more than anything else, because he is in the best position to know that it is not so." Jeanne clearly showed her contentment, the lines of anguish having disappeared from her pretty face.

All that day, the three were busily engaged in planning for the little cottage into which they were to move as quickly as possible. The uncle had been successful in finding a suitable place that same morning.

Far out on a narrow stretch of land that reached almost into the sea, were a number of cottage homes. These were not inhabited only during the summer months, in days of

peace. But the war had changed all things, and in the flood of refugees that inundated Holland, every conceivable cottage had been pressed into service. So it was, that those cottages on the stretch of land, reaching almost into the sea, were inhabited by Belgians.

The mad passions of the sea often poured out their furv against the walls of that peninsula, and the winds sighed and moaned as though they too could appreciate the world of pathos into which they were breathing this new life. To lie in bed at night, and listen to the wind as it sighed and then whistled, as though in conflicting moods, was to enjoy the one balm for the heart which had the most soothing effect. Thus, it was, that Jeanne Desirée found it.

Only a few days had passed, however, when there developed in her heart a new and stronger longing to see her Joseph. Surely there was someone who could tell her where he was. She was sure that if she explained that she was his fiancé, that she would have no difficulty whatever in locating him. How she longed to have that letter which he had written to her at Brussells. There would likely be some very important news for her in that letter, news that would have a most comforting effect on her mind. But it was impossible to get back to Brussells until she had seen the man she loved.

The situation became very discouraging at times. It seemed as though the Germans were irresistible in their drive on the coast. The Allies were falling farther and farther back before this terrific onslaught and the Belgians had been given the important task of guarding the banks of the Yser canal. In pushing on to Calais, it would be necessary to pass the Yser, but the Belgians had resolved that never would that come to pass.

The enemy had been led into a trap after the fall of Antwerp, and, although at one moment it appeared as though the morale of the troops was all but broken, it was the report of fictitious victory that came from Berlin, that buoyed them up and gave them new courage. One hundred and thirty-seven thousand had been mowed down in nine days, down in the southeastern corner of Flanders. They had been caught between three fires, and unable to place their guns effectively, they had to endure a perfect storm of shot and shell. It was a perfect hell, and the canals and rivers and inundated lands ran red with crimson blood.

Time and again did those poor, unfortunate victims of Prussian militarism turn to flee but with a revolver in each hand, the German officers would drive them back into the slaughter. Scores of men there were, who were taken back to the Fatherland in iron cages, raving maniacs as a result of that terrible ordeal.

But now the danger point had again been passed by the Kaiser's troops. They were pushing on towards Calais, as they informed their men, and hundreds of thousands of new troops were rushed in from the east to aid in the big drive.

The wall of steel thrown around Ypres had been attacked with the fury of madmen, but outnumbered as they were ten to one, the British and French stubbornly held on to their positions, and the enemy was hurled back into the fastness of his second line trenches. And, while the British and French were holding tenaciously to their positions in and around Ypres, down through their region, the same courage and dauntless pluck in the Belgian ranks, was holding the bank of the Yser canal. Once or twice did the enemy succeed in crossing, but only to be driven back again with terrible losses.

And so it was that the situation developed. At times it became so monotonous that it was almost unbearable to Jeanne, but she struggled to maintain her spirit of bravery. That was one of the legacies which Joseph had left to her, and she must cherish it. The tragic events that were unfolding themselves down in Flanders, had ceased to interest her. Had she been able to follow the gallant achievements of Joseph, she would have found a world of attraction in the war, but without him all lost its magnetism.

The days wore on, but with ever increasing monotony. The rush of refugees into Holland had already ceased with the exception of a few stragglers who, at the last moment, had decided to flee from the tyranny of Prussian rule. Already the exodus from Holland into England had set in, and it seemed as though the whole world was participating in the movement. The cottages all around them commenced to empty as the occupants decided to exploit the hospitality of English homes. So urgent had been the invitation extended by the British government, and work having been promised to artisans and laborers, there was every attraction in beckoning on the refugees. In Holland, the life was listless and lacking in purpose and the desire to labor and thus better dispose of the hours, induced the large majority to emigrate.

Jeanne was beginning to realize that to rest in Holland was drawing them to the accomplishment of no useful purpose. She thought that they could better employ their time in other ways. Now that communication between the Belgian army and the British government had assumed a permanent character, there was a much better opportunity to locate Joseph from that point, than from Holland. Many letters had been written to Brussells, but always without a reply. This absence of news from her husband was having a telling effect

on Madame Desirée, but, as Jeanne informed her mother, she too could taste of the same bitter moments that had filled her own life since Joseph had gone out of it.

Uncle Jacques was most favorably inclined to the idea of going to England. There, he would be able to get into touch with the manufacturers and to possibly resume his work. That would mean a world of relief from this monotony that was so tiring to his soul and brain.

At last the decision was reached after a lengthy discussion of the situation in all its phases. They would go to England. With the Germans in Brussells, the distance between there and London was as great as between Flushing and the Capital. Madame was convinced that her husband would never be willing that they return until the enemy had been driven from out of the city. If danger existed, their place was not in the danger. zone, but rather in the neutral world where the intrigue and murderous designs of the Huns would be shut out. But there was ever that lingering desire in her heart, and it found expression so often in those significant words: "If Antoine were only here, all would be so different!"

A few mornings later, Jeanne, with her mother and uncle, were closely packed in a small cab en route to the quay, where they would find the boat for Folkstone. Thirty minutes after leaving the house, they were already on water, closely hugging the shores so as to avoid the mine field which had been set by the Germans as well as the British.

Many Belgian soldiers were on board the boat, going to England to join the Belgian army. They had come through from different points in Belgium, and in many instances had thrilling stories to relate, of how they escaped the traps set by the Germans to capture them. As Jeanne watched these men on the lower deck, huddled together so as to drive away the

chilling blasts that swept in from the sea, singing and dancing, she wondered if all the Belgians were so happily disposed, and if her own Joseph was given to song and mirth. For his sake, she hoped he was. He could thus obscure the danger to which he was exposed.

It was well into the evening before the boat reached Folkstone, the long, circuitous route imposed by the naval boards necessitating many additional hours to make the passage. Once on British soil, there was a new and strange sense of relief which gripped all of the arriving Belgians. They had come in response to the invitation of the British government, and they had come with the knowledge of the magnanimous hospitality that had already been accorded to their fellow countrymen. And, after all, they were on the soil of their Allies.

On to London! That was the cry of the great majority once the boat was docked at Folkstone. The big metropolis was calling them, it was beckoning them on. Who was there that had not read of the world's greatest city, many had already seen it, but the greater number were going for the first time in their lives, and with no previous knowledge that they would ever have enjoyed the opportunity.

The big city was bathed in the garb of war when the train pulled into Victoria Station. Jeanne looked out of the carriage window and surveyed the sea of faces that were upturned to watch the descending passengers. Soldiers were coming home from the front for a brief respite of several hours. Friends were coming in from Holland or from France, and, here and there in the vast throng, could be seen Americans, some of whom had only then succeeded in effecting an exit from Germany, or from Austria.

But where was the London of other times? Madame Desirée could well recall the day that she, and her husband had visited the great city. They too had reached their destination late at night, but they had been greeted by a world of movement and the most brilliant illuminations.

And what a contrast now! The lights had been turned low and everywhere there was obscurity so as to hide the city from the searching eyes of the hostile air craft. Trafalgar Square, the Strand, Piccadilly and Leicester Square—where was their former brilliance and gaiety? London truly lay wrapt in the robe of war.

Comfortable quarters were found and a good night's rest did much to relieve the fatigue and restlessness of the long voyage. It was only natural that they should awaken in a fog, one of those thick, pea-soup fogs that were absolutely impenetrable. Jeanne raised the window and looked out. It seemed as though the world had been cast into the hollowness of a big abyss and it was full of hush to the brim. The noise of the traffic sounded only as the surging of the sea far away. The interruptions of the builders were as hollow tappings in the mist.

A few hours later, the air was clear of the fog, the sun shone forth in all its splendour from a sky as cloudless as could be. One would hardly know that it was possible to dispose of such a heavy fog in such remarkable time. But such was the life of London, the greatest city in the world.

The eccentricities of the city never, for one moment, interested Jeanne Desirée. She passed through the crowded streets unnoticed by the traffic, as she hurried to the general offices of the Belgian committees. There, it would be possible to learn everything respecting the welfare of any Belgian already in England, and there was also a department where

was kept the list of soldiers, invalided into English homes or hospitals, or under treatment in France. The list of Belgian dead was published from day to day in the columns of "L'Independance Belge" and these lists were carefully compiled and maintained by the same committee.

It was a most congenial young man who received Jeanne and her friends when she approached the long counter to make her enquiries. There were scores of others all about her, eagerly seeking news of their missing soldier friends. Not a spare moment there was for the members of the committee, who rushed hither and thither in an effort to gratify the desires of an applicant. Belgian soldiers, some on crutches, confirmed the fact that many of the Belgian wounded were being cared for in England.

"Have you any information of Major Joseph Vandenbroeck?" Jeanne was almost afraid to make the request, fearing that she might learn of some terrible fate into which Joseph might have fallen.

The young man turned over the leaves of a big book. His finger trailed the index, just until he came to the letter V and there he rested with his elbows stretched out on the open pages.

"Vandenbroeck? Vandenbroeck?" He repeated time and time again the name as if to hold it fresh in his memory.

"Vandenberger! It isn't Vandenberger?" he asked.

"No, Vandenbroeck is the name," and Jeanne spelled it so that the clerk would better understand it.

He searched diligently through a long, almost endless list of names and then turned to inform Jeanne, that he could find no trace of a soldier by that name.

"He's an officer, you know—a major," protested Jeanne.

A new light illumined the face of the young man. He had been looking through the list of soldiers. The names of the officers were contained in another book, and quickly he made the change. But the same fate awaited them. The name of Vandenbroeck was not amongst the list of wounded officers. No, he must still be in the fighting line or a prisoner of war.

This latter suggestion of the clerk did not offer any solace to the aching heart of Jeanne. She turned to her mother and uncle in her perplexity, and enquired of them as to what was the best course to pursue. The clerk overheard her, and offered a suggestion.

"It might be well if you saw the editor of "L'Independance Belge," Mademoiselle. There is no man in London who is more closely in touch with the movements of the Belgian army than is he. You might be able to find what you want there."

Jeanne thanked him very kindly for his generous assistance, and rejoining her friends, she prepared to leave the offices. The rush of refugees all about her, caused her to pause in her movement, and to enquire of her uncle the reason for all these Belgians.

"Why, this is the general committee that finds homes for the Belgian refugees. It might be well to enquire if they could place us comfortably, and, in that way, we would be relieved of any further expense. One never knows how long we will have to stay here, and it is just as well to conserve our resources. I understand that the refugees are placed in fine homes."

The explanation of her uncle opened up a new world to Jeanne and her mother. Their resources were not just as healthy as they had been at the outset, and if it were possible to husband the finances, it would be wise to do so.

"Step up and ask them, Jacques, what they could do for us—if they could place the three of us in the same home. I wouldn't like to be separated from you." The mother was keyed to a high pitch of enthusiasm with the proposed plan. Jeanne immediately acquiesced.

The committee was accordingly interviewed and a place was found for the three of them with a family living in one of the fashionable suburbs of London. They had been exceedingly fortunate in their choice.

But Jeanne was not unmindful of her own duty. Once the matter of a home was adjusted, she turned her efforts towards locating Joseph. With her mother and uncle, she went to the offices of "L'Independance Belge" to discuss the affair with the editor. Everyone with whom she had spoken, held the same opinion as had the member of the committee, that the editor of this well known Belgian paper, would be the best informed respecting the whereabouts of Belgian officers and soldiers.

The journalist was in his office, and he extended a warm welcome to his callers. Immediately they made known the purpose of their visit, and in reciting the incidents surrounding their strange adventures, the editor was deeply interested.

"That wouldn't be the same Vandenbroeck who won the Cross of the 'Order of Leopold'?"

"Yes, that is the same man. It was only at Ostend, that I learned of the honour which had been conferred upon my fiancé. Jeanne was ever proud of the distinction which her sweetheart had won by his gallantry.

"Well, I think that I will be able to trace him for you. He is one of the best known officers in the Belgian army, and is very popular with the rank and file. He is commonly known as 'The Hero of the Army,' and, from what I have heard of

him, he fully deserves all they give him. The last I heard of him was when his division was surrounded by the Germans. He was led into a trap by a German spy. Strange to say, nothing further has appeared in the official communiques respecting him. I might be able to find out, however, and if you leave me your address, I will be able to advise you."

The kindness of the editor aroused the hopes of Jeanne and when she left the office, she went away with a new confidence planted in her heart. She seemed to find in the editor that avenue through which she would be able to reach the goal she coveted so much.

It was now more than apparent that Joseph had not fallen into the hands of the enemy. The statement of the English correspondent in the hotel at Flushing, was now borne out by the Belgian journalist, who informed her that since the original report appeared, there had never been any subsequent confirmatory statement. It was only logical, that the original story could not have been true.

"Oh, I believe that Joseph is all right, mother," she declared, as they walked along the street after leaving the newspaper office. "All are agreed that the story of his capture by the Germans, was without foundation. There should be very little difficulty in locating him."

"I wouldn't build my hopes too high on any assurances of journalists. They are all given a little to exaggeration. War is war, and one can never believe the half that you hear." The mother was a little more pessimistic, but she had her reasons. She did not want Jeanne to build upon an apparent certainty, to find out later that it was not so. It would mean a terrible blow to that young heart which had, so far, suffered so much.

"Just what I say too, Mother," persisted the daughter. "That original report was untrue. You can't believe the half you read in the papers. How many times have some of our own little soldiers been reported killed, and a few days later the report is denied. It is simply terrible, the way they do things. It makes it very hard for the mothers and others who have loved ones at the front."

Uncle Jacques was also conscious of the same danger as the mother had foreseen, and he, too, was determined that Jeanne should not become too optimistic. It was his own personal opinion that Joseph had come to some strange end. If not, why had there ceased to be any further reference to him in the official despatches. Prior to that he had been so often mentioned. But although he held his opinion, he dare not expose it to Jeanne.

They were just crossing Trafalgar Square to go down into the Tube, when Jeanne accidentally encountered a number of her former school companions. They had just reached London, coming directly from Brussells by way of Holland. Marie and Susan Bertier had ever been warm friends of Jeanne, in fact, the two families had always been very intimate with each other. So it was, that this chance meeting evoked a great pleasure, and it made all feel just a little more contented in knowing that they had found friends in London.

"I suppose that you heard the news?" queried Marie, always ready to recount anything that she sees or hears.

"Why no! We have been in Holland for some little time, and we have found it impossible to get news through from Brussells. We have written to papa several times but could never get an answer." Jeanne feared at first that the news might affect the welfare of Joseph, but then, she knew that

he had been such a long time absent from Brussells, that it could not be.

Marie Bertier was now a litle more reticent. She saw at once that she had introduced a subject that might create a world of sorrow. She wished that she had never met Jeanne and her mother. But she had commenced the affair, and she must finish it.

"Why, the Germans have arrested a large number of civilians in Brussells, and are holding them as prisoners of war. It seems that the civic employees have refused to work with the Germans, and, in an effort to force their hand, they have taken as hostages, the members of all civic bodies."

"Then father must have been arrested. He was a member of the Civic Board of Direction."

Jeanne had spoken before she had carefully studied the effect of her words. She might have thought that her mother would be deeply moved by any announcement of this character, but the harm had now been done.

The mother turned a deathly pale, and trembled as a leaf shaken by the wind.

"Antoine arrested!" The words escaped her lips almost unconsciously. She too had to face the grim fact that war did not discriminate in the matter of selecting its victims. Her husband had now suffered the fate which she had feared most of all—to be a prisoner of the same men who had murdered the women and children.

It was a terrible thought with which to labour, but she had just enough courage still, to hope that he would not be maltreated. Mr. Whitlock would make sure that the civic officers would be dealt with in a humane spirit. Her confidence in the American Minister was almost illimitable.

"Don't worry, mother, father will be all right. The Germans daren't offer any harm to the rulers of the city." Jeanne was not at all inclined to view the situation in a too serious light, but rather to regard it as a passing incident in the life of the Capital. How often had they arrested Burgomaster Max, but he was always released again.

"I would like to go back to Brussells, Jeanne," pleaded the mother. "I could never stay in London, when I know that Antoine is in danger."

Uncle Jacques here intercepted a remark, advising his sister that there was no reason for serious alarm. He, too, quoted the case of the Burgomaster to prove that no serious harm could befall the civic officials.

Madame Desirée was very much calmed by these reassuring words, although a certain measure of fear still clung to her. All the way home, she reiterated that fear, only to be discouraged by both Jeanne and her uncle.

When Jeanne reached home, she found lying on the little table in the hall, a letter addressed to her. The writing was strange, she could not recollect having ever seen it before. At first she thought that it might be from the editor of "L'Independance Belge," but that would be impossible. They had only left his office a short time before.

She didn't like to open that missive, fearing that it might be some terrible news respecting Joseph. For a long time, she stood in silence studying the envelope and wondering what might be inside. The postmark was London, but it was the handwriting that puzzled her.

With trembling fingers she at last tore open the envelope. Inside she found a simple card. It bore the name of Mr. Frank Wright, Chicago, U.S.A.

"Why, it's the young American correspondent we met in Belgium," she called to her mother, who was already ascending the stairs. "Wait a minute, here's a note on the back. She had turned the card over and was already reading the message. It ran:

"Have found trace of Major Vandenbroeck. If you will be at home, will call this evening at 8 o'clock. Phone me No. 789 if it's all right to come."

Jeanne fairly flew to the telephone and taking down the receiver, she called hurriedly for the number given on the card. A woman answered.

"Is Mr. Wright there?" enquired Jeanne, almost gasping for breath.

A moment later that gentleman came to the phone. "Who's there?" he called. Then he recognized the voice. "Oh, it is you, Mademoiselle Desirée!"

"Yes, it is I," was the immediate response. "You are coming up this evening, I hope." Jeanne did not wait to give Mr. Wright a chance to offer any explanations.

"If it is convenient to you, I will be there at 8 o'clock."

"You found out about Joseph! Where is he? Is he well?" It was evident that a veritable fusilade of questions would be flung over the telephone, but the American had carefully anticipated this. He listened a moment and then he interrupted.

"Mademoiselle, I cannot tell you anything over the phone. You must wait until I see you tonight." It was a cold, discouraging answer for a young heart that was almost bleeding

for a comforting word. But Mr. Wright was aware that he would be surely misunderstood over the telephone, and he wished, above all things, to avoid a disaster.

"All right! I'll expect you at eight." Reluctantly Jeanne replaced the receiver.

She was impatient for the appointed hour. She could hardly wait until it arrived. She looked at the clock. There was nearly three more hours. And there was but one question in her mind. It was the only natural question she could ask herself:

"What news of Joseph does he bring? Is it good or bad?"

She could only wait and see.

CHAPTER XIV.

Alsatians Are Not All Prussians.

All Belgian employees of the various Civil Service departments, having refused to work in harmony with their German enemies, the Prussian government had arrested, and was holding as hostages, all members of the various civic boards. In this way, they were convinced that they could force the Belgian workers to accept their terms.

Antoine Desirée was a member of the Civic Board of Direction, and it was only natural that he should be detained by the German government. No end of amazement had been caused by the arrest of these prominent citizens, but it was the general belief that their confinement would not be for long. Brand Whitlock, the American Minister, immediately interested himself in the affair, and his every movement was being followed by the keenest interest on the part of the inhabitants. The latter reposed almost illimitable confidence in him. The prisoners were being held in "le caserne du petit chateau."

* * * * * * *

Joseph did not wait to enquire of Antoine Desirée the reason of his presence in the prison; there was no time for questions or for explanations; the fact was, he was there, and what was the most effective means of releasing him. The longer he delayed, the greater the danger he must face. The Alsatian guards had completed their share of the conspiracy; it would never do for Joseph to fail through his own negligence. He must move quickly.

Hurriedly, Joseph ran towards the guard room, never waiting to exchange greetings with Antoine Desirée. He found the chief guard feigning sleep, apparently marking time until he was sure that all of the prisoners had escaped. But Joseph aroused him from his sleep.

"What do you want?" he growled in a voice that was truly typical of a man who has just been awakened from a peaceful slumber, much against his will.

"There is a man in the prison whom I would like to release. His name is Antoine Desirée. He is the father of my fiancé." Joseph had such unlimited confidence in this Alsatian guard, that he had absolutely no fear in making such an unusual request.

"Ah, I know the fellow. He was put into prison with the other members of the Civic Board, but I understand that they are all to be let out tomorrow. If you'll take my advice, you'll leave him alone and look well after yourself. You haven't any too much time to spend here."

The warning word of the guard gave Joseph a moment of reflection. If it were really true, that Antoine Desirée would be released the following day, why should he risk his liberty? It was evidence that his chances for freedom were naught, the moment the big gates were closed again.

You'd better look sharp, if you're going to leave this place tonight," drawled the guard in a French truly Alsatian. "In a few more minutes the gate will be barred, and then, the general alarm will be sounded." And Joseph did look sharp. He fairly bounded through the door and made straight for the window where he had left Antoine Desirée. The latter was still there, waiting and wondering why Joseph had left him so abruptly.

"I have just been to see if it were possible to secure your release, Monsieur Desirée, but I find—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort, Joseph. We will be liberated in the course of a day or so, but for you it means much more. Get away as fast as you can. Leave me. I'll be all right." Antoine Desirée was a little annoyed when he learned that Joseph had jeopardized his liberty for him.

"Yes, the guard just told me that you would be free to-morrow. I guess that I'll need all my time." Joseph was beginning to think a little for his own safety.

"For God's sake, Joseph, get safely away," pleaded the man behind the barred window. "If you lose this chance you are done for. God knows but what the Germans would try to attach the responsibility to yourself."

"But tell me, how is Jeanne and where is—?"

The sentence was never finished. That which Joseph would like to know above all things, was to be held longer from him. Antoine Desirée, for some unknown reason, fell back into the darkness and was seen no more. So sudden was the movement that Joseph found himself alone and almost dumbfounded.

He was brought quickly to his senses, however, by the loud report of a rifle in the vicinity of the court yard gate. It might have been the warning note, or it might have been a body of troops rushed up to avert the wholesale delivery of prisoners.

Joseph ran as fast as he could towards the outer gate. Three guards were already engaged in swinging the heavy bars that would shut out liberty and light.

"Don't shut that gate yet. I must get out!" Almost breathless, Joseph made the appeal to his warders.

"What mean you by coming at this hour," snarled one of the men. "The others have been gone several minutes. The troops will be here in a few minutes."

Joseph remained motionless. He feared that the liberty which he had sought, and which he would prize so dearly, would now be snatched from him. The rifle shot had been for no other purpose than to warn the sentries in the vicinity of the prison, and they would now be running towards the place. At that very moment there was a loud tapping at the outer gate, and a number of harsh German voices called to the guards to open up.

Joseph felt himself grabbed up as he would be lifted by a mighty tornado. He was carried a few feet away and pushed forcibly into the darkness of a small compartment apparently a section of the big wall that girted the prison.

"Stay there until we come for you, and by God, if you move or make any disturbance, you are a lost man." The rough voice of the guard was not without sympathy. How Joseph regretted that he had not made his break for liberty when the chief guard had originally warned him. Now, it might be too late, but he would trust his fate to the Alsatians.

The creaking and cracking of the heavy hinges, as the big gate was swung open, sounded more like the internal rumblings of the inner earth to Joseph as he crouched in the obscurity of his hiding place. Men were passing through the gate, the clanking of the swords and the rattle of the spurs giving indisputable evidence of that fact as the tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp echoed in the stillness of the little chamber.

It seemed a long time before the door was pushed open silently, and a voice completely hushed, called to Joseph: "Come on now, we can make it; but not a murmur on penalty of your life."

Joseph was only too willing to obey and he was no sooner pushed into the darkness of the street, than the big gate closed behind him. At last he was free! But, it would be necessary to exercise every caution in reaching a place of security where he could arrange his appearance so as to deceive the searching guards.

For many weeks it had been impossible for Joseph in the stress of campaign, to shave himself, and he had developed a whisker that would have deceived his best friends. Once he was clean shaven again, he would be a new man, and the Germans would never be able to recognize him. So it was, that he deemed it his first duty to shave.

It would be dangerous to visit either his own home, or that of his sweetheart. They would both be well watched. But he could arrange through another friend to bring Jeanne to him there. Once he had seen his loved one, he would immediately arrange for the procuring of civilian clothes for his fellow prisoners.

For several minutes he thought deeply as to the best possible means to follow. At last he decided that Monsieur and Madame de Ridder would be the most likely ones to take him in and care for him. They, too, would be the proper persons to organize the search for clothes.

With his eyes carefully searching the street corners here and there, Joseph crept swiftly along, until he found himself before the door of the de Ridder home. He knew that it would cause considerable disturbance, and possibly much fear should he ring the bell, but, after all, it was imperative that he should do so.

He could hear distinctly the big gong as it sounded through the long hallway of the inner home. He watched closely along the street so as to make sure that he had not

been detected. There was no one in sight. He was all alone in the street.

At last the door was opened a little, and the voice of Monsieur de Ridder enquired as to who was there and what he wanted. Joseph, in low voice, advised him of his escape and prayed him to open quickly the door to admit him.

No sooner had the startled Monsieur de Ridder learned that it was Joseph at his door, than he swung the door wide open and admitted him with an enthusiasm that clearly proved his joy in welcoming back the young officer, who had long since been regarded as lost. The door closed behind them and they hurried into the house.

"Wait here a minute and I'll run up and tell Madame who it is," advised Monsieur de Ridder, and as he hurriedly mounted the stairs, he called back: "She will certainly be glad to see you."

"Together they descended, Monsieur and Madame de Ridder, and in the calm of the big salon, Joseph told them the story of his escape from "le caserne du petit chateau." He explained how he and his division had been trapped by a German spy, and, afterwards, made prisoner.

"I hear that you have been winning great honours since you left us, Joseph," interrupted Monsieur de Ridder.

"Ah, I don't know about that. I've only done my duty."

"But we congratulate you all the same, Major Vandenbroeck!" Joseph was a little surprised that here, in Brussells, in the grip of the German censor, that they should have learned of his success. There must be communication with the outside world.

"And how is Jeanne! I have written to her so often, but never a reply do I receive." Military matters held no inter-

est for Joseph until he was fully assured as to the welfare of his sweetheart.

There was no ready answer to this question, which had the tendency to arouse the anxiety of the young officer. It was Madame de Ridder who first broke the silence.

"Why, didn't you hear from Jeanne, or haven't you seen her? She went to Ostend to see you, just after the Belgian army had retreated from Antwerp." There was a note of concern in Madame's voice.

Joseph almost staggered under the force of this marvellous announcement. His face turned a sickly pale, and he fairly stared at Madame de Ridder, as though in a trance. The thought that his Jeanne was in the outer world, perhaps exposed to the treacheries of the murderous Huns—it was enough to drive him mad.

"Yes, Jeanne and her mother left here several weeks ago," added Monsieur de Ridder. "I believe that Jeanne learned that you were at Ostend and, not having heard from you for a long time, she determined that she would go and find you. I tell you, Joseph, that girl loves you as few men are loved."

Of the love of Jeanne Desirée, Joseph was certain, but he was now at a loss to know where she might be found at that moment. He had braved all to come to her, only to find that she was not there. The Germans had been in Ostend for some time. It would be impossible for him to go there. But he would find her, it mattered not what danger he would have to brave.

"I'll find her all right, if I have to search the whole world!" The ring of determination was full assurance of his sincerity.

"Tell us a little more about yourself, Joseph," pleaded the irresistible Madame de Ridder. "You know, we haven't heard from you for ages."

"There is work to do before we discuss personal matters, Madame. We must find clothes for a large number of escaped Belgian soldiers." Joseph again explained the sensational get-away from the prison, in order to emphasize his point.

"Those poor devils are now confined in the cellars of a number of cafes along the Boulevard du Nord and we must get the clothes to them as quickly as possible. It will be necessary to enlist the services of many good-hearted persons in order to accomplish the task. For myself, I am going to shave clean very hurriedly, if you would be good enough to provide me with a razor, and then I am going to change my clothes for others less attractive. I must do everything to allay suspicion."

"But what if we are caught supplying clothes to the escaped prisoners?" Monsieur de Ridder was always of the cautious sort.

"Caught? Why, if you go about it properly, there's no danger of being caught. God knows that it is the least you could do for your soldier lads." Joseph was a little taken back, at this evidence of fear on the part of Monsieur de Ridder. His response, however, had the desired effect and the little gentleman hurried away to find a razor, calling to his wife at the same time to heat some water.

Joseph was left alone with himself for a moment, while the others went about the performance of the duty which he, himself, had imposed. His thoughts became undeniably sad, the fact that his sweetheart was still beyond the reach of his loving arms, bearing him down until he became almost

morose. Madame de Ridder entered, and interrupted the moment of self communion.

"Would you like to take a bath, Joseph?" It's no trouble at all to heat the water. It might do you a lot of good."

Joseph thanked her very much and accepted the kindly offer. To him a bath had been a rarety for many months, but he had not forgotten the beneficial qualities of a good plunge. At the request of Madame, he accompanied her upstairs, where she showed him a room that would be his as long as he desired the use of it.

Time was not to be wasted, however, and Joseph knew it well. By daybreak it would be necessary to have the emissaries well on the road in search of clothes for the prisoners. It would never do to make the delivery of these clothes in open day, but still it would require the greater part of the day to complete the organization work. If there was to be any time to spare, he would rather that it be on the other end of the day.

All preliminary duties were disposed of in good season, and the discussion of plans was immediately undertaken. It was agreed that Joseph should remain in the secrecy of the house until the excitement occasioned by the action of the Alsatians would be a little subdued. Then, he could go out and, possibly, assist with the delivery of clothes to the appointed place. Great precaution would be necessary with this part of the work as the presence of too many packets at the same moment would certainly arouse suspicion. The men would have to leave the cellars one by one with intervals between the departure of each. Joseph was careful to explain just how things were to be done. In the meantime, Monsieur de Ridder was to look after the task of advising the

imprisoned men that all was well, and that relief would reach them that night.

That same evening, just as darkness was falling, a man was seen passing hurriedly along the streets in and out amongst the throngs of people that made up the early evening traffic. He was carrying under his arm a bundle, but to all intents and purposes it was the result of his purchases in different shops. No one noticed him as he walked along. He continued until he reached an alley leading alongside one of the fashionable cafes in the big boulevard. Here he turned and was lost to view. That man was none other than Major Vandenbroeck, for whom the German government, at that very moment, would have given much to have had as their hostage. He had slipped out of their grasp, and they were smarting under the escape of so important a prisoner.

Intense amazement was occasioned in all parts of the Capital when it became known that the officers and men of "The Fighting Fourth" had taken French leave of the guards at "le caserne du petit chateau." It was generally understood that the wholesale delivery had been the result of conspiracy on the part of the Alsatian guards. Many and varied were the stories that went the rounds as to the methods employed to effect the escape of so many prisoners, but, withal, the inhabitants of Brussells were more than pleased that the conspiracy had worked out so well.

The German government had arrested the members of the Alsatian guards, and had already threatened them with removal to the eastern field of campaign. They would have liked to have punished them according to the laws of warfare, but the spirit of unrest which already pervaded all ranks of the Alsatians, forebade that they indulge in measures that might have serious results.

And the movement of the traffic in the streets during the memorable day was as great as usual, with the possible exception of the emissaries hurrying to and fro, carrying the clothes in which the already released prisoners would become really free. They passed unnoticed, however, for if anyone did recognize them they never gave any outward evidence of the fact.

Had one followed closely Major Vandenbroeck as he entered the little side alley, they would have seen that he was admitted to the cafe by a rear door where a guard was already in attendance. He passed quietly down the stairs into the cellar, and there he deposited his bundle—it contained no less than four suits of clothes. Scores of others had already arrived.

So it was, that the officers and men of the Fourth Division escaped the clutches of the German guards. Most diligent had been the search for the missing prisoners, in all parts of the city, but it was doomed to failure from the very first. As brilliant as may have been the brains that conceived the plan of pursuit, the brains working out the welfare of the sought men, were just a little bit more brilliant.

Joseph returned to the home of Monsieur and Madame de Ridder that same night, fully pleased with the splendid success of the general plans. All of the men had now left the different hiding places and were wandering about the city in all manners and forms of dress and toilet. It was now a matter of getting away from the city by the best means possible, and to find their way back to the Belgian ranks.

At the earnest behest of Monsieur de Ridder, Joseph remained for a couple of days under the protective roof of that hospitable home. His own parents had been summoned to see him, and, thanks to a moment when the street was com-

pletely deserted, they had succeeded in effecting an entrance unseen by the watching eyes of the Prussian sentries. Monsieur Desirée had been released from prison, and he, too, had visited Joseph, and discussed matters with him affecting the interests of Jeanne and her mother.

"It's a strange thing that I never hear from them, Joseph. They were in Holland when I last heard, stopping at the Grand Hotel in Flushing, and they may still be there. Of course, I wouldn't want them to come back to the city as long as the Huns are here, but I would like to know that they are in good health and well cared for. Uncle Jacques left here with them, and it is altogether likely that he is still their guardian. It's mighty discouraging to be without news."

"I'm going to find Jeanne if I have to go to the other end of the earth!" declared Joseph. "I believe that the army can spare me for a day or so, and I will make a trip into Holland and, if necessary, into England. But I'll find them, if they're to be found at all. God knows, I would give anything to see Jeanne."

When Antoine Desirée returned to his home, he found there a card that had been left by a gentleman who had called to see him. He looked at the card and it bore the name of the American Consul at Ostend. On the back was written a few lines to inform him that his wife and daughter were well, and that they were at the Grand Hotel in Flushing.

"It's just as the Brocker lad told me the other day, that he had heard from others that Jeanne with her mother were guests at the Grand in Flushing." Antoine Desirée was now a little more contented.

He was still studying the card when the door bell rang, and after a moment of waiting, a young man was ushered into the drawing room.

"You are Monsieur Antoine Desirée, I believe," suggested the visitor, at the same time advancing with outstretched hand.

Antoine Desirée took the proffered hand, but was at a loss to know who he might be, this stranger. "I believe that you have the advantage of me," he said at last.

"True, I never met you before, Monsieur, but I have heard much of you, and I am glad to make your acquaintance. My name is Frank Wright, I am an American War Correspondent, and I had the pleasure of meeting your wife and daughter at Ostend."

As if to confirm his statement, the visitor produced the card of Madame Desirée and showed it to the husband. "Madame asked me to call, if I ever came to Brussells, so here I am."

Antoine Desirée rang the bell, calling the servant. "We'll just have a glass of wine. I am sure that I am more than pleased to meet you,"—looking again at the card—"Monsieur Wright. You must tell me how my wife and daughter are."

"Why, when I left them at the Holland frontier, near to Knocke, they were in good health. The young lady was very much disappointed that she had not found her fiancé, but they were going to take quarters in the Grand Hotel in Flushing, and continue the search."

"Strange to say, her sweetheart is here in the city at the present moment. He and his company were made prisoners owing to the ruse of a spy, but they escaped from the chateau last night." Antoine Desirée hastened to inform his new friend of the latest developments.

"Oh, I heard about that. The Alsatians, it seems, released them. It was a great piece of work." Here the

young American was interrupted by the arrival of the wine, and, after glasses had been filled, both men stood up to drink to the success of the Allies, and the safe return of all dear ones.

The American continued. "The German government has refused to publish the list of names of the prisoners who had escaped, but I can assure you that it brings me great joy to know that Major Vandenbroeck is amongst them."

Antoine Desirée here raised his finger, as though to caution complete secrecy. "Of course, no one is to know that," he counselled.

"You can trust me with any secret," the American quickly informed him and the conversation continued.

Glasses were filled several times before the interview was brought to an end. Antoine Desirée was most anxious to learn all that he could respecting his wife and daughter, just to the most minute detail. In his broken French, the young American did all in his power to gratify the wishes of his congenial host.

Several times did the journalist enquire after Joseph, but he was always informed that the gentleman in question had made good his escape and would undoubtedly now be in Holland or, possibly in England. Under no circumstances, whatever, would the hiding place of Joseph be revealed, not even to some of the best friends of Antoine Desirée. That had been one of the cast iron laws laid down. Then, too, it was far better to encourage the belief that the escaped officer was already in Holland. In that way, the vigilance of the enemy might be released.

"I hope to go over to England in the course of the next few days. I will go by way of Flushing, and I will make it a point to see Madame and Mademoiselle again." The

American was anxious to grant any favour which might be asked. There still lingered in his heart that sense of pity which had been aroused by the distressful condition of the abandoned fiancée.

"Would you mind taking a letter for me to my wife?" I will write at once, if you have time to wait."

Antoine Desirée fairly jumped at the opportunity to send word to his wife and daughter. He hurriedly took up pen and paper, and, while his visitor studied the pages of one of the papers that had been smuggled into the city a day previous to the arrest of the civic officials, he wrote.

A little later the American left the Desirée home, and Antoine Desirée went back into the privacy of his home only to await the fall of darkness, that he might go to Joseph and tell him what he had learned from the American correspondent.

He found Joseph in deep thought, but the announcement that he had found trace of Jeanne, brightened him considerably, and together they discussed ways and means of effecting an escape from Belgium into Holland. The different avenues of exit were still closed by order of the German Governor, the rumor having circulated that members of the missing Belgian Division were being smuggled out of the city. It was decided to wait at least another two or three days before making the effort.

"Better to be sure than sorry, you know, Joseph," advised the elder. "The longest way around is often the shortest way home."

"Yes, that's all too true!" sighed Joseph. He was none too pleased with the proposition of being held still longer from his sweetheart. But he knew that wisdom was the greater part of valor, so he agreed to wait.

Three days later he succeeded in getting beyond the confines of the city very early in the morning. The road was already filled with refugees, some going away and others coming into the city. They were trudging along with that aimlessness so characteristic of those people who have been driven from their home and all, and thrown on the cold mercy of a cruel world. Joseph found a place in a large party going to Termonde. In their midst he was not at all conspicuous.

It was a long, tedious journey, but it was the heart filled with an almost crushing fear that made it even more wearying. A stop was made at a small café to eat and drink. Joseph had been careful to place enough money in his pockets to care for his many wants. He was soon seated before a table with a good glass of beer and a number of thick, heavy pork sandwiches.

Termonde was reached about midday, and, although orders had been issued, prohibiting the entrance of any civilian into the wrecked city, the party in which Joseph himself, succeeded in passing the forbidden line, and was soon in the midst of the ruins within. A few cigars and an unseen ten franc note, had won the sentries to the cause of the refugees.

Termonde once disposed of, the refugees pushed on along the road leading towards the Holland frontier. More than once did they encounter German sentries, but there seemed to be no difficulty in convincing them that they were all bona fide voyageurs. A few well placed francs always served the purpose of a 'lasser-passer," in fact the sentries appreciated them, even more so than the official papers.

The frontier was, at last, reached. The party by this time, had been joined by others, and as the refugees swept

over the line leading into Holland, they had every appearance of a long, ghostlike stream that flowed from somewhere in the heart of a world of devastation and suffering.

"Thank God, we're free at last!" It was Joseph who made the observation, and the sentiment contained in those few words was shared by every member of the tired, but contented party.

Once in Holland, Joseph only waited long enough to bid adieu to his fellow travellers, and then he left for Flushing, where he hoped to find his sweetheart. How his heart filled with hope as he trudged along the road en route to the nearest railway station. He would take train to a sailing point on the Scheldt and from there, it was only a matter of a few minutes to Flushing. The latter place was reached late at night.

A taxi was chartered and Joseph started out in search of Jeanne. It mattered not if the hour was a little mature, what was that to the joy which the re-union would bring to both of them.

"Grand Hotel!" he called as he climbed into the taxi cab.

The Grand Hotel was one of the fashionable hostelries along the beach, far out from the centre of the little city of Flushing. But, in these days of war, it had lost much of its previous brilliance, for it had been converted into a home for the Belgian refugees. Holland was full of the Belgians who had fled from their homes in the stricken state.

A cold, moist wind was blowing in from the sea, and it smote Joseph with a force that made him shiver. Coming out of a well-heated carriage in which he had travelled in the train, it was more so the contrast that made him feel the weather so acutely. But the rigors of the weather were soon

forgotten, as his thoughts turned to the happiness which awaited him at the other end of the journey.

At last the hotel was reached, the chauffeur descended, and opened the door of the cab, to allow his fare to leave. A porter came rushing out to take charge of the baggage, but he stood back in amazement, as he studied the vagabond appearance of the man before him.

"Are Madame and Mademoiselle Desirée stopping here?" Joseph was not at all concerned with the curiosity of the porter. What he wanted to know was the quickest road to the girl he loved.

It required a little thought on the part of the hotel servant before he could recognize the name which had been submitted to him. At last he remembered.

"Oh, I know who you mean. They are not here now. They took a cottage somewhere along the beach. The young girl was almost broken-hearted over the loss of her sweetheart. He had been captured by the Germans. Oh. yes, I remember the people well."

"You couldn't say where I might find their cottage?" Joseph was eager to continue the search.

"Haven't the least idea, but if you'll wait a moment I'll run in and ask the patron, he might know." The porter was beginning to realize that under that mass of rags lay, possibly, a generous tip for his kindness.

He returned in a minute to report that Madame and Mademoiselle Desirée had gone across to England. "They lived here for some time, but the patron says that they went to England in the hope of finding their missing friend."

Joseph slipped a piece of money into the porter's hand, and turning, climbed back into the cab. Taking up the speaking tube, he directed the chauffeur to drive him up into

the city where he might purchase some more respectable clothes.

Early next morning, a young man, simply but neatly dressed passed out of the main entrance of one of Flushing's leading hotels. He gave no evidence of the fact that he was an officer in the Belgian army, though his military bearing easily suggested that he had seen military training. The name of Major Joseph Vandenbroeck was well known in Holland, as a result of his daring exploits and wonderful heroism, but no one there was in the seaport town that morning who knew that the distinguished officer was in their midst, and was, at that very moment, hurrying towards the boat that would carry him across to England. But that young man was Joseph Vandenbroeck.

Once comfortably situated in the boat, and the latter out to sea, Joseph began to retrace his steps since the beginning of the war. His had surely been a most remarkable career, and he had God to thank for his many marvellous escapes. All that his heart desired now, was to see again the girl whom he loved with a devotion that could not be mistaken. He was hurrying to her, and he was sure, that the God who had been so kindly disposed towards him in the past, would still watch over him and take him safely to his sweetheart.

The passengers who were promenading up and down the decks passed the silent young man so closely wrapped up in a big easy chair, and never once did they give him any serious notice. Had they known who he was, they would have crowded around him, eager to hear the story of his thrilling escapades. But Joseph was glad that they didn't know. He preferred to be with himself.

Suddenly a commotion was developed amongst the passengers. They were rushing here and there with every ap-

pearance of madness. He heard someone cry that he could see the perescope off to the right of the steamer. Joseph knew that it must be a submarine. His mind immediately turned to the horrifying methods which the Germans were employing, in sending innocent and helpless passenger ships to the bottom. He wondered if they would interfere with the boat in which he was travelling.

At that moment it seemed as though everyone was hurrying to the starboard side of the ship. Already she was listing under the uneven weight.

Joseph divested himself of his coverings and joined the passengers along the starboard railing.

He had no sooner reached this spot, than he was stricken cold with terror. Looking out into the calm surface of the sea, he saw a long, white line and it was rapidly lengthening out in the direction of his ship. It was the trail of a torpedo.

The next moment his boat would be blown to pieces. He didn't like to contemplate the awful fate, but he could recall similar crimes.

He thought of Jeanne Desirée. Would he be spared to see her?

There was only one chance out of a thousand.

The next moment there was a terrific explosion and the ship trembled from stem to stern.

The torpedo had found its mark.

CHAPTER XV.

Despair But Vies With Hope.

Promptly at eight o'clock, Frank Wright reached the home where Jeanne and her mother were guests. The latter were waiting for him in the grand salon, and as the American was ushered in, they rose to greet him with a warmth that made him feel that he was welcome.

"I never expected that we would see you again, Monsieur Wright," declared Madame Desirée. "But so many strange things happen during a war."

"Yes, I believe that you have brought us good news," added Jeanne. "You have found Major Vandenbroeck!"

"Well, I didn't exactly find him, but I know where he is," returned the American. "I saw your father, and from him I obtained all the information respecting your fiancé."

Madame Desirée arranged the chairs so as to make a small group, and then motioning to the visitor, she, herself, took a seat, ready to commence the interview. The announcement that this young man had seen her husband was enough to arouse her complete interest.

"How is Joseph? Was he captured that time—?" Jeanne was impatient. Her mother interrupted her.

"Jeanne, my child, the best thing to do is to ask no questions and allow Monsieur Wright to tell the story in his own way. That would be far better." Jeanne consented reluctantly.

The American told how he had succeeded in reaching Brussells, and how there, he had met Monsieur Desirée. The escape of Major Vandenbroeck and his men from "le petit

chateau" was fully explained amidst the joyous exclamations of his two lady auditors. The members of the Civic Boards had also been detained by the German government, but they, too had been released. As far as he knew, and as Monsieur Desirée had explained, Major Vandenbroeck was already in Holland or England.

"How the fates do pursue us, mother," declared Jeanne "Now that we have left Holland, it is only natural that Joseph should reach there. Will he know how to locate us, and will he come to England to search for us?"

The American hastened to assure them that Major Vandenbroeck was fully informed as to the movements of his fiancée and her mother, though he would undoubtedly be laboring under the impression that they were still at the Grand Hotel in Flushing.

It was many minutes before the questions that were posed to Mr. Frank Wright, American War Correspondent, were brought to an end. No detail was forgotten by either Jeanne or her mother in searching information respecting their sweetheart and husband. Of one thing their minds and hearts were fully satisfied—that their two loved ones were safe, the one at Brussells and the other possibly in Holland.

"Do you suppose that Joseph would be here in England looking for me? Would he think to enquire of the general committee for our address? God knows that it would be terrible, if he came here and then had to go away again without finding us. But that can never be. I'll make sure of that."

Jeanne was eagerly thinking of every contingency and she was determined that she would do all in her power to find Joseph. If he were already in England, she would make sure of it, or, if necessary, she would go to Holland. Ex-

cusing herself for a moment, she went to the telephone, and taking down the receiver, she called for the general committee rooms in the Aldwych Building.

She asked for someone who could talk French, and a moment later, her request was gratified. She hurriedly recited the strange experience through which she had passed, and advised the committee man of the possible arrival of her sweetheart. The committee man told her that he had read much of Major Vandenbroeck, and that there should be no difficulty in locating him. Jeanne promised to go down to the committee rooms early next morning to more fully explain the circumstances.

"That is one of the strangest things I have met," she said in re-entering the salon to join her mother and the American. "Everyone I speak to, seems to know Joseph by reputation. It is queer, then, that no one was aware that he had really been captured by the enemy."

Madame Desirée essayed to explain the mystery. "Now that Joseph is free, I can tell you the truth, my child. He was captured by the Germans, but we did all in our power to keep the truth from you. We knew that you would never be able to support the pain of knowing that your fiancé had fallen into a trap."

Jeanne drew a deep sigh before she replied. "So' that's how it is? And to think that I never once suspected your trick."

The American here offered a word. "I learned just after I had left you at the Holland frontier that Major Vandenbroeck had been made a prisoner, but I didn't have the heart to follow you up to tell you. He's one of the best known officers in the Belgian Army and the news of his capture spread like wildfire everywhere. I can tell you, the Germans

are bitterly mad over his escape."

Jeanne clapped her hands for joy. "Good!" she exclaimed. "I am so glad that the Germans were fooled for once in their lives."

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and Monsieur Wright informed his friends that he would have to leave. He had considerable work to do that night and it was quite a distance to his hotel. "I have to take the Metropolitan. I believe that it runs every thirty minutes."

He was corrected by Jeanne. "Every ten minutes after 10 o'clock at night." Although but a short time in the district, Jeanne was already well informed respecting the suburban services.

"You have certainly been the carrier of good news tonight, Monsieur Wright," Madame hastened to assure him as they approached the outer door. "We will be able to rest a lot easier now. You could never understand what a load you have lifted from our hearts." The letter which the American had brought her from Brussells, was still gripped tightly in her hand. She had never opened it, having preferred to wait until they were alone in their room.

Promising to call again, and assuring Jeanne that he would do all in his power to assist her in finding her sweetheart, Monsieur Wright bade them adieu. At the gate he called back his telephone number and advised them not to forget it. They agreed to make a note of it.

Early next morning, Jeanne and her mother were ready to go into the city, to interview the members of the general committee. Taking the Metropolitan just to Baker street, they used the Tube to Trafalgar Square, and there, mounting to the top of one of the motor bus, they followed along the

Strand on their way to the Aldwych Buildings. Their hostess had accompanied them.

At the committee rooms, it was learned that no word had as yet been received from Major Vandenbroeck. Refugees who had arrived from Brussells had carried the information that the well known officer had escaped the Germans, and that he had reached Holland, disguised as a worker. Several soldiers, whom the chief of the committee had interviewed, proved to be members of Major Vandenbroeck's division. They too had been held as prisoners in "le petit chateau" but had been released by the Alsatians.

Jeanne and her mother listened intently to the strange incidents which one of these men recited. How the Alsatians had thrown open the gates and allowed the prisoners to flee, how they had secreted themselves in the café cellars, and how the civilian clothes were brought to them. "I tell you our Major worked hard for us," declared the soldier. "He's the best man in the world and we don't ask better than to be allowed to fight under him again."

"Then you think that the Major must be in Holland?" asked Jeanne.

"Yes, he must be there. He left the city ahead of us, and we had little or no difficulty in getting through. And oh, if he had been captured again, the Germans would have been only too glad to publish the fact. No, no, he must be in Holland."

Having arranged with the committee to advise her of the first information they should learn of the Major, Jeanne and her mother, with their English hostess, went down the street. They had no sooner reached the door, than they were attracted by newsboys running by and shouting wildly something about a ship having been sunk.

Their English companion noticed at once that her friends were deeply interested, and called one of the boys to her.

"What is the report?"

"Steamer sunk by a German submarine. Coming from Holland. Hundreds of Belgian soldiers on board." The lad could scarcely wait to explain. He was hurrying to the heart of the city where he would find a ready sale for his papers. Madame purchased a paper, and the lad rushed on.

With the little English that Jeanne understood, she could read the general sense of the paragraph that appeared in big letters. A ship coming from Holland, with many Belgian soldiers aboard, had been sunk by the German submarine. No information could be had as to whether or not any lives had been lost, although it was feared that many had been sent to a watery grave.

Jeanne was almost stunned by the effect of the report. The fact that Joseph was in Holland; that he would be coming to England; that a large number of Belgian soldiers were on board the ill-fated boat; it all seemed to point to the one gruesome fact. But no, if he had been on the boat, special mention would have been made of him. He might still be travelling incognito, as the soldier in the committee room had suggested. The thought was almost overpowering and she dared not entertain it.

She thought that it would be well to go to the hotel where Mr. Wright was stopping, and possibly he would be of some assistance to them in unravelling the mystery. They found the American busy with his machine reeling off the pages of copy to be sent across the sea to feed the hungry minds of his thousands of readers. But he was more than pleased to see his friends.

"We are back to see you much sooner than we anticipated!" It was Madame who opened the conversation, but she was interrupted at once by Jeanne, who was eager to consult the correspondent respecting the latest report.

"Did you see that?" she asked of him, pushing the paper into his hands. Mr. Wright read and the amazed expression of his face told his friends that it was the first knowledge of the disaster he had received.

"No, that's terrible. Those Germans are capable of almost anything. Dirty brutes that they are, to sink a defenceless passenger ship." The correspondent was considerably stirred over the accident.

"Do you suppose that Major Vandenbroeck would be in that boat?" anxiously queried Jeanne.

The American thought a moment before he replied. "No, I hardly think so. His name would have been mentioned by the press, if he had been a passenger in the boat."

"But he was travelling in disguise, so a soldier informed me. He was one of Joseph's regiment."

"We'll just have to wait and see. If the Major was there, we'll know before many hours. The list of passengers will be published just as soon as possible."

Jeanne and her friends left a moment later and the correspondent resumed his work. Had they been able to look back into his apartment, they would have seen him take down the telephone receiver, and call for a number.

"Is that the South Eastern and Chatham?" he inquired.

Apparently it was, and he continued. "Can you tell me just when I can get the first boat to Flushing? I would like to get over there as soon as possible."

The service was closed for the time being, as a result of the terrible disaster, but there was every likelihood that it

would be resumed possibly that same night. The boats would have to make the crossing by night in order to avoid the undersea craft. But that was perfectly satisfactory to Mr. Wright, and he reserved a berth in the boat.

When Jeanne and her mother returned home, they found there a note asking them to call Mr. Wright. He had telephoned them just a few minutes previously. Jeanne rang for number, and a moment later she heard the voice of the American.

"I just wanted to tell you, Mademoiselle, that I may be going over to Holland tonight. The service may be closed, but if a boat leaves, I will be in it. I will search for your fiancé."

"But you're not going to expose yourself to danger simply to do me a favor?" protested Jeanne. She did not like the idea that this man would jeopardize his own life in order to gratify her wishes. He was only a stranger to her, and she had no right to permit such a sacrifice on his part. Had she only known that the correspondent was by this time, deeply interested in this thrilling romance in which she, Jeanne, was the centre, and that he proposed to follow it just to the end. It was a matter of great news value to him.

"But, there will be no donger," he persisted. "I have to go over to Holland, anyway, and it will be a pleasure to me to do something for you, while I am there."

"It would certainly mean a lot to me to know that my fiancé was not in that boat. Is there any further news?"

"Nothing further that I have heard. If I learn anything, I will let you know."

And it just seemed as though the suffering heart of Jeanne was to be pressed from one sorrow to another. Once gladdened with the reassuring news that their American friend had

brought to them, she was beginnig to see a faint glimmer of hope; but, a little later, this hope was destroyed and she was plunged again into the very depths of bitter remorse. How long she would be able to endure this terrible trial, she knew not, but she prayed God for the physical and mental force to combat her difficulties.

That same night Jeanne and her mother retired early. The uncle, who had been absent on a trip up country, had returned and after exchanging thoughts and ideas, for a time, the party decided that a night's repose was the most essential thing to each and all of them.

But Jeanne didn't sleep. Not since she tossed restlessly for so many nights on her bed at Brussells, had she been so disturbed in mind. It was the suspense of it all that weighed her down and made her feel so profoundly ill at ease. She could not have suffered more had she known that Joseph had been in that unfortunate boat.

Never had she welcomed the rays of morning light, as she did that morning. The darkness seemed to intensify her suffering and she longed for day, when she would, at least, be able to find a litle distraction in the different members of the household.

Rising and dressing herself, she went down stairs. The host and hostess of the house were already below. The morning paper had arrived and Monsieur was eagerly devouring the news affecting the loss of the pasesnger ship by a German submarine. Jeanne waited eagerly until she, too, could read the same report.

"I don't see the name of your fiancé amongst the list of the lost," declared Monsieur, after he had carefully studied each name as it appeared in the long column. Scores had been drowned, but, as the paper said, so many were travelling

incognito, it would never be possible to determine the real names of many of the lost ones.

Jeanne perused the list herself. She didn't see the name of Joseph there, but she didn't like the explanation that many had been lost whose identity would never be known. Joseph might well have been amongst those unfortunate ones. The soldier had been emphatic in his declaration that his Major was in disguise.

All that day the newspapers were filled with the thrilling stories of the wreck. It had been clearly established that the boat had been sent to the bottom by a German submarine, and without warning. The scenes of pathos that surrounded the disaster were portaryed in language most impressive. Many had been the sensational rescues. One man in particular, whose name was not known, had dived back into the water no less than a dozen times to save a woman or a child. Another had shown conspicuous gallantry in other ways. The captain and the crew had been worthy of the highest traditions of the sea.

* * * * * * *

Over in Flushing, Frank Wright, was searching eagerly for the information which, he knew, would bring joy to one heart, and would complete the thread of the thrilling romance which he thought would be easily developed by the romantic experiences of Mademoiselle and the Major. It was a real war drama, and his fingers fairly itched to locate the missing hero, that he might send his completed romance across the sea for publication in one of his journals.

Try as he might, he could not establish any trace of the missing Major. It was evident that he had travelled through Holland incognito. He went to the Grand Hotel, and there he found confirmation of this theory. A man, with every

appearance of a soldier of fortune, had called at the hotel two nights previous, and had enquired for Madame and Mademoiselle Desirée. It must have been the Major.

The porter of the hotel volunteered to locate the taxi cab driver who had conducted the strange visitor to the hotel. He believed that his number was 789, but he could, at least, identify him, once he saw him. The hotel employee joined the American, and, together, they went into the city. There was little doubt but that, once the chauffeur was located, that the whereabouts of Major Vandenbroeck would soon be established.

* * * * * * *

And all the while that Frank Wright was busy following up the different clues at Flushing, that might lead him to know where the gallant Belgian officer might be found, Jeanne Desirée, in her home at London, was laboring with a great sorrow. As the hours wore on, and the list of passengers, who had given up their lives in the sea disaster, was made more and more complete, her thoughts hinged on that knowledge that the identity of many of the passengers would never be established. She feared that her Joseph might have been amongst those who had gone down to a premature end and whose friends would never know of their death.

It was a difficult problem to exploit—it might never be cleared away. Unless Joseph reached her in the course of the next few days, or unless she had definite word of his safety, there would only be one solution to the problem—he was lost with the torpedoed steamer.

And this thought was pressing down on her heart and mind and she became so uncontrollably sad, that she almost prayed that God would relieve her of her earthly troubles. She felt as though she, herself, would be much happier dead

than alive. Of one thing she was certain, if Joseph was no longer alive, she too wished to die. Life would hold no further value to her.

But the words of the doctor at Knocke were ringing ever in her ears. "The Major bears a charmed life. They'll never get him." How often had she pondered over those words. As she recalled the thrilling escapes which Joseph had experienced, she began to believe that the doctor was right in what he said. Joseph must bear a charmed life. The Germans had never succeeded in holding him, and how many times had he not emerged from a conflict without a wound, and his comrades had fallen all about him.

No, she refused to believe that Joseph had been lost at sea. His life had been hallowed with a charm that would prevent any such disastrous end. He must be alive and well, and perhaps he was at that moment in England looking for her. It was just possible that he had been held up in passing through Belgium, and, for that reason, was delayed in reaching Holland.

No, she would not believe that her sweetheart had suffered such a cruel death. She remembered his last request to be brave, and throwing back her shoulders, she straightened herself up, determined that she would be brave at all costs.

But she never knew what it would cost her to be brave.

The door bell rang and the servant returned, carrying a telegram. It was addressed to Mademoiselle Jeanne Desirée. It came from Holland.

Perhaps, it was a message from Joseph, or no, it might be from Monsieur Wright. He had gone over to Holland to investigate. She did not have the moral force to open the message.

She called to her mother. The latter was in her room above, but she hurriedly descended.

"Here's a telegram for me, but I am afraid to open it." Jeanne was trembling with fear.

The mother took the missive from the hand of her daughter. She studied the address. Yes, it came from Holland, it bore the Netherlands mark. She tore it open, and then handed it to Jeanne.

Tears almost blinded her eyes as she read that tragic message:

"Major was passenger in boat, but impossible to determine whether or not he was saved. Am continuing investigation." —Wright.

"May God protect me in my sorrow!"

Jeanne threw herself into the big easy chair, and placing her head in her hands, she wept bitterly.

And while she wept, the telephone was ringing. The maid answered.

A moment later the servant pushed open the door of the salon, where Jeanne was alone with her sorrow. She paused a minute, and then said:

"You are wanted at the phone, Mademoiselle!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Out of the Jaws of Death He Comes.

When Joseph realized that his ship had been torpedoed, he immediately turned to aid the members of the crew in lowering the smaller boats so as to take off the passengers. Women and children were rushing up and down the deck, wringing their hands and praying for deliverance from a terrible death. They were almost hysterical, and it required a severe effort to draw order out of chaos.

The vessel was listing well over to port, making it a difficult task to lower the boats from that side. The engines had already stopped, it being apparent that the torpedo had entered the engine rooms. The stern of the ship was settling fast, and it was patent that there was not much time to lose, before she would keel over and go down amidst the swirling waters. In the meantime there was a noble work to be done.

One small boat which had just been lowered into the water had been overturned and the occupants were now struggling for their lives. One woman with a child in her arms was clinging desperately to the keel of the boat, but her strength was fast failing her, and her cries for help were pitiable. Joseph could not resist. Throwing off his coat, he plunged into the water and swimming to the side of the unfortunate woman, he held her up until a life belt was thrown to them by a member of the crew.

The wreckage was beginning to congest the surface of the sea, the stern of the boat being now so far under water that the loose picees on the different decks had been washed overboard. It was a scene of indescribable terror, as scores

of victims fought as maniacs to keep themselves above water long enough to permit of rescue. Three of the boats had been capsized in lowering, owing to the hasty action of some in springing into them before the appointed moment.

Joseph proved himself the same hero on sea, that he had been on land. With absolutely no concern for his own life, he plunged into the surging foam time and time again, to save helpless ones, who were sinking, possibly, for the third time. It was a hazardous task to rescue men, women and children from the icy waters and to place them safely in the boats that were passing in and out amongst the struggling masses. A cold, bitter wind that swept the sea, made conditions almost intolerable, and many there were, who suffered so much from exposure, that they were in a state of unconsciousness when picked out of the boats a little later.

A terrific roar marked the rushing of waters, and the big ship turned over and went down out of sight. Joseph felt himself carried away by the force of the vortex and a moment later he had been swirled into the big funnel as it engulfed its share of the sea. It seemed almost an interminable time before he was thrown back again into the open waters, as the big stack toppled over and sank.

No sooner had he reached the surface again, than he was picked up by two strong arms and carefully placed in one of the life-boats. The latter were hurrying their victims of the disaster to a large passenger ship that was in waiting, having come out from the shore in response to the urgent call for aid which the wireless had flashed across the sky.

"We thought that you were gone, that time, old man," declared one of the boatswains after Joseph had been rescued. "We have been waiting there for several seconds but there was

no sign of you. Guess you were pulled pretty well down all right."

Joseph did not reply. His reeling brain had not yet grapsed the significance of the thrilling experience through which he had passed. To be drawn under with a sinking vessel is almost invariably certain death, but he had somehow escaped.

"Are many lost?" he enquired as he gathered his senses together.

"Can't say exactly, but I guess that we've lost quite a few. That dirty brute of a submarine never even stood alongside, but made off after launching the fatal torpedo. Those Germans are certainly the worst type of savages."

Joseph would liked to have spoken here, and explained to the marines many of the atrocities he had witnessed in Belgium, but the effort cost him so much physically that he deemed it wise to rest calm and allow his vitality to return.

Less than an hour later, the shore was sighted. The Captain turned his helm hard over to port and made direct for a small fishing village along the Holland coast. There, the stranded passengers were generously provided for by the fisher folk, who spared no effort or expense in caring for those who were most in need. Bright fires were burning in the fireplaces in all of the cottages, and in this new found warmth, the suffering ones soon found relief.

Joseph was the object of much interest, and many there were who openly thanked him for having saved their lives. One elderly lady tried to induce him to accept a piece of gold as a mark of appreciation for his heroic act in rescuing her from the water, but he declined most gracefully, assuring his would-be benefactor that he had only done his duty, and that he was not deserving of special recognition.

Automobiles had already been arranged for by the steamship company, and those who were physically fit to travel, were taken to Rotterdam. There, they were placed in one of the leading hotels, where they were to rest for the night.

Great indignation was occasioned in Holland by the wanton destruction of this passenger ship by a German submarine. The German methods of naval warfare were condemned in all sections of the press, and meetings were called to protest against this latest act of murder on the part of the Kaisers' agents.

Joseph was seated in the lobby of the hotel after supper and he followed, with keen interest, the trend of the conversation. A big, burly German essayed to condone the sinking of the ship with the consequent loss of lives, but so severely was he reprimanded that he concluded that his absence would be much more appreciated than his presence.

How things have changed, thought Joseph. At the beginning of the war, it was common knowledge that the Hollanders were a little friendly to Germany. This may have been the result of constant trade communications, it may have been due to the aggressions of the German agents in the kingdom, but, nevertheless it was true to a certain extent. There had always been a doubt as to the spirit of the army, though it was generally conceded that it was in sympathy with Belgium.

But what conditions now? There was no longer any reason for apprehension on the part of the Allies. Holland had asserted her true self. Fear of a fate similar to that which had befallen her neighbour to the south had long since been removed and all Dutchmen were united in support of the common cause of humanity as it found itself in the force of the Allies.

And this change had been largely brought about by the barbarous character of the methods employed by the Prussians. The German owned press of Holland had striven valiantly to retain confidence for the Kaiser, but this policy had been abandoned since some time. Holland was undeniably opposed to the methods of Germany.

Joseph reasoned these things in his own mind as he sat alone in the hotel lobby. Looking far into the future he thought that he could see distinctly the participation of Holland in the war as a friend and ally of Belgium. Perhaps he was wrong in his conception, but he could not easily dispose of this thought.

Joseph was conscious of a young man lingering in his immediate vicinity for the apparent purpose of talking with him. He couldn't reocgnize the stranger, but it was just possible that the latter knew him. Or, would it be some one to discuss with him the incidents surrounding the torpedoing of the steamship. He made up his mind to find out.

"Did you want to see me?"

"No, not particularly, but being that you are one of the survivors, I would like to have a brief story from you. I have been informed that you behaved in a most heroic manner, and that you saved many lives."

Joseph blushed a little in response to this compliment. He disowned the honour, however, pointing out that he had only acquitted himself as any man should have done.

"Do I understand that you are a reporter for one of the papers?" Joseph made up his mind that he would find out who the stranger really was.

"No, I am not a reporter for one of the local papers. I am a War Correspondent representing American Journals. Here is my card."

Joseph took the card from the outstretched hand of the stranger, and, as he read the name, he searched in his mind for some recollection of a similar appellation. The card was inscribed "Frank Wirght, Chicago, U.S.A."

Where had he seen mention of the name before? He was positive that it was not the first time that he had encountered it. Ah, yes, he knew, and a joy was awakened in his heart. This was the same American who had visited the father of Jeanne at Brussells not many days ago. He had seen Jeanne and her mother and, if he correctly understood Antoine Desirée, he was going to see them again. At last he had found an avenue by which he could locate his sweetheart.

"I believe that you were at Brussells the other day, and that you called to see Monsieur Antoine Desirée. Am I right?"

"Yes, you are absolutely right," replied the American. "I left there several days ago, and I have since been over in England. But, tell me, how did you come to know that?"

"I was in Brussells at the time, and I heard that you were there." Joseph was well guarded in his answer.

"Who may you be, if I may ask?" The American was anxious to make the acquaintance of this man who was so intimate with his own movements.

"My name is Vandenbroeck and——"

"Not Major Vandenbroeck?" The journalist did not wait for a reply but, taking it for granted that this was the long lost Major, he jumped from his seat and practically forced his hand into that of Joseph.

The world had failed to identify the officer in his mufti, while Joseph was not anxious to be recognized. Once satisfied that it was really their American friend, however, he

was more at his ease. It was apparently the hand of fate that had arranged this meeting.

"You don't know how I am delighted to meet you, and I know of someone else who will be overjoyed to know that you are safe and well. We feared that you were lost in that sea disaster, in fact I was beginning to be convinced that you were."

"Where is my fiancée? That information will gratify me more than anything else affecting the sinking of the vessel." Joseph could hardly wait. It mattered not what information this young American was seeking, he must glean all that he could for himself before he essayed to discuss the other affair.

"She is living in one of the suburbs of London. Her mother and uncle are with her. But I can tell you, she is almost frantic with fear that you have been lost. I found out that you had taken passage on the ill-fated boat."

"Can you give me her address, because I must go to her at once." Here Joseph rang for one of the bellhops and he called for the latest schedule of boats between any port in Holland and England.

"If you don't mind, I will go with you." The American made the proposition to Joseph that it would be well that he should accompany him because it would never do for the Major to break in abruptly on his fiancée. The shock would be too much for her.

Joseph readily accepted the offer of his new found friend, and, with the time table on the table before them, they set about to choose the quickest and safest route to England. It was finally decided that they should leave from Flushing at 8 o'clock the following morning. They would have to leave Rotterdam that same night, but they could sleep on

board the boat. One of the hotel porters was sent out to purchase tickets and to reserve berths.

That same night as they sped along in the train en route to the seaport where they would find their vessel, the American had a splendid opportunity to recite to Joseph the incidents surrounding his meeting with Jeanne and her mother. He also explained the character of his visit to Brussells and his subsequent interview with the missing fiancée at London.

"I never saw a girl who loved anyone as that girl loves you, Monsieur," declared the journalist with great enthusiasm. "I would give all I have in the world for a love like that."

Joseph was keenly delighted with this estimate of his fiancée, but deep down in his heart there was a grander and nobler appreciation of Jeanne Desirée's love. It was an apprecition that had developed into a love for this same girl that would live just to the death.

"Think how she braved every danger in an effort to get to your side. She even threatened that she would never go back to Brussells until she had found you. Her mother was ready to quit long ago, but there was no quitting with Mademoiselle Jeanne." The American was so exultant in his description of this particular young lady, that Joseph became a little jealous, fearing that he had a rival for the hand of Jeanne. But it was not so. The journalist was only seeking to awaken a little confession from the Belgian officer, so that he might develop that touch of sentiment so urgently required for the romance which he was writing. And he succeeded.

"Jeanne is certainly the sweetest girl in all the world. It makes me happy to know that she has been so devoted to me, but I would have anticipated nothing else from a girl of her

character. She is one in a million." Joseph could have said much more, but he was not much given to superlatives.

The correspondent sought eagerly to learn as much as he could of the marvellous record of the gallant Major. He was bent upon questioning with apparently no desire to reach a conclusion, when the train pulled into the station at Flushing, and the conversation was brought to an abrupt end. In his statements, Joseph had endeavoured to be as descriptive as possible, but he always refrained from indulging his own honour and good name too much in those acts which would have brought glory to any man. His modesty forbade that.

The two men left the train and made their way through the sheds to the quay, where they found the steamer that would carry them across to England. They learned, much to their pleasure, that the boat would sail that same night. Since the sinking of the other ship, the steamship company had decided to make the crossings at night, so as to avoid the submarines.

"How foolish of me. I might have know that without asking. They told me that at London yesterday." So great had been the American's joy in meeting with Major Vandenbroeck, that he had forgotten himself in many things.

The following morning two men left the steamer at Folkestone and hurried into the train that was in waiting there at the quay head. They showed evidence of being highly impatient, but it was not because of any lack of civility on the part of the company's servants; it was because the journey to London required a full hour and a half. They would liked to have made it in a few minutes.

Joseph was not at all communicative. The nearer he approached to his sweetheart, the more he became absorbed with his own thoughts. He could picture in his mind the meeting, and, although he had never been in London before,

he believed that he could see the exact design of the house in which his fiancée was living, and there, at the door, she stood watching and waiting for him. His heart gave a leap for joy as he was about to take her into his arms, and then——

"Another half hour and we'll be there." His travelling companion has interrupted his reverie and well that he did. Joseph had almost forgotten that he was not alone.

How the half hour did drag along. It seemed as though it would never pass. How often they consulted their watches, it would be difficult to say, but the fact was that, during the last few moments, Joseph held the timepiece in his open hand, that he might better study the movement of the tiny hands. "Three, two—one minute—and we should be there." He jumped from his seat to take his coat down out of the rack overhead and to arrange himself so as to be more presentable.

"We'll go up to the hotel for a few minutes, if you don't mind," suggested the American. "We will have to wash and clean up. And then, too, it would be well to warn the young lady by telephone. It would never do for you to walk in on her unannounced. The shock would be too much for her. She is in a highly nervous state these days, particularly since the sea disaster."

Reluctantly Joseph agreed to accompany his friend to the hotel. "Where do you go?" he asked.

"Strand Palace. I always put up there. It's a good hotel, and very reasonable. Perhaps you had better take a room for yourself there tonight."

A few minutes later the hotel was reached, and after signing the register, Joseph was shown up to his room.

Alone in the privacy of his chamber, Joseph began to wonder whether it was true that he was really in London, and that he was going to see the girl he loved, in a very short

time. It seemed as a dream—a hideous dream—to him, the incidents that had surrounded his life since he bade au revoir to Jeanne Desirée at Brussells. Time and time again had he been face to face with death itself. Others would not have given anything for his chances—but he had escaped, and here he was in England, on the soil of his allies, and his own Jeanne, whom he had left behind in the Belgian Capital, was here as well. Surely did destiny work in a strange and mysterious way.

The bell in his room rang, and he took down the little receiver to answer. It was his American friend.

"Are you ready, Major? We ought to soon be getting away. It's some distance out there."

Joseph informed him that he would be ready at once, and that he would meet him in the lobby of the hotel below.

He had just put on his coat and hat, and was preparing to leave the room, when there was a heavy knock at his door. He opened up, and one of the bell boys handed him a card.

"There's a gentleman down below would like to see you. Will I send him up?" The lad was impatient for an answer.

Joseph regarded the card. It was General Fernand Bourgeois, aide-de-camp to King Albert.

"Yes, show him up at once."

And Joseph turned back into his room to wait for his distinguished visitor.

CHAPTER XVII.

Treachery Seizes Jeanne in Its Grip.

It was with faltering step that Jeanne Desirée went to the telephone after the maid had summoned her. In passing through the hallway, she called to her mother, and the latter came rushing down the stairway.

Fear that it might be some terrible news seized her with more and more gripping effect as she approached the instrument. What if Joseph were dead? The thought almost stunned her. But surely, Monsieur Wright would not be so inhuman as to advise her by telephone, if such were the case.

She took up the receiver, and her mother pushed in behind her to listen to the conversation. She, too, was laboring under an apprehension.

"Hello! Hello!" How her voice trembled and her whole frame shook with fear and nervousness.

It was the voice of a woman that answered, a voice full of compassion.

"Is that you, Mademoiselle Desirée?" The stranger spoke in almost perfect French.

"Yes Madame," and the wonder of Jeanne deepened.

There was a moment of absolute silence before the second response came, and then the woman at the other end of the line continued:

"I am Madame Labbatt, of the General Committee. We have been doing everything in our power to locate your missing sweetheart, and, I am glad to say that we have found him. He——"

Jeanne hurriedly interrupted her. She could scarcely believe her own ear as she pressed it closer to the receiver.

"Of whom are you speaking, Madame?" She could not believe but that his lady of the committee had made a mistake, but not so. The answer came prompt and firm.

"I am speaking of Major Joseph Vandenbroeck, your fiancé."

"And you have found him!" Fear now turned to joy. The mere mention of that name had an effect of magic.

The stranger continued: "Yes, we have found him after a very careful search. He is in Belgium with his troops and, if you would like to go to him, we have arranged that you may have safe conduct."

"In Belgium?" Jeanne was now more perplexed than ever. She had been led to believe that Joseph had escaped from Brussells, and that he was either in Holland or England. How could he have returned to his army in Belgium? It seemed almost incredible. But still, the general committee would not report anything that was not true.

"You are sure that he is in Belgium?" The question was posed with a sincerity that must have impressed the woman at the other end.

"We are positive of that, Mademoiselle. He came around through Holland, across to Folkestone, and then over to La Havre."

"When did he pass through Folkestone?" It was now the thought that Joseph had been on English soil and that he had not come to see her, that struck deep into her heart. Would it be possible that he would not know that she was in England. If so, it would be reasonable to understand how he would immediately leave for France.

The voice of the woman interrupted the thoughts of Jeanne.

"We have a message from the Major, Mademoiselle. He is very anxious that you go to him. Of course, you can realize that it will not be possible to remain a long time at the front, but I thought that you would appreciate our efforts in securing a special permission for you from the War Office. Major Vandenbroeck has a wonderful influence with the War Lords, you know."

There welled up immediately in the heart of Jeanne Desirée, a desire to go to her sweetheart. How she longed to see him again. It was an overpowering desire that gripped her heart. She turned to her mother, but the latter had been able to gather the significance of the conversation.

"Mother! They have found Joseph, and they have made arrangements that I can go and see him. Mother you will come with me, won't you dear?

The mother was in serious thought. She would have given all in the world that she possessed, that the happiness of her daughter would have been restored. But she knew that there was only one key to that happiness, and that key was with Joseph Vandenbroeck. It was a serious proposition, and she could scarcely refuse.

Madame Labbatt was becoming a little impatient. She called several times through the phone for Jeanne, but it was a full minute before she received a reply.

"Would you like to go to him, Mademoiselle. We can leave this same night, if you so desire. It is only a matter of a few hours in reaching the general base. Our passports are all in good order, and we will go through without the least difficulty."

The conviction of the woman awakened confidence in Jeanne. She had not the slightest doubt, but that they could go directly to the headquarters of the Belgian Army where she would find the man she loved. How he would be so happy to see her, and how her own heart would be so joyed. She must go.

"My mother can come with me, can she not?" she enquired.

"I am very sorry, but you will have to go alone with me. Our passports are only good for you and myself."

"But, mother would never let me go alone, Madame." Jeanne was already discouraged. The strange character of this offer filled her now with fear. Her mother could not go with her. It was impossible.

"If you wait for a few moments, I will go up to your house, and then we can better discuss matters. I will come immediately, because if we are going tonight, there is no time to lose."

Jeanne agreed, and the telephone was closed.

Turning to her mother, she found the latter almost pale with fear. The very thought of allowing her daughter to go away with a strange woman was not in the least comforting. But still, there could be no harm in such a plan. The woman was a member of the General Committee, and she was doing all for the best. She would wait, however, and perhaps, a personal chat with this woman would set at rest the doubts that were arising in her mind.

To the mother, it was the almost forbidding thought of permitting her daughter to go over to the war-ridden districts of Belgium, under the care and guidance of a strange woman. To Jeanne it was the almost overpowering joy that she would

A GERMAN TRAVELLER IN UPPER CANADA IN 1837

TRANSLATION FROM THE GERMAN

BY THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL

[*Freidrich Gerstäcker, born in 1816, at Hamburg, sailed in 1837 for America on the* Constitution. *After remaining a short time in New York, he went up the Hudson to Albany, and then by the Erie Canal westward. The account below begins with his leaving Niagara Falls. It is believed that a foreigner's impressions of Upper Canada in those times may be of interest. The passages translated begin at page fifty-nine of the Tostenoble (Jena) edition of Gerstäcker's "Strief—und Jagdzüge durch die Vereinigten Staaten Nordamerikas."*]

MY heart was still full of this magnificent wonder of nature, and I had no desire to spend the night in the small town of Manchester, lying close by the Falls; so I followed the first road into the country which presented itself, partly to hunt and partly to seek out a house in which to find shelter for the night.

It was growing darker and darker, the mud becoming deeper and deeper, as I at last by good fortune noticed the glow of a light breaking like a guiding star through the ever-thickening gloom. It was the peaceful and pleasant dwelling of a Pennsylvania blacksmith who had settled here in the State of New York, and who, with generous hospitality, now fed the hungry and prepared a warm bed for the weary.

I heard here, as well as at several farm-houses, that Canada was a beautiful country, that game filled the woods there to overflowing and that bears and wolves not seldom gave occupation to the bold hunter.

Here, then, was the prospect of an interesting life. "Canada," "bear-hunt"—these two words were in themselves sufficient to unfold before me new and delightful pictures. Where I should go was a matter of absolutely no importance: I should get to know the country; and whether I began at the north or the south was all one.

So I did not require long consideration. On November 1st, a steamboat took me from Lewiston, a little town on the Niagara, to Toronto: at this place, however, I remained only a night, as I arrived very late. and early the next morning went by another boat on to Hamilton.

Hamilton is a pleasant little city on Lake Ontario, in Canada, and, though it lies but a short distance from the frontier of the United States, a very great difference can be observed, as well speaking generally as in many small particulars. The greater part of the settlers in Canada are English, Scotch or Irish; and these

have for the most part retained their old customs—at least, so it appeared to me in the very short time I was there and had an opportunity for observation. The money, too, is English, although American money is also current; and one would on the other side of the lake look in vain for sceptre and crown, which here decorate signs, etc., as commonly as they do in the old land.

I hurt my foot in Hamilton, and was forced to remain there Friday the 3rd November, unpleasant as it was for me; but early on Saturday I set out in splendid weather, quite recovered and happy. into the glorious open country, and like the schoolmaster in the story felt sympathy for the people in the streets because they had to stay there. From Hamilton I went to Dundas (also on Lake Ontario), took thence a northerly direction and made my way toward the town of Preston. I turned to the right, however, two miles ahead to get to New Hope, where, as I had heard, an old German hunter was living.

On Sunday afternoon I arrived safely at New Hope, and, making inquiries there about the old German's place, I reached it that evening by dark. He was not at home; but six children of all sizes looked up with bright eyes in astonishment at the stranger and his outlandish getup. The master was at church with his wife; and the eldest daughter, a girl of sixteen, was teaching her smaller brothers and sisters reading and spelling out an old tattered (who knows whether understood?) catechism. I sat down quietly in a corner, awaiting the arrival of the older members of the family, and listening to the prattle of the children.

At last the heads of the family made their appearance. The old man belonged to the religious sect of Tunkers, and allowed his beard to grow full under the chin. They greeted the stranger most heartily as soon as they could free themselves from the children leaping upon them.

At first the old man appeared to look on me with somewhat distrustful eyes, of course on account of my weapon; for Canada stood upon the threshold of the Rebellion which broke out only a few weeks later, and these "peaceful Dutchmen" seemed to find no particular pleasure in the growing unrest. When, however, I told him the reason of my visit, he quickly became friendly and familiar; he laid aside his church clothes, and we then sat down by the warm stove. which is, in Canada, on account of the extreme cold, frequently to be found instead of a fire-place.

The conversation turned for the most part on farming and hunting. The old man seemed to understand the former thoroughly; and he was passionately fond of the latter. This was the man for me. He told me a great deal of the former abundance of game which now, however, had retreated before the increasing population which went into the woods and frightened the game by repeated shots without accomplishing more than crippling some poor deer. I fancy he was talking sarcastically. He boasted, too, that he seldom missed at a "turkey-shoot." Turkey-shooting is practised here, exactly as Cooper so strikingly decribes it in "The Pioneers." When the night was far advanced, the old man showed me to a bed under the roof, in which I certainly found no scarcity of fresh air; but I slept soundly.

During the evening, he had told me of a lake only a few miles distant in which a tremendous number of ducks had taken up their abode; and at daylight I set out to get a few for roasting.

My new acquaintance, of course, showed me approximately the direction in which I would find the lake—a road, however, was not to be thought

of. Still, I believed I should be able to find the water, even without the compass, and set off briskly. But the wood got thicker and thicker, the upturned trees lying across and through each other became more and more numerous; and the sun was already high when I at last took the compass from my pocket, and with its help I followed a straight course and I fortunately arrived at the lake. I found a great flock of ducks; but, apparently made shy by other hunters, they kept the middle of the lake, and very few swam around by the margin.

This was another difficulty; but as the lake did not seem to me to be large, I made up my mind to go around it.

I had killed three ducks, one by one; and somewhat ardently pursuing the game had not observed the progress of the day. Now I all at once noticed that the sun had declined very far toward the west. To get around the lake before sundown was, as I recognised, not possible, for as I could see at the clearings, I had not traversed half the distance; and in the northeast were gathered heavy masses of clouds which had almost overtaken the fleeing sun and sent the wind in advance whistling and roaring.

I saw nothing for it but to camp here. The few pieces of hard bread which I found in my pocket had little effect in allaying my hunger; and I did not take the time to roast one of the ducks. Moreover, the weather appeared to be on the point of becoming very disagreeable. I had got into very bad humour when, just at the right time, as I was going slowly along the shore, I found a canoe hewn out of a tree trunk. It was made fast to a root. Without a second thought I climbed in and paddled some two-and a half English miles to the other shore, a huge, high, dead tree serving me as a mark to steer by.

The wind blew strong and the waves pitched the rudely-built and clumsy vessel about to such an extent that I had to apply all my strength and skill to keep in equilibrium and to propel it through the waves. In the meantime the sky began to be clouded over with snowflakes to such an extent that I was covered in a short time and only with difficulty could I keep my eyes upon the dead tree, and so hold my direction. At last I landed, fastened the boat to the shore and tried to find a road to some settlement.

In the meantime it had become quite dark; but a short distance ahead I was fortunate enough to discover a narrow foot-path, off which the snow melted in consequence of the wet and which led me through the wood like a faint line. I followed it confidently; and, at length, after walking perhaps an hour and a half, the glow of a distant light appeared, to which I hastily and joyfully made my way. I quickly reached it and soon was knocking at the outside door—which was at the same time the room door—of a farmer's house.

A German voice asked, "*Wer ist da?*" (Who is there?"), and this streamed like balsam over my whole frame — particularly over the stomach.

It was the wife of a German waggon-maker who opened the door. Her husband had ridden to the small village a few miles away, but was expected back at any moment. The warm stove called back to new activity my nearly frozen animal spirits; and a cup of warm coffee which she set before me restored me quite to my former self. After the lapse of an hour or so, the husband, a friendly German, arrived. He had been three years in the country; he had come over without a red cent, but now he had acquired a very pretty little house, a bit of land and plenty of custom.

As it had snowed very hard all night, I promised myself a good hunt,

and set out very early. My host would on no condition accept money for his hospitality, so I left him the game shot the day before. I loaded the left barrel of my hunting-piece for this day with buckshot, the right with duckshot; and putting on fresh caps, I stepped out of the room which was hot as an oven into the fresh, cool morning air, drinking it in in long thirsty draughts.

I had wandered around something over an hour without shooting anything but a rabbit and a partridge, when suddenly a man met me whom I could not at a distance distinctly place; but soon I recognised that he was a civilised Indian.

He was dressed in a short woollen coat, dark blue trousers with wide seams protruding. His feet were covered with moccasins, and his head with a red woollen scarf, wound round like a turban. His fiery black eyes blazed out from under this, and his straight black hair hung down over his temples. In his ears he had a pair of crystal earrings. His Indian belt, decorated with pearls, held a tomahawk; on his right side hung a plain powder-horn and a bullet-pouch, and his American rifle lent to the whole figure a romantic appearance.

After a short greeting and hand shake, we tried to make ourselves understood. This was certainly no easy task, for he spoke only broken English; and I did not know much even of this language. Upon my asking him whether he had seen much game, he pointed along in front of him upon the ground where a bear track still quite fresh was to be seen in the snow. He beckoned me to go along with him; and I fancy I need not say that I followed him with a heart beating with joy and impatience.

The hunt was not distinguished by anything more noteworthy than the killing of a bear, quite young—indeed only eight or nine months old—the parents of which had apparently been shot a short time before. So far as I was concerned, I did but little harm to the little black rascal with my shot gun, notwithstanding all my huntsman's ardour. The Indian sold the little creature later in Preston for $4, and probably drank up the proceeds there; at all events, I left him busily engaged at that job when I took leave of him.

After this hunt, I traversed the wood again for a while alone, but with very little success; for not being acquainted with the bush and not being able to find my way about properly, I dare not venture to go any great distance from the settlements. Besides, as I was a very young hunter, I was hardly in a position to be perfectly sure that I would kill every day what I needed for my own support.

The weather, too, certainly did not serve to make living in the open air comfortable; I was as yet too short a time living such a life. Now and then I, of course, came across country people with whom I lodged for the night. The description which they gave me of a Canadian winter was not enticing, and I determined that I would beat a retreat before I found myself snowed in.

In order to carry out this decision, I struck a southerly direction towards Lake Ontario again, where, as I was told, the road would lead to Buffalo.

Here in the woods, I was destined to have an adventure, but one not crowned with any success on my part. While I was following in the proper direction a little foot-path or cow-path, suddenly I caught sight of seven wolves standing in front of me at a distance of about seventy yards. Without thinking, I bent down softly into the snow to load one barrel of my gun with a bullet, as I was afraid that I could not do anything with shot. When I got up, the wolves had "bid good-bye" and left me the empty satisfaction of having my trouble for my

pains. I was frantic. As they had fled southeasterly, I had a mind to follow them to get the scalp of a beast of prey like them—the Government offered a reward of $6 for every wolf-scalp. Since, however, the sun was apparently near setting, I gave up the pursuit.

The Canadians maintain that the wolves of that country, when first sheep were introduced by the settlers, were so afraid of these new-comers that they would not come near them. With time, they became accustomed to the new and strange animals, and certainly very much to their disadvantage, for hardly had they got a bite of the first of them, than the flesh tasted to them extraordinarily good; and now they were occasioning no insignificant damage among the flocks.

Moreover, the accusation is made against the Canadian wolf—I do not know whether rightly or wrongly—that his bite is deadly, and that sheep or dogs which have been bitten are sure to die, although the wound in other respects would not be at all fatal.

During the day I had seen several deer, but was not in a position to creep up within gun-shot of any; and at last had to be satisfied with a rabbit which ran across the road.

There was no use thinking of a house this evening, as I found myself no longer even upon a path in the bush, but I was in the true sense of the words "all in the woods." Accordingly, before it became dark, I dragged together as much wood as I could find near by, cleared away the snow and kindled a fire under the pile, which soon blazed up pleasantly.

When I had warmed myself sufficiently, I got to work to clean my little rabbit and broil it. This I accomplished without much ceremony. I cleaned it out with snow as well as I could and stuck it on a twig immediately over the fire; while I laid a piece of bark below so as to catch the fat which fried out; and I poured this fat over the roast again. It is true that I missed salt and bread very much, but hunger is a splendid cook. The hind legs I laid aside for breakfast; but the rest of the dish I finished. This over, I heaped up my fire, and with my hunting-bag under my head, my fur cap drawn over my eyes and feet toward the fire, I prepared to spend my first night in the open air in America.

I fell asleep very quickly and so soundly that I did not wake up till I was awakened by the sharp morning air. My fire was burned down; and my limbs were shivering with the cold. I trembled so that I could scarcely blow the fire up again; but at last I succeeded, and gradually my stiff limbs were quite thawed out. The morning sun found me buried in the contemplation of my two rabbit hams, which I inspected so long that I could see the very bones.

When I had cared sufficiently for my creature comforts, I renewed with new vigour my march toward the south, and at about 10 o'clock, the crowing of a domestic cock showed me that I was not far from a human residence. I marched in that direction with long strides; and soon was greeted by the barking of a pack of hounds.

The owner of the house was in the bush chopping wood and splitting fence-rails (the long poles which are laid upon each other to enclose the fields. The enclosure is itself called a "fence"). His wife, a tidy American, hospitably set before me bread and milk; she assured me that I was not more than twenty miles distant from the road to Buffalo, and that I would come across a good many farmhouses if I went somewhat farther to the south. She refused on any consideration to take money for the refreshments; and after heartily thanking her, I walked away through the legion of hounds and marched forward in such joyous mood that the Canadian

bush resounded with German songs. On the following morning, I reached the graded road to Buffalo, which led through a continuous succession of farms and was travelled by a kind of stage coach. I had returned to the cultivated part of the country. The farmer here grows a great deal of wheat, which succeeds very well, and also oats and barley; particularly, however, Indian corn, although this crop does not in the north arrive at the same perfection as in the south. The cobs were small and most of them that I saw had yellow grains.

About thirty miles from the city, I came across a cattle dealer from the United States, who was returning home. He was a friendly man, and I made up my mind to travel the thirty miles to Buffalo with him, for company's sake. It did not take long for us to become acquainted with each other. He was driving home two huge fat oxen out of Canada to the United States; and at the same time was riding a terribly lean horse. Nevertheless, he very hospitably invited me to take turns with him on his *Rosinante*, as he himself would like to walk a little.

Riding would not have been amiss—for there was a fine rain falling and the roads had become very slippery—if the good man had not tried to make a deal for the horse I was riding with everyone he met — he was even willing to give it in trade for two cows. It certainly must, many a time, have looked comical enough when the miserable beast upon which I was riding was offered "dirt cheap" to those who passed or met us.

When he had walked himself tired, he got on and I walked. He had in his pocket a book containing some sort of most touching tragedy; and every time he got himself settled firm in the saddle, he took it out and began to declaim, holding the book in his left hand while he gesticulated with the right, in which he at the same time carried the long ox-whip. At each of the somewhat vehement movements occasioned by the powerful parts of the tragedy, movements made with the right arm and therefore with the whip, the whip brought so much discomfort to the oxen that these poor creatures, who always kept their eyes fixed on the lash, shied back, and only a "Shoo Buck! Oh! Oh!" which often interrupted very prosaically his pathetic tones, would bring the horned and involuntary hearers back to their duty.

On the evening of the 11th November, I came for the second time to the Falls of Niagara, and was now enabled to look in wonder upon their magnificence and grandeur from the Canadian side also.

From that point the way winds up to Lake Erie — and this makes a splendid way to travel. The street itself is smooth and dry, on the left the glorious broad Niagara river shaded by the dark primeval forest, on the right one fine farm after another with the most beautiful orchards—it is an enchanting sight. The distance which we thus travelled seemed to me but a few steps. Some miles from Buffalo we boarded a ferry worked by horses over the Niagara river, and were soon again in the United States.

What I saw of Canada shows me that it is—at least in these parts—a beautiful and fertile country, with a salubrious though very cold climate. And it is on account of this extreme cold that I would never select Canada for a place of residence, not even in Upper Canada lying furthest to the south. The land produces splendid grain; but still not much can be made of sheep and swine-raising, as the numerous wolves attack these animals, unless the farmers are willing to pay more attention to their flocks and herds than to let them run wild.

Reprinted from THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE,
April, 1911.