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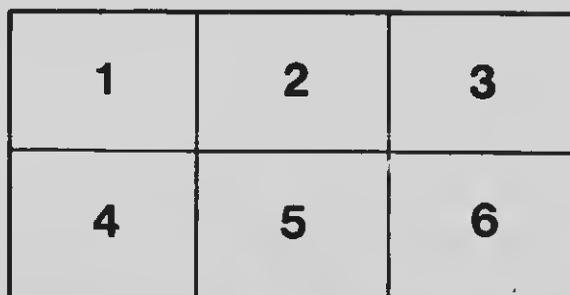
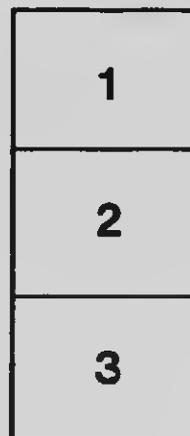
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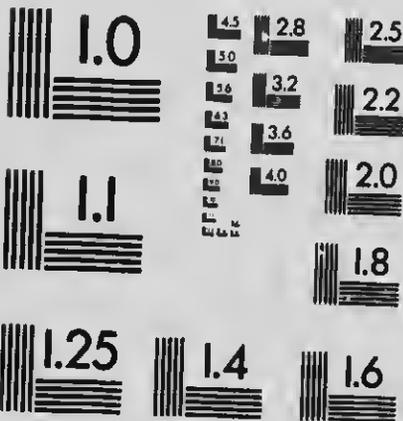
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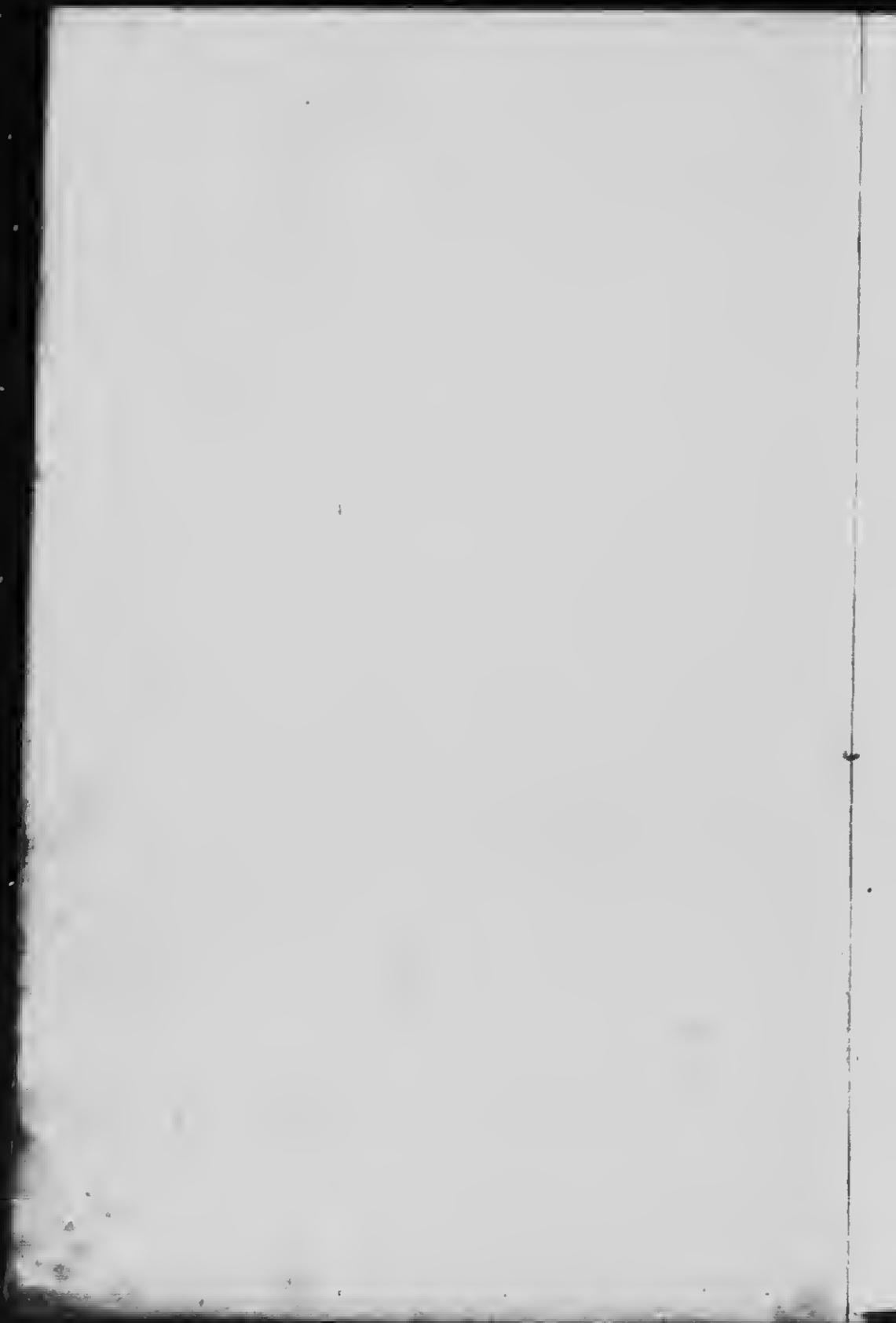
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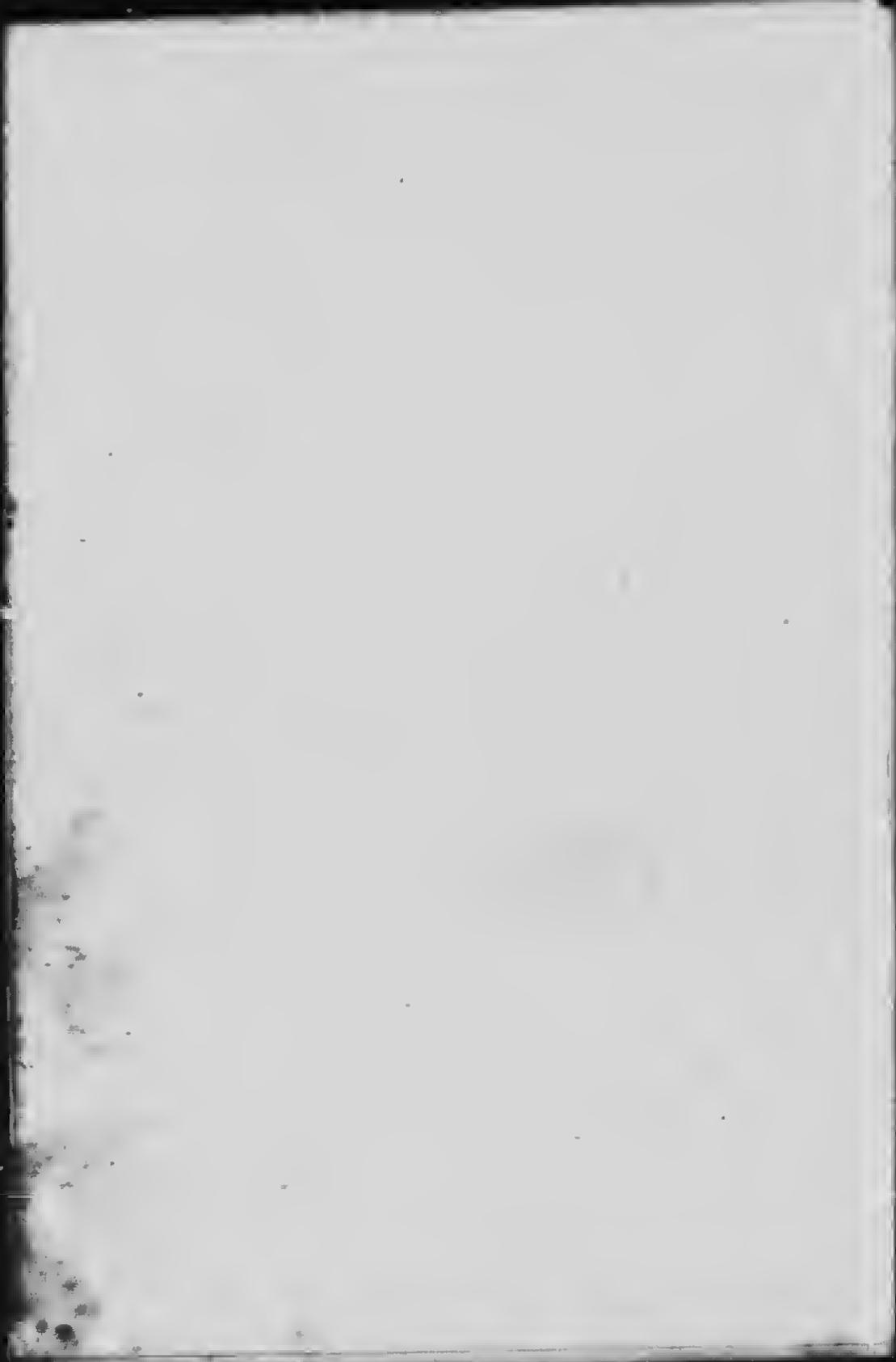
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**CAPTAIN KETTLE ON THE WAR-PATH**



**CAPTAIN KETTLE  
ON THE  
WAR-PATH**

**BY**

**C. J. CUTCLIFFE HYNE**

**S. B. GUNDY  
TORONTO**

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# CAPTAIN KETTLE ON THE WAR PATH

## I

### THE SUPPLY SHIP

CAPTAIN SIR OWEN KETTLE, K.C.B. shook his head and sighed. "I have tried everything, sir, from the Flying Corps to Motor Transports and R.A.M.C., and not one of them will have me. They say I've a wooden leg." "And that's not true," broke in Lady Kettle. "The Captain's is a high-class American limb that cost £26 18s., even with the discount. At least, the one he wore when he tried to enlist was. He still has his old wooden implement (which Mr. McTodd made him), but he only wears that about home here, and when we've no company. Mr. McTodd meant well, but he made the leg of Honduras mahogany, and that's too heavy. It's as good as an extra vest to the Captain when he wears it."

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"I'd like to show you our roses, sir," said Kettle, by way of getting rid of a painful subject. "We had mildew on them, but I've syringed them with a patent mixture of my own, and they're as clean now as a well-scrubbed deck. I don't mind owning that the mixture is founded on Quale's Sheep Dip, but I think I shall be able to get Government protection for my adaptation of it. I have always been anxious, Mr. Carnforth, to start in the patent medicine trade, and this is my first opening. 'Try Kettline for mildew on your roses.' It would sound well on the advertisements, especially with a verse or two of poetry added. I've got quotations already for space in the 'Gardener's Friend.'"

The big politician looked at the little sailor with a thoughtful eye, and the unprejudiced observer might have jumped to the conclusion that he was going to swear. But Mr. Carnforth knew his Kettle from bitter experience, and passed a cigar case instead, and in his turn talked roses, their diseases, their colours, and their culture, till even Captain Kettle had no further views to offer on the topic. And, at the finish, said he, "Now, my man, if you're fed up on flummery, we'll get down to bed-rock business. Are you open to killing a few Germans?"

"I haven't got a game ticket, sir, but my

ten-shilling licence covers the killing of vermin."

Martin Carnforth, M.P., grinned. "You're your little old self. In this case it's the crew of a certain German submarine, number unknown."

"I've a lot of theories, sir, about the way to catch submarines. Our Navy——"

"Never mind the Navy, and never mind your theories for the moment. This is a particular vessel which is to be off Ireland—North or South I don't know which at present—in a month's time, and I'm not telling the Admiralty about her because they do nothing. I told the Admiralty before about a German submarine which would be at a certain spot within a certain limit of time, and they said my news was of interest, but policy forbade them to act upon it. That submarine got busy. She sank seven big steamers in a week, not to mention four trawlers. We even owned up to four of the steamers and a brace of trawlers."

Captain Kettle was openly shocked. "And you a Member of Parliament, sir!"

"I'm sick and ashamed of it. Parliament talks and does nothing for fear of losing its votes and its salaries, and I'm aching to do something. They won't let me into either of the Services, because they say I'm too old, and can't see, and am touched in the wind, and am liable to pains in the carburetter.

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So I'm going on my own. I'm going to be a dam' pirate, and if the Navy catches me trying to help Great Britain, I suppose I shall hang. Question is—will you chip in with me?"

"Certainly not," said Lady Kettle. "The Captain's a respectable gentleman, now."

"I'll come like a bird," said the little sailor—his red torpedo beard stuck out aggressively. "By James, Mr. Carnforth, sir, I've been aching to have a bat at those Dutchmen ever since the war started. I've only to get my next Sunday's sermon in our chapel arranged for——"

"You can leave me to attend to that, Captain," said Lady Kettle, and there was a distinct gleam of triumph in her eye. "I've never been allowed in the pulpit yet, Mr. Carnforth, but women must do men's work in this war-time, and if there's a drop in the collection I'll know who it is that's short, and she can buy her next week's butter from Skipton, or where she likes. Not another pound does she have from this farm."

We may pass over, then, a voyage across the Atlantic in the next packet that sailed, and a train journey through the United States from Jersey City to New Orleans. In that capital of moist heat and doubtful drainage they put up at a modest

and inconspicuous hotel, and I regret to say under assumed names.

"If my name got down here," said Carnforth, "I should find myself in the papers."

"If mine got out," said Kettle rather awkwardly, "I'm afraid I should find myself in gaol. You see, sir, I've been here before. He was only a thief of a stevedore when we had the bit of trouble, but he's a political boss now, and Irish, and they say he's a long memory. But an archdeacon, situated as I was then, couldn't have resisted giving it that man on the nose."

"Very well, I'll be Mr. Martin, and you—let me see—you had better be Colonel Owen. You don't look like a plain mister. And now about this steamer. My cable says she's the *Grüda*, nominally Norwegian owned, and under charter to a Chicago firm with a German name."

"She's a tanker, sir, about 1,800 tons, twin-screw, loaded, and alongside the levee this minute."

"Then," said Carnforth, who was a business man, "the next thing to do is to get passages on her through the pretence that we've got to leave here in a hurry. Afterwards, when we have found out her rendezvous with the German submarine, we'll take charge." He produced from his pocket an automatic pistol and a glass tube full of small

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tabloids. "If we can't drug the crew with the chemicals, we'll have to use the cordite."

"I rather object to dope, sir. It leaves an awful head afterwards, as I know, and doping's not quite a white man's trick."

"My good Captain, you mustn't be too nice-fingered. This war with Germany is not run under Queensberry rules—they've seen to that. We've got to win, and you can take it from me we shall have to be all-in to do it."

"Well, sir," said Kettle, with a sigh, "you're a Member of Parliament, and ought to know; and anyway you're, so to speak, my owner on this trip. You give the orders, and I'll see them through."

"Right," said the big man, "that's a bargain. And now, as you've told me many times you're bad at fiction, I'll go and beard the skipper on the *Grüda*, and bamboozle passages out of him for the pair of us. I expect it will only be a case of being able to pay enough."

To Captain Sir Owen Kettle, K.C.B., who was anxiously smoking his fifteenth cigar for the day, Carnforth returned three hours later, flatly discouraged.

"The captain of that tanker was hopeless. I appealed to his better feelings, and I appealed to

his pocket, and one might as well have tried to work on the conscience of an alligator. I tried the agent: he said if I didn't get to hell quick on my own accord, he'd send me there. I rang up the runner who is to supply the crew, and he said he was full already. And the boat sails with to-morrow's daylight."

Kettle took his cigar from his mouth and examined the tip. "And who was the runner, sir?"

"Morrissey. Keeps a flash saloon about two blocks off Canal Street, on the French side."

"That's luck about Morrissey. Well, Mr. Carnforth, we might get shipped still, but the method won't be pleasant."

"I'll stomach anything to get success. What's the scheme?"

But Captain Kettle would divulge no details. Only after they had dined, and put in a couple of hours at a movies show where even a Polar whaling picture could hardly check the perspiration, he led with easy assurance through the crowded traffic of Canal Street to Mr. Morrissey's saloon.

"Seem to know your way," Carnforth commented.

"I've been in New Orleans before," Kettle admitted. "Evening, Mr. Morrissey."

"By the piper! You! I thought, Captain, you'd have died of lead-poisoning ten times over

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before this. And why are you gladdening N'Orleans? You haven't a ship here, or even down at the quarantine station."

"I want a ship. D'you know of one, Morrissey?"

"That takes a bit of thinking over, and I dare say you don't want to discuss your particular troubles before the beauty and fashion in the bar here. Come to my private room. Will you bring your friend?"

"Please. He wants to ship with me."

"We'll see what can be done. Just shut the door behind you, Mr.—er—Martin. I think you said your friend's name was, Captain? Bourbon or rye? I know you dislike our Scotch, Captain, because of its Chicago accent, though I always drink it myself. You see I've a good memory. Rye for you, eh, and Bourbon for your friend? Help yourselves. Make it a high-ball, if you like. Here's the squirt. Mine for the good old Scotch. You're looking at my nose, Captain, and I tell you it cost me a lot to have it put straight. But that's all past and over now, isn't it? Here's chin-chin!"

The saloon-keeper brimmed with affability, and, to Carnforth's surprise, Captain Kettle was affable also. He let the gross politician suggest rogueries

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and familiarities unspeakable. He allowed himself to be plied with whisky, and insisted that Carnforth should drink level. And he insisted on obtaining from his host promises of future employment which a child might have known that apoplectic person had not the smallest intention of making good.

From then onwards the evening seemed to fade out.

Carnforth, awaking with a splitting head and a brazen taste in his mouth, tried to reconstruct the details of the orgy without success. One thing he was sure about—he had not been drunk. He knew his capacity to a glass, and had not been within a bottle of it. And he was similarly confident about Captain Kettle. That mariner's iron head could have seen Mr. Morrissey under the table three times over. But who had taken him back to the hotel and put him to bed, and why was the hotel so full of grumbling, rumbling machinery?

At that point Carnforth waked a trifle more, stretched himself gingerly (as he found he was a mass of bruises and aches), and discovered he was not in the hotel at all. He was in a room that was warm and smelt of grease, and he was lying on the wooden floor of a box that reminded him of a

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coffin. Then he recognized it as a steamer's bunk.

"Glad to see you're coming round, sir," said a voice from the gloom. "Morrissey's done it pretty thoroughly, hasn't he? The swine's even stolen my best leg."

"That you, Kettle? D'you know where we are? Looks to me we're on a steamer."

"We're where we wanted to get. We're on the *Grūda*, sir, and by the way her wheel engines are clattering we must be navigating that twisty bit below the quarantine station before you get to the Port Edes pass, and the pilot's nervous of piling her up on a sand bar. Drat these mosquitoes. Do you recognize the good old Mississippi smell?"

"Then we've been—what d'you call it—shanghaied?"

"That's right, sir. I guess we asked for it, and Morrissey very kindly did the rest. A man with a good memory, sir, Morrissey, and I must own I did make a bad mess of his nose, that time I attended to him. Great James! but I have a head and a mouth on me! I told you, sir, dope was filthy stuff."

"Well, I've lost my stock of that and my gun as well. It strikes me that now we are here we can't do any good."

"Oh, that'll be all right when the time comes," said the little sailor. "No use looking for trouble on ahead, sir. And now I should advise getting a spell of sleep for as much as we're let, though I don't suppose that will be for long."

It turned out there were five other drugged men in the bunks beside them; the *Grüda's* errand was not sufficiently popular to enable her to ship a crew by above-board means; and when the pilot was dropped by the Port Edes light, and the steamer lifted to the heave of a brisk Norther in the Gulf outside, the need for hands became apparent, and large-booted mates proceeded to rouse the sleepers after the time-honoured methods.

All grumbled, and all were driven. Martin Carnforth, Esq., M.P., found that his name was Olsen and his destiny the stokehold. He went there, escorted by a volley of kicks. Kettle, after being yanked violently out of his bunk on to the iron deck below, was discovered to be a cripple, and was virulently abused for this misfortune.

"I'll knock the stuffing out of Morrissey next time I see Noo Orleans," said the *Grüda's* mate, "for charging me for a whole man and only shipping a half one. Get up, you unipod."

Captain Kettle was yanked back to the vertical, and lost the remains of his temper. His skilled

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fingers shot out and seized a handful of the Mate's shaggy hair, and with that leverage he banged the man's head against an iron stanchion till he howled for mercy.

"Will you promise to treat me decently whilst I'm on this ship if I don't kill you now?"

"Ja—si—yes. What coundymans was you? You're name's nod Schlich."

"Seems that's the name I was shipped under, and therefore it's good enough for you. Where's my jury leg?"

"If it was worth a nickel, Morrissey's got it. An' he's beyond reach. We don' carry no spare legs in our slop-chest, but I'll have Chips make you one right now, and when you've got that shipped, you'll turn to as pantryman. Unnerstan'? Say 'sir' when you answer me."

"Ay aye, sir," said Captain Kettle cheerfully, and the mate, keeping a wary eye on him, backed out of the forecastle.

The *Grüda* crossed the Mexican Gulf amongst silvery flying fish and islands of amber-yellow weed, rounded Florida with its screw-pile lights, and swirled North with the Gulf Stream. She bellowed her way through the fogs on the Banks, and missed a Miquelon fishing schooner by the short hairs. And then she butted her stolid path across

the Western Ocean, exuding smells of petroleum and fried onions.

Her pantryman did his work, and called little attention to himself. His immediate master, the cabin steward, himself an untidy creature, commented on his frequent drawings of clothes from the slop-chest.

"You'll have no wages to pouch at the far end if you put so much on your back," said the steward.

"I know," said Kettle. "But I like to feel clean and neat. Where is the far end? I haven't the muzziest notion of where I signed on to."

"Oh, 'Kjobnhavn or orders,'" said the steward.

"Probably 'orders!'"

"I don't believe there's a soul on board knows where we're bound for," said Captain Kettle to Carnforth that night as they sat together on the poop companion."

"What, not even the skipper?"

"Not even the captain, sir. At least he's a liar if he does. According to Mr. Mate, we're heading about for the middle of Ireland—say Limerick. I heard Mr. Mate ask the Old Man at tea to-night if that was our port, and the Old Man said he knew no more than the ship's tom cat."

But next day a new development showed itself,

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A span of wires was hoisted between the two masts, and presently the crackle and spit of wireless broke out from the chart-house. For another day nothing happened, and the *Grüda* loafed along at a steady half-speed. Then orders sharp and insistent evidently arrived out of space, and the tanker swung off on to a new course.

"Now we shan't be long," said Carnforth when he came off watch, and the pair were for a minute alone together. "I'm hanged if I can see what we can do. Have you managed to pinch a gun?"

"It's rather astonishing, sir, but I don't think there's such a thing on board. They're an amazing lot of haymakers. We must tackle them, when the time comes, without that."

"Then you have a scheme?"

"I've ten, sir, but I don't know yet which will come into use. We must 'wait and see,' as you politicians say when your heads are empty of ideas."

"Well, I'm going to do something. I'll set fire to the petrol as the submarine's taking it on board, sooner than she shall go off with it. I suppose we shall get killed, but I'm not going home with nothing done."

"We shall not get killed, Mr. Carnforth, sir, and we shall do in the beastly Dutchmen all right. I make a point, sir, of never getting killed. If you

fix in your mind beforehand that you are going to do your job and come through safe, you'll do it. I've proved that a hundred times, so I know. The main thing that's troubling me is Kettleline."

"Is what?"

"That mixture of mine that is such death to mildew on roses. Lady Kettle was, as you know, sir, a business lady before I knew her, and she's been a business lady most of her life since. But you know what the sex is when it comes to bucking about gardens. If any one says how clean our roses are, she'll think no more about giving away the recipe than you would about telling your fellow politicians the name of your favourite throat tabloid."

"Well," said Carnforth impatiently. "I don't see that it matters."

"It matters all the time, sir. If that recipe goes to the wrong ear there's my patent jumped before you can say 'slug.' It's taken me ten years hard gardening, sir, to bring that mixture to its present perfection, and now I'm likely to have had all my trouble and chemistry for nothing."

"Better ask the skipper for the loan of the wireless," said Carnforth sarcastically, "and ring up your wife and tell her to take care."

"By James, sir," said Kettle, "that's a sound

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idea. The minute we've sunk that submarine I'll do it. But, for the time being, the submarine comes first, before," he added regretfully, "before even roses. Curse these Dutchmen. They're always getting in the way of something, and always will, I suppose, till they're all wiped out. Well, sir, there are a lot of wipers knocking about the world just now, that's one comfort."

Carnforth was tired and stiff with his unaccustomed work. He got up rustily. "Well," he said, "wait and see is all right, I dare say, for our tin-pot politics, but it is rather a poor sort of prescription for the serious business of war. Can't you give me something better to go on?"

"Yes, sir, I can. This ship is fitted with iron belaying-pins, and they're many of them loose. Learn to an inch where the loose ones are, so that you can always lay your hand on the nearest, either by night or day, without a wink-time's waste. If you have to hit with one, hit to kill. This is red war we've ahead of us, Mr. Carnforth, and it's either us or them, and don't you forget it, because they won't. Great James, there's my bell. I must go."

Three times the *Grüda* changed her course in answer to the invisible orders, which gave a hint that the boat they were hurrying towards was not

## THE SUPPLY SHIP

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waiting for them placidly. Once all heads were drawn to the rail by the sight of a wrecked trawler's dinghy, and a patch of floating fish-boxes, and another time they steamed through a stinking, bobbling shoal of drowned and bloated mules. Three drowning cattlemen sailed with the mules as a sightless guard

Here were signs enough of the outskirts of war, but the *Griida's* company remained placid. They were neutrals; if a British warship visited them their papers were all in order; and, for the rest, it was their full right to sail the seas and gather kroner whilst they might.

Then the wireless spoke again, and the scent grew hotter. Word was given to the engine-room that from then till the business was over the fullest head of steam was to be kept ready for instant use, and the devil take fuel consumption. Two derrick-booms were slung overside and their goose-necks dropped into sockets riveted on to the ship's plating ready for them. The booms had lifts and braces so that the submarine could be moored between them, and lie there snugly alongside without danger of some sudden western ocean swell rolling the steamer down on the top of her. Oil hoses were ranged, pumps given a trial run, hoists rigged, and all made coolly ready.

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The Norwegian captain had little to say in all this. The wireless man took over complete charge, and the ship's company were given to understand that here was the complete Prussian Naval Officer who could and would deal out death, if necessary, without an afterthought. He, at any rate, would have a revolver handy somewhere, and Captain Kettle—the ship's pantryman—puzzled as to where the man had it stowed. But the *Grüda's* crew regarded the Prussian wit's bovine unconcern.

Suddenly out of the near horizon the submarine leapt into sight at nineteen knots. She swooped down, turning in a narrow circle, and made fast cleverly to the booms that were waiting for her. Captain Kettle mentally took off his cap to the smartness of her seamanship.

She was an uncouth devil of a vessel with low freeboard and ugly excrescences along her decks, especially amidships, and she bristled with dirty, scrubble-bearded men who knew exactly what to do, and did it at the double. Six of them came on to the tanker, all shod with especially heavy knee-boots, which they used mercilessly on the Norwegians—particularly on the boot-using mates and skipper—whenever the speed of work was not entirely up to their standard. One with Zeiss binoculars round his neck was bowed up to the

foremast truck, and swung there on a bo's'n's chair, and peered round, and declared the seas empty. The rest of them saw to passing the oil hose, and to whipping up Whitehead torpedoes out of the carrier's hold, and gingerly transshipping these across to their own craft.

A grimy stoker crept out of the alleyway into the pantry and hissed a whisper into the pantryman's ear. "Good God, man, you see what they are doing. Are we going to do nothing?"

The pantryman cocked his red-pointed beard truculently. "What can we do?" he snapped.

"Go and bash in an end of one of those Whiteheads, and send the whole outfit of us to hell together. I'll do the trick. It's worth it."

"The torpedoes won't have their heads filled. They'll do that after transshipment."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"To use your phrase, sir, you must 'wait and see.'"

"Oh, to the devil with your politics," said Carnforth, M.P., and flung off in a black rage.

Once from the look-out at the tanker's masthead came an alarm (in German, of which Captain Kettle could only grasp the general sense), and work went on at a still more furious pace, though the submarine was ready to slip and be away at a moment's notice. As certain people, on their

friend, the neutral, seemed restive, they cast loose the two 3-inch guns they carried forward and aft, and trained them point blank on the *Grüda's* bowels. They were unmannerly brutes, these Germans, but in the business of war they were eminently business-like. Their motto was, "Win somehow, anyhow. Explain away awkward details afterwards."

The Whiteheads got handed down without mishap, but an unpleasant incident came about through the passing across of a 3-inch shell. Either one of the maltreated Norwegians set the fuse for short time, or there was a jar that upset the nerves of the high explosive inside, or some other trifle outside the ordinary routine occurred; the present deponent is ignorant of the details; but, anyway, the result was an explosion, half-hearted perhaps, still, anyway vehement enough to kill outright two German sailors, and seriously damage a third.

A crisp order spat out from the conning-tower, and all three were booted over into the Atlantic, and work went on in its smooth routine. The officers of the submarine had no use for either the dead or the inefficient.

When they were filled up with fuel and ammunition, they demanded food and drink—especially drink. The Norwegian captain had no order for this, and objected. A second afterwards that

Norwegian captain was focussing both his eyes down the black hole which exists in the middle of a revolver barrel. Expert collectors raided pantry and storerooms, and the *Grüda's* pantryman helped them. The pantryman was thinking hard, but didn't see his way to resist just then. The pantryman was addressed in German, but not having a good command of that tongue, replied in fluent Arabic, which he thought at the moment was less dangerous than English. In the distance a rugged black-faced stoker danced and raged, but the pantryman declined to see him.

Finally, when their ship was full of fuel, and munitions, and provisions, the Germans decided they might stretch their limbs and their lungs. They were taking no chances, but as their man at the *Grüda's* foremast head reported the sea all round as still clear, they hauled up the chief engineer's two-and-a-half octave harmonium on deck, and a professional pianist amongst them played waltz tunes. The rest danced. They danced heavily (being shod with knee boots), and danced ungracefully, but they danced with energy, as beseems men who were keeping in condition entirely for the good of their Empire. When they slackened at all in their dance, one or other of their officers beat them brutally with a knotted rope's end.

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The German officers sat on the engine-room skylight, and drank Milwaukee beer, which was the only liquor other than water remaining in the *Grüda's* store, and smoked their own cigars. They drank this thin lager to the waltz music at such a rate that the cabin steward had to call up his pantryman to help open the bottles; and they sat till they had finished the stock; their crew, be it well understood, being still employed in that heavy athletic dance.

When no further bottles were forthcoming the German captain gave the order for all of his hands to get aboard, and followed them himself, nimbly enough, the submarine lying on the port side of the supply ship, and curtseying decorously between the booms to which she was tethered fore and aft.

The Norwegian captain, insulted, flushed, and ashamed, mounted to his own bridge, and there was present with him also just the quartermaster at the wheel. On the decks of the submarine men were battening down the hatches which received the Whiteheads, the stores, and the petrol. Other hands were standing-by the head and stern-fasts. She was quite ready to be off again on her cheery game of murder.

The German captain, somewhat gravid with the beer, climbed by the outside beackets to the

deck of the conning-tower, and then gave the word to "let go foward."

At that moment Captain Kettle arrived on the *Grüda's* upper bridge. There was no mistaking him for the ship's pantryman, and the Norwegian captain did not so mistake him. He limped (because of his carpenter-made wooden leg), he was dressed in steward's kit, but the Norwegian's words were: "What do you here, captain?"

There was no time for argument—or for losing the benefit of the surprise. Captain Kettle threw the Norwegian skipper violently down the ladder, laid out the quartermaster with a scientific jab on the point of the jaw, and slammed down the telegraph of the starboard engine to "Full speed ahead."

The German captain of the submarine, to give him his due, saw the whole thing as soon as it was done—and two seconds of time covered it from first to last—and acted on the tick. He also ordered "Full speed ahead," and though his engines (being Diesels) were a shade slower in responding, the mass of his vessel was far less than that of the *Grüda*, and he got weigh on her far more swiftly. In the meantime he whipped out an automatic pistol, and bombarded Kettle with vicious energy. That small mariner, however, had the height

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of the *Grüda's* bridge in comparison with the low freeboard of the submarine in his favour, and with the wheel in his hands as soon as his tanker gathered steerage way, had the game his own way. Steamer and submarine met nose to nose almost, as the gap between them grew smaller; and the *Grüda's* forefoot scraped down the war vessel's side, unshipping her starboard diving rudders, and disarranging her fittings generally; and then Kettle rang on both engines, and the submarine's stern sank under the pressure, and the larger ship lifted, and drove over the top of her.

The submarine's conning-tower hatch was still open, and if she had been allowed due time she would have filled and sunk. But as frequently happens at sea, the unforeseen intervened.

The *Grüda's* forefoot dinged in one of her adversary's plates, which in its turn depressed a stringer, which impinged on one of her stern torpedo-tubes. The inbending of the tube pressed home the striker of the Whitehead inside it, and Vesuvius burst forth in the Atlantic off the Irish Coast. The yell of the explosion was loud enough to split Heaven. The submarine was a mere magazine of high explosives, and the firing of the first Whitehead, in-board, touched off all the lot.

When things calmed down again there was no

## THE SUPPLY SHIP

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submarine, or trace of one, the *Grüda* was badly by the head, and obviously settling down for good, and a black-faced stoker was on the upper bridge rather hysterically demanding of high Heaven how Captain Kettle dared do all these things without consulting him. Captain Kettle from somewhere had procured a cigar, which he carried, cocked high in the starboard angle of his mouth, and from which he was smoking complacently. He was feeling that pleasant satisfaction which comes to a man after a good morning's work.

The *Grüda*, as it turned out, descended to the sea-floor much more hurriedly than anyone expected. "The forward bulkhead will keep her up," said everybody, but either she was holed aft of that, or the forward bulkhead gave—which, I do not know, and am not going to dive to the Atlantic floor to discover. Anyway, she started to sink with alarming suddenness, and the port quarter life-boat's falls proved to be rotten, and emptied out her people just before she reached the water. The starboard life-boat was lowered successfully, but would take neither Kettle nor Carnforth, though why they objected to Carnforth I fail to see. However, the wireless man, who said he was a Prussian, and who carried a revolver (and who showed it to them then) declined to allow their

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coming on board, and that starboard boat rowed off in sulky silence.

"We'd better haul up the other boat and provision her," said Carnforth, who was always cool at sea, even if he was invariably ignorant of seafaring matters.

"I'm afraid there's no time, sir," said Captain Kettle politely. "If you will follow me down the falls we'll try and unhook and then swim away before this steamboat founders and sucks us down with her. Incidentally, when the cold water gets to the boilers they will collapse, and may blow her up any minute."

"Oh Lord, man, don't wait to talk," said Carnforth, and slid down one fall whilst Kettle gained the water by the other. And promptly they both swam at the full of their speed away from the danger spot, though when the man with two legs found he was distancing the man with one, he pretended tiredness and eased his pace.

But the tanker was not long in her agony. She blew out her decks quite decorously, reared to the vertical, and sank with hardly a bubble.

"And now," said Captain Kettle, "about-ship, sir, please, and we'll try and right that boat."

So back they swam, heavily and wearily (being more than middle-aged men), and reached the boat

some five minutes after each had decided he could swim no longer, but would hang on just to encourage the other man. They clung to the boat's life-lines, panting, half delirious with fatigue and chill, but with pluck and stamina pulling them gradually round.

At last, just as Carnforth was beginning to put in a suggestion that they should try and right the boat, there came a fresh surprise.

"*W-s-s-h. Sp-l-o-s-sh!*"

"*W-s-s-h. C-r-r-ash!*"

"My Great James!" said Kettle, "that's shell-fire," and worked himself round to the other side of the boat to see further. Then he came back again, and— "Keep your head down, sir," said he.

"There's another Dutch submarine turned up."

"What's she firing at?"

"Those wretched Sowegians in the starboard lifeboat. She's sunk the lot of them, and now she's motoring away."

"The brutes! Their own friends, too! The unspeakable brutes. My God, that's the way Germans make war!"

"Dead men tell no tales, sir. They thought those Sowegians knew too much. We can thank the Lord, sir, they saw this boat was wrong side up. We'll wait, if you please, till they're hull-down before we try to right her."

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How that port lifeboat was turned on to her keel again, baled, and navigated to the distant Irish Coast, I do not propose to record here, as there is another tale connected with it which would be too long in the telling. But a conversation between Captain Kettle and Mr. Carnforth whilst they were thawing themselves out with bad whisky and a peat fire after their landing hangs in my mind.

"Is there a telegraph office here, Pat?" asked the M.P.

"There is then, yer 'annar," said the landlord.

"It's the best in Ireland when the lines is working."

"Good, then, I'll get off a wire."

"I'll be obliged, sir," said Captain Kettle, "if you'd let me send a message first. I want to get early word to my wife to keep quiet about that use of Quale's Sheep Dip for roses. It is highly important she shouldn't talk on the subject. I want you to understand this means a lot to me, sir."

Carnforth was shaken with a gust of laughter.

"Oh, go on, man, by all means," he said at last.

"I was only going to tell the Admiralty about our bag, and they'll probably want to hang us for piracy and for doing what they hadn't the sense to think of. But don't you worry about me. Your message is far more important."

## II

### THE MINE-LAYER

**T**HE *Grimsby Twins'* otter trawl was down, scratching up fish from the Dogger below, and John Henry Shepherd, the elder of the twins was smoking in the wheelhouse, and keeping the little steamboat approximately on her course. Arthur Cleethorpes Shepherd, his brother, and the only other hand on deck, was seated with his back against the main hatch, reading war news from a stale copy of the *Grimsby Gazette*.

To them came the strains of ecclesiastical music from the cabin skylight, proving that Captain Shepherd was awake, and was working his way through Messrs. Moody and Sankey's "Collection of Hymns." The steam trawler *Grimsby Twins'* harmonium had a compass of two octaves only, but Captain Shepherd was a resourceful man, and when his music encroached beyond these narrow limits, he whistled the missing notes with his own

lips, very efficiently. Mixed with the music that came from the skylight there drifted a fine aroma of onions, hinting that tea (with fried cod sounds) was under weigh, and that presently the watch would be changed.

"'Otc fresh i' t' paper, Clee?" called out John Henry.

"Aye, they're asking for more hands for them trawlers they've set on at raine-sweeping. I wish to God the old man would let us go."

"Well, he won't," said the elder twin in a husky whisper. "Said only just now when I took the wheel from him that all war was a crime and a mistake, and recommended me when she was steering easy to put up a bit of prayer to be delivered from the sin of wanting to chip in. I've a durn good mind—— Hey, Clee, what's that packet coming out of the mist ahead there?" He grabbed the binoculars from their box, and clapped them to his eyes. "It's a Grimsby man GY. 4696! Why there's no such number."

"Looks to me more like a Dutch boat."

"Looks to me like that Lowestoft craft, the *Bishop Something*."

"*Bishop Argles*. That's her. You can tell by that fancy vane Old Man Argles shipped on his fore-truck. But she's strangely mucked up.

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Those Lowestoft fellows have the queerest ideas of fishing. What for have they got that big derrick rigged aft?"

\* \* \* \* \*

It was at this moment the steam trawler *Grimsby Twins* struck the mine. She had missed it with her bows by a good fathom, but the drag of the heavy trawl warp over the quarter made her gait somewhat crab-wise, and with the help of a lifting swell she dropped down on the infernal machine almost amidships, so that one of its strikers was rammed thoroughly home by a downward blow from her starboard bilge keel.

Captain Shepherd's first intimation of disaster was being plucked from the harmonium stool by some unseen force, and flung violently against the cabin roof. The yell of the explosion, and the crash of smashing steel and iron came to him next, and by the time he had fallen back to the cabin floor, the stink of the yellow melinite fumes was making him cough and choke. The companion-way was gushing wreckage and seawater, and he reached the deck by a scramble through the skylight.

His vessel was in two halves. Already the forward half was cruising away drunkenly by itself, with four dazed fishermen hanging on to the

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windlass; the poop end was sinking visibly; and in the churning water between the two, there swirled about the dead and shattered bodies of his two twin sons, one of them headless.

Ice was hot compared with the trawler's skipper's coolness then. In an instant of time all that he loved in the world, and all that he owned in the world was plucked from him. He did not whimper; he did not, after the manner of his kind, bombard heaven and all beneath it with furious curses; instead he gazed with stolid eyes at the other trawler looming through the mist ahead, and nodded slowly.

"It's what they said," he muttered, "and what I wouldn't believe—mines sown broadcast over the North Sea by those dog-begotten Dutchmen. O God forgive me for not believing before what the British Government said, and give me life to pay back a bit of what I owe. Amen."

After which prayer he jumped overboard and swam to the *Grimsby Twins'* boat, which had been blown clear and floated undamaged. Then he clambered into her, and set about rescuing those of his men who still floated about on wreckage.

\* \* \* \* \*

The council of war which decided the fate of some 3,000 men, and (it is said) no less than five

German ships of war, took place in the trawler's jolly boat some twenty minutes later. There were seven men on board of her, including Captain Shepherd, as survivors of the fishing steamer's complement, and two of them were wounded, one badly. Amongst them, also wet and miserable, and with his fur stained yellow by the explosive, was Joe, the trawler's cat.

"I suppose most of you think that good old Grimsby's the place we want to see next?" began Captain Shepherd.

"You pet," said Olssen, the Third Hand.

"I'm no' sure," said McCrae, Chief Engineer, looking hard at his superior officer.

"You're thinking of Jimmy, Mac?" suggested Captain Shepherd.

"I am, Cap. He was ma' sister's son."

"And he's now down—or parts of him are—amongst the cod on the Bank below. Olssen, your brother's not here, either?"

"*Nein.*"

"Nor your boy, Dick?"

"He was smashed to a pulp, with young Olssen by the winch falling on them," said old Dick. He clutched at a sob in his throat. "A splendid lad he was, too, the young beggar. And there were your two pups and all, skipper. I saw them go

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out, too, in the middle of that stinking yellow smoke. We've always been a bit of what you might call a family ship. Very comfortable, too, and no trouble ever that meant anything. I'm sorry them cod sounds I was frying for you was wasted, chaps."

Captain Shepherd nodded to the compliment, and then hit the gunwale a hard blow with his fist to call the meeting to business. "Look here, men. We've all suffered, and we've got to get busy if we're going to show ourselves better than Joe and do anything besides meauling. I'll own up I've been a man with a wrong idea. I've been led away by a discourse once given in our chapel which said that at bottom the Dutchmen were fellers just like ourselves, and only wanted a bit of argument and some prayers to make them reasonable. That's wrong. What they want is hell, and I'm the man to give it them. Do you come in on the usual share terms as arranged for this fishing fleet?"

"If we were fitted as a man-o'-war," said McCrae cautiously, "I'd be wi' ye on the nod." He indicated with the wave of a hand the heavily-built boat that carried them lumberingly over the fog-covered swells. "This is all I can see beyond the end of ma' neb at present. But perhaps you've a scheme, Cap?"

"Aye," said Captain Shepherd heavily, "I have what you might call a strategy in my head. Man and boy I've fished the Dogger (with short holidays in the Iceland seas) these forty years, and I know it, sea-bank and sca-top, better than most. I know the ways of the cod, I know the thoughts of the men that fish them, and I know the tracks of the shipping, come fog, come fine, as a North Sea fisherman should. I got but one short look at yon spawn of Beelzebub that was laying those mines from Tommy Argles' boat—I bet some language came out when they cut Tommy's throat, by the way—and she was steering North an' by East to half a tick-tack. Now do you see the scheme?"

They didn't.

Captain Shepherd went on patiently to explain. "They'll lay one line of mines across the ship track from South to North, and then when they've covered it they'll turn and lay another parallel to it, so that a ship that misses one line will be gathered by the next.

McCrae held up a brown hand and spat into it. "That's sound metaphysics. Cap it's a pleasure to listen to ye. Go on."

"We'll pull out West from here; we'll with God's help miss the mines in the first line—and fellers

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you can take it from me, He will help us—and we'll wait for Mister Blessed Murder-Spreader as he comes down on his next trip. Then we'll get aboard and attend to his people, and when we've done that, I'll tell you what we'll do next. Any objections?"

They looked at one another thoughtfully, and conned the matter over. Your East Coast fisherman is always a mightily independent person, and sees to it that his private opinion has full weight. But there was no amendment, and the heavy boat was got under weigh.

Captain Shepherd, wooden-faced and silent, tucked his arm over an oar in the stern notch and steered. As utensils of navigation, he had a watch-chain compass, a big silver watch, and his nose, and he held a course through the fog as unfalteringly as a keeper might tread across familiar heather. Thrice they saw steam trawlers from Hull and Grimsby and Scarboro'; once they were hailed; but they made no attempt to break their voyage, or even to give hint of its purpose. They were all of them silent except Joe, the cat. Joe having less control than his betters, spat and swore aloud as he licked the yellow melinite stain from his salty fur.

"We don't want the Navy butting in," Captain

Shepherd had said as an afterthought; "we'll make this a fisherman's job; and if afterwards they say we're a pack of pirates, well, I hope they'll have to own we're efficient pirates. The dead were our dead, and we're going to arrange the funeral ceremony without help or interference. Spell-o at those oars. Two of you other fellers take a turn now."

The mine-laying trawler crossed their track on its return trip exactly as Captain Shepherd had calculated, and though her look-out saw them and commented, the officer in charge made no attempt to slow down or pick them up. But some such courtesy as this had been anticipated; the boat lay in the steamer's track, stern to bow, and at full pressure on her oars; and under Captain Shepherd's handling she presently rasped down the trawler's side. Men who spend their lives boarding fish on to the carriers in all varieties of North Sea weather are impossible to beat at that sort of game.

What followed was by no means massacre. The seven men tumbled over on to the mine-elutted decks without resistance, certainly, the cat following them; they had two iron belaying pins amongst them, and quickly picked up other weapons; but if it had not been for the surprise of their

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boarding they would have been driven over into the sea whence they came in quick time. But the surprise gave them the first start, and their toughness and the wild ferocity of their attack did the rest.

Captain Shepherd found an axe, and wielded it bloodily. They cleared the main deck under a spray of revolver bullets from an officer in the pilot house. Captain Shepherd went for him, ignoring the revolver, and got the axe well home on his right shoulder blade. He clove him through to the middle. There was no asking for or giving quarter on the English side, and when two or three of the Germans threw up their hands in surrender they were merely clubbed and slung overside as though they had been dog-fish.

The invaders cleared the decks of Germans, and then went below to fore-castle, engine-room and cabin, and killed there, leaving only two alive. These two were English and in the stokehold, and heard hard things from their saviours about Englishmen who even under duress work for Germans and do not kill them. "So back to your kennel, you whipped pups," said Captain Shepherd at the end of his discourse on their personal appearance and behaviour, "and keep a full head of steam. We're away to the S'uth'ard and East'ard

on pressing business. . . . Are you other fellers all sound? Where's Albert Henry?"

"Albert Henry got a bayonet in his stomach, and clapped his arms roun'd the Dutchman that put it there and jumped with him into the ditch."

"And I think Hull Harry died just as we boarded. He must have been worse hurt than we guessed at when the *Twins* blew up."

"That leaves five," said Captain Shepherd. "You, Olssen, take the wheel. Your course is Sou' East 'n by East. Mac, get below and learn up the coffee mill, and rub the fear o' God into those putty-livers that are firing her. And the rest of you swill down decks. I'm going to worry out how those mines are launched, and I want a clear head for it, so don't any of you fellers disturb me. . . . Oh yes, and there's one other thing. One of you hunt up a Dutch ensign: they're bound to have one aboard: and get it bent on to the signal halliards and ready to break out if any of their cruisers overhaul us."

The fishermen obeyed these orders none too promptly. They were all of them more or less cut and scratched, and to start with they gave one another rough first aid. Then (at Dick's suggestion) they raided galley and larder and pocketed a meal; and then (with food to refer

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to between whiles) they started to work, and each, according to the North Sea habit, set himself to do two men's toil.

In the meantime Captain Shepherd, who had never in his life seen a floating sea-mine, either on a ship's deck or elsewhere, set to work to puzzle out from the mass of boiler-iron and steel cable before him now he could sink, burn, and destroy his hated enemies without blowing up the steam trawler *Bishop Argles* in the process. After he had done a given amount of execution he did not in the least mind what became of her or for that matter of himself or his crew. He was a man now entirely reckless, and if he gave a thought for his mates, concluded they were the same. He had received irreparable injury: the bigger injury he could do to any German in return, the happier he would die: that was all.

The ravelling out of the plan for a fleet of floating sea-mines is no job for an amateur. But Captain Shepherd was not the ordinary layman in this matter. He was a North Sea fisherman, which is as much as to say that he was mechanic, sailor-man, carpenter and rule-of-thumb scientist combined, and he picked up intelligently the details of mooring tackle, riding cables, depth adjustment, striker adjustment, and all the rest of the

intricate detail. He reasoned it out piecemeal from A to Z, and back again tediously from Z to A, slurring over nothing, concentrating thoughtfully on every doubtful point till it became entirely clear. Now and again Joe bumped a sympathetic nose against his leg, and he always pulled the cat's tail gratefully in recognition of the attention.

The North Sea too was kind to them in being comfortably covered with fog. In fine weather Captain Shepherd was no better navigator than any other man who has grasped the truths of Norie's Epitome. But in a thick grey blanket of fog, even amongst the fisher skippers there were few to equal him. With a sluggish compass on a pole, a handful of tallow smeared into the bottom of a lead, and a nose to sniff the wet air, he could feel his way from any one part of the North Sea waste to any other part with unfaltering accuracy.

At intervals a hand would bring the lead to him, and he would examine and sniff at the arming. —“H'm, sand and small shells, and one of them brown creepy things, and that crisp brass wire smell. We are just off the Sou' East corner of that hole where I carried away a trawl-beam in Nought-one. Tell Olssen to give her half a point more starboard, and take another cast of the lead in twenty minutes, and if there's black sand with

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these same shells, you needn't bother me for another hour. I guess that half point will just overtake the drift."

So on across his chosen line to the German coast. Captain Shepherd did not trouble with charts. He carried an accurate map of the contours of the North Sea floor in his head, and had resourcefulness enough for all other requirements.

Once he was hailed by a hurrying German destroyer, but had backed away into the fog with a ported helm by the time she had come to look for him, and so escaped inquiries. But the incident gave him an idea. He went to the engine room skylight, and hailed down to one of his impressed stokers.

"Hey, you putty-feller there, what did the Dutchmen do with your fishing gear when they took you?"

"Slung it overboard, sir."

"All of it?"

"All of it except the warps."

"Did they jettison the otter boards?"

"Yes, sir."

"But didn't Captain Argles carry a spare?"

The two stokers consulted. "Yes sir, there's a spare otter board used as a floor to one of the fish boxes."

"Good," said Captain, and proceeded to get it on deck. "We'll call the depth here twenty-six fathoms, and we'll shackle one of these devil's machines on to the otter board with enough drift of painter to keep it just under the surface when we're towing it out a quarter of a mile a-beam of us. How's that, fellers? Take that mine there marked 32, that's next under the derrick, and handle it like eggs or it'll go off 'pop,' and that'll be the end of our tale, and our job'll be left undone. By Crumbs! fellers, be careful. Keep it in your heads that we've a big stack of these Dutchmen to kill yet before our own time comes."

Success came that very night. From out of the mist and the darkness, a German light cruiser came pelting up at a five and twenty knot gait, with guns nosing round for a prey, and searchlights blazing. She sighted the trawler, and hove to with engines working, full-speed astern, athwart of the *Bishop Argles'* trawl warp, bawling questions.

"Yaw! Yaw!" shouted Captain Shepherd in polite response, "No comprenney." And in the meanwhile Mr. McCrae had set the deck winch going, and hove in on the trawl warp till he drew the mine and its murderous strikers into place. It hit the cruiser squarely beneath her bilge,

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amidships. It blew her half in two; it exploded some if not all of her boilers, and these (or the mine) exploded her magazines. Heaven yelled to the din of the blasts. The fog lit to a flaming yellow. The *Bishop Argles* rocked and tossed like a cork in a flooded gutter with the shock, and when the reeking smoke of the melinite blew to him, Joe, the cat, spat and swore with excited frenzy.

"Good puss then," said Captain Shepherd. "Hates a Dutchman, doesn't she, as much as any other Christian would? Get the slack of that trawl warp hove in Mac, will you, and then we'll steam on again. Back to your course, Olssen."

"You're going to pick none of them up then, Skipper?" asked Dick. "Their own boats will have been smashed to sticks."

"I will if they'll give me back my boys—and yours Dick."

"Aye, I thought you'd be that way," said the old fisherman with a sigh. "Here's a sandwich for you, Skipper. You missed your dinner, so you'll need it. The meat's some kind of liver sausage with black things in it, but I fried it with onions, so you'll never notice the taste. And here's a mug of good hard-boiled tea."

"Thank you, Dick. Now go and take a spell at the wheel and send Olssen to me aft here. And

Dick, if he doesn't seem to want to come, or if he shows awkward in anyway, throw him over into the pond."

"Aye," said the burly old man, "I was expecting that too, Skipper. Olssen's a Dutchman of sorts himself."

Olssen came, and was sharply bidden to stand ten feet from his interviewer. "And now, my man," said Captain Shepherd, "as the only feller who speaks German on this packet, why the whiskers didn't you palaver that brass-edged Dutchman when I told you to? Frightened?"

"*Nein*, it was nod dat exactly."

"Kind o' forgot they murdered your brother a few hours ago did you?"

"*Mein Gott, nein.*"

"Look here my feller, what countryman are you? An Olssen should be some sort of a Souwegan."

"*Deutschland über alles,*" murmured Olssen softly, and rushed. Captain Shepherd stepped slightly aside, but left one heavy carpet-slipped foot behind him. Olssen struck wildly, hit nothing, tripped over the foot, and tumbled over the rail into the North Sea: where he remained.

"They're everywhere, those Dutchmen," commented Captain Shepherd patiently, and cut

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himself tobacco. "They have no feeling for a brother that's been killed or for anybody else. They'll do with a lot of weeding out. I must weed."

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It was dark again when the *Bishop Argles* entered the Heligoland Bight, and she was steaming without lights. Furthermore her engine-room and cabin skylights were covered with tarpaulins, and the binnacle light was muffled so that not the smallest ray could escape seaward. The clothing of her people was dried by now, and Captain Shepherd's carpet slippers showed their colours in full brilliancy. A more desperate venture than the one they were set upon, it would be impossible to find, but none of the bipeds showed emotion. Fishermen are not a demonstrative lot at any time, and these few survivors of what was once a happy family ship were perhaps dulled with grief, and anyway had decided that it was worth dying to encompass a certain ambition against the enemy, and there was an end of it. So they ate, drank, kept watches, and behaved as normal fishermen should behave.

Joe, the cat, was the exception. Joe complained personally and individually to each of the crew in turn (except of course the two pariahs in the stoke-

hold) and had his neck tickled or his tail pulled in good-tempered toleration. Everybody liked Joe, but nobody was going to be worried too much about his obvious forebodings. He went to McCrae last of all, as that excellent person came up to cool off at the fiddle door. Mr. McCrae was wiping grease from his hands and face with a wad of cotton waste, and thriftily transferring it to his boots.

"Fey," he said to Dick, who had been trying to tempt the cat with a bone. "Fey. That's what ails the puir beastie. I thought second sight of that kind was confined to humans. Here's a proof to the contrary. It would be a vera' interesting topic to write an article on for the *E'mbro' Review* if ever we get hame again, which we shalln't. Dick, there was an eye in that egg you fried for ma' breakfast this morning. I'll trouble you to pick the meaty bits out in the future. They're ower rich for ma' stomach."

A new danger cropped up as they neared their goal. The British Navy both on the water and below it, though mostly below it, was keeping watch and ward on the German ships that were cooped up inside. Captain Shepherd instinctively decided that the British Navy would not accept him as an ally on any terms whatever. He felt

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the point of view to be narrow-minded in the highest degree, but saw no means just then of changing it. He had no time at the moment to stop and argue an ethical point with the British Navy. So he did his best to avoid conversation with any of its units.

Twice, smoky destroyers sighted him, and turned in to speak, but the fog held his friend, and his old tactics of going astern on a swerving helm carried him out of reach. He chuckled as one of them let off a rapid stream of gun fire at some other object which they mistook for the trawler amongst the sea-mists.

But it was the submarines that worried Captain Shepherd most. A hand reported "There's a drainpipe cruising alongside us to starboard, Skipper."

Well, there it was, an insignificant periscope, with a trifling wake of white water behind it, and nothing to show if it was British or German, or that matter Venezuelan. There would be a hull down below too, twice as big as the *Bishop Argles* and full of men only too keen to interfere with his righteous work.

Captain Shepherd at last got seriously annoyed. His red face inside its frame of grizzled whiskers deepened to a fine plum colour. "Hard a port

with that helm," he ordered. "Hard over with it now—yes, and steady on that. I'll make that chap dive, or I'll scrape his deckplates."

And dive is what the submarine promptly did. Her periscope slid under water as though it had been pulled down by a string, and the little steamboat lumbered over her without touching, and drove ahead down the North Sea without scathe from her torpedoes. Perhaps they thought she was an ordinary blundering trawler, and it was an even chance whether she was their own friend or an enemy ship. Captain Shepherd could not tell her captain's thoughts. He did not even know if the submarine was a British or a German craft. But they saw her no more. Perhaps, again, when once more she got her eye above water and could see, the *Bishop Argles* had vanished in the fog. There is a large element of chance in modern sea-warfare. Anyway Captain Shepherd and his fellow fishermen were satisfied. They were fully decided that none of them liked submarines

But it was to one of these sub-aqueous craft—and the probabilities point to its being German—that they owed their pilotage through the enemy's most dangerous defences. A periscope appeared out of the gloom on their starboard hand, and converged in to their course ahead,

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"Follow that feller," said Captain Shepherd to Dick who was in the wheelhouse, and applied himself to a study of the seascape through his night glasses.

"Appears 's if he's trolling for mackerel," observed Dick, as presently the periscope swerved off on a new course.

"Follow every turn he makes, to a fathom," said Captain Shepherd. "We're going through a hedge of mines just now, and I shouldn't like to spoil any of them. So as he's got the chart of how they're laid, and we haven't, we'll just keep narrowly in his wake. But as there may be other Dutchmen wanting to use this same gap in the hedge after us, I reckon we'll just put a bramble or two in it that may scratch them. Mac?"

"Yes, Cap."

"Don't bawl so loud, Mac. That drainpipe affair ahead there may have ears as well as an eye for all we know. Just get aft, and dump in them boilers numbered 32 and 37 over the counter as quick as you like. The inoorings are ready shackled on at the right depth, so there's nothing to delay you."

"Right, Cap," said the engineer and with the help of a couple of hands set about his work. He spat on each mine for luck as they lowered it over the stern.

"Amazing queer dance this chap is taking us," said Dick, with his eyes on the faint phosphorescence of the periscope's wake. He sawed hard at the wheel, with a busy clatter of cogs. "There you are again. Can you take her through this dance backwards again d'ye think, Skipper?"

"No, Dick. For one reason Mac's sealing up the hole behind us. For another we're—we're going into harbour, Dick. We shall see your boy and mine inside an hour from now. D'ye mind?"

"That's all right Skipper. You and I have been good shipmates for a long time now, and we never differed on anything that mattered. We shalln't differ on this anyway. I'm damn sorry I cooked so badly for you sometimes, that's all."

"Only person I'm really sorry about is poor old Joe. He's no special quarrel against these Dutchmen, and he knows what's coming as well as any Christian, and hates it fit to burst himself. I did think of heading him up in a cask with a couple of pounds of meat, and setting him adrift to get a chance. But he might fall into Dutchmen's hands, and they're such cruel devils, Dick. After the way they killed my two—my two splendid—oh God damn them, Dick. Joe'll be better off if he stays aboard here and takes his gruel like the rest of us.

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"Now let me think"—He coned over in his head the bearings of the zigzag course, and mentally reckoned the length of each leg—"We shall be just over the twenty-five fathom patch, and the North East point of Heligoland will be bearing about due West, or say West 'n by North. H'm." He took a cast of the lead himself to make sure, and smiled with professional appreciation of his own skill when the depth, and the matter brought up by the arming of tallow, proved the accuracy of his mental reckoning.

"You may send her along——" he began, when the deep boom of a big syren close at hand drowned the words. It was answered by another, lighter in note, on the trawler's other side, and two rockets sped up into the fog from two more ships ahead. He put his lips to Dick's hairy ear and bawled.

"We're right in amongst the fleet of them, and if we don't look quick, we shalln't get our work done. Gimme that wheel, and do you go aft and tell Mac to get those mines overboard and into the water as quick as he can whip them off the deck."

Somehow, and I hardly think it could have been from the submarine that unconsciously piloted them through the mine-field, the Germans had got wind of an enemy's presence, and an alarm

spread round the invisible fleet with furious noise and bustle. Syrens with long blasts and short boomed messages; search lights made the fog iridescent, but did not penetrate it; and there was all the indescribable turmoil and alarm of a great war fleet caught at anchor by an invisible destroyer that had penetrated their outer and inner defences.

The fishermen were the only people who took it coolly. They had their work to do, and did it, as though it was their daily routine. Mine after mine—German-made—was lifted from their decks and dropped into the still water astern, and Captain Shepherd in the steering pulpit leaned over the spokes of the wheel, and wove his way accurately between the loudest of the noises.

Launches and picket boats at high speed began to pant by them unseen through the fog. One of these presently fouled one of the drifting mines, and blew it up with an appalling explosion. And then some big ship got an attack of the nerves and fired into what necessarily must have been one of her own boats with every light gun she could bring to bear.

"They're beginning to pay," said Captain Shepherd at the wheel. "Oh Lord, give me time to send in more of the bill, and make them pay at

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least half what's owing." He glanced over his shoulder at the after deck—"Mac."

"Yes, Cap."

"When you get to the last two of them boilers, hang one over each quarter, and tell me."

"Right," said McCrae and waved a hand.

Other spurts of firing burst out, and then there was a crash as some launch's boiler exploded to a shell, and the shrill scream of hurt men.

"The Dutchmen will call this a raid by the whole British Fleet in to-morrow's papers," commented Captain Shepherd. "They'll never own up they've been shooting into their own ships. By whiskers! I shall have to look lively now. All this firing's bringing on a breeze that'll clear the fog. Yes, Mac?"

"They're all over in the ditch, Cap, bar those last two. I've slung one on either quarter, as you said."

"Thank you, Mac," The wheel went over and the *Bishop Argles* headed for the line of invisible ships, where the noise of defence was loudest.

They sighted her when she was a hundred yards away, and saluted her with a very tornado of fire. Her funnel was shorn off close to the fiddley top by a shell from a great gun, which did not explode there, but acted against a friend in the

further line. Rifle bullets and small shells from quick firers swept over her like a hail storm, and a score of heavier missiles skated along her rusty iron sides. But she was end-on, and so as a target she was small, and there is no doubt that the gunners were scared and nervous. The German at the range and the German in action are two very different marksmen.

Normally, at ten knots, that hundred yards run should have taken about one-third of a minute, but some of the shells had penetrated between wind and water and the trawler was sinking fast, and dropping pace every second.

"Go on, old girl," Captain Shepherd urged, "H'ep now, just another score of fathoms, and that's all I ask from you. Joe, you brute, get off my shoulder, or don't claw."

The little steamer with her engines by a marvel untouched, and with her burden of mines by a greater marvel unexploded, drew up to the great battle cruiser with still some free-board showing, and then Captain Shepherd rammed his helm hard-a-port. Her bow almost scraped along the war ship's flank, and her stern swung in. There was a lull in the big gun's fire as they could not be depressed enough to get their sights on her, and the riflemen were firing from the hip and hurting

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their friends across the way. And then the star-board quarter of the *Bishop Argles* swung in against the big cruiser's side just below the forward barbettes, and the mine was cracked between them, and a volcano burst forth that rivalled Etna.

Gun ammunition blew up on board of her, and then a magazine. Boilers caught the infection, and then more gun ammunition, and more magazines. The huge ship blew to pieces piecemeal, and sank compartment by compartment. But she went to the sea floor none the less efficiently. And she was one of the biggest cruisers on the world's navy list. As for the trawler, she was spread as mere scum on the troubled waters of the Heligoland Bight.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now this ought to be the end of the tale. But history compels me to record that Captain Shepherd still resides in England. Odd to relate, he seems well off. In his house is an enlarged photograph of two young men, curiously alike, and in that wooden attitude affected by fishermen when they face the camera. It is framed simply in oak, but the frame is rotatable. It is studded thickly with curious bronze spikes, which the intelligent observer will recognize, after thought, as once

having been carried on the helmet of German infantry men, at the rate of one spike one man.

There are seventy-six spikes round the frame.

A queer-looking tabby tom cat, with one ear missing, and a foreleg that has been broken and badly mended limps round the garden with Captain Shepherd. If you shake anything yellow at this cat, he spits at you.

But how these latter things came to pass cannot be related here. They belong to another tale.

Underneath the portraits is a newspaper cutting, also framed, which runs thus :—

*"New York.* Berlin reports by wireless that a British destroyer flotilla made a determined raid on a German fleet last night, off Heligoland. The British loss was thirteen destroyers sunk and three captured. Their loss in men was very heavy. The Germans had one unimportant cruiser slightly damaged."

### III

## COTTON

**T**HE trouble about this tale is that the best bits may not be written. If they were written, and put in print, I personally should be clapped in gaol. Of course, in the good cause of enlightening the public (at so much per reader) I might be expected with reason, at any rate in theory, to welcome gaol or worse. But this would not be the end. The book in which the dangerous article appeared would be suppressed promptly. It would merely be a case of martyrdom without result. So the very much expurgated tale may be given (without prejudice) as follows:—

The man who brought the whole thing about was an actor.

About his acting powers I can say nothing, never having seen him on the boards, and being unwilling to take his own word for his histrionic powers. But about his personal appearance there was no doubt. Young Arthur Hunter saw him first coming up the road to the farm.

"Grandfather," said he, "there's a man coming up from the road."

"Ah," said Captain Kettle from behind the *Craven Herald*

"And Grandfather, he's—he's an actor."

"Mind you never come as low as that," said Sir Owen, stretching out a hand to hitch his wooden leg into an easier position.

"And Grandfather—Grandfather! *He's coming to the front door!*"

"I'll go myself," said Captain Kettle, getting briskly to his feet. "You stay here, boy."

The caller stood on the door-step, swept off his hat, stood bare-headed, and bowed. "Captain Sir Owen Kettle, K.C.B., I believe? I have not brought a letter of introduction, as I felt you would say it was not needed. I am Holly Holroyd."

"I don't know you, and I never heard of you."

"Then I am afraid you have been out of touch with the Profession these last two years."

"On the contrary, though retired, I take in *The Syren and Shipping* and read it from cover to cover, including advertisements, every week."

"Ah, you do not take me, Sir Owen. I meant, of course, the theatrical profession. All England that goes to a theatre knows that my 'Jasper Kay' in 'The Reptile' was the finest thing in

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juvenile leads that has ever been seen on the stage."

The sailor's red torpedo beard stuck out unpleasantly. "I've never been inside a theatre in my life. What do you want?"

"Your help and advice."

"If you go round to the kitchen door the girl will give cheese, bread, and a glass of beer."

"Thank you, Sir Owen, but this is a little premature. I hope to feel my knees under your good old mahogany whilst we compare reminiscences over your good old port a little later. Sweetly quaint old spot you've settled down in here, Sir Owen, and you can believe me when I say I'm a judge. I was land-agent to Sir Berkeley Craig before I joined The Profession. But am I not keeping you standing here too long?"

"You are. Good afternoon."

"You don't take me. I was going to suggest that you should smoke one of my prime cigars in your study—I have them specially blended and made for me in Havana, with my name printed in three colours on the band."

"I import my own cigars direct from a tobacconist in Skipton, and I'm not out to buy any 'Just-as-goodados' at the door."

"Sir Owen, you are a tough guardian of your own privacy. I see I must give you the password.

I have come to speak to you on—hist!—England.  
Ha! You get me now?"

Captain Kettle stood squarely in his doorway and nodded towards the field opposite. "That pond down there, with the ducks on it," he explained, "is deep, and you haven't told me if you can swim. If you've business, say in three words what it is. If you waste any more of my time, you'll bathe. Got that?"

"You are a man after Holly Holroyd's own heart, Sir Owen—brisk and curt and business-like. The stage, I'll admit it, leads one to rigmarole. You should have seen me in former days when I was on the Stock Exchange. But to my business, and in three words, as you say. "Do these thrill you? Cotton; Germany; Stop?"

"Not a bit. They're in the paper every morning. If you'd a workable plan for stopping cotton, there might be something in that."

"Holly Holroyd is the one man in this Empire who has that plan. Are we observed?"

"We are. Those ducks are listening for all they're worth. Come in if you like. But if you waste my time, and I tell you I'm in the middle of a very important article on manures in the *Craven Herald*, you'll learn what a duck's life really is."

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"M'Lord, lead on," said Mr. Holroyd with simple dignity. "An I capture not your interest, may I be writ down failure and dolt."

Now, from a commencement so unpromising, it says a good deal for Mr. Holroyd's power of persuasion that he gained so tough a subject as Captain Kettle as ally through the medium of less than an hour's talk.

"This War," he said, as he got into a chair, "this War is kept going by our politicians. I suppose we're agreed on that, Sir Owen?"

Captain Kettle stared. Then he got a box of cigars from a cupboard in the wall and offered them.

"Put your finger on cotton. All propelling explosives nowadays are made from cotton. If we'd stopped all cotton going into Germany from August, nineteen fourteen, the Germans to-day wouldn't be able to fire a shot. Isn't that logic?"

"Here are matches," said the host. "Bite the end from that vegetable and light up."

"I'm not talking through my hat. I was once runner-up at a Parliamentary Election. If I'd got in, there was £1,000 a year for me so long as I voted as I was told. I got kicked out, and so remained passably honest. But you can take it

from me, Sir Owen, there's as much money in politics now as ever there was."

"That's not news. No one ever supposed any man went in for the dirty game of politics for the good of his health. Why should he?"

"Very well, then. Supposing you were in politics—I don't care on what side—and you were told that your livelihood depended on your letting Germany have cotton, wouldn't you let?"

"I'd see Germany in hell first," said Captain Kettle violently.

Mr. Holly Holroyd spread an expostulatory palm. "That's not answering my question. You merely prove you're no politician. You're merely a clean Englishman."

"Welshman."

"Well, there are clean Welshmen, too. They're showing themselves in considerable number since the war started. But there aren't enough, and they haven't the gift of talk. The politicians have the monopoly of that, and they shout the rest of the nation down and get their own way, and earn their graft. They've tons of excuses when you start to tackle them—and they keep the supply of cotton for Germany going strong. Good Lord! but for the small matter of a score of tipsy miners voting the other way, shouldn't I

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be doing the same thing myself at this moment."

"I thought you were a celebrated actor?"

"I am. I will show you my press-cutting book to prove it if you like, but as a man of the world, Sir Owen, you can't imagine I'd be an actor if I could be anything else?"

"No," Captain Kettle admitted. "That sounds true enough. Have some whisky and soda?"

Mr. Holroyd helped himself to a moderate peg, and produced a pocket book. "But, of course, I have to make a bit as I go along. I have here a schedule of all the cotton that has gone into European neutral countries over and above their normal supply. The figures are surprising. Like to see them?"

"I should not. I hate big figures."

"So do I. I made my living as a chartered accountant for a number of years, and saw enough of figures to last me the rest of my natural. But the facts are plain. As we can't tackle our paid politicians on the spot, neutral countries are the places to stop cotton in. Private individuals can do it. I know how."

"That would mean a high-class row."

"And are you scared of a row, Sir Owen?"

"By James, no," said Captain Kettle, and then bit on to his cigar and smoked furiously. He felt

that he had been letting out the secret of his own private weakness to a comparative stranger.

Mr. Holroyd sipped at his whisky, smoked for a minute, then said "Ha, ha!"

"What the mischief are you sniggering at?" inquired his host.

"Your curiosity, m'lord. You're aching to know how it could be done."

"I am," said Captain Kettle. →

It was in company with this queer adventurer then that Captain Kettle found himself attempting to make the voyage from England to a certain seaport on the continent of Europe. To his surprise he found himself stopped at the onset. Whether it was suspicion as to his motive or official incapacity he could not make out. But one thing was certain, no permission was forthcoming within a reasonable time to leave the country.

"I always knew," he commented, "that a Government Department takes ten days longer than a business office to answer an ordinary letter, but three weeks is too much. They don't say we've got to stay at home. They simply sit tight and do nothing. So if they won't give proper leave, we'll go without leave. I've not been all my life at sea without knowing sea roads. As you haven't got any shirts

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of your own, Mr. Holroyd, Lady Kettle will lend you two of mine, and you can have my other port-manteau, and, mind, don't forget those—those——”

“Call them chemicals,” suggested Mr. Holly Holroyd. “Most embracing word, chemicals. I called moonlight whisky that when I was brewing it on the strict Q.T. in the Great Smoky Mountains in North Carolina. And we'll each carry one of the popguns so as to distribute the risk, as we insurance agents say. Those pop-guns are rather the key to the situation, Sir Owen. We couldn't replace them in—on the continent. I also hope to the Lord we don't get dropped on with them on us. If any of the authorities over yonder got wise to our little game, there'd be a hanging in which we should both take a keen, personal interest.”

“Speak for yourself,” said Captain Kettle sharply. “I don't allow any goggle-eyed continental to hang me. I'm not talking through my hat either—a lot have tried. If you'll excuse me for a minute I'll just slip up and give Arthur a half dose of Horner's Perfect Cure. By the way that child has been tucking into unripe gooseberries this day, his grandmother will be treating him for appendicitis and chill on the liver to-morrow if I don't get ahead of her with Horner. Then, if

you're packed, we will drive into Grassington and catch the train."

"Right, and I'll bring down your baggage for you."

"If you could—um—contrive to forget the long package that's laid across the armchair. I'd be obliged to you."

"Certainly. But I don't quite understand. What's the scheme?"

"Well, you see," said Kettle rather uncomfortably, "it's my second-best leg. Lady Kettle wants me to take it across for general wear. It's all right for use on the farm here, but I don't mind telling you I hate wearing it before a mixed audience. It's so infernally old-fashioned. If I had forgotten it when my lady met us at the station, I'm afraid there'd be a domestic scene. If it was your fault, I don't fancy she'd say much."

It is a pity that a gap must occur in the tale here, and that the name of the steamboat that carried them, the nationality of the submarine that held them up *en route*, and most emphatically of all, the name of the river they steamed up and the port they landed at must all be rigorously censored. Captain Kettle cocked his cigar at a fierce angle and looked with a farmer's eye at the rich, flat pasture lands beyond the river's bank

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as they steamed along, and he wrote an ode (in his mind) to the local breed of cow. At the quay he played second fiddle, as per arrangement, to the flamboyant Mr. Holroyd. At a subsequent hotel he meekly signed his name (with all the outward ensigns of shame) "Professor Owen."

"My friend, the Professor, and I," Mr. Holly Holroyd announced in that nasal accent which does duty on the Continent of Europe for good United States, "the Professor and I are here on a scientific investigation for the good of mankind and on behalf of the University of Ballahassee, Tennessee. A nootral country is necessary for our researches. We have with us all the necessary chemicals, but will guarantee they make no smell. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly," said the landlord, who did not understand one word in ten. "A private sitting-room will be extra."

"Tut, tut!" said Mr. Holroyd. "You do not understand, man. We cannot work together. We must have a private sitting-room apiece, and two bedrooms, all, of course, *en suite*."

The landlord perceived the dignity of his customers, and his bows increased. "I have at your service, sirs, our Ambassadors' suite on the first *étage*."

"We will try and make that do," Mr. Holroyd condescended. "We were prepared to be cramped when we came here. In war time one puts up with war quarters and war privations. We expect even your dinner and your wines to be bad. But be quick now. We have business to do."

"And who," demanded Captain Kettle three minutes later, "who do you suppose is going to pay for all this useless splash? I won't."

"And I can't, most excellent, my lord. We'll skip all right when the time comes. But at the moment it was necessary to impress the landlord. He'd a most damnable fishy eye. As it is, he'd never dream of putting the police on to the Ambassadors' suite."

"Hum," said Captain Kettle. "Don't you dream, my lad, of landing me into anything more like this without getting leave beforehand. Now, on which part of the river front is the cotton landed?"

"Search me. I know no more about the place than the man in the moon. But after we have had an elaborate luncheon and grumbled because there are no ortolans—always have ortolans in Ballahassee, Professor—I guess we'll have a pasear and take in the town. Aren't I Amurrican to the life?"

"You sound like an Englishman who has spent one week-end in New York. And now, my lad,

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what about those precious chemicals of yours? This place is bound to be raided the minute we turn our backs, if I know anything about continental cities."

"You're right, m'lord, all the time. I've brought along a special set of obscure chemicals and bacteriological specimens for them to find. For the real stuff we must make a magazine. The question is, where?"

"That depends on the quantity and the danger of your material. You must remember you've been so mighty mysterious about it that you've never shown me so much as a specimen yet."

"Don't you worry about ideas, your Eminence. I'm brimming with them. The only trouble is cash to carry them out. If only the British Government were subsidising this expedition I could get on swimmingly. But under the circumstances, as they don't know about it, they naturally couldn't. M'lord, could you advance me fifty guilders? They'll save our necks for the time being. If I don't turn up to pay, you can screw it out of the Chancellor of the Exchequer when you get home."

Captain Kettle produced a note. "I don't know what you want it for," he observed unpleasantly, "but if it turns out afterwards you've blown it on a spree, I'll give you something that will keep you teetotal for a fortnight."

"Most Potent," said Mr. Holroyd, "your honoured trust shall not be betrayed. I return anon. But, for the Lord's sake, stick here like glue. The city reeks of German spies, and the moment we both turn our backs the rooms will be searched down to the bone. With your lordship's permission, I will now for a while take my leave."

Mr. Holroyd returned in an hour's time carrying a large brown-paper parcel, which on being opened disclosed a portmanteau of eminently continental cut. This he proceeded to decorate with the labels of hotels in Homburg, Vienna, and Monte Carlo, and to the handle he affixed a rubic which stated that it was the property of an officer well known in the Kaiser Wilhelm's service (but who was just then, so the papers said, in Russia), and that it was to be left till called for. After which he stored within it certain matters, and then deposited it in an empty bedroom on the opposite side of their passage.

"There," said he, "if that's found, everyone will think the other fellow's put it there. The servants in this pub can be estimated in tons, and they're the most muddling lot I ever struck in all my travels. No method. I've kept enough samples of our—er—chemicals in my waistcoat

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pocket for you to experiment on, m'lord, as you still seem sceptical."

"I'll have to comb your hair yet," said the little sailor reflectively. "Now just here, and before we go any further, and without any frills of talk kindly say with clearness what it is you have got."

"Fluxite tabloids and a deferred ignitor."

"What's that?"

"You see, you don't understand. I knew you wouldn't. So I absolutely must explain, and don't blame me if I get gassy over the dramatic bits. You've heard of Louvain?"

"I have."

"The Germans burnt it?"

"So I read."

"Oh, they did, all right. They'd a corps of men specially appointed for the job. Probably been drilling them for that particular enterprise since 1870. Special uniform and special swear words, all complete. Their equipment was a box of matches and a haversack of tabloids like this"—he showed a couple of small black dice balanced on the back of his hand—"Each tabloid is guaranteed to set fire to anything, from a kitchen range to a chest of drawers when touched off. It really is wonderful stuff.

"Very well, then. An intelligent Belgian found

a dozen and a half of this amiable corps hard at work. He helped them, and after a hard day's work took them to a cellar where there was some good, old champagne, and filled them up choc-a-block. Then he turned on the gas and left. Next morning he came and found eighteen good Germans and took from them their stores of fluxite tabloids for which they had no further use. He set fire to the cellar they were in, so as not to cause any unpleasantness with their friends, and got across to England with the tabloids. As he'd picked up some shrapnel in the knee on his travels, he handed the tabloids to me, and they're now in that port-manteau."

"But what's this other thing you talked of—something about deferred ignition?"

"A mere trifle, m'lord, but being a little thing of my own, I cherish it. Once I thought I'd be a chemist, and really learned quite a bit about chemistry before I chucked it. There are lots of substances which, when mixed together, produce fire, at once or sooner. There are quite a few which take their time over it; warm up to their work slowly and thoughtfully in fact; but do it none the less efficiently for all. My tabloids are the latter sort. I won't trouble you with their composition. Indeed I may as well go so far as to say that when I have

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advertised them well by our present trip—always supposing we don't get scuppered in the process—I mean to retail the recipe to the War Office people, if I can wake them out of their winter sleep. Then I shall be able to repay that fifty guilders I've soaked you in for, not to mention those two second best shirts which Lady Kettle so kindly, but so reluctantly, provided."

"Well," said Captain Kettle, "your stuff may be good and may be bad, and is probably bad, but anyway I'm not going to be satisfied till I see it tried. So come out now and we'll find where this cotton is stored."

They had not to go far in their exploration of that Continental seaport city without finding cotton. Quays, warehouses, streets even, were piled with cotton bales; trains clattered away with them over the frontier into Germany as fast as sweating men could load them; and every minute more bales were discharged from steamers fresh in from the ocean. Every bale sent into Germany meant death for ten soldiers of the Allies, but it also meant money for the thrifty neutral who passed it through his territory, money for the free and independent Southern States planter, money for the shipper, money for the broker,

money (according to Captain Kettle) for the British lawyer-politician, money in fact for so many worthy and pushing people that the mere soldier (who as often as not did not possess a vote) had naturally to go to the wall.

"My great James!" said Captain Kettle. "Here's a way to carry on war!"

"Rather surprising isn't it, we didn't ship them cordite whilst we were at it, and bag the manufacturing profit as well? It would have been quite as consistent. Do you know we are being followed?"

"Yes, by a tall party with a kaiser moustache and glasses. He came on with us as convoy when we left the hotel. He's pointed us out to four other people that I've seen during our stroll, and probably to more."

"My compliments on your wits, m'lord. You've seen more than I did. Are we going into the hotel? It's probably a trap."

"If anybody here wants trouble," said the sailor truculently, "I'm the man to provide it. Go inside. We'll dine in our rooms, and the Lord help the Dutchman who tries to interfere."

But there were men in that city as daring as Captain Owen Kettle. Half way through dinner an embarrassed waiter announced "Some visitors, chentlemen," and on his heels there pressed the

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big German with the spectacles and the upturned moustaches, and three friends. They elbowed the waiter out into the passage, and shut the door behind them.

The big German folded his arms and addressed the sailor, in good English—"You are a Britisher."

"I have always suspected it," said Kettle drily.

"And your name is not Professor Owen, but Captain Owen Kettle. We have met before, as you will remember. And now I am going to settle up for what I owe you."

"I hear you say it."

"Speak the truth. What do you want here?"

"What the hell's that to you? Get out of this room, one time, you crossed-eyed son of dog. There's the door. If you don't use that you'll be thrown through the window. Understand? I don't like your face."

Here was a touch of the Kettle of an earlier era. The modern German always had that kind of emetic effect on him. This specimen, however, was not the man to take insults calmly. He rugged out a revolver, and was plainly on the verge of shot. But a large and heavy water carafe, thrown with the full strength of Kettle's right arm, caught him fairly on the chest, where it burst like a shell. The sailor followed up the attack as quickly as he

could limp across the room, wrenched the man's revolver away, and beat the sense out of him with the butt of it.

Another, advancing to the help of this first, had his legs plucked violently from beneath him, and his head pounded against the iron curb fender till the subsequent proceedings interested him no more. Then Captain Kettle turned his eyes and looked across the room, and saw the other two intruders ranged against the wall with their hands above their heads, and Mr. Holly Holroyd menacing them with a most murderous looking carving knife and carving fork.

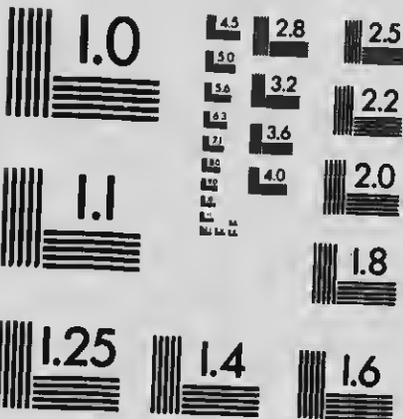
"Aren't I the complete cannibal m'lord?" he asked. "The citizen at present offering his liver to the knife is so far untouched, but the ruffian on my fork-hand has a dozen punctures in him for which he is probably none the better. Congratters on the way you killed your brace. I suppose we ought to make good Germans of these two, but my trouble is I can't kill sitters."

"You wait there, my lad," said Captain Kettle, "till I get some sheets from one of the bedrooms torn into strips, and then I'll show you how to tie up a man efficiently. It's an art. I'm also going to make fast my two in case they see fit to come to life again before they're needed, the dirty



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Dutch swine. I wonder what I once did to this party with the unpleasant moustache."

"And now," said Mr. Holroyd when the operation was ended, "we can't take it for granted that all four of these mummified gentlemen were orphans. The odds are that at any rate one of them has a dear friend who'll inquire for him. The only question is, how soon will they begin to get anxious."

"The answer to that is just under the window. There are a blessed regiment of them; the place is as German as Hamburg; and though it would tickle me finely to stay and see it out with them, business is business, and that cotton is waiting for attention before we can afford to waste time on pleasure. We must skin out of this spot, one-time."

"But how, Most Wise? According to you the doors will be guarded."

"Quite so. But the roofs won't be—yet at any rate. Get that portmanteau with the chemicals, and come along. I mapped out the course from the square below before we came in."

"Me for the cat-act on the tiles," said Mr. Holroyd cheerfully.

"And don't use that low-down theatre talk, or you'll be getting my boot into you. I'll not have my ears contaminated. I was on the edge of

composing a pleasant bit of verse then, before you blundered in and put me off."

That retreat across the roofs deserves a chapter to itself, but space cannot be afforded in this brief memoir. The roofs were high-pitched and the passage eminently dangerous. Moreover, to have detached tiles and let these clatter to the street below would have advertised their passage, and so had to be avoided at all costs. But Holroyd developed an unexpected activity (which he explained by saying he had been in the gym eight at Rugby), and Captain Kettle climbed like a sailor that he was. And in the end, after they had clambered half-a-mile from the hotel, they found an unoccupied attic, and entered it to sit down and rest.

Captain Kettle looked with distaste at his soiled knees and grimy hands and did his best to remedy these with the help of his pocket handkerchief. In his sea days he had always been noted for his personal spruceness, and though he was now the complete farmer, his tastes in this direction had not changed. I found out once that a firm in Piccadilly makes a square-topped bowler hat for him specially.

"Now," said the sailor, "we've created a lot more interest in ourselves than is wholesome, and

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I hate advertising anyway. We've work to do, and we've got to get somewhere quiet to do it. The place they're likely to hunt for us least in will be a truck or a coach in a train that's going to start sometime for Germany. Main thing is, we must pick one that's not going to start too soon, and one also that commands a view of those cotton bales. D'ye think you can find all that in the dark?"

"I'm sure I can't."

"Well I'm sure I can. That's the advantage of a sea education. Walk delicately down these steps, and if anybody interferes, bottle him."

They trod like mice down dark and resounding stairways, expecting alarms at every turn. Doors yawned at them on every landing. From the third half-pace a rat's eyes gleamed at them and then were noiselessly eclipsed. But not till they had got to the ground floor was there a sound of human life. There on the right, a door lay open, with the room beyond it extravagantly lit with showy electrics. In a great blue satin arm-chair a blowsy servant girl sprawled and snored.

Captain Kettle was always a man with neat instincts. "The hussy," he said. "Lady Kettle has trouble with them just the same. And, of course, all the lights are on and running to waste.

The papers may preach till they're black in the face, but you'll never get that sort to practice war-time economy.

Then they went out into the evening streets, mingled coolly with the stolid crowd, and went their ways without let or hindrance.

The city was old, and its streets wandered as waterside streets do. On two occasions the dead-reckoning of even Captain Kettle led them to turn off to a wrong direction, to his own wrath, and to his friend's amusement. "I love to hear you get mad," Mr. Holroyd chuckled, "when you miss a simple turning. I, personally, have no more idea than an unborn Astrakan lamb whether our way is north or south, or indeed which is north or south.

"Quite so," snapped Kettle. "It is not your job to know. It is mine. Bear away to starboard, please, and give me a spell with the portmanteau. If weight means anything, it should contain a powerful lot of your fire-raisers. I wish to goodness we'd got out earlier, before the telegraph offices were shut. I want to get another message through."

"Want to telegraph your report of what we've done up to date to the War Office?"

"No, sir, not now. I want to wire Lady Kettle not to give Arthur curd cheesecakes. She always does it if I don't remind her every time he comes

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to stay with us, and they always upset him. Then her ladyship takes it as a reflection on her cooking, and there's a row, and the girl usually leaves. . . . No, don't go that way, or you'll step into a canal. We must walk round the next block before we come to the railway yards."

To gain a hiding-place, when they came to the chosen ground, seemed impossible. The whole quay-space was lit as bright as day with sizzling arc-lamps, and work was proceeding at three times normal speed. The phlegmatic natives were being hustled by Prussians. Every third man there seemed Prussian, square shouldered, and capable. To carry on the Great War Germany needed cotton for explosives, and this was one of the ways she saw that she got it. But it was to this press and bustle that the two Britons owed immunity. Everybody was too busy to bother with them. Anybody who spared them a thought imagined that they were helping Germany.

There was a concrete water-tower at the flank of one of the warehouses, its head above the reflection of the arc lamps, its front lit like day, its back in black shadow. A ladder-way led to the top, luckily on the dark side. Up this Captain Kettle led, laboriously carrying the portmanteau with him. Holroyd followed. And in due time the pair of

them, sweating and exhausted, lay and panted on the wooden covering of the tank high up above the area of the light. A stork's nest, with Madame Stork in possession, occupied one corner of the roof-space. The intruders apologized for their disturbance and the lady continued her duties unruffled.

A train of box cars clanked out to the eastward, jolting noisily over the turntables.

"By James!" said Captain Kettle, pulling himself together. "Every second we sit idling here means a gain to somebody who is selling cotton, and a waste of English soldiers' lives. Open your magazine, and give me one of the guns. You take the bales to the left, and I'll pelt those to the right. And for the Lord's sake don't make a noise, or we'll have these swine coming up and wanting to make a fuss, and we'll have to waste time killing them instead of getting busy with that cotton."

The two pumped up the reservoirs of their air-guns, inserted the composite wad of fluxite and slow detonator, took aim at one of the ragged untidy cotton bales below, and pulled trigger.

In a way it was not exciting work; there were none of the accompaniments of ordinary shooting; there was no noise beyond an almost apologetic "click"; there was no flash; there was no movement on the part of the target to register a hit.

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Even Madame Stork did not notice the firing. "The little beasts just quietly imbed themselves," Holroyd had said, "without so much as a rustle. They only get about an inch in, and the cotton closes over them, and there's nothing to see unless you know what to look for. Then a bit later they go off in a swirling blaze. I tried that on a cotton bale at Liverpool. I've often wondered whose bale it was. I should like to have told the owner he was suffering for his country's good."

Men and trucks and cranes were handling many of the bales immediately beneath them, and loading these into covered box cars. They were careful not to touch these men, but always shot at bales that were marked for next handling. Lives, British lives, depended on their quickness.

"By James!" said Captain Kettle at the end of the first half-hour, "if this stuff of yours doesn't go off, my lad, I'll wring your neck."

"Go on shooting for another ten minutes," replied the other coolly, "and I'll show you. You're as bad as young Arthur and the curd cheesecakes, m'lord; you're too anxious for quick results. . . . Gee-whiz! I take that back, though. There you are!"

A roman candle of flame spouted suddenly from one of the brown and white bales beneath them,

sending up gouts of burning cotton into the night for the fingers of the breeze to spread. Here seemed the commencement of a bonny blaze. But a sharp guttural order barked out, and men dropped everything and ran, and returned in a matter of seconds dragging hoses from which the water already spouted.

"Smart, that," commented Captain Kettle with a disciplinarian's appreciation. "Ah, there you are, my lad, our big German with the moustaches I dislike, and the manners I'm not going to put up with. Seems to think he owns this city. Well, he'll probably get taught otherwise. But I wish I could remember where it was I met that swine before, and what I did to him."

But no extinguishing appliances were efficient to cope with those fluxite fires. Bale after bale broke into flame, and spouted destruction. A train of cars got nervous and pulled out, but the jolting irritated its simmering combustion, and it fled hooting and clattering away through the night towards Germany, in a perfect ribband of flame.

The bales in the open popped and burned like coals, the warehouses caught and burst like over-ripe pods, and the vessels in the basin, despite their hurried casting-off of shore fasts were smitten in their turn, and burned like torches also.

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"I hope you're satisfied," the inventor exulted. "About time we quitted. Even that blessed stork is getting uneasy."

"Not whilst we've this handful of cartridges left. That man who doesn't like me is going to save the train over there to the Nor'ard if we don't look lively. We'll shoot everything we've left at that, and trust to luck that one of the pellets goes off with a short fuse."

"I'm getting cooked. This tower is made of ferro-concrete, which they say doesn't burn. So we shall merely cremate. When they're examining our cinders they'd probably decide we were Parsees. By gad, Captain, look at your pal. Did you fire the shot that set light to him, or did I?"

Captain Kettle stared down at the train on the northward siding. The energetic man with the eyeglasses and the upturned moustaches who was trying to save it, suddenly clutched at his clothes, and then crumbled into flame. But he did not cry out. He ran quickly round the corner of the building, and was lost to the watchers' sight, and there is the end of him as far as this memoir is concerned.

"You aren't shooting any more?" asked Holroyd.

"I've given them my last cartridge."

"So have I. I wonder which of us bagged your pal. What about catching the last 'bus home?"

"After you, my lau," said Captain Kettle, "By James! I wish I could remember what I did to that man. Hullo, there goes Mrs. Stork. Now, quick down that ladder, or we shall cook."

Once more, to avoid custom house and passport formalities, Captain Kettle and his friend let the mail boat take her trip without them, and crossed to England by another less obvious route. The fare on board was meagre, and they went to an inn at the unobtrusive port to which their boat was consigned to supply the void. They found there an English paper.

"I see," said Mr. Holly Holroyd over his chop, "that there have been cotton fires at that place where we've been, but they're quite unimportant and no damage was done."

"I'm not in the least a betting man," said Captain Kettle, "as betting is a thing the Wharfedale Particular Methodists strongly disapprove of, but I'll stand you two days rabbit shooting on my farm if cotton isn't made contraband before the month's up."

"How's that?"

"At the time I sent that first wire about Arthur and the butterfly bottle I happened to send another

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to a British M.P. I knew, telling him he might expect that the cotton shipment his friends had got through would be spoiled, and that the dose would be repeated if needful. I guess that man knows when to come in out of the wet."

"You're a marvel," said Mr. Holroyd. "I was intended for the diplomatic service myself if I'd passed high enough out of Harrow, but the good old Governor went phut for two millions in nitrates just then, and I had to go in for medicine instead. But I should never have been your equal in diplomacy. Well, there's one thing I bagged out of this trip and that's an option on a £100,000 parcel of German dyewares now in——er——, the neutral country where we've been operating. No trouble at all importing them, and Bradford's aching for all it can get. I shall make a cool fifty thou'."

"You've a great head on you," said Captain Kettle, "though some of the things in it are a bit hard to follow. I hope that boy Arthur's all right, but between ourselves Lady Kettle spoils him dreadfully, and I expect he'll have a liver on him like a Strasburg goose by the time I get back."

#### IV

### GUN-RUNNERS

CAPTAIN IMAGE prided himself on turning out fine active West African mates. It is true that a good many officers succumbed to his treatment, but the survivors were notorious for being able to get through more work in a given time, and for giving way less to disease, than any set of mates on the Coast. As the Liverpool office will testify.

But the new Fourth he had shipped on the *M'poso* (vice a predecessor smashed under a surf boat on the beach of the Grand Bassa) frankly puzzled him.

"The young pup actually asked me this morning if he could do the navigation for me," he told his purser over their morning refreshment.

"These brass-edged upstarts," said Mr. Baggie, "are brought up that way on some of the other runs now, I believe. Your boy's overloaded this cocktail with angostura again."

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"Much angostura makes easy swizzling. You're quite right: that's a cocktail only fit for a passenger. Jones, this new Fourth calls himself, and that makes the third Jones I've got on the *M'poso* this minute, and bring the number of Joneses on the Coast up to three hundred and ninety six. Rum thing is, Balgarnie me man, he isn't Welsh either."

"Well, you ought to be a judge of that," said the Purser with sly malice.

Captain Image scowled. His nationality was a sore point with him. "Look you now, me lad, go steady. I've knocked fellows down for saying what I know you've got on the edge of your tongue. So let's get back to business—I mean this Fourth Mate. I put him on to chipping paint, and watched him start. Believe you me, he'd less idea of the job than the ordinary Liverpool dock rat. I took him out of earshot of the man and gave him my views. I said 'You've got to get quit of a lot of those airs and starched collars before you're going to be any good to me, me lad,' I said. 'Very good, sir,' says he as civil as begob. 'Where did you pick up those manners?' I said. 'Are you Royal Naval Reserve?' I said. 'I am not, sir,' says he. 'In fact very mucu the reverse,' he says. 'But I hope, sir,' he says, 'that after I've shaken down to

the ways of the ship you'll find I can carry on as well as any officer you've got.'"

"H'm," said Mr. Balgarnie. "'Carry on.'"

"Precisely," said Captain Image, signing to his Krooboy to hand the second cocktails. "Plain Navy talk."

"May have been sheer frills."

"When we get down to the Coast, I'll sweat the frills off him, the young pup. Thinks he's going to lib for top deck and run the tally desk, I expect. Well, he'll learn what it is to be down in a hold breaking out cargo with the thermometer at fifty above par."

"You promised to call at the Dutchman's factory up the Brass River this time."

"And if there's water enough for the old packet, I'll go. The Dutchman should have a hundred mahogany logs ready for me. If the fever's been good to him he may have as many as a hundred and twenty. It will be Mr. Fourth Mate's job to hook those five-ton logs on to our winch chains, and after he's stood for a couple of days up to his chin in that stinking mud off the Dutchman's beach, I'll give you further news of him—the smooth-faced young pup."

Now from the Steamboat Companys' point of view the spheres of interest along the West African

Seaboard are clearly demarcated, and seldom interlap. London boats work the North West coast from Tangier to Mogador, and go no further south now that Agadir is a closed port. The Germans and the French compete with them to a certain extent, and as they are helped and the British are hindered by their respective Home Governments, they are likely to get more of the trade. Then comes a gap: there is no regular service to the Saharan seaboard. But occasional French steamers do the bulk of the shipping from Senegal, and from there onwards, past Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast and the Bight, down to the Oil Rivers, Liverpool steamcraft carry trade, traders, and missionaries, soldiers and administrators, with weekly regularity. British steamers under the Belgian flag serve the Congo. And there are other arrangements, also clearly defined, for Portuguese Angola, British Walfish Bay (which is the entry port for German South West Africa), and of course for Cape Town.

The main point to carry in mind, however, during the reading of this memoir is that the West African seaboard is by no means all British; the ownership is shared also by French, Spaniards, Moors, Portuguese, Liberians and Germans; so that when hereafter I speak of The Other Power, there is

enough geographical vagueness to avoid international trouble. The reason for this will appear later.

The *M'poso* was a Black-Funnel boat, and with decent luck should have come to her end some ten years ago. But no bar on the Coast could break in both of her bottoms (though all had tried), and Captain Image stuck to her though promotion was often offered to him. A bigger boat of course meant more passengers; but the slow old *M'poso* putting into half-forgotten creeks up the rivers, or rolling her rails under off surf-smitten beaches where no decent steamer dare risk her anchors always staggered home loaded to her marks. A mail steamer may be decorative, but there are heavy fines for loss of time, and mailboat passengers on the West Coast expect to drink like fish at the Skipper's expense, and entertainment allowances are always inadequate. Moreover, it is a solid commercial fact that the Black Funnel Co. pay a big commission to their Masters on cargo secured. And that is where Captain Image really scored. He was known to have a nose for cargo second to none on the Coast, and the grey-headed owner with the imperial who ran the Line gave him a free hand to hunt for cargo anywhere he liked along that unhe<sup>1</sup>hy seaboard. . . .

"The Old Man seems down on you," said Mr. Price the Third Mate to Mr. Jones the Fourth, with whom he shared a room above the boilers. "Well, he hates frills and he expects his mates to work nine days a week and twenty-eight hours a day, and you don't look cut out for that. I guess he spotted you were an R.N.R."

"But I'm not."

The old Third raised his dyed eyebrows. "Oh, well, if you tell me you are not, there's an end of it. Don't talk. Look you: I want a bit of sleep."

The Fourth Mate inspected himself in the glass. "If only I'd had sense enough to grow a moustache," he told himself humorously, "I should have steered to windward of a lot of trouble. As it is, that old palm oil ruffian of a skipper seems to sniff Navy Pattern somewhere. However, thank the Lord for a thick hide: I guess I shall need it. They might have the decency to give officers separate rooms on these tanks, or else provide them with efficient exhaust silencers for when they're asleep. My Christian Aunt! How that Welshman snores. Well, it's one comfort to know he will be quite unconscious of the fact of my absence, so I'll just trot off to Number Three Hold and get on with my forgeries . . ."

Now at Abadah, which is the chief port of entry of a certain Third Class British Colony, the Colonial Secretary, who was acting Governor for the time being, vice the proper Governor invalided home, was in a state of considerable anxiety. He tapped a cigarette paper full of quinine, rolled it up, and washed it down with a wine glass of weak whiskey and water, and irritably waved away the black house boy who came to announce dinner.

"I no fit for chop."

"But I am," said Craigie, the Commandant of the Hausa Constabulary. He scratched himself because he was suffering from prickly heat, and nodded to the house boy, who took the hint and vanished. "Look here, old man. I know you're worried, and I know also that your head's ringing like a bell with that infernal quinine, but if you don't eat you'll crack up, and that's a thing that can't be allowed."

"Barring suicide, getting decently invalided home seems the only way out of my particular mess just now. And," the acting-Governor nodded significantly, "I'm not the only man who has faced those two alternatives and made his choice."

The Commandant quite understood the reference to His Excellency the late Governor, and nodded agreement. "But," said he, "you're not

that kind of jellyfish. It isn't your fault that we've another slackback at the Colonial Office at home, and you get neither backing nor encouragement, and are left to hold the dog. If the—the Other Power mops up the hinterland and ruins the Colony, you'll be held up to infamy as the rascal responsible, and if you back Great Britain and do your duty, the odds are you get recalled for spoiling the game of some trumpery politician at home. It's a sweet choice, but there's not the smallest doubt as to what you must do."

"I know that," snapped the Acting-Governor, "and of course I'm going to see the thing through. You needn't reel out any more of your platitudes, and I suppose you're hungry if I am not, so we may as well have chop. Curse this heat. The thermometer's been steadily going up for three days now, and if that threatened tornado doesn't come along soon to clear the air, I believe I shall go out in an apoplexy."

Now in that no man's country, the Abadah hinterland, there was chronic war, and so far as local history travelled backward there always had been chronic war. In theory every one deplored this, and successive Governors had reported strongly in favour of annexation, and presenting the troubled area with the Pax Britannica. Incidentally, as all the trade of the Colony came from the hinterland,

commerce would be assisted, but this fact was kept in the background of late, as the Hypocritical Party was in power at home, and as they were mostly traders themselves or came of trading stock, they always assumed an unctuous pose of righteousness, and refused to countenance any annexation that was not first proposed by the missionaries of their particular denominations.

As a glaring alternative it was pointed out that the Other Power was aching to annex. The Other Power worked the Press in its usual way, and protested that it could not afford to have a bear garden on its doorstep. It clamoured aloud that its interests suffered, that the cause of humanity was being neglected, and so on. And once the Other Power seized that hinterland, of course it would clap on its usual tariffs to divert trade to its own port, and Abadah would be ruined.

"And the utmost the present Hypocrites at home can rise to," the Acting-Governor summed up, "is that I should try moral influence on these hinterland tribes. One might as well try to shift the Equator with a hymn tune. And they're cutting down the Colonial forces every half year. As a point of fact, what is the total of the Haûsa Constabulary now? My head's so full of quinine I can't remember the simplest figures."

"Two hundred and thirty-eight effectives. By the way, you remember that eminent politician who called us butcher mercenaries in the House of Commons the other day? That pretty phrase has been copied into the local rag here, and improved upon, and my native officers tell me the men are beginning to kick."

"I don't see why they shouldn't. By the way, d'you know the *Abadah Times and Echo* has changed proprietors?"

"I didn't. I thought that snuff-and-butter-coloured barrister chap, Quablah Smith owned it."

"He's just sold out to Schmaltz."

The Commandant scratched himself thoughtfully and whistled. "Who owns, or is said to own, or at any rate who manages that big new Dutch factory at the head of the town where they sell under cost (so I hear) and buy above the market, and live like fighting cocks on what must be a very heavy net loss per annum. I suppose Schmaltz has been sent by those blighters who are trying to bag our hinterland. By Jove, Crawford, aren't they thorough? Actually nobbling the local Press in our own twopenny capital."

"Oh, they're thorough enough," said the Acting-Governor grimly, "and plodding, and systematic. They've had the whole scheme cut and dried and

docketed in their Colonial Office any time this past twenty years, and my distinguished predecessors in office have tumbled to it for ten, and have reported strongly. As a total result the Colonial Office has now woke up to the fact that they've been sending our official letters here by a round-about route for the past century, and now post them by the direct boat. Looks as if one of these new chaps they've got into the Cabinet had bought an atlas."

Now as it happened, the Other Power, which had set up a new diplomatic doctrine of doing things first and explaining them afterwards, had made a far more comprehensive network of preparations than even the men on the spot guessed at. All the world knew that Dr. Carl Josephs was one of the great modern authorities on West African lepidoptera. But no one apparently worried about where the bearded and be-spectacled Dr. Carl found the money to finance his beautifully equipped expeditions. At the end of each trip he issued a sumptuous volume, lavishly illustrated by the three-colour blocks (London: Schünemann Gebruden. £5 5s. net); but as monied butterfly hunters are few, one concludes that the circulation was limited, and probably did not meet the cost of publication.

It was perfectly true that the Herr Doctor had brought home several butterflies hitherto unknown

to science, and if one were in a scoffing mood one might point out that any other earnest student who cares to hunt through any little known section of West Africa can do the same. But the expense of such an expedition is heavy, and I can recommend Dr. Carl Josephs' plan of getting a government subsidy to cover it. Especially is it handy to have a subsidy that is not reported in any parliamentary return, and so is beyond lewd criticism. That is the great advantage of having one's income provided for under the secret service estimates.

The smart new Colonial Secretary of the Other Power has been adversely criticised for many of his appointments, but he made no mistake when he picked Dr. Carl Josephs as his missionary of empire in the Abadah hinterland. The man had health, and he had prudence ; his genius for entomology was the most perfect of disguises ; moreover he had a gift of tongues, no conscience whatever, and a talent for gaining the friendship of savages such as is only possessed by the one man in the million. He could promise and he could perform. He gave gramophones, magnetic shocking coils, and patent leather sword belts. He did a lot of very lucky doctoring in a smallpox district, and he scored with the biggest headman of the lot by the prediction of an eclipse.

Nautical almanacs are not common currency in the bush at the back of Abadah, and when the sun was shut out at the prophesied hour, the whole tribe admitted the miracle. B . the headman stuck out for further bounty. He had a repeating rifle—an early pattern Winchester. He must have a thousand more. He would not sell his country for less. Dr. Josephs knew the trouble of smuggling arms of precision into Africa in the teeth of international law, and offered two thousand gaspipe flint-locks with cherry red stocks and nickelled heel-plates. Quoth the headman, "I can get those myself if I choose to make my people collect rubber. Either the Winchesters, or I sit tight."

"Then the Winchesters you shall have," said Dr. Carl Josephs. "On my head be it. And when they come you shall use them against those cursed British who have spoiled your slave trade, and want to cut down your crucifixion tree, and will not even give you a good price for your palm oil and kernels. And to show the generosity of my master, the great Emperor, who will come in to protect your country, I will give you above and beyond the rifles, cartridges in number past thinking, which you have not even asked for. Then you can drive the British into the sea, and loot Abadah."

"Yes," said the headman doubtfully. "But I

couldn't stay there. Their ships would come with cannon that shoot a thousand miles. He was a travelled headman. He had served once in the stokehold of a West Coast gunboat, and remembered wistfully the range of a four point even gun.

"When you had looted the place, and got their gin, and their concertinas, and their tinned salmon, and that skew-eyed billiard table at Government House, and—and those big French hats the Colonial Secretary's wife does such a line in, why then my dark friend you can retreat on your ancestral middens here, and—I'll guarantee you'll find them s'rongly held."

The headman licked his big lips. "Is there much gin now in Abadah?"

"Just oceans," said Dr. Carl Josephs.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here, then, were the ingredients for a very pretty little international turmoil, and the Colonial Secretary of the Other Power rubbed his be-ringed and manicured hands and congratulated himself that Great Britain could not this time "muddle through somehow" after her usual habit by any possible means whatever. "I am sorry for the poor old Herr Bull," said the Colonial Secretary, "and my tailor in London is a man for whom I could forgive his country much. But we are the nation of the

present and the future, and we intend to have our place in the sun. Back numbers must suffer. And the guns shall go out by one of their own fool ships. Then there can be no back reckonings. American guns, ferried over in an English boat, landed at a British port, and carried to a country the greedy British are trying to annex. De—licious ! ”

But on the seas at that particular moment was a clean-shaved, red-faced young man, who gave the well known West African name of Jones, and bore the rank of Fourth Officer on the S.S. *M'poso*, and as no other reason for his presence has ever transpired, one can only suppose that he was sent there by that blind Providence which is so well known by a sneering Europe to look after the incompetent British Empire. Mr. Jones at that date was having a particularly evil time of it. He had filled the mind of Captain Image with suspicion, and that potentate was engaged in “sweating the frills off him.” Mr. Jones, who fancied himself as an actor, had done his best to adapt himself to all the requirements of the West African junior mate, but he had glaringly failed in many things, and in his very attempts the peppery Captain Image saw cause of offence.

“What do you think is the latest ? ” he demanded one sweltering day of the plump Mr. Balgarnie.

"I sent him ashore yesterday in a surf boat to bring off a few bags of kernels from Swizzle-stick Smith's factory at Malla Nulla, and he actually had the nerve to teach his Elmina boys to toss their paddles as they came up to the guess-warp alongside."

"Man o' war fashion."

"Precisely, the smooth-faced young pup. So after I'd given him my tongue, I put him in the other surf boat with those Sa' Leone Krooboy's."

"And as they know their rights," said the Purser rather bitterly, "there'd be no use tampering with them. And as there's been a shocking bad beach to-day, and as those Christian Kroos are rotten bad boat boys, he'll have had a gay time of it landing."

Captain Image winked a watery eye. "Spilt three times, so I hear, though he didn't report it. And knowing old Swizzle-stick's beach, I should guess he'd swallow enough Atlantic and seaweed to last him a lifetime. But the pup's a sticker, I will say that for him. He had his boat all ready to go ashore agam when I decided the beach was too bad, and hove up and steamed on."

"Why's he always messing about in Number Three Hold when he's supposed to be off watch?"

"Oh, that's all right, Purser me lad. He asked me one day if he was expected to tally cargo. I said yes, unless he proposed to play amusing tunes

on the grand piano whilst somebody else did his work for him. 'Then, sir,' says he, 'as I shouldn't like you to find me inefficient when the time comes, would you mind my going down beforehand to see how the cargo's stowed?' Well, I wasn't civil, but I said he could go if he felt incompetent and was minded to waste his time that way. To tell the truth I didn't see how I could refuse."

"It is awkward sometimes to think of the right repartee on the spur of the moment. But I noticed you stuck up for him when that Dutchman came aboard breathing thunder and blitzen off Abadah."

Captain Image's complexion deepened to a fine plum colour. "I'm skipper aboard here, Mr. Bargarnie me lad, and though I do allow liberties with traders who ship cargo, it is best they should always remember my true position. Besides, as regards Schmaltz, although we bring him a big tonnage out from home, he's never shipped so much as a ton of cargo by the *M'poso* for the run North."

Cargo from Liverpool interested Captain Image little. But on every ton of cargo picked up on the Coast he drew commission, and somewhat naturally West African cargo was the chiefest of his life's interests. He was believed in the Liverpool office to have the keenest nose for cargo in the trade, but

even there they did not realize the wealth of diplomacy he expended over the gathering of it.

"That man Schmaltz is a fraud," Captain Image went on, "and he's neither bottom nor sides to his stomach. Last time I was round here I asked him aboard for chop. Instead of the usual two preliminary cocktails he had six. He must have necked at least three bottles of Castle Hamburg champagne for dinner, and didn't even put angostura in it. He said he could do with some port after, and cost me a couple of pints, and then I started to drink him level at whiskey and soda. Well, Balgarnie me lad, you know what I am on that?"

"I do," said the stout Purser feelingly.

"Well, he was a tin wonder. I'll admit to being inclined to recite poetry myself by the time we knocked off, but he hadn't so much as stirred a hair. But as for cargo, I might as well been asking for his gold nuts."

"Bland way with him too, hasn't he?"

"Bland, d'ye style it? I should call it b——  
Yes, Mr. Price?"

The old third officer, with half an inch of white showing at the roots of his dyed hair reported that his room-mate the Fourth was down with fever.

"Ungrateful young skrimshanker, just when I

was beginning to make a useful mate of him. Well, Mr. Price me lad, as you know, I can be hospitable even to a junior mate. Come along to the chart house, and I'll give you a couple of pills. Let him take those in half a tumbler of whiskey together with a cigarette paper full of quinine, and he'll be ready for work to-morrow. Has he been wandering at all in his talk, Mr. Price? Has he let on at all where he served before he came on the *M'poso*?"

"He's said little, except to abuse me for snoring, which is a thing I never do. But look you, when I come to think of it, he has talked of guns and again of guns."

"Navy," said the Purser.

"Look you, I thought it was his cheeky way of referring to my breathing."

"Navy," said Captain Image. "It's written all over him in plain red clean-shaved print. That'll do, Mr. Price. There are the pills, and don't let them roll out of your fist. Here, I'll just flatten them. There, that's safe. Yes, he's been Navy, Balgarnie me lad, an officer too, and he's skipped. I wonder what for? However that's his palaver. He's here now, and if he doesn't peg out, with God's help, I'll make him into an efficient West Coast Fourth Mate. Between ourselves I liked the way he stood up to Schmaltz, although you can bet your sweet

life I didn't let him guess that. There was nothing of the flare up about him, no language, not so much as a hard-shut first even. He was just coolly polite. Reminded me of a play actor I saw once at the Court Theatre who was pretending to be a gentleman. If he'd blustered, I really believe Schmaltz would have hit him, and been glad of the chance. He was as mad as he could stick."

"What did happen exactly? I never heard the proper tale."

"Well, Schmaltz had got some goods consigned in the ordinary way. Hardware it was invoiced as, and I suppose altogether the lot ran up to about three tons in weight. It was hove up and dropped into the surf boats, and paddled ashore in the usual way. There was, as I say, a good handful of it, and as you remember there was a bad run of surf that day, and so they were getting it ashore pretty slowly. But no sooner does the first lot get dumped on his beach, than off comes Schmaltz in the return boat in a towering rage. He'd been upset in the surf coming off, and was wet to the skin and had broken his specs, and I don't suppose that improved his temper. Anyway he stormed up to the tally desk and swore by ten thousand devils we'd sent him off the wrong cargo, and done it on purpose."

“ ‘And what, sir, is your private mark?’ asks Mr. Navy Jones as cool as an ice cream.”



“ ‘S-in - a - ring - in - a - triangle,’ says Schmaltz.”

“ ‘Right,’ says Navy. ‘The responsibility of sending off those goods is entirely mine. I see by my tally sheet I have sent ashore to your address seventeen cases marked S-in-a-ring-in-a-triangle. From memory I can tell you that six were biggish bundles, and the rest were rectangular and about the size of—ar—ammunition boxes!’ ”

“Navy again,” said Mr. Balgarnie.

“Oh, it was Navy right through, Purser me lad. And I’ll not deny that for a change it’s rather amusing to hear it when you’ve run dry on your ordinary tap of hard language. Ammunition boxes indeed! I thought Schmaltz would have choked. But he’s the business man right enough. Trade first and fun afterwards is his motto, and before Jones could stop him he was climbing down into the hold himself.”

“ ‘If you are such a dunderhead you can’t look after my cargo,’ says Schmaltz, ‘I’ll go and pick it out myself.’

“ ‘If you don’t come up out of that hold one-time,’ says Mr. Fourth Mate, ‘I’ll have you sent in a way that’ll surprise you. The stuff down there’s

under my charge, and I don't have it tampered with by a half-drowned Dutchman anyway.'"

"Good," said Mr. Balgarnie. "The pup's got pluck. Schmaltz is twice his weight, at a low estimate. And so he came up, sir?"

"He did not me lad. He went on clambering unhandily down. Jones picks up a cargo sling and heaves it to that second headman, Funnel-Paint, who was at the bottom of the hold, and says he. 'When that Dutchman who is crawling down comes within your reach, make him fast to the winch chain. I want him up here. Savvy?'

"'Savvy plenty,' says Funnel-Paint smartly enough. I will say Balgarnie me lad, the smooth-faced young pup's got the knack of command, and the hands always jump when he raps out an order. So Mister Schmaltz when he steps out on the ground floor finds himself grabbed by a dozen naked sweating, stinking Krooboys, and hitched up in a cargo sling, and hooked on to the winch chain, and jerked aloft, and bashed against the sides of the hatch as the old girl rolled. They ran him up to the sheave wriggling like an eel snarled up in a fishing line, and then they guyed the derrick outboard, and let him go by the run to where a surf boat ought to have been but wasn't. I guess the objections were mostly drowned out of him by the time he was

hauled on board a boat and paddled to the beach."

"So perish all Dutchmen," said Mr. Balgarnie, with emotion. He touched no cargo commission, and could afford to let animosities spirt out which his superior officer had to keep suppressed. "I've wanted to kick that man myself most times I've seen him, and the only reason I didn't was because I thought he might be useful to you and the ship. Let's hope a shark chops him next time he tries to leave the shore."

"Amen," said Captain Image. "I've no use for any foreign devil palm oil ruffian who hasn't cargo for me when I call off his factory. Why, he's worse than a Belgian, that one."

There was a pause, and then the stout Purser coughed and said, "I'm wondering."

"What's broke now?" inquired his friend and senior officer.

"Has Jones anything to do with that cheerful drunk we've got down below in the First Class, who's also a Dutchman, and who also had objections to raise about his cargo?"

"Name of Aaronstein Gebruden from that funny little green painted factory in the Happy Dutchland Colony?"

"Aaronstein: that's him. Gebruden is Dutch

for 'And Co.' His objection was a bit of a mystery to me, sir."

"Oh, he came off from New Hamburg suffering from a different kind of hot bearings. He'd cargo consigned which he said differed from the invoice, but he didn't kick. He wanted to stand Mr. Jones a dash and seemed surprised when the d——d fool wouldn't take it."

"Navy again," said the Purser.

"Obviously. But they argued it out quietly enough."

"What's your mark?' says Jones.

 "Double - A - in - a - long - diamond,' says Aaronstein.

"Were the goods you got marked with something else?' asks Mr. Fourth Mate.

"They were not. They all had the double-A-in-a-long-diamond, but——'

"I've nothing to do with your butts,' says Jones smartly enough.

"If your goods have got the right mark on 'em that's the end of my funeral procession. And you may take your drinks to a place where the temperature's probably lower than it is here, and where we've no reason to believe there's malarial fever. I'm not thirsty.'

"Man,' says Gebruden in a pig's whisper you

could hear on the upper bridge, 'Man, you've sent us wrong goods. I open a case: I expect to find gramophone records: I see cartridges. I open another. It should be fishing rods: it is——'

" 'Oh, go and boil your head,' says Mr. Fourth Mate, 'and attend to your business, and don't come bothering me. Is the stuff saleable?'

" The Dutchman stared till his eyes stuck out of his head like a lobster's. 'Oh, it's saleable enough, Herr Jones,' says he.

" 'Then in heaven's name go and peddle it to your dusky customers,' says my high-toned Fourth. 'I guess making a bargain is your mission in life.'

" 'Quite so, quite so,' says Gebruden. 'I only wanted to be assured that the cargo was mine.'

" 'That I can't answer for,' says Mr. Fourth Mate as chilly as you please, 'not having the pleasure of your personal acquaintance. But these cases belong to the shopkeeper whose mark is double-A-in-a-long-diamond, and if he doesn't make the most of them, he's a variegated fool.' "

" Did he say 'variegated fool'?" asked the Purser.

" Now, I come to think of it, me lad, he did not. He said 'silly fathead.' "

" There you see, sir," said Mr. Balgarnie. " Navy again."

"Yes," said Captain Image thoughtfully, "and he wouldn't share. I wish the chance had come my way."

"Have there been some good pickings then?"

"I don't know what cargo Gebruden expected. Ordinary trade stuff I suppose. And he'd have gone grubbing along, and just keeping to windward of bankruptcy as he has done these last dozen years. The niggers don't bring trade into the Dutch colonies if they can avoid it—prices too bad, too many forms to fill up, too many officials to pay. And then in this particular bit of the Happy Fatherland there's that war still going on that they don't seem able to stamp out, although they've got enough troops on the job to conquer half Africa, you'd think. If it wasn't for bringing officials and war material, the port wouldn't be worth calling at. Isn't that so, me lad?"

"C'rect."

"And how long did we stay there this run?"

"Twenty-eight—no, twenty-seven hours."

"Well, Gebruden in that time seems to have done more solid business than he's put through in the preceding twelve years. He got his stuff ashore and up to the factory; got the cases broken open (presumably), and the goods displayed in the feteesh; found customers; did a deal and got paid

in cash. And then, by whispers he closes out the rest of his business for cash also, and comes aboard here with the family parrot and two heavy boxes that look to me uncommonly like gold dust. He doesn't wait for the Dutch boat. Nor would he let you book him through to Happy Dutchland. No, me lad, good old Liverpool's far enough for him, and my idea is that he'll be calling himself Macdonald before the year's out, and sitting behind a big cigar in his own motor car, with an office in Castle Street, and a county place in Cheshire. And Mr. Navy Jones might at least have pocketed cumshaw, to the tune of—say—a suit of clothes if he'd known anything about the ways of the Coast."

\* \* \* \* \*

Look now upon a final scene on board H.M.S. *Desolation*, 2nd class cruiser. Gunnery-Lieutenant T. R. B. Lee-Wentworth, just returned from special leave, had reported himself on board with the usual formalities, and spent the balance of the afternoon in taking over duty from his substitute.

That evening he dined in state with his Captain, and they talked briskly during the meal on the absorbing topic of Service shop. But when the cloth was cleared, and they sat alone over a glass of port, the elder man suddenly laughed,

"I ran down to Monte Carlo for a couple of days," said he.

"Hope you robbed the tables, sir."

"I'm afraid it was the other way on. But there was a man in Monte who interested me. He tried to be a dressy man, and made rather a comic failure of it. He'd been Colonial Secretary of Another Power, and he'd just been sacked. Know anything about it?"

The Gunnery-Lieutenant grinned. "I'd like to hear, sir."

"Of course I can only tell what I picked up from the papers. But you know they've had a war on in their West African Colony for some considerable time now, and recently the niggers have managed to smuggle in a big consignment of modern rifles, and they've been giving the Europeans fits."

"Ah," said Gunnery-Lieutenant Lee-Wentworth. "Of course I couldn't know that. I was at sea at the time. Any news from Abadah, sir?"

"Yes, by Jove. Now they've been having a busy time. They've got an energetic fellow called Crawford as Acting-Governor, and he's taken the bit in his teeth, and waltzed up into the hinterland with an escort of half-a-dozen Hausa police, and calmly proclaimed a protectorate over the whole lot of it. Sad thing about that explorer johnny,

Josephs. Crawford found him decorating the local crucifixion tree when he arrived at the cannibal capital. I hear it hinted that Mr. Acting-Governor rather took the wind out of the Government's sails, but the thing's done and they can't repudiate it. In fact the country was so pleased with Crawford's pluck, that the Government's had to give him a knighthood."

Lee-Wentworth laughed. "Some fellows do have all the luck."

"Well," said his Captain, "whilst the rest of us have been working here in our chains you've had a fine long enjoyable leave."

"Which I'm afraid won't count much for promotion, sir."

"I shouldn't be too sure of that if I were you," said the Captain drily. "I have to report privately on my officers, you know, and even the British Admiralty sits up and takes notice if things are put strongly enough. Have another glass of port. I'm sure you've earned it after all the towelling you've gone through. Here's luck, Tommy. I wish I'd your prospects ahead of me."

## THE INTERVENING WIRE

CAPTAIN KETTLE tapped Dr. Mary Brown sharply on the shoulder, and that lady woke up with a start and shivered. She found the world disgustingly cold, and wet, and dark. But she was briskly alive to all possibilities.

She leant towards Captain Kettle's ear and hissed :  
"What is it ?"

The little sailor shrank decorously away. "Here, Miss, take my glasses, and you can see for yourself."

She did so, and peered out diligently into the wet autumn night.

Presently : "I can't see anything," she grumbled, "and the rain's got down the collar of my oily, and has soaked through the elbows. I know there are waves, by the sound they make on the shingle, but I can't see them. Was there ever a blacker or colder night ? And I wish you wouldn't call me Miss."

"No, Miss—I mean Doctor. But if you look long enough till you get used to the dark, you'll see a submarine's periscope. I can pick it up now with the naked eye. It looks like a drain-pipe stuck up on end and going dead slow, and there's a wake of lighter water behind it. By James, Miss, look! It's stopped now, and is growing longer. Mr. Submarine's coming to the surface."

A conning-tower rose out of the night sea, and presently men sprouted from the top of it. The decks of the submarine did not show, and the little waves splashed diligently against the foot of the superstructure.

"Come up to get his bearings," commented Captain Kettle. "I wonder what water he has there; must be pretty shoal. Another fifty fathoms on the old course and he'd have piled her up hard and fast on the floor of Wales. Now, Miss—Doctor, I mean—you'll see him go astern again till he's reached deep water."

The girl clutched Kettle's arm and shook it. "You still won't believe me, and I still stick to it. She's come in here for petrol, as she did the time I told you about before. There, look! She's not backing out to sea again as you said she would. She's moving nearer."

"By James, Miss, you're right! She's creep-

ing north along the coast. Is this the exact spot where you saw her before?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't tell to half a mile or so, Captain. It was dark at the time."

Kettle groaned, but forbore to say: "How like a woman!" Instead he took back the glasses and kept them steadily fixed on the enemy below.

"She'll be out of sight if you don't take care. Let's run along after her."

"They'd spot us on the cliff-head here against the sky in less than two ticks. Lie down again, Miss, or I'll have to pull you. We may be on the edge of a big thing here, and you're going the way to spoil it. Lie down, Miss, I say. I'm in command here, and you've asked me to treat you as a man, and, by James, I'll do it if you don't sit tight, much as I should regret it."

"Oh, very well," said Dr. Brown meekly.

"I've got to own up, Miss, that the Dutchmen at sea since this war began aren't the fools they used to be. They've had sense booted into them during the last thirty years, and it's stuck, and now they're using it. There, you see, Miss, she hasn't gone far. That noise meant reversed propellers. They'd got her on to some cross bearings on the shore, and now they're stopping her, I should judge, over some exact spot. You stay here, Miss. I

must get some cross-bearings, too, on where she is now."

Dr. Mary Brown's voice showed a tendency to rise above the tone of her former cautious whisper.

"I'll come too. I'm half frozen to death, crouching here. And besides, the—the beastly Germans may land—and—and I should hate to be left alone."

"Take my overcoat and wrap yourself in that," said Kettle patiently, "and stay here. You can't crawl about on this cliff-top without being seen. I can. You needn't be scared of the Dutchmen's landing, as they won't have a boat. And you needn't be afraid of my not finding my way back to you."

"Not now you've left your coat," said Dr. Brown spitefully. "I suppose you're sure to return for that?"

"Certainly, Miss," said the sailor with simple truth. "You see, it's my best one. If I'd only known we were in for this rough and tumble, I'd have brought the other. I hate spoiling clothes. Good-bye for the present, and don't move, so that I'll know where to find you again."

Captain Kettle moved from the lady's side, and with the craft of an old stalker was promptly swallowed up by the darkness.

Now with regret it must be recorded that Dr.

Mary Brown was a disappointed young woman. Brown, the father, was an easy-going man, and well-off withal. He lived in Norfolk and bred prize cocker spaniels, and his hope was that Mary would stay at home till in due time she married one or other of some dozen eligible neighbours, and settle down near him. Mamma Brown, who was stout and placid, and famed throughout three counties for her begonias, coincided with these views exactly. But Mary, who once went to a lecture on Wasted Lives, stated she was not going to waste hers, and decided that her use lay in Medicine—*via* Girton.

She qualified in this intricate science, and was somewhat disillusioned in the process. Thereafter she tried in a desultory way for various appointments. Later, when these failed, she set up her plate in Wych Street on the strength of a grudging paternal allowance, and was still hoping for patients when the war broke out.

Instantly she conceived the notion of Doctor Mary Brown's Private Hospital for British Soldiers in France, and telegraphed for ample supplies. But Brown the father didn't approve of women doctors "messing about even women" in peace time, and he thoroughly disapproved of their "adding another horror for the soldiers maimed in war

If the girl had turned vet. (like some of them turn gardeners), and could doctor cockers, she might be some use," said Brown the father "As it is, she's getting a bit of a dam' nuisance."

"'Zactly, m'dear," said Mrs. Brown. "Just hold me this skein of wool, will yaw?"

So when a certain baroness (who shall otherwise be nameless in this chronicle), finding that the game of making herself a nuisance politically was put a stop to for the time being, thought she would look nice in a Red Cross kit, Dr. Brown was able to oblige her by coming into the expedition as surgeon.

The League-o'-Women's Hospital, after outstaying its welcome in the London picture papers, moved across to France, where it was known to the vulgar as the All-Skirt Warriors, and was avoided by those in authority. It wore the choicest thing in top-boots and a bushranger hat, and as long as it was peaceful and did nothing it was allowed to stay. When it began to flirt with the wounded subaltern in quantity, it was sent off home one-time, with a flea in its ear. And Dr. Brown, refusing shelter under the friendly ancestral roof, and feeling mightily ashamed of herself for the company she had fallen into, fled to the wilds of Wales to hide her scalding blushes. It was during one moonlit night of penitence that she saw a submarine sneak in and

suck up supplies from some unseen store beneath the seas.

In the first throb of interest she was minded to go with her news direct to the Admiralty. But with breakfast and reflection she changed her mind. She remembered the brutal treatment lately meted out to her by the Admiralty's sister institution, the War Office, and was minded to take the credit of whatever praise befel personally, and to sail for the moment under the somewhat forgotten banner of the suffragettes. As a point of fact, she cared not one straw for the creed of the suffragettes, but in war—which this was going to be—one needs a flag. Even pirates fly a skull and marrowbones, *argent on sable*.

As she professed no knowledge of seacraft, an executive was a necessity, and at once a name leapt to her memory. Years ago she had met Sir Owen Kettle for an hour on shipboard, and had never forgotten him. Here was her man, if only she could get him. She delved his address in Wharfedale from *Who's Who*, and took train for Grassington within the hour.

I pass over a somewhat thorny interview with Lady Kettle, who "though a business lady herself" regarded "female doctors as indelicate," and get on to the point where Captain Kettle, somewhat

by stealth, joined her at a six-house village on the Welsh seaboard. Lady Kettle disliked her husband having truck or dealing with any women whatever outside his own household, and made no bones about saying so, and the little mariner came armed to the fray with strict admonitions on these lines, as well as his own natural bashfulness.

The tale, when it had been told him at first had been sufficiently sensational, but it had grown thinner under discreet cross-examination. The lady was doubtful about locality, and she did not know if the submarine was British or German. No, she didn't think it could have been a fishing-boat she had seen that night; she was morally certain it must have been a submarine, though she could not describe it in any way, and she could give no details of how the vessel was getting the petrol inboard, or where it was coming from. Only she was convinced that was what the boat was there for. "You must trust a woman's intuition," said Dr. Mary Brown. But Captain Kettle didn't. He was always a man without imagination.

"If they've a lot of petrol tins anchored at the bottom of this bay," said Captain Kettle, "it's likely they'll have some sort of a buoy made fast to the end of the mooring."

"Then we could see it from the shore."

"Not necessarily if the buoy is merely a bit of wood just awash. But we could hunt for it, Miss, in a boat, if you think it worth while."

"Call me Doctor please. Of course it's worth while. I'll hoist my suffragette flag on that submarine before many days are over, when you catch it for me, Captain. And in the meanwhile I have a boat, a motor-boat, round at the fishing harbour. We can bring her here and leave her in that cove of rocks at the foot of the cliff there, when we're not using her."

This they did, and during three days quartered the sea without success, and Captain Kettle grew even more sceptical. But he stuck manfully to the night watching, which Dr. Brown soon found wearying. And then, to his surprise, came fulfilment, as has been recorded above.

Dr. Mary Brown has admitted that she had half a mind to follow Captain Kettle when he left her to stalk the submarine, but was deterred by the shrewd notion that he would shake her if she came up to him. She was sure he would shake her politely, but was confident he would do it efficiently. So being a young woman with a full sense of her own dignity, she decided to do as she was told for the time being.

But it was tedious work waiting. The Germans, as she could see through the glasses now that she had got accustomed to them, were full of activity. The submarine was still awash, and wavelets splashed in mimic surf at the foot of her conning-tower. There was little to attract the eye in that dark night unless one was looking for it specially. The Germans might be replenishing their petrol store, but Dr. Brown could not swear to it. In fact, if plain evidence was needed, she could swear to little, and she realized this and felt inclined (in a purely feminine way, of course) to swear at much.

And in the meanwhile Captain Kettle had disappeared into the blackness of the night, and might, for all she knew, have thrown up the whole affair in disgust and returned to his farmhouse headquarters and bed.

Then, like a trick in a theatre, clouds slid away from the moon, and a green-grey submarine and her people were shown dished up brilliantly on a glittering metallic sea. But as the scene was lit, a man crawled out from the broken water on her submerged after-deck, whipped a revolver from some pocket in his sodden clothes, and sent three shots in brisk succession. Two men on the conning-tower fell over into the sea. The third staggered, and in his turn produced a weapon. But his fire

was returned in style, and his knees collapsed under him.

The man on the submerged deck limped to the base of the conning-tower, climbed it, and emptied the remaining two shots from his revolver down the open hatch. Enough light came up this hatch to illumine Captain Kettle's face, and Dr. Brown shivered when for the first time she saw it in fighting trim. At the same time, she was thrilled with the exultation the female always feels for the fighting male, and, inconsistently enough, felt a sudden distaste for that plump and matrouly person, Lady Kettle. If only that unnecessary woman were out of the way, she, Mary Brown—"Pish!" said Dr. Brown, and frowned angrily.

Shots came from below, and the invader's own pistol was empty. He stripped two from the fallen Germans, and blazed away with these. He was deliciously resourceful. Then he clapped down the lid of the hatch, sticking an iron bar in it so that it should not shut completely, and then with a length of wire rope lashed it firmly in place. With this much to the good, he proceeded in leisurely fashion to wring the surplus water from his clothes and to knead his collar into reputable shape.

The submarine was tethered by nothing stouter than an armoured rubber hose to something unseen

in the black waters off her starboard quarter. She had no anchor down, nor so much as a line to the oil source, whatever it was. She was kept in position by her engines only, and was ready for an instant start at the smallest scare. The oil, by the way, was a heavy, tar-like stuff, and by no means the petrol which Dr. Mary Brown had diagnosed; and how it was stored at the bottom of the sea Captain Kettle did not know, and, for the moment, did not care.

His main business, for the time being, was to capture that German submarine intact. He felt at the moment he would like to have on his tombstone: "Inventor of the Wharfedale Particular Methodists. Also first to capture a German submarine."

Now, the Germans below-decks on their part by no means went to sleep. Dive they could not, by reason of an unshut hatch, but motor away for the open sea they could and did. The armoured hose pulled thin and burst with the first of the strain, and Captain Kettle to his disgust and annoyance was sprayed from head to foot with stinking fuel oil. But he saw then how the oil was stored beneath the waters of that Welsh bay.

Thereafter, he was swirled rapidly away towards the open sea. He tried at first to control things

somewhat with the conning-tower steering-wheel, and did, indeed, contrive to make the submarine take an alarming sheer towards the rocks. But they straightened her out smartly enough with the propellers, and then took matters out of her hands by disconnecting the upper deck wheel and steering her themselves from below. So the sailor blinded them by taking the coat of one of the fallen Germans and wrapping it round the head of the periscope and stopping it there with a piece of spunyarn, and then whilst casting around him for further resources of annoyance, came across a cigar-case and a box of lights on the floor of the conning-tower.

"Belonged to that first officer I shot," he mused. "Well, I hope he knew more about choosing tobacco than he did about looking after his ship. By James, I've got her like a sprit-sail-yarded shark. She can do nothing but bustle along on the top of the water like a blinded fool. Only trouble is, she'll blunder into somebody's sight if only she goes on long enough in this flurry, and I shall have to take help, as likely as not from some Navy man, instead of doing the job myself. By James, I should hate that. I must think a way out of this, and in the meanwhile I'll give them wet feet to keep them busy."

There was a roll of canvas, for sea-going bulwarks,

lashed down at one corner of the conning-tower's top, and from this Kettle contrived a very simple and efficient water scoop, leading from the bitts on the submerged foredeck, and delivering its contents through the gap which the iron bar caused in the fit of the conning-tower hatch. The interior of the submarine received from it a foaming cataract of sea-water. As a tribute to the scoop's efficiency the speed of the submarine was promptly eased, till her pace was too slow to force the water up from the water level below.

Captain Kettle shook his head doubtfully. "By James," he commented, "these beastly Dutchmen are getting on. They know enough now to get in out of the wet. They aren't the easy proposition they used to be. If I'd time I could write some poetry on that." He chewed hard on his cigar, and stared out thoughtfully through the night.

In the meanwhile Dr. Mary Brown's short supply of patience had completely evaporated. Moreover, her feet and her back were both unpleasantly cold. So she made up her mind to ignore Captain Kettle's explicit instructions, and got up with a haughty air, and with elevated nose marched resolutely down to the cove behind the rocks where her motor-boat bobbed to its moorings. Captain Kettle and her—*her*—submarine had disappeared seaward into

space without explanation, and she was going to see into the reason why without further delay. She might have a sneaking admiration for Captain Kettle—she might—well, that did not matter. The thing for the moment was to prove to this small man with the red torpedo beard that she was all of a woman, and not to be trifled with or neglected. And for the time being it may be freely owned that she had forgotten all about the suffragette flag, and was sailing under the banner of her own injured dignity. Whip up her submarine—here—from under her very nose, and walk off with it? She'd let him see.

She cranked up her engine, and for a wonder it started readily, and then tucking herself down to the wheel and advancing spark and throttle to the full, she swished hardily out into the darkness.

By luck the little zephyr of wind had dropped, and the sea was glassily smooth. The boat was fast, and Dr. Brown felt the exhilaration of her speed. What was going to be done when she reached the Germans she did not know, but she was firmly determined Captain Kettle should not do it without her. Of her life up to then she felt she had made a mess, but she saw visions of a brilliant future. Those visions embraced Captain Sir Owen Kettle. His position in the limelight should be little inferior

to her own. But he would have to alter some of his ways. He must be taught that lady doctors were the equals of any male practitioners, and the superiors of most. And, above all things, he must give up his detestable habit of praising patent medicines.

Captain Kettle, in a German officer's dry cap and overcoat, received her without enthusiasm. "Miss," said he, "I wish to James you were safely at home and in bed. This iron box is packed with Germans, and they're swine. There ought to be a law passed that no lady should go within a hundred fathoms of any German. But now you are here I'll not deny that your boat may have its use."

"Call me Doctor, please, not Miss. What is it you want? Our flag?"

Captain Kettle restrained his remarks. "Here," he said, "come alongside, please, " and I'll make you fast. You can step aboard here and tell the Germans through this slit in the hatch that you want a vote, and I'll get busy on something that matters. Starboard your helm please, Miss."

Doctor Brown stamped, but did as she was told. Presently the motor-boat, with stopped engines, rode to a tow-line alongside the conning-tower, with the sea-water slicing up between them. Captain Kettle stepped across to the smaller craft, and

busied himself inside her engine hatch. He emerged presently with a pair of wires.

"Now, Miss," said he in a whisper, "our Dutchman can't see through his periscope, and he's steering by compass. He's got a sort of pole-compass in the roof of his conning-tower, and he's getting his bearings now by looking up at it from underneath. These wires come from your sparking coil, and I'm going to take a turn with them round his binnacle. They'll make the compass cant either to the Eastward or the West—we shall have to find out by experiment which wire has to go on to which terminal, and I shall have to bring the bight towards the compass very gradually. We must go softly. These Dutchmen are not to be sneezed at nowadays; they're getting to know quite a thing or two of the white man's savvy; and if they guess we're tampering with their compass, they'll as likely as not do the bang opposite to what I want. So quietly does it."

"Ye-es," said the lady.

"Of course, Miss, as you say you're a doctor, you'll understand all about it, and will be quite competent to manage the trembler end."

Dr. Brown squeezed the little mariner's arm ecstatically. She had not the vaguest notion of what Captain Kettle was talking about, but she

felt that now at last they understood one another, and said so in a few well-chosen words. The sailor very nervously pulled his arm away, and climbed back to the submarine as fast as his wooden leg would let him, and thereafter found his orders attended to, frequently with correctness, and always with enthusiasm.

The process of deflecting the German's compass by an induced current was a delicate one, and officially Captain Kettle was no electrician. But a man who has earned his living as a master mariner in the British mercantile marine through any reasonable number of years is always competent to turn his hand to anything, from abdominal surgery to tea-planting. The real niceness of the operation lay in the fact that the little sailor had to carry in his head an invisible course over an invisible sea, and jockey the German's compass so that she should steer to it neither more nor less.

As luck would have it, the moon had slid back again behind coy clouds; the bold headlands of Wales had dissolved out into starless dark; and the ordinary man, stuck out there in that lonely sea with only a compass known to be lying, would have felt as hopeless as a blind puppy on a prairie. Captain Kettle, however, held on to his work with a brazen confidence. He probably had some glim-

mer of his bearings not to be guessed at by the lay mind, and if he had not, he showed no tremor; and, anyway, Dr. Brown, who "found the compass detestable even when it was working" (as she confesses in her Memoirs) had the fullest confidence in his skill and knowledge. She wanted to board the submarine; she even demanded this as a right, and the shy sailor, with the dread of companionable fingers on his shoulder, was hard put to it to keep her at a safe distance in the motor-boat.

Just as the chill of dawn was gripping them, they came in sight of the trawler.

To be precise they nearly ran her down, but by dint of some manipulation of wires that verged on the miraculous, Captain Kettle gave a jolt to the compass (and incidentally to the nerves of the German quartermaster below) and the submarine swerved like an eel and escaped the blow.

Now in the ordinary course of events, that should have been the beginning and end of the episode. German submarines are notoriously unhealthy for British fishing craft, and this one was as unmistakably German as the trawler (by her marks) was indisputably a Grimsbyman. The steam trawler *Ulfrida Crump's* she was by name, and the fishy smell of her caused Captain Kettle emphatically to spit. Her habits, however, were peculiar. She

sidled down alongside and began to talk—in German.

Captain Kettle had, as his record shows, the gift of tongues, but it had always been a matter of pride with him never to speak German. His habit was to force Germans with whom he came in contact to speak one of the civilized languages—English for choice. But in this process of strenuous tuition he had picked up a good understanding knowledge of the tongue, and it was of use to him now.

"Miss," he whispered huskily down to Dr. Brown, "lie down in the bottom of that motor-boat please, and don't shift till I tell you. They think by my cap and coat I'm a blessed Dutchman. There's going to be some fancy shooting in about ten ticks. The *Ulfrida Crump's* got into bad luck."

"I've—I've got a revolver of my own here."

"Then for the Lord's sake drop it over into the ditch. I'd be as nervous as a canary with a new bath if you started any fancy shooting down there."

The stream of voluble German from the steam trawler's pilot house changed in tone from civility to menace.

"If you don't stop that language, you crossed-eyed son of a Dutch thief," shouted the little sailor grimly, "I'll come across to that packet and kick your backbone through your hat."

The German gaped. Then, "*Gott strafe*——" he began, and lugged at something in his pocket.

"You must be a lot quicker on the draw than that, my lad," said Kettle as he shot him, "to have a chance of growing up in this wicked world. The rest of you aboard there, listen. The next man who tries to pull a gun, or to get on to that topside deck, drops too. And by James, let me tell you, you Dutchmen are a jolly sight easier to shoot than Upper Wharfedale rabbits, though less interesting when dead."

A man, with both hands thrust high above his head, stammered a reply: "But, Most Gracious, you do not understand. We are your relief ship. Our own was sunk. We took this, and transferred our supplies. And here we are as good Germans as yourself, though sailing in this condemned trawler."

"What did you do with the English crew? Can they tell tales?"

"Oh, that is all right, Gracious Herr. We set them swimming. You would have laughed to see them in their high boots. We laughed, I tell you. They did not swim for long. All is safe. This is war, and it does not do to leave these things to chance."

"I see. She carried about ten of a crew. I suppose?"

"Thirteen, Gracious Herr."

"It's an unlucky number. Unlucky for them, poor devils, and just as unlucky for you."

"*Herr Gott!* What——"

"Half a minute. How many of the blighters alongside you understand English?"

"English? What, you are English? Has our U-boat been captured? Say, are you English?"

"As a matter of birth, I am Welsh, though it is an item that is often overlooked by those who know me. But for working purposes you can call me English, and not be far out. There, I told you not to try and shoot, and now you've got it in the department where you stow the sausage, a very dangerous place according to the Doctors."

Captain Kettle slipped from his perch, and stood on the plating below, knee-deep in swirling seawater. A hailstorm of bullets whistled across the top of the conning-tower, and continued to whistle. The Germans had good aim, but little moderation. At intervals Captain Kettle peeped from the shelter of the conning-tower, and took rapid shots. He seldom missed. He had always been deadly with a revolver, and of late years on the Wharfedale farm, practice with a shot gun at rabbits which dodged in and out of the limestone rocks of Craven, had if anything smartened his eye.

A smothered voice came from the motor-boat below. "Are you killed, Captain?"

"As right as the mail, thank you, Miss. I've only one trouble."

"What is it? C-can I do anything?"

"If you could provide me with a rhyme to 'Submarine' I'd be happier. I've just been making up the dinkiest little verse you ever listened to, and it's stuck in the last line."

At this point a muffled risp-rasping noise obtruded itself on Captain Kettle's attention, and he looked up and noted that some one had pushed a hacksaw through the gap in the conning-tower hatch and was vigorously cutting at the wire rope that held it down. The sailor seized the end of the tool and pulled. The owner at the other end pulled too, and he was, if not the stronger, at least as strong a man. But Kettle with a flick broke the brittle blade, and then with a sharp wrench snapped the cast-iron spreader, and—"Uneasy lot these Dutchmen are," he commented. "If I don't look out they'll be giving trouble yet, and I suppose there must be thirty of them still stinking away together inside this tin box. I did design taking them ashore for the Government to pamper, but I'm sure the country would be better if I made good Germans of them here in the wet. As for those blighters on

the *Ulfrida Crump*, they've followed their beastly nature and laughed in the wrong place once too often, and they're going to hell fire as soon as it can be managed. Yes, Miss?"

"If you're really in earnest, would 'Britain's Queen' do for your rhyme?"

"Perfectly, Miss, and thank you greatly. We've a King in charge at the moment, but I can work in his lady wife all right. Let me think now. . . . 'Huns obscene' . . . Ah, got that swine with the blue nightcap fairly in the liver wing. That makes five I've bagged on the *Ulfrida Crump*, Miss. Not bad, for an early morning's shoot. There, I thought so. The blighters are sheering off out of pistol range."

"Oh, what are they going to do now?"

"Try and worry out how to communicate with their fellow-sausages in the tin coffin here, Miss, and then try to join forces and eliminate us. I tell you that bit of verse is coming into shape grandly, Miss."

"Please don't frivol, and for goodness' sake call me Doctor. Can't you see that everything's deadly serious? I do believe you're actually enjoying yourself."

The little sailor heaved an immense sigh. "Miss, it's abominable, but I've been in places I've liked

worse. You see, between you and me, up on the farm in Wharfedale there are moments (for a man that's spent a busy life) when it is a bit quiet; though, of course, there is always the chapel on Sunday to look forward to, and my sermon to get up. Lady Kettle," he added rather bitterly, "has had the advantage of occupying our pulpit these last two Sundays, and, if she's increased the congregation of the Wharfedale Particular Methodists, I'll eat my wooden leg. She's a clever woman, a vastly clever woman, Miss, but she's not got the knack of preaching to suit the stomachs of our chapel members, and that's a fact. I wish you could see our chapel, Miss, on a nice, rainy Sunday in autumn——"

"Look, Captain, look! The Germans are trying to press up that lid—thing."

"Then we'll give them some asphyxiating gases," said the little mariner genially, and thrust a revolver muzzle in through the crack in the hatch and fired three rapid shots. "There, those will ricochet grandly inside that tin box, and they can share the proceeds amongst them. Did it ever occur to you, Miss, that it's a terribly sad thing to be born a German? Since I've given up handling them at sea, and taken to the Ministry, I've often sent up a prayer that no more of them should undergo the

unpleasantness of being born. Fancy a world clean of Germans! There's a chance for poetry! My Great James!"

"Whatever is it, Captain?"

"Just something I thought of, Miss, though it is a hundred to one chance."

The little sailor climbed nimbly back to the top of the conning-tower, and made rapid inspection. At one corner was a small iron box, locked. With a neat blow of his sound foot he kicked open the lid. Inside were six switches—switches to the six torpedo tubes—each with its appropriate brass label.

"It's a hundred pounds to a case of gin they cut the connections when they left the top side here, and, anyway, I'm no torpedo-layer. Let me see now . . . that *Ulfrida Crump* is doing about eight point five . . . I'll give her two degrees."

With which decision he made cautious readjustments of his compass-deflecting wire, and set about training the submarine to the angle he sought. Then he threw over the switch to the bow tube.

The incredible happened. The Germans—the methodical, plodding, scientific Germans—had left the connections of the deck control intact. A 20-inch torpedo jumped out of the bow tube with a

splutter, and sped away, leaving a vivid wake of soda-water.

The Germans on the *Ulfrida Crump* saw her, and howled. They tried to change course and stop engines, but had no time to do either effectively. The steel fish hit them on the quarter with a shattering explosion. It carried T.N.T. enough to have blown up a battleship, and so made small bones of a trumpery steam trawler. And apparently the trawler carried a hefty wad of munitions for her friend the submarine. These went off piecemeal as the bits of her sank.

Captain Kettle lit another of the German captain's cigars, and felt that he was once more in the swim of things.

"All right, Miss," he called down to the motor boat, "you may sit up and look round now. There's nothing objectionable afloat. I'm sorry for the fish, that's all. Men that laugh like those men did aren't wholesome. Phew! haven't these fancy new explosives a bad smell to them? Well, there's one comfort, our fine tin yacht here is taking us quickly out into sweet air again. Haven't they whooped up the speed since we buzzed off that cracker?"

"What's their idea? Where do they think they are going?"

"If this compass was acting as Nature and Lord Kelvin intended, she'd be heading for the Wolf Rock, and then round the corner and down Channel for happy Dutchland. Oh, they've picked up navigation all right, these Dutchmen, and no error about that. You don't catch these new swine making an error of thirty minutes in their observations a matter of habit like the old crowd did. But—ahem!—they sleep unconscious of the wire, that goes about their tower higher."

Captain Kettle coughed and blushed, and looked rather coyly for Dr. Mary Brown's comment. That young woman, however, had not the vaguest idea of what he was talking about—because it remembered she "always found compasses detestable." She was horribly shocked at what had occurred. "And you've killed them all!" she lamented.

"I'm sorry there were so few, Miss. If you feel any qualms, try and remember those fishermen who got laughed at because they couldn't swim in top-boots. A lot of those would be married men with wives to support at home, and likely enough a parcel of youngsters. You know what fishermen are in that way, Miss. It doesn't do to let Dutchmen laugh at Britishers. It gives them ideas above their station."

"But you're not going to kill the poor fellows

in the submarine? You'll take them prisoners?"

The sailor pulled doubtfully at his red torpedo beard. "A dozen years back I'd have said yes, Miss. But these modern Dutchmen have learnt to shoot, and don't mind doing it. Besides, we haven't such a thing as a pair of irons about your ship."

"You'll have to take their parole."

"I'm afraid that's a French word, Miss, that they don't understand, and it would be a bit too much of a strain to teach them at this time of day."

"Well," said Dr. Brown doggedly, "you will own, Captain, that I thought out the whole of this scheme. What I want, and what you must help me to do, is to see that submarine sail into port under the suffragette flag, and her crew taken ashore under a suffragette guard. This means a great deal to me, Captain."

"Yes, Miss," said Kettle politely, "I see you're set on it."

"And don't you agree with me that what I've mapped out is the proper course? Say honestly, now."

Captain Kettle, in his humble way, set Great Britain first, but he was not a man to put such a ridiculous idea into bald words. Instead, he got

rather redder than nature had already made him, and said a little haltingly that they "must see," and, as an afterthought, added that he was sure they would both of them do their little best. And Dr. Brown pitied his hesitating speech, but felt sure he meant what he said. The worst of these merchant service captains was that they had such a pitiful lack of expression, thought Dr. Mary Brown.

The submarine was drawing a foot more water than Kettle had reckoned on, and so grounded before he expected. She was doing her fourteen knots at the time, and the jolt was severe. Captain Kettle was within an ace of being shot overboard, and, as it was, dinged himself rather shrewdly on the conning-tower rail. The motor boat stubbed violently on her painter, and Dr. Brown received a most indecorous tumble, which the sailor was too polite to notice till she had readjusted herself angrily on to her feet. The vessels lay on a narrow beach of sand at the foot of cliffs.

"Now, Miss," said Kettle, throwing away the sodden stump of his last cigar, "here's the place where you can be really useful. Can you fix up an electric fuse for a bomb?"

"What for?"

"Well, you see, Miss, I've found quite a store of

nice little handy bombs in one of this conning-tower's lockers—the sort they blow up surrendered steamers with. It's a regular Swiss Family Robinson's ship this, for handy stores."

"But it was arranged we were to set the crew free, on parole. I ordered you to do that not ten minutes ago. You can't have forgotten"

"Quite so, Miss. But I'm just wanting to get ready a little stand-by in case of accidents. It's just possible these Dutchmen may give their parole easily enough, and then forget all about it when they see there are only two of us."

"Oh, if you doubt them beforehand——"

"Nothing unpleasant meant, Miss, believe me. But I am a family man, and expected home again, and one can't afford to take unnecessary risks. The question is, can you fix up an electric exploder on to one of these bombs? It's out of my line, but I suppose with your college learning it will come as easy to you as boiling a saucepan of tea."

"I know nothing whatever about the subject," said Dr. Mary Brown shortly.

"Well, Miss," said the sailor with a sigh, "I suppose I must worry it out myself. I only hope I don't blow off any fingers in the process. These detonators are nasty things for an ordinary man to play about with."

Thereafter for the next hour he was busied over mysterious devices to this end, only breaking off once to shed his German cap and overcoat, and again to attend to some other enthusiast who had found another hack-saw, and was once more attempting to cut through the wire that secured the conning-tower hatch.

When his labours were complete, Captain Kettle got over the submarine's side and found the out-board ends of the broadside torpedo tubes. The boat had grounded on a falling tide, and he was able to work, standing on the sand, with the water just above his middle. He took it for granted that a live torpedo was ready inside each port, and slung bombs so that an explosion would set these off. He was a man who always liked full effects for his firework displays. Then he completed his wiring, took tests, and went ashore with the balance of the wires to where the motor boat lay high and dry beside a tidy lump of rock on the beach.

"Now, Miss," said he, "as soon as you have got half a mile away I will get things moving."

Dr. Mary Brown put her chin in the air. "I shall stay here," she announced, "and take the surrender myself."

There was a silence. She turned slowly, and

saw beside her a truculent-looking man, who was very different from the little sailor who had blushed so readily and done her bidding with such politeness.

"Get out of this, one-time," he ordered.

Dr. Brown did as she was told.

The sailor waded back to the submarine, climbed on board, climbed to the conning-tower top, and inquired for the officer in command.

"I am Captain Kettle. Who are you?"

A name and rank were given.

"I want your unconditional surrender."

"I give it. I have no alternative."

"You are to come up one by one, unarmed, go ashore, and attempt no retaliation. Do you promise that?"

"Again I have no alternative. I promise."

"In the name of yourself and crew?"

"In the name of all of us. I swear it on my honour."

"Good. Keep that promise in memory. I am casting off the down-haul on this hatch. In two minutes' time you may come out, unarmed, remember, one by one, and go off as instructed. Got all that?"

"Perfectly."

Captain Kettle waded ashore, walked to the

motor-boat, uncoupled one of the terminals, switched on the trembler, and stood by with the loose terminal in his hand. "Come along," he hailed "Come along, the first man."

A bearded officer shot up through the hatch, glared around him, and called below. Then he hailed the landscape generally. "Who do I surrender to?"

Captain Kettle bowed politely.

"You! You are not even Navy? You are alone?"

"Quite."

"Then I take back what I said."

"I felt sure you would," said Captain Kettle. "But I'll blow you and your whole outfit to the place you came from if you don't do exactly as I ordered."

"Pig-face!" yelled the German, and bawled down the hatch. A gush of armed men answered him, and then Captain Kettle connected the loose terminal.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the sailor came to his senses Dr. Mary Brown had his head on her arm, and was looking down at him with more tenderness than he considered wholesome for a married man.

"I thought the end of the world had come,"

she told him. "I never dreamt such an explosion could be possible. There is no vestige of anything left. And the cliff has fallen down on the top of where it was."

"I told you, Miss," said Kettle rather faintly, "I was a poor hand at arranging these sort of things."

"You are wounded, too. Let me examine you."

Captain Kettle pulled himself together, and stood up. "Oh, that's all right, thank you, Miss. I've only got a bit of a dint in the forearm."

"Well, I'll cut away your coat, and we'll see how bad it is."

The sailor stepped back, and took off the garment himself, and then felt in a pocket and produced a small old-fashioned pewter flask. "I'm glad that's not hurt, anyway, Miss. It is full of Horner's Perfect Cure, the best thing in the world for cuts and stomachic troubles."

"But, my dear Captain, you must not use a patent medicine at a time like this. You are really wounded, and, though you keep on forgetting it, I am really a doctor. I will dress it for you."

"I am sure you are what you say," said Captain Kettle soothingly. "But you see, Miss, this wound is rather a personal matter, and I wish it properly

attended to. I am going to dress it with Horner, and I am going to drink half the rest of the flask. Then all will be well. I will give you what is left, and if you use it with judgment, believe me, you will lay the foundation of a really valuable medical practice. With Horner's Perfect Cure, Miss, you can tackle everything that comes into the biggest hospital in London or South Shields. It's the last word in medicine, and, mark you, I know. I've tried everything that's advertised.

"I believe, by the way, Miss, I never told you where that submarine was getting her fuel oil from. They had it stored in a couple of old marine boilers from some wreck which were lying just under the surface of the bay. I could see them quite clearly."

## VI

### REJOINING AT ONCE

**W**E will call him Plough—Lieutenant John B. Plough, R.N.—because that name is not in the Navy List, and his own is. He had been on special leave at Marienbad “on urgent private affairs,” which in less technical English might be explained as an expedition to that German health resort with a view of inspecting a girl he had danced with twice at home, and trying to persuade her that her mission in life was to become Mrs. Plough. And from this idyllic occupation he had been torn by a bald telegram which commanded him to “Rejoin at Once.”

He wondered vaguely what was up. He had not seen an English paper for a week, and could not read German, and had heard no word about the threatened war. But he was too good an officer to question such an order. He packed his traps, saw the girl, explained the case to her in ten words, kissed her rapturously, much to her surprise,

and just caught the 5.40, without having time to register his luggage. Thereafter began his troubles.

The train lagged minutes, and half hours, and hours behind scheduled time, and finally gave up its attempt altogether. An order was passed for "All turn out." The line was commandeered for troops. Civil traffic must go round by so-and-so and so-and-so, which were apparently German junctions further east, but nobody seemed to have heard of them before. A train for that route would leave in six hours' time.

It was fifteen hours before that train got started, and even when it was under weigh a mule tram could have beaten it for speed. John B. Plough, being a Naval man, arrived in the train clean-shaven, well-fed, and rested. The balance of the passengers were be-draggled, and cross, and tired. Plough gave up his window seat in a first-class carriage to a middle-aged Englishwoman with a capable face, and went and stood in the corridor.

The train travelled on single lines through a country unknown to English tourists, and stopped at innumerable stations at which the platforms were all full of excited people. But progress northwards to the coast was sure if it was slow. At intervals officials, not belonging to the railway,

came into the carriages and stared rudely at the passengers. They passed insolent eyes over all non-Germans—especially the women—and made notes in pocket books which seemed to amuse them. Certain of the fathers and husbands and brothers got annoyed, and said things, though this did not in the least abate the nuisance. J. B. Plough said nothing. He wanted to get home.

Finally the train drew in to the outskirts of a Port—what Port must be left vague here, for reasons which will appear—and official vigilance increased. A spectacled man in uniform—everybody seemed to be in uniform here—came into the carriage with six aggressively armed soldiers at his heels.

“Passports?”

They none of them had one. An American, with dry humour, explained that Cooks had told him passports were only needed now in the uncivilized parts of Europe.

“Arrest all these pig-dogs,” said the official, and went on to the next carriage. And arrested they were—children, women, and men.

Thereafter came a most galling part of the exodus. The streets of the Sea Port were crammed with people, troops for the most part, and all jeered and hooted as the prisoners were marched through

them. The officer of their escort seemed to possess little of the boasted German order and method. He dragged them from office to office, and from prison to prison, arguing and expostulating with the keepers of each, and every time being sent on somewhere else. The prisoners lagged and expostulated, but the bayonets of the escorts pressed them into movement, and the weak ones limped along as best they could. Plough had a child on his back, and the middle-aged Englishwoman he had talked to in the train, on his arm, by the time they reached a destination that seemed a final one.

This looked a private house, was in the Wilhelm Strasse, and turned out to be their captor's personal residence. He proceeded to arrange the forty prisoners in front of him and pompously to examine them.

The majority claimed to be, and probably were, Americans, and produced letters and other documents to prove it. Also being tired and angry, they told him exactly what the little old United States would do when their President got busy, and woke up to the fact of his insignificant existence.

This being patently true, probably frightened Jack-in-Office, but like Pharaoh of old it also hardened his heart, and he refused to let them go. So they were herded apart for the time being in

another room, with a couple of fixed bayonets to keep them soothed. The French were similarly filtered out, insulted, and set apart. There remained Plough, and the middle-aged woman of the train whose name he did not know.

"Names?" They gave them.

"English?" Certainly.

"What relation to one another?"

"None," said Plough.

"Liar," said Jack. "You are son and mother. I have seen you arm in arm."

"Evidence seems hardly conclusive," suggested the Naval man, who was used to sifting testimony.

The lady coloured with annoyance at being thought old enough to have such a strapping son.

"Zol You show confusion, because I haf der truth discovered. You shall be shut up together, and if I had my way, on to-morrow you should be shot, you treacherous pig-dogs of English that dare to make war on Germany. Away with dem."

Shut up together they were, in a small bare room at the top of the house, but the supply of bayonet-bearers having run out of stock, a locked door was considered enough for them.

Plough went to the window, "Phew! four

stories from the ground, and not so much as a fall-pipe to climb down by. And we're at war with Germany, by gad, and I'm here."

"And you're in the Navy?" said madam.

"How did you find that out?"

"Well, for one thing you carry your trade mark about with you plainly, and for another you were walking about Marienbad with a young lady who is a customer of mine, and I asked who you were and got told."

"Sorry I didn't see you at Marienbad."

"Not at all. We are in different sets, and likely to remain so. But we've got an interest in common. We both want to get out of here. You, I presume, wish to rejoin your ship. I have a big millinery business in Bradford that will go to pieces if I'm not there to look after it; and I've two daughters, too, who will want me, though," she added as a tart afterthought, "they aren't anywhere near so old as you."

"Eh?" said Plough, who didn't quite follow this last on the spur of the moment. "Oh, I see. Yes, it was pretty beastly rude of that bumptious ass downstairs. Now, if he'd only guessed us as brother and sister, what?"

"That would have been quite as impossible as the other," said madam uncompromisingly. "Let's

get to the point. You, I suppose, would risk a good deal to get home?"

"I'd risk my neck," said the sailor simply. "But I don't see any way out of this room."

"Well, I do. The question is, if I help you out of here will you take me along with you as far as you go?"

"I shouldn't care to risk it. You see, pardon my putting it bluntly, but you're a woman."

"I've reason to suspect it. But when it isn't a case of walking, which I frankly admit I can't do in these absurd shoes, I'm tougher than most men. Come now, Mr. Plough, I know the way out and you don't. Will you take me?"

Lieutenant John B. Plough hesitated for a moment, frankly looking madam over. Then, "it's a deal," said he, "and if anything happens to you—well, it'll have happened to me first. Now, where's the way out?"

"Through that door."

"Door. Why, my good lady, that's wall."

"Also door. It's papered like the rest of the wall, but I noticed the keyhole, and whilst you were staring out of window I opened it. It leads to the next house."

"And after we get there, what then?"

"I leave that to you, partner," said madam,

giving him the State curtsey she taught to customers who bought Presentation Gowns.

John B. Plough's grin wrinkled up his face. "Madam," said he, "you're a daisy. The Lord, He only knows what amount of Hoch-der-Kaisers there are in the next house, and if we're caught we're liable to be tried for anything between simony and arson; but if you're game to come with me, I'm game to take you. And, blow me, if you'll teach me stitching I'll teach you sailor's."

"Go on into that house," said madam, "and don't talk twaddle. I want to get home to my work."

The passage of the next house proved to be the easiest thing imaginable. They went inside, found the stair, and crept down it like cats to the next landing. They were undisturbed. They crept down the next flight, and the next, and—the next, and stood in a barbarously furnished hall, full of light from raw electrics. There was not a sound or a whisper in the whole house.

"All out bean-feasting," said Plough, "and arranging which estates they'll have when they have taken England. Come along, partner."

"Madam, please," said the lady, and pulled the latch of the front door.

"Half a minute. Do you know this city?"

"I don't even know the name of it."

"H'm, I'm ahead of you there. It's——. Now let me worry out where we are and how the river-front lies. Don't speak for at least fifteen seconds. . . . Right, I've got it. We must bear east with a bit of north in it. Salt water's my pigeon, and as we've got to cross it to get home, we may as well make for it at once. Now let me open that door, part— madame, and we'll get under weigh."

Wilhelm Strasse, when they stepped out into it, closing the house door behind them, was a mere crowd of people. All were talking, and most looked important. A German occupies far more standing-room for an ordinary conversation than is sufficient for the Briton, by reason of his language being obscure and the necessity of eking it out by dumb show, and when his hand semaphoring is cramped by a crowd, it is enough to irritate him at once.

"Madam," said John B. Plough with an explanatory wave that was really a very passable imitation of the genuine article, "you've got to carry in your head the bed-rock fact that these people are all as mad as hay, and if they drop to the fact that you come from Bradford, England, they're just as likely as not to lynch you. Do you speak German?"

"Not a word."

"Quite right. It's a filthy language. But you musn't let any one hear a word of even your worst English. Happy thought—we're both deaf and dumb."

"I don't even know the deaf and dumb alphabet."

"Nor do I. But we're the educated kind with a sort of Admiralty code of our own. Madam, I'm not joking; you must look serious and keep it up."

The next street was quieter; and the next street after which they branched into was quieter still.

"I do feel lonely out of that crowd," muttered Plough. "This is just the place for some busy ass to spot us for what we are. Keep it up, madam. Here are two heroes coming across the road to ask why and wherefore."

Two men came and planted themselves firmly across the pavement, and put questions in rapid German. Plough replied in his best imitation deaf and dumb. One of the Germans rocked with laughter. The other said spitefully: "Zo! English spies. We will take you to the polis."

"I doubt it," said John B. Plough, and laid stringent hands on the outside ear of each, and bumped their heads violently together.

The two inquirers collapsed into a limp heap on the pavement. Plough plucked the lady by the

arm, and ran with her round the next corner, and the next corner after that.

And then: "You really must try and talk more realistic deaf and dumb, madam," said he, "or you will get us into bad trouble presently."

"That's right, lay the blame on me," said she rather breathlessly. "How like a man!"

"I'm sorry your first wasn't a success," said John B. Plough with a grin, "but there may be better times coming. Cheer up, madam. Here's the water front. Now we'll begin to move."

They stood on the string-piece of a wharf, looking upstream and down, through an opalescent river-mist; and to them, up some weed-covered steps, there suddenly arrived a man in uniform. He stopped, stared at them, and then cried: "Zo, und again, Eenglish."

"Well, don't make a song about it," said Plough.

"You admeet? Zo! Den you come along mit me."

"Got an appointment elsewhere," said Plough, and clipped the man under the jaw. He tripped backwards over the string piece, and fell with a splash into the river.

"He'll drown," said madam, shivering.

"He probably will if he can't swim," said Plough philosophically. "He should have thought of that

before he started being impertinent to a comparative stranger. These Germans always are so unmannerly. But he's left a boat tied up at the bottom of these stairs, and I guess we'd better use it. Mind your skirts against the weed and the mud, and for the Lord's sake don't skid."

"You go first," said madam, "and help me down."

The boat, once it was cast off from the stairs, swung down stream, and in the charge of a strong ebb, sped away towards the river's mouth. They whirled past half a dozen destroyers, which blazed with light, and were alive with men.

"I thought we should have been stopped there," said the sailor, "but there's evidently nothing doing. And we're told in the text-books to look up to the business methods of these Germans. Got your wind back yet, madam?"

"You look after the boat, and never mind me. Why are you going stern first?"

"Because I can see better front ways than through the back of my head. The ebb's taking us five knots, and that's quite fast enough for a clumsy tub like this. We shall be coming across shipping hung up to moorings soon, if they haven't removed the buoys. I want to try my soft eloquence on the packet that's nearest the sea."

The fairway was full enough of life. Big steamers were coming up for sanctuary against British raiders; coasting craft whose business was ended, were hunting for mud berths; and a tug in charge of the last four-masted sailing ship that was to win home for many disastrous months, hooted dismally to show her importance. And moving amongst these were the launches and picket boats of an anxious Navy. The small rowing boat with its two occupants was far too insignificant an object for notice amongst hurrying interests such as these.

At last they drifted down to the line of the outer moorings, and found there one steamer, where in normal times there would have been twenty.

"A hulking 2000-ton collier, with the coal still in her," announced Plough. "Kind of ship they build on Tyneside by the mile, and cut off in lengths as ordered, and stick a bulkhead across the ends for bow and stern. She's no accommodation ladder, madam. Can you climb a Jacob's staircase?"

The lady bit her lips. "I'll have to. I must get home."

"Mind your eye, then," said Plough, and ran his boat alongside. He made fast his painter to a dangling davit fall, and helped madam up the uneasy ladder. A fat man appeared from above

and handed her over the rail. Plough followed, and addressed him.

"You the master?"

"Captain's ashore, if that's what you mean."

"Ah, yes, of course, he would be."

"He was fetched by the police."

"Like them, the busy brutes. I see you've steam. Well, we'll get under weigh at once."

"Look here, mister man, I'm mate of this packet, and in charge, and I'm the one that gives the orders. Who the hell are you?"

"I am Lieutenant J. B. Plough, of the Navy, and I've come here to take you home, because you don't seem able to do it yourself. Call up the chief engineer to let me know the instant he can give me full steam, and then you can unshackle from the buoy and we'll be off."

The fat mate scratched his nose with a dirty finger nail. "And you—as representing the Navy—assume all responsibility?"

"Any God's quantity of it. Now get a move on, Mr. Mate, or we shall have the German Fleet round here presently wanting us to sign a stack more of official forms in triplicate."

"The Lord preserve us from any more documents," said the mate piously, and jumped for the engine-room.

Steam was ready for full speed—which was nine knots—and the chief himself brought word that in half an hour's time he "could whack her up to nine-point-five."

"Been in the Navy myself, sir," he added, "as a tiffy, and glad enough to rejoin again if you can get us home out of this. If I may suggest, sir, the lady had better have my room. The old man's cabin is hardly decent. He's papered it with portraits of his lost loves till there isn't space left for so much as a shaving-glass."

"Make it so," said Plough. "And, Mr. Mate, when I take the strain off her with the engines, just unshackle from the buoy with as little noise as you can manage. If you started playing a tune with your windlass, we'd have some one coming to inquire why. They're a desperate lot of busy-bodies up there at the Port."

The unwieldy collier was, of course, lying head up stream. Lieut. Plough jockeyed her round between the narrow limits of the fairway, and then rained down the handles of his engine-room telegraph to full speed ahead, and set a course for home. Then he began to equip ship and crew for war.

He tackled the crew first. Could any of them speak German fluently? Two of them did—for

the very sound reason that they were Germans. They were a couple of deckhands who had run to sea to escape the conscription, and they were both very frightened men at the idea of being caught by their compatriots.

Lieutenant Plough examined them with a thoughtful eye. "There is not much to choose between you as regards physiogs. You both look German enough to play in a band. Now let's see how you can give a word of command. Suppose you're a full-fledged skipper. Say, 'Lower away those boats.' Say it in German, and say it as if you meant it. You, first."

The man let off a sudden bawl.

"Now you."

Number two man yapped the order in true officer's style.

"Yes, you're the better of the two. Now, which of you is about the build of your late skipper?"

The second man grinned, and believed he was.

"Right. Go you to the master's room and rootle out a full kit of uniform—coat and cap, and the more brass binding it has on it the better. Then come back to this bridge. I may want you to appear as captain here, and the more trigged out you are in uniform, the more you'll appeal to the German official mind. Mr. Mate?"

The mate waddled to the upper bridge.

" Well ? "

" Say ' sir ' when you speak to me. Got that ? "

" Yes—sir."

" Good. Then I want two big heavy weights, up to a ton, or a ton and a half, on the foredeck there."

" There's a young locomotive boiler down under number two hatch on the top of the coals, if that will do—sir."

" Derrick carry it ? "

" Not without preventer stays—sir."

" Then rig them, and get off your hatch, and heave it up on deck at once. What about number two weight ? "

" I can't think of another—sir."

" I can. There's that forrard winch. Unbolt it from the deck, cast off the steam pipes, and tell me when you have it adrift. And, just one other thing. Work silently. There's a fog coming on, and it will carry sounds like a telephone. Hullo, there's madam." He jumped down the upper bridge ladder, and stood before her. " Now I thought I'd got you comfortably stowed away in a clean, warm room, out of harm's way. You really mustn't come out on deck here."

" I don't want to be a burden to you. The room was clean, certainly. But warm! It was

like a greenhouse. And the smell of oil! Perhaps you didn't know, but the cabin I was given opened right on to the engine-room. I should have been sick if I'd stayed there another minute."

"My good woman, if necessary, be sick. Other people have tried it and survived. If you're spotted out on deck here by the chap I'm expecting, it's all up with us—and, by gad! there he is, away on the port bow. Here, this is the skipper's drawing-room. In you go."

He hustled her into the chart-house, slammed the door behind her, and ran up to the bridge. "Quartermaster, see that cruiser broad on the port bow?"

"Yessir."

"Bear down to her, and if she moves, follow her."

"Yessir. Beg pardon, sir, but she's a Dutchman. We passed her coming in this morning. She's their *Hula*."

"Quite right," said Plough drily. "I happened to be having a drink in her wardroom myself at Kiel not two months since. Now, you there, in the skipper's togs and the German tongue, come up on topside here, and listen. I'm heading for that German cruiser over yonder, because if I didn't she'd head for me, and overhaul me in about ten minutes. (Confound her beastly searchlight.)





You're to pose as skipper here, and pretend this old tub's under a German charter. Stop your engines when you come within hailing distance, and sing out and ask her if she is the ship you were sent to bunker. She'll say (or I hope she will) that she isn't. Then waggle your hands, and ask them if they can tell you where the henkers the boat you are after, is to be found. Say you got your instructions by telephone, and the line was bad. Say you thought the name of the ship that wanted coaling was the *Lieben*—there's about a five to one chance she may be here—and you were to stand on and off across the harbour mouth here till you found her. You must use your wits, my lad, because, I take it, you'll be hanged if you're caught, and, anyway, I shall be squatted down under the lee of the weather-cloth here to attend to you if you make a hash of it. Grasp all that ? ”

“ Yes, saire.”

“ Then carry on.”

The ruse, to John B. Plough's glee, succeeded faultlessly. No ; the cruiser was fully bunkered. Yes, the *Lieben* was cruising in company with her, and was stationed to s'uthward, and was very likely expecting a collier. Sorry for troubling : Not at all. These mistakes will happen, and shore telephones are the devil, anyway.

"In German, now," Lieutenant Plough hissed from under cover of the weather cloth, "tell your quartermaster to starboard his helm, you owl, and telegraph the engine-room for full speed ahead."

The man did this with full Teutonic formalities, and the war steamer and the collier parted with speed. Once more J. B. Plough turned to face his lady passenger.

"Yes," he said testily; "what is it now?"

"That room you put me in is disgraceful. I lit a match and saw the photographs on the walls. I never felt so insulted in my life."

"Well, you're ahead of me, my good woman. I haven't been into the room, and I haven't seen any photographs; and, if you'll take the tip from me, you'll go back and not light any more matches, and then you won't see them either. You can't stay out here on deck, anyway."

"I won't go back—that's flat. There's another kind of smell in there—of clothes, and people, and herrings—and it makes me feel deathly sick. Couldn't I come out if I put on that long oilskin coat that's hanging in the corner, and the sou'wester? I should look like a man then."

"If you tuck up your petticoats as well, and put on a pair of sea-boots. Madam, this isn't a comic opera. It's war. And colliers don't bring

their women to sea. A hair out of place may easily mean death for the whole crowd of us. So, if you still insist on butting in to where you aren't wanted, you know how to dress the part. But I wish to heaven you'd keep under cover and be sick in private."

Plough ran the collier on the southerly course in search of *Lieben* (which he especially did not wish to find) till he was sure *Hula* was not following him, and then turned back on his course for home. "And that," said he, "puts us through their light cruiser screen. Another four miles, and we ought to get to where their destroyers are strung out in front. If only this infernal fog would come down good and thick in regular North Sea fashion, instead of letting itself get thin in patches, it's ten to one we'd slip through without being sighted."

The chief engineer came to the upper bridge, and saluted Navy fashion. "Beg pardon, sir, but any time you're going to slow down and want fog, if you can only give me sixty seconds' warning on ahead through the voice-tube, I can arrange it."

"How's that?"

"We've as cargo good, hard steam coal. For our own bunkers we have some of the dirtiest sludge ever shot out of a Tyneside coal-drop. If

the firemen are artists, they can make steam with it—if they've me to look after them. But if it's fired into the furnaces in the ordinary way, it simply blows straight out of the stack. I can always have it shovelled in that way if you want a smoke, sir."

"Good!" said John B. Plough. "That may just save our bacon. Just you hop below one-time and stand by to do it if I call down a warning. We may want that smoke inside ten minutes from now."

They did. The fog on which Plough had been relying, instead of becoming more solid, grew wispy and thin. Clean alleys of pure air cut through it here and there, and the coal-boat dodged in and out of the solid masses of vapour.

"If only the moon would pop out now," said Lieutenant Plough, "we'd be lit up like a theatre. According to their own textbooks, they ought to have six destroyers—or, at any rate, big torpedo-boats—strung out across here, and, as they're so bran-new to war, they're hardly likely to make an exception of to-night. Confound them! I wish they'd let me get home peaceably. I feel uncommonly out of it as admiral of a collier."

"*Wir-r-r-umph!*" said a shell hurrying past the coal-boat's bows.

"Cheer-o!" said Plough. "There she spouts!"

and rang off his engines. "Below there! That the chief? Good! Let's have your worst class of smoke in the smallest possible time. There's a Dutchman somewhere slap on top of us, and I want to try a game on him."

The smoke lingered—hours it seemed to Lieutenant Plough, though in point of fact it was only fifteen seconds—and the enemy switched on a searchlight and made the fog opalescent. He could hear the destroyer nosing this way and that through the thickness, going at a big pace ahead, then at the full of her speed astern, and on every slant edging nearer.

Then, providentially, the fog thickened, and evil-smelling smoke also began to billow forth from the stack, thick, and glutinous, and black. "Fore-deck there—Mr. Mate!" Plough hissed out.

"Ay-aye—sir."

"Heave up that loco boiler chock-a-block, to your starboard derrick, sway outboard, and make fast with a hemp stopping on the wire as I told you. When you hear me whistle, cut."

A winch clacked and grunted, and a sheave screamed. Plough swore at the noise, and pulled the string of his syren to drown it. The fog might clear, or the smoke thin—it was now or never.

The destroyer raced briskly up to where the great steam whistle boomed.

It was not the smallest use trying the German skipper dodge here. Destroyers in the outside line do not coal at sea. Lieutenant Plough sung out to have a Jacob's ladder put over the rail abreast of the foremast, and waited, leaden whistle in mouth.

The German destroyer swung up through the murk in a bustle of hurry and importance. She sheered round with one reversed propeller when she caught the collier's loom, and ran smartly up alongside. Her men stood on her deck, armed like pirates, and all ready to board. "Surrender, you beastly Britisher!" sung out a bearded officer on her bridge, as the sides of the two ships rasped together.

Plough blew his whistle; knives cut the stopping of the winch wire, and the huge steel boiler, weighted to the brim with water, dropped like a stone on to the flimsy decking of the vessel alongside. It hit her between her two foremost funnels, and shore through thin steel plate and angle iron as though they had been so much pie-crust.

One of her own boilers shot up with a whisk of steam and white-hot coal. Another boiler followed. Then a magazine created a volcano of

its own, and then the war heads of the deck torpedos added their quota to the inferno.

On the moment of impact Plough had rung for "Full speed" from his own engines, but the series of explosions had begun and ended before the ex-naval artificer below had got speed on her. The collier winced and reeled to the shocks, but the damage she received was practically nil. All her plates, all her frames were backed with buttresses of coal. She was packed with coal from floors to deckbeams, and was about as impervious to shock as a granite pier-head. The exploding destroyer spurned her away, but did not damage her.

"If I could own up to sinking that joker," said John B. Plough when at last the collier drew clear, and was plunging away at her normal nine knots through the friendly darkness, "the Admiralty would give me a tin medal. As it is, I guess my pigeon is to sing low. I'm an awful duffer at writing reports and giving explanations of anything outside routine——"

An oilskinned figure tapped him sharply on the arm. "Do you call that fair?" asked his passenger.

"I call it jolly smart, if you ask me. There are no Queensberry rules in this game. It's war—plain, naked war—and war's hell. If I didn't sink, burn, and destroy an enemy's ship when I

got the chance, the taxpayer who stumps up my wages would grumble. And you wouldn't like him to do that, would you, madam?"

The lady shivered. "If it wasn't that I'm absolutely bound to get home, I wish I'd never come. You must have killed twenty of them."

"Sixty, I hope," said Plough.

\* \* \* \* \*

They ran into Harwich without further interference, and Lieutenant John B. Plough went ashore in the boat he had stolen from a stranger in a German port, without saying good-bye, or asking anybody's leave. He judged quite rightly that the fat mate would acquire merit for bringing a valuable steamboat and cargo home out of the jaws of Total Loss, and did not concern himself about that officer's feelings any further.

He was apologetic only to his lady passenger as he handed her out on to a beach and kicked adrift the rowing-boat that had carried them.

"Sorry I've had to 'come the quarter-deck' over you once or twice, madam, but we've been in some tightish places, and they didn't bear monkeying with." He grinned at her affably all over his red, clean-shaven face. Women always said he had a most in gratiating smile. "Come, now, we'll go up to the Railway Hotel and have a good

dinner and a bottle of pop, and I bet we part good friends after all."

"I am obliged to you," said the lady stiffly, but I do not dine alone with young men in the Navy. I have my reputation to think about just as much as other people. I thank you most heartily for bringing me home, and you must excuse my getting familiar and offering you advice when you killed all those poor fellows on that destroyer. I was rather upset at the time. I wonder if I might ask one more favour?"

"Certainly, my——certainly, madam. Ten, if you like."

She opened her hand-bag, and from it gave him a small pack of cards. They read:

MADAME ARTHUR.

MODES ET ROBES.

Manningham,  
Bradford.

Millinery  
a Spécialité.

"If you would distribute those amongst your lady friends, it would be a great help to me. You may assure anyone you introduce that prices will be made most reasonable to her throughout the War, if she says she comes from you."

## VII

### THE LADY KILLER

**T**HE bullet entered the peat wall of the butt with a luscious *plop*.

Captain Kettle continued to keep his eye on the particular bird he had singled from the advancing pack of grouse, swung his gun judiciously ahead of it, and fired. The bird dropped neatly. He got another behind with his second barrel, marked their position with empty cartridge cases on the wall of the butt, and congratulated himself pleasantly on the neat right and left as he reloaded. Then he turned about and inquired tartly from the spaces of the moor as to who the devil had the impudence to shoot at him.

There was no doubt about it being a bullet. In the lamentable event of being peppered by a neighbour in the next butt, the grouse shooter generally registers the marks on his person, never on his butt. Also grouse-butts are more or less in line, and shot-gun attacks (however much they can be explained away) are always on the flank. This was from

some sector of the rear, as the ugly hole in the wet peat abundantly proved. Further—lady novelists notwithstanding—rifles are not in common use for the purpose of grouse shooting.

“ Now I wonder,” the little mariner mused, “ if that was meant for me ? ”

The answer came promptly. Another bullet plopped into the butt, and Captain Kettle felt that he would have to miss the rest of that drive. He walked round to the rear of the butt, lit himself a fresh cigar, placed this with its burning end up-wind so that it would emit a noticeable smoke, and crawled away, gun in hand, on a tour of reconnaissance. Further *plops* announced that the stranger was aiming at the smoke and trying to shoot him through the butt.

The sound of the shots had not come to him, so he knew the sniper must be at a good distance. He crawled first to the next butt, which happened to shelter his host, and made announcement :—

“ Mr. Carnforth, sir, don't look up, and please go on shooting. Some blighter in the rear has had the impudence to bombard me with a rifle, and I'm going back to take down his name and address.”

“ Gee ! ” said Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., “ that'll be our friend the spy. He didn't seem to put you off your shooting. That was an uncommon neat

right and left. Bit above your average form with grouse."

"I was never able to take up game shooting till I'd left the sea, sir, and on the farm in Wharfedale we have mostly rabbits. I hope I'll be back again for lunch, sir, but if I'm not, please don't wait."

"Can't I come too? The pair of us would have more chance of catching your pal than you will alone. And after all, it is my moor, and so I ought to have a say on what's shot on it."

"Better not, sir. You must keep on remembering that you are a Member of Parliament and your job is to talk, not to do things. I shall be back for that luncheon if it can be managed. I saw a steak and kidney pie put aside for the shooting hut this morning that I want to see more of."

Captain Kettle, however, did not turn up for that pleasant shooting lunch, and his butt was empty for the rest of the day. Carnforth parried inquiries from the other guns about his "naval friend," by suggesting that he had "been called away O.H.M.S. The chap does a good deal in that line on the quiet I believe, but for the Lord's sake don't say I told you so, or he'll bite my head off. You know what these special service fellows are."

The sailor by means best known to himself, not

back to the house in time for dinner that night, dressed in five minutes—for a man who never had much practice, the way he could tie a dress tie bordered on the miraculous—and came down looking as if he had stepped out of a bandbox. He played an extremely good knife and fork at dinner, got outside three quarters of a bottle '70 port after it, and then settled down in the billiard room (which is really part of the hall) within easy range of a box of Carnforth's five-inch Coronas Colorados. He was smoking the seventh of these when the last of the other guests thought "bed was the best idea that occurred to him just then," and Carnforth mentioned that he "thought the beggars would never go. I'll mix you another whiskey and soda. And now kindly tell me what you've been playing at all the afternoon. I bar a man that you've asked to shoot who goes and bags all the sport to himself."

"Well, sir, those peat hags at the back of Cow Ghyll butts weren't intended for a gentleman of your generous figure to scramble through."

"You leave my figure alone, you one-legged ruffian. I'll walk you level from here to Pateley Bridge for a tenner—no, I won't. Go on."

"There's nothing much to tell. I had a general notion of my sniper's direction, and set out to work up to l'oard of him. There was a bit of a breeze

and I thought he would never hear me, and he didn't. He kept on pegging away at that spot below my cigar smoke, in the hopes of hitting me in the back through the butt. When I'd got level with him—and I tell you sir it's cruel hard work on a hot August day making a passage through those hags——”

“ Even for a man who hasn't a pot belly.”

“ For any one, sir. Well, I just worked up to l'oard, and he spotted me just as I was within gunshot, and started to lift his rifle.”

“ Go on, man. Go on.”

“ Oh, I just gave him two barrels of number five. My gun makes a nice large pattern at seventy yards, and I guess I didn't leave much of him without a pellet to remind him he'd been taking liberties. He wore a shooting hat just like yours sir, and a well used burberry.”

“ Get on, Captain. You're a rotten hand at telling a yarn. Did you gather him ? ”

“ I did not. I just turned tail, and ran away here.”

“ You what ? ”

“ Ran as near like a hare, sir, as an artificial leg would let me. You see, I gathered from remarks when that hail of shot got home that he was a ' she. ' It's one of the many disabilities of the other sex, sir, that when they want to swear, and really have

cause, they don't know how to do it efficiently. I'm a modest man, Mr. Carnforth, and I felt too ashamed of listening to stay there any longer. And, of course, the lady wouldn't have been hurt really, only stung at seventy yards, though I once did drop a woodcock with the choke of that gun at seventy-five."

"Hum," said Carnforth, "I don't call this business. You discover that our spy is a woman—which I will grant is a good step in advance. But you have had her in your hands, and let the creature go. Theoretically, in both the Services, men have been hanged for less."

"Well, sir," said Kettle rather stiffly, "I am neither in the Navy nor in the Army, and I don't scrap with women. I leave that for you politicians, sir. I've felt more uncomfortable than you can think, sir, at the idea of having shot her."

"Quite regardless of the trifle that for a good hour she was trying her best to murder you. Highly quixotic, I'm sure. Pity you're not a bachelor, and could end the tale with the usual wedding-bells. I suppose, by the way, she was supremely beautiful?"

"She'd a figure like a pear, and one of the homeliest faces I ever saw. But that doesn't make her any the less woman, sir, or excuse me for filling her with shot-corns."

"Ah," said Carnforth thoughtfully, "I wonder if your lady friend is also a friend of mine. Pear-shaped figure, and an ugly face you say. Pince-nez, by any chance?"

"Plain steel-rimmed spectacles, sir."

"We're getting warmer. A round pug-nose, and a good flourishing black moustache, eh?"

"Her nose might be as you say. As regards the other matter, sir, I should never dream of noticing such a thing on a lady."

Mr. Martin Carnforth hit the edge of the billiard-table and hurt his hand. "I bet a thousand acres of grouse-moor to a keg of sourkraut I know the lady's name and late address. We're getting into deep waters. Did you ever come across Hermann Vogelheimer?"

"I did, sir, half-a-dozen years ago, and wonder I didn't leave my mark on him."

"Oh, what was the trouble?"

"He asked me how much I gave for my K.C.B., the swine."

"And you got furious, and told him such things weren't bought and sold in this country?"

"I don't know how you guessed, Mr. Carnforth, but that is about what I did say, except that I added he was a dirty German Jew, and told him

pretty accurately how he'd been bred and where he'd go to later."

"How like you. Well, Captain, he's Sir Hermann Vogelheimer, baronet, to-day, and on paper a pukka Englishman, in spite of the trifle of his accent, and if you call him either German or Jew in public he'll bring an action for libel. I know how much he gave for the title, because I worked the deal myself, as it happened. Our Party funds were dead low just then, and something desperate had to be done. We were past decency at the moment. I remember, when I had to fill in what the beast had done for the country, the only thing I could find to his credit was that he had once given a clock to a mechanics' institute—and I suppressed the detail that he had previously sold them the building site at an exorbitant profit."

"Now, this man had a sort of governess-secretary person called Fräulein Berta Schauer in his household up to the beginning of the war. Since then she has been living about the country on her own, with enough money at her command to make her interesting. You quite take me? She'd no money before the war, or we'll say spent none. Now she's lots, and is very, very kind to soldiers, military doctors, and young subalterns in want of a dinner. Incidentally she is so much like your heroine of

the moor, that the coincidence is, to say the least of it—damn that billiard-table, I've smashed my knuckles again."

"We could, of course," suggested Captain Kettle thoughtfully, "haul this Vogelheimer out of his bed some night, and hang him quietly from a tree in his garden if you think fit, sir. I suppose it would be no use giving information to the Government. They'd know he'd parted with money in the past, and would only bleed him for more, and the spy business would not be touched."

Carnforth grinned. "You've a delightfully clear opinion about politicians, Captain. I wouldn't go so far as to agree with you that the Government would proceed to blackmail our man if they had the chance, but I fancy they're mindful of past favours. Anyway, he isn't interned, and a child can see he ought to be. But, of course, that's the ordinary rule. We only intern poor Germans, and those who don't subscribe to our Party funds. Moreover, you are going a bit too fast. We've no evidence that the immaculate Sir Herman is running this spy game, and as he is one of the most capable men in Great Britain at this minute, it's heavy odds we don't find any evidence. But if we keep a watchful eye on your shot-pocked Fräulein Schauer——"

"You'll excuse me, Mr. Carnforth, sir, but I don't

scrap with women, and I've done that one more damage than I care about already. With your leave, I'm going to drop the whole business. I'll just take another cigar with me for before breakfast, and now I'll turn in."

Carnforth watched his guest as he stumped up the stairs at the other side of the hall. "Go to sleep by all means for the present, and I'll get busy. Later, if you're wanted, and the intrusive petticoat is wafted away from your modest sight, you'll help most efficiently. I never came across a man who hated Germans—or Dutchmen, as you will persist in calling them—more efficiently. You might not make a good minister, but if they had you in the Cabinet you'd have a big value in killing off the dangerous ones. Um! I hate travelling at night, but I fancy a fifty—no, it'll be a seventy-mile motor run will have its uses just now. Nice work for a middle-aged gentleman after a hard day's grouse shooting. Well, I shall probably breakfast a bit late, that's all."

The apologetic butler who came into Captain Kettle's room at five o'clock next morning was rather surprised to find any guest in the house rouse so suddenly into perfect wakefulness. He was unused to the habits of sailors, but being the com-

plete butler he did not flicker so much as the eyebrow of surprise. He said with stolid and perfect courtesy, "The Master telephones, sir, that he would be obliged if you would meet him at Fordham as soon as you can get there. It is about eighty miles. If you have any doubt about going, I was to mention that without your help there will be three ships of the British Navy sunk within four hours' time. I shall have our big Napier ready for you, sir, by the time you are dressed."

"Always pleased to give the Navy a leg up," said the mariner briskly. "Just hand me that wooden leg out of the portmanteau, will you? No, not the one I wore yesterday. Now go and get that car. I'll be at the front door as soon as it is round."

The big car hurtled out coastwards through the end of the autumn night, and quickened as dawn made the roads more clear. The driver flicked out his electrics and turned to his passenger. "If you're not nervous, Sir Owen, I can open her up a bit now."

"I am always nervous with these beastly road-engines," Captain Kettle admitted, "when I'm not conning them myself, but push her along, my lad. The tune of this car up to now has fitted in with 'Greenland's Icy Mountains,' and I suppose

you'll hit it up now to the air of the 'Turkish Patrol,' and that will spoil the rhythm of some poetry I was making. But don't mind that. I'm not the man to let pleasure stand in the way of business."

They met Carnforth half-a-dozen miles outside Fordham, the big grey car drawn up at a cross-roads inn advertising his whereabouts. It was six-thirty in the morning, and he was eating ham and eggs and drinking beer. Also he was in dress clothes, unshaven, and the worse for wear.

"You look as if you have been climbing trees, sir," said Captain Kettle, with all a tidy man's disgust for the dishevelled.

"It was walls and a fall-pipe, and I've broken all my nails and the knee of one of my trousers. You needn't turn up your nose at my frugal meal; it's supper for me, not breakfast. Have some?"

"Thank you, sir, I think I will. Your man has scared me so with the pace he's driven, I'm hungry enough to eat two breakfasts. But I expected to meet you at the coast, sir. Your message mentioned something about giving a leg up to the Navy."

"All in good time. I suppose you don't know anything about wireless? A bit since your day, eh?"

The little sailor drew himself up stiffly. "I keep myself up to date, sir. I take in every issue of the *Syren and Shipping* and the *Patent*

*Medicine Recorder* and read through every word of both, advertisements included. And as it happened, for my last Christmas holiday, I took a run across the Western Ocean in a boat fitted with wireless to see how it worked. A Mr. McTodd, a retired sea-going engineer of my acquaintance, was interested in her as a shareholder, and gave me every facility. He came too. He——" Captain Kettle was evidently on the brink of disclosures, but bit them off with a firm lip. "He and I came home by different boats."

"Well, there's wireless and wireless, and I fancy the instalment I'm nosing after isn't the usual sort. I put the Home Office on to an instalment like it once before. They (after I began to get nasty) discovered it wasn't their job, and handed me on to the Post Office. The Post Office went to sleep over it for three weeks, and then when I roused them by methods I wouldn't like to describe to you, said they'd taken tests and proved that no wireless messages had been sent or received from the area under discussion. I didn't believe them. But they'd wasted two months of valuable time, and when their final report came, my birds had got frightened and bolted. Now we can't afford to be hung up like that again. This is business, and one can't expect business from a Government office."

"I've known the Board of Trade get busy quick enough, sir," said Kettle rather bitterly. "Is this wireless you're after some new patent?"

"I can only guess, but I've a notion it's an improvement on a type that was talked about in the text books before the Marconi sort was heard of."

"You're rather vague, sir."

"I am. But I'm open to bet seven years' penal servitude to nothing I'm right."

Captain Kettle looked puzzled. "I don't take you, sir."

"What I'm going to do within the next half hour—and what you can chip in at if you like—will be put down as armed burglary of Sir Hermann Vogelheimer's house, if I'm wrong. If we're right, and save a nice little squadron of British ships, probably nothing will be said about the method. We shan't be thanked anyway. Here are a few more details," said Carnforth, and gave them. "Question is, are you going to risk coming?"

Captain Kettle tried to look disturbed and failed. "It seems to me more than a one-man job, sir, and I think perhaps it would be better I should come and stand by in case of trouble, especially as you can guarantee I shan't see Miss Schauer. It would be most embarrassing to meet that lady with my shot-corns still making her feel sore. I've

brought along that automatic you lent me yesterday, though I must say my old Hopkins-Allen '380 feels more homelike."

At this point unfortunately a gap occurs in history. Captain Kettle refuses to fill it. Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., for sound reasons, I cannot get at. I suppose the pair of them raided the house of Sir Hermann Vogelheimer in broad daylight and made that Teutonic baronet squeal. I say I suppose they did this, because when I suggested it Captain Kettle surreptitiously licked his lips. But he provided no details, either for publication or for anything else. As a side issue, I did get an inkling once of the method Vogelheimer used for signalling. We were talking of wireless, and I said it was odd that the heat-ray method had never been developed.

"That's all you know about it, my lad," Kettle snapped. "Get a multiple arc with plenty of juice at the back of it, filter out the light with a screen, and you can send messages down a heat ray that a telephonic nerve can pick up thirty miles away. That's the way Vogel——"

"Who did you say?"

"No one. But the thing's been done. That you can take from me. I've seen it." And he then proceeded to give me a précis of his last week's

sermon to the Wharfedale Particular Methodists by way of changing the subject.

A gap, as I say, mutilates the sequence, and I can only take up events again on a particularly unpleasant timber-laden barquentine of Swedish register somewhere in the North Sea. The unfortunate vessel advertised herself to the waters at large as a derelict. Her crew had been driven from her by Germans, and a bomb had done its best to sink her. But a lading of timber buoyed her up, and she floated dismantled, bulwarkless, and waterlogged, as a menace to shipping, and a gossiping spot for gulls.

In spite of latitude and longitude given, and elaborate calculations for current drift and wind drift, Captain Kettle spent a whole day searching the grey rollers of the North Sea before he found her, and one man had a leg smashed in the subsequent transhipment of the three-inch gun.

Where the gun came from I do not know, but suspect Carnforth. Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., had been in the gun-running business before, as has been recorded, and presumably knew where to procure weapons when needed, even though officially such a thing was not to be got for love or money by anyone outside the two Services. Anyway, there the gun was; the latest thing; firing from a shoulder-piece and delicately balanced by recoil

cylinders ; fitted with an ample shield ; and capable, with efficient loading, of getting off twenty unpleasant shells per minute. Most of the barquentine's deckload had survived its wartime experiences, and Kettle's first orders were directed to digging a gunpit out of this.

When the tender steamed away, there were three of them left besides himself, to wit, Carnforth and two other grouse-shooters, one a supercilious barrister, and the other a florid stockbroker, and the three instinctively dropped under the little sailor's orders. They tore at the deals till their hands bled, and their wrists were full of splinters ; they sweated at augers ; they strained at spanners ; they worked with panting fury till they had got their gun bolted down, with its slim store of shells laid handy.

For a minute they stood round, thawing their stiff muscles, and admiring their work.

" Filthy life sailors must lead," commented the barrister.

" By James, you're right," said Captain Kettle, " and they deserve a sight more consideration than they get."

" Well," said the stockbroker, " I're's hoping there's soon a slump in submarines ; I say, Captain, haven't we earned a drink ? "

The cabin aft was afloat, the forecastle the same,

and the galley, a green-painted wooden box, clamped down to the decks by an iron strap, was the only place of shelter. A shrewd rain-laden breeze was blowing from the eastward, and the water-logged derelict behaved like a half-tide rock. Her four inhabitants were bone-weary, sodden wet, icily cold. But only two could shelter in the galley at a time, and that without fire. Captain Kettle ordained that there should be always two on watch, and he forbade the showing of smoke or any other ensign of human occupancy.

The three-inch gun, was shrouded from the gaze of the gulls and others by the tattered and sodden remains of a main-topmast staysail. This flapped about artistically between wind and water, and would appear to the inquirer (when one arrived) as the piece of genuine wreckage it really was. The gunpit and this erratic canvas also gave some shelter to the officer and man of the watch, but as the North Sea ebbed and flowed through the floor of the pit, or gushed in (when it felt inclined) over its edges, the place, as a sentry-box was not without its inconveniences.

"I don't mind eating soaked biscuit and sardine," said Carnforth, "but even my stomach refuses sea-water and whiskey. Can't you screw her round head to wind, somehow, Captain? This

wallowing in the trough is the very devil. Incidentally, it will make me sea-sick soon."

"But it looks natural, and that's what we needed. Believe me, sir, these Dutchmen spot the least thing nowadays that's suspicious. They're getting the savvy of white men. Mind you don't get a clip on the head from one of the hanks of that staysail, Mr. Carnforth. Duck, sir. By James, that one nearly flicked your brains out. You should take care. You must remember, sir, that if these Dutch submarines come up, as arranged, you'll be needed presently, and it's shirking your duty if you get killed beforehand."

The autumn night wore through, cold, windy, and bitter, but, with a niggard dawn, the wind eased, and grey pallisades of rain hedged the derelict into a narrow circus of sullenly rolling water. Gulls mewed at them from the ruined fore-top.

Captain Kettle rubbed his wet hands appreciatively. "Perfect weather, isn't it, Mr. Carnforth? You'd like more sporting shooting, I know. But with this thickness they'll have to come close so as to pick up their mark, and we can pot them with our gun like sitting rabbits. I'm not like you, sir; I'm not out for sport just now; what I want is to make a big bag of good Germans. The only thing I can't understand is why this floating wreck

should be set out as a rendezvous. A sailor, if he wanted to make an appointment in the middle of the North Sea would just give a latitude and longitude."

Carnforth chuckled. "But you see neither the eminent Sir Hermann nor his lady friend that we agree to call Miss Schauer are sailors."

"You never mentioned, sir," said Kettle disgustedly, "that the lady was in it."

"Forgot," said Carnforth, with complete absence of truth. "You're so shy of petticoats, most eminent Captain, I thought you'd wriggle out of the job if you knew. Gee! Look! That chap's coming down on top of us."

A black Norwegian collier, with stump topmasts, poked her ugly dray-horse bows out of the grey sea mist, and bore down stolidly and squarely on to them. The derelict was helpless. There did not seem a possibility that she could escape destruction. And the chances were a hundred to one that if she were hit she would scrape the bottom off the collier and take her to the North Sea floor in convoy. Even the sea-fowl got scared, and flew away.

The mountainous bows, yawning wildly to the seas, made for them as if drawn by a wire, and the nerve of Martin Carnforth, M.P., gave way. He leapt to his feet and tried to shout a warning. But with a cat's quickness Kettle's knees were against his

shoulder-blades, and Kettle's cold, wet right hand clapped hard over his mouth, and Martin Carnforth, M.P., flopped back into the sea-water at the bottom of the gun-pit.

The staysail bellied and snapped above them, and the look-out on the collier (who then for the first time woke up) saw only a timber-laden derelict, deserted even by the sea-birds. He made swift outcry, and the mechanism, human and mechanical, on the bridge responded. The clumsy bows, ducking and curtesying, took a slow sheer to port, and missed the barquentine's splintering sides by a short fathom.

The ponderous stern bore in to starboard and grazed the derelict's quarter. The water from her condenser sluiced along the deck-load. The popple of her wake set the barquentine dancing like a cork till she had pulled out through the palings of the rain, and vanished on the trail of her own considerable affairs.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Captain Kettle, getting off his friend's head.

"Don't mention it. Gee! Those other two chaps in the galley must have nerves! They never let up a whimper. I'm getting jumpy. Must be growing old."

"The other two gentlemen are both asleep, sir.

The thin, superior one's head had slid off (when I looked in the galley last) on to a piece of beef that hadn't been fresh for a fortnight, and the stockbroker must be a Tynesider from the homely way he's snuggled down amongst the coals. Well, sir, we don't count near squeaks at sea. There aren't enough log-books made to enter them up. I wish you'd finish what you were saying about Vogelheimer when that coal-boat broke you off."

"The Admiralty have been allowed to pick up an ordinary wireless which let out that a German cruiser squadron was to rendezvous where we are now, preparatory to a raid on Scarborough'. It was judged, rightly enough, that some British ships would be sent to attend to them. Vogelheimer sent all this news down his own heat-ray wireless (that we thickheaded British can't tap), and I guess it was picked up by a German submarine thirty miles out at sea. I'm not sure about that, you understand; but it was received by somebody, because I heard it acknowledged myself whilst I was in the room. And then, as you know, we got spotted, and you had your little interview with Vogelheimer when he rushed out on to the leads to see who his callers were. I can guarantee I smashed their wireless most efficiently, and, though the operator bolted——"

"The operator, sir?"

"Well, it was your shot-marked friend. Lord, Captain, you did pepper her, to judge by the marks! She ran like an animated pear when she saw me—thought I'd another shot-gun, I suppose. And as I guessed she was too scared to pull up this side of a hundred miles, I let her go. Other things were too pressing. And besides, I knew your sentiments."

"I don't consider you've treated me fairly in this matter, sir."

Carnforth grinned. "I haven't. You see, I wanted to use you, and, knowing your scruples, I just circumnavigated them most unscrupulously. I've got you out here. British cruisers are probably coming, though I hope they change their minds or miss their way, but German submarines are going to turn up within the next hour or so, for an absolute certainty. We shall probably get scuppered ourselves before lunch-time, but if we send plenty of Germans before us into the Shades, I shan't mind that much. It will be a more decent ending than most Members of Parliament acquire."

"Yes, sir, quite so, and you and the other two gentlemen may die as arranged. But, by James! I'm not out in the wet old North Sea to get killed. You'll see I shall do all that's needful, and get home again to Lady Kettle as promised to her. If you go into these little affairs with an appointment with

your wife in your pocket-book, when you've carried them through successfully you keep that appointment, and go round the garden with her quite pleasantly, and see the roses that have grown since you've been away, and arrange the date when you'll dig the potatoes and put them in a pie. There was something that made me feel a bit like former times, Mr. Carnforth, that I saw just inside the main companion."

"What was that?"

"An accordion, sir—the Old Man's, possibly, or perhaps Mr. Mate's. It was coming unstuck with the wet, and every other note was dumb. But it would be very pleasant to squeeze music out of an accordion again. You see, sir, since we've been prosperous and had the harmonium in the house, Lady Kettle says accordions are low. She won't try to play the bigger machine herself, and I can't learn, and my daughter, Mrs. Hunter, that had such splendid lessons on it from the master in Skipton, is seldom with us nowadays. So you see, we get no music except what that little cat from down the dale pumps out in chapel on Sundays. She always plays the hymns I hate, and when I try to get her to put through one with a lift on it, she's always pat with an excuse.—My great James, sir, stand-by! There's another steamboat coming—a

big fellow and in a hurry, by the sound of his propeller. Down under the staysail, sir—down under the staysail, I say—or you'll get another thick ear!"

It was no black-painted collier this time that bore down upon them, but a vast steel ship, painted, it seemed, to the very tint of the rain-mists themselves. She was unsubstantial, and yet solid; a ghost ship, and yet grinning with guns; carrying no man in open sight, yet awake enough to train a score of ugly muzzles on the barquentine in case of accident.

She was twenty thousand tons of hate embodied in hardened steel, and she slid in and out of their narrow, rain-swept horizon at the pace of an ordinary train. Captain Kettle peered at her from under the flapping edge of the staysail, and tugged perplexedly at his red torpedo beard.

"My great James! Mr. Carnforth, what kind of a mess have we here? That duck's not Dutch any more than she's English."

"French, she looked to me."

"French all over. I never saw anything more French in my life. But what's she doing out here?"

"Skipper felt he'd like a cod steak for breakfast, so they just slipped across to the Dogger for an evening's fishing."

"You've a great imagination, sir. I suppose you need it in Parliament. But upon my sam, although the explanation's sheer foolishness, I can't think of a better. Unless——"

"Well? Unless what?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Unless our pear-shaped friend has got another move on her were you going to say?"

"I was, as it happened. But I shan't interfere with her further. It makes me hot, Mr. Carnforth, to think of the damage I've done to that lady already."

"Anyway, she's out of our range at the moment. By God, though, if that woman's had the cleverness to send French ships into the trap as well as British, she's got some energy, and some tackle to use it with. She——"

"Here they are, sir, at last! Slip you foward to the galley and rouse up the other two. Keep out of sight going. You must crawl behind those deals. And keep out of sight when you are there till you hear me whang off the first shot. It's all in with these Dutchmen now, and I'm not going to let the swine hit first, if it can be avoided. But when you hear the bang, run aft to here, all three of you, for all you're worth. Got that?"

"Ay, aye, sir," said Martin Carnforth, M.P.,

and crawled away on the errand as briskly as his portliness would permit.

The German submarine came on with her decks just clear of the water, and her bows nodding over or nosing through the seas. She had a gun on her foredeck and another aft, and high-booted men stood alertly beside each, with the water swirling between-whiles up to their knees. A conning-tower like a wedding-cake decorated her amidships, with a periscope, and a wireless mast that emitted a pennon of stinking smoke. Three bearded dirty men occupied the top of the conning-tower. Captain Kettle, clapped snugly into the shoulder-piece of his gun, slipped down his sights to point-blank, and took steady aim at the centre of where that wedding-cake joined the hull.

"If they weren't these fancy new kind of Dutchmen," said Captain Kettle as he pressed home his trigger, "it wouldn't be fair to shoot them sitting like this. By James, that joker's got it where the chicken got the axe—right in the neck."

The 3-inch shell, discharged at some forty yards distance, tore through the plating of the conning-tower as though it had been biscuit-tin, and exploded inside. The conning-tower opened like an expanding lily. The men on the top of it disappeared into mist. The men below were involved

in what appeared to be a secondary explosion. The men on the fore and after decks stuck grimly to their guns, and fired them in the face of death—and fired them without result.

They had no time to reload ; their ship was sinking bodily beneath them ; and into a sea, iridescent with escaping fuel oil, they were presently swept, together with scalded survivors escaping from below. Carnforth and his two friends, racing along from the galley to join Kettle in the gunpit, stopped in their stride, and commenced throwing deals overboard, with the Englishman's ordinary instinct for saving life.

Then out of the rain-mist *whiz-crash* came a shell, and *whiz-crash* came another, and the wet air was full of hissing splinters as these exploded amongst the deals.

"By James, Mr. Carnforth," Kettle called out, "if you don't carry out my orders, I'll attend to you later. Here's submarine number two arriving, and I've got to load this gun for myself like a common deckhand. By James, sir, I'm captain of this packet, and you've got to remember it. Come away aft here, one-time."

Carnforth and the barrister obeyed the call. The plump stockbroker stayed behind, spread out in a limp heap on the derelict's deckload.

The amateurs loaded briskly and shot well.

The professionals (despite an austere drill) loaded better and shot more accurately. Moreover, they had two guns to the barquentine's one, and they were firing at a background that splintered at a touch and spread a torrent of horror, whilst Kettle was aiming at chilled steel plates.

The Germans did not miss; the derelict sang with splinters that were potent for death; but they could not sink her. Captain Kettle, on his part, did not miss either; but he could not hit a vital part. He punctured an oil locker on the submarine's ribs, and the sullen North Sea swell was covered with more iridescence. He cut away the wireless mast, and the fumes of burnt lubricating oil stank from the conning-tower level. He swept one of the after-gun crew into space. But he could not give the submarine a mortal hit. And in the meanwhile the unsinkable barquentine was disintegrating into planks, the barrister had collapsed badly hit, and Carnforth was white and wounded. Captain Kettle cursed his aim, re-lit his cigar whilst a 3-inch shell burst noisily alongside of him, and shot doggedly on.

Then the unexpected happened.

All this time the submarine had been fighting him under-weigh, circling the derelict at some 18 knots, and offering a difficult target. Her friends

in submarine number one, that Carnforth and the others had tried to succour, were still squattering in the water, but they did not strike submarine number two as valuable. They were out of action for the time being, and submarine number two ignored them as though they had been so many swimming gulls. There was more joy for submarine number two in killing three Britons in a waterlogged derelict timber ship than in saving fifteen compatriots. And then with a hiccough her Diesel engines struck work (from some cause unknown), and she lost weigh.

The commanding officer of submarine number two was a man of resource. He had saved his torpedoes up to now for worthier game, but when the engine trouble showed itself, and while he had still got steerage way, he put down his helm. If he could not sink this nuisance of the seas by shell fire, at least he could blow her into matchwood with a 15-inch torpedo.

But then by a beautiful shot—Carnforth, who knew Kettle's shooting, always declared it was a fluke—the little sailor got in first. Submarine number two was end on, and presented her smallest possible target, but he hit her just as one of the stern torpedo-tubes was being fired, and the torpedo exploded—inboard,

There were no swimmers from submarine number two, and by this time those from number one had all disappeared under the slimy oil.

Captain Kettle knocked the ash from his cigar, and went to look at his friends. The stockbroker was dead. He wore on his face the pleased grin of a man who was satisfied with the end of life as he had seen it.

The barrister had a carotid artery slit through by a splinter. He, also, could not last long. Captain Kettle took off his hat. "Any message, sir?" he asked softly.

*"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori"*

"I beg your pardon, sir. I didn't quite catch?"

The barrister gave the ghost of a superior smile.

"I'm afraid it's above your head, my man," said he, and dropped back into unconsciousness.

Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., in the shocking remains of what was once evening dress, was a more profitable patient. He had been merely stunned by one of the all-pervading splinters, and North Sea water, strenuously applied, brought him round.

A British destroyer storming up at 30 knots some hours later found a small man in farmery-looking clothes and a red torpedo beard, a wounded man

who looked like a rag-picker, and two dead on a shattered derelict barquentine. The farmer was playing "As pants the hart for cooling streams," on a patched-up accordion with three dumb notes, to an audience of three kittiwakes and a lesser black-backed gull.

The destroyer bustled up alongside with much business-like confusion, took off the humans and continued her way. The Lieutenant-Commander, who wore a woollen comforter of a startling pink, and a black smudge on his nose, stared hard at Captain Kettle, and asked his name.

"I know your face," said the Lieutenant-Commander. "It's like some one I've seen in a magazine illustration."

"He is generally known as the Lady killer," said Carnforth.

The little sailor turned on him with a sudden ferocity. "I'm more ashamed of what I did to that poor stout woman than I can say, sir, and if you make a song about it, I'll attend to you in a way you'll remember for the rest of your natural life."

"What-ho!" said the Lieutenant-Commander. "Don't let me butt into anybody's private divorce case. Got enough of my own on hand, thanks. Come below and have some hot cocoa. You look

as cold and wet as a brace of snipe. Step down into the parlour and hear all the news. Perhaps you can help to solve the latest problem they've got ashore: 'Who hanged Sir Hermann Vogelheimer?'

## VIII

### AN EYE FOR AN EYE

CAPTAIN KETTLE stepped out from the little knoll that sheltered him, and ran rapidly across the open. The German bullets hummed near his ears, sang by his ribs, hissed past his legs, and spat up fountains of dust from the ground below, but he went stedfastly on to where the man was writhing and squirming in the barbed wire, and with brisk, capable fingers disentangled him.

The man said, "Go away, you damned fool. I'm done for."

"If you speak to me like that, you son of a brick," returned the little sailor, "I will stamp the tripes out of you. Say 'Sir' when you address me. And lift up your starboard elbow. I've got all the rest clear now. Will it hurt you if I lift you by your left arm?"

"I'd rather you left me alone. I'm done in. I'm shot through the backbone. Thanks all the same."

"H'up you go now," said Kettle, "and mind don't knock off my hat, because it's the only one I've got out here, and I have them built at Scott's, and can't buy another nearer. Anyway, I can't in decency leave you out there hung up in that fencing wire for those Dutch swine to plug at. It gives them ideas above their station."

"It's jolly decent of you," said the soldier faintly as Kettle lowered him gently down on the short turf behind the knoll, "but you've wasted your wind. I'm a goner."

"If I'd a bottle of Horner's Perfect Cure with me, I'd make you as fit as French. Horner's has cured worse cases than yours. As it is, I'm afraid, my lad, you'll have to wait till I can get one of those regulation doctors to come and patch you up."

"If you could fix me a drink I'd remember you later on. It's the very devil this thirst."

"I know the feeling," said Kettle. "I've been hit myself. You shall have something wet if it can be got. I'll just put this other fellow's coat under your head—so. He's got no further use for it. Now take a grip on your nerves and expect me back here in twenty-eight minutes. I've got another man to see. But when I get back you can build on my having some liquor of sorts in my

pocket, if it's only cold tea. Apologize in advance, my lad, if I can't bring you anything better than cold tea."

"You're a good sort," said the soldier faintly, "I won't forget, now—or later. So long. Keep away from these pellets."

Captain Kettle rose up from the man's side, brushed the mud from his knees, made himself as spruce as the occasion would allow, and worked his way rearwards to the ruined brewery where Monsieur Joseph Mumm had arranged to meet him with the cinematograph camera.

There was, however, no Monsieur Joseph, and in his place lolled an extremely dirty British officer in khaki, with red tabs on his collar. The officer was smoking a pipe that gurgled, and was adding artistic touches to a map of his own production.

"Hullo," said the officer, "who the devil are you? How's the pig trade?"

The sailor introduced himself formally and produced papers.

"Come to take photographs of Belgium to annoy William with, have you? Well, so far as I am concerned, and especially if you can give me a box of matches, you may go along and prosper. I'm only a gilded subaltern of the staff and I am too busy with my own job here to find time to run you

in. But if you go on long enough you'll come across some officer who'll either hang you out of hand or pack you off home again, papers or no papers. You look too much the British farmer to be quite unnoticeable in this dear country. Isn't there a grand smell of beer in this ruin? There's not a drop left though. I've looked."

"I came to meet a party here, sir, a Belgian named Mumm. Have you seen him by any chance?"

"If he was a littlish fellow with a pale face, and hump shoulders, and a club foot, who carried an infernal machine with a handle to it, I did. Lord, I do itch. Haven't got any insect powder by any chance, have you?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I'm travelling light at present. It was Mumm you saw. Did he leave any message?"

"Well, as you seem to be the nobleman he expected, you may as well have it. He returns anon. I'm not much good at Chochtaw, but as far as I could gather from his rapid conversation, he's gone to fetch his wife and bring her back here."

"James!" said Kettle nervously. "His wife! I didn't know he had one. I don't like this."

"Cheer up," said the subaltern, cocking his head and admiring his map work, "and don't fear the worst. You haven't seen the lady yet. She may

even be good-looking. You can never tell what will marry which. During your recent stroll through that barbed wire in front, did you happen to notice what gauge it was, or must I go out and see?"

"I'm afraid I don't carry an accurate wire gauge in my eye, sir. But I've got an errand out there as soon as I've found something to drink, and I'll bring you back a sample."

"If you don't look out," said the staff officer thoughtfully, "your promising young career will be cut short if you go gadding about in this health resort. Have you been hit already by any chance? I noticed you limped when you came in."

"That was on account of my wooden leg, sir."

"Oh, sorry. Didn't know I was dipping into domestic secrets. If you want a drink, there's my flask. It's filthy, but it's wet. It's made of some patent tabloids that my favourite aunt sends me, and is guaranteed I believe to keep off malarial fever, ingrowing toe-nails, and that tired feeling. Here, I say, I offered you a swig. I didn't ask you to walk off with the bally flask."

Captain Kettle worked his way back to the wounded man with so much care that he was only shot at once. Night was closing down, lurid with afterglow, icy with wind from the North and East.

Guns growled in a distant ring. Bullets from nowhere spat and whinnied, and occasionally one which had achieved a ricochette went past with a *whoop, whoop, wishy!* Into the No-man's-land where the morning's action had taken place, two armies shot with indiscriminate hate.

The sailor found his man, and handed the flask. He had to put his arm behind the man's shoulder and lift him before he could drink.

"I say, squire, that's awfully good of you. Rum tippie, too, but I suppose my taste's out of order. I've had a pretty thick day . . . and now I'm going to see the chap who does sentry-go . . . in the Place Beyond. And that isn't a joke, because . . . there . . . He is."

He pulled himself half erect with a grinding jerk, and brought his hand up to the salute, and answered an unseen inquisitor.

"One of the English, Sir. . . . A bad record perhaps. . . . But—I tried to do my job."

Then he dropped back and slowly stiffened, and Captain Kettle took off his hat.

In the meanwhile Monsieur Joseph Mumm of Louvain was having trouble with his wife. Madame Joseph, who always prided herself on being *bien chaussée*, flatly declined to run. Indeed in her

absurd high-heeled shoes running was an impossibility, but she had not the honesty to admit this. She said running was undignified, and Joseph should have told her earlier that the unspeakable Bosches were so near, and that he had mismanaged things as usual, and how she could have brought herself to marry such a man was more than she could then imagine

Joseph, however, loved her, and refused to be ruffled.

They came at last to the battered brewery, and were welcomed by the war-worn subaltern.

"Hullo, Joseph," said the subaltern in his best English, "so here you are again as bright and bonny as ever, and no holes in you? And this is Madame? I told our friend, the agriculturist, she'd turn out to be a beauty."

"No spik Englisch."

"I know you don't, my tulip, or I wouldn't be so free with my compliments. Curse this pipe! Now I wish you'd either skin out of here or get to cover. Savvy? *Lyo doggo!* Or else some energetic Bosch gunner will spot us, and turn on the frightfulness, and that always makes me nervous. Madame, I'm sure you have your reasons for strafering Joseph, and giving me the glad eye. But I've a girl of my own at home, and another out here, and

I can't be true to a third. It's beginning to look as if our friend the nobleman who stole my flask isn't coming back. You never can bet on your life insurance in these stirring times. But if he does, you turn your eyes on to him. He's the little man for the ladies, I bet a pot of jam. And by the Lord, here he is, and none the worse."

Captain Kettle took off his hat with stiffness, and looked annoyed.

"Cheer up, Sir Owen," said the subaltern, pleasantly. "Belgium mourns, but Madame's got a smile left, and I told her not to waste them on me. She was to save all up for you."

"I'd wring your neck for twopence," Kettle snapped.

"I don't think you could," said the subaltern with a sigh. "Many heroes have tried—and alas, failed. It was owing to their failures that the Cambridge Rugger Captain, a man I disliked, was compelled to give me my blue as a forward. Here! Get to ground quick. Shell coming."

Thereafter for the space of forty-five minutes high explosive shells sang through the night and smashed the remains of the brewery to dust, and exploding shrapnel spat over it spitefully. Captain Kettle coughed when lyddite vapour mixed itself with his cigar smoke, and talked rabbit shooting

with the subaltern. Madame Joseph ogled Kettle. And poor Joseph winced at each shock of the exploding shells, and screamed at the louder ones. He was not cast in a heroic mould. And he loathed himself for appearing as a poltroon under the eyes of his wife, whom he loved.

"I suppose by the way," said the subaltern, "you didn't come out here for the mere sport of the thing and to take photographs?"

"No, sir," said the little sailor. "I've a contract on to find Belgian mechanics, and ship them out of the country, to make shells in a works at home. The men I was after lived in that little town where you were scrapping this morning and I couldn't find any of them left. Mr. Mumm's cinematographing scheme was, so to say, a bye-product. I've always had my knife into the German Emperor ever since that telegram he sent about Dr. Jameson, the interfering swine. And I'd a notion Mr. Mumm could find me mechanics, though I had only his word for it. Hullo the shelling's stopped."

"Then I'll give up whistling, 'Wait till the clouds roll by, mother,' and toddle off home. I'd ask you to our mess, Sir Owen, but if our Old Man spotted you it would be home sweet home for yours by the next train. However, I dare say we shall meet in England sometime. So long."

"A pleasant young man that," mused the sailor. "I wonder what his name was." And then he turned to disentangle the hands of Madame Joseph, which had clasped themselves affectionately on his shoulder.

"It makes dark, now," she whispered, "and Joseph does not count. You will protect me? You are a man."

"A married man, Madame, and don't you ever forget it. Take Joseph's arm, please, and we will go to the village over to the sou' west there, and see if we can't find a *café* that serves dinner. Joseph, I want you to remember that I give you twenty-five francs a head for all Belgian fitters and turners you introduce me to that will come over to England and earn big wages making shells."

"I know twenty," said Joseph eagerly. "Give me twenty francs each, and they are yours."

"Twenty-five I said, and I pay when the goods are delivered—and shipped—and not before. But if a twenty-franc note on account will ease the situation, it is yours."

"Monsieur," said Joseph Mumm ecstatically, and Captain Kettle, very much to his disgust, found himself kissed. "Monsieur, till now I have never met you. I salute you as the saviour of Madame."

"Better take two twenties whilst you are about it," said Kettle edging away. "No Madame, Madame, I say no. You need not thank me in the least. It is entirely business proposition, as you will understand when I tell you there is an English M.P. at the back of it.

Madame replied with a gesture. "You give money to that? *Pzzt!* He will merely spend it on drugs, and me, I shall trudge as usual. For me is there now ever a taxi-automobile? *Pas!*"

Later in the evening, in a dishevelled town just outside the German lines, Kettle saw the truth of this charge. Joseph bought drugs, small white tabloids of unknown composition, made solution, inhaled this into a tarnished syringe, and made injection into a lean and spotted forearm. Till then he had been a worm, though always (be it understood) the devout lover of Madame. But with the drug in his veins he was the hero of chivalric times, Madame's adorer, and her very sure guard. And the odd thing (to Kettle's mind) was that Madame seemed to prefer him in this exalted state.

But all this, as Captain Kettle kept on reminding himself, was not business. He had come out to Belgium for skilled mechanics, having promised

Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., that if such still remained alive he would bring them back with him to England, if necessary by the hair of their heads, and in spite of the Kaiser William's teeth. And so far he had shipped but three, and doubted if they would arrive.

"Munitions," Carnforth, M.P., had said, "munitions, chiefly in the way of shells, are what we want, and when you hear my fellow-politicians bellowing that we have plenty, don't you believe them. They are merely trying to hide their own inefficiency and keep their own salaries going. I've got an empty bay at my Works, and a lot of lathes, but the British mechanic is either not to be got or too big for his boots when you've found him. The decent ones are all gone to the war, and I've no use for the wasters who might offer. But if you can find me Belgians who both can work and will work, I will put them in the way of earning five pounds a week per head."

Captain Kettle carried with him as personal luggage a parcel of circulars setting forth in two foreign tongues the more attractive of these points, and had distributed them lavishly under the muzzles of German rifles, but so far mainly with poor results. The Belgian mechanic was not at the moment receptive of new ideas, as was perhaps natural.

Conceive the British mechanic, with Germans in Britain, asked by some alien whom he understood imperfectly, to go overseas to a land where the working man eats horse for preference. One can understand the Belgian reluctance.

But with a brain brightened by his drug, Monsieur Joseph Mumm developed unexpected powers. He teemed with suggestions, and as they sat at dinner hissed them out in true conspirator's style. Most of them were unpractical, many were fantastic, but some had glimmerings of sense.

"Do not heed him," said Madame. "He does not know about these mechanics. He is a professional man, my husband, though for the moment he has a pretty wit. *Pas ?*"

"Don't run him down, ma'am. He's some remarkable sound ideas, but I wish he'd speak French or English or one of God's languages instead of switching off into Walloon, or Flemish, or German, or whatever it is. Look here, Joseph, you say these engineers have their Lodge. What do you mean? Masonic?"

Again came the whirl of words.

"Well, call it Guild, or Trades Union, or something like that. Where is it, and have you the pass-word? Be quick. By the sound of the firing the Germans will be here by morning."

Joseph at that moment of exaltation had everything—certainly such a trifle as entrance to a guild of base mechanics. When could they go? This moment or sooner. He leaped up and fled into the night, and Kettle, after bows to Madame, limped after him.

In due time they came to the secret place of assembly, which, after all, had little of secrecy about it. The mechanics of the little business town met in a cellar amongst wine casks. They stood about on a blue floor, and gesticulated in an atmosphere rich with tannins and ethers. It was rather a jarring change from the mingled smell of wood-smoke and garlic Captain Kettle had left at the restaurant, and he lit a damp, black Canary cigar to counter-balance it, whilst Joseph Mumm with much florid phrase explained him.

And then came interruptions. From the street above and without there came the clattering of iron-shod hoofs, the crackle of shots, the shrill screams of hurt men, and now and again the more dreadful shriek from a woman or child.

One of the men peeped from the head of the stairway and came back with a scared face. "Uh-lans!" said he. "The rest of the Bosches will follow. Our troops must have fallen back. They always do fall back."

"If you ducks had accepted my offer to go to England," Captain Kettle told them, "instead of wearing yourselves out with oratory, we might have been well on the way out of this by now. As it is, the best thing to do for the moment is to shut that door and sit tight. Those parties on horse-back are out to murder somebody, and with them it's first come first killed. I don't want you to be too pushing. You can be useful."

The men listened and shivered. They were mechanics, not fighters, and this truculent little Islander evidently knew what he was talking about. He looked a fighter, every inch of him, and if he advised caution there was evidently some reason for it.

"But you," said Kettle, turning to Joseph, "you had better slip out and look after your wife."

Joseph shivered. The drug had died out in him and he was no longer the hero. He had a headache, he was shaken, he was unashamedly afraid.

"Oh, well, just as you like," said the sailor with contempt. "I'd go myself if I was free. But I'm under orders now, and my owner comes first. I've got to get these mechanics shipped across to a town in the Midlands, and with the beastly Germans buzzing about one's ears it's going

to be a tougher job than I reckoned on. Your friends here have the nerves of sheep."

The mechanics, with the horrors of the neighbouring Belgian towns fresh upon them, were hard to move. Their country had been crushed with Satanic efficiency. Terror stalked through it raw-headed. They had not read the details in the columns of a censored newspaper. The full beastly story had been chartered out to them by wild-eyed, shivering survivors. Small wonder they were cowed.

Most had others besides themselves to think about—wives, mothers, daughters—and the Huns were raging through the town and carrying out their full programme of frightfulness whilst they, able-bodied men though they were, cowered in the wine merchant's cellar, impotent to help or resist.

"To hear you ducks talk," said Captain Kettle disgustedly, "one would believe you don't want to do anything, or say anything, or think anything that'll hurt the Emperor of Germany's feelings. Now, I'd cheerfully give my wooden leg just for the luxury of having him here in this room for two minutes so that I might pull his nose. And it is an American limb that cost, with spares, £30. Great James! Have none of you got a tail to wag? The Germans are playing Hell's delight with your women and kids this minute, and the

most you can say is 'So mote it be.' Can't some of you do a bit of killing in your turn? Get out of here. Be dangerous. Go for every German you see with your finger-nails and your teeth if you've nothing better, and you'll find the German will run. Then gather your women and come back here. I'll do the rest."

"What, you'll take our wives too? You never said that before."

"Then, by James! I say it now. Now then, out with you! All that are back here with their women in two hours' time I will take out of this filthy Belgium to a place where the Huns can't get."

The mechanics sullenly shrank their way out through the cellar door with Kettle's tongue lashing them from behind, and then from the darkness of a distant corner came the frightened moan of M. Joseph Mumm.

The little mariner stalked across, put fingers on the humpback's collar, and shook him. "If you think a kicking will do you good, just mention it."

"Give me a little money. I must have money. It is to buy film with. You said you wanted cinematograph pictures and I cannot take them without film, negative film, you understand, and that will cost money. Please——"

"Shut up! You're after drugs again, and you've a skinful of those already. Now clear out of this one-time, and go and hunt up your wife. I'll come with you till you find her, in case you forget between now and then what your errand is—you miserable bag of shivers!"

Out into the street they went, lit now by burning houses, and horrid with the noises of a sack.

"My God! we shall be seen in all this glare," said poor Josep.

"Then put back your shoulders and walk as if you owned the town. These devils won't touch a man with a stiff upper lip if they can find another with his knees twittering."

"*Dieu de Dieu!* but hear the screams!"

"There are too many screams for my taste," said the sailor acidly. "Your friends are dying like sheep, Joseph, when if they'd the sense they might die like dogs, and pull some of these other dogs down with them. If you'll take the tip from me, you'll get your teeth picked clean and ready for biting. Where did you say Mrs. Joseph was?"

"At the *café* where we dined."

"Then go along and collect her, and bring her to the Lodge. I'd better not come with you as I expect I look a bit English, and might bring down attention. But I will hang about, board and board,

in the offing, and bear a hand if you look like needing one. Mind your head!"

A German soldier, red with recent murder, and with blood-lust glaring from his eyes, ran at them from a doorway. Joseph Mumm covered his face, moaned, and cowered up against the wall. Captain Kettle attracted the man's charge with a yell, then dodged, and tripped him as he passed. Thereafter he jumped upon the man's back, and dirked him heartily with his own bayonet. . . .

Joseph Mumm found himself shaken viciously by a fierce-faced man with a red torpedo beard, in pickle-haube and long grey-green overcoat. "By James! Do you dare to make me give an order twice? I told you to be off and collect your wife. Go! D'ye hear me! Go, you swine!"

The humpback hobbled off, and Kettle with Mauser at the trail, followed at a discreet distance. Around them the sack continued, and horror abounded. Another soldier danced up drunk, with rifle slung over his shoulder, and cigar boxes in his arms. All the boxes except two he dropped to the cobbles, and then opening those he had left, he solemnly emptied the tobacco rolls over Captain Kettle's helmet.

Now the little sailor, as has been shown in these

memoirs, was the last person in the world to take liberties with, and that German soldier had a narrower escape from being smitten violently with a Mauser butt than he probably suspects to this day. But it flashed upon Captain Kettle that here was a certificate for his disguise; the German had taken him for another German; and, in view of what was to come, this perfect make-up was necessary. But at the same time, as head of the Wharfedale Particular Methodists, he felt very keenly the degradation of being an actor. He followed after M. Mumm, telling himself that bundle of terror little knew what insults his protector was forced to put up with.

Joseph Mumm tottered in between the gaily-lit green-painted tubs of shrubs which advertised the front of the *café*, at a point where two streams of German office's made ingress and egress. Captain Sir Owen Kettle, with a start, remembered that a German private should never breathe the air hallowed by his officer, and (using his new-found caution) cut into a side street, and worked his way round to the back of the *café*, where he remembered a side window.

But when he put his face to the pane and peered round the side of the blind, the scene dished up through that narrow slit staggered even his steel

nerve. The place was full of German officers, many of them roaring with drink. One, in a chair, struck with spurred heels at a piano's keyboard; two for a bet were shooting at the bottles in the bar with other bottles; Belgian corpses lay on the floor, and the men of Kultur kicked them as they passed; Belgian women were there being vilely ill-treated; a stout, struggling priest, held between four officers, was having his bare feet grilled at a stove.

At one side of the ruined *café* lay Madame Mumm, dead. . . . There was no doubt as to how she had died. . . . Facing a group of three of the soberer officers, Joseph, who had loved her, with light laugh and humorous gesture, was giving information about the little town. He was making no attempt to avenge his wife. He was merely being a traitor.

Captain Kettle was a man with a strong stomach, but he was nearly sick then. "My Great James!" he muttered. "And they hate the English a thousand times worse than they hate these poor ducks. I suppose we've Josephs at home, too. What would the swine do if they got to England? There's only one way of taming them now, and that's by killing them off. Well, I have no time for frills like cleaning up Germany just now. I must get back to my job.

Now, Kettle was under no illusions about the

capabilities of the members of the Mechanics' Lodge. Turners and fitters they might be; fighting men they were not; and he had a shrewd idea that truth and faith were not in them. When he made his offer to transport them and their women to British soil, he had a plan already matured in his mind, but did not tell it, because of a very reasonable fear of informers.

There was a chemical works near the Lodge-room, and alongside in the road, awaiting erection, was a large iron vat, made from a Lancashire boiler with its flues and tubes removed. The vat was perched on a broad-wheeled trolley, and had a manhole at its top, and another, with door lying near, at its lower edge. Coupled to the fore-end of the trolley was a lusty traction engine, deserted certainly, but trickling steam. Here was a car in which, packed close, he reckoned he could transport fifty people to the Belgian frontier.

The question of a driver worried him. Amongst the members of the Mechanics' Lodge the odds were heavy on finding at least one man who could handle a road locomotive. But would that man have nerve? This was an essential qualification. The drive from the sacked town to the Dutch frontier was not going to be, he plainly foresaw, a simple trip to suit a nervous man. At a pinch he could

drive himself, but another man as guard would be desperately needed, and he had a profound distrust for these Belgians. The lamentable example of Joseph Mumm was still hot within him.

At this stage of doubt then he ran into another German soldier round the corner of a block, who cursed him in a language which was not German, and presented a prompt bayonet to hamper his further advance.

"If it wasn't for that spiked hat," said Kettle, warily, "I should say you were a gentleman I met not very long ago near a beer-mill."

"By Gad! It's my pal the pig-dealer! D'ye happen to have matches on you? I found a feather to clean out my pipe, and now I haven't a light. I say, worthy knight, do you know you are on the wrong side of the fence, and are liable to be hung on sight if the Bosches clap eyes on you? You really shouldn't do these sort of things at your time of life."

"Can you drive a traction engine?"

"It's rather changing the subject, but I can. It happens I'm a sapper, and that was part of my A B C. Nobody ever recognizes my true worth. Even the girls I'm engaged to don't appreciate the treasure they've snapped up. And nobody ever supplies me with matches. But why a traction

engine, noble stranger? You may want to pull a travelling circus round this benighted country, with brass band attachment, but my humble ambition is to sneak away to my nice wet dug-out as quietly as possible."

Captain Kettle's fingers itched. He had a thousand wishes to catch this big casual youngster by the collar and shake the foolishness out of him. But by an effort he restrained himself, and spoke instead. His tone was acidulated, but his explanations were clear.

The staff subaltern scratched his head. "Seems to me, Sir Owen, that if I don't get scuppered over this little entertainment of yours, it's likely to cost me my commission. My immediate boss is very keen on his young men attending to their own particular jobs, and not getting switched off on to side tracks. He broke a man only last week for slipping off for a day's snipe-shooting. What he'd say if he caught me philandering after the beauty and fashion of Belgium doesn't bear even thinking about. Is Madame Joseph one of this troupe, by any chance, that you're personally conducting?"

In ten words the sailor told of Madame Joseph's fate and Joseph's treachery.

The tall subaltern blew through his bubbling pipe and put it in his pocket. "That puts the hat on it

That decent little woman! I always said those chaps weren't fit to have commissions. They aren't gentlemen. They don't know how to behave like gentlemen, and will never learn. Well, I'll come in. And is that your traction-engine? She's number-one top-size. Well, the Lord grant there are plenty of horse-troughs on the way. With that grate-area she'll hanker after liquor like the Bishop of Sodor and Man."

The subaltern tried his water, peered into the firebox, raked and coaled. Captain Kettle watched him with an approving eye.

"You seem to know your job."

"I can't help it. They turn us out so perfect from Woolwich we're almost inhuman. H'm! This caravan compounds when she gets going, but starts out on full steam for both cylinders. I wonder which gadgett. . . . Yes, sir, I beg pardon?"

"I said how long before you will have enough head of steam to pull out of here?"

"I must fill my water-tank first at the hydrant there. Call that eight minutes. You can up-anchor and off in half-an-hour, if that will do?"

"Right. Don't get killed whilst I'm away."

Now the members of the Mechanics' Lodge were desperate enough, and had terror put into them,

heart and soul, by the sack of their town, as the invaders intended. But they nearly drove Captain Kettle desperate before they could be brought to see the feasibility of his plan. They talked, and they screeched, and they supplicated; they appealed to heaven, and they openly wept; and their women did all these things, and more.

At last Kettle got to the far end of both his politeness and his patience. If he could not quell their oratory with his tongue, he must try more primitive means.

"Yes," he said, when at last he had got them quiet and had put his crude argument back into his pocket, "the beginning of discipline is learning to wait till your betters speak first. I'm sorry to have to pull a gun before you ladies, but if you'd known my shooting, you need not have been scared of being hit. I should have bagged a husband every shot, and there's none of them would have been much loss. Now then, stand fast where you are those that are coming to Holland with me, and fall out there between those two casks those who funk it."

Again there was the buzz of talk, and the whirl of gesticulation; but the compelling voice once more brought silence: "I give you thirty seconds to decide."

That seemed to crisp the argument. Four men—smallish, white-faced men they were—and no women, separated themselves from the main group, and stood between the casks.

“Ah!” said Kettle, “and as soon as we have got nicely under weigh, you’ll go and try to curry favour by telling. That right, you others?”

They sent up a yell of assent.

“Well, don’t shout it. You’re so boisterous. You must tone down before you get to England, or people will stare at you. I commend to you your four friends between the claret casks. Take them with you, and keep them quiet. If they won’t keep quiet, wring their necks. If you fail in that, remember it is your necks that will pay. Now then, move ahead to the chemical works, and if any one makes so much as a whimper, recollect I will deal with him.”

The loading took time. There was only the one manhole available as entrance-way to the boiler’s dismantled interior, and for some of the ladies it was a tight fit. However, pressure, moral and physical, helped things along, and when all were in-board, Captain Kettle and the staff subaltern left them to sort themselves, and lifted the heavy iron manhole door into place and nutted it home.

"That," said Kettle, "will keep the Bosches out and our beauties in."

"Lord! won't they be fruity inside? May I go ahead now? By the way my boiler's blowing off, I'm afraid she's getting so full of steam she may want to leave us for a home in the sky. The old bird's got a whacking big grate-area."

The traction-engine tugged at its spring draw-bar, and, with the big boiler on its broad-wheeled trolley rattling behind, roared out northwards over the cobbles.

Uhlans galloped past them with questing lances; a burning house dropped flakes of fire on them as they lumbered past; and cordon after cordon of blood-lusting soldiery, driving the people of the suburbs into the central slaughter-ground of the market-place, opened out and let them pass.

A motor-car would have been stopped, a horsed vehicle would have had no chance of passage, but who was going to interfere with a traction-engine driven by two German soldiers, with a huge, empty boiler clamouring behind its noisy heels at exorbitant speed?

There were no instructions for such an apparition as this, and, anyway, it was making such an infernal din that no one could make its custodians hear.

Captain Kettle reached over and bawled in his

companion's car : " You'll have the whole concern tumbling to bits if you push on at this pace."

" Probably. But Lord, man, can't I drive ? "

The German Army is organized down to the last decimal. The German troops they met solemnly goose-stepping towards France would have known how to deal with foot, horse, or guns, with spies in every shape, with an invasion of aeroplanes, howitzer shells, or Senegambian sharpshooters. But Potsdam had not contemplated Belgian civilians leaving their country in a boiler, and had made no provision for the case. To the troops no Belgians showed through the boiler's skin, and the traction engine drivers (in German uniform) were evidently and unashamedly in a desperate hurry. Here, the troops thought, was obviously a sudden order of the Most Highest.

Only one attempt was made to stop its triumphant retreat, and that was on the Belgian side of the Dutch border. Men spread out, calling and bellowing. A gate was slammed and shut. A trumpet squealed, and a troop of horse answered it. But the car of Juggernaut was not a thing to stop. Juggernaut splashed aside the horse, and sailed through the gate, and chain, and men, and everything else that stood in its clanking path, and from its head there gushed a sudden efflorescence of

gesticulating Belgian men and shrilling Belgian dames, who called down curses on the invaders of the land they had left behind.

"Well, I wish you joy of your pals," said the subaltern, slowing up by the Dutch Customs House. "I bet I've burned out this boiler. The old dear hasn't shown water in her gauge for a good half-hour. . . . Yes? Oh, no, Mr. Douanier, I am not the skipper, nor, thank the Lord, am I German. My friend here is in command, and will pay your import duty. He isn't a German either, although he looks it. He's a Britisher, too, and he's a pig-dealer of high descent when he's at home."

But here, of all ludicrous places, a hitch occurred. Certainly there was a tariff for importing "one traction engine (damaged) and one Lancashire boiler (dismantled)" into Holland, but the goods were so unusual that the official in charge regretted that he would have to apply to headquarters for instructions. Presumably, he did so apply, but the Dutchman is not swift to move, especially if there is no money to give him impetus. So Kettle by means of a shipping agent got his Belgian mechanics and their womenkind started off *en route* for Mr. Carnforth's Works in the Midlands, and smoked Dutch cigars to the accompaniment of the subaltern's unclean pipe at a spruce little tavern

just inside the border. Between whiles they passed the time of day with the Germans, who were mending the smashed Belgian gate on the other side of the frontier line beside their white-walled Custom House.

Then came the film. It was handed in mysteriously, and Kettle often wondered afterwards whether Joseph was not his own messenger. But the little humpback never appeared. The subaltern with the unclean pipe—whose name he never learned—was the man who found out its points.

Captain Kettle, as became the founder of the Wharfedale Particular Methodists, made a point of never entering a theatre, and included picture halls under this ban. The subaltern was an expert in both. The subaltern also, as became a British officer and a sapper, knew how to procure a cinematograph projector, with narrow-angle lens for a long throw, and how to secure light, and how to work it. He did all these things that same night after dinner, setting up his machine on the Dutch side of the border, wiring his arc-lamp from the tavern, and using the white-plastered wall of the Belgian Customs House over the frontier as screen. Dutchmen and Germans formed the audience.

The film sounds flat in scenario form after the

real thing. You must go and see it for yourself.

It starts with the exterior of the *café* before and after the sack. (Joseph must have cut out the first of these from an old negative taken in happier days.) Then an interior (badly lit) showing German officers prone in all directions. A title explains that they were "*Drugged ready to receive punishment.*"

Then there is a pretty forest glade into which Madame Mumm presently "fades in." She is dead, and laid out reverently. Then by a simple "stop-film" trick, German officers appear one by one against each of the trees that surround the little clearing.

They are all free of their drug now, and very much alive, but their feet are tied together and their hands are tied behind them. Then nooses are placed round their necks and over boughs of the overhanging trees, and one by one they are hauled up.

The film gives the fullest details, as you will agree when you see it. There are twenty-three German officers, and they all hang and kick their last on twenty-three trees, with the body of poor Madame lying peacefully in the middle of them. Then by another simple camera trick the woman's body fades out, and the men's are left hanging. That is the end.

" My Great James ! " said Kettle when the white wall of the Belgian Customs House flicked back into darkness, " do you suppose Joseph did all that ? "

" I'm afraid he did. The camera can lie to a certain extent, but not about all those essentials. How did he get those chaps unconscious ? Was he a bit of a chemist by any chance ? Oh, of course, I remember. He drugged himself, didn't he, poor little chap ? "

" He did."

" Well, that film's too melodramatic for our taste, of course, but we must carry in mind he was awfully fond of that pretty wife of his."

" Yes, sir, he was. And he was not the coward I thought him. I apologize to Joseph. He was not a fighting man, and he had to take the only course that was open. The beasts had got his girl, and he had to get level, as any man that was worth calling a man would do. I don't like his method—it's too Belgian for me—but he got level all right, and that was the main thing so far as Joseph was concerned."

## IX

### THAT RHINE TOUR

“**D**EAR SIR,” wrote Captain Kettle.  
“Have managed to get hold of Zeppelin, the Germans who manned her objecting. Am at present at that place where you said you shot a right and left of woodcock, and didn’t, the second bird being mine, though I said nothing at the time. I mention the spot that way in case this letter falls into wrong hands. Please join at once, and bring with you (as quiet as possible) things as per enclosed list.

“The grub we can do without if needful, and if you can’t arrange the plant for making gas, we can help ourselves to that from a gasworks somewhere. But as much petrol as your two big cars can stagger under is an absolute necessity. And without the dynamite, or something like it, we shall be a damp squib.

“You must be here on the job before daybreak, which will be at 6.30 at latest, or I must sail without

you, and trust to picking up supplies and a ship-mate elsewhere.

“ Yours truly,

“ O. KETTLE (Master).”

“ P.S.—She is going to be a beast to navigate.”

“ Um,” said Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P. “ Who brought this ? ”

“ Young person on a motor-cycle, sir.” The butler’s wooden features relaxed into a moment’s smile, and then froze again. “ Said the name was Brown, sir.”

“ Well, take the man to the kitchen and give him a drink.”

“ Beg pardon, sir, the young person insisted on the name of Doctor Brown, and was a—er— young person, sir, not a man.”

“ I wish to heaven you would speak English, Booker. Do you mean the messenger is a woman ? ”

“ I suppose she is, sir, though her clothes, especially the lower——”

“ Well, put her in the drawing-room, and give her some tea, and—er—buns, and chocolates, and things. And light a fire. And if she looks that sort give her some cigarettes. Egyptians they usually like.”

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. I did take the liberty of offering her a whisky-and-soda, sir, when she arrived."

"With the result, I suppose, that she snapped your head off for your impudence."

"No, sir. Seemed flattered, sir, although she didn't want one just then," said the butler as he made his exit.

"I shall surprise Booker by kicking him one of these days," Carnforth said to himself as he watched the door shut behind his ancient retainer.

"And now for our small mariner's list of sea stores. Gee-Wilikins! He must think I'm Harrod and the Army and Navy Stores rolled into one Siamese twin. Well, the telephone and a reliable secretary are sound things."

Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., was a man of decision. He knew what he wanted, where to get it, and how to get it quickly, and (being shrewd and businesslike) acted on this knowledge with small delay. Then at the call of a gong he dressed, and dined thoughtfully and well. He had been out with Captain Kettle on the warpath before, and knew that small sailorman would dine comfortably if dinner was before him, and if it was not, would, apparently with equal pleasure, fast for forty hours on end. Mr. Carnforth, though tough and wiry,

was a man of full habit, and liked to meet his meals at their usual fixed intervals.

Half-way through dinner he remembered Dr. Brown. "Has that messenger gone yet, Brooker?"

"No, sir. In the drawing-room."

"H'm, well, it's rather dull dining alone. No, don't you go, Booker. I'll go and see what she's like myself." And a half minute later he was saying, "I'm amazingly sorry I didn't know you were still here. Please come in to dinner at once. Booker! Bring back the soup."

Now I think it was Dr. Mary Brown's voluminous black leather breeches and neat boots and gaiters which got her that very prompt invitation in the first instance, and it was a handy way she had with her eye that warmed up early acquaintance into a pretty warm flirtation before the end of dinner. Carnforth was once pithily described as "a bit of a warrior." Dr. Brown had of late decided that the way to get the most out of life was not to be too prim. I am not going to give away her age, but she had a tidy handful of experience behind her. She had tried philanthropy, dancing, religion, and medicine, and found them all very well as hobbies, but had tired of each in turn. Now she was seeing life as a Lady Motor Scout, and a swashbuckling air was necessary for local colour.

"Have another walnut," said Carnforth, as they sat over their dessert. "I shall call you 'cork' directly."

"'Cork,' why?"

"Because you are stopping the bottle. No, my good girl, help yourself first. Well, if you won't I'll do my best. It's '70, and we aren't going to leave the bottle with one of Kettle's little games to go through on ahead. Ahead of me that is. I shall have to clear out in half an hour, I'm sorry to say, my dear. My housekeeper will bed you down here for the night, and see you have shaving tackle and all that."

"Oh, but I'm coming too."

"I bet a trifle Kettle didn't ask you. Cuddle-some little way with him, hasn't he, when he doesn't want anybody?"

"Don't be horrid. He's rather a dear, though, isn't he?"

"Now, you're trying to make me jealous. Have some cognac with your coffee if you won't drink any more port, and no—Booker, I particularly told you Dr. Brown always smokes Egyptian cigarettes. Apologize, my dear, for my bachelor ways, but I hate the beastly things myself. And I don't smoke cigars with '70 port. Heigh-ho, *Ge-wine, ge-women, and ge-song*, as they say in

Lord What's-his-name's spiritual home, are great things, my dear, aren't they, and I always think when I go off cruising with Kettle that my bright young career will be cut off short with suddenness. That's why I am dining decently before starting out to-night. It's a pity to leave a bottle more of the '70 than's necessary to my young fool of a nephew."

"You will smuggle me on board, won't you?" said Dr. Brown, moving her chair up closer.

"I'm a bit deaf. What was that? Here, come and sit on my knee, and then you needn't bawl at me."

"Oh, I can make you hear all right. You'll manage to get me on board, won't you, old thing? If it hadn't been for me you would never have heard of the affair at all."

"By Jove, you have ripping eyes, m'dear, when you look at a man like that. You'd better keep out of Lady Kettle's way, or she'll be reading the riot act."

"Then you promise?"

"Oh, Lord, I'll promise anything. Look out. Here's Booker.

It was a slightly embarrassed Martin Carnforth that walked up, motor head-lamp in hand, to

Captain Kettle's rendezvous. The huge dark airship, swinging to her rock moorings, twittered to the breeze overhead, and the little sailor, with cigar cocked to an acute angle, lay smoking on a bank of leather. He dandled a 12-bore handily across his knees. And the cock of his red torpedo beard was full of tranquil satisfaction.

"Well, did you shoot the whole of the crew of your Zep?"

"No, sir, only a brace of them. The rest concluded they would do as they were told, so I put them in gaol before they could change their minds. It doesn't do to trust Germans an inch these days, Mr. Carnforth."

"It never did. But where did you find a gaol up here on the moor?"

"There's an old adit close by, sir, for some of the lead workings, though it's too dark for you to see it now. I drove them into that, and then blew down the entrance. They'd some handy little bombs for killing babies with in their after car, and I used one of those. I had to set the fuse by guess, but it went off all right, and nobody was hurt. At least I wasn't."

"H'm. And so I suppose they starve or suffocate to death."

"Oh there's a vertical shaft half a mile further

in that leads up to the moor. We'll leave word, if you like, that they are there, and anybody that hankers after them can wind them up through that shaft. But what anyone can want Germans for these days is beyond me."

"Collectors fancy all sorts of bric-à-brac, even live Germans. There's quite a cult in some political circles for collecting live Germans and pampering them. How did you catch the Zep by the way? Had she come down to poach your rabbits? She's rather out of her latitude up here in the middle of Yorkshire. There are precious few babes and women to kill amongst these moors."

"There was a sudden cold snap in the early morning, sir. My minimum thermometer on the garden wall showed eighteen degrees of frost, though when I went to look at it after breakfast to take the reading, the sun was shining and the air temperature had gone up to 45 degrees."

"And they wanted to come down to thaw?"

"No, sir, there was a heavy snow-storm up aloft there, and the weight of snow forced them down. This craft here, Mr. Carnforth, is 500 feet long and 40 feet beam and if you work out what half an inch of rain-water—turned into snow—means over that surface, you'll find it figures out at a lot more weight than she could carry. So they gave up

their job of being frightful over Bradford and Leeds, and slanted down to earth up here in the dales, where it is quieter. They were just starting to scrape off the snow (and making a very poor job of it) when I came to the top of the scaur there to look at a weasel trap."

"And the weasel was forgotten, I suppose?"

"Mr. Carnforth, with me business comes first, and pleasure afterwards. I took the weasel—a fine young dog—to hang up for my keeper's larder, and re-set the trap, and then I gave two Dutchmen who'd forgotten their manners a barrel of number five apiece at thirty yards. Afterwards I told the rest to put up their hands."

"And they kindly did it? Tame of them."

"I'm afraid, sir," said Captain Kettle drily, "they believed I'd part of the British Army at my back. It was very foggy, and they didn't seem accustomed to our moorland."

"Bang goes another ideal! I always looked upon you as another George Washington."

"Well sir," said Kettle with a flush, "I try to be truthful, and if necessary, I would have taken on the whole thirteen. But I'd got an idea I might make use of this Zeppelin, and I knew that if we started scrapping they'd destroy her before I could get them all comfortably killed off. Anyway, I

didn't tell any lies, if that's what you're meaning. No, by James! I just sang out in the fog to 'keep back there out of shot' and hailed down to the Dutchmen that if they didn't march into that adit, one-time, I'd mow down the lot of them. I expect the cold and this moorland country nipped them. They ran to cover like a push of the old-style Dutch deck-hands with a brace o' mates after them. Well then as I say, sir, I fastened them up and went back to breakfast. Lady Kettle never likes me to be late!"

"I admire your taste in messengers," said Carnforth with a grin. "You seem to have made a great impression on the damsel in the leather breeks some time during your shady past."

"My Great James! Has she been talking?"

"Good heavens, man, don't jump down my throat—or hers—like that. I assure you she's been most discreet. I wish I'd had your chances though. With you ahead of me, I don't get a look in."

"I don't know what you're driving at, sir," Kettle snapped at him acidly. "I did nothing to the lady I—er—couldn't help."

"Oh that will be quite enough for Lady Kettle I'm sure when we laugh over the yarn with

her—All right. I'll climb down, Colonel. Don't shoot."

"Our views about ladies are very different, sir," said Kettle with much stiffness.

"Thank the Lord, yes. I'm out for fun. You've Lady Kettle. Now then, business: There's a five-ton motor lorry load of hydrogen cylinders, and a quarter of a mile of piping in case we can't get alongside. There's a ton and a half of petrol on another lorry. There's a third lorry with a special line in T.N.T. bombs fitted with the Carnforth patent vane. I've never contrived to get our fool air-craft officials to take them up, and now's the chance to advertise them. That's the only reason I came. Now what's the scheme? Are you going to take your Zep down to Hendon and make a present of her to the British Army? As you haven't invited the authorities here, I should say that is the correct procedure."

Captain Kettle pulled thoughtfully at his red torpedo beard and stared at Carnforth.

Mr. Carnforth pursed his lips and scratched his chin and stared at Captain Kettle.

Then Carnforth sniggered, and that seemed to break the spell. "I thought, sir," said Kettle with some embarrassment, "we might do something on our own. You see neither Navy nor Army has

any use for us. They say I've a wooden leg, and they say you're too—er——”

“Tum-tummy.”

“Well, I believe the brutes would even say that. So I thought we might put in a little trip without consulting them. You see, sir, I know very little of Europe, having spent, as you know, most of my life at sea. We'd a Preacher who came to our chapel two Sundays ago and he'd done what he called 'the Rhine tour.' I didn't think much of it myself, but he kept dragging his experiences into his sermon, and the congregation liked it. It's rather a slur on me, sir, but I may tell you in confidence that the collection was thirteen and twopence up on my own average. I've got to get level with that somehow, or the Wharfedale Particular Methodists will want to know why I am sticking on at their head. One of our mottoes is, 'By their deeds ye shall know them.'”

“It's the devil of a position,” Carnforth agreed. “I'm no preacher myself, but as a politician I agree with you. But I don't quite catch the point.”

“Why I was thinking, sir, we might do the Rhine Tour (just as the tripper people advertise it) in our own Zep, and empty our ballast on anything in the shell-manufacturing line as we went

along. Those commercial towns are not mentioned in the Tourist Guide, but I guess we can spot them. Our preacher was great on the medieval castles, and I should scorn to drop bombs on them, because they will always be of interest to photographers when Germany's opened up to white men, after the war. And there's one other thing."

"Well?"

"I know, sir, you laugh at poetry, but our preacher said the Rhine reeked of it. I tell you sir, when he occupied my pulpit, he let off poetry about the Rhine till I fairly writhed. It was other people's too, and the swine never owned up. But let me go there, and pump out some verse of my own on the spot, and I'll give my crowd the squirms or know the reason why. Yes, by James! They'll understand whose congregation they are by the time I've finished shooting off those Rhine verses at them, the mutinous dogs."

"Hullo!"

"Yes, Mr. Carnforth, with shame I own it, but I've been having trouble. Lady Kettle, as you know, has been filling our pulpit on several occasions during my absence, and I want to clear her ticket at once. She dropped the collection, but she's kept the popularity going strong. It's me that two of our blighters have got their knife

into. One's a chemist from down the dale (not rightly in our circle at all) and one's a sheep farmer from above Arncliffe. They complain I preach too hot a kind of hell for their complete enjoyment, feeling I suppose they're in for it as residents later. Well, Mr. Carnforth, let me get that Rhine poetry straight from the soil, so to speak, to fire out at them, and they'll swallow any brand of hot place they're offered. I know the beggars. And now, if you please, we'll just run through the Zep's engines and her rising gear. The rest of the gadgetts can wait till we're under weigh. But I tell you beforehand, she's a regular bag of tricks."

Dr. Mary Brown was not discovered till they had left the gloom of England behind them, and were heading across a great saucer of the North Sea. It was Kettle who found her in the after gondola, plugging her ears against the noise of the engine exhausts, and Carnforth, when called into consultation, rather basely disclaimed all knowledge of her intention to stow away.

"Well, Miss," said the little sailor acidly, "you have forced your way in where you were not invited, and you'll have to do as you're told, lady or no lady."

"Call me Doctor, please."

"To start with, I'll not have my ship disgraced with you in those breeches. Can you make yourself a skirt, if I give you the material?"

"I can't, and I won't try. You're horrid."

"Very well, then, Miss, I will be your dressmaker. In the meanwhile you'll stay in there with the lock turned till I'm ready."

But Captain Kettle was not able to commence dressmaking just then. From somewhere on the well-watched water below, a seaplane soared and buzzed towards the huge airship with vicious intent. She was travelling three miles to the airship's two, and was ascending rapidly.

The sailor picked up the loud-speaking telephone and tried to get hold of Carnforth in the engine gondola, but without result. The roar of the exhausts hung round them like the noise of a battle. So he steadied his helm and ran aft down the central alley-way.

"Give her more speed," he bawled in Carnforth's ear. "There's an English seaplane after us, and we'll be bombed if we don't look out, by our own men. There's no chance of letting him know who we are with all this row going on, and he's as noisy as we are."

"You've all the speed I can get," Carnforth shouted back. "These infernal engines have got a

chill on the gizzard. 'What does the fool of a 'plane want to interfere for? Can't he see we're going towards Germany?'"

"There's only one kind of good Zep from his point of view, sir, and that's a dead Zep. If we can't run, we must rise."

"I've got the horizontal rudders full on, and she doesn't answer. Not enough speed."

"Then we must turn the exhaust into the envelope and warm up the whole outfit. That will make her rise fast enough."

"It's about ten to one we set her on fire in the process if we try that. I say, Captain, there's a dam sight more in Zep-driving than the ordinary amateur guesses at. Here, that's the cut-out to this set of engines. You stand by it, and shut when I wave. I'll shut the cut-out of the port engines. As soon as you think we're high enough, open them again, and don't you go on a second longer than's dead necessary. We're squirting white hot air on to hydrogen ballonets, and it's about as safe as having a firework party in a powder factory. Now then, hup!"

The din of the exhausts was dulled, and the huge airship quivered. Then she swelled visibly, straining at her covering till all wrinkles were lost in chubbiness. The soaring seaplane seemed to

be dropping like a stone beneath them. The ring of sea, with its ships and its tiny fret of waves appeared to be falling away through the bottom of space. And then they swooped up into a veil of cloud, dank and icy to the feel, and shutting them away from all human sight, and spangling them with instant dewdrops.

"Keep her at that level, sir, for half an hour," Kettle bawled at his friend's ear, "and I will change course a dozen points. We'll soon shake off our navy customer down below if only this cloud doesn't thin out before we've run our distance."

The little sailor went forward again, and his engineer, with a minute's rest ahead of him, straightened his back and interviewed the prisoner through a port hole.

"I told you you'd catch it," he chuckled.

"Captain Kettle was most insulting."

"He struck me as being icily polite. I knew he'd never stand those bags."

"I mean he was insulting in persisting in calling me, Miss, when he knows quite well I'm Doctor."

"So you are, m'dear. I'll lace into him sometime when we get home, if you like. Of course you're a doctor. Any one could tell that at once by your learned frown. Look here, do you mind tying up my knuckles where I've grazed them?"

" Oh, are you hurt ? "

" Horribly. F-s-s ! Go gently, m'dear. Ah, that's nicer. There, if I squeeze on to your hand like that, it doesn't ache so much. That bandage properly sterilized ? Here, hold on to it a minute. My blessed port engine is going on strike again. Who wouldn't sell a farm and go Zep-driving ? "

Now, Captain Sir Owen Kettle, K.C.B., was beginning to find his navigation in a tangle. At sea, come fair, come gale, come night, come fog, he could find his way from port to port with any expert who did business on the great waters. The sextant and the log were his cousins ; the compass, with its most erratic variations, was his familiar friend.

But up here in the navigating position of the Zeppelin he was faced with a score of new problems. Height, angle of ascension, angle of descent, wind drift, speed by engine evolution, retardation due to increase in envelope size, varying air friction, leeway, were all indicated on dials and recorders in front of him. He took these as accurate, to start with, but soon convinced himself that many of them were recording fiction.

For a while, too, he pinned his faith, mariner-fashion, on the reliability of the elaborate Thompson compass. But when, during a passage between two

electricity-discharging clouds this instrument emulated a windmill in full working activity, he felt that one of the props had been taken from his universe. Even his cigar in that rare air burned abnormally.

Occasionally, very occasionally, he got a glimpse at the sun, and, comparing this with his watch, was able to get an approximate bearing. But for the most part the Zeppelin travelled through a bank of cloud, though even this, most unfairly (he felt) was not enough to conceal her.

Those envious dogs, the officers of the British Navy, who sailed the North Sea below in forty assorted craft, kept spotting her outline.

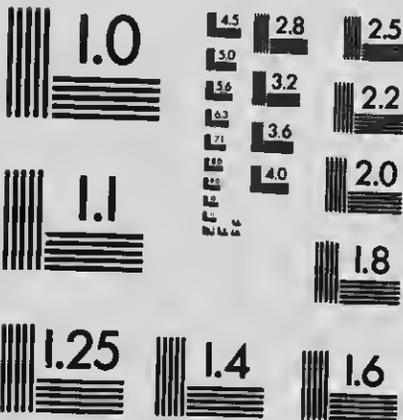
They merrily wirelessly to one another, "Mark Zep over!" and at intervals, as she blundered down their sentry line, snapped off shrapnel at her. It was a poor solace to Captain Kettle's feelings that their shooting was extremely bad. The hardest trial of all was not being able to bawl back at them exactly what he thought.

There are, of course, ninety and nine close shaves for one actual shipwreck, and about these it is one of the primary rules of shipmasters (as it is of railway companies and others) to keep the most profound secrecy. Captain Owen Kettle is, as has been recorded many times, one of the few really



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truthful men now alive, but even he, when Mr. Carnforth bawled in his ear: "Finding your way all right?" snarled back "Think I don't know my job?"

"You're making for the Texel, aren't you?"

"As it happens, I am."

"Of course, my dear chap, I don't question your navigation for one moment, but when the clouds pulled away for a moment just now, I spotted one of my own ships heading along the same course as ourselves."

"Well?"

"Oh, she's off to Norway, that's all."

"By James, sir, are you trying to teach me to navigate?"

"Not a bit, not a bit. Why should I?"

"Because you know nothing about it. And I may tell you, sir, that I don't either up here. I can get neither sights nor soundings, and my compass is like a tee-to-tum. You might think, Mr. Carnforth, it is an easy thing to take a departure from Flamborough Head and hit Europe. Yesterday I would have said a child could have done it. But just now I'm free to own there are difficulties. These auxiliary sky-windjamners take a bit more thinking out than the ordinary seafaring man has any idea of. But don't you get uneasy, sir. You

can carry in mind I've got to do that Rhine Tour, or the Wharfedale Particular Methodists will take more handling than I care to talk about."

A minute later Carnforth was telling Dr. Mary Brown that he had "pulled his Eminence's leg all right."

"Nasty little wasp," said the lady.

"Not a bit of it. He's the best chap in the Eastern Hemisphere. But I bet you a bottle of eau de Cologne, my dear, you can't guess what he's doing just now."

"Oh, writing poetry, I suppose."

"Not he. He's sewing at a skirt for you. It will be made of canvas. He cut it out with his pocket-knife on the deckplanks. It's not one of those nasty skimpy ones, either. There will be tons of room in it to cover all of you decently."

"You're both of you horrors," said Dr. Mary Brown. "Oh, there, they're shooting at us again! Mr. Carnforth, I forbid you to laugh. Do something! Get it stopped."

Now, ever since the start from that lonely Yorkshire moorland, the port engine of the Zennelin had been giving trouble, and naturally Carnforth had given it most of his attention. The automatic adjustment of its carburettors for varying air-

pressures was faulty, its magnetos shorted at every jolt, its plugs sooted almost as soon as they were replaced. Its driver was burned, stifled, deafened by its imbecilities, but nursed it through every ailment triumphantly. It was the starboard engine that let them down. Lubrication failed at one of fifty points; there was a smell of heated steel and scorching oil; and before Carnforth, frantically searching, could find the sore, a gear-box bearing seized, and the whole of the starboard machine stopped with a squeal and a jar. Incidentally one huge propeller blade flicked off into space.

"Good afternoon," said Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., as he watched its whirring flight. "I wonder if the old bus has a big enough helm to keep her straight against the port engine alone. Hullo, what's that? Yes. Oh, chasing her tail, is she? If I slow down more than a few revolutions she'll stop altogether. Ay ay, sir; stop port engine it is."

Dusk was falling, and the huge gas-bag drifted as a helpless derelict at the same pace as the cloud which surrounded her. "It's beginning to look a bit sick for your Rhine Tour," Carnforth admitted, as he rejoined his friend. "I'm a rotten Zep-driver, and that's a fact."

"You're one engineer, sir, and not six. I'm the

man that's to blame. Here am I, a failure at my own trade. I aimed at the Texel, and a minute ago, through a hole in the clouds, I sighted Heligoland, four points starboard and about ten miles ahead. By James! Mr. Carnforth, if we could have kept weigh on her half an hour more, and those parent bombs of yours are what you claim, we could have blown Heligoland into fine spray."

"Shall we miss it now?"

"I make it we've a lee-drift of some twenty-eight to thirty miles an hour, sir. There's a stiffish breeze blowing up here, though you can't feel now, because, of course, we're drifting with it."

"Where will that take us?"

Captain Kettle picked up a parallel ruler and laid it on the German chart of the North Sea pinned to the table in front of him. Here's where we are now"—he drew a line with a pencil and stepped back, pointing. "And that's the course of our present drift."

"Phew, slap across the Kiel Canal!"

"If the wind doesn't shift, sir. And as that's a thing over which we have no control, and the starboard engine's beyond repair, I'll ask you to excuse me, sir, for the next hour. I've a little writing to do. I've my head full of some really stirring verse, and I want to get it on paper before it escapes me."

"Feel you've got your argumentative chemist and the Littondale sheep farmer fixed, eh?"

"I can see the tears hopping down their whiskers, sir. If only we'd an accordion on board here, I could set to music some new poetry that I believe would surprise even you."

The short wintry day faded out, and, after a long twilight, night fell, black, and chill, and starless. Even the high air was not at peace in this time of universal war. Searchlight beams slashed it with swift cuts, and the rumbling growl of guns drifted to it from all quarters and reverberated amongst the clouds. Dewdrops from the vast gas-bag overhead dripped on to the roofs of the gondolas with a noise like falling shot. Twice a rattle like machine guns from a neighbouring cloud told that unseeing aeroplanes were doing sentry-go. In the after gondola Mr. Martin Carnforth watched Dr. Mary Brown brew tea on an electric heater, and flirted with her industriously. In the control station Captain Owen Kettle made poetry which he felt would shake Upper Wharfedale down to the very limestone from which it was gouged.

Then land slid into view beneath them, the German land of Schleswig-Holstein—which is the basic cause of the present war—and Mr. Martin Carnforth, M.P., lost his temper and flung a teacup

and its steaming contents at the silent starboard engine of the Zeppelin. Captain Kettle made no demonstration. He had an older acquaintance with Fate and the Winds of Heaven, and knew that he could change neither of them. He went steadily on with his literary work. In his mind's eye he saw the bearded chemist from down the dale writhing under his next sermon.

"You will let me drop the first bomb on the Canal, won't you?" Dr. Brown pleaded. "I'm sorry you spilt your tea. Here's another cup. I'm a suffragette, you know, and it would be a splendid thing for me if I could say the Kiel Canal and the ships in it were blown up by a woman."

Carnforth's laugh was rather startling. But his words were suave enough, as usual. "You can drop the whole caboodle as far as I am concerned, my dear, and if you smash the canal, or a ship that counts, I'll endow your excellent society with enough to keep it in chocolates for the next ten years. But if you watch the ground below there, you'll see the wind's shifted, and we're drifting north."

"The horrid Zep's twiddling round so much I don't know which is north and which is south-east."

"Then don't worry to look, my dear, or you'll

strain your eyes. By Jove, you have pretty eyes, too, as I believe I've told you before. You'll get married one of these days, sharp and quick, before you know what's happened, if you look at people like that. There, my dear, you sit down in that corner out of the draught and swig your tea, and I'll go and have a word with the Admiral."

"The wind," said Captain Kettle, when his friend joined him, "seems far more flawy up here than one finds it down on the sea. It's blowing as fresh as ever, but it changes direction from minute to minute, as you can see for yourself, sir. I believe we shall hit that canal yet, though at present we can't see ——"

At that precise moment two sections of cloud below them slid apart and rolled up with the quickness of a conjuring trick, and there below them Schleswig-Holstein lay spread out like a map. It was striped with railways and glittering with a great canal. Those lights astern would be Büsum that the Danes fought so bitterly to hold; there were Heide's electrics immediately below; and that great glow ahead on the other side of the canal must be Neümunster, where they make the cloth and the beer and the dyewares.

But it was the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal that held the eye. It was lit like a street with sizzling arcs;

it was busy with a thousand activities. It was not a mere waterway between towns. It was the main artery of one colossal city. Launches and passenger boats did traffic on its surface; the abounding industries of war hummed on its banks; and in the sidings, moored fore and aft to the great bollards on the banks, lay the tragic items of the Second Largest Fleet in all the World. There were Dreadnought and super-Dreadnought battleships, huge Dreadnought cruisers, and swarming torpedo craft moored there in inglorious safety—all the kinds of vessels, in fact, that go to make a navy's complement, except submarines—and, given engine power, the hovering Zeppelin could have destroyed one after another as though they had been ships of straw, so long as her supply of bombs held out.

"Whilst as it is," said Carnforth bitterly. "we are just as helpless and harmless as a Cabinet Minister with a mouthful of words. We're running parallel to the canal at as accurate a half-mile distance as if we were geared to a rail. A man's cursed Creation for less."

"Yes, sir," agreed Captain Kettle. "It's annoying. I've been looking forward to that Rhine Tour more than I've told you, and I am beginning to fear the chances for it are fading out." The Zeppelin gave a sudden jump upwards. "By James!

who's throwing out my ballast? By James! sir, that infernal Miss Brown has let go one of your bombs!"

"And it's falling beautifully. Look there! Straight as a die, now those vanes have got their grip. Kettle, if I'd the British air-craft bomb-buyer here, that would be worth a quarter of a million to me."

"Well," said Kettle drily, "no one can say I ever dodged trouble. The band will begin to play if that bomb hits anything solid and bursts. I hope Miss will like the results."

"It's dropping on that patch of green that looks like marsh. Damn that girl! Why couldn't she use brains and loose off over something solid? Glory Alleluia! How's that for a tickle fuse?"

The bomb touched earth, and a volcano spouted. The eye saw it first as a splendid pyrotechnic picture. Later came the din of the explosion and an air-wave that set the Zeppelin a'rock like a cork in a flooded gutter. And almost as soon searchlights spat out from all the countryside, exploring the zenith, and from that down and round. The first quivered on to the airship and settled there in twelve seconds from its start, and ten others promptly followed suit.

The great Zeppelin hung there in the wind, lit

like a stage, with a hundred gun-muzzles swinging on to her, helpless as Montgolfier's first balloon.

"By James!" said Kettle, "this beats me! Why don't they fire? Haven't they anti-aircraft guns?"

"I should say the place was stiff with them. But apparently the private right signal of the homecoming Hun is 'Drop one bomb, and then sit tight and do nothing,' and it's acted. They think we're their own pals suffering from engine trouble, and that very nice bomb was dropped by accident, which happens to be the strict truth. Great Scott! I wonder how many candle-power of light they're buzzing at us from that canal?"

"And you believe they're taking us for Germans?"

"I'm dead sure of it."

"By James, sir, I don't like that! I don't know whether you, sir," the little sailor added pointedly, "feel the degradation of it, too?"

"I do—oh, I do! But I'm going to stick it for the time being all the same. Looking down the muzzles of all those infernal guns has swamped all my better feelings. At this rate of drift we shall be out of range in another ten minutes, and then I'll be my old brave, bonny self again. Damn that girl! There! she's dropped another bomb!

Little fool must be as fond of stirring up a wasp's nest as you are."

In the after-gondola Dr. Mary Brown cowered on a sofa and trickled delicate machinery with a neat but shuddering toe. "Oh, why didn't you come when I called?" she demanded when Carnforth opened the door.

"Because I didn't hear you, my dear, for one thing. Have you been calling me? Glad you've been enjoying yourself, but felt the thing was not complete without me. What are you playing at now?"

"Trying to prevent more of these beastly things from slipping down through that hole. Didn't you hear what a noise the other ones made?"

"I believe I did. Quite a little bang. If it tickles you to know, I dare say the noise has reached Berlin by now. There, take away your foot; I have set the trigger again. What was your nice little idea in pulling over the release lever?"

"I thought it was the switch for the water-heater thing we used for the tea."

Mr. Martin Carnforth gulped—and then sniggered. "Well, you've jangled Wilhelm's nerves all right, and with one of his own dear Zeps, too. The suffragette papers ought to give you an awfully fine par about it."

"Do you think they really will?" asked Dr. Mary Brown hopefully.

"Sure of it, if we get home to report same. But if you're particularly anxious for newspaper glory, I shouldn't try any more little games. You see, they are so apt to irritate the Bosches, who've really got no sense of humour. They are not like us; they still take their Zeps pretty seriously."

A voice that announced, "Wind's shifting to the s'uthard," made them both start and move apart.

"Good Lord!" said Carnforth. "I thought that was my chaperon come to take me home. This telephone is one of the loud-speaking sort, intended to be heard above the din of the motor-exhausts. Now they're stopped, it's a bit startling."

"Conscience!" said Dr. Mary Brown archly.

In the meanwhile the huge, helpless airship sidled and whirled at the sport of the air-currents across towards the Baltic. But with the edge of that sea beginning to gleam beneath her through the night, she got into another valley of the winds, and fled away north, down Schleswig-Holstein.

Captain Kettle by this time had grown thoroughly disgusted with air-travel over which he had so little

control. Moreover, he had found a very efficient substitute for the actual Rhine Tour of his ambition, and, as further damage to Germany seemed out of the question for the moment, he wanted to get back to Upper Wharfedale for the earliest possible delivery of his epoch-making sermon. So, as the airship's latest course seemed to be due north, he made up his mind to bring her to ground before she could change her mind and take to the seas again, but if possible he proposed that she should carry him and his crew across the Danish border, so as to avoid further complications with the German Army. Even Captain Sir Owen Kettle has had to admit that in these latter days Germans in bulk are likely to be too well organized to be tackled without adequate resources.

The exit valves for the hydrogen in the many ballonettes all converged to the control position, and Captain Kettle experimented with them judiciously, and noted results on the barometer and the other altitude meters.

The night was inkily dark, and in the grazing country of Schleswig-Holstein (which was once Denmark) there are few salient features except for houses and farm villages. These were tucked away in bed, and showed no lights; and, indeed, up there, in the quiet night, it was hard to remember

that nine-tenths of Europe was flaming with war. The stillness bred in Kettle's poetic brain the germ of another idea. He turned again to pencil and paper, and worked it out. Morning was beginning to thin the night when it was borne in on him that the Zeppelin was falling.

It was the dawn chill, of course, that did it. With engines running, he could have turned the hot exhausts into the envelope, and expanded the hydrogen in the ballonettes, and gained height with ease. Now he was falling steadily—in fact, rather quickly. Well, that was all right. The Danish border was close ahead, and he had designed to come to earth in Denmark. He picked up the telephone and warned the pair in the after gondola to stand-by for going ashore—and, incidentally, forgetting the power of that loud-sounding instrument, caused them to jump.

\* \* \* \* \*

As far as Mr. Martin Carnforth's personal record goes, that was about the end of the tale. He was conscious of a heavy blow—it seemed like several heavy blows all rolled into one, and when he next awoke to life it was in a bare, clean room that smelt vaguely of cows and cheese. He was lying on a wooden bed that was too short for him, and sitting by his side was Dr. Mary Brown. Dr.

Brown was wearing a voluminous skirt made of whitey-brown canvas, and was looking sulky. There was a smell of pungent cigar-smoke in the room, and tracing this up, Carnforth's eye lit upon the small, neat form of Captain Kettle, writing busily at the window ledge.

His eyes worked back again to the skirt which covered Dr. Brown's voluminous black leather breeches, and this set his thoughts going again. He chuckled pleasantly at them.

"Hullo, sir," said the little sailor, turning round. "Glad to see you're getting all right again. You had a bit of a bump."

"It seemed to me several bumps."

"My fault, sir, entirely. I brought her alongside in a way that ought to cost me my airman's ticket. I told you all along she was a beast to navigate, but I am not going to excuse myself behind that. You put your shoulder out in getting ashore."

"And you put it in, my dear?"

"I tried," said Dr. Brown sulkily. "I did my best."

"But you had to call in a second opinion, eh?"

"Well, sir, you see, Miss hasn't had the experience in setting limbs and putting them into joint that I have. But I think you'll find we did the job all right between us."

"And where's the Zep?"

"I'm afraid that's a total loss. You see, sir, if the Danes had got it, being neutrals, they'd probably have traded it back to the Germans. So I just put a match to the petrol tank before I left. We were only just across the border, and a whole regiment of German soldiers skipped over to put out the blaze."

"And didn't they? Quick, man. Don't say they managed it."

"It looked as if some of your bombs got overheated, sir. She made one of the finest blow-ups I ever heard, and the great, big quarry-hole that was left was beginning to fill with water when we set off for the house. The farmer here seems rather pleased. He says the great difficulty on this farm has been enough water for milk-cooling."

"Eh, well, we seem to have made some good Germans after all. And our little girl with the nice eyes here has had the time of her life, haven't you, my dear? You appear to be the person that's been mainly scored off, Captain. You'll have trouble with that chapel if the Rhine Tour was essential."

"Don't you make any mistake there, sir. I've got that crowd in hand, and a bit 'o spare, if Rhine poetry will do it."

"What, you've written the things?"

"I have, sir. It seems to me I generally can write poetry best about places I haven't seen. Seeing them generally spoils my flow. If I don't give that chemist Lorely enough to choke him, I'll eat my hat. These new Rhine Tour poems of mine beat the real thing hands down. They'll just make the sweat drip off him when I give them from our pulpit."

X

THE INVENTOR OF MELTITE

**M**R. S. J. LIVINGSTONE was not a poor man, but I think he may be described broadly as an ambitious man. He had an air that some people (other than customers) found arrogant.

Soon after the War began he tried to hold up the British Admiralty for a million sterling, free of tax, and an earldom; and when this did not come off, he crossed Whitehall and tried the same game on the War Office. He got hold of some bland ass there who irritated him into saying more than was judicious, and left the building under arrest. The magistrate before whom he was hauled, called in doctors to inquire into his mental state, and was with difficulty persuaded to dismiss him with a caution.

He had not gone to either of these seats of military learning on the strength of his appearance alone. He was a business man, and had no mind to be fubbed off with underlings. He knew it would

require one of the Heads to be man enough to give him what he asked for, and he saw to it that weighty introductions carried him direct to a Head—both at the Admiralty and War Office. The only trouble was, neither Head that he saw was big enough for his job, or S. J. Livingstone would have got what he asked for—or been taken out into the yard and shot before he could talk. For myself, I think I should have shot him, as being on the whole the safer, and certainly the cleaner course. However, perhaps that is a matter of taste. You shall judge for yourself.

But read next a word or two about the man himself. Livingstone, he called himself, and by reason of a birth in Paisley, affected a Glasgow accent, rather of the Pollockshields variety. (This is a cross between cleft palate and German). His father had been Solomon Levenstein who had exchanged brutal ill-treatment in the Frankfort Ghetto for the doubtful delights of being a rabbi in Scotland. (Conceive a Jewish priest in an atmosphere of Wee Frees, U.P.'s and Episcopalians!) S. J. Livingstone, son of Solomon Levenstein, never visited Germany, but loathed it and all its contents from the bitter tales of Ghetto persecution dinned into him during his upbringing.

Old Solomon, in his way, was a well-read man ;

S. J. was a better—mainly in the direction of natural science. I think if somebody had subsidised S. J. and he had specialised in one or two branches of chemistry or chemical physics he might have been something big, though again this is open to question. It is on the cards that when he discovered something good—Meltite, for instance—he would have dropped pure research like a hot brick and struck out boldly for commercial affluence. He was a good deal of a mixture—which is perhaps the same thing as saying he was altogether a Jew. For instance; no outsider would have suspected him of collecting enamels; but he did, lavishly and worshipfully; and told no one, so that prices should not be raised against him.

In commercial life, S. J. Livingstone was a seller of dyewares in Bradford (Livingstone & Co., 29, Chapel Row. Agents for Dresdner Alizerin Gesellschaft. Telegrams :—"Explorer," Bradford). Up to the beginning of the War, he did pretty well, sold a decent weight of goods in his office, and more, after the manner of his kind, at the political club where he lunched, and at the golf club where he kept his liver down to gauge on Saturdays. On Sundays he was invisible. He spent half that day in chemical research—he was chasing a cheaper synthetic indigo—and the other half in gloating

over his enamels. No living soul ever caught him at either. Between whiles his housekeeper fed him sumptuously, although he bullied her.

After war began he made money hand over fist. How he ran German dyewares into England without getting dropped on I know, but shall not tell. Probably the Government knows, too. The British Government makes a speciality of doing silly things, we all admit, but it is not what the oriental calls an All-the-time Fool. We all knew the Government wanted dyewares to get into the country for khaki and other things, and, presumably the Government knew when to wink. Anyway, Livingstone & Co. were the firm with the goods, which they bought for shillings a pound, and sold for pounds a pound, to S. J.'s delight, and to the noted increase amongst his enamels. It was just after last December's balance sheet he cut out the big Yankee collectors over that bit of old Limoges that Christie's called the Scarlet Madonna. Also he bought twenty dozen Pommery '06.

Then by an absolute fluke on one Sunday morning he blundered upon Meltite.

It was untamed enough when he first mixed it, and I gather that he narrowly escaped with life. As it was, he was badly burned, his laboratory in the cellar was wrecked, and the City Fire Brigade

had an interesting time salving the balance of the house.

But he was skilled enough at his job, and once he knew the nature of the mixture he had stumbled upon it was easy to arrange its proportions so that it could be handled in comparative safety. Incidentally the City Corporation helped him. They were using a mechanical mixture of an iron salt and powdered aluminium for welding together the ends of tramrails, and he studied their methods. The Corporation called their stuff Thermit. There is no secret about it. Thermit is used for a score of purposes, and latterly the ingenious German loads it into his Zeppelin bombs. S. J. Livingstone's mixture was like Thermit, only more so. He added to his powdered aluminium a substance that gave up its oxygen with more astonishing quickness, with the result of producing even more amazing heat than burning Thermit gave out.

After inspecting the fused remains of his cellar, the inventor hit upon "Meltite" as a name for his discovery, and then spent a rapturous afternoon gloating over his enamels, and thanking Allah that he kept them in a fireproof safe. He went to the Seascale links for a couple of days then, and because he was thinking of something else the whole time, played golf extremely badly. But exercise and sea

air crisped his brain, and lifted his outlook from the retail view.

Half the world was at war. This was no time for a new Limited Company, and anyway that infernal Treasury would probably stop a capital issue. Besides, if he took out a patent, and published a specification, Germany would jump his claims as surely as mails ran to Rotterdam.

"No," he declared—and smashed a new driver into the turf and sent the head flying. "No, a Government is my mark, and the British is the nearest. The German, of course, would be the easier to handle, but strafe Germany, anyway—The British Government—and keep the mixture a secret till they pay—and then let them work it—Caddy, give me a club that won't break. I think I'll make an iron shot of this now."

Thereafter he sold the business of S. J. Livingstone & Co., 29, Chapel Row, Bradford, to an unintelligent Christian (being very shrewdly of opinion that no more German dyewares would slip through before the end of the war), and settled down to draw out a prospectus for Meltite that would convince even a high Government official.

Shells for naval and military cannon, loaded with Meltite, were the basis of his first idea. On leaving the gun they would be fired by means of

an ordinary time fuse, and could (1) arrive as a mass of molten steel—highly recommended for annoyance to trenches; or (2) could warm up after penetrating armour—a special line this for setting fire to refractory warships.

S. J. Livingstone was not a literary genius, but he was a salesman, and a man who can unload dyewares in Bradford and Manchester can sell anything. His prospectus of Meltite was a gem in its way, and he was justly proud of it. But he did not send it through the post. He got the best introductions possible to the biggest man available at the Admiralty, and took the prospectus in his hand to back up his voluble tongue.

He failed at the Admiralty to make a sale, as has just been recorded, but I know no details. All I could get out of him was that the officials at that office were "a pretty tough lot, but, according to their limited lights, sound." S. J. did not get his knife into the Admiralty as he did into the War Office, and I think it was more the particular "bland ass" (his term) who received him there than the failure to effect a bargain that got on his nerves. He was always rather an arrogant man with those he considered weaker than himself.

For a moment, after that second rejection with its police-court sequel, he was minded to seek the

sure market of Germany. They, at any rate, had no qualms about the methods by which they killed an enemy, so long as they killed him efficiently, and anyway Germans knew enough about elementary science to understand a first-class invention when they saw one. He dined on this, in style, and at the Café Royal, and came out, and shook a fist at darkened London.

"Curse you," he said to Great Britain, "I don't care a row of beans about you, but I'm not going to help the blighters who tormented Solomon Levenstein in Frankfort. And I am going to make Creation hear all about Meltite, even if I don't get paid C.O.D. Afterwards, when you fools here do get wise to what you've been offered, the price will be two millions instead of one, with the earldom thrown in as per before. Dirt cheap, too! Only ten hours' cost of your blessed war. Then I'll settle down and marry—yes, marry some real nice girl with a lump of money—and have a family, and try to feel a real Englishman. And I'll have the best collection of enamels on earth—not on view to the public, or they'd be raising my income-tax. 'The Earl and Countess of Livingstone invite you to Livingstone Castle to meat tea, and afterwards to view their celebrated enamels.' And perhaps we won't do it in style—I beg your pardon."

"Not 't all," said the man whose hat he had bashed in. "Just rehearsing your speech, I suppose? Or have you been dinin'—like myself? What do you say to joining me in small glass particular old fine champagne brandy to keep it all quiet? You'll have to pay for yourself because of non-treating order, but I'll pay for myself next round, so that'll be all right."

Now S. J. was not in the mood to come down from the clouds and drink brandy with a stranger who had obviously "dined" already, and the stranger was sharp enough to notice this. Said he:

"Don't strain yourself to come in here if you're due at the club. But I'm bound to talk to somebody about my yacht, or else I'll burst, and I thought you'd do."

Thoughts snapped and sizzled in S. J.'s brain.

"A yacht, have you?"

"Well, I call her that when I want to put on edge. Admirin' friends describe her as a coffin with the motor too 'ar aft."

"Thank you," said S. J. Livingstone. "I'll come in with you and have that cognac."

"Come along in then, or some sweet young thing will trip along and ask why I'm not soldierin', and I shall bring the blush to her damask cheek by explaining how few of my legal set of insides I've

got left on the premises. You unsound, too?"

"Too old," said S. J., who was thirty-five. "Turned forty-six, I'm sorry to say, though perhaps I don't look it. How big's this yacht of yours?"

"That depends whether you view her with the mellow eye of evening, or run her over with a cold two-foot rule. Just now I could take her round the world with a crew of one, and if there was a German to kill at the far end, I'd take her round twice. Gad, man, I'd give something to be sound! But it's no use lyin' to those infernal Army vets. I know. I've tried."

"It must be beastly. Then she's an ocean-going yacht?"

"Good heavens, yes, man; though frankly she's a bit damp if there's much sea runnin'. But in anything like smooth water, if her sparking plugs are clean, and she's pleased with her mixture, she can kick out eleven—yes, and up to eleven-point-eight sometimes, as easy as look at you. And I've just shipped a patent washstand that'll beat the band. Can't leak in-board however rocky the valves get."

"Why haven't you hired her to Government?"

"Because the swine don't know a soft thing when they see one. She fouled two of their blessed con-

ditions out of eight hundred and forty-three. It was my own patent balance-rudder that floored her finally. They said she'd turn turtle if I gave her a hard-over helm at top speed. Well, so would a loco go smash if you ran it full pelt into the buffers. It's a thing a man doesn't do, that's all. Damn, let's clear out of here! That pretty girl with the gold hat there by the pillar is going to shove a white feather on me. I know it by her thoughtful eye. And I shall be saying something I shall regret tomorrow morning if she does. Have you a club anywhere handy?"

"I haven't a London club."

"Well, I've a pot-house of sorts in St. James's Street. We'll go there. Drat that girl."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a queer and one-sided partnership that was fixed up between Jew and Gentile that night. The Gentile, who was Sir Thomas Hillcote (seventh baronet), hankered after nothing except "a bit of sport with the Germans." The Jew's single idea was to advertise Meltite so noisily that even the British Government must see the need to buy it up at maker's terms.

"Hallo, Tommy!" said a man coming into the club smoke-room. "How's *Drowning Made Easy*? Still afloat?"

"No, I've put her on wheels and made her into an armoured car," said the owner, genially.

"Well, call on me when you want a spare shuver. My neck's my own at present. Nobody seems to want it."

"That's Bell," said Hillcote, as the man carefully picked his way to a chair at the other side of the room. "He's got locomotor ataxy. He and I both crocked in the Navy the same week, and got fired out by a Medical Board on the same day. Rum, isn't it?"

"Oh, you're a naval gentleman, are you?" said S. J.

"There's another blow. I've got even Navy rubbed off me now, have I? As a matter of interest, was it one of our genial archbishops you took me for? Alack, my fatal gravity of manner."

"Then you can navigate, and all that?"

"I was a most promising officer. Every one said it of me. It was a thing I couldn't avoid. The First Lord sobbed out that now, indeed, the country would go to the dogs when they lost me. I say, Mr. Isaacs, I mayn't stand you a drink because of the brutal Laws of the Land—Section: Treating. But you may absorb mine when I'm not looking. I've about got my load. My crumbs, but wasn't that a pretty girl with the gold hat?"

"If you carry out my scheme, you could marry ten girls with gold hats."

"Not 't all, my good chap. I'm not a Turk. But, by Jove, I'll tell you what! If you'll let old Tinkle Bell chip in, we'll call it a deal. He's having a filthy time, poor dear, just now, what with pain and being flinty, and all that, and if he saw a decent chance of being hung as a pirate, or anything in that line (which is what your scheme seems to amount to)—excuse me, Mr. Benjamin, if I'm a bit fuzzy about it—he'd freeze on to it with both claws. By the way, I suppose you are an Englishman?"

"Rather! Sorry if you thought I was anything else."

"Not 't all. But you will waggle your hands in moments of excitement. Pedigree started in Asia, I suppose. I shall want a bit of proof that you can deliver those goods in the dynamite line you've been speaking about——"

"Meltite."

"Very likely. Never heard of it. I wasn't one of the scientific johnnies. I was merely a salt-horse lieutenant. Well, prove to me and old Tinkle that this blowy-up stuff will eat holes in a ship's plating, as you say, and we'll motor you off to any old point in the North Sea you care to name till

we've sunk all the shipping afloat, or run out of bombs, or been strafed ourselves, whichever comes first. Is it a bet?"

"You're just the gentleman I want. Look here; read that! There's a full specification of Meltite."

"Nothing doing, most noble Abraham. I don't care a row of pins for typewritten matter. The letters jump about so. Nothing but the genuine article at work will convince us. Let Tinkle and me see that with a sober morning eye, and we'll get busy with a speed that will surprise you."

Sir Thomas Hillcote's motor-boat does not appear in either Lloyds or the Yachting Register as *Drowning Made Easy*, but as her real name brings up other memories, it may here be suppressed. Anyway, amongst her intimates and acquaintances she is sufficiently well known by her nickname.

She was the darling of her owner's heart, and largely the product of his lamentable inventive faculties. From her misplaced engines to her ridiculous bow, from her capstan (whose barrel would not bite) to an enormous balance rudder that would have capsized a battleship, she was a museum of enthusiastic ideas gone wrong. Ex-Lieutenant Thomas Hillcote swelled with pride every time she tried to shake him overboard. Ex-Lieutenant Bell was glad to be at sea once again in anything

that would float. He had been desperately afraid of dying in his bed these last few weeks, and now, with the low land of the Thames Estuary dropping into the grey seas astern, the fear was easing. There was war and work away through the North Sea mists ahead, and perhaps luck.

"Can you cook?" S. J. Livingstone was asked.

"I never tried. I've always been above that sort of thing."

"Then you've got to learn. You aren't a watch-keeper, and seeing as how we don't carry a crew this trip, you'll have to cook—and cook well, or you'll get the foul side of Tinkle's tongue. When we bring up alongside the enemy you'll be gunnery lieutenant, and you take charge, and we two do as we're told. But till then you're cook, Father Isaac; and as we're bare Navy in the way of drinks, and there's no whisky on board, you're to stand-by with hot cocoa whenever it's wanted. Got that? We'll worry along on cold tin and biscuit for the rest. But we're not going to be done out of our lawful cocoa, and don't you forget it. You may be sick between whiles, though what in thunder you're being sick for in smooth water like this beats me. Good Lord! there's a busy devil of a destroyer buzzing up at about fifty knots, and wasting my country's fuel-oil most scandalously, just to interfere. Here,

Tinkle, you talk to her, and tell her we're out after mackerel. Say I'm below, writing to a lady friend who wears a gold hat."

Ex-Lieutenant Bell tried to be formal, but was recognized.

"Haw, haw! you and your mackerel! Glad to see you looking so fit, Tinkle. You'll be back as a giddy brass-edged commander before the week's out. Go easy with that wheel, or you'll twist off Tommy's patent rudder. If you stick to your present course you'll land on to the feather-edge of my fancy new minefield. You might call me up if they don't go off, and I'll come and set 'em better. You gay kipper, why doesn't *Drowning* carry a pilot? But I suppose that's Tommy. Trust Tommy for running on a graveyard if there's one handy. You bear away four points starboard, Tinkle, and you'll live a lot longer. Keep good."

The destroyer grunted and bucked, and ran away over the edge of the horizon at the speed of a railway train. She spread the news amongst the British sea police patrolling the North Sea, and they in their turn jeered at the motor-boat, and let her through. An important small cruiser wig-wagged "Captain's compliments to Sir T. Hillcote, and he didn't care for mackerel, but would like brace of grouse." An ugly tug, with a three-inch gun

stuck through her towing-bridge, hailed through a megaphone that she could supply a stale tinned tongue for bait if fish were not biting freely. A draggle-tailed motor patrol-boat, whose crew all wore forked beards in polite imitation of Admiral Tirpitz, offered to bet *Drowning Made Easy* three gallons of petrol to a pint of lubricating oil she hadn't got more than three cylinders firing at that precise moment—and the bet, for painful reasons, could not be taken.

"We're making a dreadful stir," said S. J. Livingstone once, between spasms. "I'd no idea there were so many British ships about."

"Who did you think ran the North Sea?" Bell asked. "The Germans? You've been reading the papers, Uncle Reuben. You're entirely wrong. It's ceased to be the German Ocean quite a lot of months now, and we've taken possession of it ourselves for keeps. Bring me a bowl of cocoa, Reuben, hot and gummy, and mind you don't slop it about on the oilcloth like you did last time. Also bring me of the sandwiches, cold-dog variety, one; class, non-bendable. I have a twist on me, Reuben, for the first time for three months. After you have completed your important duties as steward, you can stand-by, and get a couple of your torpedoes, or whatever you call 'em, ranged ready for action.

We are not exactly on our cruising ground yet, but there's a good thick North Sea fog coming down, and you meet all sorts of funny things in fogs."

"I don't think I can do it," said S. J. faintly. "This beastly little boat lurches so, and I've been so sick, I've no strength left."

The man with locomotor ataxy dropped his drawl, and yapped in the old style of the quarter-deck.

"Carry out your orders! This is war-time! If you don't do as you are told, I will fling you overboard. We've no use here for extra ballast. If you can't do it yourself, I'll take charge of your Meltite, or whatever you call it, and make what I can of it myself."

"You coolly say you'll rob me?"

"Like a bird. Carry on, now!"

S. J. Livingstone found himself doing as he was told. These ex-naval lieutenants at sea were very different people from the thirsty souls he had talked with in a St. James's Street club, and he suddenly found himself scared. The attitude of Sir Thomas Hillcote on the matter clinched things.

"I resent Mr. Bell's treatment," said S. J., as he was bringing aft the ordered cocoa.

"You can resent till you're black in the face," the baronet informed him cheerfully.

"And I shall square up for it when I get home."

"Home! Who's thinking of getting home? We're out here to play games with Germany, with half the British Fleet standing by ready to interfere. You haven't a cat-in-hell chance of seeing your happy home again, Moses, my dear. You carry on and don't worry about the future, or you'll meet with present trouble that'll cause you pain. That's a sound tip. Old Tinkle's got the devil of a temper now he's seedy, and he'll break your arm or crack your jaw as soon as look at you if you don't carry out orders smartly. I'll help him if necessary."

Now I don't think S. J. was a coward, but he was first and foremost a business man, and he was beginning to regret very much that he had launched Meltite with these strange associates. His idea, of course, was (with their help) to advertise the stuff and sell it. Theirs was an entirely different proposition. They looked forward to doing the maximum of damage with it—and there their programme ended. They did not anticipate getting back to England. They had no care whatever for the future of Meltite or its inventor. The disgusting part of it was there was no wriggling out of the deal. His earldom, his two millions, his beautiful enamels—

"Below there. Stand-by with those torpedo things. Tommy, bear a hand to do as Reuben tells

you. Neither of you is to use a word of English. Hear that Reuben? If you let out a word of English I'll shoot you like a rat. I'll do all the patter: understand? And Tommy, fish out those German uniform caps for the pair of you. I've got mine bent."

S. J. Livingstone went out presently into the cold foggy air on deck with heavy burdens, and to his amazement saw a German naval ensign whipping and snapping from the motor-boat's jackstaff, and her wheel held by a starched and arrogant German officer in whom he could hardly recognize the late Mr. Bell of St. James' Street. A steamer of 3,000 tons loomed through the fog, and the motor-boat was edging down on to her on a parallel course.

"What steamboat's that?" The hail went in harsh German.

"Steamship *Rhein*, Rotterdam-Amerika Line, Vanrennan Master, from Galveston for Rotterdam. Cotton loaded."

"Heave-to, and I will see if I must sink you."

"But, thousand devils, Captain, I'm carrying cotton I tell you, and it's for Germany."

"That's what I wanted to know. Get out your port boats, and row clear as soon as you like. I'm coming up to starboard."

The Dutch skipper danced on his bridge, but his

crew carried out the order without waiting for him to repeat them. Then Bell put the motor-boat alongside, and S. J. did the rest with the efficient help of Sir Thomas Hillcote.

The charge of Meltite was made fast to an electromagnet, which was fed by an accumulator of S. J.'s own design. This was not active till it was clapped against a ship's plating, but once there a switch was automatically thrown in, and the whole affair clung in place like a limpet. Simultaneously a small detonator fired the Meltite.

*Drowning Made Easy* slid away with a spurting, sputtering spray of molten iron pursuing her, and a fine firework effect taking place over her counter.

"Good Heavens!" said Hillcote. "That fiery stuff is eating the plating away as if it was so much tissue paper, and inside the hole things look like a blast-furnace. That's the cotton, I suppose. Aren't those ducks getting out their boats in a number-one hurry. There goes the owner down off the bridge to get the ship's papers before he leaves for home. By gad, look! The deck's catching now. Aaron, my lad, your stuff's big medicine, but it advertises itself a bit too much for my taste. We shall have the British Navy round here with fire engines and first-aid kit in two jiffs, and we don't

want to meet them. No, not any. Tinkle, my humble friend, bear away to the cold North for half an hour, and I'll hop below and whoop up the coffee-mill another knot or so."

"You might strike that infernal flag before you go; and, here, take my fancy hat with you."

They fired a second ship that night, copper-laden, and were fired at by a third. The third ship carried a profane Yankee officer on her bridge who had apparently been ruffled by the British Navy in the immediate past, and said he would see all Germans in hell before he answered their questions. He backed up his remarks with a .380 automatic Colt, with which he made remarkably close shooting.

Next day Sir Thomas Hillcote broke down and was put in his bunk.

"I told you my insides were unreliable," he gasped at them between spasms. "Leave me the morphia, and I shall be quite merry and bright. Don't you worry about me, Tinkle. I'll dream about that girl with the gold hat. You carry on, and Jonadab will help you. Jon's getting quite a second Nelson with all his experience. Oh, corkscrews! that was a twinge. I'd take a cast closer in to Rotterdam if I were you."

"We've only just about enough petrol to get home on," said S. J.

"Who wants to get home, my good Jeremiah? There's lots more mischief to be done out here if all goes well and the British Navy doesn't butt in. Just think: all this stuff into or out of Rotterdam is for or from Germany, and because Germany's got a pull in London, the British Government doesn't interfere."

"That's true enough," said the man who had run dyewares.

"Well we, not being politicians, and knowing what's good for the country, do interfere. That's all. I suppose a lot of pious people will want to hang us for our pains, but till we are hung we'll go on with the missionary effort. Tinkle, get busy. There's a steamer coming. I can feel the vibration of her propeller on my sore liver. No, propellers; she's twin screw. Hop, you lazy scoundrel, or she'll be past us."

"Sir Thomas is bad," said S. J., when they got back on deck.

"Have you only just found that out? That new fellow's coming towards us. I'm going to turn round. Mind you don't get shot overboard when I give her the helm! Here! Stay on deck there, you Reuben. You needn't worry about Tommy shooting out of his berth. I'll keep him on the lee side."

Once more ex-Lieutenant Bell appeared as the complete German naval officer, and barked his remarks in a foreign tongue. The new ship was a Swede, out of Rotterdam for New York, full to the hatches with German leather goods, dyewares, and chemicals. "Those beasts of English," announced her captain, "are respecting the rights of neutrals this week, whatever they may do next."

"Got good freights?"

The Swede shrugged apologetically. "Well, in war time, illustrious Herr, we neutrals all look to make a little extra bit. Be careful—Himmel! be careful; you will run me down."

"Not a bit of it. I'm not going to ram. It's only a sort of game like 'Tig' we're playing. Now then Rube. On the port quarter. Clap on your poultice when I swing her in, and don't get flung overboard if you can help it. Poor old Tommy's patent rudder's a bit fierce. Great Scott, man, but you set that fuse mighty short. You'd better put some oil on those burnt hands before the air gets to them."

"You German swine," the Swede stormed, "you have set my ship on fire."

"I hope so, Mr. Neutral. Rather pretty effect I call it. To see a big chunk of plating dissolve out into mere sparks and roman candles is astonish-

ingly pretty to the simple sailorman. I should call away your boats if I were you, or you'll get wet feet. Excuse my butting in with advice, but you seem rather to have lost your head, and by the smell, those leather goods you were bucking about are beginning to singe."

Now the night was dark and the night was clear, and it sang with wind; and the steamboat flamed like a torch; and by the rules of war *Drowning Made Easy* should have faded from the scene of her exploit with all possible speed. But the Swede bungled his boat-lowering badly, and Bell could not tear himself away. He bawled advice with an acid tongue, and in the event of the advice not being acted upon efficiently, he stood by to save life.

"We shall be seen here," said S. J., frostily.

"Bound to be. Party in the front seats at the firework show always is spotted by the whole audience. But a man couldn't clear out whilst there was a possibility of those fellows frying, unless he was a dam' German. I'm sure you see that, Rube?"

"Ye—es," said S. J. Livingstone, and stepped down into the after well and sat there. Something inside him bumped with heavy foreboding.

The German submarine must have come up awash, and quietly stalked them by the light of the burring Swede.

Bell did not see her till she was close alongside. They called on him to surrender. He very naturally turned on his power, and tried to bolt. At the same time he threw into the grey North Sea the last remaining Meltite firemaker, where it burst into torrid flame, and exploded in a geyser of fire and steam. Him, after a careful inspection—a very careful inspection—the Germans shot in six places. Then they bore down alongside, and made fast.

The boarding party found Sir Thomas Hillcote dead in a bunk below. He had bitten through his lower lip because he did not wish to call out and disturb his two shipmates on deck who were trying to give a lift to the British Empire. They examined S. J. curiously, inquired his name, and, on hearing it, transhipped him with politeness.

One of the officers leaned over Bell, who was very nearly gone. "Ha, I thought I knew you. We met once at Kiel, if you remember, at the regatta. I'm sorry, but it's the fortune of war."

"Don't apologize," gasped the man with locomotor ataxy. "I've got to windward of the Admiralty—this trip, and died in my boots—at sea. At sea! I've—had—luck."

Down below in a clammy cabin in the U-boat, S. J. Livingstone found himself treated with a curious courtesy that after a while began to chill.

It flashed upon him that cannibals might be similarly courteous to a missionary that they proposed to—well—attend to later. These German officers knew his name, the style of his firm in Bradford, the nature of his proceedings at the British Admiralty, his rejection by the "bland ass" at the War Office. They mentioned that eminent officer's name, and could imitate his manner. They even knew about S. J.'s taste for enamels, and had a catalogue of his more recent purchases. It was all most uncanny. They gave him his favourite Pommery to drink.

They knew all about the powers of Meltite, and recited to him a list of ships destroyed and a description of what they looked like as they burned. It was all very accurate, and scientific and, unnerving. An outside observer would have noticed one curious change in S. J. He was not the least arrogant now, either in manner or look. I don't say he cringed, but—well, there was a change.

They even in a wooden way got on to his pedigree.

"You are not English? No?"

"Certainly I am. My name is Livingstone. Unless you call it Scotch."

"Livingstone? Ah, but before you changed it? What?"

S. J. kept a sullen silence.

"Answer me. Was it not Levenstein?"

"Yes," said S. J. and felt his self-respect oozing from him.

"So! And now you are going to tell me—pleasantly, and without pressure—how Meltite is made?"

"I do not know. I forget."

"So? Then I hope you like chlorine. Because until you remember, I shall put you in the compartment with our accumulators which just now are gassing, and there you will perhaps recover your memory before it is too late."

But S. J. Livingstone came of a race that in the past had had teeth pulled rather than draw cheques which they did not consider lawfully due, and he coughed, and spat, and choked, but parted with no formula. He had pretty far gone when the U-boat ran into her home port, but he showed not the smallest signs of yielding.

The Germans were eminently business-like. S. J. Levenstein dead was no use to them. Alive he was full of Melinitic possibilities. So they kept him alive, and alternately treated him well and vilely. He was interviewed by small personages and great, all of them in uniform, some of them polite, most of them overbearing, some of them proffering gifts, many of them offering threats;

but to all of them he was unyielding! He might be this Levenstein they were talking about. He might have heard of Meltite. But, anyway at the moment he had forgotten the composition of Meltite, if, indeed he had ever heard it. They could not budge him past that, by either kindness or cruelty.

At last he was brought before the Greatest Personage of all, a tragic twitching cripple, and he set himself out to charm.

"I understand, Mr. Livingstone that you were a Prussian by birth, a British subject by early upbringing, and are a cosmopolitan by taste. Well, it is our loss, because you are a man of ideas. But I am not going to quarrel with your choice. You have made a great invention in Meltite. You see I am not going to belittle it. And if I say it is great, it is great. You offered it to the London Government. They, being fools, as I have shown many times already, refused it. I believe they did not even refuse it civilly. You have stated your price—a million sterling and a peerage. I will give it you."

"My price is two millions, now that Meltite is proved."

"Two millions be it. I do not quibble over marks about a thing I intend to get."

"There is also the British peerage."

"I can buy that for you, too—as I have bought for money down other British titles for my people when I wanted them."

"Very well, sire," said S. J. Levenstein, "get me from the politicians an English earldom, and give me two million British pounds sterling, and I will give you the formula for Meltite."

"That shall be arranged," said the Greatest Personage, and S. J. was taught by his guide how to back out from the Presence.

There the matter rests for the present.

S. J. Levenstein (or Livingstone) resides in dignified seclusion and security in a Prussian castle full of enamels, whilst arrangements are being made to pay him his price. They feed him on the richest food he cares to order, and he may bathe in Pommery '06 if he so desires.

I wonder if they will succeed?

