ROBERT CHAMBERS

THE GIRL PHILIPPA

Robert Chambers
The Girl Philippa

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Содержание

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BOB AT SIXTEEN

You can tell a better tale than I;
Trap and wing you shoot a better score;
You can cast a surer, lighter fly,
Catch as can, you'd put me on the floor;
Should I hoist a sail beneath the sky
Yours the race, away and back to shore.

You have mastered all my woodland lore,
In the saddle you can give me spades;
You have slain your first and mighty boar
In the classic Croyden Forest shades;
You have heard the Northern rivers roar,
You have seen the Southern Everglades.

You have creeled your Highland yellow trout
Where the Scottish moorlands call us back;
You have left me puzzled and in doubt
Over tropic specimens I lack —
Sphinxes that I know not, huge and stout;
Butterflies, un-named, in blue and black.

Well, we've had a jolly run, my son,
Through a sunny world has lain our trail
Trodden side by side with rod and gun
Under azure skies where white clouds sail;
– Send our journey is not nearly done!
Send the light has not begun to fail.

Envoi

Yet, that day you tread the trail alone,
With no slower comrade to escort
On the path of spring with blossoms sown,
You may deem me not so bad a sort,
Smile and think, as one who would condone,
"He was sure a perfectly good sport."

R. W. C.Broadalbin; 1916.

DOG-DAYS (1914)

The mad dog of Europe
Yelped in the dog-days' heat;
To his sick legs he staggered up
Swaying on twitching feet;

Snarled when he saw the offered cup,
And started down the street.

All hell has set his brain aflame;
All Europe shrieks with dread;
All mothers call on Mary's name,
Praying by shrine and bed,
"For Jesus' sake!" – Yet all the same
Each sees her son lie dead.

"On Guard!" the Western bugles blow;
"Boom!" from the Western main;
The Brabant flail has struck its blow;
The mad dog howls with pain
But lurches on, uncertain, slow,
Growling amid his slain.

They beat and kick his dusty hide,
He bleeds from every vein;
On his red trail the Cossacks ride
Across the reeking plain
While gun-shots rip his bloody sides
From Courland to Champagne.

Under the weary moons and suns
With phantom eyes aglow,
Dog-trotting still the spectre runs
Yelping at every blow
'Til through its ribs the flashing guns

And stars begin to show.

The moon shines through its riven wrack;
On the bleached skull the suns
Have baked the crusted blood all black,
But still the spectre runs,
Jogging along its hell-ward track
Lined with the tombs of Huns.

Back to the grave from whence it came
To foul the world with red;
Back to its bed of ancient shame
In the Hunnish tomb it fled
Where God's own name is but a name
And souls that lived lie dead.

FOREWORD

On the twenty-eighth of June, 1914, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was murdered by a Serb in Serajevo, the capital of Bosnia. The murder was the most momentous crime ever committed in the world, for it altered the geography and the political and social history of that planet, and changed the entire face of the civilized and uncivilized globe. Generations unborn were to feel the consequences of that murder.

Incidentally, it vitally affected the life and career of the girl Philippa.

Before the press of the United States received the news, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British Ambassador, had been notified of the tragedy, and a few minutes later he was in secret conference with the President.

The British Ambassador knew what he wanted, which was more than the administration knew, and at this hasty and secret conference he bluntly informed the President that, in his opinion, war before midsummer had now become inevitable; that there was every probability of England being drawn into a world-wide conflict; and that, therefore, an immediate decision was necessary concerning certain pending negotiations.

The truth of this became apparent to the President. The State Department's ominous information concerning a certain Asiatic

Empire, the amazing knowledge in regard to the secret military and political activities of Germany in the United States, the crass stupidity of a Congress which was no better than an uneducated nation deserved, the intellectual tatterdemalions in whose care certain vitally important departments had been confided – a momentary vision of what all this might signify flickered fitfully in the presidential brain.

And, before Sir Cecil left, it was understood that certain secret negotiations should be immediately resumed and concluded as soon as possible – among other matters the question of the Harkness shell.

About the middle of July the two governments had arrived at an understanding concerning the Harkness shell. The basis of this transaction involved the following principles, proposed and mutually accepted:

1st. The Government of the United States agreed to disclose to the British Government, and to no other government, the secret of the Harkness shell, known to ordnance experts as "the candle shell."

2nd. The British Government agreed to disclose to the United States Government, and to no other government, the secrets of its new submarine seaplane, known as "the flying fish," the inventor of which was one Pillsbury, a Yankee, who had offered it in vain to his own country before selling it to England.

3rd. Both Governments solemnly engaged not to employ either of these devices against each other in the event of war.

4th. The British Government further pledged itself to restrain from violence a certain warlike and Asiatic nation until the Government of the United States could discover some method of placating that nation.

But other and even more important negotiations, based upon the principle that the United States should insure its people and its wealth by maintaining an army and a navy commensurate with its population, its importance, and its international obligations, fell through owing to presidential indifference, congressional ignorance, the historic imbecility of a political party, and the smug vanity of a vast and half-educated nation, among whose employees were numbered several of the most perfect demagogues that the purlieus of politics had ever germinated.

This, then, was the condition of affairs in the United States when, on the nineteenth of July, the British Ambassador was informed that through the treachery of certain employees the plans and formula for the Harkness shell had been abstracted.

But the British Embassy had learned of this catastrophe through certain occult channels even before it was reported to the United States Government; and five hours after the information had reached Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, two young men stepped aboard the Antwerp liner *Zeeduyne* a few seconds before the gangway was pulled up.

With the first turn of the steamer's screws the wheel of fate also began to revolve, spinning out the web of destiny so swiftly that already its meshes had fallen over an obscure little town

thousands of miles distant, and its net already held a victim so obscure that few except the French Government had ever heard of the girl Philippa.

The two young men who had come aboard at the last moment were nice-looking young men. They carried tennis bats, among other frivolous hand luggage, and it was rumored very quickly on board that they were two celebrated New Zealand tennis champions on their way to the international tournament at Ostend.

It was the Captain who first seemed interested in the rumor and who appeared to know all about the famous New Zealand players, Halkett and Gray.

And this was odd, because when Halkett and Gray came aboard their names did not figure on the passenger list, no stateroom had been engaged for them, and the Captain of the *Zeeduyne* had never before laid eyes on either of them.

But he may have heard of them, for that morning the British Embassy had called him on the telephone, had talked for twenty minutes to him, and had arranged for him to hold his steamer if necessary. But it had been necessary for the Captain to hold the *Zeeduyne*for ten minutes only.

The voyage of the *Zeeduyne* was calm, agreeable, and superficially uneventful. There was much dancing aboard. Halkett and Gray danced well. They had come aboard knowing nobody; in a day or two they seemed to have met everybody. Which urbanity is not at all characteristic of Englishmen. New

Zealanders, it seemed, were quite different.

The ocean being on its best behavior nearly everybody appeared triumphantly on deck. There were, however, several passengers who maintained exclusiveness in their staterooms; and among these were two German gentlemen who preferred the stateroom they shared in common. However, they took the air sometimes, and always rather late at night.

Evidently they were commercial gentlemen, for they sent several wireless messages to Cologne during the voyage, using a code of their own which seemed to concern perfumes and cosmetics and, in particular, a toilet soap known as Calypso soap.

In return they received several wireless messages, also apparently in some commercial code, and all mentioning perfumes and Calypso soap.

And a copy of every code message which they dispatched or received was sent to the Captain of the *Zeeduyne*, and that affable and weather-reddened Belgian always handed these copies to the tennis champions of New Zealand, who spent considerable time poring over them in the only spot on the steamer which was absolutely safe from intrusion – the Captain's private quarters.

Then, in their turn, as the steamer drew nearer to the Belgian coast, they sent a number of wireless messages in private code. Some of these messages were directed to the British Consul at Maastricht, some to the British Ambassador at Brussels, some to private individuals in Antwerp.

But these details did not interfere with the young men's

social activities on board, or with their popularity. Wherever Halkett and Gray walked, they walked surrounded by maidens and pursued by approving glances of relatives and parents.

But the two German gentlemen who kept their cabin by day and prowled sometimes by night were like Mr. Kipling's cat; when they walked they walked by their wild lone. Only the chaste moon was supposed to notice them. But always either Halkett or Gray was watching them, sometimes dressed in the jaunty uniform of a deck steward, or in the clothing of a common sailor, or in the gorgeous raiment of a ship's officer. The two Germans never noticed them as they walked in the dark by their wild lone.

And always while one of the young men watched on deck, the other ransacked the stateroom and luggage of the gentlemen from Germany – but ransacked in vain.

As the *Zeeduyne* steamed into the Scheldt, several thousand miles away, in the city of Washington, the French Ambassador telegraphed in cipher to his Government that the secret plans and formula for the Harkness shell, which had been acquired by England from the United States Government, had been stolen on the eve of delivery to the British Ambassador; that French secret agents were to inspect the arrival of all Dutch, Belgian, and German steamers; that all agents in the French service resident or stationed near the north or northeastern frontier of France were to watch the arrival of all strangers from Holland or Belgium, and, if possible, follow and observe any individual who might be likely to have been involved in such a robbery.

Immediately, from the Military Intelligence Department in Paris orders were telegraphed and letters sent to thousands of individuals of every description and station in life, to be on the alert.

Among others who received such letters was a denationalized individual named Wildresse, who kept a cabaret in the little town of Ausone.

The cabaret was called the Café de Biribi. Wildresse insisted that the name had been his own choice. But it was at the request of the Government that his cabaret bore the ominous title as an ever-present reminder to Wildresse that his personal liberty and the liberty of his worthless son and heir depended on his good behavior and his alacrity in furnishing the French Government with whatever information it demanded.

The letter sent to Monsieur Wildresse read as follows:

MONSIEUR:

Undescribed individuals carrying important document stolen from the United States Government may appear in your vicinity.

Observe diligently, but with discretion, the arrival of any strangers at your café. If suspicions warrant, lay a complaint before local police authorities. Use every caution. The fugitives probably are German, but may be American. Inform the girl Philippa of what is required. And remember that Biribi is preferable to Noumea.

When Wildresse received this letter he went into the bedroom of the girl Philippa, who was standing before her looking glass

busily rouging her cheeks and painting her lips. She wore no corset, her immature figure requiring none.

"If they come our way, Philippa," growled Wildresse, "play the baby – do you hear? Eyes wide and artless, virginal candor alternating with indifference. In other words, be yourself."

"That is not difficult," said the girl Philippa, powdering her nose. "When I lose my innocence then it will mean real acting."

Wildresse glared at her out of his little black eyes.

"*When* you lose it, eh?" he repeated. "Well, when you do, I'll break your neck. Do you understand that?"

The girl continued to powder her nose.

"Who would marry me?" she remarked indifferently. "Also, now it is too late for me to become a religieuse like – "

"You'll carry on the business!" he growled. "That's what you'll do – with Jacques, when the Sbirs de Biribi let him loose. As for marrying, you can think it over when you are thirty. You'll have a dot by that time, if the damned Government lets me alone. And a woman with a dot need not worry about marriage."

The girl was now busy with her beautiful chestnut hair; Wildresse's pock-marked features softened.

"*Allons*," he said in his harsh voice, "lilies grow prettiest on dunghills. Also, you are like me – serious, not silly. I have no fears. Besides, you are where I have my eye on you."

"If I am what I am it is because I prefer it, not on account of your eye," she said listlessly.

"Is that so!" he roared. "All the same, continue to prefer virtue

and good conduct, and I'll continue to use my two eyes, nom de Dieu! And if any strangers who look like Germans come into the café – any strangers at all, no matter what they look like – keep your eyes on them, do you hear?"

"I hear," said the girl Philippa.

The web of fate had settled over her at last.

About that time the steamer *Zeeduyne* was docking at Antwerp.

Two hours later two German gentlemen in a hurry registered at the Hôtel St. Antoine in the Place Verte, and were informed that they were expected immediately in room 23.

A page conducted them to the corridor and indicated the room; they thanked him and sent him back for their luggage which he had, it seemed, neglected to bring from the lobby.

Then both German gentlemen went to the door of room 23, knocked, and were admitted; and the door was rather violently closed and locked.

The next instant there came a crash, a heavy fall, dull sounds of feet scuffling behind the locked door, a series of jarring, creaking noises, then silence.

A chambermaid came into the corridor to listen, but the silence was profound, and presently she went away.

When the boy came back with the hand luggage and knocked at 23, Halkett opened the door a little way and, tipping the lad with a five-franc piece, bade him leave the luggage outside the door for the present.

Later, Gray cautiously opened the door and drew in the luggage.

Ten minutes later both young men came leisurely out of the room, locking the door on the outside. They each carried hand luggage. Halkett lighted a cigarette.

At the desk Gray requested that the gentlemen in No. 23 should not be disturbed that night, as they were lying down and in need of repose. Which was true.

Then both young men departed in a cab. At the railroad station, however, an unusually generous stranger offered Gray a motor cycle for nothing. So he strapped his bag to it, nodded a smiling adieu to Halkett, and departed.

Halkett bought a ticket to Maastricht, Holland, which he had no idea of using, and presently came out of the station and walked eastward rather rapidly. A man who also had bought a ticket for Maastricht rose from his seat in the waiting room and walked stealthily after him, making a signal to another man.

This second man immediately stepped into a station telephone booth and called up room 23 at the Hôtel St. Antoine, where two German gentlemen, badly battered, were now conferring with a third German gentleman who had paid no attention to instructions from the hotel office but had gone to room 23, knocked until out of patience, and had then summoned the *maître d'hôtel*, who unlocked the door with a master-key.

Which operation revealed two Teutons flat on their backs, very carefully tied up with rope and artistically gagged.

This unbattered gentleman now conversed over the telephone with the man at the railroad station.

A few moments later he and the two battered ones left the hotel hastily in a taxicab, joined the man at the railroad station, and drove rapidly eastward.

And before forty-eight hours had elapsed, each one of these four men operating in pairs, had attempted to kill the young man named Halkett. Twice he got away. The third time two of them succeeded in locating him in the little town of Diekirch, a town which Halkett was becoming more and more anxious to leave, as he finally began to realize what a hornet's nest he and his friend Gray had succeeded in stirring up.

And all the while the invisible net of destiny in which he now found himself entangled was every minute enmeshing in its widening spread new people whose fate was to be linked with his, and who had never even heard of him. Among them was the girl Philippa.

PROLOGUE

A narrow-gauge railroad track runs through the woods from Diekirch, connecting the two main lines; and on the deserted wooden platform beside this track stood Halkett, his suitcase in one hand, the other hand in his side pocket, awaiting the shuttle train with an impatience born of deepest anxiety.

The young man's anxiety was presently justified, for, as he sauntered to and fro, uneasily scanning the track and the unbroken woods around him, always keeping his right hand in his coat pocket, two men crept out from behind separate trees in the forest directly behind the platform, and he turned around only in time to obtain a foreshortened and disquieting view of the muzzle of a revolver.

"Hands up – " began the man behind the weapon; but as he was in the very act of saying it, a jet of ammonia entered his mouth through the second button of Halkett's waistcoat, and he reeled backward off the platform, his revolver exploding toward the sky, and fell into the grass, jerking and kicking about like an unhealthy cat in a spasm.

Already Halkett and the other man had clinched; the former raining blows on the latter's Teutonic countenance, which proceeding so dazed, diverted, and bewildered him that he could not seem to find the revolver bulging in his side pocket.

It was an automatic, and Halkett finally got hold of it and

hurled it into the woods.

Then he continued the terrible beating which he was administering.

"Get out!" he said in German to the battered man, still battering him. "Get out, or I'll kill you!"

He hit him another cracking blow, turned and wrested the other pistol from the writhing man on the grass, whirled around, and went at the battered one again.

"I've had enough of this!" he breathed, heavily. "I tell you I'll kill you if you bother me again! I could do it now – but it's too much like murder if you're not in uniform!"

The man on the grass had managed to evade suffocation; he got up now and staggered off toward the woods, and Halkett drove his companion after him at the point of his own revolver.

"Keep clear of me!" he said. "If you do any more telephoning or telegraphing it will end in murder. I've had just about enough, and if any more of your friends continue to push this matter after I enter France, just as surely as I warn you now, I'll defend my own life by taking theirs. You can telephone that to them if you want to!"

As he stood on the edge of the wooden platform, revolver lifted, facing the woods where his two assailants had already disappeared, the toy-like whistle of an approaching train broke the hot, July stillness.

Before it stopped, he hurled the remaining revolver into the woods across the track, then, as the train drew up and a guard

descended to open a compartment door for him, he cast a last keen glance at the forest behind him.

Nothing stirred there, not even a leaf.

But before the train had been under way five minutes a bullet shattered the glass of the window beside which he had been seated; and he spent the remainder of the journey flat on his back smoking cigarettes and wondering whether he was going to win through to the French frontier, to Paris, to Calais, to London, or whether they'd get him at last and, what was of infinitely greater importance, a long, thin envelope which he carried stitched inside his undershirt.

That was really what mattered, not what might become of a stray Englishman. He knew it; he realized it without any illusion whatever. It was the contents of this envelope that mattered, not his life.

Yet, so far, he had managed to avoid taking life in defense of his envelope. In fact, he traveled unarmed. Now, if matters continued during his journey through France as they had begun and continued while he was crossing Holland and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, he would be obliged to take life or lose his own.

And yet, if he did kill somebody, that meant arrest and investigation by the police of France. And such an investigation might be fatal to the success of his undertaking – quite as fatal, in fact, as though he himself were killed.

The main thing was to get that envelope and its contents to

London.

His instructions were not to mail it, but to take it in person, or to send it, if necessary, by another messenger through other channels.

One thing became more and more evident to him; the time had now arrived when certain people unknown to him by sight had decided to kill him as the only way out of the affair.

Would they actually go so far as to kill him in France, with the chance of the French police seizing that envelope before they could seize it and clear out with it to Berlin? Would they hazard the risk of France obtaining cognizance of a matter which so vitally concerned Germany, rather than permit that information to reach England?

Halkett lay on his back and smoked and did not know.

But he was slowly coming to the conclusion that one thing was now imperative: the envelope must not be found upon his person if he were killed.

But what on earth to do with it until it could be safely transferred to the proper person he had not the slightest idea.

That evening, as he changed trains at the frontier, in the lamp-lit dimness of the station platform he was fired at twice, and not hit.

A loud outcry naturally ensued; a stampede of passengers who tried to escape, a rush of others who desired to see what had happened – much hubbub and confusion, much shouting in several languages.

But nobody could be found who had fired two shots from a revolver, and nobody admitted that they had been shot at.

And so, as nobody had been hit, the gendarmes, guards, and railway officials were in a quandary.

And the train rolled out of the station with Halkett aboard, a prey to deepest anxiety concerning his long thin envelope.

CHAPTER I

Somebody at Warner's elbow spoke to him in French. He turned his head leisurely: a well-dressed young fellow, evidently an Englishman, was striving to maintain a place beside him in the noisy, market day crowd.

"Pardon, Monsieur, are you English?"

"American," replied Warner briefly, and without enthusiasm.

"My name is Halkett," said the other, with a quick smile. "I'm English, and I'm in trouble. Could you spare me a moment?"

To Warner the man did not look the typical British dead-beat, nor had he any of the earmarks and mannerisms of the Continental beach-comber. Yet he was, probably, some species or other of that wearisome and itinerant genus.

"I'm listening," said the young American resignedly. "Continue your story."

"There's such a row going on here – couldn't we find a quieter place?"

"I can hear you perfectly well, I tell you!"

Halkett said:

"If I try to talk to you here I'll be overheard, and that won't do. I'm very sorry to inconvenience you, but really I'm in a fix. What a noise these people are making! Do you mind coming somewhere else?"

"Say what you desire to say here," returned Warner bluntly.

"And perhaps it might save time if you begin with the last chapter; I think I can guess the rest of the story."

The features of the American expressed boredom to the point of unfriendly indifference. The Englishman looked at him, perplexed for a moment, then his sun-bronzed face lighted up with another quick smile.

"You're quite mistaken," he said. "I don't expect the classic remittance from England, and I don't require the celebrated twenty-franc loan until it arrives. You take me for that sort, I see, but I'm not. I don't need money. May I tell you what I do need – rather desperately?"

"Yes, if you choose."

"I need a friend."

"Money is easier to pick up," remarked Warner drily.

"I know that. May I ask my favor of you all the same?"

"Go ahead."

"Thanks, I will. But can't we get out of this crowd? What is going on in this town anyway?"

"Market day. It's like this once a month in Ausone. Otherwise the town is as dead as any other French provincial town."

Shoulder to shoulder they threaded their way through the crowded market square, amid the clatter of sabots, the lowing of cattle, the incessant bleating of sheep. Ducks quacked from crates in wagons, geese craned white necks and hissed above the heads of the moving throngs; hogs squealed and grunted; fowls hanging by their legs from the red fists of sturdy peasant women

squawked and flapped.

Cheap-Jack shows of all sorts encumbered the square and adjacent streets and alleys – gingerbread booths, shooting ranges, photograph galleries, moving-picture shows, theaters for ten sous. Through the lowing, bleating, and cockcrowing, the drumming and squeaking of Punch and Judy, and the brassy dissonance of half a dozen bands, mournful and incessant strains from several merry-go-rounds continued audible.

But the steady clatter of sabots on stony pavements, and the ceaseless undertone of voices, swelling, subsiding, dominated the uproar, softening the complaint of kine and feathered fowl to a softly cheerful harmony suggestive of summer breezes and green fields.

On the dusty Boulevard d'Athos – the typical solitary promenade of such provincial towns – there were, as usual, very few people – the inevitable nurses here and there, wheeling prams; a discouraged, red-trousered and sou-less soldier or two sprawling on benches under the chestnut trees; rarely a passing pedestrian, more often a prowling dog.

At the head of the Boulevard d'Athos, where the rue d'Auros crosses, Warner halted under the shade of the chestnuts, for the July sun was very hot. His unconvinced grey eyes now rested inquiringly on the young Englishman who had called himself Halkett. He said:

"What species of trouble are you in?"

Halkett shook his head.

"I can't tell you what the trouble is; I may only ask you to help me a bit – " The quick smile characteristic of him glimmered in his eyes again – a winning smile, hinting of latent recklessness. "I have my nerve with me, you see – as you Americans have it," he added. "You're thinking something of that sort, I fancy."

Warner smiled too, rather faintly, but remained silent.

"This is what I want you to do," continued Halkett. "I've a long thin envelope in my pocket. I'd like to have you take it from me and slip it into your breast pocket and then button your coat. Is that too much to ask?"

"*What!*"

"That's all I want you to do. Then if you wouldn't mind giving me your name and address? And that is really all I ask."

Said the American, amused and surprised:

"That airy request of yours requires a trifle more explanation than you seem inclined to offer."

"I know it does. I can't offer it. Only – you won't get into trouble if you keep that envelope buttoned tightly under your coat until I come for it again."

"But I'm not going to do that!"

"Why?"

"Why the devil should I? I don't propose to wander about France carrying papers concerning which I know nothing – to oblige a young man about whom I know even less."

"I quite see that," admitted Halkett seriously. "I shouldn't feel inclined to do such a thing either."

"Can't you tell me what is the nature of these papers? – Or something – some explanation – "

"I'm sorry."

"And why do you propose to trust me with them?" continued Warner, curiously. "How do you know I am honest? How do you know I won't examine your packet as soon as you clear out?"

Halkett looked up with his quick and winning smile:

"I'll take that risk."

"Why? You don't know me."

"I had a good look at you in the market square before I spoke to you."

"Oh. You think you are a psychologist?"

"Of sorts. It's a part of my business in life."

"Suppose," said Warner, smiling, "you explain a little more clearly to me exactly what is your actual business in life."

"Very glad to. I write."

"Books?"

"No; just – stories."

"Fiction?"

"As one might say, facts rather than fiction."

"You are a realist?" suggested Warner with slight irony.

"I try to be. But do you know, there is more romance in realism than in fairy tales?"

Warner, considerably diverted, nodded:

"I know. You belong to the modern school, I take it."

"Very modern. So modern, in fact, that my work concerns

tomorrow rather than today."

Warner nodded again:

"I see. You are a futurist – opportunist. There are a lot of clever men working on those lines in England… Still – " he glanced amusedly at Halkett " – that scarcely explains your rather unusual request. Why should I take charge of an envelope for *you*?"

"My dear fellow, I can't answer that… Still – I may say this much; I'm hard put to it – rather bewildered – had a rotten time of it in the Grand Duchy and in Belgium – so to speak – "

"What do you mean by a rotten time?"

"Rows."

"I don't understand. You'll have to be more explicit."

"Well – it had to do with this envelope I carry. Some chaps of sorts wanted to get it away from me. Do you see? … I had a lively time, and I rather expect to have another before I get home – if I ever get there."

Warner looked at him out of clear, sophisticated eyes:

"See here, my ingenuous British friend," he said, "play square with me, if you play at all."

"I shan't play otherwise."

"Very well, then; why are you afraid to carry that envelope?"

"Because," said Halkett, coolly, "if I'm knocked on the head and that envelope is found in my clothing and is stolen, the loss of my life would be the lesser loss to my friends."

"Is anybody trying to *kill* you?"

Halkett shrugged his shoulders; but there seemed to be neither swagger nor bravado in his careless gesture of assent. He said:

"Listen; here's my case in brief. I saw you in the crowd yonder, and I made up my mind concerning you. I have to think quickly sometimes; I took a good look at you and – " He waved one hand. "You look like a soldier. I don't know whether you are or not. But I am ready to trust you. That's all."

"Do you mean to say that you are in any real personal danger?"

"Yes. But that doesn't count. I can look out for myself. What worries me is this envelope. Couldn't you take charge of it? I'd be very grateful."

"How long do you expect me to carry it about?"

"I don't know. I don't know whether anything is likely to happen to me today in this town – or tomorrow on the train – or in Paris – I have no means of knowing. I merely want to get to Paris, if I can, and send a friend back here for that envelope."

"I thought you were to return for it yourself."

"Maybe. Maybe I'll send you a letter by a friend – just a line for him to give you, saying it's all right."

"Mr. Halkett, you have rather a disconcerting way of expressing unlimited confidence in me – "

"Yes, I trust you."

"But *why*?"

"You look right."

"That's no reason!"

"My dear chap, I'm in a corner, and instinct rules, not reason!

You see, I – I'm rather afraid they may get me before I can clear out."

"*Who'll* get you?" demanded Warner impatiently.

"That's the worst of it; I don't know these fellows by sight. The same chaps never try it on twice."

Warner said quietly:

"What is this very dramatic mess you're in? Can't you give me a hint?"

"I'm sorry."

"Shall I give *you* a hint?"

"If you like."

"Are the *police* after you?"

"No."

"You're sure of that?"

"Quite sure. I don't blame you for asking. It looks that way. But it isn't."

"But you are being followed across Europe by people who want this envelope of yours?"

"Oh, yes."

"You expect personal violence from them?"

Halkett nodded and gazed absently down the almost deserted boulevard.

"Then why don't you appeal to the police – if your conscience is clear?" demanded Warner bluntly.

Halkett's quick smile broke out.

"My dear chap," he said, "I'd do so if I were in England. I

can't, as matters stand. The French police are no use to me."

"Why don't you go to your consulate?"

"I did. The Consul is away on his vacation. And I didn't like the looks of the vice-consul."

"What?"

"No. I didn't like his name, either."

"What do you mean?"

"His name is Schmidt. I – didn't care for it."

Warner laughed, and Halkett looked up quickly, smiling.

"I'm queer. I admit it. But you ought to have come to some conclusion concerning me by this time. Do you think me a rotter, or a criminal, or a lunatic, or a fugitive from justice? Or will you chance it that I'm all right, and will you stand by me?"

Warner laughed again:

"I'll take a chance on you," he said. "Give me your envelope, you amazing Britisher!"

CHAPTER II

Halkett cast a rapid glance around him; apparently he saw nothing to disturb him. Then he whipped out from his pocket a long, very thin envelope and passed it to Warner, who immediately slipped it into the breast pocket of his coat.

"That's very decent of you," said Halkett in a low voice. His attractive face had grown serious and a trifle pale. "I shan't forget this," he said.

Warner laughed.

"You're a very convincing Englishman," he said. "I can't believe you're not all right."

"I'm right enough. But you are *all* white. What is your name?"

"I had better write it out for you."

"No. If things go wrong with me, I don't want your name and address discovered in my pockets. Tell it to me; I'll remember."

Warner looked at him rather gravely for a moment, then:

"James Warner is my name. I'm a painter. My present address is La Pêche d'Or at Saïs."

"By any chance," asked Halkett, "are you the military painter, James Warner, whose pictures we know very well in England?"

"I don't know how well my pictures are known in England. I usually paint military subjects."

"I *knew* you were right!" exclaimed Halkett. "Any man who paints the way you paint *must* be right! Fancy my actually

knowing the man who did 'Lights Out' and 'The Last Salute'!"

Warner laughed, coloring a little.

"Did you really like those pictures?"

"Everybody liked them. I fancy every officer in our army owns a colored print of one or more of your pictures. And to think I should run across you in this God-forsaken French town! And to think it should be *you* who is willing to stand by me at this pinch! Well – I judged you rightly, you see."

Warner smiled, then his features altered.

"Listen, Halkett," he said, dropping instinctively the last trace of formality with a man who, honest or otherwise, was plainly of his own caste. "I have tried to size you up and I can't. You say you are a writer, but you look to me more like a soldier. Anyway, I've concluded that you're straight. And, that being my conviction, can't I do more for you than carry an envelope about for you?"

"That's very decent of you, Warner. No, thanks, there is nothing else you could do."

"I thought you said you are likely to get into a row?"

"I am. But I don't know when or where. Besides, I wouldn't drag you into anything like that."

"Where are you stopping in Ausone?"

"At the Boule d'Argent. I got in only an hour before I met you."

"Do you still believe you are being followed?"

"I have been followed so far. Maybe I've lost them. I hope so."

Warner said:

"I came into town to buy canvases and colors. That's how I

happen to be in Ausone. It's only an hour's drive to Saïs. Why don't you come back with me? Saïs is a pretty hamlet. Few people have ever heard of it. The Golden Peach is an excellent inn. Why don't you run down and lie snug for a while? It's the last place on earth anybody would think of looking for a man who's done – what I suppose *you've* done."

Halkett, who had been listening with a detached smile, jerked his head around and looked at Warner.

"What do you suppose I've done?" he asked coolly.

"I think you're a British officer who has been abroad after military information – and that you've got it – in this envelope."

Halkett's expressionless face and fixed eyes did not alter. But he said quietly:

"You are about the only American in France who might have been likely to think that. Isn't it the devil's own luck that I should pick *you* for my friend in need?"

Warner shrugged:

"You need not answer that implied question of mine, Halkett. My theory concerning you suits me. Anyway, I believe you *are* in trouble. And I think you'd better come back to Saïs with me."

"Thinking what you think, do you still mean to stand by me?"

"Certainly. I don't *know* what's in your damned envelope, do I? Very well; I don't wish to know. Shall we stroll back to the Boule d'Argent?"

"Right-o! What a devilish decent chap you are, Warner!"

"Oh, no; I'm a gambler by disposition. This business amuses

me!"

"Are you stopping at the Boule d'Argent, too?" asked Halkett after a moment.

"I lunched there and left my stack of *toiles* and my sack of colors there. Also, I have a dogcart and a horse in the stables."

They turned away together, side by side, crossed the boulevard, traversed the deserted square in front of the beautiful old church of Sainte Cassilda, and entered the stony rue d'Auros, which led directly into the market square.

The ancient town of Ausone certainly seemed to be very much *en fête*, and the rue d'Auros – the main business thoroughfare – was crowded with townspeople, country folk, and soldiers on leave, clustering not only all over the sidewalks, but in the middle of the streets and squares, filling the terraces of the cafés and the courts of the two hotels, the Boule d'Argent and the Hôtel des Voyageurs.

Sunlight filtered through the double rank of chestnut trees in full leaf; the shade was even denser and cooler by the stone bridge where, between stone walls, the little stony river flowed, crystal clear. Here women and young girls, in holiday attire, sat on the benches, knitting or chatting with their friends; children played along the stone embankment, where beds of brilliant flowers bloomed; the red trousers of soldiers and the glittering brass helmets of firemen added a gayety to the color and movement.

"They're a jolly people, these French," remarked Halkett.

"They're very agreeable to live among."

"You've lived in France for some time?"

"Yes," said Warner. "My headquarters are in Paris, but every summer I take a class of American art students – girls – to Saïs for outdoor instruction. I've half a dozen there now, plugging away at *Plein Air*."

"Do you like to teach?"

"Well, not particularly. It interferes with my own work. But I have to do it. Painting pictures doesn't keep the kettle boiling."

"I see."

"I don't really mind it. Saïs is a charming place; I've known it for years. Besides, a friend of mine lives there – an American woman, Madame de Moidrey. Her sister, Miss Brooks, is one of the young girls in my class. So it makes it agreeable; and Madame de Moidrey is very hospitable."

Halkett smiled.

"Painters," he said, "have, proverbially, a pretty good time in life."

"Soldiers do, too; don't they?"

Halkett's smile became fixed.

"I've heard so. The main thing about a profession is to choose one which will take you out of doors."

"Yours does. You can sit under a tree and write your stories, can't you?"

The Englishman laughed:

"Of course I can. That's the beauty of realism; all you have to do is to walk about outdoors and jot down a faithful description

of everything you see."

They had reached the little stone *quai* under the chestnut and lime trees; the cool ripple of the river mingled with the laughter of young girls and the gay voices of children at play made a fresh and cheerful sound in the July sunshine.

They leaned against the mossy river wall and looked out under the trees across the square which surged with people. Flags fluttered from booths and white tents; the blare of bands, the tumult of wooden shoes, the noises of domestic creatures, and human voices all mingled with the unceasing music from the merry-go-rounds.

Across the esplanade there was a crowd around the Café de Biribi – people constantly passing to and fro – and strains of lively music leaked out from within.

After a moment Warner suggested that they go over and have something light and cool to drink.

"I've never been in there," he remarked, as they started, "but I've always intended to go. It's kept by a rascal named Wildresse – a sporting man, fight promoter, and an ex-gambler. You've heard of the Cabaret Wildresse in Paris, haven't you?"

"I think I have," replied Halkett. "It was an all night place on the Grand Boulevard, wasn't it?"

"Yes; opposite the Grand Hôtel. This is the same proprietor. He's an American – a shady sort of sport – and he certainly must have been a pretty bad lot, because the police made him leave Paris six years ago – what for, I don't know – but they fired him

out, and he started his cabaret business here in Ausone. You hear of it everywhere. People come even from Nancy and Liége and Louvain to dance, and dine here – certain sorts of people, I mean. The cuisine is celebrated. There are cockfights and other illegal attractions."

The Cabaret Biribi formed the corner of the square. It was a detached stucco structure surrounded by green trees and pretty shrubbery; and in the rear the grounds ran down to the river, where a dozen rowboats were moored along that still, glassy reach of water which extends for several miles south of Ausone between meadows and pleasantly wooded banks.

They found the Cabaret Biribi crowded when they went in; a lively young person was capering on the little stage at the end of the dancing floor, and singing while capering; soldiers and civilians, with their own or other people's sweethearts, sat at the zinc tables, consuming light beer and wine and syrups; a rather agreeable stringed orchestra played intermittently.

Waiters scurried about with miraculously balanced trays on high; old man Wildresse roamed furtively in the background, his gorilla arms behind his back, his blunt fingers interlocked, keeping a sly and ratty eye on waiters and guests, and sometimes on the young woman cashier who lounged listlessly upon her high chair behind the wire cage, one rather lank leg crossed over the other, and her foot swinging in idle time to the music.

The moment that Warner and Halkett appeared in the doorway, looking about them to find a table, Wildresse crossed

the floor and said to his cashier in a whisper:

"It's one of those men. Schmidt's description might fit either. If they don't make eyes at you and ask you to dance and drink with them, come over and join them anyway. And I want you to pump them dry. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear."

Warner looked across the room at her again when he and Halkett were seated. She had considerable paint on her cheeks, and her lips seemed too red to be natural. Otherwise she was tragically young, thin, excepting her throat and cheeks – a grey-eyed, listless young thing with a mass of chestnut hair crowning her delicately shaped head.

She made change languidly for waiter and guest; acknowledged the salutes of those entering and leaving without more than a politely detached interest; smiled at the jests of facetious customers with mechanical civility when importuned; and, when momentarily idle, swung her long, slim foot in time to the music and rested her painted cheek on one hand.

Her indifferent grey eyes, sweeping the hall, presently rested on Warner; and remained on him with a sort of idle insolence until his own shifted.

Halkett was saying:

"You know that girl – the cashier, I mean – is extraordinarily pretty. Have you noticed her, Warner?"

Warner turned again:

"I've been looking at her. She's rather thickly tinted, isn't she?"

"Yes. But in spite of the paint. She has a charmingly shaped head. Some day she'll have a figure."

"Oh, yes; figures and maturity come late to that type… If you'll notice, Halkett, those hands of hers are really exquisite. So are her features – the nose is delicate, the eyes beautifully drawn – she's all in good drawing – even her mouth, which is a little too full. As an amateur, don't you agree with me?"

"Very much so. She's a distinct type."

"Yes – there's a certain appeal about her… It's odd, isn't it – the inexplicable something about some women that attracts. It doesn't depend on beauty at all."

Halkett sipped his Moselle wine.

"No, it doesn't depend on beauty, on intelligence, on character, or on morals. It's in spite of them – in defiance, sometimes. Now, take that thin girl over there; her lips and cheeks are painted; she has the indifferent, disenchanted, detached glance of the too early wise. The chances are that she isn't respectable. And in spite of all that, Warner – well – look at her."

"I see. A man could paint a troubling portrait of her – a sermon on canvas."

"Just as she sits there," nodded Halkett.

"Just as she sits there, chin on palm, one lank leg crossed over the other, and her slim foot dangling… And the average painter would make her seem all wrong, Halkett; and I might, too, except for those clear grey eyes and their childish indifference to the devil's world outside their ken." He inspected her for a moment

more, then: "Yes, in spite of rouge and other obvious elementals, I should paint her as she really is, Halkett; and no man in his heart would dare doubt her after I'd finished."

"That's not realism," remarked Halkett, laughing.

"It's the vital essence of it. You know I'm something of a gambler. Well, if I painted that girl as she sits there now, in this noisy, messy, crowded cabaret, with the artificial tint on lip and cheek – if I painted her just as she appears to us, and in all the insolently youthful relaxation of her attitude – I'd be gambling all the while with myself that the soul inside her is as clean as a flame; and I'd paint that conviction into her portrait with every brush stroke! What do you think of that view of her?"

"As you Americans say, you're some poet," observed Halkett, laughingly.

"A poet is an advanced psychologist. He begins where scientific deduction ends."

"That's what makes your military pictures so convincing," said Halkett, with his quick smile. "It's not only the correctness of details and the spirited drawing and color, but you *do* see into the very souls of the men you paint, and their innermost characters are there, revealed in the supreme crisis of the moment." He smiled quietly. "I'll believe it if *you* say that young girl over there is quite all right."

"I'd paint her that way, anyhow."

The singing on the stage had ceased from troubling, and the stringed orchestra was playing one of the latest and most inane

of dance steps. A clumsy *piou-piou* got up with his fresh-cheeked partner; other couples rose from the sloppy tables, and in another moment the dancing floor was uncomfortably crowded.

It was a noisy place; a group of summer touring students from Louvain, across the border, were singing "La Brabançonne" – a very patriotic and commendable attempt, but it scarcely harmonized with the dance music. Perspiring waiters rushed hither and thither, their trays piled high; the dancers trotted and spun around and galloped about over the waxed floor; the young girl behind her wire wicket swung her narrow foot to and fro and gazed imperturbably out across the tumult.

"Philippa!" cried one of the Louvain students, hammering on the table with his beer glass. "Come out from behind your *guichet* and dance with me!"

The girl's grey eyes turned superciliously toward the speaker, but she neither answered nor moved her head.

The young man blew a kiss toward her and attempted to climb upon the zinc table, but old man Wildresse, who was prowling near, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Pas de bêtise!" he growled. "Soyez sage! Restez tranquille, nom de Dieu!"

"I merely desired the honor of dancing with your charming cashier – "

"Allons! Assez! It's sufficient to ask her, isn't it? A woman dances with whom she chooses."

And, grumbling, he walked on with his heavy sidling step,

hands clasped behind him, his big, hard, smoothly shaven face lowered and partly turned, as though eternally listening for somebody just at his heels. Always sidling nearer to the table where Warner and Halkett were seated, he paused, presently, and looked down at them, shot a glance across at the girl, Philippa, caught her eye, nodded significantly. Then, addressing Warner and his new friend:

"Well, gentlemen," he said in English, "are you amusing yourselves in the Café Biribi?"

"Sufficiently," nodded Warner.

Wildresse peeped stealthily over his shoulder, as though expecting to surprise a listener. Then his very small black eyes stole toward Halkett, and he furtively examined him.

"*Jour de fête*," he remarked in his harshly resonant voice. "Grand doings in town tonight. Do you gentlemen dine here this evening?"

"I think not," said Warner.

"I am sorry. It will be gay. There are dance partners to be had for a polite bow. You should see my little *caissière* yonder!" He made a grunting sound and kissed his blunt fingers to the ceiling. "M-m-m!" he growled. "*She* can dance! But I don't permit her to dance very often. Only a special client now and then – "

"May we consider ourselves special clients?" inquired Warner, amused.

"Oh, I don't say yes and I don't say no." He jerked his round, shaven head. "It all depends on *her*. She dances with whom she

pleases. And if the Emperor of China asked her, nevertheless she should be free to please herself."

"She's very pretty," said Halkett.

"Others have said so before you in the Cabaret de Biribi."

"Why do you call your cabaret the Café Biribi?" asked Warner.

"Eh? By God, I call it Biribi because I'm not ashamed of the name."

Halkett looked up into his wicked black eyes, and Wildresse wagged his finger at him.

"Supposition," he said, "that your son is a good boy – a little lively, but a good boy – and he comes of age and he goes with his class for two years – three years now, and to hell with it!

"Bon! Supposition, also, that his sergeant is a tyrant, his captain an ass, his colonel an imbecile! Bon! Given a little natural ardor – a trifle of animal spirits, and the lad is up before the council – bang! – and he gets his in the battalions of Biribi!"

His voice had become a sort of ominous growl.

"As for me," he said heavily, "I mock at their council and their blockhead colonel! I accept their challenge; I do not conceal that my son is serving in a disciplinary battalion; I salute all the battalions of Biribi – where there are better men in the ranks than there are in many a regiment of the line, by God! And I honor those battalions by naming my cabaret 'Biribi.' The Government gets no change out of me!"

The man asserted too much, swaggered too obviously; and

Halkett, not suspicious but always cautious, kept his inquiring eyes fixed on him.

Warner said with a smile:

"You have the courage of your convictions, Monsieur Wildresse."

"As for that," growled Wildresse, casting another stealthy glance behind him, "I've got courage. Courage? Who hasn't? Everybody's got courage. It's brains the world lacks. Excuse me, gentlemen – affairs of business – and if you want to dance with my little cashier, there is no harm in asking her." And he shuffled away, his heavy head bent sideways, his hands tightly clasped behind him.

"There's an evil type," remarked Halkett. "What a brute it is!"

Warner said:

"With his cropped head and his smooth, pasty face, and those unpleasant black eyes of his, he looks like an ex-convict. It doesn't astonish me that he has a son serving in the disciplinary battalions of Africa."

"Does it astonish you that he is the employer of that girl behind the counter?" asked Halkett.

Warner turned to look at her again:

"It's interesting, isn't it? She seems to be another breed."

"Yes. Now, what do you make of her?"

Warner hesitated, then looked up with a laugh.

"Halkett," he said, "I'm going over to ask her to dance."

"All right; I'll hold the table," said the Englishman, amused.

And Warner rose, skirted the dancers, and walked around to the cashier's desk, aware all the while that the girl's indifferent grey eyes were following his movements.

CHAPTER III

Warner tucked his walking stick and straw hat under one arm and, sauntering over to the cashier's desk, made a very nice and thoroughly Continental bow to the girl behind it.

Her impartial and uninterested gaze rested on him; after a moment she inclined her head, leisurely and in silence.

He said in French:

"Would Mademoiselle do me the honor of dancing this dance with me?"

She replied in a sweet but indifferent voice:

"Monsieur is too amiable. But he sees that I am *caissière* of the establishment."

"Yet even the fixed stars of heaven dance sometimes to the music of the spheres."

She smiled slightly:

"When one is merely a fixture *de cabaret*, one dances only to the music of the *Sbires*! You must ask Monsieur Wildresse if I may dance with you."

"He suggested that I ask you."

"Very well, if it's a matter of business – "

Warner laughed.

"Don't you ever dance for pleasure?" he asked in English.

She replied in English:

"Is it your theory that it would give me pleasure to dance with

you?"

"It is," he said, still laughing. "But by demonstration alone are theories proven."

The girl hesitated, her grey eyes resting on him. Then she turned her head, drew a pencil from her chestnut hair, rapped with it on the counter. A head waiter came speeding to her.

"Aristide, I'm going to dance," she said in the same sweetly indifferent voice. "Have the goodness to sit in my chair until I return or Mélanie arrives."

She slid to the floor from her high seat, came out, through the wire gate, and began to unpin her cambric apron.

The closer view revealed to him her thinness in her black gown. She was not so tall as he had thought her, and she was younger; but he had been right about her cheeks and lips. Both were outrageously painted.

She handed her daintily embroidered apron to the waiter, laid one hand lightly on Warner's arm; he led her to the edge of the dancing floor, clasped her waist and swung her with him out into the noisy whirl beyond.

Thin, almost immature in her angular slenderness, the girl in motion became enchantingly graceful. Supple as a sapling in the summer wind, her hand rested feather-light in his; her long, narrow feet seemed like shadows close above the floor, never touching it.

The orchestra ceased playing after a few minutes, but old man Wildresse, who had been watching them, growled, "Go on!" and

the music recommenced amid plaudits and shouts of general approval.

Once, as they passed the students' table, Warner heard the voice of old Wildresse in menacing dispute with the student who had first shouted out an invitation to Philippa.

"She dances with whom she chooses!" roared Wildresse. "Do you understand, Monsieur? By God, if the Grand Turk himself asked her she should not dance with him unless she wished to!"

Warner said to her jestingly:

"Did the Grand Turk ever ask you, Philippa?"

The girl did not smile.

"Perhaps I am dancing with him now. One never knows – in a cabaret."

When the music ceased she was breathing only a trifle faster, and her cheeks under the paint glowed softly pink.

"Could you join us?" he asked. "Is it permitted?"

"I'd like to… Yes."

So he took her back to the table, where Halkett rose and paid his respects gracefully; and they seated themselves and ordered a grenadine for her.

Old Wildresse, sidling by, paused with a non-committal grunt:

"Eh bien? On s'amuse? Dis, petit galopin!"

"I'm thirsty," said the girl Philippa.

"And your *caisse*?"

"Tell them to find Mélanie," she retorted indifferently.

"Bon! A *jour de fête*, too! How long are you going to be?" But

as she glanced up he winked at her.

She shrugged her shoulders, leaned forward, chose a straw, and plunged it into the crimson depths of her iced grenadine.

Old Wildresse looked at her a moment, then he also shrugged his shoulders and went shuffling away, always apparently distrustful of that invisible something just behind his back.

Halkett said:

"Mr. Warner and I have been discussing an imaginary portrait of you."

"What?" The clear, grey eyes turned questioningly to him, to Warner.

The latter nodded:

"I happen to be a painter. Mr. Halkett and I have agreed that it would be an interesting experiment to paint your portrait —*as you really are*."

The girl seemed slightly puzzled.

"As I really am?" she repeated. "But, Messieurs, am I not what you see before you?"

The music began again; the Louvain student, a little tipsy but very decorous, arose, bowed to the girl Philippa, bowed to Halkett and to Warner, and asked for the honor of a dance with her.

"Merci, Monsieur – another time, perhaps," she replied indifferently.

The boy seemed disposed to linger, but he was not quarrelsome, and finally Halkett got up and led him away.

From moment to moment Warner, glancing across during his tête-à-tête with the girl Philippa, could see the Louvain student continually shaking hands with Halkett who seemed horribly bored.

A little later still the entire Louvain delegation insisted on entertaining Halkett with beer and song; and the resigned but polite Englishman, now seated at their table, was being taught to sing "La Brabançonne," between draughts of Belgian beer.

The girl Philippa played with the stem of her glass and stirred the ice in it with her broken wheat straw. The healthy color in her face had now faded to an indoor pallor again under the rouge.

"So you are a painter," she said, her grey eyes fixed absently on her glass. "Are you a distinguished painter, Monsieur?"

He laughed:

"You'll have to ask others that question, Philippa."

"Why? Don't you know whether you are distinguished?"

"I've had some success," he admitted, amused.

She thought a moment, then leaned forward toward the Louvain table.

"Mr. Halkett," she called in English. "Is Mr. Warner a distinguished American painter?"

Halkett laughed.

"One of the most celebrated American painters of the day!"

The Louvain students, understanding, rose as a man, waved their glasses, and cheered for Warner, the "*grand peintre Américain*." Which embarrassed and annoyed him so that his

face grew brighter than the paint on Philippa's lips.

"I'm sorry," she said, noticing his annoyance. "I did not mean to make you conspicuous."

Everybody in the café was now looking at him; on every side he gazed into amused and smiling faces, saw glasses lifted, heard the cries of easily aroused Gallic enthusiasm.

"Vive le grand peintre Américain! Vive l'Amérique du Nord!"

"This is tiresome!" exclaimed Philippa. "Let us walk down to the river and sit in one of our boats. I should really like to talk to you sensibly – unless you are too much annoyed with me."

She beckoned a waiter to bring her apron; and she put it on.

"When you are ready, Monsieur," she said serenely.

So they rose; Warner paid the bill, and, with a whimsical smile at Halkett, walked out beside Philippa through one of the rear doors, and immediately found himself in brightest sunshine, amid green trees and flower beds.

Here, under the pitiless sky, the girl's face became ghastly under its rouged mask – the more shocking, perhaps, because her natural skin, if pale, appeared to be smooth and clear; and the tragic youth of her seemed to appeal to all out of doors from the senseless abuse it was enduring.

To see her there in the freshness of the open breeze, sunshine and shadow dappling the green under foot, the blue overhead untroubled by a cloud, gave Warner a slightly sick sensation.

"The air is pleasant," she remarked, unconscious of the effect she had on him.

He nodded. They walked down the grassy slope to the river bank, where rows of boats lay moored. A few were already in use out on the calm stream; young men in their shirt sleeves splashed valiantly at the oars; young women looked on under sunshades of flamboyant tints.

There was a white punt there called the *Lys*. Philippa stepped into it, drew a key from her apron pocket, unlocked the padlock. Then, lifting the pole from the grass, she turned and invited Warner with a gesture.

He had not bargained for this; but he tossed the chain aboard, stepped in, and offered to take the pole.

But Philippa evidently desired to do the punting herself; so he sat back, watching her sometimes and sometimes looking at the foliage, where they glided swiftly along under overhanging branches and through still, glimmering reaches of green water, set with scented rushes where dragon flies glittered and midges danced in clouds, and the slim green frogs floated like water sprites, partly submerged, looking at them out of golden goblin eyes that never blinked.

"The town is *en fête*," remarked Philippa presently. "Why should I not be too?"

Warner laughed:

"Do you call this a *fête*?"

"For me, yes." … After a moment, turning from her pole: "Do you not find it agreeable?"

"Certainly. What little river is this?"

"The Récollette."

"It flows by Saïs, too. I did not recognize it for the same. The Récollette is swifter and shallower below Saïs."

"You know Saïs, then?"

"I live there in summer."

"Oh. And in winter?"

"Paris."

An unconscious sigh of relief escaped her, that it was not necessary to play the spy with this man. It was the other man who interested Wildresse.

The girl poled on in silence for a while, then deftly guided the *Lys* into the cool green shadow of a huge oak which overhung the water, the lower branches touching it.

"The sun is warm," she observed, driving in the pole and tying the white punt so that it could swing with the current.

She came and seated herself by Warner, smiled frankly.

"Do you know," she said, "I've never before done this for pleasure."

"What haven't you done for pleasure?" he inquired, perplexed.

"This – what I am doing."

"You mean you never before went out punting with a customer?"

"Not for the pleasure of it – only for business reasons."

He hesitated to understand, refused to, because, for all her careless freedom and her paint, he could not believe her to be merely a *fille de cabaret.*

"Business reasons," he repeated. "What is your business?"

"Cashier, of course."

"Well, does your business ever take you boating with customers? Is it part of your business to dance with a customer and drink grenadine with him?"

"Yes, but you wouldn't understand – " And suddenly she comprehended his misunderstanding of her and blushed deeply.

"I am not a *cocotte*. Did you think I meant that?"

"I know you are not. I didn't know what you meant."

There was a silence; the color in her cheeks cooled under the rouge.

"It happened this way," she said quietly. "I didn't want to make it a matter of business with you. Even in the beginning I didn't… You please me… After all, the town is *en fête*… After all, a girl has a right to please herself once in her life… And business is a very lonely thing for the young… Why shouldn't I amuse myself for an hour with a client who pleases me?"

"Are you doing it?"

"Yes. I never before knew a distinguished painter – only noisy boys from the schools, whose hair is uncut, whose conversation is *blague*, and whose trousers are too baggy to suit me. They smoke soldier's tobacco, and their subjects of discussion are not always *convenable*."

He said, curiously:

"As for that, you must hear much that is not *convenable* in the cabaret."

"Oh, yes. I don't notice it when it is not addressed to me… Please tell me what you paint – if I am permitted to ask."

"Soldiers."

"Only soldiers?"

"Portraits, sometimes, and landscapes out of doors – anything that appeals to me. Do pictures interest you?"

"I used to go to the Louvre and the Luxembourg when I was a child. It was interesting. Did you say that you would like to make a portrait of me?"

"I said that if I ever did make a portrait of you I'd paint you *as you really are*."

Her perplexed gaze had the disconcerting directness of a child's.

"I don't understand," she said.

"Shall I explain?"

"If you would be so kind."

"You won't be offended?"

She regarded him silently; her brows became slightly contracted.

"Such a man as you would not willingly offend, I think."

"No, of course not. I didn't mean that sort of thing. But you might not like what I have to say."

"If I merit what you say about me, it doesn't matter whether I like it or not, does it? Tell me."

He laughed:

"Well, then, if I were going to paint you, I'd first ask you to

wash your cheeks."

She sat silent, humiliated, the painful color deepening and waning under the rouge.

"And," he continued pleasantly, "after your face had been well scrubbed, I'd paint you in your black gown, cuffs and apron of a *caissière*, just as I first saw you there behind the desk, one foot swinging, and your cheek resting on your hand.

"But behind your eyes, which looked out so tranquilly across the tumult of the cabaret, I'd paint a soul as clean as a flame… I'm wondering whether I'd make any mistake in painting you that way, Philippa?"

The girl Philippa had fixed her grey eyes on him with fascinated but troubled intensity. They remained so for a while after he had finished speaking.

Presently, and partly to herself, she said:

"*Pour ça*– no. So far. But it has never before occurred to me that I look like a *cocotte*."

She turned, and, resting one arm on the gunwale, gazed down into the limpid green water.

"Have you a fresh handkerchief?" she asked, not turning toward him.

"Yes – but – "

"Please! I must wash my face."

She bent swiftly, dipped both hands into the water, and scrubbed her lips and cheeks. Then, extending her arm behind her for the handkerchief, she dried her skin, sat up again, and

faced him with childish resignation. A few freckles had become visible; her lips were no longer vivid, and there now remained only the faintest tint of color under her clear, cool skin.

"You see," she said, "I'm not attractive unless I help nature. One naturally desires to be thought attractive."

"On the contrary, you are exceedingly attractive!"

"Are you sincere?"

"Perfectly."

"But I have several freckles near my nose. And I am pale."

"You are entirely attractive," he repeated, laughing.

"With my freckles! You are joking. Also, I have no pink in my cheeks now." She shrugged. "However – if you like me this way – " She shrugged again, as though that settled everything.

Another punt passed them; she looked after it absently. Presently she said, still watching the receding boat:

"Do you think you'll ever come again to the Café Biribi?"

"I'll come expressly to see you, Philippa," he replied.

To his surprise the girl blushed vividly and looked away from him; and he hastily took a different tone, somewhat astonished that such a girl should not have learned long ago how to take the irresponsible badinage of men. Certainly she must have had plenty of opportunity for such schooling.

"When I'm in Ausone again," he said seriously, "I'll bring with me a canvas and brushes. And if Monsieur Wildresse doesn't mind I'll make a little study of you. Shall I, Philippa?"

"Would you care to?"

"Very much. Do you think Monsieur Wildresse would permit it?"

"I do what I choose."

"Oh!"

She misunderstood his amused exclamation, and she flushed up.

"My conduct has been good – so far," she explained. "Everybody knows it. The *prix de la rosière* is not yet beyond me. If a girl determines to behave otherwise, who can stop her, and what? Not her parents – if she has any; not bolts and keys. No; it is understood between Monsieur Wildresse and me that I do what I choose. And, Monsieur, so far I have not chosen – indiscreetly – " She looked up calmly. " – In spite of my painted cheeks which annoyed you – "

"I didn't mean – "

"I understand. You think that it is more *comme il faut* to exhibit one's freckles to the world than to paint them out."

"It's a thousand times better! If you only knew how pretty you are – just as you are now – with your soft, girlish skin and your chestnut hair and your enchanting grey eyes – "

"Monsieur – "

The girl's rising color and her low-voiced exclamation warned him again that detached and quite impersonal praises from him were not understood.

"Philippa," he explained with bored but smiling reassurance, "I'm merely telling you what a really pretty girl you are; I'm not

paying court to you. Didn't you understand?"

The grey eyes were lifted frankly to his; questioned him in silence.

"In America a man may say as much to a girl and mean nothing more – important," he explained. "I'm not trying to make love to you, Philippa. Were you afraid I was?"

She said slowly:

"I was not exactly —*afraid*."

"I don't do that sort of thing," he continued pleasantly. "I don't make love to anybody. I'm too busy a man. Also, I would not offend you by talking to you about love."

She looked down at her folded hands. Since she had been with him nothing had seemed very real to her, nothing very clear, except that for the first time in her brief life she was interested in a man on whom she was supposed to be spying.

The Gallic and partly morbid traditions she had picked up in such a girlhood as had been hers were now making for her an important personal episode out of their encounter, and were lending a fictitious and perhaps a touching value to every word he uttered.

But more important and most significant of anything to her was her own natural inclination for him. For her he already possessed immortal distinction; he was her first man.

She was remembering that she had gone to him after exchanging a glance with Wildresse, when he had first asked her to dance. But she had needed no further persuasion to sit with

him at his table; she had even forgotten her miserable rôle when she asked him to go out to the river with her. The significance of all this, according to her Gallic tradition, was now confronting her, emphasizing the fact that she was still with him.

As she sat there, her hands clasped in her lap, the sunlit reality of it all seemed brightly confused as in a dream – a vivid dream which casts a deeper enchantment over slumber, holding the sleeper fascinated under the tense concentration of the happy spell. Subconsciously she seemed to be aware that, according to tradition, this conduct of hers must be merely preliminary to something further; that, in sequence, other episodes were preparing – were becoming inevitable. And she thought of what he had said about making love.

Folding and unfolding her hands, and looking down at them rather fixedly, she said:

"Apropos of love – I have never been angry because men told me they were in love with me… Men love; it is natural; they cannot help it. So, if you had said so, I should not have been angry. No, not at all, Monsieur."

"Philippa," he said smilingly, "when a girl and a man happen to be alone together, love isn't the only entertaining subject for conversation, is it?"

"It's the subject I've always had to listen to from men. Perhaps that is why I thought – when you spoke so amiably of my – my – "

"Beauty," added Warner frankly, " – because it *is* beauty, Philippa. But I meant only to express the pleasure that it gave to

a painter – yes, and to a man who can admire without offense, and say so quite as honestly."

The girl slowly raised her eyes.

"You speak very pleasantly to me," she said. "Are other American men like you?"

"You ought to know. Aren't you American?"

"I don't know what I am."

"Why, I thought – your name was Philippa Wildresse."

"I am called that."

"Then Monsieur Wildresse isn't a relation?"

"No. I wear his name for lack of any other… He found me somewhere, he says… In Paris, I believe… That is all he will tell me."

"Evidently," said Warner in his pleasant, sympathetic voice, "you have had an education somewhere."

"He sent me to school in England until I was sixteen… After that I became cashier for him."

"He gave you his name, and he supports you… Is he kind to you?"

"He has never struck me."

"Does he protect you?"

"He uses me in business… I am too valuable to misuse."

The girl looked down at her folded hands. And even Warner divined what ultimate chances she stood in the Cabaret de Biribi.

"When I'm in Ausone again, I'll come to see you," he said pleasantly. " – Not to make love to you, Philippa," he added with

a smile, "but just because we have become such good friends out here in the *Lys*."

"Yes," she said, "friends. I shall be glad to see you. I shall always try to understand you – whatever you say to me."

"That's as it should be!" he exclaimed heartily. "Give me your hand on it, Philippa."

She laid her hand in his gravely. They exchanged a slight pressure. Then he glanced at his watch, rose, and picked up the pole.

"I've got to drive to Saïs in time for dinner," he remarked. "I'm sorry, because I'd like to stay out here with you."

"I'm sorry, too," she said.

The next moment the punt shot out into the sunny stream.

CHAPTER IV

Warner and the girl Philippa reëntered the Cabaret de Biribi together the uproar had become almost deafening. Confetti was thrown at them immediately, and they advanced all a-flutter with brilliant tatters.

The orchestra was playing, almost everybody was dancing, groups at tables along the edge of the floor sang, clinked glasses, and threw confetti without discrimination. The whole place – tables, floor, chandeliers, and people – streamed with multi-colored paper ribbons. Waiters swept it in heaps from the dancing floor.

Philippa entered the cashier's enclosure and dismissed the woman in charge. Seated once more on her high chair she opened her reticule and produced a small mirror. Then she leaned far over her counter toward Warner.

"Is it permitted me to powder my nose?" she whispered with childlike seriousness; but she laughed when he did, and, still laughing, made him a gay little gesture of adieu with her powder puff.

He stood looking at her for a moment, where she sat on her high chair behind the cage, intently occupied with her mirror, oblivious to the tumult around her. Then, the smile still lingering on his features, he turned to look for his new acquaintance, Halkett.

Old man Wildresse sidled up to the cashier's desk, opened the wicket, and went inside. Philippa, still using her tiny mirror, was examining a freckle very seriously.

"Eh, bien?" he growled. "Rien?"

"Nothing!"

"Drop that glass and talk!" he said harshly.

She turned and looked at him.

"I tell you it was silly to suspect such a man!" she said impatiently. "In my heart I feel humiliated that you should have set me to spy on him – "

"What's that!"

"No, I've had enough! I don't like the rôle; I never liked it! Are there no police in France – "

"Little idiot!" he said. "Will you hold your tongue?"

"It is a disgusting *métier*– "

"Damnation! Hold your tongue!" he repeated. "We've got to do what the Government tells us to do, haven't we?"

"Not I! Never again – "

"Yes, you will! Do you hear? Yes, you will, or I'll twist your neck! Now, I'm going to keep my eye on that other gentleman. Granted that the man you pumped is all right, I'm not so sure about the other, who seems to be an Englishman. I'm going over to stand near him. By and by I'll address him. And if I wink at you, leave your *caisse* with Mélanie, come over, and sit at their table again – "

"No!"

"Yes, you will!"

"No!"

"Yes, you will. And you'll also contrive it so the Englishman asks you to dance. Do you hear what I say? And you'll find out where he comes from, and when he arrived in Ausone, and where he is going, and whatever else you can worm out of him!" He glared at her. "Disobey if you dare," he added.

She was silent.

After a moment he continued in a softer voice:

"Do you want to see me in prison and my son in New Caledonia? Very well, then; do what the Government tells you to do."

"I – I've done enough – filthy work – " she stammered. "Why must I? I have never done anything wrong – "

"Did you hear what I said? Do you want to see Jacques in Noumea?"

"No," she said sullenly.

"Then do what I tell you, or, by God, they'll ship him there and me too!"

And he clasped his hands behind his back, peered sideways at her, shrugged, and went shuffling out of the enclosure.

Groups at various tables were singing and shouting; the floor seethed with sweating dancers. On the edge of this vortex the girl Philippa, from her high chair, looked darkly across the tumult toward the table where Halkett sat.

Something seemed to be happening there; she could see

Wildresse gesticulating vigorously; she saw Warner making his way toward his friend, who was seated alone at a table, a lighted cigarette balanced between his fingers and one arm thrown carelessly around the back of the chair on which he sat.

He was looking coolly but steadily at three men who occupied the table next to him; Wildresse now stood between the two tables, and his emphatic gesticulations were apparently directed toward these three men; but in the uproar, and although he also appeared to be shouting, what he was saying remained inaudible.

Warner went over and seated himself beside Halkett; and now he could distinguish the harsh voice of the Patron raised in irritation:

"No politics! I'll not suffer political disputes in my cabaret!" he bawled. "Quarrels arise from such controversies. I'll have no quarrels in my place. Now, Messieurs, *un peu de complaisance*!"

One of the men he was exhorting leaned wide in his seat and looked insolently across at Halkett.

"It was the Englishman's fault," he retorted threateningly. "I and my friends here had been speaking of the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Serajevo. We were conversing peaceably and privately among ourselves, when that Englishman laughed at us – "

"You are mistaken," said Halkett quietly.

"Did you not laugh?" cried the second of the men at the next table.

"Yes, but not at what you were saying. I'm sorry if you thought

so – "

The man half rose in his chair, exclaiming:

"Why shouldn't I think it natural for an Englishman to laugh at the murder of an Austrian arch-duke – "

"Stop that discussion!" cried Wildresse, angrily jerking his heavy head from Halkett to the three men at the other table. "Let it rest where it is, I tell you! The English gentleman says he did not laugh at what you were saying. Nom de Dieu! Nobody well brought up laughs at murder!" And to Halkett and Warner: "Be amiable enough, gentlemen, to carry this misunderstanding no further. I've had sufficient trouble with the police in my time."

Warner laid one hand lightly on Halkett's arm.

"All right," he said to Wildresse; "no trouble shall originate with us." And, to Halkett, in a lowered voice: "Have you an idea that those men over there are trying to force a quarrel?"

"Of course."

"Have you ever seen them before?"

"Not one of them."

Warner's lips scarcely moved as he said:

"Is it the matter of the envelope?"

"I think so. And, Warner, I don't intend to drag you into any – "

"Wait. Are you armed?"

Halkett shook his head.

"That's no good," he said. "I can't afford to do anything conspicuous. If I'm involved with the authorities I'm done for,

and I might just as well be knocked on the head." After a moment he added: "I think perhaps you'd better say good-by to me now, Warner – "

"Why?"

"Because, if they manage to force a quarrel, I don't mean to have you involved – "

"Do you really expect me to run away?" asked Warner, laughing.

Halkett looked up at him with a faint smile:

"I'm under very heavy obligations to you already – "

"You are coming to Saïs with me."

"Thanks so much, but – "

"Come on, Halkett. I'm not going to leave you here."

"My dear chap, I'll wriggle out somehow. I've done it before. After all, they may not mean mischief."

Warner turned and looked across at the three men. Two were whispering together; the third, arms folded, was staring truculently at Halkett out of his light blue eyes.

Warner turned his head and said quietly to Halkett:

"I take two of them to be South Germans or Austrians. The other might be Alsatian. Do any of these possible nationalities worry you?"

"Exactly," said Halkett coolly.

"In other words, any trouble you may expect is likely to come from Germans?"

"That's about it."

Warner lighted a cigarette.

"Shall we try a quiet getaway?" he asked.

"No; I'll look out for myself. Clear out, Warner, there's a good fellow – "

"Don't ask me to do a thing that you wouldn't do," retorted Warner sharply. "Come on; I'm going to drive you to Saïs."

Halkett flushed.

"I shan't forget how decent you've been," he said. They summoned the waiter, paid the reckoning, rose, and walked leisurely toward the door.

At the *caissière's* desk they turned aside to say good-night to Philippa.

The girl looked up from her accounts, pencil poised, gazing at Warner.

"*Au revoir*, Philippa," he said, smilingly.

The girl's serious features relaxed; she nodded to him gayly, turned, still smiling, to include Halkett. And instantly a swift change altered her face; she half rose from her chair, arm outstretched.

"What is that man doing behind you!" she cried out – too late to avert what she saw coming. For the man close behind Halkett had dexterously passed a silk handkerchief across his throat from behind and had jerked him backward; and, like lightning, two other men appeared on either side of him, tore his coat wide, and thrust their hands into his breast pockets.

Warner pivoted on his heel and swung hard on the man with

the silk handkerchief, driving him head-on into the table behind, which fell with a crash of glassware. Halkett, off his balance, fell on top of the table, dragging with him one of the men whose hand had become entangled in his breast pocket.

The people who had been seated at the table were hurled right and left among the neighboring tables; a howl of anger and protest burst from the crowd; there came a shout of "*Cochon*!" – a rush to see what had happened; people mounted on chairs, waiters arrived, running. Out of the mêlée Halkett wriggled and rose, coughing, his features still crimson from partial strangulation. Warner caught his arm in a grip of iron and whisked him out of the door. The next instant they were engulfed in the crowds thronging the market square.

Warner, thoroughly aroused and excited, still maintained his grip on Halkett's arm.

"Did you ever see anything like it?" he said in a low voice. "It came like a bolt from the sky. That was the *Coup du Père François*. Did they get anything from you?"

Halkett spoke with difficulty, pressing his throat with his fingers and trying to smile.

"What they got," he said, "was meant for them to get – time-tables and a ticket to Paris. I don't intend to travel that way – " A fit of coughing shook him. " – For a moment I thought they'd actually broken my neck. What did you do to that fellow with his noose?"

"He fell on the table behind you. Everybody was piled up

with the crockery. You wriggled out like a lizard." He turned cautiously and looked back over his shoulder. "Do you think we have been followed?"

"I can't see that we are."

They entered the rue d'Auros and turned into the Hôtel Boule d'Argent. Warner sent a chasseur to the stables for his horse and dogcart; Halkett hastened to collect his luggage.

In a few minutes the horse and cart came rattling out of the mews; luggage, canvases, and the sack of colors were placed in the boot; Warner mounted, taking reins and whip; Halkett sprang up beside him, and the groom freed the horse's head.

Into the almost deserted Boulevard d'Athos they went at a lively clip, circled the lovely church of Sainte Cassilda at the head of it, and trotted out into the broad highroad which swings cast to the river Récollette, and follows that pretty little stream almost due south to the hills and cliffs and woods and meadows of Saïs.

The sun hung low above the fields, reddening the roadside bushes and painting the tall ranks of poplars with vivid streaks of gold and rose.

Just outside the remains of the old town wall they passed through a suburban hamlet. That, except for a farm or two more, included the last houses this side of Saïs.

For a little while neither of the young men spoke; Halkett's cough had ceased, but now and then he fidgeted with his collar as though to ease it from the bruised throat. Warner drove, looking straight between his horse's ears, as though intently preoccupied

with his navigation.

After a while Halkett said:

"The envelope is safe, I take it:"

"Oh, yes. They never noticed me until I hit one of them."

"I'm so grateful," said Halkett, "that it's quite useless for me to try to say so – "

"Listen! I'm enjoying it. I'm grateful to *you*, Halkett, for giving me the opportunity. I needed touching up." He laughed in sheer exhilaration. "We stodgy professional people ought to be stirred out of our ruts, A little mix-up like that with a prospect of others is exactly what I needed."

Halkett smiled rather dryly.

"Oh," he said. "If it strikes you that way, I shall feel much relieved."

"Relieve yourself of all embarrassment," returned Warner gayly. "If our acquaintance entails further scraps with those gentlemen, I shall be merely the more grateful to you."

They both laughed; Warner swung his long whip like a fly rod and caught the loop cleverly on his whip-stock.

Halkett, still laughing, said:

"You don't look as though you enjoyed a cabaret fight. You look far too respectable."

"Oh, I am respectable, I suppose. But I'm not very aged yet, and my student days are still rather near."

The road curved out now along the Récollette where it still flowed a placid stream between green meadows and through

charming bits of woodland. In the glass of the flood the sunset sky was mirrored; swallows cut the still, golden surface; slowly spreading circles of rising fish starred it at intervals.

"So you don't go armed?" remarked Warner thoughtfully.

"No."

The American pointed with the butt of his whip to the dashboard where the blue-black butts of two automatics appeared from slung holsters.

"Why the artillery?" inquired Halkett.

"I drive my neighbor, Madame de Moidrey, sometimes; and in summer it is often dark before we return. It's a lovely country; also, the quarrymen at the cement works are a rough lot. So I let my pretty neighbor take no chances with me."

"Quite right," nodded Halkett. "When quarrymen get drunk it's no joke. What quarry is it?"

"The Esser Company. It's a German cement concern, I believe."

"German?"

"I believe so."

"Where is this quarry?"

"In the hills back of the Récollette. They run barges to Ausone. Just below their canal the Récollette becomes unnavigable, and the shallows and rapids continue for several miles below Saïs. That is the reason, I suppose, that the country around Saïs remains primitive and undeveloped, lacking as it does railroad and water transportation."

"I wonder," said Halkett thoughtfully, "whether I might see the quarry and cement works. It must be interesting."

Warner shrugged:

"If that sort of thing interests you, I'll take you over. It's a messy place full of stone crushers and derricks and broken rock and pits full of green water. Still, if you want to see it – "

"Thanks, I should like to."

Warner glanced at him; a slight grin touched his lips.

"You seem to be interested in a great many kinds of business," he said, " – literature, military science, cement works, cabaret life – "

Halkett laughed outright; but the next moment he turned like a flash in his seat, and Warner also cast a quick glance behind him.

"A car coming!" he said, driving to the right. "What's the matter, Halkett? You don't think it's after us?"

"I think it is."

"What?"

"I know damned well it is!" said Halkett between his teeth. "Shall I jump and swim for it? Pull in a moment, Warner – "

"Wait! Do you see that gate in the hedge? Get out and open it. Quick, Halkett! I know what to do – "

Halkett leaped, dragged open the gate; Warner swung his horse and drove through and out into a swampy meadow set with wild flowers and bushes and slender saplings.

The wheels of the cart cut through the spongy sod and sank almost to the hubs, but Warner used his whip and Halkett, taking

the horse by the head, ran forward beside the swaying cart. Right across their path flowed a deep, narrow stream, partly invisible between reeds and tufts of swamp weed; Warner turned the vehicle with difficulty, urged his nervous horse across a cattle bridge which had been fashioned out of a few loose planks, and drove up on firmer ground among tall ferns and willow bushes.

"Pull up those planks!" he shouted back to Halkett, guiding his horse with difficulty; and Halkett ran back, lifted the mossy, half rotted planks, and threw them up among the bushes.

A grey touring car which had halted on the highway outside the hedge had now turned after them through the gate; and already the driver was having a bad time of it in the swampy meadow.

As Halkett lifted the last plank that spanned the brook, one of three men in the tonneau of the car stood up and fired a revolver at him; and another of the men, seated beside him, also fired deliberately, resting his elbow on the side of the stalled car to steady his aim, and supporting the revolver with his left hand under the barrel.

Halkett ran back to where the cart stood, partly concealed among the ferns and bushes; Warner, holding whip and reins in one hand, passed him an automatic revolver and drew out the other weapon for his own use.

"This is rottenly ungrateful of me," said the Englishman. "I've certainly involved you now!"

"It's all right; I'm enjoying it! Now, Halkett, their car is badly

mired. There is another gate to that hedge a few hundred yards below. If you'll just lay those planks in the cart, we'll drive along the hard ground here and make another bridge below."

Halkett picked up the wet and muddy planks, one by one, and placed them crossways in the cart. Then, at a nod from Warner, he climbed up and the cart started slowly south, winding cautiously in and out among the bushes.

When they had driven a little distance, the men in the car across the brook caught sight of them; the driver left his wheel and sprang out; and from either door of the tonneau the three other men followed, revolvers lifted. There was no shouting; not a word spoken; not a sound except the hard, dry crack of the pistols.

"I don't know," said Warner coolly, "whether this horse will stand our fire, but if they cross the stream we'll have to begin shooting… We'd better begin now anyway, I think." He drew rein, turned in his seat, and fired two shots in quick succession. The horse started, and, instantly checked, stood trembling but behaving well enough.

Another shot from Halkett brought the running men to a halt. Warner drove on immediately; three of the men started to follow on a run, but half a dozen rapid shots brought them to a dead stop again. And again the dogcart jolted slowly forward.

One of the men made a furious gesture, turned, and ran back to the mud-stalled car; two of the others followed to aid him to extricate the machine; the fourth man, skulking along the stream,

continued to advance as the dogcart drove on.

Warner, driving carefully, shoved with his foot a box of clips toward the dashboard; Halkett reloaded both automatics. Presently the cart turned east, descending the hard slope toward the stream again; and the man who had followed them along the swampy brook immediately opened fire.

Halkett and Warner sprang out; the former shouldered the planks and ran forward; the latter, holding his nervous horse by the head, fired at the man among the reeds as he advanced toward the stream.

It seemed odd that so many bullets could fly and hit nothing; Halkett heard them whining over his head; the horse heard them too and threatened to become unmanageable. Far up the stream the three other men were laboring frantically to disengage the grey automobile; the man across the creek, routed out of the reeds by the stream of bullets directed at him, was running now to get out of range. Evidently his automatic was empty, for it merely swung in his hand as he ran.

But what occupied Warner was the course the man was taking, straight for the lower gate in the hedge.

"Jump in!" he called to Halkett. "We can't wait for the other planks!" The Englishman swung up beside him; the whip whistled and the horse, now thoroughly frightened, bounded forward down the slope and took the improvised bridge at a single leap. For one moment it looked like a general smash, but the cart stood it, and, after a perilous second, righted itself.

Straight at the closed gate drove Warner, whipping his horse into a dead run; crashed through the flimsy pickets, slashed mercilessly with his whip at the man who pluckily stripped off his coat and strove to make the horse swerve into the hedge, as a toreador waves his cloak at a charging bull.

Halkett could have shot the man; but he merely turned his weapon on him as they dashed out into the highroad once more, and tore away due south through the rose and golden glory of the sunset.

The horse ran a flat mile before Warner chose to ease him down; the summer wind whistled in their ears; the last glow faded from the purpling zenith; the crimson streak on the river surface, which had run parallel on their left like level and jagged lightning, glimmered to a pallid ochre tint; and the flying mist of trees and bushes which had fled past like an endless rush of phantoms now took shape and substance once more above the rising veil of river mist.

Warner's tense features were flushed with excitement. As he gradually eased in his horse he was smiling.

"Well, what do you know about this performance of ours, Halkett?" he inquired rather breathlessly. "Can you beat it in the movies?"

"I'm wondering what I've let you in for," said the Englishman very seriously.

"I'll tell you," laughed Warner; "you've let me in for a last glimpse of my youth – the days when everything went and every

chance for mischief was gratefully seized – the days when I was a subject of the only real democracy on earth – the Latin Quarter – the days that dawn no more, Halkett. This is the last gleam from their afterglow. *Nosce tempus*! But the sun has set at last, Halkett, and the last haymaker is going home."

"It would not have been very amusing if one of those bullets had knocked you off your seat," remarked Halkett.

"But they didn't, old chap!" returned Warner heartily. "It was a good mix-up – exciting, harmless, and beneficial. I feel years younger. Respectability is a good, warm coat for the winter of life; but one feels its weight in Indian summer."

Halkett smiled but shook his head:

"No good hunting trouble. You've only to turn around any time to find it sniffing in your tracks."

"You don't understand. For years I've worked very steadily, very seriously. I've painted, studied, read; I've made a living by selling some pictures, by royalties on the reproduction of pictures, by teaching a summer class of girls. After a while, you know, one goes stale with respectability. I went out to the East and saw the Balkan fighting. It helped some. I made some sketches last year in Mexico. That helped.

"But there's an exhilaration about lawbreaking – or in aiding and abetting a lawbreaker – that has the rest beaten to a batter. Today's misdeeds mean a new lease of life to me, Halkett."

The Englishman laughed. He was still cradling the two automatics on his knees; now, with a careless glance behind him,

he leaned forward and replaced them in their respective holsters.

"For a rather celebrated and weighty member of the social structure," he remarked, "there is a good deal of the boy left in you."

"When that dies in a man," returned Warner lightly, "creative and constructive work end. The child who built with blocks, the youth who built airier castles, is truly dead. And so is the man he has become."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it. The same intellectual and physical restlessness drives one to create and construct, which, as a boy, drove one into active and constructive mischief. When the day dawns wherein creating no longer appeals to me, then I am old indeed, Halkett, and the overcoat of respectability will suit me the year round… I'm very glad that I have found it oppressive this July day. By the way, what day does it happen to be?"

Halkett said:

"It happens to be the last day of July. I have an idea that several billion other people are destined to remember these last few days of July, 1914, as long as they live."

"Why?" inquired the American curiously.

"Because, within these last few days, Austria has declared war on Servia, Russia has already ordered partial mobilization, Germany has sent her an ultimatum, and will back it up tomorrow."

"What! How do you know?"

"You don't mean to ask me that, do you?" said Halkett pleasantly.

"No, of course not – " Warner gazed straight ahead of him as he drove; his altered features had become gravely expressionless. After a moment he said:

"I can't comprehend it. Servia had agreed to everything demanded – except that one item which she offered to arbitrate. I can't understand it."

Halkett said calmly:

"It is not difficult to understand. A telegram has been suppressed – the only telegram which could now prevent war." He removed his straw hat, took from the lining a strip of semi-transparent paper, and read aloud the minute handwriting:

"The German government has published several telegrams which the Emperor of Russia exchanged with Emperor William. Among these telegrams, nevertheless, is one which was not published – a dispatch from His Russian Majesty, dated July 29, 1914, containing a proposition to submit the Austro-Servian conflict to The Hague Tribunal.

"This has an appearance of a desire in Germany to pass over in silence the attempt to prevent the approaching collision. In view of this, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is authorized to publish the telegram mentioned, of which this is the text:

"'Thanks for your conciliatory and friendly telegram. Inasmuch as the official message presented today by your ambassador to my minister was conveyed in a very different tone,

I beg you to explain this divergency. It would be right to give over the Austro-Servian problem to The Hague Conference. I trust in your wisdom and friendship.'"

"Where did you get that?" asked Warner bluntly.

"This morning at the Boule d'Argent. A friend was kind enough to leave it for me in a note," he added blandly.

"Do you believe it to be authentic?"

"Unfortunately, I can not question its truth."

"You think that the German government – "

"Without any doubt at all, Warner. For her The Day is about to dawn at last. Her Joshua has halted the course of the sun long enough to suit himself. It is scheduled to rise tomorrow."

"Do you mean war?"

"I do."

"Where?"

"Well, here, in France – to mention one place."

"In *France*!"

"Surely, *surely*!"

"Invasion?"

"Exactly."

"From which way?"

Halkett shrugged:

"Does anybody now believe it will come by way of the Barrier Forts? The human race never has been partial to cross-country traveling; only ants prefer it."

"You think it will come by the flank – through Belgium?"

"Ask yourself, Warner. Is there an easier way for it to come?"

"But the treaties?"

"*Nulla salus bello; necessitas no habet legem.*"

"Nothing dishonorable is ever necessary."

"Ah! If nations could only agree upon the definition of that word 'honor'! There'd be fewer wars, my friend."

"You think, if France follows Russia's example and mobilizes, that Germany will strike through Belgium?"

"I'm sure of it."

"What about England, then?" asked Warner bluntly.

But Halkett remained silent; and he did not repeat the question.

"After all," he said, presently, "this entire business is incredible. Diplomacy will find a way out of it." And, after a moment's silence: "You don't think so?"

"No."

Presently Halkett turned and looked back through the gathering dusk.

"I wonder," he said, "whether they'll get their car out tonight?"

"They'll have to go back to Ausone for aid," said Warner.

"Do you still mean to put me up at Saïs?"

"Certainly. You don't expect your friends back there to assault the inn, do you?"

"No," said Halkett, laughing. "They don't do things that way just yet."

Warner snapped his whip, caught the curling lash, let it free,

twirled it, and, snapped it again, whistling cheerfully a gay air from his student days – a tune he had not thought of before in years.

"I believe," he said, frankly hopeful, "that you and I are going to have another little party with those fellows before this matter is ended."

"I'm sure of it," said Halkett quietly.

A few moments later Warner, still whistling his joyous air, pointed toward a cluster of tiny lights far ahead in the dark valley.

"Saïs," he said; and resumed his song blithely:

> "Gai, gai, mariez-vous!
> C'est un usage
> Fort sage.
> Gai, gai, mariez-vous,
> Le mariage est si doux! – "

"Like a bird it is!" he added ironically.

"By the way, you're *not* married, are you?" inquired Halkett uneasily.

"Oh, Lord! No! Why the unmerited suspicion?"

"Nothing much. I just thought that after getting you into this scrape I shouldn't dare face your wife."

Then they both laughed heartily. They were already on excellent terms. Already acquaintance was becoming an unembarrassed friendship.

Warner flourished his whip and continued to laugh:

"I have no serious use for women. To me the normal and healthy woman is as naïve as the domestic and blameless cat, whose first ambition is for a mate, whose second is to be permanently and agreeably protected, and whose ultimate aim is to acquire a warm basket by the fireside and fill it full of kittens! … No; I'm not married. Don't worry, Halkett."

He whistled another bar of his lively song:

"Women? Ha! By the way, I've a bunch of them here in Saïs, all painting away like the devil and all, no doubt laying plans for that fireside basket. It's the only thing a woman ever really thinks about, no matter what else she pretends to be busy with. I suppose it's natural; also, it's natural for some men to shy wide of such things. I'm one of those men. So, Halkett, as long as you live, you need never be afraid of offending any wife of mine!"

"Your sentiments," said Halkett, mockingly serious, "merely reveal another bond between us. I thank God frequently that I am a bachelor."

"Good," said Warner with emphasis. And he chanted gayly, as he drove, "Gai, gai, marions-nous – " in a very agreeable baritone voice, while the lights of Saïs grew nearer and brighter among the trees below.

"I never saw a girl worth the loss of my liberty," he remarked. "Did you, Halkett? And," he continued, "to be tied up to a mentally deficient appendage with only inferior intellectual resources, and no business or professional occupation – to be tied fast to something that sits about to be entertained, and that does

nothing except nourish itself and clothe itself, and have babies! – It's unthinkable, isn't it?"

"It's pretty awful… Of course if a woman came along who combined looks and intellect and professional self-sufficiency – "

"You don't find them combined. Take a slant at my class. That's the only sort who even pretend to anything except vacuous idleness. There are no Portias, Halkett. There never were. If there were, I'd take a chance myself, I think. But a man who marries the young girl of today has on his hands an utterly useless incubus. No wonder he sometimes makes experiments elsewhere. No wonder he becomes a rainbow chaser. But he's like a caged squirrel in a wheel; the more he runs around looking for consolation the less progress he makes.

"No, Halkett, this whole marriage business is a pitiable fizzle. Until both parties to a marriage contract are financially independent, intellectually self-sufficient, and properly equipped to earn their own livings by a business or a trade or a profession – and until, if a mistake has been made, escape from an ignoble partnership is made legally easy – marriage will remain the sickly, sentimental, pious fraud which a combination of ignorance, superstition, custom, and orthodoxy have made it.

"I'm rather eloquent on marriage, don't you think so?"

"Superbly!" said Halkett, laughing. "But, do you know, Warner, your very eloquence betrays the fact that you have thought as much about it as the unfortunate sex you have so eloquently indicted."

"What's that?" demanded Warner wrathfully.

"I'm sorry to say it, but you are exactly the sort of man to fall with a tremendous flop."

"If ever I fall – "

"You fell temporarily this afternoon."

"With that painted, grey-eyed – "

"Certainly, with the girl Philippa. Come, old chap, you were out with her a long while! What did you two talk about? Love?"

"No, you idiot – "

"You didn't even mention the word 'love'? Be honest, old chap!"

Warner began to speak, checked himself.

"Didn't you or she even mention the subject?" persisted Halkett with malicious delight.

But Warner was too angry to speak, and the Englishman's laughter rang out boyishly under the stars. To look at them one would scarcely believe they had been a target for bullets within the hour.

"You don't suppose," began Warner, "that – "

"No, no!" cried Halkett. " – Not with that girl. I'm merely proving my point. You're too eloquent concerning women not to have spent a good deal of time in speculating about them. You even speculated concerning Philippa. The man who mourns the scarcity of Portias wouldn't be likely to care for one if he met her. You're just the man to fall in love with everything you denounce in a girl. And I have no doubt I shall live to witness that sorrowful

spectacle."

Warner had to laugh.

"You are rather a terrifying psychologist," he said. "You almost make me believe I have a streak of romance in me."

"Oh, we all have that, Warner. We call it by other names – cleverness, logic, astuteness, intelligence – but we all have it in us, and it is revealed in every man who marries a woman for love… Believe me, no normal man ever lived who was not, at some brief moment in his life, in love with some woman. Maybe he ignored it and it never came again; maybe he strangled it and went on about more serious business; maybe it died a natural but early death. But once, before he died, he must have had a faint, brief glimpse of it. And that was the naissance of the latent germ of romance in him – ephemeral, perhaps, but inevitably to be born before it died."

Warner waved his whip and snapped it maliciously:

"So you have been in love, have you?"

"Why? Because I, also, am suspiciously eloquent?"

"That's the reason – according to you."

Halkett smiled slightly.

"Perhaps I have been," he said… "Hello! Is this your inn?" as they drew up before the lighted windows of a two-story building standing close to the left-hand edge of the highway, under the stars.

"Here we are at the Golden Peach," nodded Warner, as the door opened and a smiling peasant lad came out with a: "Bon

soir, Monsieur Warner! Bon soir, messieurs!" And he took the horse's head while they descended.

That night, lying awake on his bed in the Inn of the Golden Peach, Halkett heard the heavy rush of a southbound automobile passing under his window with the speed of an express train.

And he wondered whether the spongy morass by the little brook still held the long, grey touring car imprisoned.

He got up, went to his window and leaned out. Far away down the road the tail lamps of the machine twinkled, dwindled to sparks, and were engulfed in the invisible.

"More trouble south of me," he thought. But he returned to his bed and lay there, tranquil in the knowledge that when he started south alone on the morrow the envelope would not be on his person.

After a while he rose again, walked to the door connecting his room with Warner's, and opened it cautiously.

"I'm awake," said Warner in a low voice.

"Did you hear that car?"

"Yes. Was it the one that chased us?"

"I only guess so. Listen, Warner! When I go south tomorrow, what are you going to do with that envelope until I send a man back for it?"

"I've thought it all out, old chap. I shall take one of my new canvases, lay the envelope on it, cover envelope and canvas with a quarter of an inch of Chinese White, and when the enamel is dry I shall paint on it. By the way, did you do your telephoning

to your satisfaction?"

"Entirely, thank you."

"You got your man?"

"I did," said Halkett. "He's on his way here now. Good night. I'll sleep like a fox, old chap!"

"Good night," said Warner cheerily, enamored with his invention for the safety of the envelope, as well as with the entire adventure.

That night, while they both slept, far away southward, on a lonely road in the Vosges, the car which had rushed by under their windows was now drawn up on the edge of the road.

Four men sat in it, waiting.

Just as dawn broke, what they awaited came up out of the south – a far, faint rattle announced it, growing rapidly louder; and a motor cyclist, riding without lights, shot out of the grey obscurity, trailing a comet's tail of dust.

Head-on he came, like a streak, caught sight suddenly of the motionless car and of four men standing up in it, ducked and flattened out over his handlebars as four revolvers poured forth streams of fire.

Motor cycle and rider swerved into the ditch with a crash; the latter, swaying wide in his saddle, was hurled a hundred feet further through the air, landing among the wild flowers on the bank above.

He was the man to whom Halkett had telephoned.

He seemed to be very young – an Englishman – with blood

on his fair hair, and his blue eyes partly open.

They searched him thoroughly; and when they could find nothing more they lifted him between two of them; two others carried the wrecked motor cycle out across the fields toward the slope of a wooded mountain.

After ten minutes or so, two of the men returned to the car, drew a couple of short, intrenching spades from the tool box, and went away again across the fields toward the misty woods.

A throstle in a thorn bush had been singing all the while.

CHAPTER V

Halkett had not slept well; all night long in the garden under his window the nightingales had been very noisy. When he slept, sinister dreams had assailed him; cocks crowed at sunrise, cowbells tinkled, outside his drawn blinds a refreshed and garrulous world was awakening; and the happy tumult awoke him, too.

He was bathed, shaved, and dressed, and downstairs before Warner awoke at all; and he began to rove about the place which, by daylight, did not look at all like what he had imagined it to be the night before.

The Inn of the Golden Peach was one of those cream-tinted stucco houses built into and around a series of haphazard garden walls which inclosed flower and fruit gardens, cow-barns and stables. Its roof and wall copings were covered with red tiles, weather-faded to a salmon tint; two incredible climbing rosebushes nearly covered the front with delicate, salmon-pink blossoms, and, in the rear, flowers bloomed along stone-edged borders – masses of white clove pinks, rockets, poppies, heliotrope, reseda, portulaca, and pansies – a careless riot of color, apparently, yet set with that instinctive good taste which seldom fails in France and is common alike to aristocrat and peasant.

Beyond the strawberry beds were fruit trees, peach, cherry,

plum, and apricot – the cherries hanging ripe and deeply crimson among dark green leaves, the apricots already golden, peaches and plums delicately painted with a bloom which promised approaching maturity.

Everywhere the grass grew thick and intensely green, though it was not very neatly kept; water ran out of a stone trough and made a dancing little rivulet over a bed of artificially set stones among which grew ferns. Beyond stood a trellised summerhouse, with iron tables and chairs painted green.

On the edge of the watering trough, Halkett seated himself in the sun. An immaculate tiger cat sat on the garden walk a few paces away, polishing her countenance with the velvet side of one forepaw, and occasionally polishing the paw with a delicate pink tongue.

Once or twice she looked at Halkett without any apparent interest; now and then she glanced up with more interest at the side of the house where, under the kitchen door, in a big basket-cage, a jay hopped about, making a scuffling noise among his cracked maize and rye straw.

However, the cat proved entirely susceptible to flattery, responded graciously to polite advances, and presently relapsed into a purring doze on his knee.

It was very still in the garden, too early even for butterflies to be abroad. The kitchen door remained closed; smoke had just begun to rise from one chimney.

In the peaceful silence nothing stirred; there was no breeze,

no sound save the trickle of water among fern fronds.

Then, from nowhere apparently, into this golden tranquillity came a nun – no, not a nun, but one of those Grey Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul, who have "for their monastery the houses of the sick, for a cell a hired room, for a cloister the city streets, for a veil modesty."

In her white *cornette*, or pointed coiffe, with its starched wings, her snowy collarette, wide sleeves, grey apron, and grey-blue habit, she became instantly the medieval incarnation which vitalized the old garden and the ancient wall, so that the centuries they had witnessed were born again there where their spirit had returned, clothed in the costume which they had known so well.

The *soeur de charité* had not seen Halkett; she passed lightly, swiftly, along the flowering borders with scissors and ozier basket, bending here to gather the white clove pinks, kneeling there to snip off pansies.

And it was only when the grey cat leaped from Halkett's knees and advanced toward the Sister of Charity with a little mew of recognition that she turned, still kneeling, caught sight of Halkett, and remained looking at him, one delicate white hand resting on the purring cat.

Halkett was on his feet, his hat under his arm, now, and he bade her good-morning with that pleasant deference which marks such men immediately for what they are.

She smiled faintly from the transparent shadow of her white *cornette*.

"Flowers are all so lovely," she said, "it is never easy for me to choose. They are for my school, you know?" – with a slight rising inflection. But evidently this young man did not know, so she added, "I am Sister Eila," and smiled again, when it was apparent that he had never heard of Sister Eila.

"I am English," he said, " – traveling through France on business. I arrived last night to visit my friend, Mr. Warner. My name is Halkett."

She nodded and snipped a few more pansies.

"May I help you, Sister? If you don't mind telling me what flowers you desire – "

"Merci, Monsieur. Pansies, if you please. The children see odd little faces in their petals, and it amuses them."

Down on his knees beside the border, the grey cat seated between them, Halkett picked pansies and laid them in rows in her ozier basket.

"Of course," he said, "your school is a charity school."

"For the poor, of course. My children are those of the quarrymen."

"You do not teach them alone?"

"Oh, no. Sister Félicité teaches with me. And then, of course, we are together when, during the vacation, hospital service is required of us."

"Is there a quarry hospital?"

"Yes, Monsieur. It is more like an ambulance where first aid is given. The hospital at Ausone takes our sick." Still kneeling,

she looked up at the slender fruit trees beyond, and the sunlight fell full on the most exquisite young face that Halkett had ever seen. Whether it was her unexpected beauty that gave him a little shock, or the sudden idea that in her features there was a haunting resemblance to somebody he had seen, perhaps met, he did not know.

Sometimes in the first glimpse of a face we recognize the living substance of her to whom we have aspired, and of whom we have dreamed. But she has never existed except in the heart which created her until we unconsciously endow another with all we dreamed she was.

He went on gathering flowers to fill her basket.

"I wonder," she said musingly, "whether any of those apricots are ripe. One of my children is convalescent, and she really needs a little fresh fruit."

So Halkett rose, threaded his way through the flowers, and looked carefully among the branches for a ripe apricot. He found two, and Sister Eila laid them together in the corner of her basket, which was now full.

He walked with her to the garden door, which was set solidly under an arch in the wall. There she looked up, smiling, as she said in English:

"Is not our country of Saïs very lovely, Mr. Halkett?"

"Yes, indeed, it is," he replied, also smiling in his surprise. "But, Sister Eila, you are English, are you not?"

"Irish – but brought up in France." … Her face grew graver;

she said very quietly: "Is it true there is any danger of war? The children are talking; it is evident that the quarrymen must be discussing such things among themselves. I thought I'd ask you – "

"I'm afraid," he said, "that there is some slight chance of war, Sister."

"Here in France?"

"Yes – here."

"It is Germany, of course?"

"Yes, the menace comes from – " he cast a quick glance toward the east, " – from over there… Perhaps diplomacy may regulate the affair. It is always best to hope."

"Yes, it is best always – to hope," she said serenely… "Thank you, Mr. Halkett. Mr. Warner is a friend of mine. Perhaps you may have time to visit our school with him."

"I'll come," said Halkett.

She smiled and nodded; he opened the heavy green door for her, and Sister Eila went out of the golden world of legend, leaving the flowers and young trees very still behind her.

CHAPTER VI

Warner discovered him there in the garden, seated once more on the stone trough, the grey cat dozing on his knees.

"Hello, old chap!" he said cheerfully. "Did you sleep?"

Halkett gave him a pleasant, absent-minded glance:

"Not very well, thanks."

"Nor I. Those damn nightingales kept me awake. Has your man arrived?"

"Not yet. I don't quite understand why."

Warner sauntered up and caressed the cat.

"Well, Ariadne, how goes it with you?" he inquired, gently rubbing her dainty ears, an attention enthusiastically appreciated, judging by the increased purring.

"Ariadne, eh?" inquired Halkett.

"Yes – her lover forsook her – although she doesn't seem to mind as much as the original lady did. No doubt she knows there's a Bacchus somewhere on his way to console her."

The other nodded in his pleasant, absent-minded fashion. After a moment he said:

"I've been talking to a Sister of Charity here in the garden."

"Sister Félicité?"

"No; Sister Eila."

"Isn't she the prettiest thing!" exclaimed Warner. "And she's as good as she is beautiful. We're excellent friends, Sister Eila

and I. I'll take you over to her school after breakfast."

"It's the Grey Sisterhood, isn't it?"

"St. Vincent de Paul's Filles de la Charité; not the Grey Nuns, you know."

"I supposed not. Of course these nuns are not cloistered."

"They are not even nuns. They don't take perpetual vows."

Halkett looked up quickly.

"What!" he demanded.

"No. The vows of these Sisters of Charity are simple vows. They renew them annually. Still, it is a strict order. Their novitiate is five years' probation."

"Oh! I supposed – " He remained silent, his thoughtful gaze fixed on space.

"Yes, our brave gentle Sisters of Charity remain probationers for five years, and then every year they renew their vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. The annual vows are taken some time in March, I believe. They have no cloister, you know, other than a room in some poor street near the school or hospital where they work. Did you ever hear the wonderful story of their Order?"

"No."

So Warner sketched for him the stainless history of a true saint, and of the Filles de St. Vincent de Paul through the centuries of their existence; and Halkett listened unstirring, his handsome head bent, his hand resting motionless on Ariadne's head.

A few minutes later a fresh-faced peasant girl, in scarlet bodice and velvet-slashed black skirts, came out into the garden bearing a tray with newly baked rolls, new butter, and café-au-lait for two. She placed it on the iron table in the little summerhouse, curtseyed to the two young men, exchanged a gay greeting with Warner, and trotted off again in her *chaussons*– the feminine, wholesome, and admirable symbol of all that is fascinating in the daughters of France.

Halkett placed Ariadne on the grass, rose, and followed Warner to the arbor; Ariadne tagged after them, making gentle but pleased remarks. There was an extra saucer, which Warner filled with milk and set before the cat.

"You know," he said to Halkett, "I like to eat by myself – or with some man. So I have my meals served out here, or in the tap room when it rains. The Harem feeds itself in the dining-room – "

"The *what*?"

"My class, I mean. An irreverent friend of mine in Paris dubbed it 'the Harem,' and the title stuck – partly, I suppose, because of its outrageous absurdity, partly because it's a terse and convenient title."

"*They* don't call it that, do they?"

"I should say not! And I hope they don't know that others do. Anyway, the Harem dawdles over its meals and talks art talk at the long table where Madame Arlon – the Patronne – presides. You'll have to meet them."

"Do you criticise your – Harem – this morning?" inquired Halkett, laughing.

"Yes; I give them their daily pabulum. Do you want to come about with me and see how it's done? After the distribution of pap I usually pitch my own umbrella somewhere away from their vicinity and make an hour's sketch. After that I paint seriously for the remainder of the day. But I'll take you over to Sister Eila's school this morning if you like." He fished out a black caporal cigarette and scratched a match.

Halkett, his cigarette already lighted, lounged sideways on the green iron chair, his preoccupied gaze fixed on Ariadne.

"Annual vows," he said, "mean, of course, that a Sister renews such vows voluntarily every year; does it not, Warner?"

"Yes."

"They usually do renew their vows, I suppose."

"Almost always, I believe."

"But – a Sister of Charity *could* return to the – the world, if she so desired?"

"It could be done, but it seldom is, I understand. The order is an admirable one; a very wonderful order, Halkett. They are careful about admitting their novices, but what they regard as qualifications might not be so considered in a cloistered order like the Ursalines. The novitiate is five years, I believe; except for the head of the order in Paris, no grades and no ranks exist; all Sisters are alike and on the same level." He smiled. "If anything could ever convert me to Catholicism, I think it might be this

order and the man who founded it, Saint Vincent de Paul, wisest and best of all who have ever tried to follow Christ."

Ariadne had evidently centered her gentle affections upon the new Englishman; she trotted at his heels as he sauntered about in the garden; she showed off for his benefit, playfully patting a grasshopper into flight, frisking up trees only to cling for a moment, ears flattened, and slide back to earth again; leaping high after lazy white butterflies which hovered over the heliotrope, but always returning to tag after Halkett where he roamed about, a burnt-out cigarette between his fingers, his eyes dreaming, lost in speculations beyond the ken of any cat.

The Harem came trooping into the garden, presently, shepherded by Warner. They all carried full field kit – folding easels, stools, and umbrellas slung upon their several and feminine backs; a pair of clamped canvases in one hand, color-box in the other.

Halkett was presented to them all. There was Miss Alameda Golden, from California, large, brightly colored, and breezy; there was Miss Mary Davis, mouse-tinted, low-voiced, who originated in Brooklyn; there was Miss Jane Post, of Chicago, restlessly intense and intellectually curious concerning all mundane phenomena, from the origin of café-au-lait to the origin of species; and there was Miss Nancy Lane, of New York, a dark-eyed opportunist and an observer of man – sometimes individually, always collectively. And there was Miss Peggy Brooks, cosmopolitan, sister of Madame de Moidrey who lived

in a big house among the hills across the meadows – the Château des Oiseaux, prettily named because the protection and encouragement of little birds had been the immemorial custom of its lordly proprietors.

And so the Harem, fully equipped to wrestle with the giant, Art, filed out of the quiet garden and across the meadows by the little river Récollette, where were haystacks, freshly erected and fragrant, which very unusual subject they had unanimously chosen for their morning's crime.

To perpetrate it upon canvas they pitched their white umbrellas, tripod easels, and sketching stools; then each maiden, taking a determined grip upon her charcoal, squinted, so to speak, in chorus at the hapless haystacks. And the giant, Art, trembled in the seclusion of the *ewigkeit*.

Warner regarded them gloomily; Halkett, who had disinterred a pipe from his pockets, stood silently beside him, loading it.

"They'll paint this morning, and after luncheon," said Warner. "After dinner they all get into an omnibus and drive to Ausone to remain overnight, and spend tomorrow in street sketching. I insist on their doing this once every month. When they return with their sketches, I give them a general criticism."

"Will these young ladies ever really amount to anything?" inquired Halkett.

"Probably never. Europe, the British Isles, and the United States are dotted all over with similar and feminine groups attempting haystacks. The sum-total of physical energy thus

expended must be enormous – like the horsepower represented by Niagara. But it creates no ripple upon the intellectual serenity of the thinking world. God alone knows why women paint haystacks. I do my best to switch them toward other phenomena."

The rural postman on his bicycle, wearing *képi* and blue blouse, came pedaling along the highway. When he saw Warner he saluted and got off his wheel.

"Letters, Grandin?"

"Two, Monsieur Warner."

Warner took them.

"Eh, bien?" he inquired, lowering his voice; "et la guerre?"

"Monsieur Warner, the affair is becoming very serious."

"What is the talk in Ausone?"

"People are calm – too calm. A little noise, now, a little gesticulation, and the affair would seem less ominous to me – like the Algeciras matter and the Schnaeble incident before that – Monsieur may remember?"

"I know. It is like the hush before a tempest. The world is too still, the sunlight too perfect."

"There seems to me," said the little postman, "a curious unreality about yesterday and today – something in the cloudless peace overhead that troubles men."

Being no more and no less poet than are all French peasants, this analysis sufficed him. He touched his képi; the young men lifted their hats, and the postman pedaled away down the spotless military road.

Warner glanced at the envelope in his hand; Halkett looked at it, too. It was addressed in red ink.

"It's for me, old chap," said the Englishman.

The other glanced up, surprised.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite – if you don't mind trusting me."

Warner laughed and handed him the letter.

"It's addressed very plainly to me," he said. "You've got your nerve with you, Halkett."

"I have to keep it about me, old chap."

"No doubt. And still I don't see – "

"It's very simple. I sent two telephone messages last night. One letter should have arrived. It has not! The man who wrote this letter must have gone miles last night on a motor cycle to mail it so that your little postman should hand it to me this morning – "

"Intriguer!" interrupted Warner, still laughing. "He handed it to *me*! I see you're going to get me in Dutch before I'm rid of you."

"I don't comprehend your Yankee slang," retorted Halkett with a slight grin, "so if you don't mind I'll sit here on the grass and read my letter. Go on and criticize your Harem. But before you go, lend me a pencil. They stole even my pencil in the Cabaret de Biribi."

Warner, amused, handed him a pencil and a pad, and strolled away toward the industrious Harem to see what they might be perpetrating.

Halkett seated himself on the grass where, if he chose to glance up, he had a clear view all about him. Then he opened his letter.

It was rather an odd sort of letter. It began:

DEAR GREEN:

A red wagon, red seat, orange rumble, red mudguards, blue steering-wheel, red bumpers, blue wheels, red engines, red varnish, red open body, red machinery, red all over, in fact, except where it isn't – is for sale.

So much of this somewhat extraordinary letter Halkett very carefully and slowly perused; then, still studying this first paragraph intently, he wrote down on his pad the following letters in the following sequence, numbering each letter underneath:

R O Y G B I V S W A1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

The letters represented, up to and including the letter V, the colors of the solar spectrum in their proper sequence: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. The letter S, which followed the letter V, stood for *schwarz*, which in German means black. The letter W stood for weiss, white; the letter A for *argent*. Every letter, therefore, represented some color or metallic luster; and these, in turn, represented numbers.

And now Halkett took the opening salutation in the first paragraph of his letter – "Dear Green." The color green being numbered 4, he found that the fourth letter in the word "dear" was the letter R. This he wrote down on his pad.

Then he took the next few words: "A red wagon, red seat,

orange rumble, red – " etc.

The first and only letter in the word "A" he wrote down. The next word after "wagon" was "red." The color red indicated the figure 1. So he next wrote down the first letter of the word "wagon," which is W.

Then came the word "seat." The word "orange" followed it. The color orange indicated number 2 in the spectrum sequence. So he found that in the word "seat" the letter E was the second letter. This he wrote.

Very carefully and methodically he proceeded in this manner with the first paragraph of the letter, as far as the words "all over," but not including them or any of the words in the first paragraph which followed them.

He had, therefore, for his first paragraph, this sequence of letters:

RAWERUSEWEVOM.

Beginning with the last letter, M, he wrote the letters again, reversing their sequence; and he had:

MOVEWESUREWAR.

These, with commas, he easily separated into four words: "Move," "we," "sure," and "war." Then, again reversing the sequence of the words, he had two distinct sentences of two words each before him:

WAR SURE! WE MOVE!

Always working with the numbered color key before him, taking his letter paragraph by paragraph, he had as a final

remainder the following series of letters:

EDIHUOYERADELIARTTIAWDROWOTDEECORPSIAI

Reversing these, checking off the separate words, and then reversing the entire sequence of words, he had as the complete translation of his letter, including the first paragraph, the following information and admonition:

"War sure. We move. Hide. You are trailed. Wait word to proceed Calais."

"War sure!" That was easily understood. "We move." That meant England was already mobilizing on land and sea. And the remainder became plain enough; he must stay very quietly where he was until further instructions arrived.

He read through his notes and his letter once more, then twisted letter, envelope, and penciled memoranda into a paper spiral, set fire to it with a match, and leisurely lighted his pipe with it.

When the flame of the burning paper scorched his fingers, he laid it carefully on the grass, where it was presently consumed. The charred remnants he ground to dust under his heel as he got up and brushed a spear or two of hay from his clothing.

Then he looked at the Harem, all busily committing felony with brush and colors; and, as he gazed upon them, he politely stifled a yawn.

CHAPTER VII

Warner, conscientious but not hopeful, circulated among the easels of the Harem. Halkett strolled at his heels.

Stopping in front of Alameda Golden's large canvas, which was all splashed with primary and aggressive colors, he gazed, uncomforted, upon what she had wrought there. After a few moments he said very patiently:

"You should not use a larger canvas than I have recommended to the class. Mere size is not necessarily a synonym for distinction, nor does artistic strength depend upon the muscular application of crude paint. A considerable majority of our countrymen comprehend only what is large, gaudy, and garrulous. Bulk and noise only can command their attention. On the other hand, only what is weak, vague, and incoherent appeals to the precious – the incapables and eccentrics among us. But there is a sane and healthy majority: enroll yourself there, Miss Golden!

"Be honest, reticent, and modest. If you have anything to say in paint, say it without self-consciousness, frankly, but not aggressively. Behave on canvas as you would bear yourself in the world at large, with freedom but with dignity, with sincerity governed by that intelligent consideration for truth which permits realism and idealism, both of which are founded upon fact."

Miss Golden pouted:

"But I *see* haystacks this way!" she insisted. "I see them in large and brilliant impressions. To me nothing looks like what it is. Haystacks appear this way to my eyes!"

"My dear child, then paint them that way. But the popular impression will persist that you have painted the battle of Trafalgar."

Miss Golden wriggled on her camp chair.

"Everything," she explained, "is one monstrous, gaudy, and brutal impression to me. I see a million colors in everything and very little shape to anything. I see only cosmic vigor; and I paint it with a punch. Can't you see all those colors in those haystacks? To me they resemble gigantic explosions of glorious color. And really, Mr. Warner, if I am to be true to myself, I must paint them as I see them."

Warner, horribly discouraged, talked sanely to her for a while, then with a pleasant nod he passed to the next easel, remarking to Halkett under his breath:

"It's a case for a pathologist, not for a painter."

And so for an hour he prowled about among the Harem, ministering to neurotics, inspiring the sluggish, calming despair, gently discouraging self-complacency.

"Always," he said, "we must remain students, because there is no such thing as mastery in any art. If ever we believe we have attained mastery, then our progress ceases; and we do not even remain where we are; we retrograde – and swiftly, too.

"The life work of the so-called 'master' is passed only in

solving newer problems. There is no end to the problems, there is an end only to our lives.

"Look at the matter in that way, not as a race toward an attainable goal, nor as an eternally hopeless effort in a treadmill; but as a sane and sure and intelligent progress from one wonder-chamber to a chamber still more wonderful – locked rooms which contain miracles, and which open only when we find the various keys which fit their locks…

"That is all for this morning, young ladies."

He lifted his hat, turned, and strolled away across the meadow, Halkett at his side.

"Some lecture!" he commented with a faint grin.

"It's sound," said Halkett.

"I do the best I can with them. One might suppose I know how to paint, by the way I pitch into those poor girls. Yet, I myself never pick up a brush and face my canvas but terror seizes me, and my own ignorance of all I ought to know scares me almost to death. It's not modesty; I can paint as well as many, better than many. But, oh, the long, long way there is to travel! The stars are very far away, Halkett."

He pitched his easel, secured a canvas, took a freshly-set palette and brushes from his color-box, and, still standing, went rapidly about his business, which was to sketch in an impression of what lay before him.

Halkett, watching him over his shoulder, saw the little river begin to glimmer on the canvas, saw a tender golden light grow

and spread, bathing distant hills; saw the pale azure of an arching sky faintly tinting with reflections the delicate green of herbage still powdered with the morning dew.

"This is merely a note," remarked Warner, painting away leisurely but steadily. "Some day I may pose my models somewhere outdoors under similar weather conditions; and you may see dragoons in their saddles, carbines poised, the sunlight enveloping horses and men – or perhaps a line of infantry advancing in open order with shrapnel exploding in their faces… Death in the summer sunshine is the most terrifying of tragedies… I remember once after Lule Burgas – Never mind, I shan't spoil the peaceful beauty of such a morning.

"War? War *here*! – In this still meadow, bathed in the heavenly fragrance of midsummer! … Well, Halkett, the government of any nation which *attacks* another nation is criminal, and all the arguments of church and state and diplomacy cannot change that hellish fact.

"There is only one right in any combat, only one side in any war. And no reasoning under the sun can invest an aggressor with that right.

"He who first draws and strikes forestalls God's verdict."

Halkett said:

"How about your own wars?"

"Halkett, the United States is the only nation which ever entered a war from purely sentimental reasons. It was so in the Revolution; it was so in 1812, in the War of Secession, in Mexico,

in the Cuban War.

"All our wars have been undertaken in response to armed aggression; all were begun and carried on in defense of purely sentimental principles. I do not say it because I am a Yankee, but our record is pretty clean, so far, in a world which, since our birth, has accused us of ruthless materialism."

He continued to paint for a while in silence; and when his color notes were sufficiently complete for his purpose, and when the Harem had filed before the canvas and had adoringly inspected it, Warner packed up his kit, and, taking the wet canvas, walked with Halkett back to the Golden Peach.

There Halkett was made acquainted with Madame Arlon, the stout, smiling proprietress of the inn, who sturdily refused to believe that war was possible, and who explained why to Halkett with animation while Warner went indoors to deposit his sketches in his studio.

He returned presently, saying that he would take Halkett to Sister Eila's school across the fields; so the two young men lighted their pipes and strolled away together through the sunshine.

Eastward, far afield, the gay aprons and sunbonnets of the Harem still dotted the distance with flecks of color; beyond, the Récollette glimmered, and beyond that hazy hills rolled away southward toward the Vosges country.

Halkett looked soberly into the misty east.

"It won't come from that direction," he said, half to himself.

Warner glanced up, understood, and sauntered on in silence.

"By the way," remarked the Englishman, "I shall stay here tonight."

"I'm very glad," returned Warner cordially.

"So am I, Warner. Ours is an agreeable – acquaintance."

"It amounts to a little more than that, doesn't it?"

"Yes. It's a friendship, I hope."

"I hope so."

After a moment he added laughingly:

"I've fixed up your bally envelope for you."

"How?"

"Covered it with a thick, glossy layer of Chinese white. I put in a dryer. In a day or two I shall make a pretty little picture on it. And nobody on earth could suspect that embedded under the paint and varnish of my canvas your celebrated document reposes."

They took a highway to the left, narrow and tree-shaded.

"When do you get the newspapers here?" inquired Halkett.

"After lunch, usually. The *Petit Journal d'Ausone*arrives then. Nobody bothers with any Paris papers. But I think I shall subscribe, now… There's the school, just ahead."

It was a modern and very plain two-storied building of stone and white stucco, covered with new red tiles. A few youthful vines were beginning to climb gratefully toward the lower window sills; young linden trees shaded it. A hum, like the low, incessant murmur of a hive, warned them as they approached

that the children were reciting in unison; and they halted at the open door.

Inside the big, clean room, the furniture of which was a stove and a score or more of desks, two dozen little girls, neatly but very poorly dressed, stood beside their desks reciting. On a larger desk stood a glass full of flowers which Halkett recognized; and beside this desk, slenderly erect, he saw Sister Eila, facing the children, her white hands linked behind her back.

Seated behind the same desk was another Sister – a buxom one with the bright, clear coloring of a healthy peasant – more brilliant, even, for the white wimple, collarette, and wide-winged headdress which seemed to accent the almost riotous tint of physical health.

The childish singsong presently ceased; Sister Eila turned pensively, took a step or two, lifted her eyes, and beheld Halkett and Warner at the doorway.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Please come in, Messieurs. I have been wondering whether Mr. Warner would bring you before luncheon… Sister Félicité, this is Monsieur Halkett, who so amiably aided me to gather my bouquet this morning."

Sister Félicité became all animation and vigor; she was cordial to Halkett, greeted Warner with the smiling confidence of long acquaintance.

It lacked only a few minutes to noon, and so lessons were suspended, and the children put through one or two drills for Halkett's benefit.

Out in the kitchen a good, nourishing broth was simmering for them, and Sister Eila slipped away during the brief exhibition to prepare twenty-four bowls and spoons and tartines for these ever-hungry little children of the poor, orphaned for the most part, or deserted, or having parents too poor to feed them.

At noon Sister Félicité dismissed the school; and the little girls formed in line very demurely and filed off to the kitchen.

"What a delicious odor!" exclaimed Halkett, nose in the air.

Sister Félicité sniffed the soup.

"We do our best," she said. "The poor little things fatten here, God be praised." And, to Warner, in her vigorous, alert manner: "What is all this talk concerning war? The children prattle about it. They must have heard such gossip among the quarry people."

Warner said:

"It begins to look rather serious, Sister."

"Is it Germany again?"

"I fear so."

Sister Félicité's pink cheeks flushed:

"Is it the noisy boaster who rules those Germans who would bring the sword upon us again? Is there not enough of barbaric glory in his Empire for him and his that he should invade the civilized world to seek for more? It is a vile thing for any man, be he ruler or subject, to add one featherweight to the crushing burden of the world's misery!"

"To declare war is the heaviest of all responsibilities," admitted Warner.

"Is it already declared?"

"No. That is to say, Austria has declared war against Servia, Russia is mobilizing, and Germany has warned her."

"Is that an excuse for anybody to attack France?"

"Russia is mobilizing, Sister," he repeated meaningly.

"What then?"

"France must follow."

"And then?"

Warner shrugged his shoulders.

Sister Eila came out, nodding to Sister Félicité, who usually presided at the lunch hour: and the latter went away with Warner toward the kitchen, still plying the American with questions. Sister Eila bent her head, inhaled the perfume of the flowers on her desk, and then looked up at Halkett.

"Don't you ever lunch?" he asked.

"Yes; I tasted the soup. You lunch at one at the inn."

"I suppose so. What a charming country this is – this little hamlet of Saïs! Such exquisite peace and stillness I have seldom known."

Sister Eila's eyes grew vague; she looked out through the sunny doorway across the fields towards a range of low hills. The quarries were there.

"It is a tranquil country," she said pensively, "but there is misery, too. Life in the quarries is hard, and wages are not high."

"Mr. Warner tells me they are a hard lot, these quarrymen."

"There is intemperance among the quarrymen, and among the

cement workers, too: and there is roughness and violence – and crime, sometimes. But it is a very hard *métier*, Mr. Halkett, and the lime dust blinds and sears and incites a raging thirst. God knows there is some excuse for the drunkenness there. We who are untempted must remain gentle in our judgments."

"I could not imagine Sister Eila judging anybody harshly."

Sister Eila looked up and laughed:

"Oh, Mr. Halkett, I have confessed to impatience too many times to believe that I could ever acquire patience. Only today I scolded our children because they tore down a poster which had been pasted on the public wall at the crossroad. I said to them very severely, 'It is a sin to destroy what others have paid for to advertise their merchandise.'"

"That was a terrible scolding," admitted Halkett, laughing.

"I'll show you the poster," volunteered Sister Eila, going over to her desk. Raising the lid, she picked up and displayed an advertisement.

CHAPTER VIII

Halkett looked curiously at this specimen of a poster which was already very familiar to him. The dead walls of northern and eastern France and Belgium had been plastered with such advertisements for the last year or two, extolling the Savon de Calypso. But what had recently interested Halkett in these soap advertisements was that posters, apparently exactly similar, appeared to differ considerably in detail when examined minutely.

The picture in this advertisement represented, as always, the nymph, Calypso, seated upon the grass, looking out over the sea where the sun shone in a cloudless sky upon a fleet of Grecian ships which were sailing away across the blue waves of the Ægean.

Where details varied was in the number of ships in the fleet, the number and grouping of sails, sea birds flying, of waves, and of clouds – when there were any of the latter – the number of little white or blue or pink blossoms in the grass, the height of the sun above the horizon line and the number and size of its rays.

There was always at least one ship – never more than a dozen; he had counted twenty white blossoms on some posters; varying numbers on others, of white, of blue, or of pink, but never less than three of any one color. Sometimes there were no sea birds.

As for the sun, sometimes it hung well above the ocean, often

its yellow circle dipped into it, and then again only the rays spread fanlike above the horizon line.

And concerning the nymph, her pose and costume did not seem to vary at all in the various poster specimens which he had seen; the wind was always blowing her red hair and white, transparent scarf; she always sat gazing laughingly seaward, one hand resting on the grass, the other clutching a cake of soap to her bosom.

Still examining the sheet of paper, he counted the white flowers scattered over the grass around the seated nymph. There were *ten* of them.

"Sister Eila," he said carelessly, "how many kilometers is it to the next town south of us? I mean by the military road."

"To Rosières-sous-Bois?"

"Yes."

"About ten kilometers by the military road."

He nodded and counted the ships. There were three.

"Is there more than one road which runs to Rosières-sous-Bois?" he asked.

"Yes. One may go by this road, or cross the bridge by the quarries and go by the river road, or there is still a better and shorter highway which runs west of Saïs."

"Then there are *three* main roads to Rosières-sous-Bois?"

"Yes. The road to the west is shorter. It is not more than seven miles that way."

Halkett casually counted the sea gulls. Seven gulls were flying

around one of the ships; thirteen around another.

"And the river road, Sister?" he inquired.

"By the quarry bridge? Oh, that is longer – perhaps twelve or thirteen kilometers."

"I see… Rosières-sous-Bois is not a garrison town?"

"No. There are only a few gendarmes there."

Halkett examined the picture attentively. The sun appeared to be about three hours high above the horizon.

"The nearest military post must be about three hours' journey from here," he ventured.

Sister Eila thought a moment, then nodded:

"Yes, about three hours. You mean the fort above the Pass of the Falcons? That is the nearest."

He counted the rays of the sun. There were three long ones and two short ones.

"I suppose there are three or four battalions garrisoned there," he remarked.

"Three, I think. And a company of engineers and one company of Alpine chasseurs."

All the time, with a detached air, the young Englishman was examining the colored poster, searching it minutely for variations from other posters of the same sort which he had recently investigated.

There remained in his mind little or no doubt that the number and position of the groups of pointed wavelets signified something important; that the number of sails set on the ships,

which varied in every poster, contained further information; that the sky, cloudless in some posters, dotted with clouds in others, was destined to convey topographical particulars to somebody.

These colored advertisements of a soap made in Cologne by Bauermann and Company, and plastered over the landscape of Northern and Eastern Belgium and France, concealed a wealth of secret information for anybody who possessed the key to the messages so clearly and craftily expressed in pictograph and cipher code.

The sinister significance of the sheet in his hand was becoming more apparent every minute. He had made a study of these posters – was just beginning to find them interesting, when he had been ordered to America. Now, all his interest in them returned.

Sister Eila had seated herself at her desk, and, while he was still examining the poster, she continued serenely to correct the pile of inky copybooks.

He watched her for a while, where she bent above the scrawled pages, her pen poised, her lovely face framed in the snowy wimple under the pale shadow of her wide-winged coiffe.

"Sister Eila?"

She turned her head tranquilly.

"You are English, you tell me?"

"Irish." She smiled.

"It's the same. Tell me, have you had enough experience in your world of duty and of unhappiness to know an honest man

when you encounter him?"

Sister Eila laid aside her pen and turned toward him.

"I don't think I understand," she said.

"I mean, could you make up your mind about – well – about such a man as I am – merely by inspecting me and hearing me speak?"

Sister Eila laughed:

"I think I could very easily."

"Have you already done so?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so."

"Do you think I am honest enough to be trusted?"

Sister Eila laughed again, deliciously.

"Yes, I think so," she said.

He remained silent and his face, already grave, grew more serious. Sister Eila's smile faded as she watched him. It was becoming very plain to her that here was a man in trouble.

Silent there together in the cool stillness of the schoolroom, they heard the distant clatter of little feet, the vigorous voice of command from Sister Félicité; and a moment later a double file of chattering children passed in the sunshine outside the window, led toward their noonday playground by Sister Félicité accompanied by Warner.

"What is on your mind, Mr. Halkett?" asked Sister Eila, still watching him.

"If I tell you," he said, "will you ask me no more than I offer to tell you?"

She flushed:

"Naturally, Monsieur – "

"You don't quite understand, Sister. What I have to say I wish you to write down for me in the form of a letter of information to the French Government."

"You wish *me* to write it?"

"Please. And that is what I mean. Naturally, you might ask me why I do not write it myself… Don't ask me, Sister… If you really do trust me."

He turned, met her gaze, saw two clear, sweet eyes unspoiled and unsaddened by the wisdom she had learned in dark and wretched places; saw in them only a little wonder, a faintly questioning surprise.

"What is your answer, Sister?" he asked.

"My answer is – I – I *do* trust you… What am I to write?"

She took a few loose leaves of paper from the desk, and sat looking at him, pen lifted.

He said:

"Write to the chief of the general staff at the Ministry of War in Paris."

And when she had properly addressed the personage in question, he dictated his letter very slowly in English; and Sister Eila, her expressionless young face bent above the letter paper, translated into French as he dictated, and wrote down the exact meaning of every word he uttered:

"Information has come to me that the advertisements of

Bauermann and Company, of Cologne, Prussia, which are posted everywhere throughout Belgium and Northern and Eastern France, conceal military and topographical details concerning the vicinity where these advertisements are displayed.

"Such information could be of use only to a prowling spy or an invading enemy.

"Therefore, acting upon the incomplete information offered me, I deem it my duty to bring this matter to the notice of the Government.

"It would appear that:

"1st. Secret information is contained in the details of the picture which embellishes this advertisement, a sample of which I inclose herewith.

"2nd. These details vary in every poster. Presumably their number, color, groupings, and general distribution constitute a secret code which is calculated to convey information to the enemies of France.

"3rd. In the sample which is inclosed with this letter, the number of ships probably represents the number of highways leading from Saïs to Rosières-sous-Bois; the sea gulls flying above two of the ships give the distance in kilometers; the ten white flowers give the distance by the military road.

"The sun, in the picture, appears to be about three hours high above the horizon; and it is *three hours'* journey from here to the nearest French fortified post, the Pass of the Falcons in the Vosges.

"The rays of the sun are five in number, three long ones and two short ones; and there are *three battalions* of the line guarding the fort at the pass, and *two companies*, one of engineers, one of Alpine infantry.

"My informant, who desires to remain anonymous, further declares it to be his belief that an exhaustive study of this and similar posters would reveal perfectly clear messages in every detail of color, drawing, and letter-press; and that it is his firm conviction that these posters, representing a German firm which manufactures soap, have been placed throughout Belgium and France for the convenience of an invading army.

"Immediate removal of these advertisements seems advisable in the opinion of my informant.

"(Signed), SISTER EILA,

"Of the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul at Saïs."

When she had finished the letter and had unhesitatingly signed it, she lifted her clear eyes to him in silence. Her breath came a trifle unevenly; the tint of excitement grew and waned in her cheeks.

"At least," he said, "you will understand that I am a friend to France."

"Yes, that is evident."

"Will you direct and seal the packet and give it to the postman?"

"Yes."

"And, Sister Eila, if they send gendarmes or other officials to

question you?"

She looked straight into his eyes, deeply, so that her gaze seemed to plunge into the depths of his very soul.

Then, lifting the cross from the rosary at her girdle, she slipped out of her chair and knelt down beside her desk, her young head bent low over the crucifix which she held between the palms of her joined hands.

Halkett, head also lowered, stood motionless.

After a few moments she rose lightly from her knees.

"It is a vow, now," she said. "I have bound myself to silence concerning the source of my information – " her untroubled eyes rested again on his – "because I believe in you, Monsieur."

He started to speak, but seemed to find no word to utter. A bright color mounted to his brow; he turned abruptly from the desk and stepped toward the open door.

And the instant he appeared there, framed by the doorway, a shot rang out, knocking a cloud of stucco and plaster from the wall beside him.

CHAPTER IX

He shrank back flat against the wall, edged along it, and slipped swiftly inside the house. A thick veil of lime dust hung across the open doorway, gilded by the sunlight. Crumbs of plaster and mortar still fell to the schoolroom floor.

Through the heated silence of early afternoon he could hear the distant cries of the children from their playground; there was no other sound; nothing stirred; nobody came.

If Warner had noticed the shot at all, no doubt he supposed it to be the premature report of some piece. To the gaunt, furtive Vosges poacher no close season exists. If it did exist, he would cease to.

Halkett slowly turned his head and saw Sister Eila behind him. She had risen from her chair at the desk; now she came slowly forward, her deep, grey eyes fixed on him. But before she could take another step he laid his hand firmly on her wide, blue sleeve and forced her back into the room.

"Keep away from that door," he said quietly.

"Did somebody try to kill you?" she asked. Her voice was curious, but perfectly calm.

"I think so… Don't show yourself near that door. They might not be able to distinguish their target at such a range."

"They? Who are 'they'?"

"Whoever fired… I must ask you again to please keep out of

range of that doorway – "

"The shot came from the river willows across the fields, did it not?" she interrupted.

"I'm very sure of it. You need not feel any anxiety for the children, Sister; I am going. There'll be no more shots."

"There is a door at the back by the kitchen yard, Mr. Halkett. They will not see you if you leave that way."

He stood thinking for a while; then:

"On your account, and on the children's, I'll have to show myself again when I leave the house, so that there'll be no mistake about my identity. Don't move until after I have gone some distance along the road. And please say to Mr. Warner that I've returned to the inn for luncheon – "

"There is a door in the rear! You must not show yourself – "

"Indeed, I must. Otherwise, they might mistake you or Sister Félicité or one of the children for me – "

"Mr. Halkett!" He had already started.

"Yes?" he replied, halting and glancing back; and found her already at his elbow.

"Why were you shot at?" she asked. "I desire to know."

He looked her straight in the eyes:

"I can't tell you why, Sister."

"You say you are English, and that you are a friend to France. If that is true, then tell me who shot at you! Do you know?"

"In a general way, I suppose I do know."

"Do you not trust a French Sister of Charity sufficiently to

tell her?"

"What man would not trust a daughter of St. Vincent de Paul?" he said pleasantly.

"Then tell me. Perhaps I already guess. Has it to do with your knowledge of German advertisements?"

He was silent.

"You are evidently a British agent." Her deep, grey eyes grew more earnest. "You are *more*!" she said, clasping her hands with sudden conviction. "I suspected it the first time I saw you – "

"Please do not say to anybody what it is that you suspect – "

"You are a British officer!" she exclaimed.

"Sister Eila; you could do me much harm by mentioning to others this belief of yours, or anything concerning this affair. And – do you remember that you once said you trusted me?"

"I said it – yes."

"Do you still have confidence in me?"

Their eyes met steadily.

"Yes," she said. "I believe you to be a friend to France, and to me." A slight flush edged the snowy wimple which framed the lovely oval of her face.

"I *am* your friend; and I am a friend to France – I say as much as that to you. I say it because of what you are, and because – you are *you*. But ask me no more, Sister. For men of my profession there are confessionals as secret and as absolute in authority as those which shrive the soul."

He hesitated, his eyes shifted from her to the fresh flowers

on the desk, which they had both gathered; he reached over and drew a white blossom from the glass.

"May I take it with me?"

She bent her head in silence.

Then he turned to go through the deadly doorway, carrying his flower in his hand; but, as he walked out into the sunshine, Sister Eila stepped swiftly in front of him, turned on the doorstep, screening him with extended arms.

"This is the best way," she said. "They ought to see quite clearly that I am a Sister of Charity, and they won't fire at me – "

But he tried to push her aside and spring past her:

"Stand clear of me, for God's sake!" he said.

"Wait – "

"Sister! Are you insane?"

"*You* must be, Mr. Halkett – "

"Keep away, I tell you – "

"Please don't be rough with me – "

He tried to avoid her, but her strong, young hands had caught both his wrists.

"They won't shoot at a Sister of Charity!" she repeated. " – And I shall not permit them to murder you! Be reasonable! I am not afraid."

She held on to his wrists, keeping always between him and the distant glimmer of the river:

"I shall walk to the road with you this way; don't try to shake me off; I am strong, I warn you!" She was even laughing

now. "Please do not wriggle! Only schoolboys wriggle. Do you suppose I am *afraid*? Since when, Monsieur, have Sisters of Charity taken cover from the enemies of France?"

"This is shameful for me – "

"You behave, as I have said, like a very bad schoolboy, Mr. Halkett – "

He tried vainly to place himself between her and the river, but could not disengage her grasp without hurting her. Then, over his shoulder, he saw three men come out of the river willows.

"You shall not take this risk – " he insisted.

"Please listen – "

"I take no risk worth mentioning. It was you who would have walked out to face their fire – with that smile on your lips and a flower in your hand! Did you think that a Grey Sister would permit that? Soyez convenable, Monsieur. They will not fire while I am walking beside you." She looked over her shoulder. One of the men by the willows was raising a rifle.

They reached the highway at the same moment, and the roadside bank sheltered them. Here she released his arm.

"I beg you to be a little reasonable," she said. "You must leave Saïs at once. Promise me, Mr. Halkett – "

"I cannot."

"Why?"

"Sister, if I am really a soldier, as you suppose me to be, perhaps I have —*orders*– to remain at Saïs."

"Have you?" she asked frankly.

He turned and looked at her:

"Yes, little comrade."

"That is really serious."

"It must not cause you any anxiety. I shall 'wriggle' – as you say – out of this mess when the time comes. I may start tonight."

"For London? Do you wriggle as far as that?"

He said gravely:

"You know more about me now from my own lips than I would admit, even prompted by a firing squad. I trusted you even before you faced death for me on that doorstep a moment ago. *Did you see that man come out of the willows and level his rifle at us?*"

She said tranquilly:

"We daughters of St. Vincent de Paul never heed such things."

"I know you don't; I know what are your traditions. Many a Sister of your Order has fallen under rifle and shell fire on the battlefields of the world; many have died of the pest in hospitals; many have succumbed to exposure. The history of modern war is the history of the Grey Sisters. What you have just done, as a matter of course, is already part of that history. And so – " he looked down at her crucifix and rosary – "and so, Sister, and comrade, I shall tell you what it would not be possible for me to admit to any other living soul in France. Yes; I *am* a British officer on special and secret duty. I left the United States two weeks ago. Trouble began in Holland. I am now on my way to London. Orders came today halting me at Saïs. Enemies of France are annoying me – people who are becoming

more desperate and more determined as the hours pass and the moment approaches swiftly when they can no longer hope to interfere with me. That moment will come when war is declared. It will be declared. I shall be very glad to arrive in England. Now I have told you almost everything, Sister Eila. My honor is in your keeping; my devotion is for my own country, for France – and for you."

"I have made one vow of silence," she said simply. "I shall make another – never to breathe one word of this."

"You need not. Just say to me that you will not speak."

Her lovely face became as solemn as a child's:

"I shall not speak, Mr. Halkett."

"That settles it," he said. "If it lay with me, I'd trust you with every secret in our War Office!" He checked himself, hesitated, then: "Sister Eila, if anything happens to me, go to Mr. Warner and ask him for *that envelope*. There are sure to be British soldiers in France before very long. Give that envelope to some British officer."

After a moment she laughed:

"Englishmen are odd – odd! They are just boys. They are delightful. I shall do what you ask… And there is your inn… Am I tired? *I*? Vous plaisantez, Monsieur! But, Mr. Halkett, what would be the object in your walking back with me? I should only have to walk back here again with you! It would continue *ad infinitum*."

They both laughed.

"When trouble finally comes, and if I am hit, I pray I may lie in your ward," he said gayly.

Her smile faded:

"I shall pray so, too," she said.

"I'd feel like a little boy safe in his own nursery," he added, still smiling.

"I am – happy – to have you think of me in that way." Her smile glimmered anew in her eyes. "I should be a devoted nurse." She made him a friendly little signal of adieu and turned away.

Hat in hand, he stood looking after the grey-blue figure under the snowy headdress.

At the turn of the road she looked back, saw him, still standing there; and again, from the distance, she made him a pretty gesture of caution and of farewell. Then the grassy bank hid her from view.

At the Inn of the Golden Peach, Warner's Harem was already lunching. Through the open windows of the dining-room came a discreet clatter of tableware and crockery, and a breezy, cheery tumult like the chatter in an aviary.

Halkett, not fancying it, went around the house to the quiet garden. Here he wandered to and fro among the trees or stood about aimlessly, looking down at the flower beds where, kneeling beside Sister Eila, he had aided her to fill her ozier basket.

Later Warner found him seated under the arbor with Ariadne on his knee; and a few moments afterward the maid, Linette, served their luncheon.

Neither of the young men was very communicative, but after the dishes and cloth had been removed, and when Halkett, musing over his cigarette and coffee, still exhibited no initiative toward conversation, Warner broke the silence:

"What about that shot?" he asked bluntly.

"What shot?"

"Don't you want to talk about it?"

Halkett glanced up, amused:

"Well, I suppose there was no hiding that bullet hole and the plaster dust from Sister Félicité."

"Of course not. The bullet ripped out the lathing. Who was it fired at the school? Or was it at you they let go?"

"Didn't you ask Sister Eila?"

"I did. She absolutely refused to discuss it, and referred us both to you. It was no accident, was it?"

"No."

"Somebody tried to get *you*?"

"It rather looked that way."

"Our friends in the grey car, of course!" concluded Warner.

"Not necessarily. *They* have other friends who might be equally attentive to me. I don't know who shot at me. There were three of them over by the river."

"Well, Halkett, don't you think you had better remain indoors for a while?"

"I'd better, I suppose." He laughed. "Honestly, I'm sick of being shot at. One of these days they'll hit me, if they're not very

careful."

But Warner did not smile.

"Do you promise to stay indoors?" he insisted.

"I'll see. Perhaps."

"Don't you think it advisable for you to carry some sort of a firearm – one of my automatics, for example?"

"Thanks, old fellow. I think I'll do that, if you can spare a section of your artillery for a day or two."

Warner promptly fished an automatic out of his hip pocket, and Halkett took it and examined it.

"So I'm to do the Wild West business after all," he said gayly. "Right you are, old chap. I know how it's done; I've read about it in your novels. You wait till your enemy takes a drop, then you get the drop!" He laughed at his British joke. And, having no hip pocket, he stowed away the lumpy bluish weapon in a side pocket of his coat.

"Now, don't let me interfere with your daily routine," he continued. "I shall do very well here in the arbor while you lead your Harem toward the Olympian heights."

"Sometimes I feel like pushing 'em off those cliffs," muttered Warner. "All right; I fancy you'll be snug enough in the garden, here with Ariadne, till I return. We shall have the whole house to ourselves after dinner. The Harem migrates to Ausone for overnight to do street sketches tomorrow, and returns the next morning for a general criticism. So if you'll amuse yourself – "

"I shall be quite comfortable, thanks. If anybody climbs the

wall to pot me, we'll turn loose on 'em, this time – won't we, old girl?" – caressing Ariadne, who had returned to his knee.

Half an hour afterward Warner went away in the wake of the Harem; and at the end of the second hour he gave them a final criticism before they started for Ausone.

Much good it did them; but they adored it; they even adored his sarcasms. For the Harem truly worshiped this young man – a fact of which he remained uncomfortably conscious, timidly aware that warier men than he had been landed by maidens less adept than they.

So it was with his usual sense of deep relief that he saluted the Harem, picked up his own kit and canvases, and wandered at hazard through a little poplar grove and out of it on the other edge.

A wild meadow, deep with tasseled grasses and field flowers, stretched away before him, where swallows sailed and soared and skimmed – where blue lupin, *bouton d'or*, meadowsweet, and slender, silvery stems crowned with queen's lace grew tall, and the heliotrope perfume of hidden hawkweed scented every fitful little wind.

But what immediately fixed his attention was a distant figure wading waist-deep amid the grasses – a slim, brilliant shape, which became oddly familiar as it drew nearer, moving forward with light and boyish grace, stirring within him vaguely agreeable recollections.

Then, in spite of her peasant's dress, he recognized her; and

he walked swiftly forward to meet her. The figure out there in the sunshine saw him coming and lifted one arm in distant recognition and salute.

They met in mid-meadow, Warner and the girl Philippa.

Her short skirt and low peasant bodice had faded to a rose-geranium tint; her white chemisette, laced with black, was open wide below the throat. Black velvet straps crossed it on the shoulders and around the cuffs. Her hair was tied with a big black silk bow.

"How in the world did you come to be here?" he asked, not yet releasing the eager, warm little hands so frankly clasped between both of his.

Philippa laughed with sheerest happiness:

"Figurez-vous, Monsieur. I have been punting since early morning; and when I found myself so near to Saïs I was ready to drop with heat and fatigue: 'Mais, n'importe! Allons!' I said to myself. 'Courage, little one! Very soon you shall see Mr. Warner painting a noble picture by the river!' Et puis – " She tightened her clasp on his hands with an adorable laugh, "Nous voici enfin ensemble – tous les deux – vous et moi! Et je suis bien content et bien fatiguée."

"But, Philippa – how in the world do you propose to get back to Ausone tonight?"

She shrugged, looked up as though protesting to the very skies:

"I have this instant arrived, and his first inquiry is concerning my departure! That is not a very friendly welcome."

"Philippa, I *am* glad to see you – "

"It is time you said so – "

"I thought you understood – "

The girl laughed:

"I understand how glad I am to see *you*!" She looked about her in the sunshine, and touched a tall blossom of queen's lace with outstretched fingers.

"How heavenly beautiful is this world of God!" she said with that charming lack of self-consciousness which the skies of France seem to germinate even in aliens. "I am very glad to see you," she repeated abruptly, "and I am awaiting the expression of your sentiments."

"Of course I am glad to see you, Philippa – "

"That makes me quite happy." She smiled on him and then looked curiously at his painting kit. "If you will choose your picture," she added, "I shall sit beside you and watch you at your painting. It will be agreeable. We can converse."

So he chose a ferny spot at the wood's edge, pitched his field easel and camp stool, and opened his color box; and Philippa seated herself cross-legged on the short grass beside him, gathering both slim ankles into her hands.

While he was fussing with his canvas, she sang to herself blithely, radiantly contented, rocking herself to and fro to the rhythm of her song:

"'Hussar en vedette,

What do you see?
The sun has set
And a voice is calling me
Across the Récollette,
Where the scented rushes fret
In the May wind's breath —
Et garde à vous, Hussar!
'Tis the voice of Death!

'Hussar en vedette,
What do you see?
The moon has set
And a white shape beckons me
Across the Récollette,
Where the scented rushes fret
In the night wind's breath —
Et garde à vous, Hussar!
'Tis the shape of Death!'"

Singing away with the serene unconsciousness of a bird, rocking her lithe young body, and watching his every movement out of wide grey eyes, Philippa assisted at the artistic preparations with great content, missing nothing.

"To squeeze color from tubes must be amusing," she remarked. "I like to squeeze out tooth paste."

"I am very sure," said Warner, "that you accomplish more charming results with your tooth paste than I do with my colors."

The girl laughed, showing her snowy teeth:

"Do you find them pretty, Monsieur?"

"Quite perfect, and therefore in keeping with the remainder of you, Philippa."

"He really seems to mean it," she said, addressing a grasshopper which had alighted on her knee. And to Warner: "Is my face sufficiently scrubbed to suit you?"

He glanced down at her:

"You have kept your word, haven't you?"

"Ma foi! My word is my word… Listen; I came to Saïs to see you; and partly because I have something to show you. It concerns your friend, I think."

"Mr. Halkett?"

"Yes. After the fight in our cabaret there was much excitement, but when you had disappeared, and before the agents de police and the gendarmes arrived, I found on the floor under the overturned table a portfolio. In that portfolio was part of an unfinished letter. It is written in German. I could not read it; but, studying it, I recognized Mr. Halkett's name written several times. So I said nothing to anybody, but I have brought it. Here it is."

She drew from her bosom a small leather pocketbook.

"Before you examine it," she continued, "I ought to tell you what really happened at the cabaret. Those men who attacked Mr. Halkett were in the employment of Monsieur Wildresse."

"What!" exclaimed Warner.

"It is true. I was furious when I noticed them creeping up

behind him. I realized instantly what they meant to do, and I cried out – too late. You ought to be told about this. Therefore, I came here to tell you.

"And I desire to tell you more. The three men who were seated across the hall, and who attempted to pick a quarrel with Mr. Halkett, were 'provocative agents' – Germans.

"The *patron* knew them and interfered. Besides, he had his own ideas and his own ends to serve just then.

"But I saw those three German agents whisper to a fourth – a stranger. And that man came and seated himself with three other men directly behind Mr. Halkett, where he stood while you were talking to me – "

"Philippa," he interrupted with blunt impatience, "I don't understand all this that you are saying to me. Give me that letter if it concerns Mr. Halkett."

The girl colored painfully.

"Please don't speak rudely to me," she said. "I am trying to behave honestly – "

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to speak roughly. Please continue."

"Yes; it is better you should know what happened before you read this letter. Well, then, the men who attacked Mr. Halkett naturally got away; the patron attended to that. Naturally, also, he desired to have people believe that the German agents were responsible for the fight, and they were, therefore, detained by Monsieur Wildresse and were asked for an explanation. Then they declared that Mr. Halkett was a British spy, and that they

were Belgian police agents with full authority to arrest him in France. Which was a lie, of course, but it served its purpose by increasing the tumult."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.