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THE BOX WITH BROKEN SEALS

BY

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

1919

CHAPTER I

James Crawshay, Englishman of the type usually described in transatlantic circles as "some Britisher," lolled apparently at his ease upon the couch of the too-resplendent sitting room in the Hotel Magnificent, Chicago. Hobson, his American fellow traveler, on the other hand, betrayed his anxiety by his nervous pacing up and down the apartment. Both men bore traces in their appearance of the long journey which they had only just completed.

"I think," Crawshay decided, yawning, "that I shall have a bath. I feel gritty, and my collar--heavens, what a sight! Your trains, Hobson, may be magnificent, but your coal is filthy. I will have a bath while your friend, the policeman, makes up his mind whether to come and see us or not."

His companion treated the suggestion with scant courtesy.

"You will do nothing of the sort," was his almost fierce objection. "We've got to wait right here until Chief of Police Downs comes along. There's something crooked about this business, something I don't understand, and the sooner we get to the bottom of it, the better."

The Englishman pacified himself with a whisky and soda which a waiter had just brought in. He added several lumps of ice and drained the contents of the tumbler with a little murmur of appreciation.

"It will be confoundedly annoying," he admitted quietly, "if we've had all this journey for nothing."

Hobson moistened his dry lips with his tongue. The whisky and soda and the great bucket of ice stood temptingly at his elbow, but he appeared to ignore their existence. He was a man of ample build, with a big, clean-shaven face, a square jaw and deep-set eyes, a man devoted to and wholly engrossed by his work.

"See here, Crawshay," he exclaimed, "if that dispatch was a fake, if we've been brought here on a fool's errand, they haven't done it for nothing. If they've brought it off against us, you mark my words, we're left--we're bamboozled--we're a couple of lost loons! There's nothing left for us but to sell candy to small boys or find a job on

a farm."

"You're such a pessimist," the Englishman yawned.

"Pessimist!" was the angry retort. "I'll just ask you one question, my son. Where's Downs?"

"I certainly think," Crawshay admitted, "that under the circumstances he might have been at the station to meet us."

"He wouldn't even talk through the 'phone," Hobson pointed out. "I had to explain who we were to one of his inspectors. No one seemed to know a goldarned thing about us."

"They sent for him right away when you explained who you were," Crawshay reminded his companion.

Hobson found no comfort whatever in the reflection.

"Of course they did," he replied brusquely. "There's scarcely likely to be a chief of police of any city in the United States who wouldn't get a move on when he knew that Sam Hobson was waiting for a word. I haven't been in the Secret Service of this country for fifteen years for nothing. He'll come fast enough as soon as he knows I'm waiting, but all the same, what I want to know is, if that dispatch was on the square, why he wasn't at the station to meet us, and if it wasn't on the square, how the hell do we come out of this?"

Their conversation was interrupted by the tinkle of the telephone which stood upon the table between them, the instrument which both men had been watching anxiously. Hobson snatched up the receiver.

"Police headquarters speaking? Right! Yes, this is Sam Hobson. I'm here with Crawshay, of the English Secret Service. We got your dispatch.--What's that?--Well?--Chief Downs is on the way, eh?--Just started? Good! We're waiting for him."

Hobson replaced the receiver upon the instrument.

"Downs is coming right along," he announced. "I tell you what it is, Mr. Crawshay," he went on, recommencing his walk up and down the apartment, "I don't feel happy to be so far away from the coast. That's what scares me. Chicago's just about the place they'd land us, if this is a hanky-panky trick. We're twenty hours from New York, and the City of Boston sails to-morrow at five o'clock."

The Englishman shook himself and rose from his recumbent position upon the sofa. He was a man of youthful middle-age, colourless, with pleasant face, a somewhat discontented mouth, but keen grey eyes. He had been sent out from Scotland Yard at the beginning of the war to assist in certain work at the English Embassy. So far his opportunities had not been many, or marked with any brilliant success, and it seemed to him that the gloom of failure was already settling

down upon their present expedition.

"You don't believe, then, any more than I do, that when a certain box we know of is opened at the Foreign Office in London, it will contain the papers we are after?"

"No, sir, I do not," was the vigorous reply. "I think they have been playing a huge game of bluff on us. That's why I am so worried about this trip. I wouldn't mind betting you the best dinner you ever ate at Delmonico's or at your English Savoy that that box with the broken seals they all got so excited about doesn't contain a single one of the papers that we're after. Why, those blasted Teutons wanted us to believe it! That's why some of the seals were broken, and why the old man himself hung about like a hen that's lost one of its chickens. They want us to believe that we've got the goods right in that box, and to hold up the search for a time while they get the genuine stuff out of the country. I admit right here, Mr. Crawshay, that it was you who put this into my head at Halifax. I couldn't swallow it then, but when Downs didn't meet us at the depot here, it came over me like a flash that you were right that we were being flimflammed."

"We ought, perhaps, to have separated," the Englishman ruminated. "I ought to have gone to New York and you come here. On the other hand, you must remember that all the evidence which we have managed to collect points to Chicago as having been the headquarters of the whole organisation."

"Sure!" the American admitted. "And there's another point about it, too. If this outsider who has taken on the job for them should really turn out to be Jocelyn Thew, I'd have banked on his working the scheme from Chicago. He knows the back ways of the city, or rather he used to, like a rat. Gee, it would be a queer thing if after all these years one were to get the bracelets on him!"

"I don't quite see," Crawshay remarked, "how such a person as this Jocelyn Thew, of whom you have spoken several times, could have become associated with an affair of this sort. Both the Germans and the Austrians at Washington had the name of being exceedingly particular with regard to the status of their agents, and he must be entirely a newcomer in international matters. From the _dossier_ you handed me, Jocelyn Thew reads more like a kind of modern swashbuckler spoiling for a fight than a person likely to make a success of a secret service job."

"Don't you worry," Hobson replied. "Jocelyn Thew could hold his own at any court in Europe with any of you embassy swaggerers. There's nothing known about his family, but they say that his father was an English aristocrat, and he looks like it, too."

"It was you yourself who called him a criminal, the first time you spoke of him," Crawshay reminded his companion.

"And a criminal he is at heart, without a doubt," the American

declared impressively.

"Has he ever been in prison?"

"He has had the luck of Old Harry," Hobson grumbled. "In New York they all believed that it was he who shot Graves, the Pittsburg millionaire. The Treasury Department will have it that he was the head of that Fourteenth Street gang of coiners, and I've a pal down at Baltimore who is ready to take his oath that he planned the theft of the Vanderloon jewels--and brought it off, too! But I tell you this, sir. When the trouble comes, whoever gets nabbed it's never Jocelyn Thew. He's the slickest thing that ever came down the pike."

"He is well off, then?"

"They say that he brought half a million from Mexico," Hobson declared. "How he brought money out of that country, neither I nor anybody else on the Force can imagine. But he did it. I know the stockbroker down-town who handles his investments.--Here's our man at last!"

The door was opened by the floor waiter, who held it while a thin, dark man, dressed in civilian clothes of most correct cut, passed in. Hobson gripped him at once by the hand.

"Chief Downs," he said, "this is my friend Mr. Crawshay, who is connected with the English Embassy over here. You can shake hands with him later. We're on a job of business, and the first thing before us is to get an answer from you to a certain question. Did you send this dispatch or did you not?"

Hobson handed over to the newcomer the crumpled telegraph form which he had just produced from his pocket. The latter glanced through it and shook his head.

"It's a plant," he announced. "I'm sorry if the use of my name has misled you in any way, but it was quite unauthorised. I know nothing whatever about the matter."

Hobson remained for a moment silent, silent with sick and angry astonishment. Crawshay had glanced towards the clock and was standing now with his finger upon the bell.

"Is it a big thing?" the Chicago man enquired.

"It's the biggest thing ever known in this country," Hobson groaned. "It's what is known as the Number Three Berlin plant."

"You didn't get the stuff at Halifax, then?" Downs asked.

"We didn't," Hobson replied bitterly. "We've sent a representative over to sit on the box with the broken seals till they can open it at the Foreign Office in London, but I never believed they'd find

anything there. I'm damned certain they won't now!"

A waiter had answered the bell.

"Don't have our luggage brought up," Crawshay directed. "We are leaving for New York to-night. That's so, isn't it, Hobson?" he added, turning to his companion.

"You bet!" was the grim reply. "I'd give a thousand dollars to be there now."

"The Limited's sold out," the man told them. "There are two or three persons who've been disappointed, staying on here till to-morrow."

"I'll get you on the train," Downs promised. "I can do as much as that for you, anyway. I'll stop and go on to the station with you from here. I'm very sorry about this, Hobson," he continued, fingering the dispatch. "We shall have to get right along to the station, but if there's anything I can do after you've left, command me."

"You might wire New York," Hobson suggested, as he struggled into his overcoat. "Tell 'em to look out for the _City of Boston_, and to hold her up for me if they can. I've got it in my bones that Jocelyn Thew is running this show and that he is on that steamer."

"Those fellows at Washington must have collected some useful stuff," Chief Downs observed, as the three men left the room and stepped into the elevator. "They've been working on their job since before the war, and there isn't a harbour on the east or west coast that they haven't got sized up. They've spent a million dollars in graft since January, and there's a rumour that the new Navy Department scheme for dealing with submarines, which was only adopted last month, is there among the rest."

"Anything else?" Crawshay asked indolently.

The Chief of Police glanced first at his questioner and then at Hobson.

"What else should there be?" he enquired.

"No idea," the Englishman replied. "Secret Service papers of the usual description, I suppose. By-the-by, I hear that this man Jocelyn Thew has stated openly that he is going to take all the papers he wants with him into Germany, and that there isn't a living soul can stop him."

Hobson's square jaw was set a little tighter, and his narrow eyes flashed.

"That's some boast to make," he muttered. "Kind of a challenge, isn't it? What do you say, Mr. Crawshay?"

Crawshay, who had been gazing out of the window of the taxicab, looked back again. His tone was almost indifferent.

"If Chief Downs can get us on the Limited," he said, "and if we catch the _City of Boston_, I think perhaps we might have a chance of making Mr. Jocelyn Thew eat his words."

The Chief smiled. The taxicab had turned in through the entrance gates of the great station.

"I have heard men as well-known in their profession as you, Hobson, and you too, Mr. Crawshay, speak like that about Jocelyn Thew, but when the game was played out they seem to have lost the odd trick. Either the fellow isn't a criminal at all but loves to haunt shady places and pose as one, or he is just the cleverest of all the crooks who ever worked the States. Some of my best men have thought that they had a case against him and have come to grief."

"They've never caught him with the goods, because they've never been the right way about it," Hobson declared confidently.

"And you think you are going to break his record?" Downs asked, with a doubtful smile. "If you find him on the _City of Boston_, you know, the stuff you're after won't be in his pocketbook or in the lining of his steamer trunk."

The three men were hurrying out to the platform now, where the great train, a blaze of light and luxury, was standing upon the track. Captain Downs made his way to where the Pullman conductor was standing and engaged him in a brief but earnest conversation. A car porter was summoned, and in a few moments Crawshay and Hobson found themselves standing on the steps of one of the cars. They leaned over to make their adieux to Chief Downs. Crawshay added a few words to his farewell.

"I quite appreciate all your remarks about Jocelyn Thew," he said. "One is liable to be disappointed, of course, but I still feel that if we can catch that steamer it might be an exceedingly interesting voyage."

"If you're on time you may do it," was the brief reply. "All the same--"

The gong had sounded and the train was gliding slowly out of the station. Crawshay leaned over the iron gate of the car.

"Go on, please," he begged. "Don't mind my feelings."

Chief Downs waved his hand.

"I'm afraid," he confessed, "that my money would be on Jocelyn Thew."

CHAPTER II

At just about the hour when Crawshay and Hobson were receiving the visit of Chief Downs in the Chicago hotel an English butler accepted with due respect the card of a very distinguished-looking and exceedingly well-turned-out caller at the big, brownstone Beverley house in Riverside Drive, New York.

"Miss Beverley is just back from the hospital, sir," the former announced. "If you will come this way, I will see that your card is sent to her at once."

The caller--Mr. Jocelyn Thew was the name upon the card--followed the servant across the white stone circular hall, with its banked-up profusion of hothouse flowers and its air of elegant emptiness, into a somewhat austere but very dignified apartment, the walls of which were lined to the ceiling with books.

"I will let Miss Beverley have your card at once, sir," the man promised him again, "if you will be so kind as to take a seat for a few moments."

The visitor, left to himself, stood upon the hearthrug with his hands behind his back, waiting for news of the young lady whom he had come to visit. At first sight he certainly was a most prepossessing-looking person. His face, if a little hard, was distinguished by a strength which for the size of his features was somewhat surprising. His chin was like a piece of iron, and although his mouth had more sensitive and softer lines, his dark-blue eyes and jet-black eyebrows completed a general impression of vigour and forcefulness. His figure was a little thin but lithe, and his movements showed all the suppleness of a man who has continued the pursuit of athletics into early middle-life. His hair, only slightly streaked with grey, was thick and plentiful. His clothes were carefully chosen and well tailored. He had the air of a man used to mixing with the best people, to eating and drinking the best, to living in the best fashion, recognising nothing less as his due in life. Yet as he stood there waiting for his visitor, listening intently for the sound of her footsteps outside, he permitted himself a moment of retrospection, and there was a gleam of very different things in his face, a touch almost of the savage in the clenched teeth and sudden tightening of the lips. One might have gathered that this man was living through a period of strain.

The entrance of the young lady of the house, after a delay of about ten minutes, was noiseless and unannounced. Her visitor, however, was prepared for it. She came towards him with an air of pleasant enquiry in her very charming face--a young woman in the early twenties, of little more than medium height, with complexion inclined to be pale, deep grey eyes, and a profusion of dark brown, almost copper-coloured hair. She carried herself delightfully and her little smile of welcome was wonderfully attractive, although her deportment and manner were a

little serious for her years.

"You wish to see me?" she asked. "I am Miss Beverley--Miss Katharine Beverley." "Sometimes known as Sister Katharine," her visitor remarked, with a smile.

"More often than by my own name," she assented. "Do you come from the hospital?"

He shook his head and glanced behind her to be sure that the door was closed.

"Please do not think that my coming means any trouble, Miss Beverley," he said, "but if you look at me more closely you will perhaps recognise me. You will perhaps remember--a promise."

He stepped a little forward from his position of obscurity to where the strong afternoon sunlight found its subdued way through the Holland blinds. The politely interrogative smile faded from her lips. She seemed to pass through a moment of terror, a moment during which her thoughts were numbed. She sank into the chair which her visitor gravely held out for her, and by degrees she recovered her powers of speech.

"Forgive me," she begged. "The name upon the card should have warned me--but I had no idea--I was not expecting a visit from you."

"Naturally," he acquiesced smoothly, "and I beg you not to discompose yourself. My visit bodes you no harm--neither you nor any one belonging to you."

"I was foolish," she confessed. "I have been working overtime at the hospital lately--we have sent so many of our nurses to France. My nerves are not quite what they should be."

He bowed sympathetically. His tone and demeanour were alike reassuring.

"I quite understand," he said. "Still, some day or other I suppose you expected a visit from me?"

"In a way I certainly did," she admitted. "You must let me know presently, please, exactly what I can do. Don't think because I was startled to see you that I wish to repudiate my debt. I have never ceased to be grateful to you for your wonderful behaviour on that ghastly night."

"Please do not refer to it," he begged. "Your brother, I hope, is well?"

"He is well and doing famously," she replied. "I suppose you know that he is in France?"

"In France?" he repeated. "No, I had not heard."

"He joined the Canadian Flying Corps," she went on, "and he got his wings almost at once. He finds the life out there wonderful. I never receive a letter from him," she concluded, her eyes growing very soft, "that I do not feel a little thrill of gratitude to you."

He bowed.

"That is very pleasant," he murmured. "And now we come to the object of my visit. Your surmise was correct. I have come to ask you to redeem your word."

"And you find me not only ready but anxious to do so," she told him earnestly. "If it is a matter--pardon me--of money, you have only to say how much. If there is any other service you require, you have only to name it."

"You make things easy for me," he acknowledged, "but may I add that it is only what I expected. The service which I have come to claim from you is one which is not capable of full explanation but which will cause you little inconvenience and less hardship. You will find it, without doubt, surprising, but I need not add that it will be entirely innocent in its character."

"Then there seems to be very little left," she declared, smiling up at him from the depths of her chair, "but to name it. I do wish you would sit down, and are you quite sure that you won't have some tea or something?"

He shook his head gravely and made no movement towards the chair which she had indicated. For some reason or other, notwithstanding her manifest encouragement, he seemed to wish to keep their interview on a purely formal basis.

"Let me repeat," he continued, "that I shall offer you no comprehensive explanations, because they would not be truthful, nor are they altogether necessary. In Ward Number Fourteen of your hospital--you have been so splendid a patroness that every one calls St. Agnes's your hospital--a serious operation was performed to-day upon an Englishman named Phillips."

"I remember hearing about it," she assented. "The man is, I understand, very ill."

"He is so ill that he has but one wish left in life," Jocelyn Thew told her gravely. "That wish is to die in England. Just as you are at the present moment in my debt for a certain service rendered, so am I in his. He has called upon me to pay. He has begged me to make all the arrangements for his immediate transportation to his native country." She nodded sympathetically.

"It is a very natural wish," she observed, "so long as it does not

endanger his life."

"It does not endanger his life," her visitor replied, "because that is already forfeit. I come now to the condition which involves you, which explains my presence here this afternoon. It is also his earnest desire that you should attend him so far as London as his nurse."

The look of vague apprehension which had brought a questioning frown into Katharine Beverley's face faded away. It was succeeded by an expression of blank and complete surprise.

"That I should nurse him--should cross with him to London?" she repeated. "Why, I do not know this man Phillips. I never saw him in my life! I have not even been in Ward Fourteen since he was brought there."

"But he," Jocelyn Thew explained, "has seen you. He has been a visitor at your hospital before he was received there as a patient. He has received from various doctors wonderful accounts of your skill. Besides this, he is a superstitious man, and he has been very much impressed by the fact that you have never lost a patient. If you had been one of your own probationers, the question of a fee would have presented no difficulties, although he personally is, I believe, a poor man. As it is, however, his strange craving for your services has become a charge upon me."

"It is the most extraordinary request I ever heard in my life," Katharine murmured. "If I had ever seen or spoken to the man, I could have understood it better, but as it is, I find it impossible to understand."

"You must look upon it," Jocelyn Thew told her, "as one of those strange fancies which comes sometimes to men who are living in the shadowland of approaching death. There is one material circumstance, however, which may make the suggestion even more disconcerting for you. The steamer upon which we hope to sail leaves at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon."

The idea in this new aspect was so ludicrous that she simply laughed at him.

"My dear Mr. Jocelyn Thew!" she exclaimed. "You can't possibly be in earnest! You mean that you expect me to leave New York with less than twenty-four hours' notice, and go all the way to London in attendance upon a stranger, especially in these awful times? Why, the thing isn't reasonable--or possible! I have just consented to take the chairmanship of a committee to form field hospitals throughout the country, and--"

"May I interrupt for one moment?" her visitor begged.

The stream of words seemed to fall away from her lips. There was a touch of Jocelyn Thew's other manner--perhaps more than a touch. She

looked at him and she shivered. She had seen him look like that once before.

"Your attitude is perfectly reasonable," he continued, "but on the other hand I must ask you to carry your thoughts back some little time. I shall beg you to remember that I have a certain right to ask this or any other service from you." "I admit it," she confessed hastily, "but--there is something so outlandish in the whole suggestion. There are a score of nurses in the hospital to any one of whom you are welcome, who are all much cleverer than I. What possible advantage to the man can it be, especially if he is seriously ill, to have a partially-trained nurse with him when he might have the best in the world?"

"I think," he said, "I mentioned that this is not a matter for reasoning or argument. It is you who are required, and no one else. I may remind you," he went on, "that this service is a very much smaller one than I might have asked you, and, so far as you and I are concerned, it clears our debt."

"Clears our debt," she repeated.

"For ever!"

She closed her eyes for several moments. For some reason or other, this last reflection seemed to bring her no particular relief. When she opened them again, her decision was written in her face.

"I consent, of course," she acquiesced quietly. "Is there anything more to tell me?"

"Very little," he replied, "only this. You should send your baggage on board the City of Boston as early as possible to-morrow morning. Every arrangement has been made for transporting Phillips in his bed, as he lies, from the hospital to the boat. The doctor who has been in attendance will accompany him to England, but it is important that you should be at the hospital and should drive in the ambulance from there to the dock. I shall ask very little of you in the way of duplicity. What is necessary you will not, I think, refuse. You will be considered to have had some former interest in Phillips, to account for your voyage, and you will reconcile yourself to the fact that I shall not at any time approach the sick man, or be known as an acquaintance of his on board the ship."

His words disturbed her. She felt herself being drawn under the shadow of some mystery.

"There is something in all this," she said, "which reminds me of the time when Richard was your protog , the time when we met before."

He leaned towards her, understanding very well what was in her mind.

"There is nothing criminal in this enterprise--even in my share of

it," he assured her. "What there is in it which necessitates secrecy is political, and that need not concern you. You see," he went on, a little bitterly, "I have changed my role. I am no longer the despair of the New York police. I am the quarry of a race of men who, if they could catch me, would not wait to arrest. That may happen even before we reach Liverpool. If it does, it will not affect you. Your duty is to stay with a dying man until he reaches the shelter of his home. You will leave him there, and you will be free of him and of me."

"So far as regards our two selves," she enquired, "do we meet as strangers upon the steamer?"

He considered the matter for a few moments before answering. She felt another poignant thrill of recollection. He had looked at her like this just before he had bent his back to the task of saving her brother's life and liberty, looked at her like this the moment before the unsuspected revolver had flashed from the pocket of his dress-coat and had covered the man who had suddenly declared himself their foe. She felt her cheeks burn for a moment. There was something magnetic, curiously troublous about his eyes and his faint smile.

"I cannot deny myself so much," he said. "Even if our opportunities for meeting upon the steamer are few, I shall still have the pleasure of a New York acquaintance with Miss Beverley. You need not be afraid," he went on. "In this wonderful country of yours, the improbable frequently happens. I have before now visited at the houses of some whom you call your friends."

"Why not?" she asked him. "I should look upon it as the most natural thing in the world that we were acquainted. But why do you say 'your country'? Are you not an American?"

He looked at her with a very faint smile, a smile which had nothing in it of pleasantness or mirth.

"I have so few secrets," he said. "The only one which I elect to keep is the secret of my nationality."

She raised her eyebrows.

"Then you can no longer," she observed, "be considered what my brother and I once thought you--a man of mysteries--for with your voice and accent it is very certain that you are either English or American."

"If it affords you any further clue, then," he replied, "let me confide in you that if there is one country in this world which I detest, it is England; one race of people whom I abominate, it is the English."

She showed her surprise frankly, but his manner encouraged no further confidence. She touched the bell, and he bowed over her fingers.

"My friend Phillips," he said, in formal accents, as the butler stood

upon the threshold, "will never live, I fear, to offer you all the gratitude he feels, but you are doing a very kind and a very wonderful action, Miss Beverley, and one which I think will bring its own reward."

He passed out of the room, leaving Katharine a prey to a curious tangle of emotions. She watched him almost feverishly until he had disappeared, listened to his footsteps in the hall and the closing of the front door. Then she hurried to the window, watched him descend the row of steps, pass down the little drive and hail a taxicab. It was not until he was out of sight that she became in any way like herself. Then she broke into a little laugh.

"Heavens alive!" she exclaimed to herself. "Now I have to find Aunt Molly and tell her that I am going to Europe to-morrow with a perfect stranger!"

CHAPTER III

Mr. Jocelyn Thew descended presently from his taxicab outside one of the largest and most cosmopolitan hotels in New York--or the world. He made his way with the air of an *_habitué_* to the bar, the precincts of which, at that time in the late afternoon, were crowded by a motley gathering. He ordered a Scotch highball, and gently insinuated himself into the proximity of a group of newspaper men with whom he seemed to have some slight acquaintance. It was curious how, since his arrival in this democratic meeting-place, his manners and deportment seemed to have slipped to a lower grade. He seemed as though by an effort of will to have lost something of his natural air of distinction, to be treading the earth upon a lower plane. He saluted the barkeeper by his Christian name, listened with apparent interest to an exceedingly commonplace story from one of his neighbours, and upon its conclusion drew a little nearer to the group.

"Say," he exclaimed confidentially, "if I felt in the humour for it I could hand you boys out a great scoop."

They were on him like a pack of hungry though dubious wolves. He pushed his glass out of sight, accepted one of the drinks pressed upon him, and leaned nonchalantly against the counter.

"What should you say," he began, "to Miss Katharine Beverley, the New York society young lady--"

"Sister Katharine of St. Agnes's?" one of them interrupted.

"Daughter of old Joe Beverley, the multi-millionaire?" another exclaimed.

"Both right," Jocelyn Thew acquiesced. "What should you say to that young woman leaving her hospital and her house in Riverside Drive, breaking all her engagements at less than twenty-four hours' notice, to take a sick Englishman whom no one knows anything about, back to Liverpool on the _City of Boston_ to-morrow?"

"The story's good enough," a ferret-faced little man at his elbow acknowledged, "but is it true?"

Jocelyn Thew regarded his questioner with an air of pained surprise.

"It's Gospel," he assured them all, "but you don't need to take my word. You go right along up and enquire at the Beverley house to-night, and you'll find that she is packing. Made up her mind just an hour ago. I'm about the only one in the know."

"Who's the man, anyway?" one of the little group asked.

"Nothing doing," Jocelyn Thew replied mysteriously. "You've got to find that out for yourself, boys. All I can tell you is that he's an Englishman, and she has known him for a long time--kind of love stunt, I imagine. She wasn't having any, but now he's at death's door she seems to have relented. Anyway, she is breaking every engagement she's got, giving up her chairmanship of the War Hospitals Committee, and she isn't going to leave him while he's alive. There's no other nurse going, so it'll be a night and day job for her."

"What's the matter with the chap, anyway?" another questioner demanded.

"No one knows for sure," was the cautious reply. "He's been operated upon for appendicitis, but I fancy there are complications. Not much chance for him, from what I have heard."

The little crowd of men melted away. Jocelyn Thew smiled to himself on his way out, as he watched four of them climb into a taxicab.

"That establishes Phillips all right as Miss Beverley's prot  g  ," he murmured, as he turned into Fifth Avenue. "And now--"

He stopped short in his reflections. His careful scrutiny of the heterogeneous crowd gathered together around the bar had revealed to him no unfamiliar type save the little man who at that moment was ambling along on the other side of the way. Jocelyn Thew slackened his pace somewhat and watched him keenly. He was short, he wore a cheap ready-made suit of some plain material, and a straw hat tilted on the back of his head. He had round cheeks, he shambled rather than walked, and his vacuous countenance seemed both good-natured and unintelligent. To all appearances a more harmless person never breathed, yet Jocelyn Thew, as he studied him earnestly, felt that slight tightening of the nerves which came to him almost instinctively in moments of danger. He changed his purpose and turned down Fifth Avenue instead of up. The little man, it appeared, had business in the

same direction. Jocelyn Thew walked the length of several blocks in leisurely fashion and then entered an hotel, studiously avoiding looking behind him. He made his way into a telephone booth and looked through the glass door. His follower in a few moments was visible, making apparently some aimless enquiry across the counter. Jocelyn Thew turned his back upon him and asked the operator for a number.

"Number 238 Park waiting," the latter announced, a few moments later.

Jocelyn Thew reentered the box and took up the receiver.

"That you, Rentoul?" he asked.

"Speaking," was the guarded reply. "Who is it?"

"Jocelyn Thew. Say, what's wrong with you? Don't go away."

"What is it? Speak quickly, please."

"You seem rather nervy up there. I'm off to Europe to-morrow on the _City of Boston_, and I should like to see you before I go."

There was a moment's silence.

"Why don't you come up here, then?"

"I'd rather not," Jocelyn Thew observed laconically. "The fact of it is, I have a friend around who doesn't seem to care about losing sight of me. If you are going to be anywhere around near Jimmy's, about seven o'clock--"

"That goes," was the somewhat agitated reply. "Ring off now. There's some one else waiting to speak."

Jocelyn Thew paid for his telephone call and walked leisurely out of the hotel with a smile upon his lips. The stimulus of danger was like wine to him. The little man was choosing a cigar at the stall. As he leaned down to light it, Jocelyn Thew's practiced eye caught the shape of a revolver in his hip pocket.

"English," he murmured softly to himself. "Probably one of Crawshay's lot, preparing a report for him when he returns from Chicago."

With an anticipatory smile, he entered upon the task of shaking off his unwelcome follower. He passed with the confident air of a member into a big club situated in an adjoining block, left it almost at once by a side entrance, found a taxicab, drove to a subway station up-town, and finally caught an express back again to Fourteenth Street. Here he entered without hesitation a small, foreign-looking restaurant which intruded upon the pavement only a few yards from the iron staircase by which he descended from the station. There were two faded evergreen shrubs in cracked pots at the bottom of the steps, soiled muslin curtains drawn across the lower half of the windows,

dejected-looking green shutters which, had the appearance of being permanently nailed against the walls, and a general air of foreign and tawdry profligacy. Jocelyn Thew stepped into a room on the right-hand side of the entrance and, making his way to the window, glanced cautiously out. There was no sign anywhere of the little man. Then he turned towards the bar, around which a motley group of Italians and Hungarians were gathered. The linen-clad negro who presided there met his questioning glance with a slight nod, and the visitor passed without hesitation through a curtained opening to the rear of the place, along a passage, up a flight of narrow stairs until he arrived at a door on the first landing. He knocked and was at once bidden to enter. For a moment he listened as though to the sounds below. Then he slipped into the room and closed the door behind him.

The apartment was everything which might have been expected, save for the profusion of flowers. The girl who greeted him, however, was different. She was of medium height and dark, with dark brown hair plaited close back from an almost ivory-coloured forehead. Her grey eyes were soft and framed in dark lines. Her eyebrows were noticeable, her mouth full but shapely. Her discontented expression changed entirely as she held out both her hands to her visitor. Her welcome was eager, almost passionate.

"Mr. Thew!" she exclaimed.

He held up his hand as though to check further speech, and listened for a moment intently.

"How are things here?" he asked.

"Quiet," she assured him. "You couldn't have come at a better time. Every one's away. Is there anything wrong?"

"I am being followed," he told her, "and I don't like it--just now, at any rate."

"Any one else coming?" she enquired.

"Rentoul," he told her. "He is in a mortal fright at having to come. They found his wireless, and they are watching his house. I must see him, though, before I go away."

"Going away?" she echoed. "When? When are you going?"

"To-morrow," he replied, "I sail for London."

She seemed for a moment absolutely speechless, consumed by a sort of silent passion that found no outlet in words. She gripped a fancy mat which covered an ornate table by her side, and dragged a begilded vase on to the floor without even noticing it. She leaned towards him. The little lines at the sides of her eyes were suddenly deep-riven like scars. Her eyes themselves were smouldering with fire.

"You are going to England!"

"That is what I propose," he assented. "I am sailing on the _City of Boston_ to-morrow afternoon."

"But the risk!" she faltered. "I thought that you dared not set foot in England."

"There is risk," he admitted. "It is not easy to amuse oneself anywhere without it. I have been offered a hundred thousand pounds to superintend the conveyance of certain documents and a certain letter to Berlin. The adventure appeals to me, and I have undertaken it. Until I found this man following me this afternoon, I really believed that we had put every one off the track. I know for a fact that most of the American officials believe that the papers for which they have searched so long and anxiously are in that trunk with the broken seals which they found at Halifax."

"What about the Englishman, Crawshay, and Sam Hobson?" the girl asked.

"They are not quite so credulous," he replied, "but at the present moment they are in Chicago, and if we get off at four o'clock punctually to-morrow afternoon, I scarcely think I shall be troubled with their presence on the _City of Boston_." "I have been reading about the trunk," the girl said. "Is it really a fake?"

"Entirely," he assured her. "There is not a single document in it which concerns either us or our friends. Everything that is of vital importance will be on the _City of Boston_ to-morrow and under my charge."

She looked at him wonderingly.

"But, Mr. Thew," she exclaimed, "you are clever, I know--even wonderful--but what possible chance have you of getting those things through--on an American steamer, too!"

"I have to take my risks, of course," he admitted coolly, "but the game is worth it. I can't live without excitement, as you know, and it's getting harder and harder to find on this side of the ocean. Besides, there is the money. I can think of several uses for a hundred thousand pounds."

She caught his wrist suddenly and leaned across the table.

"Can I come with you?" she asked breathlessly.

He shook his head.

"I shouldn't advise a sea voyage just now, Nora," he said. "It isn't exactly a picnic, nowadays. Besides, if you come on the _City of Boston_ there will be more than one danger to be faced."

"Danger!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "Have I ever shown myself afraid? Have we any of us--my brother or father or I--hesitated to run any possible risk when it was worth while? This house has been yours, and we in it, to do what you will with. It isn't a matter of danger--you know that. I come or go as you bid me." He met the fierce enquiry of her eyes without flinching. Only his tone was a little kinder as he answered her.

"I think, Nora," he said, "that you had better stay."

There was a timid but persistent knocking at the door, and, in response to Nora's invitation, a fat and bloated man entered the room hurriedly. He sank into a chair and mopped the perspiration from his forehead. Jocelyn Thew watched him with an air of contemptuous amusement.

"You seem distressed, Rentoul," he remarked. "Has anything gone wrong?"

"But it is terrible, this!" the newcomer declared. "Anything gone wrong, indeed! Listen. The police have made themselves free of my house. My beautiful wireless--it was only a hobby--it has gone! They open my letters. They will ruin me. Never did I think that this would arrive! There has been some terrible bungling!"

"And you," Jocelyn Thew retorted, "seem to have been the arch bungler."

"I? But what have I done?" Rentoul demanded, wringing his hands. "I have always obeyed orders. Even a hint has been enough. I have spent a great deal of money--much more than I could afford. What have I done wrong?"

"You have talked too much, for one thing," was the cold reply, "but we haven't time for recriminations now. How did you get here?"

"I came in my car. You will perhaps say that it was not wise, but I could not have stood the subway. My nerves are all rotten." Jocelyn Thew's tone and gesture were smoothly disdainful.

"You are quite right," he agreed. "You have lost what you call your nerve. You had better send for the newspaper men, give them plenty of champagne, and explain what a loyal American citizen you are. Have you burnt everything?"

"Every scrap of paper in the house which concerns a certain matter is burnt," Rentoul declared.

"It would be!"

"But I am in the right," the agitated man protested vigorously. "For five years we have worked and with good result. It is finished with us now for the present. There is no one who would dare to continue. Five

long years, mind you, Mr. Jocelyn Thew. That is worth something, eh?"

"Whatever it may be worth," was the somewhat grim reply, "will be decided within the next fortnight. That doesn't concern you, though."

"You are not staying over here now that the war has come?"

"Not !! But listen. There is no need for you to know where I am going, and I am not going to tell you. There is no need for you to remember that you ever knew me in your life. There is no need for you to remember any of the work in which you have been engaged. Your propaganda has developed a few strong men in this country and discovered a good deal of pulp. You are part of the pulp. There is only one other thing. If you should be heard of, Rentoul, shall we say telephoning, or calling upon the police here, offering to sell--No, by God, you don't!" The man's furtive tug at his hip pocket was almost pathetic in its futility. Jocelyn Thew had him by the throat, holding him with one hand well away from him, a quivering mass of discoloured, terrified flesh.

"Now you know," he continued coolly, "why I sent for you, Rentoul. Now you know why I rather preferred to see you here to coming to your Fifth Avenue mansion. I don't like traps--I don't like traitors."

"I give you my word," the breathless man began, "my word of honour--"

"Neither would interest me," the other interrupted grimly. "You are to be trusted just as far as you can be seen, just as far as your own safety and welfare depend upon your fidelity. You needn't be so terrified," he went on as, leaning over, he took the revolver from Rentoul's pocket, drew out the cartridges and threw it upon the table. "You've earned any ugly thing that might be coming to you, but I should think it very probable that you will be able to go on over-feeding your filthy carcass for a few more years. First of all, though, perhaps you had better tell me exactly why you have an appointment with Mr. Harrison, from Police Headquarters, at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning?"

Rentoul was white to the lips.

"I wanted to explain about the wireless," he faltered.

"That sounds very probable," was the contemptuous reply. "What else?"

"Nothing!"

Jocelyn Thew shrugged his shoulders. His victim cowered before him. For the first time the girl moved. She came a little nearer, and there was fury in her eyes as she looked down upon the terrified man.

"We could keep him here," she whispered. "Ned Grimes and some of the others will be in soon. There are plenty of ways of getting rid of him for a time."

"It wouldn't be worth while," Thew said simply. "One doesn't commit crimes for such carrion."

Rentoul had struggled into a sitting posture. He was dabbing feebly at his forehead with an overperfumed handkerchief.

"I wanted to make peace at Headquarters," he whined. "I want to be left alone. I should not have told them anything."

"That may or may not be," Jocelyn Thew replied. "All that I am fairly sure of is that you will keep your mouth shut now. You know," he went on, his voice growing a shade more menacing, "that I never threaten where I do not perform. I may not be over here myself, but there will be a few men left in New York, and one word from your lips--even a hint--and your life will pay the forfeit within twenty-four hours. You will be watched for a time--you and a few others of your kidney--watched until the time has gone by when anything you could say or do would be of account."

"Have you anything more to say to me?" the man stammered. "I feel faint."

His persecutor threw open the door.

"Nothing! Get into your car and drive home. Keep out of sight and hearing for a time. You are no particular ornament nor any use to any country, but remember that everything you have done, you have done when the country of your birth was in trouble and the country of your adoption was at peace. The situation is altered. The country of which you are a naturalised citizen is now at war. You had better remember it, and decide for yourself where your duty lies."

They listened to his heavy footsteps as he descended the stairs. Then the girl turned to her companion.

"Mr. Thew," she began, "you are not a German or an Austrian, yet you are doing their work, risking your life every day. Is it for money?"

"No," he replied, "in a general way it is not for money."

"What is it, then?" she asked curiously.

He stood looking out across the roofs and at the distant skyscrapers. She watched him without speaking. She knew very well that his eyes saw nothing of the landscape. He was looking back into some world of his own fancy, back, perhaps, into the shadows of his own life, concerning which no word that she or any one else in the city had ever heard had passed his lips.

CHAPTER IV

The two men--Crawshay and Sam Hobson--still a little breathless, stood at the end of the dock, gazing out towards the river. Around them was a slowly dispersing crowd of sightseers, friends and relations of the passengers on board the great American liner, ploughing her way down the river amidst the shrieks and hoots of her attendant tugs. Out on the horizon, beyond the Statue of Liberty, two long, grey, sinister shapes were waiting. Hobson glanced at them gloomily.

"Guess those are our destroyers going to take the _City of Boston_ some of the way across," he observed. "To think, with all this fuss about, that she must go and start an hour before her time!"

"It's filthy luck," the Englishman muttered.

The crowd grew thinner and thinner, yet the two men made no movement towards departure. It seemed to Crawshay impossible that after all they had gone through they should have failed. The journey in the fast motor car, after a breakdown of the Chicago Limited, rushing through the night like some live monster, tearing now through a plain of level lights, as they passed through some great city, vomiting fire and flame into the black darkness of the country places. It was like the ride of madmen, and more than once they had both hung on to their seats in something which was almost terror. "How are we going?" Crawshay had asked perpetually.

"Still that infernal half-hour," was the continual reply. "We are doing seventy, but we don't seem to be able to work it down."

A powerful automobile had taken them through the streets of New York, and lay now a wreck in one of the streets a mile from the dock. They had finished the journey in a taxicab, and the finish had been this--half an hour late! Yet they lingered, with their eyes fixed upon the disappearing ship.

"I guess there's nothing more we can do," Hobson said at last grudgingly. "We can lay it up for them on the other side, and we can talk to her all the way to Liverpool on the wireless, but if there is any scoop to be made the others'll get it--not us."

"If only we could have got on board!" Crawshay muttered. "It's no use thinking of a tug, I suppose?"

The American shook his head.

"She's too far out," he replied gloomily. "There's nothing to be hired that could catch her."

Crawshay's hand had suddenly stolen to his chin. There was a queer light in his eyes. He clutched at his companion's arm.

"You're wrong, Hobson," he exclaimed. "There is! Come right along with me. We can talk as we go."

"Are you crazy?" the American demanded.

"Not quite," the other answered. "Hurry up, man."

"Where to?" "To New Jersey. I've got Government orders, endorsed by your own Secretary of War. It's a hundred to one they won't listen to me, but we've got to try it."

He was already dragging his companion down the wooden way. His whole expression had changed. His face was alight with the joy of an idea. Already Hobson, upon whom the germ of that idea had dawned, began to be infected with his enthusiasm.

"It's a gorgeous stunt," he acknowledged, as he followed his companion into a taxicab. "If we bring it off, it's going to knock the movies silly."

Katharine, weary at last of waving her hand to the indistinct blur of faces upon the dock, picked up the great clusters of roses which late arrivals had thrust into her arms at the last moment, and descended to her stateroom upon the saloon deck. She spent only a few minutes looking at the arrangement of her things, and then knocked at the door of the stateroom exactly opposite. A thick-browed, heavy-looking man, sombrely and professionally dressed, opened the door.

"Are you wanting me, Doctor Gant?" she asked.

The doctor shook his head.

"The patient is asleep," he announced in a whisper.

Katharine stepped inside and stood looking down upon the pale, almost ghastly face of the man stretched at full length upon the bed.

"Why, I remember him perfectly," she exclaimed. "He was in Number Three Ward for some time. Surely he was a clerk at one of the drygoods stores down-town?"

The doctor nodded.

"Very likely."

"I remember the case," Katharine continued,--"appendicitis, followed by pneumonia, and complicated by angina pectoris."

"You have it precisely."

Katharine's eyes were full of perplexity.

"But the man is in very poor circumstances," she remarked. "How on earth can he afford a trip like this? He was on the free list at the hospital."

The doctor frowned.

"That is not my business," he said. "My fees are paid, and the steamer tickets appear to be in order. He probably has wealthy friends."

Katharine looked down once more at the sleeping man. His face was insignificant, his expression peevish, his features without the animation of any high purpose.

"I really cannot understand," she murmured, "how he became a friend--a friend--"

"A friend of whom?" the doctor enquired.

Katharine reflected and shook her head.

"Perhaps I was indiscreet," she confessed. "I dare say you know as much about him as I do. At what time would you like me to come and help you change the bandages?"

"I shall change them alone," the doctor replied.

"I prefer to."

Katharine glanced up in surprise.

"Surely you are not in earnest?" she asked. "What else am I here for? I suppose you realise that I am fully qualified?"

The doctor unbent a little.

"I am perfectly well aware of that. Miss Beverley," he said, "and it may be that there are times when I shall be glad of your help, and in any case," he went on, "I shall have to ask you to take a share in the night watching. But the surgical part of the case has been a great responsibility, and I couldn't afford to have the slightest thing in the world happen to one of my bandages."

Katharine nodded.

"You are thinking of Nurse Lynn," she observed. "But really I am very careful."

"I am sure of it," the doctor acknowledged, "but so long as I am here, with nothing else to do and a very heavy fee if by any chance I bring my man through, I may just as well see to these things myself. At any moment I might need your help, and I am very happy, Miss Beverley, to think that I shall have some one like you to fall back upon. My great hope," he went on, "is that we may get him across without a touch of

the angina."

"Will he ever get well?" she asked.

The doctor shook his head doubtfully.

"One can never tell," he said. "It is just one of these cases which are very close to the borderland. With luck he may pull through, may even become a fairly strong man again, but he doesn't look as though he had much of a physique. Sometime or other the day will come when life or death for him will depend entirely upon his will."

She nodded and moved away. "My stateroom is just opposite, if you want me at any time, doctor," she said.

He bowed and closed the door after her. Katharine made her way into her cabin, sat on her steamer trunk and looked around a little helplessly. The confusion of thought in which she had come on board was only increased by this introduction to doctor and patient. A presentiment of strange and imminent happenings kept her seated there long after the dressing bugle had sounded.

The City of Boston was four hours out of harbour, with her course set direct for Liverpool. The passengers, of whom there were only a very moderate number, had taken possession of their staterooms, examined their lifebelts, eaten their first meal, and were now, at eight o'clock on a fine June evening, mostly strolling about the deck or reclining in steamer chairs. There was none of the old-time feeling that a six-days' holiday was before them, a six-days' freedom from all anxiety and care. Even in these first few hours of their enterprise a certain strain of suppressed excitement was almost universally noticeable. There was no escaping from grim facts, and the facts were brought home to them all the time by those two businesslike destroyers flying the Stars and Stripes, and whose decks were swept continually by a deluge of green salt water. Amongst the few people who conversed there was but one subject of conversation, a subject which every one affected to treat lightly, and yet which no one managed to discuss without signs of anxiety.

"This thing will get on all our nerves before we are over," Brand, a breezy newspaper man from the West, observed. "What with boat drill three times a day, and lifebelt parade going on all the time on the deck, one doesn't get a chance to forget that we are liable to get a torpedo in our side at any moment."

"Oh, these little gnats of Uncle Sam's will look after us!" a more cheerful confrère observed. "Come into the smoking room and I'll buy you a drink."

A good deal of courage seemed to be sought in that direction, and presently, although the afterglow of the sunset was still brilliant, the decks were almost deserted. On the starboard side, only a man and a woman remained, and gradually, as though with a certain

unwillingness, they drifted closer together. The woman, who wore a black and white check coat over her blue serge steamer dress, and a small black hat from which she had pushed back the veil, was leaning over the side of the steamer, her head supported by her hand, looking steadily into the mass of red and orange clouds. The man, who was smoking a cigar, with both hands in his ulster pockets, seemed as though he would have passed her, but without turning her head she held out her hand and beckoned him to her side.

"I was beginning to wonder whether you were an absentee," Katharine remarked.

"I have been making friends with the captain," Jocelyn Thew replied.

"Please arrange my chair," she begged. "I should like to sit down."

He did as he was asked, arranging her rugs with the care of an old traveler. All his movements were very deliberate, even the searching way in which his eyes swept the long row of empty chairs on either side of them, and the care with which he fastened two open portholes above their heads. Finally he accepted her invitation and sat by her side.

"I have seen you once before," she observed, "just before we started."

"Yes?" he murmured.

"You were standing on the upper deck," she continued, "a little away from the others. You had your glasses glued to your eyes and you watched the dock. You had the air of one looking for a late arrival. Do you know of any one who has missed the boat?"

"I think so."

"A friend?"

"No, an enemy," he answered equably.

She turned her head a little. It was obvious that he was speaking the truth.

"So you have enemies?"

"A great many," he acknowledged, "one in particular just now. Perhaps," he went on, "I should say an opponent."

"If that is so," she remarked, after a moment's pause, "you should be glad that he missed the boat."

Jocelyn Thew smiled.

"I am," he admitted. "It was part of my plan that he should miss it."

She moved uneasily in her chair.

"So you haven't finished with adventures yet?"

"Not just yet."

There was a brief silence. Then she turned her head a little, leaning it still on the back of the chair but watching him as she spoke.

"I have seen my patient," she told him. "I have also had some conversation with the doctor."

"Well?"

"I am beginning to think," she continued, "that you must be a philanthropist."

"Why?"

"You hinted," she went on, "that your friend was in poor circumstances. You did not tell me, though, that you were paying the whole expenses of this trip, just so that the man should see his home and his family before he died."

"I told you that the care of him was a charge upon me," Jocelyn Thew reminded her. "That amounts to the same thing, doesn't it? I was clever enough, anyhow, to get a good nurse at a small fee."

"I am not at all sure," she replied, "that I shall not charge you something outrageous. You are probably a millionaire."

"Whatever you charge me," he promised, "I shall try to pay."

The two journalists, refreshed and encouraged by their libation, strolled past arm in arm.

"Queer sort of voyage, this, for a man on the point of death," the Westerner observed. "They brought a chap on here, an hour before we sailed, in an ambulance, with a doctor and a hospital nurse. Had to be carried every foot of the way."

"What's wrong with him?" the other enquired.

"He was only operated upon for appendicitis a fortnight ago, and they say that he has angina pectoris amongst other complications. They brought him straight from the hospital. Seems he's crazy to get back to England to die."

The two men passed out of hearing. Jocelyn flicked the ash from the cigarette which he had lighted.

"Sounds a queer sort of story, the way they tell it," he observed, glancing at his companion.

"Oh, I don't know," she replied. "Men have done this sort of thing before--but it isn't often," she went on, "that a man has done it for the sake of another man."

He smiled.

"You have the old-fashioned idea of man's devotion to woman. Can't you believe that there may be ties between two men stronger even than between a man and the woman he loves?"

"I can believe that," she assented, "but the men must have something in common. I should find it hard to believe, for instance, that they existed between you and the man downstairs."

He shrugged his shoulders very slightly.

"You forget," he observed, "that a man does not look at his best after such an illness as Phillips has had. You find him, perhaps, a little insignificant. You are probably aware of his vocation and station in life."

"I am."

"And these things," he went on, "make it difficult for you to believe that there is any great tie between us two. Yet it is the exception which proves the rule, you know. I will not say that your patient has ever saved my life or performed any immortal action, yet believe me he has courage and a grit you would scarcely believe in, and I am speaking seriously when I tell you that not only I but others are under deep obligations to him."

He rose to his feet with the air of one who has closed the subject. Katharine also threw off her rugs.

"You are going to walk?" she asked. "Please take me with you. I don't know why, but I feel restless this evening."

They paced side by side up and down the deck, pausing now and then to watch the destroyers and indulging in a very spasmodic conversation. At their fourth promenade, as they reached the stern extremity of their deck, the woman paused, and, holding to the railing with one hand, looked steadily back towards New York. The colour was fading slowly from the sky now, but it was still marvellously clear.

"Are you homesick for what lies beneath those clouds?" he enquired lightly.

She took no immediate account of his words. Her eyes were fixed upon one spot in that distant curtain of sky. Suddenly she pointed with her finger.

"What's that?" she asked. "No, the mast's dipping now--you can't see."

There--the other side."

He followed her outstretched finger, and slowly his fine black eyebrows grew closer and closer together. Far away, at a certain spot in the clear evening sky, was a little speck of black, hidden every now and then by the mast of the ship as she rolled, but distinctly there all the time, a little smudge in an amber setting, too small for a cloud, yet a visible and tangible object. Katharine felt her companion's arm tighten upon hers, and she saw his face grow like a piece of marble.

"It's a seaplane," he muttered, "coming from the New Jersey coast."

Through that mysterious agency by means of which news travels on board ship as though supernaturally conveyed, the deck was crowded in a very few moments by practically every passenger and most of the officers. Every form of telescope and field-glass was directed towards the now clearly visible seaplane. Speculations were everywhere to be heard.

"Come to warn us of a submarine," was the first suggestion.

"They'd use the wireless," was the prompt reminder.

"But seaplanes can spot the submarines under the sea," one of the journalists reminded the bystanders. "They're a better escort than any destroyer."

"She can't come all the way across the Atlantic, though," Brand observed.

"It's some new device of Uncle Sam's they are testing, perhaps," his friend suggested. "Gee! You can hear her now quite plainly. There are two of them in the car--a pilot and an observer. Wonder what the captain thinks about it."

The captain on the bridge was talking to his chief officer. Fragments of their conversation were apparently overheard, for it was soon rumoured around that the captain had expressed his opinion that this was simply part of some manoeuvres they were carrying out from the New Jersey Aviation Station. Jocelyn Thew watched the blue fire about the mast.

"I wonder whether that's she talking to us," he observed. "One would have to be pretty nippy with one's fingers to work aboard on one of those small things."

"Do you suppose she is bringing us a message?" Katharine asked.

He shook his head.

"They could do that by wireless from the shore," he replied. "Hullo, we're slowing down!"

The little crowd was now bubbling over with excitement. The speed of the steamer had, without a doubt, been slackened, and a boat was being lowered. Brand and his companion, immensely happy, were already dotting down their notes for the wireless. The seaplane was gently skimming the water almost alongside, and barely fifty yards away. The pilot and his companion were clearly visible. The passengers lined the whole length of the steamer, leaning over to watch the _dØnouement_ of this strange scene.

"It's a newspaper scoop," one man suggested.

The idea was not favourably entertained.

"No newspaper would be allowed to make use of a Government seaplane," Brand pointed out. "Apart from that, they wouldn't dare to stop a steamer out here."

"There's the boat!" some one else exclaimed, pointing to one of the ship's lifeboats which had shot out towards the plane. "She must be going to pick one of the men up!"

The steamer was merely drifting now, and its strange visitor had alighted upon the water, rushing along a little way in front and leaving two long, milky paths of white foam behind. Both the pilot and the passenger were drenched by every wave. They watched the latter as he was taken off, and their eyes followed the return of the lifeboat. Almost immediately afterwards the plane, increasing its speed, rushed across the surface of the water and rose again.

"Prettiest sight I ever saw in my life," Brand declared enthusiastically.

"We live in wonderful times," his friend agreed, looking longingly at the wireless office. "I guess we must get a look at this chap, anyway," he added. "He's the first man who has overtaken an American liner so far from land like this before."

The man who clambered a few minutes later up the ladder of the steamer had not the appearance of one who has performed a heroic action. His clothes had shrunk upon his body, and the sea water was oozing from him in all directions. His face was blue with cold and almost unrecognisable. Nevertheless, Jocelyn Thew, who was one of the most eager of the sightseers, attained a certain measure of conviction as he shut up his glasses with a snap and turned to his companion.

"An Englishman," he observed.

"Do you know him?" she asked curiously.

"I can't go so far as that," he admitted, "but--"

"But he was the man for whom you were looking before the steamer started," she declared confidently.

"Seems a little rough luck to be caught up like this out in the ocean," he grumbled. "I don't know that the man's likely to do me any particular harm," he added, "but I'd just as soon he wasn't on board."

Meanwhile, the captain had hurried his belated passenger into his room, and the ship saw no more of him that night. By degrees the excitement simmered down. Jocelyn escorted his companion to the gangway and bade her good night.

"I am not at all sure," she protested, "that I am ready to go down yet."

"You must show a little interest in your patient," he insisted.

"But the doctor has already as good as told me to keep away."

"Gant is a peculiar fellow," he told her. "By this time he has probably changed his mind and needs your help. Besides, I am anxious to hear what they say in the smoking room concerning this extraordinary visitor."

She looked around. They were absolutely alone.

"Who is he," she asked, "and what does his coming mean to you?"

"His name is Crawshay," Jocelyn replied. "He is an ex-Scotland Yard man who came over here to work for the English Secret Service."

"What does he want here?" she whispered, a little hoarsely.

Jocelyn raised his cap as he turned away.

"Me," he answered. "He'll probably be disappointed, though."

CHAPTER V

Crawshay found himself a popular hero when at a few minutes before eleven o'clock the next morning he made his appearance on deck. With little regard to the weather, which was fine and warm, he was clad in a thick grey suit and a voluminous overcoat. The fact that his borrowed hat was several sizes too large for him detracted a little from the dignity of his appearance, a misfortune for which he endeavoured to atone by a distinct aloofness of manner. The newspaper men, however, were not to be denied.

"Say, Mr. Crawshay," Brand began, stopping him as soon as he had emerged from the companionway, "I'd like to shake hands with you. My

name's Brand. I'm a newspaper man."

Crawshay shook hands, although he showed no particular enthusiasm about the proceeding.

"And I am Clark, of the Minneapolis _Record_" the small, dark man, who was generally by Brand's side, added. "Put it there, sir."

Crawshay put it there with an incipient reluctance which the two men were not slow to note.

"Kind of shock to you yesterday, no doubt," Brand began. "It was a fine, plucky thing to do, sir. Ever flown before?"

"Never," Crawshay confessed. "The sensation was--er--entirely new to me. I found the descent upon the water most uncomfortable." "Soaked your shore clothes, eh?" Brand observed.

"I was not attired for the proceeding," Crawshay admitted. "I was, in fact, very inappropriately dressed. I was wearing a thin flannel suit, which was completely ruined, and I do not think that I shall ever be warm again."

Mr. Brand glanced longingly at his wrist watch and sighed.

"I make it a rule, sir," he said, "never to drink before twelve o'clock, but there is no rule without an exception. If you think that a double jigger of gin, with a little lemon and--"

"Stop!" Crawshay begged. "I have no sympathy with the weird compounds produced by your bartenders. As a matter of fact, I take nothing at all except with my meals. I am going to sit in this sunshine and try and recover my normal temperature."

"There are a few of the boys on board," Brand continued insinuatingly, "who would like to join in our little chat, if you wouldn't mind their stepping round."

"I have no desire for a chat with any one," Crawshay objected. "I came up on deck to rest. Kindly ask me what you want to know and leave me alone for a time."

"Then what in thunder sent you here after an American liner on a seaplane?" Brand demanded. "That's about the long and short of what we're aching to know, I think."

"You've hit it, Ned, as usual," Mr. Clark, of the Minneapolis _Record_, acquiesced. Crawshay drew his rug about him a little peevishly.

"My name," he said, "is Charles Reginald Crawshay."

"We got that from the captain," Brand replied. "Very nice name, too."

"I have been attached," Crawshay went on, "to the British Embassy at Washington."

"You don't say!" Brand murmured.

"I am returning home," Crawshay continued, "because I intend to join the British Army, I was unfortunate enough to miss the boat, and being in company with a person of authority and influence, he suggested, partly in joke, that I should try to persuade one of the pilots of your new seaplanes at Jersey to bring me out. He further bet me five hundred dollars that I would not attempt the flight. I am one of those sort of people," Crawshay confessed meditatively, "who rise to a bet as to no other thing in life. I suppose it comes from our inherited sporting instincts. I accepted the bet and here I am."

"In time to save the British Army, eh?" Brand observed.

"In time to take my rightful place amongst the defenders of my country," was the dignified rebuke. "Incidentally, I have won a hundred pounds."

"Would you do it again for the same money?" Clark asked guilefully.

The Englishman coughed.

"I must confess," he said, "that it is not an experience I am anxious to repeat."

Brand rose to his feet.

"Well, sir," he concluded, "I offer you my congratulations on your trip. We shall just dot a few words together concerning it for the New York newspapers. Anything you'd like to add?"

Crawshay stroked his upper lip.

"You can say," he pronounced with dignity, "that I found the trip most enjoyable. And by-the-by, you had better put a word in about the skill of the pilot--Lieutenant T. Johnson, I believe his name was. I have no experience in such matters, and I found him once or twice a little unsympathetic when I complained of bumps, but the young man did his best--of that I am convinced."

Mr. Brand's tongue slowly crept round the outside of his mouth. He met the eye of his friend Mr. Clark and indulged in a wink. He had the air of a man who felt relieved by the operation.

"We are very much obliged to you, Mr. Crawshay," he declared. "You have done something to brighten this trip, anyway."

"A little later," Crawshay announced, "either just before your luncheon or dinner hour, if you and your friends would meet me in the

smoking room, I should be delighted to remember in the customary fashion that I have won a rather considerable wager."

"Come, that's bully," Brand declared, with a little real feeling in his tone. "I tell you, Clark," he added, as they made their way along the deck to the writing room, "you've got to prick these damned Britishers pretty hard, but they've generally got a bit of the right feeling somewhere tucked away. He'll have a swollen head for the rest of this voyage, though." Crawshay watched the two men disappear, out of the corner of his eye. Then he rose to his feet and commenced a little promenade about the sunny portion of the deck. After two or three turns he found himself face to face with Jocelyn Thew, who had just issued from the companionway.

"Good morning, Mr. Late Passenger!" the latter exclaimed.

Crawshay paused and looked him up and down.

"Do I know you, sir?" he asked.

"I am not so sure that you do," Jocelyn replied, "but after yesterday the whole world knows Mr. Reginald Crawshay."

"Very kind of you, I am sure," Crawshay murmured. "What I did really wasn't worth making a fuss about."

"You had an uncomfortable ride, I fear?" Jocelyn continued.

"I was most unsuitably attired," Crawshay hastened to explain. "If, instead of asking me very absurd questions at the aerodrome, they had provided me with some garments calculated to exclude the salt water, I should be able to look back upon the trip with more pleasurable feelings."

"Pity you had to make it, wasn't it?" Jocelyn observed, falling into step with him.

"I scarcely follow you, Mr.--Ought I to know your name? I have a shocking memory."

"My name is Jocelyn Thew."

"Mr. Jocelyn Thew," Crawshay concluded.

"I mean that it was a pity you missed the boat, you and Hobson, wasn't it? What was the weather like in Chicago?" "Hot," Crawshay replied. "I was hotter there than I ever expect to be again in this world."

"A long, tiring journey, too, from Halifax."

"Not only that, sir," Crawshay agreed, "but a dirty journey. I like to travel with the windows down--cold water and fresh air, you know, for us English people--but the soft coal you burn in your engines is the

most appalling uncleanly stuff I have ever met."

"Still, you got here," Jocelyn reminded him.

"I got here," Crawshay agreed with an air of satisfaction.

"And you can take a bath three times a day, if you feel like it, on board," Jocelyn continued. "I'm afraid you won't find much else to do."

"One can never tell," Crawshay sighed. "I have started on ocean trips sometimes which promised absolutely nothing in the way of entertainment, and I have discovered myself, before the end of the journey, thoroughly interested and amused."

"Nothing like looking on the bright side of things," Jocelyn observed.

Crawshay turned his head and contemplated his companion for a few moments. Jocelyn Thew, notwithstanding his fine, slim figure, his well-cut clothes and lean, handsome face, carried always with him some nameless, unanalysable air of the man who has played the explorer, who has peered into strange places, who has handled the reins which guide the white horse of life as well as the black horse of death.

"I am quite sure," he said, in a tone of kindly approval, "that I shall find you a most interesting companion on this trip. You and I must have a little further conversation together. I have won a considerable sum of money, I may say, by my--er--exploit, and I have invited some of these newspaper fellows to take a drink with me before luncheon in the smoking room. I hope you will join us?"

"I shall be delighted," Jocelyn accepted. "A drink with a friend, and a little mutual toast, is always a pleasure."

Crawshay paused. They were standing outside the entrance to the captain's cabin.

"I quite agree with you," he said. "Exercise your ingenuity, Mr. Jocelyn Thew, and think out a toast that we can both drink sincerely. You will excuse me? I am going in to talk to the captain for a few minutes. There are a few matters concerning my personal comfort which need his attention. I find the purser," he added, dropping his voice, "an excellent fellow, no doubt, but just a trifle unsympathetic, eh?"

"I have no doubt you are right," Jocelyn agreed. "We will meet again, then, just before one o'clock."

Crawshay knocked at the door of the captain's room, received a stentorian invitation to enter, and sank a little plaintively into a vacant easy-chair. The purser, who had been in close confabulation with his chief, hastily took his leave.

"Good morning, sir," the visitor said languidly.

"Good morning, Mr. Crawshay," the captain replied. "Feeling a little stronger this morning, I hope?"

Crawshay sighed.

"The memory of that experience," he began, settling down in his chair,--

"Well, well, you ought to have got over that by this time," the captain interrupted. "What can I do for you, Mr. Crawshay? I have been yarning with the purser a little longer than usual, this morning, and I have some rounds to do."

"I must not stand in the way of your daily avocation," the newcomer said gloomily. "I really dropped in chiefly to see if by any chance you had had a wireless message about me."

"Not a word."

"No message, eh? Now, do you know, that seems to me exceedingly strange," Crawshay ruminated.

"I don't see why it should," was the somewhat brusque reply. "I have no doubt that the New York papers have some wonderful headlines--'How an Englishman catches the steamer!' or 'An English diplomatist, eager to fight'--and all that sort of thing. But apart from the spectacular side of it, I don't suppose they consider your adventure of national interest."

"On the contrary, it is the development of a new era," Crawshay replied, with dignity. "Just consider what actually happened. I miss the steamer, owing to the breakdown of the Chicago Limited and a subsequent automobile accident. I arrive at the dock whilst you are in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. What do I do? What no one else has ever done before! I fly after you! Romance has never pictured such a thing. I am a pioneer, Captain."

The Captain grinned.

"You've been pretty sorry for yourself ever since," he observed.

"I must confess that I made up my mind to the heroic deed in a rash moment," Crawshay acknowledged. "I am a person of strong and unconquerable impulses. You see, that exceedingly disagreeable American policeman who was sent up to Halifax on a fool's errand with me, and who subsequently led me on another to Chicago, bet me five

hundred dollars, as we stood upon the dock, that I couldn't catch that steamer. Now if there is one thing," he went on, crossing his legs, "which excites my interest more than another, it is a bet."

"That and your accent," the captain said, smiling, "are two of your most prominent British traits, Mr. Crawshay." The latter took out his eyeglass and polished it.

"I have others," he retorted, "but never mind. I understood you to say, I think, that you have heard nothing by wireless about me?"

"Not a word."

The captain glanced at his clock and showed some signs of impatience. His visitor, however, remained blandly imperturbable.

"I see that you have only one operator in the wireless room," he remarked.

"How do you know that?"

"I happened to be walking by last night, and I glanced in."

"We are short-handed," the captain explained.

"Quite naturally," Crawshay replied. "Now with reference to this young man, I watched him coming down the steps from his office this morning. You may be surprised to hear, Captain, that I found him unprepossessing--in fact I might almost say that I took a dislike to him."

"I am sure he would be very much disturbed if he knew your opinion," was the faintly sarcastic reply. "He happens to be a young man with exceptionally good credentials."

"Credentials," Crawshay observed blandly, "in which I have no faith--no faith whatever."

The captain turned his head suddenly. There was a new expression in his face as he looked keenly at his visitor.

"What do you mean, Mr. Crawshay?"

"Nothing much. I see you have been smoking a pipe, Captain. You will forgive me if I light one of these perfectly damnable cigarettes which are all I have been able to buy on board.--Thank you.--I talk better when I smoke."

"It seems to me that you talk a great deal of nonsense," the captain declared bluntly.

"Intermingled at times," the other insisted, "with a word or two of sense. Now I am going to repeat that I have very little faith in this

wireless operator of yours. At three o'clock this morning--I don't wish to tie myself down, Captain, so I will say in the vicinity of that hour--he received a message--a long one, I should imagine. I put it to you, sir--was that dispatch for you?"

"No," the captain admitted, "I had no message at that hour or since."

"Very-well, then," Crawshay continued, loosening a little muffler at his throat, "I suppose you can ascertain from the purser if any message was delivered to any one of your passengers?"

"I certainly can," the captain admitted, "but to tell you the truth, sir, I scarcely see how this concerns you."

"I am endeavouring," his visitor replied, with a little wave of his hand, "to justify my statement. Enquire of the purser, I beg you. It will do no harm."

The captain shrugged his shoulders, touched the bell and despatched his steward for Mr. Dix, the purser, who, happening to be on the deck outside, made an immediate appearance.

"Mr. Dix," the captain asked him, "can you tell me if you have received any wireless message intended for any one of the passengers at or since three o'clock this morning?" "Not one, sir."

Crawshay's smile was beatific and triumphant. He relit his cigarette which had gone out, and, crossing his legs, made himself a little more comfortable.

"Very well, then," he said, "what I should like to know is, what became of that message which made very pretty illuminations around your conductor, or whatever you call it, for at least a quarter of an hour this morning?"

"The message may merely have been an intercepted one," the purser pointed out. "It may not have been for us at all."

"I had an idea," Crawshay persisted, with bland and officious precision, "that even intercepted messages, especially in time of war, were referred to some person of authority on board. Apart from that, however, the message I refer to was written down and delivered to one of your passengers. I happened to see your operator leave his office with an envelope in his hand."

"At three o'clock in the morning?" the captain observed incredulously.

"At about a quarter of an hour past that time," the other assented.

"And what on earth were you doing about on deck?"

"I have strange habits," Crawshay confessed. "On board ship I indulge them. I like to sleep when I feel like it, and to wander about when I

feel inclined. After my extraordinary, my remarkable experience of yesterday, I was not disposed for slumber." "It appears to me, sir," the purser intervened, "that on board this ship you seem to do a great deal of walking about, considering you have only been with us for a little more than twelve hours."

"Liver," Crawshay explained confidentially. "I suffer intensely from my liver. Gentle and continual exercise is my greatest help."

The captain turned towards his junior officer.

"Mr. Dix," he suggested, "perhaps it will clear this little matter up if we send for Robins. You might just step out yourself and bring him round."

Crawshay extended an eager hand.

"I beg that you will do nothing of the sort," he pleaded.

"But why not?" the captain demanded. "You have made a definite charge against a wireless operator on the ship. He ought to be placed in the position to be able to refute it if he can."

"There is no doubt," Crawshay agreed, "that in course of time he will be given that opportunity. At present it would be indiscreet."

"And why?"

"Because there will be other messages, and one is driven to the conclusion that it would be exceedingly interesting to lay hands on one of these messages, no record of which is kept, of which the purser is not informed, and which are delivered secretly to--"

"Well, to whom?" the captain demanded.

"To a passenger on board this steamer."

The captain shook his head. His whole expression was one of disapproval.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "If Robins has failed in his duty, which I still take the liberty of doubting, I must cross-question him at once."

Crawshay assumed the air of a pained invalid whose wishes have been thwarted.

"You must really oblige me by doing nothing of the sort," he begged.

"I am sure that my way is best. Besides, you make me feel like an eavesdropper--a common informer, and that sort of thing, you know."

"I am afraid that I cannot allow any question of sentiment to stand between me and the discipline of my ship," was the somewhat

uncompromising reply.

Crawshay sighed, and with languid fingers unbuttoned his overcoat and coat. Then, from some mysterious place in the neighbourhood of his breast pocket, he produced an envelope containing a single half-sheet of paper.

"Read that, sir, if you please," he begged.

The captain accepted the envelope with some reluctance, straightened out its contents, read the few words it contained several times, and handed back the missive. He stood for a moment like a man in a dream. Crawshay returned the envelope to his pocket and rose to his feet.

"Well, I'll be getting along," he observed. "We'll have another little chat, Captain, later on. I must take my matutinal stroll, or I know how I shall feel about luncheon time. Besides, there are some exuberant persons on board who are expecting me to offer them refreshment about one o'clock, out of my winnings, and, attached to your wonderful country as I am, Captain, I must admit that cocktails do not agree with me." "One has to get used to them," the captain murmured absently.

"I am most unfortunate, too, in the size of my feet," Crawshay continued dolefully, looking down at them. "If there is one thing I thoroughly dislike, it is being on board ship without rubber overshoes--a product of your country, Captain, which I must confess that I appreciate more than your cocktails. Good morning, sir. I hope I haven't kept you from your rounds. Dear me!" he added, in a tone of vexation, as he passed through the door, "I believe that I have been sitting in a draught all the time. I feel quite shivery."

He shambled down the deck. The purser lingered behind with an enquiring expression in his eyes, but his chief did not take the hint.

"Dix," he said solemnly, as he put on his cap and started out on his rounds, "I was right. This is going to be a very queer voyage indeed!"

CHAPTER VII

Crawshay walked slowly along the deck until he found a completely sheltered spot. Then he summoned the deck steward and superintended the arrangement of his deck chair, which was almost hidden under a heap of rugs. He had just adjusted a pair of spectacles and was preparing to settle down when Katharine, in her nurse's uniform, issued from the companionway and stood for a moment looking about her. Crawshay at once raised his cap.

"Good morning, Miss Beverley," he said. "You do not recognise me, of

course, but my name is Crawshay. I had the pleasure of meeting you once at Washington."

"I remember you quite well, Mr. Crawshay," she replied, glancing with some amusement at his muffled-up state. "Besides, you must remember that you are the hero of the ship. I suppose I ought to congratulate you upon your wonderful descent upon us yesterday."

"Pray don't mention it," Crawshay murmured. "The chance just came my way. I--er--" he went on, gazing hard at her uniform, "I was not aware that you were personally interested in nursing."

"That shows how little you know about me, Mr. Crawshay." "I have heard," he admitted, "of your wonderful deeds of philanthropy, also that you entirely support a large hospital in New York, but I had no idea that you interested yourself personally in the--er--may I say most feminine and charming avocation of nursing?"

"I have been a probationer," she told him, "in my own hospital, and I am at the present moment in attendance upon a patient on board this steamer."

"You amaze me!" he exclaimed. "You--did I understand you to say that you were in personal attendance upon a patient?"

"That is so, Mr. Crawshay."

"Well, well, forgive my astonishment," he continued. "I had no idea. At any rate I am glad that your patient's state of health permits you to leave him for a time."

Her expression became a little graver.

"As a matter of fact," she sighed, "my patient is very ill indeed, I am afraid. However, the doctor shares the responsibility with me, and he is staying with him now for half an hour."

"May I, in that case," he begged, "share your promenade?"

"With pleasure," she acquiesced, without enthusiasm. "You will have to take off some of your coats, though."

"I am suffering from chill," he explained. "I sometimes think that I shall never be warm again, after my experience of yesterday."

He divested himself, however, of his outside coat, arranged his muffler carefully, thrust his hands into his pockets, and fell into step by her side. "I am interested," he observed, "in illness. What exactly is the matter with your charge?"

"He has had a bad operation," she replied, "and there are complications."

"Dear me! Dear me!" Crawshay exclaimed, in a shocked tone. "And in such a state he chooses to make a perilous voyage like this?"

"That is rather his affair, is it not?" she said drily.

"Precisely," her companion agreed. "Precisely! I should not, perhaps, have made the remark. Sickness, however, interests me very much. I have the misfortune not to be strong myself, and my own ailments occupy a good deal of my attention."

She looked at him curiously.

"You suffer from nerves, don't you?" she enquired.

"Hideously," he assented.

"And yet," she continued, still watching him in a puzzled fashion, "you made that extraordinary voyage through the air to catch this steamer. That doesn't seem to me to be at all the sort of thing a nervous person would do."

"It was for a bet," he explained confidentially. "The only occasion upon which I forget my nerves is when there is a bet to be lost or won. At the time," he went on, "my deportment was, I think, all that could have been desired. The sensations of which I was undoubtedly conscious I contrived to adequately conceal. The after-shock, however, has, I must admit, been considerable."

"Was it really so terribly important," she enquired, "that you should be in London next week?"

"The War Office made a special point of it," he assured her. "Got to join up, you know, directly I arrive."

"Do you think," she enquired after a brief pause, "that you will enjoy soldiering better than pseudo-diplomacy? I don't exactly know how to refer to your work. I only remember that when we were introduced I was told that you had something to do with the Secret Service."

They were leaning over the side of the steamer, and she glanced curiously at his long, rather sunken face, at the uncertain mouth, and at the eyes, carefully concealed behind a pair of green spectacles. He seemed, somehow, to have aged since they had first met, a year ago, in Washington.

"To tell you the truth," he confided, "I am a little tired of my job. Neither fish nor fowl, don't you know. I took an observation course at Scotland Yard, but I suppose I am too slow-witted for what they call secret-service work over here."

"America wouldn't provide you with many opportunities, would it?" she observed.

"You are quite right," he replied. "I am much more at home upon the Continent. The Secret Service in America, as we understand it, does not exist. One finds oneself continually in collaboration with police inspectors, and people who naturally do not understand one's point of view. At any rate," he concluded, with a little sigh, "if I have any talents, they haven't come to the front in Washington. I don't believe that dear old Sir Richard was at all sorry to see the last of me."

"And you think you will prefer your new profession?"

"Soldiering? Well, I shall have to train up a bit and see. Beastly ugly work they seem to make of it, nowadays. I don't mind roughing it up to the extent of my capacity, but I do think that the advice of one's medical man should be taken into consideration."

She laughed at him openly.

"Do you know," she said, "I can't picture you campaigning in France!"

"To tell you the truth I can't picture it myself," he confessed frankly. "The stories I have heard with reference to the absence of physical comforts are something appalling. By-the-by," he went on, as though the idea had suddenly occurred to him, "I can't think how your patient can rest, anyhow, after an operation, on beds like there are on this steamer. I call it positively disgraceful of the company to impose such mattresses upon their patrons. My bones positively ache this morning."

"Mr. Phillips has his own mattress," she told him, "or rather one of the hospital ones. He was carried straight into the ambulance from the ward."

"Mr.--er--Phillips," Crawshay repeated. "Have I ever met him?"

"I should think not."

"He is, of course, a very great friend of yours?"

"I don't know why you should suppose that."

"Come, come," he remonstrated, "I suppose I am an infernally curious, prying sort of chap, but when one thinks of you, a society belle of America, you know, and, further, the patroness of that great hospital, crossing the Atlantic yourself in charge of a favoured patient, one can't help--can one?"

"Can one what?" she asked coolly.

"Scenting a romance or a mystery," he replied. "In any case, Mr. Phillips must be a man of some determination, to risk so much just for the sake of getting home."

She turned and recommenced their promenade.

"I wonder whether you realise that it isn't etiquette to question a nurse about her patient," she reminded him.

"I'm sure I am very sorry," he assured her. "I didn't imagine that my questions were in any way offensive. I told you from the first that I was always interested in invalids and cases of illness."

She turned her head and looked at him. Her glance was reproof, her manner impatient.

"Really, Mr. Crawshay," she said, "I think that you are one of the most inquisitive people I ever met."

"It really isn't inquisitiveness," he protested. "It's just obstinacy. I hate to leave a problem unexplained."

"Then to prevent any further misunderstanding, Mr. Crawshay," she concluded, a little coldly, "let me tell you that there are private reasons which make any further questioning on your part, concerning this matter, impertinent."

Crawshay lifted his cap. He had the air of a man who has received a rebuff which he takes in ill part.

"I will not risk your further displeasure, Miss Beverley," he said, stopping by his steamer chair. "I trust that you will enjoy the remainder of your promenade. Good morning!"

He summoned the deck steward to arrange his rugs, and lay back in his steamer chair, eating broth which he loathed, and watching Jocelyn Thew and Katharine Beverley through spectacles which somewhat impaired his vision. The two had strolled together to the side of the ship to watch a shoal of porpoises go by.

"I see that you are acquainted with our hero of the seaplane," Jocelyn Thew remarked.

She nodded.

"I met him once at Washington and once at the polo games."

"Tell me what you think of him?"

She smiled.

"Well," she confessed, "I scarcely know how to think of him. I must say, though, that in a general way I should think any profession would suit him better than diplomacy."

"You find him stupid?"

"I do," she admitted, "and in a particularly British way."

Jocelyn glanced thoughtfully across at Crawshay, who was contemplating his empty cup with apparent regret.

"You will not think that I am taking a liberty, Miss Beverley, if I ask you a question?"

"Why should I? Is it so very personal?"

"As a matter of fact, it isn't personal at all. I was only going to ask you if you would mind telling me what our friend Mr. Crawshay was talking to you about just now?" "Are you really interested?" she asked, with an air of faint surprise. "Well, if you must know, he was asking questions about my patient. He appears to be something of a hypochondriac himself, and he is very interested in illnesses."

"He has the air of one who takes care of himself," Jocelyn observed, with a faint smile. "However, one mustn't judge. He may be delicate."

"I think he is an old woman," she remarked carelessly.

"He rather gives one that impression, doesn't he?" Jocelyn agreed. "By-the-by, there wasn't much you could tell him about your patient, was there?"

"There really isn't anything at all," she replied. "I just mentioned his condition, and as Mr. Crawshay still seemed curious, I reminded him that it was not etiquette to question a nurse about her patients."

"Most discreet," Jocelyn declared. "As a matter of fact," he went on, "I have scarcely thought it worth while to mention it to you, because I knew exactly the sort of answer you would make to any too curious questions, but there is a reason, and a very serious reason, why my friend Phillips wishes to avoid so far as possible all manner of notice and questions."

"You call him your friend Phillips," she remarked, "yet you don't seem to have been near him since we started."

"Nor do I intend to," he replied. "That is the other point concerning which I wish to speak to you. You may think it very extraordinary, and I offer no explanation, but I do not wish it known to--say, Mr. Crawshay, or any other casual enquirer, that I have any acquaintance with or interest in Phillips."

"The subject is dismissed," she promised lightly. "I am not in the least an inquisitive person. I understand perfectly, and my lips are sealed."

His little smile of thanks momentarily transformed his expression. Her eyes became softer as they met his.

"Now please walk with me for a little time," she begged, "and let us leave off talking of these grizzly subjects. You've really taken very

little notice of me so far, and I have been rather looking forward to the voyage. You have traveled so much that I am quite sure you could be a most interesting companion if you wished to be."

He obeyed at once, falling easily into step with her, and talking lightly enough about the voyage, their fellow passengers, and other trifling subjects. Her occasional attempts to lead the conversation into more serious channels, even to the subject of his travels, he avoided, however, with a curious persistency. Once she stopped short and forced him to look at her.

"Mr. Jocelyn Thew," she complained, "tell me why you persist in treating me like a child?"

Then for the first time his tone became graver.

"I want to treat you and think of you," he said, "in the only way that is possible for me."

"Explain, please," she begged.

He led her again to the side of the ship. The sea had freshened, and the spray flew past them like salt diamonds.

"Since it has pleased you to refer to the subject, Miss Beverley," he said seriously, "I will explain so far as I am able. I suppose that I have committed nearly every one of the crimes which our abbreviated dictionary of modern life enumerates. If the truth were known about me, and I were judged by certain prevailing laws, not only my reputation but my life might be in serious danger. But there is one crime which I have not committed and which I do not intend to commit, one pain which I have avoided all my life myself, and avoided inflicting upon others. I think you must know what I refer to."

"I can assure you that I do not," she told him frankly. "In any case I hate ambiguity. Do please tell me exactly what you mean."

"I was referring to my attitude towards your sex," he replied.

There was a faint twinkle in her eyes.

"That sounds so ponderous," she murmured. "Don't you like us, then?"

"There are circumstances in my life," he said, "which prevent my even considering the subject."

She turned and looked him full in the eyes. Her very sweet mouth was suddenly pathetic, her eyes were full of gentle resentment.

"I do not believe," she said firmly, "that you have done a single thing in life of which you ought to be ashamed. I do not believe one of the hard things you have said about yourself. I am not a child. I am a woman--twenty-six years old--and I like to choose my own friends."

I should like you to be my friend, Mr. Thew."

He murmured a few words entirely conventional. Nothing in his expression responded in the least to the appeal of her words. His face had grown like granite. He turned to the purser, who was strolling by. As though unconsciously, the finer qualities of his voice had gone as he engaged the latter in some trivial conversation.

CHAPTER VIII

That night at dinner time a stranger appeared at the captain's table. A dark, thick-browed man, in morning clothes of professional cut, was shown by one of the saloon stewards to a seat which had hitherto been vacant. Crawshay, whose place was nearly opposite, leaned across at once with an air of interest.

"Good evening, Doctor," he said.

"Good evening, sir," was the somewhat gruff reply.

"Glad to see that you are able to come in and join us," Crawshay continued, unabashed. "You are, I believe, the physician in attendance on Mr. Phillips. I am very interested in illnesses. As a matter of fact, I am a great invalid myself."

The doctor contented himself with a muttered monosyllable which was not brimful of sympathy.

"This is a very remarkable expedition of yours," Crawshay went on. "I am a man of very little sentiment myself--one place to me is very much like another--so I do not understand this wild desire on the part of an invalid to risk his life by undertaking such a journey. It is a great feat, however. It shows what can be accomplished by a man of determination, even when he is on the point of death." "Who said that my patient was on the point of death?" the doctor demanded brusquely.

"It is common report," Crawshay assured him. "Besides, as you know, the New York press got hold of the story before you started, and the facts were in all the evening papers."

"What facts?"

"Didn't you read them? Most interesting!" Crawshay continued. "They all took the same line, and agreed that it was an absolutely unprecedented occurrence for a man to embark upon an ocean voyage only a few days after an operation for appendicitis, with double pneumonia behind, and angina pectoris intervening. Almost as unusual," Crawshay concluded with a little bow, "as the fact of his being escorted by the most distinguished amateur nurse in the world, and a physician of such

distinction as Doctor--Doctor--Dear me, how extraordinary! For the moment I must confess that your name has escaped me."

The heavy-browed man leaned forward a little deliberately towards his _vis-à-vis_. His was not an attractive personality. His features were large and of bulldog type. His forehead was low, and his eyes, which gave one the impression of being clear and penetrating, were concealed by heavy spectacles. His hands only, which were well-shaped and cared for, might have indicated his profession.

"My name," he said, "is Gant--Doctor James H. Gant. You are not, I presume, a medical man yourself?"

Crawshay shook his head.

"A most admirable profession," he declared, "but one which I should never have the nerve to follow."

"You do not, therefore, appreciate the fact," Doctor Gant continued, "that a medical man, especially one connected with a hospital of such high standing as St. Agnes's, does not discuss his patient's ailments with strangers."

"No offence, Doctor--no offence," Crawshay protested across the table. "Mine is just the natural interest in a fellow sufferer of a man who has known most of the ailments to which we weak humans are subject."

"I suppose, as we have the pleasure of your company this evening," the captain intervened, "Miss Beverley will be an absentee?"

"Miss Beverley at the present moment is taking my place," the doctor replied. "She insisted upon it. Personally, I am used to eating at all times and in all manner of places."

There was a brief silence, during which Crawshay discussed the subject of inoculation for colds in the head with his neighbour on the other side, and the doctor showed a very formidable capacity for making up for any meals which he might have missed by too rigid an attention to his patient. The captain presently addressed him again.

"Have you met our ship's doctor yet?" he enquired.

"I have had that honour," Doctor Gant acknowledged. "He was good enough to call upon me yesterday and offer his assistance should I require it."

"A very clever fellow, I believe," the captain observed.

"He impressed me some," the other confessed. "If any further complications should arise, it will be a relief for me to consult him."

The subject of the sick man dropped. Crawshay walked out of the saloon

with the captain and left him at the bottom of the stairs.

"I'll take the liberty of paying you a short call presently, Captain, if I may," he said. "I just want to fetch my wraps. And by-the-by, did I tell you that I have been fortunate enough to find a pair of rubbers that just fit me, at the barber's? One of the greatest blessings on board ship, Captain, believe me, is the barber's shop. It's like a bijou Harrod's or Whiteley's--anything you want, from an elephant to a needle, you know. In about ten minutes, Captain, if I shan't be disturbing you."

The captain found the purser on deck and took him into his cabin.

"I saw you speaking to Doctor Gant in the gangway," the former observed. "I wonder what he really thinks about his patient?"

"I think I can tell you that, sir, without betraying any confidences," the purser replied. "Unless a miracle happens, there'll be a burial before we get across. Poor fellow, it seems too bad after such an effort."

The captain nodded sympathetically.

"After all, I can understand this hankering of a man to die in his own country," he said. "I had a brother once the same way. They brought him home from Australia, dying all the way, as they believed, but directly he set foot in England he seemed to take on a new lease of life--lived for years afterwards." "Is that so?" the purser remarked. "Well, this fellow ought to have a chance. It's a short voyage, and he has his own doctor and nurse to look after him."

"Let's hope they'll keep him alive, then. I hate the burial service at sea."

The captain turned aside and filled his pipe thoughtfully.

"Dix," he continued, "as you know, I am not a superstitious man, but there seems to be something about this trip I can't fathom."

"Meaning, sir?"

"Well, there's this wireless business, first of all. We shall close it up in about thirty-six hours, you know, and in the meantime I have been expecting half a dozen messages, not one of which has come through."

"Young fellow of the highest character, Robins," the purser remarked drily.

"That may be," the captain agreed, "and yet I can't get rid of my premonition. I wouldn't mind laying you anything you like, Dix, that we don't sight a submarine, and shouldn't, even if we hadn't our guns trained."

"That's one comfort, anyway. Being a family man, sir--"

"Yes, I know all about your family, Dix," the captain interrupted irritably, "but just at the present moment I am more interested in what is going on in my ship. I begin to believe that Mr. Crawshay's voyage through the air wasn't altogether a piece of bravado, after all."

The purser smiled a little incredulously. "He sent round this evening to know if I could lend him some flannel pyjamas," he said,--"says all the things that have been collected together for him are too thin. That man makes me tired, sir."

"He makes me wonder."

"How's that, sir?"

"Because I can't size him up," the captain declared. "There isn't a soul on board who isn't laughing at him and saying what a sissy he is. They say he has smuggled an extra lifebelt into his cabin, and spends half his time being seasick and the other half looking out for submarines."

"That's the sort of fellow he seems to me, anyway," the purser observed.

"I can't say that I've quite made up my mind," the captain pronounced. "I suppose you know, Dix, that he was connected with the Secret Service at the English Embassy?"

"I didn't know it," Dix replied, "but if he has been, Lord help us! No wonder the Germans have got ahead of us every time!"

"I don't think he was much of a success," the other continued, "and as a matter of fact he is on his way back to England now to do his bit of soldiering. All the same, Dix, he gave me a turn the other day."

"How's that, sir?"

"Showed me an order, signed by a person I won't name," the captain went on, lowering his voice, "requesting me to practically run the ship according to his directions--making him a kind of Almighty boss."

Mr. Dix opened his lips and closed them again. His eyes were wide open with astonishment. There was an indecisive knock at the door, which at a gesture from the captain he opened. Wrapped in a huge overcoat, with a cap buttoned around his ears and a scarf nearly up to his mouth, Crawshay stood there, seeking admittance.

* * * * *

"I am exceedingly fortunate to find you both here," the newcomer

observed, as he removed his cap. "Captain, may I have a few minutes' conversation with you and Mr. Dix?"

"Delighted," the captain acquiesced, "so long as you don't keep me more than twenty minutes. I am due on the bridge at nine o'clock."

"I will endeavour not to be prolix," Crawshay continued, carefully removing his rubbers, unfastening his scarf and loosening his overcoat. "A damp night! I fear that we may have fog."

"This all comes off the twenty minutes," the captain reminded him.

Crawshay smiled appreciatively.

"Into the heart of things, then! Let me tell you that I suspect a conspiracy on board this boat."

"Of what nature?" the captain asked swiftly.

"It is my opinion," Crawshay said deliberately, "that the result of the whole accumulated work of the German Secret Service, compiled since the beginning of the war by means of Secret Service agents, criminals, and patriotic Germans and Austrians resident in the States, is upon this ship."

"Hell!" the purser murmured, without reproof from his chief.

"It was believed," Crawshay continued, "that these documents, together with a letter of vital importance, were on the steamer which conveyed the personnel of the late German Ambassador to Europe. The steamer was delayed at Halifax and a more or less complete search was made. I was present on behalf of the English Embassy, but I did not join personally in the search. You have all heard that the seals of a tin chest belonging to a neutral country had been tampered with. The chiefs of my department, and the head of the American Secret Service, firmly believe that the missing papers are in that chest and will be discovered when the chest is opened in London. That is not a belief which I share."

"And your reasons, Mr. Crawshay?" the captain asked.

"First, because Hobson and I were decoyed to Chicago by a bogus telegram, evidently with the idea that we should find it impossible to catch or search this steamer. Secondly, because there is on board just the one man whom I believe capable of conceiving and carrying out a task as difficult as this one would be."

"Who is he?" the captain demanded.

"A very inoffensive, well-mannered and exceedingly well-informed individual who is travelling in this steamer under, I believe, his own name--Mr. Jocelyn Thew."

"Jocelyn Thew!" the captain murmured.

"Thew!" the purser repeated.

"Now I tell you that I have definite suspicions of this man," Crawshay continued, "because I know that for some reason or other he hates England, although he has the appearance of being an Englishman. I know that he has been friendly with enemy agents in New York, and I know that he has been in recent communication with enemy headquarters at Washington. Therefore, as I say, I suspect Mr. Jocelyn Thew. I also suspect Robins, the wireless operator, because I am convinced that he has received messages of which he has taken no record. I now pass on to the remainder of my suspicions, for which I frankly admit that I have nothing but surmise. I suspect Mr. Phillips, Doctor Gant and Miss Katharine Beverley."

The last shock proved too much for the captain. For the first time there was distinct incredulity in his face.

"Look here, Mr. Crawshay," he protested, "supposing you are right, and that you are on the track of a conspiracy, how do you account for a physician from the finest hospital in New York and one of the best-known young ladies in America being mixed up in it?"

Crawshay acknowledged the difficulties of the supposition.

"As regards the physician," he said thoughtfully, "I must confess that I am without information concerning him, a fact which increases my suspicion of Robins, for I should have had his _dossier_, and also that of the man Phillips, by wireless twenty-four hours ago."

"What about Miss Beverley then?" the captain enquired. "Her family is not only one of the oldest in America, but they are real Puritan, Anglo-Saxon stock, white through and through. She has a dozen relatives in Congress, who have all been working for war with Germany for the last two years. She also has, as she told me herself, a brother and four cousins fighting on the French front--the brother in the Canadian Flying Corps, and the cousins in the English Army."

"There I must confess that you have me," Crawshay admitted. "What you say is perfectly true. That is one of the mysteries. No plot would be worth solving, you know, if it hadn't a few mysteries in it."

"If you will allow me a word, Mr. Crawshay," the purser intervened, "I think you will have to leave Doctor Gant and his patient and Miss Beverley out of your speculations. I have our own ship doctor's word for it that Mr. Phillips' condition is exactly as has been stated. Mr. Jocelyn Thew may or may not be a suspicious character. Anything you suggest in the way of watching him can be done. But as regards the other three, I trust that you will not wish their comfort interfered with in any respect."

"Beyond the search to which every one on board will have to be

subjected," Crawshay replied, "I shall not interfere in any respect with the three people in question. Mr. Jocelyn Thew, however, is different. He is a man who has led a most adventurous life. He seems to have travelled in every part of the globe, wherever there was trouble brewing or a little fighting to be done."

"Why do you connect him with the present enterprise?" the captain asked.

"Because," Crawshay answered, "the wireless message of which your man Robins took no record, and concerning which you have kept silence at my request, was delivered to Mr. Jocelyn Thew. Because, too," he went on, "it is my very earnest belief that at somewhere in the small hours of this morning there will be another message, and Mr. Jocelyn Thew will be on deck to receive it."

The captain knocked out the ashes of his pipe a little apprehensively.

"If half what you suspect is true, Mr. Crawshay," he said, "you will forgive my saying so, but Jocelyn Thew is not a man you ought to tackle without assistance."

There was a peculiar glitter in Crawshay's deep-set eyes. For a single moment a new-born strength seemed to deepen the lines in his face--a transforming change.

"You needn't worry, Captain," he remarked coolly. "I am not taking too many chances, and if our friend Mr. Jocelyn Thew should turn out to be the man I believe him to be, I would rather tackle him alone."

"Why," Mr. Dix demanded, "should anything in the shape of violence take place? The ship can be searched, every article of baggage ransacked, and every passenger made to run the gauntlet."

Crawshay smiled.

"The search you speak of is already arranged for, Mr. Dix," he said; "long cables from my friend Hobson have already reached Liverpool--but the efficacy of such a proposed search would depend a little, would it not, upon whether we reach Liverpool?" "But if we were submarined," the captain pointed out, "the papers would go to the bottom."

Crawshay leaned forward and whispered one word in the captain's ear. The latter sat for a moment as though paralysed.

"What's to prevent that fellow Robins bringing her right on to our track?" Crawshay demanded. "That is the reason I spent last night listening for the wireless. It's the reason I'm going to do the same to-night."

The captain sprang to his feet.

"We'll run no risks about this," he declared firmly. "We'll dismantle

the apparatus. I'd never hold up my head again if the _Von Blucher_ got us!"

Crawshay held out his hand.

"Forgive me, Captain," he said, "but we want proof. Leave it to me, and if things are as I suspect, we'll have that proof--probably before to-morrow morning," he added, glancing at the chart.

There was a call down the deck, a knock at the door. The captain took up his oilskins regretfully.

"You will remember," Crawshay enjoined, "that little mandate I showed you?"

The captain nodded grimly.

"I am in your hands," he admitted. "Don't forget that the safety of the ship may be in your hands, too!"

"Perhaps," Crawshay whispered, "even more than the safety of the ship."

CHAPTER IX

Robins, the wireless operator, bent closer over his instrument, and the blue fires flashed from the masthead of the steamer, cutting their way through the darkness into the black spaces beyond. The little room was lit by a dull oil light, the door was fast-closed and locked. Away into the night sped one continual message.

"Steamship _City of Boston_, lat.... long.... lying four points to northward of usual course. Reply."

A time came when the young man ceased from his labours and sat up with a yawn. He stretched out his hand and lit a cigarette, walked to the little round window which commanded the deck, gazed out of it steadily, and turned back once more to his chair before the instrument. Then something happened. A greater shock than any that lay in the blue lightning which he had been generating was awaiting him. His right hand was suddenly gripped and held on to the table. He found himself gazing straight down the black bore of a small but uncommonly ugly-looking revolver. A voice which seemed remarkable for its convincing qualities, addressed him.

"If you speak a word, Robins, move, or show signs of any attempt to struggle, I shall shoot you. I have the right and the power." Robins, a young man of nerve, whose name stood high on an official list of those who might be relied upon for any desperate enterprise, sat like

a numbed thing. Dim visions of the face of this man, only a few feet away from his own, assailed him under some very different guise. It was Crawshay the man, stripped for action, whose lean, strong fingers were gripping the butt of that revolver, and whose eyes were holding him like gimlets.

"Now, if you are wise, answer me a few questions," Crawshay began. "I'd have brought the captain with me, but I thought we might do better business alone. You've been advertising the ship's whereabouts. Why?"

"I've only been giving the usual calls," the young man muttered.

"Don't lie to me," was the grim reply. "Your wireless was supposed to be silent from yesterday midday except for the purpose of receiving calls. I ask you again, why and to whom were you advertising our whereabouts and course?"

Robins looked at the revolver, looked at Crawshay, and was dimly conscious of a damp feeling about his forehead. Nevertheless, his lips were screwed together, and he remained silent.

"Come," Crawshay went on, "we'll have a common-sense talk. I am an agent of the British Secret Service. I have unlimited powers upon this ship, power to put a bullet through your head if I choose, and not a soul to question it. The game's up so far as you are concerned. You have received messages on this steamer of which you have kept no record, but which you have delivered secretly to a certain passenger. Of that I may or may not speak later on. At present I am more interested in your operations of to-night. You are signalling the information of our whereabouts for some definite reason. What is it? Were you trying to pick up the _Blucher?_"

"I wasn't trying to pick up anybody," the young man faltered.

Crawshay's fingers gripped him by the shoulder. His very determined-looking mouth had suddenly become a ring of steel.

"If you don't give me a different answer in ten seconds, Robins, I'll blow your brains all over the cabin!"

The young man broke.

"I was trying to pick up the _Blucher_," he acknowledged.

"That's exactly what I thought," Crawshay muttered. "That's the game, without a doubt. What are you? An Englishman?"

"I am not!" was the almost fierce reply. "Blast England!"

Crawshay looked into the black eyes, suddenly lit with an ugly fire, and nodded.

"I understand," he said. "Robins, your name, eh? Any relation to the young Sinn Feiner who was shot in Dublin a few months ago?"

"Brother."

"That may save your life later on," Crawshay observed coolly. "Now you can do one of three things. You can come with me to the captain, be put in irons and shot as soon as we land--or before, if the _Blucher_ finds us; or you can send the message which I shall give you; or you can end your days where you sit."

"What message?" the young man demanded.

"You will send out a general call, as before, repeating the latitude and longitude with a difference of exactly three points, and you will repeat the altered course, only you will substitute the word 'south' for the word 'north.'"

The young man's eyes suddenly gleamed as he turned towards the instrument, but Crawshay smiled with grim understanding.

"Let me tell you that I understand the wireless," he said impressively. "You will give the message exactly as I have told you or we finish things up on the spot. I think you had better. It's a matter of compulsion, you know--in fact I'll explain matters to Mr. Jocelyn Thew, if you like."

The young man's eyes were round with amazement.

"Jocelyn Thew!" he repeated.

"Precisely. You needn't look so terrified. It isn't you who have given away. Now what are you going to do?"

The young man swung round to his instrument. Crawshay released his hand, stepping a little back.

"You are going to send the message, then?"

"Yes!" was the sullen reply.

"Capital!" Crawshay exclaimed, cautiously subsiding into a chair. "Now you'll go on every ten minutes until I tell you to stop."

Robins bent over his task, and again the crackling waves broke away from their prison. Once his finger hesitated. He glanced surreptitiously at Crawshay. "Four degrees south," Crawshay repeated softly.

The night wore on. Every ten minutes the message was sent. Then there followed a brief silence, spent generally by Robins with his head drooped upon his clasped arms; by Crawshay in unceasing vigil. Just as the first faint gleam of daylight stole into the little turret

chamber, came the long-awaited-for reply. The young man wrote down the few lines and passed them over. Crawshay, who had risen to his feet, glanced at them, nodded, and thrust the paper into his pocket.

"That seems quite satisfactory," he said coldly. "Now ask the _Blucher_ her exact course?"

Robins sat for a moment motionless. He felt Crawshay's presence towering over him, felt again the spell of his softly-spoken command.

"Don't waste any time, please. Do as I tell you."

Robins obeyed. In less than a quarter of an hour he handed over another slip of paper. Crawshay thrust it into his pocket.

"That concludes our business," he said. "Now let me see if I remember enough of this apparatus to put it out of action."

He bent over the instrument, removed some plugs, turned some screws, and finally placed in his pocket a small concealed part of the mechanism. Then he turned towards Robins.

"You can leave here now," he directed. "I shall lock the place up."

Robins had in some measure recovered himself. He was a quiet, hollow-eyed young person, with thick black hair and a thin frame, about which the uniform of the ship hung loosely. "You are the man who boarded the steamer from a seaplane, aren't you, and pretended afterwards to be such a ninny?"

"I am," Crawshay acknowledged.

"How did you get on to this?"

Crawshay raised his eyebrows.

"Sorry," he replied, "that is a matter concerning which I fear that you will have to restrain your curiosity."

"How did you get in here?"

"By means of a duplicate key which I obtained from the purser. I hid in your bunk there and drew the curtains. Quite a comfortable mattress, yours. You'll have to change your sleeping quarters, though."

"What is going to happen to me?" the young man enquired.

"Probably nothing extreme. You were philosophical enough to accept the situation. If," Crawshay went on more slowly, "you had falsified a single word of those messages, your end would have been somewhat abrupt and your destination according to your past life. As it is, you can go where you choose now and report to the captain later on in the morning, after I have had a talk with him."

"My kit is all in here."

Crawshay laid his hand upon the operator's shoulder in peremptory fashion.

"Then you will have to do without it for the present," he replied coolly. "Outside."

The young man turned on his heel and disappeared without a word. Crawshay glanced once more at the dismantled instrument, then followed Robins on to the deck, carefully locking the door behind him. A grey, stormy morning was just breaking, with piles of angry clouds creeping up, and showers of spray breaking over the ship on the weather side. He chose a sheltered spot and stood for a few moments breathing in the strong salt air. Notwithstanding his success, he was unaccountably depressed. As far as he could see across the grey waste of waters, there was no sign of any passing ship, but the eastern horizon was blurred by a low-hanging bank of sinister-looking clouds. Suddenly a voice rang out, hailing him. It was the captain descending from the bridge.

"Come and have a cup of coffee with me in my room, Mr. Crawshay," he invited.

Crawshay felt himself suddenly back again in the world of real happenings. His depression passed as though by magic. After all, he had won the first trick, and the next move was already forming up in his mind.

CHAPTER X

The captain sank into his easy-chair a little wearily. It had been a long and rather trying vigil. His steward filled two cups with coffee and at a sign from his master withdrew.

"Any news?"

"I have been compelled," Crawshay announced, stirring his coffee, "to dismantle your wireless."

"The devil you have!"

"Also, to speak words of wisdom to young Robins. I detected him signalling our location to the _Blucher_."

The captain set down his coffee cup.

"Mr. Crawshay," he said, "this is a very serious accusation."

"It isn't an accusation at all--it's a fact," Crawshay replied.

"Luckily, he hadn't picked her up when I got there. He signalled our exact location and our course a dozen times or more, without response. Then I took a hand in the game."

"Exactly what happened?" the captain enquired.

"Well, I borrowed a key from Mr. Dix, and whilst the young man was down at his supper I concealed myself in his bunk. I listened to him for a short time, and then I intervened."

"Did he make any trouble?"

"He had no chance," Crawshay explained, a little grimly. "I was first off the mark. On this piece of paper," he added, smoothing it out, "you will find Robins' calculations as to our whereabouts, which I took as being correct. These, you understand, were not picked up. Lower down you will see the message which he sent under my superintendence later on--"

"Superintendence?" the captain interrupted.

"At the point of my revolver," Crawshay explained. "This message was picked up by the _Blucher_."

The captain scanned the calculations eagerly.

"Wish you'd given us a little more room," he muttered. "However, it will be all right unless we get fog. We might blunder into one another then."

"This little incident," Crawshay continued, crossing his legs, "confirms certain impressions with which I came on board. I think that the scheme was to get the documents on board this steamer, and then, in order to avoid the inevitable search at Liverpool, I fancy it was arranged that the _Blucher_ should be on the lookout for us and take over the messenger, whoever he may be, and the documents. It's a straightforward, simple little scheme, which we have now to look at from our own point of view. In the first place, the _Blucher_ is now very much less likely to capture us. In the second place, I would suggest that in case the _Blucher_ should happen to blunder across us, we make the search at once instead of in Liverpool."

"What, search every one on board?" the captain asked.

"Suspected persons only."

"Exactly who are they?" "First and foremost, Mr. Jocelyn Thew."

"And afterwards?"

Crawshay hesitated.

"Mr. Phillips and his entourage."

"What, the man who is supposed to be dying?"

"I will admit," Crawshay said, "that this is more or less guesswork, but I suspect every one with whom Jocelyn speaks."

"Great heavens, you are not thinking of Miss Beverley!" the captain exclaimed.

"I fail utterly to understand her acquaintance with Jocelyn Thew," Crawshay confided. "I do not propose, however, that you interfere with these people for the moment. What I do ask is that Jocelyn Thew's effects are searched, and at once."

"It's a thing that's never happened before on any steamer I've commanded," the captain said reluctantly, "but if it has to be done, I will do it myself."

"What chance of fog is there?" his companion enquired.

"We shall get some within twenty-four hours, for certain. It's coming up from the west now."

"Then the sooner you make a start with Mr. Jocelyn Thew, the better," Crawshay suggested. "I don't think there's one chance in a hundred that he'd have those documents in any place where we should be likely to find them by any ordinary search, but you can never tell. The cleverest men often adopt the most obvious methods."

The captain yawned.

"I'll have two hours' sleep," he decided, "then Dix and I will tackle the job. I don't suppose you want to be in it?" "I should prefer not," Crawshay replied. "I'll follow your example," he added, rising to his feet.

The habits of Mr. Jocelyn Thew on shore were doubtless most regular, but on board ship he had developed a proclivity for sleeping until long after the first breakfast gong. About half-past eight that morning, he was awakened from a sound sleep by a tap on his door, and instead of the steward with his hot water, no less a person entered than the captain, followed by the purser. Jocelyn sat up in his bunk and rubbed his eyes.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said. "Anything wrong?"

The captain undid the catch of the door and closed it behind him.

"Are you sufficiently awake to listen to a few words from me on a subject of importance, Mr. Thew?" he asked.

"Certainly," was the prompt reply.

"Very well, then," the captain proceeded, "I shall commence by taking you into my confidence. There is an impression on the part of the British and American Secret Services that an attempt is being made to convey documents of great importance, and containing treasonable matter, to Europe by some one on board this ship."

Jocelyn Thew, who was attired in silk pyjamas of very excellent quality, swung himself out of the bunk and sat upon the side of it. The captain was an observant man and of somewhat luxuriant tastes himself, and he fully appreciated the texture and quality of the suspected man's night apparel. "This sounds remarkably interesting," Jocelyn said. "Very kind of you, Captain, I am sure, to come and tell me about it."

"My visit," the captain continued, a little drily, "had a more definite object. It is my duty to explain to you that the circumstances of this voyage are unprecedented. We are going to take liberties with our passengers which in normal times would not be dreamed of."

Jocelyn Thew pushed the knob with his left hand and let some cold water run into his basin. Then he dabbed his eyes for several moments with his fingers.

"Yes, I seem to be awake," he remarked. "Tell me about these liberties, Captain?"

"To begin with, I am going to search your stateroom and baggage--or rather they are going to be searched under my supervision. Your trunk from the hold has already been brought up and is in the gangway."

"It seems to me," Jocelyn said, sitting, as Mr. Dix expressed it afterwards, like a tiger about to spring, "that you've been listening to that crazy loon, Crawshay."

"I am not at liberty," the captain rejoined, "to divulge the source from which my information came. I am only able to acquaint you with my intentions, and to trust that you will offer no obstruction."

"The obstruction which I could offer against the captain of a ship and his crew would be a waste of energy," Jocelyn observed, with fine sarcasm. "At the same time, I protest most bitterly against my things being touched. Any search you deemed necessary could be undertaken at Liverpool by the Customs officers in the usual way. I consider that this entrance into my stateroom on the high seas, and this arbitrary resolve of yours to acquaint yourself with the nature of my belongings is indefensible and a gross insult."

"I am sorry that you take it this way, Mr. Thew," the captain regretted. "Any complaints you feel it right to make can be addressed to the company's agents in Liverpool. At present I must proceed with

what I conceive to be my duty. Do you care to hand Mr. Dix your keys?"

"I will see Mr. Dix damned first!" Jocelyn assured him.

The captain shrugged his shoulders, called to the steward, who was waiting outside, and the search commenced. They opened drawers, they turned up the carpet. They invited Jocelyn Thew to sit upon the couch whilst they ripped open the bed, and they invited him to return to the bed whilst they ripped up the couch. His personal belongings, his dressing-case and his steamer trunk were gone through with painstaking care. His trunk, which was then dragged in, was ransacked from top to bottom. In due course the search was concluded, and except that his wearing apparel seemed chosen with extraordinary care and taste, nothing in any way suspicious was discovered. The captain made haste to acknowledge the fact.

"Well, Mr. Thew," he announced, "I have done my duty and you are out of it with a clean sheet. Have you any objection to answering a few questions?" "Every objection in the world," Jocelyn Thew replied.

The purser ventured to intervene.

"Come, Mr. Thew," he said, "you're an Englishman, aren't you?"

A light flashed in Thew's eyes.

"I shall break the promise I made to the captain just now," he declared, "and answer that one question, at any rate. I thank God I am not!"

Both men were a little startled. Jocelyn's cold, clear voice, his manner and bearing, were all so essentially Saxon. The captain, however, recovered himself quickly.

"If the tone of your voice is any index to your feelings, Mr. Thew," he said, "you appear to have some grudge against England. In that case you can scarcely wonder at the suspicions which have attached themselves to you."

"Suspicions!" Jocelyn repeated sarcastically. "Well, present my compliments to the wonderful Mr. Crawshay! I presume that I am at liberty now to take my bath?"

"In one moment, Mr. Thew. Even though you do not choose to answer them, there are certain questions I intend to ask. The first is, are you prepared to produce the Marconigram which you received last evening?"

"How do you know that I received one?"

"The fact has come to my knowledge," the captain said drily.

"You had better ask the operator about it."

"The operator is at the present moment under arrest," was the terse reply. If the news were a shock to Thew, he showed it in none of the ordinary ways. His face seemed to fall for a moment into harder lines. His mouth tightened and his eyes flashed.

"Under arrest?" he repeated. "More of Crawshay's tomfoolery, I suppose?"

"More of Mr. Crawshay's tomfoolery," the captain acknowledged. "Robins is accused of having received a Marconigram of which he took no note, and which he handed to a passenger. He is also accused of attempting to communicate with an enemy raider."

A peculiar smile parted Jocelyn's lips.

"You seem to wish to make this steamer of yours the *_mise-en-scene_* of a dime novel, Captain," he observed. "I accept the part of villain with resignation--but I should like to have my bath."

"You don't propose to tell me, then," his questioner persisted, "the contents of that message?"

"I have no recollection of having received one," Jocelyn replied coolly. "You are making me very late for breakfast."

They left him with a brusque word of farewell, to which he did not reply. Jocelyn, in a dark-green silk dressing gown, with a huge sponge and various silver-topped bottles, departed for the bathroom. The captain and the purser strolled up on deck.

"What do you make of that fellow, Dix?" the former asked.

The purser coughed.

"If you ask me, sir," he replied, "I think that Mr. Crawshay has got hold of the wrong end of the stick."

CHAPTER XI

Katharine came on deck that morning in a somewhat disturbed frame of mind. It was beginning to dawn upon her that her position as sick nurse to Mr. Phillips was meant to be a sinecure. She was allowed to sit by the sick man's side sometimes whilst the doctor took a promenade or ate a meal in the saloon, but apart from that, the usual exercise of her duties was not required from her. She was forced to admit that there was something mysterious about the little stateroom, the suffering man, and the doctor who watched him speechlessly night and day.

She was conscious presently that Crawshay, who had been walking up and down the deck, had stopped before the chair on which she lay extended. She greeted him without enthusiasm.

"Are you taking one of your health constitutionals, Mr. Crawshay?" she enquired.

"Not altogether," he replied. "May I sit down for a moment?"

"Of course! I don't think any one sits in that chair."

He took his place by her side, deliberately removed his muffler and unfastened his overcoat. It struck her, from the first moment she heard his voice, that his manner was somehow altered. She was altogether unprepared, however, for the almost stern directness of his first question. "Miss Beverley," he began, "will you allow me to ask you how long you have known Mr. Jocelyn Thew?"

She turned her head towards him and remained speechless for a moment. It seemed to her that she was looking into the face of a stranger. The little droop of the mouth had gone. The half-vacuous, half-bored expression had given place to something altogether new. The lines of his face had all tightened up, his eyes were hard and bright. She found herself quite unable to answer him in the manner she had intended.

"Are you asking me that question seriously, Mr. Crawshay?"

"I am," he assured her. "I have grave reasons for asking it."

"I am afraid that I do not understand you," she replied stiffly.

"You must change your attitude, if you please, Miss Beverley," Crawshay persisted. "Believe me, I am not trying to be impertinent. I am asking a question the necessity for which I am in a position to justify."

"You bewilder me!" she exclaimed.

"That is simply because you looked upon me as a different sort of person. To tell you the truth, I should very much have preferred that you continued to look upon me as a different sort of person during this voyage, but I cannot see my way clear to keep silence on this one point. I wish to inform you, if you do not know it already, that Mr. Jocelyn Thew is a dangerous person for you to know, or for you to be associated with in any shape or form." She would have risen to her feet but he stopped her.

"Please look at me," he begged.

She obeyed, half against her will.

"I want you to ask yourself," he went on, "whether you do not believe that I am your well-wisher. What I am saying to you, I am saying to save you from a position which later on you might bitterly regret."

She was conscious of a quality in his tone and manner entirely strange to her, and she found any form of answer exceedingly difficult. The anger which she would have preferred to have affected seemed, in the face of his earnestness, out of place.

"It seems to me," she said, "that you are assuming something which does not exist. I am not on specially intimate terms with Mr. Jocelyn Thew. I have not talked to him any more than to any other casual passenger."

"Is that quite honest?" he asked quietly. "Isn't it true that Jocelyn Thew is interested in your mysterious patient?"

She started.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say," he replied. "I happen also to have very grave suspicions concerning the presence on this ship of Mr. Phillips and his doctor."

Her fingers gripped the side of her deck chair. She leaned a little towards him.

"What concern is all this of yours?" she demanded.

"Never mind," he answered. "I am risking more than I should like to say in telling you as much as I have told you. I cannot believe that you would consciously associate yourself with a disgraceful and unpatriotic conspiracy. That is why I have chosen to risk a great deal in speaking to you in this way. Tell me what possible consideration was brought to bear upon you to induce you to accept your present situation?"

Katharine sat quite still. The thoughts were chasing one another through her brain. Then she was conscious of a strange thing. Her companion's whole expression seemed suddenly to have changed. Without her noticing any movement, his monocle was in his left eye, his lip had fallen a little. He was looking querulously out seaward.

"I don't believe," he declared, "that the captain has any idea about the weather prospects. Look at those clouds coming up. I don't know how you are feeling, Miss Beverley, but I am conscious of a distinct chill."

Jocelyn Thew had come to a standstill before them. He was wearing no overcoat and was bare-headed.

"I guess that chill is somewhere in your imagination, Mr. Crawshay,"

he observed. "You are pretty strong in that line, aren't you?"

Crawshay struggled to his feet.

"I have some ideas," he confessed modestly. "I spend my idle moments, even here, weaving a little fiction."

"And recounting it, I dare say," Jocelyn ventured.

"I am like all artists," Crawshay sighed. "I love an audience. I must express myself to something. I will wish you good evening, Miss Beverley. I feel inclined to take a little walk, in case it becomes too rough later on."

He shuffled away, once more the perfect prototype of the _malade imaginaire_. Jocelyn Thew watched him in silence until he had disappeared. Then he turned and seated himself by the girl's side.

"I find myself," he remarked ruminatively, "still a little troubled as to the precise amount of intelligence which our friend Mr. Crawshay might be said to possess. I wonder if I might ask; without your considering it a liberty, what he was talking to you about?"

"About you," she answered.

"Ah!"

"Warning me against you."

"Dear me! Aren't you terrified?"

"I am not terrified," she replied, "but I think it best to tell you that he also has suspicions, absurd though it may seem, of Phillips and the doctor."

"Why not the purser and captain, while he's about it?" Jocelyn said coolly. "Every one on this boat seems to have got the nerves. They searched my stateroom this morning."

"Searched your stateroom?" she repeated. "Do you mean while you were out?"

"Not a bit of it," he replied. "They dragged me up at half-past eight this morning--the captain, purser and a steward--fetched up my trunk and searched all my possessions."

"What for?" she asked, with a sudden chill.

He smiled at her reassuringly. "Something they didn't find! Something," he added, after a slight pause, "which they never will find!"

Towards midday, Jocelyn Thew abandoned a game of shuffleboard, and,

leaning against the side of the vessel, gazed steadily up at the wireless operating room. The lightnings had been playing around the mast for the last ten minutes without effect. He turned towards one of the ship's officers who was passing.

"Anything gone wrong with the wireless?" he enquired.

"The operator's ill, sir," was the prompt reply. "We've only one on board, as it happens, so we are rather in a mess."

Jocelyn strolled away aft, considering the situation. He found Crawshay seated in an elaborate deck chair and immersed in a novel.

"I hear the wireless has gone wrong," he remarked, stopping in front of him.

Crawshay glanced up blandly.

"What's that?" he demanded. "Wireless? Why, it's been going all the morning."

"There has been no one there to take the messages, though. If anything happens to us, we shall be in a nice pickle."

Crawshay shivered.

"I wish you people wouldn't suggest such things," he said, a little testily. "I was just trying to get all thought of this most perilous voyage out of my mind, with the help of a novel here. From which do you seriously consider we have most to fear," he went on, "mines, submarines, or predatory vessels of the type of the _Blucher_?"

"The latter, I should think," Jocelyn replied. "They say that submarines are scarcely venturing so far out just now."

There was a brief silence. Jocelyn Thew was apparently engaged in trying to fit a cigarette into his holder.

"Specially hard luck on you," he remarked presently, "if anything happened when you've taken so much trouble to get on board."

"It would be exceedingly annoying," Crawshay declared, with vigour, "added to which I am not in a state of health to endure a voyage in a small boat. I have been this morning to look at our places, in case of accident. I find that I am expected to wield an oar long enough to break my back."

Jocelyn Thew smiled. The other man's peevishness seemed too natural to be assumed.

"I expect you'll be glad enough to do your bit, if anything does happen to us," he observed.

"By-the-by," Crawshay asked, "I wonder what will become of that poor fellow downstairs--the man who is supposed to be dying, I mean--if trouble comes?"

"I heard them discussing it at breakfast time," Jocelyn Thew replied. "I understand that he has asked specially to be allowed to remain where he is. There would of course be not the slightest chance of saving his life. The doctor who is with him--Gant, I think his name is--told us that anything in the shape of a rough sea, even, would mean the end of him. He quite understands this himself." Crawshay assented gravely.

"It seems a little brutal but it is common sense," he declared. "In times of great stress, too, one becomes primitive, and the primitive instinct is for the strong to save himself. I am not ashamed to confess," he concluded, "that I have secured an extra lifebelt."

Jocelyn glanced, for a moment scornfully down at the man who had now picked up his novel again and was busy reading. Crawshay represented so much the things that he despised in life. It was impossible to treat or consider him in any way as a rival to be feared. He passed down the deck and made his way below to the doctor's room. He found the latter in the act of starting off to see a patient.

"I came around to ask after Robins, the young Marconi man," Jocelyn explained. "I hear that he was taken ill last night."

The doctor looked at his questioner keenly.

"That is so," he admitted.

"What's wrong with him?"

"I have not thoroughly diagnosed his complaint as yet," was the careful reply. "I can tell you for a certainty, though, that he will not be able to work for two or three days."

"It seems very sudden," Jocelyn Thew persisted.

"As a matter of fact, I had some slight acquaintance with him, and I always thought that he was a remarkably strong young fellow."

The doctor, who had completed his preparations for departure, picked up his cap and politely showed his visitor out. "You wouldn't care," the latter suggested, "to let me go down and have a look at him? I can't call myself a medical man, but I know something about sickness and I am quite interested in young Robins."

"I don't think that I shall need a second opinion at present, thank you," the doctor rejoined, a little drily. "If you wish to see him later on, you must get permission from the captain. Good morning, Mr. Thew."

Jocelyn Thew strolled thoughtfully away, found a retired spot upon the promenade deck behind a boat, lit a very black cigar, and, drawing his field-glasses from his pocket, searched the horizon carefully. There was no sign of any passing steamer, not even the faintest wisp of black smoke anywhere upon the horizon. It was Wednesday to-day, and they had left New York on Saturday. He drew a sheet of paper from his pocket and made a few calculations. It was the day and past the time upon which things were due to happen....

The day wore on very much as most days do on an Atlantic voyage in early summer. The little handful of passengers, who seemed for the moment to have cast all anxieties to the winds, played shuffleboard and quoits, lunched with vigorous appetites, drank tea out on deck, and indulged in strenuous before-dinner promenades. The sun shone all day, the sea remained wonderfully calm. Not a trace of any other steamer was visible from morning until early nightfall, and Jocelyn Thew walked restlessly about with a grim look upon his face. At dinner time the captain hinted at fog, and looked doubtfully out of the open porthole at the oily-looking waste of waters.

"Another night on the bridge for me, I think," he remarked.

Jocelyn Thew leaned forward in his place.

"By-the-by, Captain," he asked, "now that the shipping is so reduced, do you alter speed for fog?"

The captain filled his glass from the jug of lemonade which, was always before him.

"Do we alter our speed, eh?" he repeated. "You must remember," he went on, "that we have Miss Beverley on board. We couldn't afford to give Miss Beverley a fright."

Jocelyn accepted the evasion with a slight bow. Katharine, who had come in to dine a little late and seemed graver than usual, smiled at the captain.

"Am I the most precious thing on this steamer?" she asked.

"Gallantry," the captain replied, "compels me to say yes!"

"Only gallantry? Have we such a wonderful cargo, then?"

"There are times," was the cautious reply, "when not even the captain knows exactly what he is carrying."

"You remind me," Jocelyn Thew observed, "of a voyage I once made from Port Elizabeth to New York, with half-a-dozen I.D.B's on board, and as many detectives, watching them day and night."

The captain nodded.

"What happened?" he enquired.

"Oh, the detectives arrested the lot of them, I think, got hold of them on the last day." The captain rose from his place.

"Queer thing," he remarked, "but the law generally does come out on top."

Jocelyn followed his example a few minutes later, and Katharine purposely joined him on the way out. She led her companion to the corner where her steamer chair had been placed, and motioned him to sit by her side. They were on the weather side of the ship, with a slight breeze in their faces and a canopy over their heads which deadened sound. She leaned a little forward.

"Smoke, please." she begged. "I mean it--see."

She lit a cigarette and he followed suit.

"Not a cigar?"

He shook his head.

"I keep them for my hard thinking times."

"Then you were thinking very hard this morning?"

"I was," he admitted.

"And gazing very earnestly out of those field-glasses of yours."

"Quite true."

"Mr. Thew," she said abruptly, "it is my impression, although for some reason or other I am scarcely allowed to go near him, that Mr. Phillips is dying."

"One knew, of course, that there was that risk," Jocelyn Thew reminded her.

"I do not think that he can possibly live for twenty-four hours," she continued. "I was allowed to sit with him for a short time early this morning. He is beginning to wander in his mind, to speak of his wife and a sum of money." Jocelyn's fine eyebrows came a little closer together.

"Well?"

"Nothing in his appearance or speech indicate the man of wealth or even of birth. I begin to wonder whether I know the whole truth about this frantic desire of his to reach England before he dies?"

"I think," Jocelyn Thew said thoughtfully, "that you have been talking

again to Mr. Crawshay."

"Yes," she admitted, "and he has been warning me against you."

"I suppose," Jocelyn ruminated, "the man has a certain amount of puppy-dog intelligence."

"I do not understand Mr. Crawshay at all," she confessed. "My acquaintance with him before we met on this steamer was of the slightest, but his manner of coming certainly led one to believe that he was a man of courage and determination. Since then he has crawled about in an overcoat and rubber shoes, and groaned about his ailments until one feels inclined to laugh at him. Last night he was different again. He was entirely serious, and he spoke to me about you."

"Do you need to be warned against me?" he asked grimly. "Have I ever sailed under false colours?"

"Don't," she begged, looking at him with a little quiver of the lips and a wonderfully soft light in her eyes. "You have never deceived me in any way except, if at all, as regards this voyage. I made up my mind this evening that I would ask you, if you cared to tell me, to take me into your confidence about this man who is dying down below, and his strange journey. I need scarcely add that I should respect that confidence."

"I am sorry," he answered. "You ask an impossibility."

"Then there is some sort of conspiracy going on?" she persisted. "Let me ask you a straightforward question. Is it not true that you have made me an unknowing participator in an illegal act?"

"It is," he admitted. "I was very sorry to have to do so but it was necessary. Without your assistance, I should never have been allowed to bring Phillips across the Atlantic."

"What difference do I make?" she asked.

"You lend an air of respectability and credibility to the whole thing," he told her. "You are a person of repute, of distinguished social position, and the object of a good deal of admiration in your own country. The doctor who accompanies you comes from your own hospital. No one would believe it possible that either of you could be concerned in any sort of conspiracy. If that ass Crawshay had not got on board, I am convinced that there would never have been a breath of suspicion."

She shivered a little.

"Is it quite kind to bring me into an affair of this sort?" she asked.

"It is a world," he declared cruelly, "in which we fight always for our own hand or go under. I am fighting for mine, and if I have

occasionally to sacrifice a friend as well as an enemy, I do not hesitate."

"What has the world done to you," she demanded, "that you should speak so bitterly?" "Better not ask me that."

"How will the man Phillips' death affect your plans?"

"It will make very little difference either way," he assured her. "We rather expected him to die."

"And you won't take me any further into your confidence?"

"No further. Your task will be completed at Liverpool. So long as you leave this steamer in company with the doctor and the ambulance, if Phillips is still alive, you will be free to return home whenever you please."

"Very well," she said. "You see, I accept my position. I shall go through with what I have promised, whatever Mr. Crawshay may say. Won't you in return treat me, if not as a confederate, as a friend?"

He turned and looked at her, met the appealing glance of her soft eyes for a moment and looked suddenly away.

"I do not belong to the ranks of those, Miss Beverley, from whom it is well for you to choose your friends."

"But why should I not make my own choice?" she insisted. "I have always been my own mistress. I have lived with my own ideas, I have declined to be subject to any one's authority. I am an independent person. Can't you treat me as such?"

"There are facts," he said, "which can never be ignored. You belong to the world of wealthy, gently born men and women who comprise what is called Society. I belong, and have belonged all my life, to a race of outcasts." "Don't!" she begged.

"It is true," he repeated doggedly.

"But what do you mean by outcasts?"

"Criminals, if you like it better. I have broken the law more than once. There is an unexecuted warrant out against me at the present moment. You may even see me marched off this steamer at Liverpool between two policemen."

"But why?" she asked passionately. "Why? What is the motive of it all? Is it money?"

"I am not in need of money," he told her, "but I have a great and sacred use for all I can lay my fingers on. If I succeed in my present enterprise, I shall receive a hundred thousand pounds."

"I value Jerry's life and future at more than that," she declared.

"Will you make a fresh start, Mr. Jocelyn Thew, with twice that sum of money to your credit?"

He shook his head, but there was a curious change creeping into his face. For the first time she saw how soft a man's dark-blue eyes may sometimes become. The slight trembling of his parted lips, too, seemed to unlock all the cruel, hard lines of his face. He had suddenly the appearance of a person of temperament--a poet, even a dreamer.

"I could not take money from you, Miss Beverley," he said, "or from any other woman in the world."

"Upon no conditions?" she whispered softly.

"Upon no conditions," he repeated.

The breeze had dropped, and twilight had followed swiftly upon the misty sunset. There was something a little ghostly about the light in which they sat. "I am stifled," she declared abruptly. "Come and walk."

They paced up and down the deck once or twice in silence. Then he paused as they drew near their chairs.

"Miss Beverley," he said, "in case this should be the last time that we talk confidentially--so that we may put a seal, in fact, upon the subject of which we have spoken to-night--I would like to tell you that you have made me feel, during this last half-hour, an emotion which I have not felt for many years. And I want to tell you this. I am a lawbreaker. When I told you that there was a warrant out against me at the present moment, I told you the truth. The charge against me is a true one, and the penalty is one I shall never pay. I must go on to the end, and I shall do so because I have a driving impulse behind, a hate which only action can soothe. But all my sins have been against men and the doings of men. You will understand me, will you not, when I say that I can neither take your money, nor accept your friendship after this voyage is over? You, on your side, can remember that you have paid a debt."

She sank a little wearily into her chair and looked out through the gathering mists. It seemed part of her fancy that they gathered him in, for she heard no sound of retreating footsteps. Yet when she spoke his name, a few moments later, she found that she was alone.

CHAPTER XII

Throughout the night reigned an almost sepulchral silence, and when

the morning broke, the City of Boston, at a scarcely reduced speed, was ploughing her way through great banks of white fog. The decks, the promenade rails, every exposed part of the steamer, were glistening with wet. Up on the bridge, three officers besides the captain stood with eyes fixed in grim concentration upon the dense curtains of mist which seemed to shut them off altogether from the outer world. Jocelyn Thew and Crawshay met in the companionway, a few minutes after breakfast.

"I can see no object in the disuse of the hooter," Crawshay declared querulously. "Nothing at sea could be worse than a collision. We are simply taking our lives in our hands, tearing along like this at sixteen knots an hour."

"Isn't there supposed to be a German raider out?" the other enquired.

"I think it is exceedingly doubtful whether there is really one in the Atlantic at all. The English gunboats patrol these seas. Besides, we are armed ourselves, and she wouldn't be likely to tackle us."

Jocelyn Thew had leaned a little forward. He was listening intently. At the same time, one of the figures upon the bridge, his hand to his ear, turned in the same direction.

"There's some one who doesn't mind letting their whereabouts be known," he whispered, after a moment's pause. "Can't you hear a hooter?"

Crawshay listened but shook his head.

"Can't hear a thing," he declared laconically. "I've a cold in my head coming on, and it always affects my hearing."

Jocelyn Thew stepped on tiptoe across the deck as far as the rail and returned in a few minutes.

"There's a steamer calling, away on the starboard bow," he announced. "She seems to be getting nearer, too. I wonder we don't alter our course."

"Well, I suppose it's the captain's business whether he chooses to answer or not," Crawshay remarked. "I shall go down to my cabin. This gazing at nothing gets on my nerves."

Jocelyn Thew returned to his damp vigil. Leaning over the wet wooden rail, he drew a little diagram on the back of an envelope and worked out some figures. Then he listened once more, the slight frown upon his forehead deepening. Finally he tore up his sketch and made his way to the doctor's room. The doctor was seated at his desk and glanced up enquiringly as his visitor entered.

"I just looked in to see how young Robins was getting on," Jocelyn explained.

"I am afraid he is in rather a bad way," was the grave reply.

"What is the nature of his illness?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. His manner became a little vague.

"I must remind you, Mr. Thew," he said, "that a doctor is not always at liberty to discuss the ailments of his patients. On board ship this custom becomes more, even, than mere etiquette. It is, in fact, against the regulations of the company for us to discuss the maladies of any passenger upon the steamer."

"I recognise the truth of all that you say," Jocelyn Thew agreed, "but it happens that I know the young man and his people. Naturally, therefore, I take an interest in him, and I am sure they would think it strange if, travelling upon the same steamer, I did not make these very ordinary enquiries."

"You know his people, do you?" the doctor repeated. "Where does he come from, Mr. Thew?"

"Somewhere over New Jersey way," was the glib reply, "but I used to meet his father often in New York. There can be no mystery about his illness, can there, doctor--no reason why I should not go and see him?"

"I have placed the young man in quarantine," was the brief explanation, "and until he is released no one can go near him."

"Something catching, eh?"

"Something that might turn out to be catching."

Jocelyn Thew shrugged his shoulders and accepted what amounted almost to a little nod of dismissal. He ascended the staircase thoughtfully and came face to face with Katharine Beverley, issuing from the music room. She greeted him with a little exclamation of relief.

"Mr. Thew," she exclaimed, "I have been looking for you everywhere. Doctor Gant thinks," she added, lowering her voice, "that if you wish to see his patient alive, you had better come at once." "There is a change in his condition, then?"

"Yes," she told him gravely.

He stood for a moment thinking rapidly. The girl shivered a little as she watched the change in his face. Her hospital training had not lessened her awe and sympathy in the face of death, and it was so entirely obvious that Jocelyn Thew was considering only what influence upon his plans this event might have. Finally he turned and descended the stairs by her side.

"I am not at all sure that it is wise of me to come," he said.

"However, if he is asking for me I suppose I had better."

They made their way into the commodious stateroom upon the saloon deck, which had been secured for the sick man. He lay upon a small hospital bed, nothing of him visible save his haggard face, with its ill-grown beard. His eyes were watching the door, and he showed some signs of gratification at Jocelyn's entrance. Gant, who was standing over the bed, turned apologetically towards the latter.

"It's the money," he whispered. "He is worrying about that. I was obliged to send for you. He called out your name just now, and the ship's doctor was hanging around."

The newcomer drew a stool to the side of the bed, opened a pocketbook and counted out a great wad of notes. The dying man watched him with every appearance of interest.

"Five thousand dollars," the former said at last. "That should bring in about eleven hundred and fifty pounds. Now watch me, Phillips."

He took an envelope from his pocket, thrust the notes inside, gummed down the flap, and, drawing a fountain pen from his pocket, wrote an address. The dying man watched him and nodded feebly.

"These," Jocelyn continued, "are for your wife. The packet shall be delivered to her within twelve hours of our landing in Liverpool. You can keep it under your pillow and hand it over to Miss Beverley here. You trust her?"

The man on the bed nodded feebly and turned slightly towards Katharine. She bent over him.

"I shall see myself," she promised, "that the money is properly delivered."

Phillips smiled and closed his eyes. It was obvious that he had no more to say. Jocelyn Thew stole softly out, followed, a moment later, by Katharine.

"The doctor thinks I am better away," she whispered. "He won't speak again. Poor fellow!"

Jocelyn stepped softly up the stairs and drew a little breath of relief as they reached the promenade deck without meeting any one. Both seemed to feel the desire for fresh air, and they stepped outside for a moment. There were tears in Katharine's eyes.

"Of course," she said, a little timidly, "I don't understand this at all, but it is terribly tragic. Do you think that he would have lived if he had not undertaken the journey?"

"It was absolutely impossible," her companion assured her. "He was a

dying man from the moment the operation was finished."

"Will he be buried at sea?"

"I think not. He was exceedingly anxious to be buried at his home near Chester. It isn't a pleasant thing to talk about," Jocelyn went on, "but they brought his coffin on board with him. It's lying in the companionway now, covered over with a rug."

She shivered.

"It's a horrible day altogether," she declared, looking out into the seemingly endless banks of mist.

"Entirely my opinion, Miss Beverley," a voice said in her ear. "I find it most depressing--and unhealthy. And listen.--Do you hear that?"

They all listened intently. Again they could hear the hooting of a steamer in the distance.

"Between ourselves," Crawshay went on confidentially, "the captain seems to me rather worried. That steamer has been following us for hours. She is evidently waiting for the fog to lift, to see who we are."

"How does she know about us?" Katharine asked. "We haven't blown our hooter once."

"We don't need to," was the fractious reply. "That's where we are being over-careful. She can hear our engines distinctly."

"Who does the captain think she is, then?"

Crawshay's voice was dropped to a mysterious pitch, but though he leaned towards the girl, his eyes were fixed upon her companion.

"He doesn't go as far as to express a definite opinion, but he thinks that it might be that German raider--the Blucher, isn't it? She can steal about quite safely in the fog, and she can tell by the beat of the engines whether she is near a man-of-war or not."

Not a muscle of Jocelyn's face twitched, but there was a momentary gleam in his eyes of which Crawshay took swift note. He glanced aft to where the two seamen were standing by the side of their guns.

"If it really is the German raider," he remarked, "they might as well fire off a popgun as that thing. She is supposed to be armed with four six-inch guns and two torpedo tubes."

Crawshay nodded.

"So I told the captain. We might have a go at a submarine, but the raider would sink us in two minutes if we tried to tackle her. What a

bestly voyage this is!" he went on, in a depressed tone. "I can't get over the fact that I risked my life to get on board, too."

Jocelyn Thew, with a little word of excuse, had swung around and disappeared. Katharine looked at her companion curiously.

"Do you believe that it really is the raider, Mr. Crawshay?" she enquired.

He hesitated. In Jocelyn's absence his manner seemed to undergo some subtle change, his tone to become crisper and less querulous.

"We had some reason to hope," he said cautiously, "that she was on a different course. It is just possible, however, that in changing it she might have struck this bank of fog and preferred to hang about for a time."

"What will happen if she finds us?"

"That depends entirely upon circumstances."

"I have an idea," Katharine continued, "that you know more about this matter than you feel inclined to divulge."

"Perhaps," he admitted. "Nowadays, every one has to learn discretion."

"Is it necessary with me?" "It is necessary with any friend of Mr. Jocelyn Thew," he told her didactically.

"What a suspicious person you are!" she exclaimed, a little scornfully. "You are just like all your countrymen. You get hold of an idea and nothing can shake it. Mr. Jocelyn Thew, I dare say, possesses a past. I know for a fact that he has been engaged in all sorts of adventures during his life. But--at your instigation, I suppose--they have already searched his person, his stateroom, and every article of luggage he has. After that, why not leave him alone?"

"Because he is an extremely clever person."

"Then you are not satisfied yet?"

"Not yet."

"Am I, may I ask, under suspicion?" she enquired, with faint sarcasm.

"I should not like to say," he replied glibly, "that you were altogether free from it."

She laughed heartily.

"I should not worry about the army if I were you," she advised. "I am quite sure that secret-service work is the natural outlet for your talents."

"I shouldn't be surprised," he confided, "if headquarters didn't insist upon my taking it up permanently. It will depend a little, of course, upon what success I have during this voyage."

She laughed in his face and turned away.

"I will tell you what I find so interesting about you, Mr. Crawshay," she said. "You must be either very much cleverer than you seem, or very much more foolish. You keep me continually guessing as to which it is."

CHAPTER XIII

Towards six o'clock that evening, without any apparent change in the situation, Captain Jones descended from the bridge and signalled to Crawshay, whom he passed on the deck, to follow him into his room. The great ship was still going at full speed through a sea which was as smooth as glass.

"Getting out of it, aren't we?" Crawshay enquired.

The captain nodded. His hair and beard were soaked with moisture, and there were beads of wet all over his face. Otherwise he seemed little the worse for his long vigil. In his eyes, however, was a new anxiety.

"Another five miles," he confided, "should see us in clear weather."

"Steamer's still following us, isn't she?"

"Sticking to us like a leech," was the terse reply. "She is not out of any American port. She must have just picked us up. She isn't any ordinary cargo steamer, either, or she couldn't make the speed."

"I've worked it out by your chart," Crawshay declared, "and it might very well be the Blucher. I don't think I made the altered course wide enough, and she might very well have been hanging about a bit when she struck the fog and heard our engines."

The captain lit a pipe. "I am not in the habit, as you may imagine, of discussing the conduct of my ship with any one, Mr. Crawshay," he said, "but you come to me with very absolute credentials, and it's rather a comfort to have some one standing by with whom one can share the responsibility. You see my couple of guns? They are about as useful as catapults against the Blucher, whereas, on the other hand, she could sink us easily with a couple of volleys."

"Just so," Crawshay agreed. "What about speed, Captain?"

"If our reports are trustworthy, we might be able to squeeze out one more knot than she can do," was the doubtful reply, "but, you see, she'll follow us out of this last bank of fog practically within rifle range. I've altered my course three or four times so as to get a start, but she hangs on like grim death. That's what makes me so sure that it's the _Blucher_."

"Want my advice?" Crawshay asked.

"That's the idea," the captain acquiesced.

"Stoke her up, then, and drive full speed ahead. Take no notice of any signals. Make for home with the last ounce you can squeeze out of her."

"That's all very well," Captain Jones observed, "but there will be at least half an hour during which we shall be within effective range. She might sink us a dozen times over."

"Yes, but I don't think she will."

"Why not?"

"If the theory upon which I started this wild-goose chase is correct," Crawshay explained, "there is something on board this ship infinitely more valuable than the ship itself to Germany. That is why I think that she will strain every nerve to try and capture you, of course, but she will never sink you, because if she did she would lose everything her Secret Service have worked for in Germany ever since, and even before the commencement of the war."

"It's an idea," the captain admitted, with a gleam in his eyes.

"It's common sense," Crawshay urged. "When I left Halifax, I was ready to take twenty-five to one that we'd been sold. I wouldn't mind laying twenty-five to one now that what we are in search of is somewhere on board this steamer. If that is so, the _Blucher_ will never dare to sink you, because there will still remain the chance of the person on board who is in charge of the documents getting away with them at the other end, whereas down at the bottom of the Atlantic they would be of no use to any one."

"I see your point of view," the other agreed.

"Then you'd better take my tip," Crawshay continued. "There isn't a passenger on board who didn't know the risk they were running when they started, and I'm sure no one will blame you for not surrendering your ship like a dummy directly you're asked. They're a pretty sporting lot in the saloon, you know. All those newspaper men are real good fellows."

The captain's face brightened.

"Next to fighting her," he soliloquised, stroking his beard,--

"The idea of fighting her is ridiculous," Crawshay interrupted. "Look here, you haven't any time to lose. Send to the engineer and let him give it to them straight down below. I'll give a tenner apiece to the stokers, if we get clear, and if my advice turns out wrong, I'll see you through it, anyway."

"We can leg it at a trifle over nineteen knots," Captain Jones declared, as he picked up his cap, "and, anyway, anything's better than having one of those short-haired, smooth-tongued, blustering Germans on board."

He hurried off, and Crawshay followed him on deck to watch developments. Already, through what seemed to be an opening in the walls of fog, there was a vision in front of clear blue sea on which a still concealed sun was shining. Soon they passed out into a new temperature of pleasant warmth, with a skyline ahead, hard and clear. The passengers came crowding on deck. Every one leaned over the starboard rail, looking towards the place whence the sound of the hooting was still proceeding. Suddenly a steamer crept out of the fog mountain and drew clear, barely half a mile away. The first glimpse at her was final. She had cast off all disguise. Her false fore-castle was thrown back, and the sun glittered upon three exceedingly formidable-looking guns, trained upon the City of Boston. A row of signals, already hoisted, were fluttering from her mast.

"It's the Blucher, by God!" Sam West muttered.

"We're nabbed!" his little friend groaned.

"Wonder what they'll do with us."

Every eye was upturned now to the mast for the answering signals. To the universal surprise, none were hoisted. The captain stood upon the bridge with his glass focussed upon the raider. He gave no orders, only the black smoke was beginning to belch now from the funnels, and little pieces of smut and burning coal blew down the deck. Jocelyn Thew, who was standing a little apart, frowned to himself. He had seen Crawshay and the captain come out of the latter's cabin together.

The blue lightnings were playing now unchecked about the top of the Marconi room. Another more imperative signal flew from the pirate ship. A minute later there was a puff of white smoke, a loud report, and a shell burst in the sea, fifty yards ahead. Crawshay edged up to where Jocelyn Thew was standing.

"This is a damned unpleasant affair," he said.

"It is," was the grim reply.

"You know it's the Blucher?"

"No doubt about that."

"What on earth are we up to?" Crawshay continued, in a dissatisfied tone. "We haven't even replied to her signals."

"It appears to me," Jocelyn Thew pronounced irritably, "that we are going to try and get away. I never heard of such lunacy. They can blow us to pieces if they want to."

Crawshay shivered.

"I think," he protested, "that some one ought to remonstrate with the captain. Look, there's another shell coming! Damned ugly things!"

There was another puff of white smoke, and this time the projectile fell within a steamer's length of them, sending a great fountain of water into the air. "They are giving us plenty of warning," Jocelyn Thew observed coolly. "I suppose we shall get the next one amidships."

"I find it most upsetting," his companion declared. "I am going down to the cabin to get my lifebelt."

He turned away. Presently there was another line of signals, more shots, some across the bows of the steamer, some right over her, a few aft. Nevertheless, the City of Boston stood on her course, and the distance between the two steamers gradually widened. Katharine, who had come up on deck, stood by Jocelyn Thew's side.

"Is this really the way that they shoot," she asked, "or aren't they trying to hit us?"

"They are not trying," he told her. "If they were, every shot they fired at this range would be sufficient to send us to the bottom."

"Why aren't they trying?" she persisted.

"There's a reason for that, which I can't at the moment explain," was the gloomy reply. "They want to capture us, not sink us! What I can't understand, though, is how the captain here found that out."

"How is it that you are so well-informed?" Katharine asked curiously.

"You had better not enquire, Miss Beverley. It's just as well not to know too much of these things. Here's Mr. Crawshay," he added. "Perhaps he'll tell you."

Crawshay appeared, hugging his lifebelt, on which he seated himself gingerly.

"Can't imagine what the captain's up to," he complained. "A chap who understands those little flags has just told me that they've threatened to blow us to pieces if we go on.--Here comes another shell!" he groaned. "Two to one they've got us this time!--Ugh!"

They all ducked to avoid a shower of spray. When they stood upright again, Katharine studied the newcomer for a minute critically. There was a certain air of strain about most of the passengers. Even Jocelyn Thew's firm hand had trembled, a moment ago, as he had lowered his glasses. Crawshay, seated upon his lifebelt, with a mackintosh buttoned around him, his eyeglass firmly adjusted, his mouth querulous, was not exactly an impressive-looking object. Yet she wondered.

"Give me your hand," she asked suddenly.

He obeyed at once. The fingers were cool and firm.

"Why do you pretend to be afraid?" she demanded. "You aren't in the least."

"Amateur theatricals," he replied tersely, "coupled with a certain amount of self-control. I am a cool-tempered fellow at most times.--Jove, this one's meant for us, I believe!"

They all ducked instinctively. The shell, however, fell short. Crawshay measured the distance between the two steamers with his eyes.

"Dashed if I don't believe we're giving them the slip!" he exclaimed. "I wonder why in thunder they're letting us off like this! The captain must have known something."

Jocelyn Thew turned around and looked reflectively at the speaker. For a single moment Crawshay's muscles tingled with the apprehension of danger. There was a smouldering light in the other's eyes, such a light as might gleam in the tiger's eyes before his spring. Crawshay's hand slipped to his hip pocket. So for a moment they remained. Then Jocelyn Thew shrugged his shoulders, and the tense moment was past.

"There seems to be some one on this ship," he said quietly, "who knows more than is good for him."

CHAPTER XIV

The City of Boston passed through the danger zone in safety, and dropped anchor in the Mersey only a few hours later than the time of her expected arrival. Towards the close of a somewhat uproarious dinner, during which many bottles of champagne were emptied to various toasts, Captain Jones quite unexpectedly entered the saloon, and, waving his hand in response to the cheers which greeted him, made his way to his usual table, from which he addressed the little company.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have an announcement to make to

which I beg you will listen with patience. Both the English and the American police, whether with reason or not, as we may presently determine, have come to the conclusion that a large number of very important documents, collected in America by the agents of a foreign power, have been smuggled across the Atlantic upon this ship, in the hope that they may eventually reach Germany. In a quarter of an hour's time, a number of plainclothes policemen will be on board. I am going to ask you, as loyal British and American subjects, to subject yourselves, without resistance or complaint, to any search which they may choose to make. I may add that my own person, luggage and cabin will be the first object of their attention." The captain, having delivered his address, left the saloon again amidst a little buzz of voices. There had probably never been a voyage across the Atlantic in which a matter of forty passengers had been treated to so many rumours and whispers of strange happenings. Sam West got up and spoke a few words, counselling the ready assent of every one there to submit to anything that was thought necessary. He briefly commented upon their unexplained but fortuitous escape from the raider, and heaped congratulations upon their captain. Very soon after he had resumed his seat, the shrill whistle of a tug alongside indicated the arrival of visitors. A steward passed back and forth amongst the passengers with a universal request--all were asked to repair to their staterooms. Twenty-seven exceedingly alert-looking men thereupon commenced their task.

Seated upon the couch in her room, with a cup of coffee by her side and a cigarette between her lips, Katharine listened to the conversation which passed in the opposite room, the one which had been tenanted by Phillips. For some reason, the end of the voyage, instead of bringing her the relief which she had expected, had only increased her nervous excitement. She was filled with an extraordinary prescience of some coming crisis. She found herself trembling as she listened to Doctor Gant's harsh voice and the smooth accents of his interlocutor.

"Well, that completes our search of your belongings, Doctor Gant," the latter's voice observed. "Now I want to ask a few questions with reference to the Mr. Phillips who I understand died the day before yesterday under your charge." "That is so," Doctor Gant agreed. "He had no luggage, as we only made up our minds to undertake the journey with him at the last moment. The few oddments he used on the voyage, we burned."

"And the body, I understand,--"

"You can examine it at once, if you will," the doctor interrupted. "We have purposely left the coffin lid only partly screwed down. I should like to say, however, that before arranging the deceased for burial, I asked the ship's doctor to make an examination with me of the coffin and the garments which I used. He signed the certificate, and he will be ready to answer any questions."

"That seems entirely satisfactory," the detective confessed. "I will

just have the coffin lid off for a few moments, and will see the doctor before I leave the ship."

The men left the room together and were absent some ten minutes. Presently the detective returned to Katharine's room, and with him came Crawshay. Katharine had discarded the nurse's costume which she had usually worn on board ship, and was wearing the black tailor-made suit in which she had expected to land. In the dim light, her pallor and nervous condition almost startled Crawshay.

"You will forgive my intrusion," he said. "I have just been explaining your presence here to Mr. Brightman, the detective, and I don't think he will trouble you for more than a few minutes."

"Please treat me exactly as the others," she begged.

The search proceeded for a few moments in silence. Then the detective looked up from the dressing case which he was examining. In his hand he held the envelope addressed to Mrs. Phillips.

"Do you mind telling me what this is, Miss Beverley?" he asked.

"It is a roll of bills," she replied, "that belonged to Mr. Phillips. I promised to see them handed over to his wife."

Brightman glanced at the address and balanced the envelope on the palm of his hand.

"It is against the law," he told her, "for a passenger to be the bearer of any sealed letter."

Katharine shrugged her shoulders.

"I am very sorry," she said, "but the packet which you have did not come from America at all. It was sealed up on board this ship at the time when I accepted the charge of its delivery. There is no letter or communication of any sort inside."

"You will not object," the detective enquired, "to my opening it?"

She frowned impatiently.

"I can assure you," she repeated, "that I saw the notes put inside an empty envelope. Mr. Crawshay will tell you that my word is to be relied upon."

"Implicitly, Miss Beverley," Crawshay pronounced emphatically, "but under the circumstances I think no harm would be done if you allowed our friend just to glance inside. The notes can easily be sealed up in another envelope."

"Just as you like," she acquiesced coolly. "You will find nothing but bills there."

Brightman tore open the envelope and glanced inside as though he did not intend further to disturb it. Suddenly his face changed. He shook out the contents upon the little table. They all three looked at the pile of papers with varying expressions. In Katharine's face there was nothing but blank bewilderment, in Crawshay's something of horror, in the detective's a faint gleam of triumph. He pressed his finger down on the heading of the first sheet of paper.

"I am not much of a German scholar," he observed. "How do you translate that, Mr. Crawshay?"

Crawshay was silent for several moments. Then in a perfectly mechanical tone he read out the heading:

"List of our agents in New York and district who may be absolutely trusted for any enterprise."

There was another dead silence, a silence, on Katharine's part, of complete mental paralysis. Crawshay's face had lost all its smooth petulance. He was like a man who had received a blow.

"But I don't understand," Katharine faltered at last. "That packet has not been out of my possession, and I saw the notes put into it."

"By whom?" Crawshay demanded.

"By Mr. Phillips," she declared steadfastly, "by Mr. Phillips and Doctor Gant together."

The detective turned the envelope over in his hand.

"The bills seem to have disappeared," he observed.

"They were in that envelope," Katharine persisted. "I have never seen those papers before in my life."

Brightman's face remained immovable. One by one he slipped the papers back into the envelope, thrust them into his breast pocket, and, turning round, locked the door.

"You must forgive me if the rest of our investigations may seem unnecessarily severe, Miss Beverley," he said.

Katharine sank back upon the sofa. She was utterly bewildered by the events of the last few minutes. The search of her belongings was now being conducted with ruthless persistence. Her head was buried in her hands. She did not even glance at the contents of her trunk, which were now overflowing the room. Suddenly she was conscious of another pause in the proceedings, a half-spoken exclamation from the detective. She looked up. From within the folds of an evening gown he had withdrawn a small, official-looking dispatch box of black tin, tied with red tape, and with great seals hanging from either end.

"What is this?" he asked.

Katharine stared at it with wide-open eyes.

"I have never seen it before," she declared.

There was another painful, significant silence. Crawshay bent forward and examined the seals through his glass.

"This," he announced presently, "is the official seal of a neutral Embassy. You see how the packet is addressed?"

"I see," the detective admitted, "but, considering the way in which we have found it, you are not suggesting, I hope, that we should not open it?"

"Opened it certainly must be," Crawshay admitted, "but not by us in this manner. When you have finished your search, I should be glad if you will bring both packets with you to the captain's room."

Brightman silently resumed his labours. Nothing further, however, was found. The two men stood up together.

"Miss Beverley," Brightman began gravely,--

Crawshay laid his hand upon the man's arm.

"Wait for a moment," he begged. "I wish to have a few words with you outside. We shall be back before long, Miss Beverley."

The two men disappeared. Katharine, with a sinking of the heart, heard the key turn on the outside of her stateroom. She watched the lock slip into its place with an indescribable sense of humiliation. She had been guilty--of what?

She lost count of time, but it was certain that only a few minutes could have passed before a strange thing happened. The sight of that lock, which seemed somehow to shut her off from the world of reasonable, honest men and women, had fascinated her. She was sitting watching it, her chin resting upon her hands, something of the horror still in her eyes, when without sound, or any visible explanation, she saw it glide back to its place. The door was opened and closed. Jocelyn Thew was standing in her stateroom.

"You?" she exclaimed.

"I am not disappointed in you, I am sure," he said softly. "You will keep still. You will not say a word. I have risked the whole success of a great enterprise to come and say these few words to you. I am ashamed and sorry for what you are suffering, but I want to tell you this. Nothing serious will happen--nothing serious can happen to you. Everything is not as it seems. Will you believe that? Look at me. Will

you believe that?"

She raised her eyes. Once more there was that change in his face which had seemed so wonderful to her. The blue of his eyes was soft, his mouth almost tremulous. She answered him almost as though mesmerised.

"I will believe it," she promised.

As silently and mysteriously as he had come, he turned and left her. She watched the latch. She saw the lock creep silently once more into its place. She heard no movement outside, but Jocelyn Thew had gone.

During the few remaining minutes of her solitude, Katharine felt a curious change in the atmosphere of the little disordered stateroom, in her own dazed and bruised feelings. She seemed somehow to be playing a part in a little drama which had nothing to do with real life. All her fears had vanished. She rose from her place, smoothed her disordered hair carefully, bathed her temples with eau-de-cologne, adjusted her hat and veil, and, turning on the reading lamp, opened a novel. She actually managed to read a couple of pages before there was a knock at the door and the two men reappeared. She laid down her book and greeted them quite coolly.

"Well, have you come to pronounce sentence upon me?" she asked.

"Our authority scarcely goes so far," Brightman replied. "I am going on shore now, Miss Beverley, to fetch the consul of the country to which this packet is addressed. It will be opened in his presence. In the meantime, Mr. Crawshay has given his parole for you. You will therefore be free of the ship, but it will be, I am afraid, my duty to ask you to come with me to the police station for a further examination, on my return."

"I am sure I shall like to come very much," she said sweetly, "but if you go on asking me questions forever, I am afraid you won't come any nearer solving the problem of how that box got into my trunk, or how those bills got changed into those queer-looking little slips of papers. However, that of course is your affair."

The detective departed with a stiff bow. Crawshay, however, lingered.

"Aren't you going with your friend?" she asked him.

He ignored the question.

"Miss Beverley," he said, "you will forgive me saying that I find the present position exceedingly painful."

"Why?" she demanded. "I don't see how you are suffering by it."

"It was at my instigation," he went on, "that suspicion was first directed against your travelling companions. I am convinced that the first idea was to get these documents off the ship upon the person of

Phillips, if alive, or in his coffin if dead. The instigators of this abominable conspiracy have taken fright and have made you their victim. Certainly," he went on, "it was a shrewd idea. I myself suggested to Brightman that your things might remain undisturbed. But for the finding of that envelope, your trunk would certainly not have been opened. You see the position I have placed myself in. I am driven to ask you a question. Did you know of the presence of those papers and dispatch box amongst your belongings?"

"I had no idea of it," she answered fervently.

He drew a little breath of relief.

"You realise, of course," he went on, "that there is only one man who could have placed them there?"

"And who is that?" she enquired.

"Jocelyn Thew."

"And why do you single him out?"

"Because," Crawshay told her patiently, "we had evidence in America to show that he was working with our enemies. It is true that he has not been associated to any extent with the German espionage system in America, but he has been well-known always as a reckless adventurer, ready to sell his life in any doubtful cause, so long as it promised excitement and profit. It was known to us that he had come into touch with a certain man in Washington who has been looking after the interests of his country in America. It was to shadow Jocelyn Thew that I came on this steamer. His friends cleverly fooled Hobson and me, and landed us in Chicago too late, as they thought, to catch the boat. That is why I made that somewhat melodramatic journey after you on the seaplane. Do please consider this matter reasonably, Miss Beverley. It was perfectly easy for him to slip across and place these things in your luggage as soon as he found that his original scheme was likely to go wrong. You were the one person on the steamer whom he reckoned would be safe from suspicion. You were part of his plot from the very first, and no more than that."

"I cannot believe this," she said slowly.

Crawshay's face darkened.

"It is no business of mine, Miss Beverley," he declared, "but if you will forgive my saying so, you must be infatuated by this man. The evidence is perfectly clear. You are a prominent citizeness of a great country, and you have been made an accessory to an act of treason against that country. Yet, with plain facts in my hands, it seems impossible for me to shake your faith in this person. What is the reason of it? What hold had he upon you that he should have induced you to leave your work and your home and betray your country?"

"He has no hold upon me at all," she replied indignantly. "Since you are so persistent, I will tell you the truth. I once saw him do a splendid thing, a deed which saved me from great unhappiness."

"There we have it then at last!" Crawshay exclaimed eagerly. "You are under obligations to him."

"I certainly am," she acknowledged.

"And he has taken advantage of it," Crawshay continued, "to make you his tool."

"Whatever he has done," she replied, "rests between Jocelyn Thew and me. I am not in the least disposed to excuse myself or to beg for mercy from you. If you represent the law, directly or indirectly, I do not ask for any favours. I shall be perfectly ready to go to your police station whenever I am sent for." There was a knock at the door. They both turned around. In reply to Katharine's mechanical "Come in," Jocelyn Thew entered.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "was I mistaken or did I hear my name?"

"We were speaking of you," Crawshay admitted, turning towards him, "but I do not think that either Miss Beverley or I have anything to say to you at the moment."

"That's rather a pity," was the cool reply, "because you may not see me again. I was looking for Miss Beverley, in fact, to say good-by. We are docking in half an hour, and those who have been searched can go on shore, if they like to leave their hold luggage. As I have been searched twice in the most thorough and effective fashion, I have my pass out."

"You mean that you are going away altogether to-night?" Katharine exclaimed.

"Only so far as the Adelphi," he told her. "I have some friends to see who live near Liverpool, so I shall probably stay there for two or three days."

"I was coming to look for you on deck presently," Crawshay intervened, "but if your departure is so imminent, I will say what I have to say to you here."

"That would seem advisable," Jocelyn Thew agreed.

"I think it is only right that you should know, sir," Crawshay continued, "that a very serious position has arisen here in which Miss Beverley is unfortunately involved. Incriminating documents have been found in her luggage, placed there obviously by some unscrupulous person, who was in search of a safe hiding-place."

"Is this true?" Jocelyn Thew asked, looking past Crawshay to

Katharine.

"I am afraid that it is," she assented.

"The person who placed them there," Crawshay proceeded, the anger gathering in his tone, "may believe for the present that he has been able to escape from his dangerous position by this dastardly attempt to incriminate a woman. He may, on the other hand, find that his immunity will last but a very short time."

Jocelyn Thew nodded in calm acquiescence.

"I am at a loss," he said, "to account for your somewhat melodramatic tone, but I really do not think that Miss Beverley has very much to fear."

"There I agree with you," Crawshay declared. "She has not so much to fear as the criminal who is responsible for what has happened. He may think that he has escaped by saddling his crime upon a woman's shoulders. On the other hand, he may discover that this attempt, which only aggravates his position, will turn out to be futile."

Jocelyn Thew held out his hand towards Katharine.

"Really," he said, "the tone of this conversation takes one back to the atmosphere of the dear old Drury Lane melodrama. I feel, somehow or other," he went on, looking into Katharine's eyes, "that our friend here has cast me for the part of the villain and you for the injured heroine. I am wondering whether I dare ask you for a farewell greeting?"

Katharine did not hesitate for a moment. Her shapely, ringless hand was grasped firmly by his brown, lean fingers. She felt the pressure of a signet ring, the slight tightening of his grip as he leaned a little towards her. Again she was conscious of that feeling of exuberant life and complete confidence which had transformed her whole and humiliating situation so short a time ago.

"The injured heroine is always forgiving," she declared,--"even though she may have nothing to forgive. Good-by, Mr. Thew, and good fortune to you!"

CHAPTER XV

The morning--grey, slightly wet--broke upon Liverpool docks, the ugliest place in the ugliest city of Europe. A thin stream of people descended at irregular intervals down the gangway from the _City of Boston_ to the dock, and disappeared in various directions. Amongst the first came a melancholy little procession--a coffin carried by two ship's stewards, with Doctor

Gant in solitary attendance behind. After the passengers came a sprinkling of the ship's officers, all very smart and in a great hurry. Then there was a pause of several hours. About midday, two men--Brightman and a stranger--came down the covered way into the dock and boarded the steamer. They were shown at once into the captain's room, where Crawshay and Captain Jones were awaiting them.

"This," Brightman said, introducing his companion, "is Mr. Andelsen. I was fortunate enough to find him on the point of leaving for London."

Mr. Andelsen shook hands and accepted a chair. Upon the table in front of the captain was the sealed dispatch box. Crawshay had a suggestion to make.

"I think," he said, "that Miss Beverley should be here herself when this is opened."

"I have no objection," Brightman assented.

The captain rang for his steward and sent down a message. Mr. Andelsen--a tall, thin man, dressed in a sombre grey suit--handled the seals for a moment, looked at the address of the box, and shook his head.

"I could not take upon myself the responsibility of opening this," he declared. "It is certainly the seal of the Embassy of my country, but the box is addressed specifically to our Foreign Secretary at the Capital."

"We quite appreciate that," Crawshay admitted. "The captain, I believe, is not asking you to break it. We simply wish you to be present while we do so, in order to prove that no disrespect is intended to your country, and in order that you yourself may have an opportunity of taking a note of the contents."

"So long as it is understood that I am only here as a witness," the consul acquiesced, a little doubtfully, "I am quite willing to remain."

Katharine was presently ushered in. She was dressed for landing in a smart tailor-made suit, and her appearance was entirely cheerful. Crawshay stepped forward and handed her a chair.

"Dear me," she said, "this all seems very formidable! Am I under arrest or anything?"

"The captain is about to open the dispatch box found in your trunk, Miss Beverley," Crawshay explained, "in the presence of Mr. Andelsen here, who represents the country whose seals are attached. I have already expressed my opinion that this box has been surreptitiously placed amongst your belongings, and although, of course, our chief object was to gain possession of it, I regret very much the position in which you are placed."

"You are very kind, Mr. Crawshay," she rejoined, without much feeling. "It is certainly a fact that I never saw the box before it was dragged out of my trunk yesterday."

The captain broke the seals, untied the tape, and with a chisel and hammer knocked the top off the box. They all, with the exception of Katharine, gathered around him breathlessly as he shook out the contents on to the table. They were all sharers in the same shock of surprise as the neatly folded packets of ordinary writing paper were one by one disclosed. Crawshay seized one and dragged it to the light. The captain kept on picking them up and throwing them down again. Brightman mechanically followed his example.

"The whole thing's a bluff!" Crawshay exclaimed. "These sheets of paper are all blank! There isn't any trace even of invisible ink."

The consul rose to his feet with a heavy frown.

"This is a very obvious practical joke," he said angrily. "It seems a pity that I should have been compelled to miss my train to town."

"A practical joke!" the captain repeated. "If it is I'm damned if I understand the point of it!"

"Give me the envelope which held the notes," Crawshay demanded.

The captain unlocked his safe and produced it. Crawshay glanced through some of the documents hastily.

"These are all bogus, too!" he exclaimed. "There are no such streets as this in New York--no such names. The whole thing's a sell!"

"But what the--what in thunder does it all mean?" the captain demanded, pulling himself up as he glanced towards Katharine.

Brightman, who had scarcely spoken a word, leaned across the table.

"Probably," he said drily, "it means that some one a little cleverer than us has got away with the real stuff whilst we played around with this rubbish."

"But how?" Crawshay expostulated. "Not a soul has left this ship who hasn't been searched to the skin. The luggage in the hold is going out trunk by trunk, after every cubic foot has been ransacked. We have had a guard at every gangway since we were docked."

There was a knock at the door. The ship's doctor entered. He glanced at the little company and hesitated.

"I beg your pardon, Captain," he said, "could I have a word with you?"

The captain moved towards the threshold.

"Ship's business, Doctor?"

"It's just a queer idea of mine about these papers," the doctor confessed. "It's perhaps scarcely worth mentioning--"

"You'd better come in and tell us about it," the captain insisted. "That's what we're all talking about at the present moment."

Crawshay closed the door behind the newcomer, whose manner was still to some extent apologetic.

"It's really rather a mad idea," the latter began, "and I understand you found a part of what you were searching for, at any rate. But you know the man Phillips, who'd been operated upon for appendicitis--your patient, Miss Beverley, who died during the voyage?"

"What about him?" the captain demanded.

"Just one thing," the Doctor continued. "There was no doubt whatever that he had been operated upon for appendicitis, there was no doubt about the complications, there was no doubt about his death. I helped Doctor Gant--who seemed a very reasonable person, and who is known to me as one of the physicians at Miss Beverley's hospital--in various small details, and at his request I went over the clothing of the dead man and even knocked the coffin to see that it hadn't a double bottom. Doctor Gant appeared to welcome investigation in every shape and form, and yet, now that it's all over, there is one curious thing which rather bothers me."

"Get on with it, man," the captain admonished. "Can't you see that we're all in a fever about this business?"

The doctor produced from his pocket a small strip of very fine quality bandaging.

"It's just this," he explained. "They left this fragment of bandaging in the stateroom. Phillips was bound up with it around the wound, as was quite natural, but it isn't ordinary stuff, you see. It's made double like a tube, with silk inside. He must have had a dozen yards of this around his leg and side, which of course was not disturbed. It's a horrible idea to a layman, I know," he went on, turning apologetically to Katharine,--

"Captain, will you send at once for the steward," Crawshay interrupted, "who carried the coffin out?"

The captain sent a message to the lower deck. Katharine was leaning a little forward, intensely interested.

"Perhaps, Miss Beverley, you can throw some light upon this?" the former enquired--"in your capacity as nurse, I mean."

She shook her head.

"I am sorry that I cannot," she replied. "As a matter of fact, I was never allowed to touch the bandages. Doctor Gant did all that himself."

"Have you ever seen any bandaging of this sort?" Brightman asked, showing her the fragment which he had taken from the doctor's fingers.

"Never."

Crawshay drew a little breath between his teeth. He was on the point of speech when a steward knocked at the door. The captain called him in.

"Harrison," he asked, "were you one of the stewards who was looking after Doctor Gant?"

"Yes, sir," the man replied.

"You helped to carry the coffin out, didn't you?"

"That's so, sir. We were off at six o'clock this morning."

"Was there a hearse waiting?"

The steward shook his head.

"There was a big motor car outside, sir. We put the coffin in that and the doctor drove off with it--said he was to take it down to the place where the man had lived, for burial."

"Do you know where that was?"

"No idea, sir."

The captain glanced towards Brightman.

"Do you want to ask the man any questions?"

"Questions? No, sir!" the detective replied bitterly. "We've been done--that's all there is about it. Never mind, they've only got six hours' start. We'll have that car traced, and--"

"Does any one know what time Mr. Jocelyn Thew left the steamer?" Crawshay interrupted.

"He got away last night," the steward replied. "There were three or four of them went up to the Adelphi to sleep. Some of them came back for their baggage this morning, but I haven't seen Mr. Jocelyn Thew."

Katharine rose to her feet. Her tone and expression were impenetrable.

"Am I still suspect?" she asked.

Crawshay glanced at Brightman, who shook his head.

"There is no charge against you. Miss Beverley," he admitted stiffly. "So far as I am concerned, you are at liberty to leave the ship whenever you please."

She held out her hand to the captain.

"I can't make up my mind, Captain," she said, smiling at him delightfully, "as to what sort of a voyage I have had on this steamer, but I do congratulate you on that escape from the raider. Good-by!"

Crawshay walked with her along the deserted deck as far as the gangway.

"I am afraid I cannot offer my escort any further, Miss Beverley," he regretted. "I must have a little conversation with Brightman here."

"Of course," she answered. "I quite understand. Perhaps we may meet in London. It seems a pity, doesn't it," she went on sympathetically, "that that wonderful voyage of yours was taken for nothing? Some one on this ship has been very clever indeed."

"Some one has," Crawshay replied bitterly, "and you and I both know who it is, Miss Beverley. But," he went on, holding the gangway railing as she turned to descend, "it's only the first part of the game that's over. Our friend has won on the sea, but I have an idea that we shall have him on land. We shall have him yet, and we'll catch him red-handed if I have anything to do with it. Will you wish us luck?"

She turned and looked at him. Her lips parted as though she were about to speak. Instead she broke into a little laugh, and, turning away, descended the gangway. From the dock she looked up again at Crawshay.

"Do come and look me up if you are in town," she begged. "I shall stay at Claridge's, and I shall be interested to hear how you get on."

CHAPTER XVI

The City of Boston docked in Liverpool on Sunday night. On Tuesday, at five o'clock in the afternoon, Crawshay, who had been waiting at Euston Station for a quarter of an hour or so, almost dragged Brightman out of the long train which drew slowly into the station.

"We'll take a taxi somewhere," the former said. "It's the safest place to talk in. Any other luggage?"

"Only the bag I'm carrying," the detective replied. "I have got some more stuff coming up, if you want me to keep on this job."

"I think I shall," Crawshay told him. "I want to hear how you got on. I gathered from your first telegram that you were on the track. Where did you mean to stay?"

"I've no choice."

"The Savoy, then," Crawshay decided. "Jocelyn Thew is staying there, and

you may be able to keep an eye on him. Here we are. Taxi?--Savoy!--Now, Brightman."

"You don't want me to make a long story of it, sir," Brightman observed, as they drove off.

"Just the things that count, that's all."

"Well, we got on the track of the car all right," the detective began, "and traced it to a small village called Frisby, the other side of Chester, and to the house of a Mrs. Phillips, a woman in poor circumstances who had just removed from Liverpool. She was the widow, all right. She showed us letters, and plenty of them, from her husband in New York. It appears that Gant alone had brought the coffin, which was left at the cemetery, and the funeral will have taken place this afternoon. Mrs. Phillips was full of his praises, and it seems that he had paid her over the whole of the money you spoke about--five thousand dollars."

"There was no chicanery so far, then," Crawshay observed. "The man was dead, of course?"

"Absolutely," Brightman declared, "and his death seems to have taken place exactly according to the certificate. Here comes the point, however. With the aid of the local police and the doctor whom we called in, the bandage around the wound was removed. We found in its place a perfectly fresh one, bought in Liverpool, not in the least resembling the silk-lined fragment which the ship's doctor brought into the cabin."

Crawshay looked gloomily out of the window.

"Well, I imagine that that settles the question of how the papers got into England," he sighed.

"Our job, I suppose," the detective reminded him, "is to see that they don't get out again."

"Precisely!"

"In a sense," Brightman continued, "that is a toughish job, isn't it, because whoever has them now can make as many copies as he chooses, and one set would be certain to get through."

"As against that," Crawshay explained, "some of the most valuable documents are signed letters, of which only the originals would be worth anything. There are also some exceedingly complicated diagrams of New York harbours, a plan of all the battleships in existence and projected, a wonderful submarine destroyer, and a new heavy gun. These things are very complicated, and to carry conviction must be in the original. Besides that," he added, dropping his voice, "there is the one most important thing of all, but of which as yet no one has spoken, and of which I dare scarcely speak even to you."

"Is it in the shape of a drawing?" Brightman asked.

"It is not," was the whispered reply. "It is a letter, written by the greatest man in one of the greatest countries in the world, to the greatest personage in Europe. There is a secret reward offered of half a million dollars for the return of that letter alone."

"The affair seems worth looking into," Brightman remarked, stroking his little black moustache.

"I can promise you that the governments on both sides will pay handsomely," Crawshay assured him. "I have had my chance but let it slip. You know I had my training at Scotland Yard, but out in the States I found that I simply had to forget all that I knew. Their methods are entirely different from ours, and you see what a failure I have made of it. I have let them get away with the papers under my very nose."

"I can't see that you were very much to blame, Mr. Crawshay," the detective observed. "It was a unique trick, and very cleverly worked out."

They had turned off the main thoroughfare and were now brought to a standstill in the courtyard leading to the Savoy. Suddenly Crawshay gripped his companion by the arm and directed his attention to a man who was buying some roses in the florist's shop.

"You see that man?" he said. "Watch him carefully. I'll tell you why when we get inside."

The eyes of Mr. Brightman and Jocelyn Thew met over the gorgeous cluster of red roses which the girl was in the act of removing from the window, and from that moment the struggle which was to come assumed a different character. Brightman's thin mouth seemed to have tightened until the line of red had almost disappeared. There was a flush upon his sallow cheeks. The hand which was gripping his walking stick went white about the knuckles. But in Jocelyn Thew there was no change save a little added glitter in the eyes. There was nothing else to indicate that the recognition was mutual.

"Well, what about him?" Brightman asked, as their taxicab moved on. "What does he call himself?"

"Mr. Jocelyn Thew is his name," Crawshay replied. "He was on the steamer. It is he, and not Gant, whom we have to make for. The plot which we have to unravel, which Gant and Phillips, and, unwittingly, Miss Beverley carried through, was of his scheming."

"Mr. Jocelyn Thew," the detective repeated as they passed through the swing doors. "So that is how he calls himself now!"

"You know him?"

"Know him!" Brightman repeated bitterly. "The last time I saw him I could have sworn that I had him booked for Sing Sing prison. He got out of it, as he always has done. Some one else paid. It was the greatest failure I had

when I was in the States. So he is in this thing, is he?"

"He is not only very much in it," Crawshay replied, "but he is the brains of the whole expedition. He is the man to whom Gant delivered those documents some time last night."

They found two easy-chairs in the smoking room and ordered cocktails. Mr. Brightman sat forward in his chair. He was one of those men whose individuality seems to rise to any call made upon it. He was indifferently dressed, by no means good-looking, and he had started life as a policeman. Just now, however, he seemed to sink quite naturally into his surroundings. Nothing about his appearance seemed worthy of note except the determination of his very dogged mouth.

"I accepted your commission a short time ago, Mr. Crawshay," he said, "with the interest which one always feels in Government business of a remunerative character. I tell you now that I would have taken it on eagerly if there had not been a penny hanging to it. I can't tell you exactly why I feel so bitterly about him, but if I can really get my hands on to the man who calls himself Jocelyn Thew, it will be one of the happiest days of my life."

"You really know something about him, then? He really is a bad lot?" Crawshay asked eagerly.

"The worst that ever breathed," Brightman declared, "the bravest, coolest, best-bred scoundrel who ever mocked the guardians of the law. Mind you, I am not saying that he hasn't done other things. He has travelled and fought in many countries, but when he comes back to civilisation he can't rest. The world has to hear of him. Things move in New York underground. The moment he takes rooms at the Carlton-Ritz, things happen in a way that they have never happened before, and we know that there's genius at the back of it all, and Jocelyn Thew smiles in our faces. I tell you that if anything could have kept me in America, although I very much prefer Liverpool, the chance of laying my hands on this man would have done it."

Through the swing doors, almost as Brightman had concluded his speech, came Jocelyn Thew. He was dressed in light tweeds, carefully fashioned by an English tailor. His tie and collar, his grey Homburg hat with its black band, his beautifully polished and not too new brown shoes, were exactly according to the decrees of Bond Street. He seemed to be making his way to the bar, but at the sight of them he paused and strolled across the room towards them.

"Getting your land legs, Mr. Crawshay?" he enquired.

"Pretty well, thank you. You finished your business in Liverpool quickly, I see."

"More urgent business brought me to London. I dined and spent last evening, by-the-by, with Doctor Gant--the doctor who was in attendance upon that poor fellow who died on the way over."

"A very ingenious gentleman," Crawshay observed drily.

"Ah! you appreciate that, do you?" Jocelyn Thew replied, with a faint smile. "You should go and cultivate his acquaintance. He is staying over at the Regent Palace Hotel."

"One doesn't always attach oneself to the wrong person, Mr. Thew."

"Even the stupidest people in the world," Jocelyn Thew agreed, "can scarcely make mistakes all the time, can they? By the way," he went on, turning towards the detective, "is it my fancy or have I not had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Brightman in America? I fancied so when I saw him board the steamer in the Mersey on Sunday, but it did not fall to my lot to receive the benefit of his offices."

"I was just telling Mr. Crawshay that I had had the pleasure of professional dealings with you," Brightman said drily. "I was also lamenting the fact that they had not ended according to my desires."

"Mr. Brightman was always ambitious," the newcomer observed, with gentle satire. "He is, I am sure, a most persevering and intelligent member of his profession, but he flies high."

"I am much obliged for your commendation," Brightman said bluntly. "As regards professions, I was just explaining to Mr. Crawshay that you were almost at the top of the tree in yours."

"If you have discovered my profession," Jocelyn Thew replied, "you have succeeded where my dearest friends have failed. Pray do not make a secret of it, Mr. Brightman."

"I have heard you called an adventurer," was the prompt reply.

"It is a term with which I will not quarrel," Jocelyn declared. "I certainly am one of those who appreciate adventures, who have no pleasure in sitting down in these grey-walled, fog-hung cities, and crawling about with one's nose on the pavements like a dog following an unclean smell. No, that has not been my life. I have sought fortune in most quarters of the globe, sometimes found it and sometimes lost it, sometimes with one weapon in my hand and sometimes with another. So perhaps you are right, Mr. Brightman, when you call me an adventurer."

"These very uncomfortable times," Crawshay remarked, "rather limit the sphere in which one may look for stirring events."

"You are wrong, believe me," Jocelyn Thew replied earnestly. "The stories of the Arabian Nights would seem tame, if one had the power of seeing what goes on around us in the most unsuspected places. But we are digressing. Mr. Brightman and I were speaking together. It occurred to me, from what he said, that he has not quite the right idea as to my aspirations, as to the place I desire to fill in life. I shall try to give him an opportunity to form a saner judgment."

"It will give me the utmost pleasure to accept it," the detective confessed, with ill-concealed acerbity.

Jocelyn Thew sighed lightly. He had seated himself upon the arm of a neighbouring easy-chair and was resting his hand upon the head of a cane he was carrying.

"If our friend Brightman here has a fault," he said, "in the execution of his daily duties, it is that he brings to bear into his task a certain amount of prejudice, from which the mind of the ideal detector of crime should be free. Now you would scarcely believe it, Mr. Crawshay, I am sure, to judge from his amiable exterior, but Mr. Brightman is capable of very strong dislikes, of one of which, alas! I am the object. Now this is not as it should be. You see what might happen, supposing Mr. Brightman were engaged to watch a little coterie, or, in plainer parlance, a little gang of supposed misdemeanants. If by any possible stretch of his imagination he could connect me with them, I should be the one he would go for all the time, and although I perhaps carry my fair burden of those peccadilloes to which the law, rightly or wrongly, takes exception, still, in this particular instance I might be the innocent one, and in Mr. Brightman's too great eagerness to fasten evil things upon me, the real culprit might escape.--Thank you, Mr. Crawshay," he added, accepting the cocktail which the waiter had presented. "Let us drink a little toast together. Shall we say 'Success to Mr. Brightman's latest enterprise, whatever it may be!'"

Crawshay glanced at his companion.

"I think we can humour our friend by drinking that toast, Brightman," he said.

"I shall drink it with great pleasure," the detective agreed.

They set down their empty glasses. Jocelyn Thew rose regretfully to his feet.

"I fear," he said, "that I must tear myself away. We shall meet again, I trust. And, Mr. Brightman, a word with you. If you are in town for a holiday, if you have no business to worry you just at present, why not practise on me for a time? Watch me. Find out the daily incidents of my life. See what company I keep, where I spend my spare time--you know--and all the rest of it. I can assure you that although I am not the great criminal you fancy me, I am a most interesting person to study. Take my advice, Mr. Brightman. Keep your eye upon me."

They watched him on the way to the door--a little languid but exceedingly pleasant to look upon, exceedingly distinguished and prepossessing. A look of half unwilling admiration crept into Brightman's face.

"Whatever that man really may be," he declared, "he is a great artist."

The swing door leading from the room into the café was pushed open, and a woman entered. She stood for a moment looking around until her eyes fell upon Jocelyn Thew. Crawshay suddenly gripped the detective's arm.

"Is there anything for us in this, my friend?" he whispered. "Watch Jocelyn Thew's face!"

CHAPTER XVII

For a few seconds Jocelyn Thew was certainly taken aback. His little start, his look of blank astonishment, were coupled with a certain loss of poise which Crawshay had been quick to note. But, after all, the interlude was brief enough.

"Exactly what does this mean, Nora?" he demanded.

Her vivid brown eyes were fastened upon his face, eager to understand his attitude, a little defiant, a little appealing. There was nothing to be gathered from his expression, however. After that first moment he was entirely himself--well-mannered, unemotional, cold.

"I came over on the _Baltic_," she explained, "I guessed I'd find you here. Fourteenth Street was getting a little sultry. The old man hopped it to San Francisco the day you left."

"Sit down," he invited.

They found places on a lounge and were served with cocktails. The girl sipped hers disapprovingly.

"Rum stuff, this," she declared. "I guess I'll have to get my shaker out."

"You are staying here, then?" he enquired.

"Why not?" she replied, with a faint note of truculence in her tone. "You know I'm not short of money, and I guessed it was where I should find you."

He raised his eyebrows.

"That is very nice and companionable of you," he said, "and naturally I shall be very glad to be of any assistance possible whilst you are over here, but I hope you will remember, Nora, that I did not encourage you to come."

"I'm wise enough about that," she admitted. "I never expected you to care two pins whether you ever saw me again or not, and I know quite well," she went on hastily, "that I haven't any right to follow you, or anything of that sort. But honestly, Mr. Thew, we were being watched down there, and New York wasn't exactly healthy."

He nodded.

"Yes," he assented, "no doubt you are right. They have awkward methods of cross-examination there, although I don't think they'd get much out of you, Nora."

"I'd no fancy to have them try," she admitted. "Besides, I've never had that trip to Europe that uncle and I were always talking about, and it seemed to me that if I wanted to see the old country whole, now or never was the time. You may all be a German colony over here by next year."

"I have no right or any desire," he told her quietly, "to interfere in any way with your plans, but I must warn you that just at present I am living in the utmost jeopardy. I have no friends to whom I can introduce you, nor any of my own time or attentions to offer. Unless you choose to exercise tact, I might find your presence here not only embarrassing but a positive hindrance to my plans."

"I guess I can lie close," she replied, looking at him through half-closed eyes. "Just how am I to size that up, though?"

He looked at her appraisingly, a little cruelly. The effect of her beautiful figure was almost ruined by the cheap and unbecoming clothes in which she was attired. Her hat, with its huge hatpins and ultra-fashionable height, was hideous. She exuded perfumes. Her silk stockings and suede shoes were the only reasonable things about her. The former she was displaying with some recklessness as she leaned back upon the settee.

"I once told you," he said calmly, "that there was no woman in the world for whom I felt the slightest affection."

"Well?"

"That is no longer the case."

Her eyes glittered.

"Who is she?"

"It is not necessary for you to know," he answered coldly. "She happens, however, to be concerned in the business which I have on hand. She has been of great assistance to me, and she may yet be the means of helping me to final success. I cannot afford to have her upset by any false impressions."

She looked at him almost wonderingly.

"If you're not the limit!" she exclaimed. "Nothing matters to you except to succeed. You tell me in one breath that you care for a woman for the first time in your life, and in the next you speak of using her as your tool!"

"You perhaps find that incomprehensible," he observed. "I do not blame you. At present, however, I have only one object in life, and that is to succeed in the business I have on hand. Whatever I may find it necessary to do to attain my ends, I shall do."

She had gone a little pale, and her white teeth were holding down her full under lip.

"Buy me another cocktail," she demanded.

He obeyed, and she drank it at a gulp.

"So you are not going to be nice to me?" she asked in a low tone.

"That depends upon what you call nice," he answered. "I am rather up against a blank wall. Even if I succeed, I remain in this country at very considerable personal danger. I am not sure that even for your sake, Nora, it is well for you to associate with me. Why not go home? You'll find some of your people still there--and an old sweetheart or two, very likely."

"It isn't a very warm welcome," she remarked, a little wistfully.

"You have taken me by surprise," he reminded her. "I had not the slightest idea of your coming."

"I know that," she sighed. "I suppose I ought not to have hoped for anything more. You've never been any different to me than to any of the others. You treat us all, men and women, just alike. You are gracious or cold, just according to how much we can help. I sometimes wonder, Mr. Jocelyn Thew, whether you have a heart at all."

For a single moment he looked at her kindly. His hand even patted hers. It was a curious revelation. He was a kindly ordinary human being.

"Ah, Nora," he said, "I am not quite so bad as that! But for many years I have had a great, driving impulse inside me, and at the back of it the most wonderful incentive in all the world. You know what that is, Nora--or perhaps you don't. To a woman it would be love, I suppose. To a man it is hate."

She drew a little further away from him, as though something which had flamed in his eyes for a moment had frightened her.

"Yes," she murmured, "you are like that."

Jocelyn Thew was himself again almost at once.

"Since we understand one another, Nora," he said, a little more kindly, "let me tell you that I am really very glad to see you, although you did give me rather a shock just now. I want you, if you will, to turn your head to the left. You see those two men--one seated in the easy-chair and the other on its arm?"

"I see them."

"They are the two men," he continued, "who are out to spoil my show if they can. You may see them again under very different circumstances."

"I shan't forget," she murmured. "The dark one looks like Brightman, the detective you were up against in that Fall River business--the man who believed that you were the High Priest of crime in New York."

"You have a good memory," he remarked. "It is the same man."

"And the other," she continued, with a sudden added interest in her tone--"Why, that's the Englishman who had me turned off from the hotel in Washington. Don't you remember, I went there for a month on trial as telephone operator, just before the election? You remember why. That Englishman was always dropping in. Used to bring me flowers now and then, but I felt certain from the first he was suspicious. He got me turned off just as things were getting interesting."

"Right again," Jocelyn Thew told her. "His name is Crawshay. He is the man who was sent out from Scotland Yard to the English Embassy. He crossed with me on the steamer. We had our first little bout there."

"Who won?"

"The first trick fell to me," he acknowledged grimly.

"And so will the second and the third," she murmured. "He may be brainy, though he doesn't look it with that monacle and the peering way he has, but you're too clever for them all, Jocelyn Thew. You'll win."

He smiled very faintly.

"Well," he said, "this time I have to win or throw in my chips. Now if you like we'll have some lunch, and afterwards, if you'll forgive my taking the liberty of mentioning it, you had better buy some clothes."

"You don't like this black silk?" she asked wistfully. "I got it at a store up-town, and they told me these sort of skirts were all the rage over here."

"Well, you can see for yourself they aren't," he remarked, a little drily.

"London is a queer place in many ways, especially about clothes. You're either right or you're wrong, and you've got to be right, Nora. We'll see about it presently."

They left the room together. Crawshay looked after them with interest.

"This affair," he told his companion, "grows hourly more and more interesting. You've been up against Jocelyn Thew, you tell me. Well, I am perfectly certain that that girl, whose coming gave him such a start, was a young woman I had turned away from an hotel in Washington. She was in the game then--more locally, perhaps, but still in the same game. I used to sit and talk to her in the afternoons sometimes. Finest brown eyes I ever saw in my life. I wonder if there is anything between her and Jocelyn Thew," he added, looking through the door with a faintly disapproving note in his tone,--a note which a woman would have recognised at once as jealousy.

"If you ask me, I should say no," the other answered. "I've kept tabs on Jocelyn Thew for a bit, and I've had his _dossier_. There's never been a woman's name mentioned in connection with him--don't seem as though he'd ever moved round or taken a meal with one all the time he was in New York. To tell you the truth, Mr. Crawshay, that's just what makes it so difficult to get your hands on a man you want. Nine times out of ten it's through the women we get home. The man who stands clear of them has an extra chance or two--Say, what time this evening?"

"Come to my rooms at 178, St. James's Street, at seven o'clock," Crawshay directed. "I've a little investigation to make before then."

CHAPTER XVIII

Crawshay took a taxicab from the Savoy to Claridge's Hotel, sent up his card and was conducted to Katharine Beverley's sitting room on the first floor. She kept him waiting for a few moments, and he felt a sudden instinct of curiosity as he noticed the great pile of red roses which a maid had only just finished arranging. When she came in, he looked towards her in surprise. She appeared to have grown thinner, and there were dark rims under her eyes. Her words of greeting were colourless. She seemed almost afraid to meet his steady gaze.

"I ought to apologise for calling in the morning," he said, "but I ventured to do so, hoping that you would come out and have some lunch with me."

"I really don't feel well enough," she replied. "London is not agreeing with me at all."

"You are ill?" he exclaimed, with some concern.

She looked at the closed door through which the maid had issued.

"Not exactly ill. I have some anxieties," she answered. "It is kind of you to keep your promise and come. Please tell me exactly what happened? You know how interested I am."

"I have unfortunately nothing to report but failure," he replied.

"Everything seems to have happened exactly as the doctor on the ship suggested. The detectives at Liverpool were quite smart. We were able to trace the car without much difficulty, and the body of your patient Phillips was found at his home, the other side of Chester. We obtained permission to make an examination, and we found that, just as we expected, fresh bandages had been put on only a few hours previously."

"And Doctor Gant?"

"He is at an hotel in London. He is watched night and day, but he seems to divide his time between genuine sight-seeing and trying to arrange for his

passage home. Naturally, the whole of his effects have been searched, but without the slightest result."

"And--and Mr. Jocelyn Thew?"

"His business in Liverpool seems to have detained him a very short time. He is staying now at the Savoy Hotel. Needless to say, his effects too have been thoroughly searched, without result."

"You know that he sent me these?" she asked, glancing towards the roses.

"I saw him buying them."

Her fingers had strayed over one of the blossoms, and he noticed that while they talked she was convulsively crushing it into pulp.

"Were these detectives from Liverpool," she asked, "able to keep any watch upon Doctor Gant and Mr. Jocelyn Thew after--Chester?"

"To some extent. There is no doubt that Jocelyn Thew spent the first night in Liverpool. After that he travelled to London and took up his residence at the Savoy. Here Doctor Gant, who had travelled up from Chester, called upon him, late in the afternoon of the day of his arrival. They spent some time together, and subsequently the doctor took a room at the Regent Palace Hotel. The two men dined together at the Savoy grill, and took a box at the Alhambra music-hall, where they spent the evening. They appear to have returned to Jocelyn Thew's rooms, had a whisky and soda each and separated. There is no record of their having spoken to any other person or visited any other place."

"And their rooms have been searched?"

"By the most skilled men we have."

She pulled another of the roses to pieces.

"So it comes to this," she said. "All these documents, of whose existence both you and the American police knew, have been brought from America to England, and even now you cannot locate them."

"At present we cannot," he confessed drily, "but I am not prepared to admit for a single moment that they are ever likely to reach their destination."

"Jocelyn Thew is very clever," she reminded him calmly.

"I am tired of being told so," he replied, with a touch of irritation in his tone.

She smiled.

"You probably need your luncheon! If you care to come downstairs with me," she invited, "we can finish our conversation."

"I shall be only too pleased."

Katharine Beverley's table was in a quiet corner, and she sat with her back to the window, but even under such circumstances the change in her during the last few days was noticeable. There was a frightened light in her eyes, her cheeks were entirely colourless, her hands seemed almost transparent. Such a change in so short a time seemed almost incredible. Crawshay found himself unable to ignore it.

"I am very sorry to see you looking so unwell," he observed sympathetically. "I am afraid the shock of your voyage across the Atlantic has been too much for you."

"I am terribly disturbed," she confessed. "I am disappointed, too, in Mr. Jocelyn Thew. One hates to be made use of so flagrantly."

"You really knew nothing, then, until those things were discovered in your stateroom?"

"That question," she replied, "I am not going to answer."

"But the main part of the plot?" he persisted, "the bandages?"

"Doctor Gant never allowed me to touch them. That is what I found so inexplicable,--what first set me wondering."

"The whole scheme was very cleverly thought out," Crawshay pronounced, "but if you will forgive my repeating a previous speculation, Miss Beverley, the greatest mystery about it all, to me, is how you, Miss Katharine Beverley, whose name and reputation in New York stands so high, were induced to leave your work, your social engagements and your home, at a time like this, when your country really has claims upon you, to act as ordinary sick nurse to a New York clerk of humble means who turns out to have been nothing but the tool of Jocelyn Thew."

"I am still unable to explain that," she told him.

He realised the state of tension in which she was and suddenly abandoned the whole subject. He spoke of the theatres, asked of her friends in town, discussed the news of the day, and made no further allusion of any sort to the mystery which surrounded them. It was not until after they had been served with their coffee in the lounge that he reverted to more serious matters.

"Miss Beverley," he said, "for your own sake I am exceedingly unwilling to leave you like this. I may seem to you to be an inquisitor, but believe me I am a friendly one. I cannot see that you have anything to lose in being frank with me. I wish to help you. I wish to relieve the anxiety from which I know that you are suffering. Give me your confidence."

"You ask a very difficult thing," she sighed.

"Difficult but not impossible," he insisted. "I can quite understand that

your discovery of the fact that you had been made use of to assist in the bringing to England of treasonable documents is of itself likely to be a severe shock to you, but, if you will permit me to say so, it is not sufficient to account for your present state of nerves."

"You don't know all that is happening," she replied, in some agitation.

"There is a very astute lady detective who has a room near mine, and a man who shadows me every time I come in or go out. I am expecting every moment that the manager will ask me to leave the hotel."

"That is all very annoying, of course," he acknowledged sympathetically, "and yet I believe that at the back of your head there is still something else troubling you."

"You are very observant," she murmured.

"In your case," he replied, "close observation is scarcely necessary. Why, it is only four days since we left the steamer, and you look simply the wreck of yourself."

"A great deal has happened since then," she confessed.

He seized upon the admission.

"You see, I was right.--There is something else! Miss Beverley, I am your friend. You must confide in me."

"It would be useless," she assured him sadly.

"You cannot be sure of that," he insisted. "If this espionage gets on your nerves, I believe that I have influence enough to have it removed, provided that you will let me bring a friend of mine to see you here and ask you a few questions."

She shook her head.

"It is not the espionage alone," she declared. "I am confronted with something altogether different, something about which I cannot speak."

"Is this man Jocelyn Thew connected with it in any way?" he demanded.

She winced.

"Why should you ask that question?"

"Because it is perfectly clear," he continued, "that Jocelyn Thew exercises some sort of unholy influence over you, an influence, I may add, which it is my intention to destroy."

She smiled bitterly.

"If you can destroy anything that Jocelyn Thew means to keep alive," she began--

"Oh, please don't believe that Jocelyn Thew is infallible," he interrupted.

"I have had a long experience of diplomatists and plotters and even criminals, and I can assure you that no man breathing is possessed of more than ordinary human powers. Jocelyn Thew has brought it off against us this time, but then, you see, one must lose a trick now and then. It is the next step which counts."

"Oh, the next step will be all right!" she replied, with a hard little laugh. "He has brought his spoils to England, although there must have been twenty or thirty detectives on board, and you won't be able to stop his disposing of them exactly as he likes."

"I don't agree with you," he assured her confidently. "That, however, is not what I want to talk about. You are in a false position. In the struggle which is going on now, your heart and soul should be with us and against Jocelyn Thew."

Her eyes were lit with a momentary terror.

"You don't suppose for a moment," she said, "that my sympathies are not with my own country and our joint cause?"

"I don't," he replied. "On the other hand, your actions should follow upon your sympathies. There is something sinister in your present state. I want you to tell me just what the terror is that is sitting in your heart, that has changed you like this. Jocelyn Thew has some hold upon you. If so, you need a man to stand by your side. Can't you treat me as a friend?"

She softened at his words. For a moment she sat quite silent.

"I can only repeat to you what I told you once before," she said. "If you are picturing Jocelyn Thew to yourself as a blackmailer, or anything of that sort, you are wrong. I am under the very deepest obligations to him."

"But surely," he protested, "you have paid your debt, whatever it was?"

"He admits it."

"And yet the terror remains?"

"It remains," she repeated sadly.

Crawshay meditated for a moment.

"Look here, Miss Beverley," he said, "I have a friend who is chief in this country of a department which I will not name. Will you dine with me to-night and let me invite him to meet you?"

She shook her head.

"It is a very kind thought," she declared, "but I am engaged. Mr. Jocelyn Thew is dining here."

Crawshay's face for a moment was very black indeed. He rose slowly to his feet.

"I know that you mean to be kind," she continued, "and I fear that I must seem very ungrateful. Believe me, I am not. I am simply faced with one of those terrible problems which must be solved, and yet which admit of no help from any living person."

Crawshay's attitude had grown perceptibly stiffer.

"I am very sorry indeed, Miss Beverley," he said, "that you cannot give me your confidence. I am very sorry for my own sake, and I am sorry for yours."

"Is that a threat?" she asked.

"You know the old proverb," he answered, as he bowed over her fingers. "Those who are not on my side are against me."

"You are going to treat me as an enemy?"

"Until you prove yourself to be a friend."

CHAPTER XIX

At a quarter to eight that evening, a young man who had made fitful appearances in the lounge of Claridge's Restaurant during the last half-hour went to the telephone and rang up a certain West End number.

"Are these Mr. Crawshay's rooms?" he asked.

"Mr. Crawshay speaking," was the reply.

"Brightman there?"

Crawshay turned away from the telephone and handed the receiver to the detective.

"What news, Henshaw?" the latter enquired.

"Miss Beverley dines at her usual table, sir, at eight o'clock," was the reply. "The table is set for three."

"For three?" Brightman exclaimed.

"For three?" Crawshay echoed, turning from the sideboard, where he had been in the act of mixing some cocktails.

"You are quite sure the third place isn't a mistake?" Brightman asked.

"Quite sure, sir," was the prompt reply. "I am acquainted with one of the head waiters here, and I understand that two gentlemen are expected."

"Anything else?"

"Nothing, sir. Miss Beverley sent away two parcels this afternoon, which were searched downstairs. They were quite unimportant."

"I shall expect to hear from you again," Brightman directed, "within half an hour. If the third person is a stranger, try and find out his name."

"I'll manage that all right, Mr. Brightman. The young lady has just come down. I'll be getting back into the lounge."

Brightman turned around to Crawshay, who was in the act of shaking the cocktails.

"A third party," he observed.

"Interesting," Crawshay declared, "very interesting! Perhaps the intermediary. It might possibly be Doctor Gant, though."

The detective shook his head.

"Three quarters of an hour ago," he said, "Doctor Gant went into Gatti's for a chop. He was quite alone and in morning clothes."

Crawshay poured the amber-coloured liquid which he had been shaking into a frosted glass, handed it to his companion and filled one for himself.

"Here's hell to Jocelyn Thew, anyway!" he exclaimed, with a note of real feeling in his tone.

"If I thought," Brightman declared, "that drinking that toast would bring him any nearer to it, I should become a confirmed drunkard. As it is, sir--my congratulations! A very excellent mixture!"

He set down his glass empty and Crawshay turned away to light a cigarette.

"No," he decided, "I don't think that it would be Doctor Gant. Jocelyn Thew has finished with him all right. He did his job well and faithfully, but he was only a hired tool. Speculation, however, is useless. We must wait for Henshaw's news. Perhaps this third guest, whoever he may be, may give us a clue as to Jocelyn Thew's influence over Miss Beverley."

The telephone rang a few minutes later. Crawshay this time took up the receiver, and Brightman the spare one which hung by the side. It was Henshaw speaking.

"Miss Beverley has just gone in to dinner," he announced. "She is accompanied by Mr. Jocelyn Thew and a young officer in the uniform of a

Flight Commander."

"What is his name?" Crawshay asked.

"I have had no opportunity of finding out yet," was the reply. "I believe that he is staying in the hotel, and he seems to be on very intimate terms with Miss Beverley."

"On no account lose sight of the party," Crawshay directed, "and try and find out the young soldier's name. Wasn't he introduced to Jocelyn Thew?"

"Not a bit of it," was the prompt reply. "They shook hands very much like old friends."

"Go back and watch," Crawshay directed. "I must know his name. The sooner you can find out, the better. I want to get away within a few minutes, if I can."

They left the instrument. Crawshay, who seemed a little nervous, took a cigarette from an open box which he passed across to his companion, and strolled up and down the room for a few moments with his hands in his pockets.

"A young officer," he remarked, "presumably English, known to both Miss Beverley and Jocelyn Thew, seems rather a puzzle. He may be the connecting link. I hope to goodness your man won't be long, Brightman."

"Are you in a hurry?" the detective asked.

Crawshay nodded.

"I want to get round to the Savoy," he announced.

Brightman smiled slightly.

"Were you thinking about the young lady, sir?" he asked.

"I thought it might be useful to renew my acquaintance with her," Crawshay explained, a little laboriously. "I shouldn't think she'd go out alone."

"She has probably made some friends by this time," Brightman observed.

Crawshay dropped his eyeglass and polished it.

"From my experience of the young lady," he said, a little stiffly, "I should think it improbable. I happened to meet her twice in New York, and she struck me as being an extraordinarily well-behaved and, in her natural way, very attractive person."

"Do you suppose that she came to Europe after Jocelyn Thew?" Brightman asked.

"Oh, damn Jocelyn Thew!" Crawshay replied. "I should think it most

unlikely. You and I have both seen the man's _dossier_. Most cold-blooded person alive."

The telephone broke in once more upon their conversation. Crawshay took up the receiver. It was Henshaw speaking.

"I made a mistake about the uniform, sir," he announced. "The young man is in the Canadian Flying Corps and he is the young lady's brother. He is called Captain Beverley."

"Her brother!" Crawshay exclaimed.

"The connecting link!" Brightman murmured.

Meanwhile, the little dinner at Claridge's, of which sketchy tidings were being conveyed to the two occupants of Crawshay's flat by Henshaw, was settling down, so far as the two men were concerned, into a cheery enough meal. There had been a little strangeness at first, but Jocelyn Thew's hearty welcome of his young friend, and his genuine pleasure at seeing him, had quickly broken the ice. Katharine, however, although she had a shade more colour than earlier in the day, had sometimes the air of a Banquo at the feast. She listened almost feverishly to Jocelyn Thew, whenever he seemed inclined to turn the conversation into a certain channel, and she watched her brother a little anxiously as the waiter filled up his glass, unchecked, every few minutes. The likeness between the two was apparent enough, although marked by certain differences. Beverley was tall, of exceedingly powerful build, and with a fresh, strong face which would have been remarkably attractive but for the weak mouth and the slightly puffy cheeks.

"I can't conceive anything more fortunate than this meeting," Jocelyn Thew declared, as he inspected the cigars which had been brought round to him, with the air of a connoisseur. "Quite an extraordinary coincidence, too, that you should turn up in London on five days' leave, the very day that your sister arrives from the States. Tell me, are you right up at the front?"

"Right beyond it, most days," was the cheerful reply. "We spend most of our time over the German lines."

"Lucky fellow!" Jocelyn Thew sighed. "You are getting now what a few years ago one had to defy the law for--real, thrilling sensations. It's a life for men, yours."

The young man's hand shook a little as he raised his glass. He looked towards Jocelyn Thew almost appealingly.

"It's a splendid life," he assented, talking rapidly and with the air of one who wishes to stifle conversation. "I had hard work to get my wings, but I guess I'm all right now. The engine part of it never gave me any trouble, but I suffered from a kind of sickness the first few times I went up. It's a gorgeous sensation, flying. The worst of it is we never know when those cunning Germans aren't coming out with something fresh. They

stung us up last week with a dozen planes of an entirely new pattern, two hundred and fifty horse-power engines on a small frame. Gee, they gave some of our elderly machines a touching up, I can tell you!"

"So you fly over the German lines most days, eh?" Jocelyn Thew ruminated.

"We dropped a few thousand copies of the President's speech last Monday," the young man told them. "That ought to give them something to think about. They only know just what they are told. The last batch of prisoners that were brought in firmly believed that one of their armies had landed in England and that London was on the point of falling."

"All war," Jocelyn Thew said didactically, "is carried on under a cloud of misconception."

The young man stretched himself out. He had dined well and his courage was returning. He asked a question which up till then he had felt inclined to shirk.

"What licks me," he declared suddenly, "is finding you two over here. What ever brought you across, Katharine?"

There was a brief silence. Katharine seemed uncertain how to answer. It was Jocelyn Thew who took up the challenge.

"A little over a fortnight ago," he explained, "I called upon your sister in New York. I begged her to perform a certain service for me. She consented. The execution of that service brought her across from New York on board the City of Boston."

"But have you two been seeing anything of one another, then? You never mentioned Thew in any of your letters, Katharine?"

"Your sister and I have not met since a certain memorable occasion," Jocelyn Thew replied.

The young man shivered and drained his glass.

"What was this service?" he enquired.

"Your sister played sick nurse upon the steamer to a person in whom I was interested, and who was operated upon in her hospital," Jocelyn Thew explained. "He was an Englishman, and very anxious to reach his own country before he died."

"I can't quite catch on to it," Beverley admitted.

Jocelyn Thew glanced carelessly around. His manner was the reverse of suspicious, but he only resumed his speech when he was sure that not even a waiter was within hearing.

"It happened to form part of an important plan of mine," he said, "that a man who was dangerously ill should be brought over to England without

raising any suspicion as to his *_bona fides_*. I made use of your sister's name and social position to ensure this. There has been, as I think you have often acknowledged, Beverley, a debt owing from you to me. Half of that debt your sister has paid."

"You haven't been getting Katharine mixed up in any crooked business?" her brother demanded excitedly.

"Your sister ran no risk whatever," Jocelyn Thew assured him. "She performed her share of the bargain excellently. It is just possible," he continued, with a glint of fire in his eyes and a peculiar, cold emphasis creeping into his words, "that it may fall to your lot to wipe out the remainder of the debt."

Beverley moved in his chair uneasily.

"You will remember," he said, "that things have changed. I am not a free agent now. I entered upon this fighting business as an adventure, but, my God, Thew, it's got into my blood! I've seen things, felt things. I don't want anything to come between me and the glorious life I live day by day."

Jocelyn Thew nodded approvingly.

"That's the proper spirit, Beverley," he declared. "I always knew you had pluck. Quite the proper spirit! Your sister showed the same courage when the necessity came."

"Oh, don't bring me into this, please!" she interrupted.

"You seem to have been brought into it," her brother observed grimly, "and I'm not sure that I am satisfied. I can pay my own debts."

There was a note of rising anger in his tone. Katharine laid her fingers upon his hand.

"Don't imagine things, please, Dick," she begged. "It is my own foolishness if I am disturbed. I really had nothing to do. Mr. Thew has been most considerate."

"In any case," Jocelyn Thew went on, "I think that the matter had better be discussed another time, when we are alone. We might have to make reference to things which are best not mentioned in a public place."

For a moment the young man's eyes challenged his. Then they fell. He shivered a little.

"Why ever speak of them?" he demanded.

"Ah, well, we'll see," Jocelyn Thew observed. "Now what about an hour or two at a music-hall? I have a box at the Alhambra."

Katharine rose at once to her feet. They all made their way into the lounge. Whilst they waited for her to fetch her cloak, Beverley swung round

to his companion.

"Look here," he said, "for myself it doesn't matter--you know that--but what game are you playing? I don't know much about your life, of course, before those few days, but on your own showing you were out for big things. Are you known here? Is it anything--anything against the law, this business you're on? I don't care for myself--you know that. It's Katharine I'm thinking of."

Jocelyn Thew knocked the ash from his cigar. He smiled deprecatingly at his companion. Certainly there was no man in that very fashionable restaurant who looked less like a criminal.

"My dear Beverley," he expostulated, "you must remember that I am an exceedingly clever person. I am suspected of any number of misdemeanours. I will not say that there are not one or two of which I have not been guilty, but I have never left behind me any proof. I dare say the English police over here look on me sometimes just as hungrily as the New York ones. They feel in their hearts that I am an adventurer. They feel that I have been connected with some curious enterprises, both in the States and various other countries of the globe. They know very well that where there has been fighting and loot and danger, I have generally followed under my own flag. They know all this, but they can prove nothing against me. They can only watch me, and that they do wherever I am. They are watching me now, every hour of the day."

"It isn't," the young man commenced, with a sudden break in his tone--

Jocelyn shook his head.

"No, my young friend," he said, "the curtain fell upon that little episode. I doubt whether there is even a police record of it. It isn't the lives of individuals I am juggling with to-day. It's the life of a nation."

"Are you a spy?" Beverley asked him hoarsely.

"Your sister," Jocelyn Thew pointed out, "is waiting for us."

CHAPTER XX

Crawshay, having the good fortune to find, as he issued from his rooms, a taxicab whose driver's ideas of speed were in accordance with his own impatience, managed to reach the Savoy at a few minutes before eight. He entered the hotel by the Court entrance. An insignificant-looking young man with a fair moustache and watery eyes touched him on the shoulder as he passed through the Court lobby. Crawshay glanced lazily around and assured himself that they were unobserved.

"Anything fresh?" he asked laconically.

"Nothing. We have searched Miss Sharey's rooms thoroughly, and two of our men have been over Thew's apartments again."

"Miss Sharey up-stairs?"

The young man shook his head.

"Hasn't been up for some hours," he reported.

Crawshay nodded and strolled on. He left his coat and hat in charge of the attendant, and entered the grill room. Here, however, he met with disappointment. The place was crowded but his search was methodical. There was no sign there of Nora Sharey. He climbed the few stairs and entered the smoking room. Seated in an armchair, reading a novel, he discovered the young lady of whom he was in search.

He crossed the room at a slow saunter, as though on his way to the bar, and paused before the girl's chair. She laid down her book and looked up at him. Her smile at once assured him of a welcome.

"I am glad that I am not altogether forgotten, Miss Sharey," he said, holding out his hand which she promptly accepted. "I suppose it still is Miss Sharey, is it? I hope so."

"I guess the name's all right," she replied. "Glad to see you don't bear any ill-will against me, Mr. Crawshay. You Englishmen sometimes get so peevish when things don't go quite your way, and you weren't saying nice things to me last time we met."

Crawshay smiled and glanced at the seat by her side. She made room for him, and he subsided into the vacant space with a little sigh of content.

"A man's profession," he confided, "sometimes makes large and repugnant demands upon him."

"If that means you are sorry you were rude to me last time we met down in Fourteenth Street," she said, "I guess I may as well accept your apology. You were a trifle disappointed then, weren't you?"

"We acted," Crawshay explained, with studied laboriousness,--"my friends and I acted, that is to say--upon inconclusive information. America at that time, you see, was a neutral Power, and the facilities granted us by the New York police were limited in their character. My department was thoroughly convinced that the--er--restaurant of which your father was the proprietor was something more than the ordinary meeting place of that section of your country-people who carried their enmity towards my country to an unreasonable extent."

She looked at him admiringly.

"Say, you know how to talk!" she observed. "What about getting an innocent girl turned out of a job at Washington, though?"

Crawshay stroked his long chin reflectively.

"You don't suppose," he began--

"Oh, don't yarn!" she interrupted. "I'm not squealing. You knew very well that I'd no need to take a post as telephone operator, and you did your duty when you got me turned off. It was very clever of you," she went on, "to tumble to me."

Crawshay accepted the compliment with a smile.

"If you will permit me to say so, Miss Sharey," he declared, "you are what we call in this country a good sportsman."

"Oh, I can keep on the tracks all right," she assented. "I guess I am a little easier to deal with, for instance, than your friend Mr. Jocelyn Thew."

Crawshay frowned. His expression became gloomier.

"I am bound to confess, Miss Sharey," he sighed, "that your friend Mr. Jocelyn Thew has been the disappointment of my life."

"Some brains, eh?"

"He has brains, courage and luck," Crawshay pronounced. "Against these three things it is very hard work to bring off--shall I say a coup?"

"The man who gets the better of Jocelyn Thew," she declared, with a little laugh, "deserves all the nuts. He is a sure winner every time. You're up against him now, aren't you?"

"More or less," Crawshay confessed. "I crossed on the steamer with him."

"I bet that didn't do you much good!"

"I lost the first game," Crawshay confessed candidly. "I see that you know all about it."

"No need to put me wiser than I am," the girl observed carelessly. "Jocelyn Thew's no talker."

"Not unless it serves his purpose. It is astonishing," Crawshay went on reflectively, "how the science of detection has changed during the last ten years. When I was an apprentice at it--and though you may not think it. Miss Sharey, I am a professional, not an amateur, although I am generally employed on Government business--secrecy was our watchword. We hid in corners, we were stealthy, we always posed as being something we weren't. We should have denied emphatically having the slightest interest in the person under surveillance. In these days, however, everything is changed. We play the game with the cards upon the table--all except the last two or three, perhaps--and curiously enough, I am not at all sure that it doesn't

add finesse to the game."

Her eyes flashed appreciatively.

"You're dead right," she acknowledged. "Take us two, for instance. You know very well that Jocelyn Thew is a pal of mine. You know very well that I shall see him within the next twenty-four hours. You know very well that you're out to hunt him to the death, and you know that I know it. Every question you ask me has a purpose, yet we talk here just as chance acquaintances might--I, a girl whom you rather like the look of--you do like the look of me, don't you, Mr. Crawshay?"

Crawshay had no need to be subtle. His eyes and tone betrayed his admiration.

"I have thoroughly disliked you ever since you were too clever for me in New York," he confessed, "and I have been in love with you all the time."

"And you," she continued, with a little gleam of appreciation in her eyes, "are a very pleasant-looking, smart, agreeable Englishman, who looks as though he knew almost enough to ask a poor girl out to dinner."

Crawshay glanced at his wrist watch.

"It is you who have the science of detection," he declared. "You have read my thoughts. Do you wish to change your clothes first, or shall we turn in at a grill room?"

She rose promptly to her feet.

"I'm all for the glad rags," she insisted. "I bought a heap of clothes in Bond Street this afternoon, and I don't know how many chances I shall have of wearing them. I am a quick dresser, and I shan't keep you more than a quarter of an hour. But just one moment first."

Crawshay stood attentively by her side.

"I am at your service," he murmured.

"It's all in the game," she went on, "for you to take me out to dinner, of course, but I guess I needn't tell you that there's nothing doing in the information way. You've fixed it up in your mind, I dare say, that I am mad with Jocelyn Thew. I may be or I may not, but that doesn't make me any the more likely to come in on your side of the game."

Mr. Crawshay's gesture was entirely convincing.

"My dear Miss Sharey," he said softly, "I am going to take a holiday. Business is one thing and pleasure is another. For this evening I am going to put business out of my mind. The sentiment at which I hinted a few moments ago, has, I can assure you, a very real existence."

"Hinted?" she laughed. "Guess there wasn't much hint about it. You said you

were in love with me."

"I am," Crawshay sighed.

Her eyes danced joyously.

"You shall tell me all about it over dinner," she declared. "I've got a peach of a black gown--you won't mind if I am twenty minutes?"

"I shall mind every moment that you are away," Crawshay replied, "but I can pass the time. I will telephone and have a cocktail."

She leaned towards him.

"I can guess whom you are going to telephone to."

"Perhaps--but not what I am going to say."

"You are going to telephone to that chap with the dark moustache--Brightman, isn't it? I can hear you on the wire. 'Say, boys,' you'll begin, 'I'm on to a good thing! Everything's looking lovely. I'm taking little Nora Sharey, of Fourteenth Street, out to dine--girl who came over to Europe after Jocelyn Thew, you know. Good business, eh?'"

Crawshay laughed tolerantly. The girl's humour pleased him.

"You are wrong," he declared. "If I told them that, they'd expect something from me which I know I shan't get. You are right about the person, though. I am going to telephone to Brightman."

"What are you going to say?" she challenged him.

"I am just going to tell him," Crawshay confided, "that Jocelyn Thew is dining with Miss Beverley and her brother, more red roses and a corner table in the restaurant, and--"

"Well, what else?"

Crawshay hesitated.

"Perhaps," he said, "if I went on I might put just one card too many on the table, eh?"

"We'll let it go at that, then," she decided. "After all, you know, I am not coming exactly like a lamb to the slaughter. There are a few things you'd like to get to know from me about Jocelyn Thew, but there are also a few things I should like to worm out of you. We'll see which wins. And, Mr. Crawshay."

"Miss Sharey?" he murmured, bending down to her as he held the door open.

"I don't mind confessing that it depends a great deal upon what brand of champagne you fancy."

"_Mum cordon rouge_?" he suggested.

She made a little grimace as she turned away.

"I am rather beginning to fancy your chance," she declared.

CHAPTER XXI

Crawshay, about half an hour later, piloted his companion to the table which he had engaged in the restaurant with all the *savoir faire* of a redoubtable man about town. She was, in her way, an exceedingly striking figure in a black satin gown on which was enscrollled one immense cluster of flowers. Her neck and arms, very fully visible, were irreproachable. Her blue-black hair, simply arranged but magnificent, triumphed over the fashions of the coiffeur. The transition from Fourteenth Street to her present surroundings seemed to have been accomplished without the slightest hitch. She leaned forward to smell the great cluster of white roses which he had ordered in from the adjoining florist's.

"The one flower I love," she sighed. "I always fall for white roses."

Crawshay's eyes twinkled as he took his place.

"Do you remember your English history?" he asked. "This is perhaps destined to become a battle of red and white roses--red roses at Claridge's and white roses here."

"Which won--in history?" she asked indifferently.

"That I won't tell you," he said, "in case you should be superstitious. At the same time, I am bound to confess that if we could both of us hear exactly what Jocelyn Thew is saying to-night across those red roses, I think perhaps that I should back the House of York."

"So that's the stunt, is it?" she remarked coolly. "You want to make me jealous of Katharine Beverley?"

"The cleverest and hardest men in the world," Crawshay observed, "generally meet with their Waterloo at the hands of your sex. So far as I am concerned, I am myself in distress. I am jealous of Jocelyn Thew."

"You're bearing up!"

"I am bearing up," Crawshay rejoined, "because I am hoping that with kindness and consideration, and with opportunity to prove to you what a domestic and faithful person I am, you will perceive that of the two men I am the more worthy."

"Think something of yourself, don't you?" she observed.

"I have cultivated this confidence," he told her. "In my younger days I was over-diffident."

"Guess you're older than I thought you, then."

"I am thirty-seven years old," he declared, "and I was well brought up."

"Jocelyn Thew," she said reflectively, "is forty."

"I did not bring you here," he declared, "to discuss the age of my unworthy rival. I brought you to tell me whether you consider that this Lobster Americaine reminds you at all of Delmonico's, and to prove to you that we can, if we put our minds to it and speak plain and simple words to the sommelier, serve our champagne as iced even as you like it."

Nora was not wanting in appreciation.

"It's the best thing I've had to eat since I left New York, and for some time before that," she assured him. "There hasn't been much Delmonico's for me during the last few months. Too many of your lot poking about Fourteenth Street."

He nodded.

"After all," he said, "that was bound to come to an end when America declared war. You people did the only wise thing--brother to San Francisco, eh, your father to Chicago, and you over here?"

"You do know things," she laughed.

"I am a perfect dictionary as to your movements," he assured her.

"Have you anything to do with the fact that my rooms have been searched by the police?" she asked abruptly.

"Indirectly I fear so," he confessed. "You see, up to the present we haven't the least idea as to what has become of all those documents and plans which Mr. Jocelyn Thew so very cleverly brought over to this country."

"Don't know where he's tucked them away, eh?" she enquired.

"That's a fact," Crawshaw confessed. "We discovered, a trifle too late, how they were brought over, but what has become of them since Jocelyn Thew's arrival in London we do not know. Every one concerned has been searched, no deposit has been made at any hotel or in any of the ordinary places where one might conceal securities. They have momentarily vanished."

The girl's eyes twinkled.

"Well," she exclaimed, "he does put it over you, doesn't he? I wonder

whether you think that I am going to be any use to you--that you'll trap Jocelyn Thew through me?"

"Not now," he answered. "I used to think so once."

"Why have you changed your mind?"

"Because," he told her bluntly, "I used once to think that you and he cared for one another."

"And now?"

"I have changed my mind," he admitted. "You know him so well that I need not remind you that where women are concerned he seems to have shown few signs of weakness. Personally, I have a theory that the time has come when he is likely to go the way of all other men."

She leaned across the table. Those wonderful brown eyes of hers were lit with an indescribable interest. Crawshay for a moment lost the thread of his thoughts. They were certainly the most beautiful eyes he had ever looked into.

"You think there is anything between those two--Katharine Beverley and him?"

"The consideration of that point," Crawshay continued, resuming his usual manner, "although it lies off the track of my present investigation, presents some points of interest. She can be of no further use to him in his present scheme. She certainly would not aid him in the concealment of any of his spoils, nor could she become an intermediary in forwarding them to their destination. Yet he has sent her roses every day she has been in England, and dined with her two nights following. You, who know him better than I do, will agree that such a course is unusual with him."

"But Dick Beverley is with them to-night, you told me," she reminded him.

"That scarcely alters the situation," Crawshay pointed out, "because his coming was quite unexpected. If anything, it rather strengthens my point of view. Beverley is very much a young man of the world, and he probably knows Jocelyn Thew's reputation. He certainly would not consent to meet him in this friendly fashion, in company with his sister, unless the latter insisted."

"She doesn't need to insist," Nora said, watching the champagne poured into her glass. "Unless you're kidding me, you don't seem to be able to see much further than your nose. Katharine Beverley didn't come across the Atlantic for her health, and Dick Beverley didn't join that little dinner party for nothing to-night. They both of them did as they were told, and they had to do it."

"This, I must confess," Crawshay murmured, smoothly and mendaciously, "puzzles me. Your idea is, then, that Jocelyn Thew has some hold over them?"

She laughed at him a little contemptuously.

"You are not going to make me believe," she said, "that you are not wise about that. It isn't clever, you know, to treat me as a simpleton."

"I am afraid," he confessed humbly, "that it is I who am the simpleton. You think, then, that the red roses are more emblematic of warfare than of love?"

Nora shrugged her shoulders and was silent for several moments. Her companion changed the subject abruptly, pointed out to her several theatrical celebrities, told her an entertaining story, and talked nonsense until the smile came back to her lips. It was Nora herself who returned to the subject of the Beverleys, reopening it with a certain abruptness which showed that it had never been far from her thoughts.

"See here, Mr. Crawshay," she said, "you seem to me to be wasting a lot of time worrying round a subject, when I don't know whether a straightforward question wouldn't clear it up for you. If you want to know what there is between those three, Jocelyn Thew and the two Beverleys, I don't know that I mind telling you. It's probably what you asked me to dine with you for, anyway."

"My dear Miss Sharey!" Crawshay protested, with genuine earnestness. "I can assure you that I had only one object in asking you to spend the evening with me."

She smiled at him over the glass which she had just raised to her lips.

"And that?"

"The pleasure of talking to you--of being with you."

"You're easily satisfied."

"Perhaps not so easily as I seem," he whispered, leaning a little forward in his place. "If only I were sure that you were not in love with Jocelyn Thew!"

"If you think that I am," she observed, "why are you always slinging that Beverley girl at me?"

"Perhaps," he said coolly, "to make you jealous. All's fair in love and war, you know."

"I see. Then what you really want is to make love to me yourself? I'm sitting here and taking notice. Go right ahead."

Crawshay let himself go for a few moments, and his companion listened to him approvingly.

"It sounds quite like the real thing," she sighed, "but I never trust you

Englishmen. You seem to acquire the habit of talking love to us girls just as easily as you drink a cocktail. You know that if I were to put my little hand in yours this moment across the table, you wouldn't know what to do with it."

"Try me," Crawshay begged.

She held it out--a long, rather thin, capable woman's hand, manicured a few hours ago in the latest fashion, but ringless. Crawshay promptly raised it to his lips. She snatched it away, half amused, half vexed, and glanced furtively around.

"If you did that in an American restaurant," she told him, "you'd stand some chance of getting yourself laughed at."

"It's quite the custom over here and on the Continent," he assured her equably. "It means--well, just as much as you want it to mean."

She sighed and looked at her fingers reflectively.

"What you'd like me to tell you, then," she suggested, raising her eyes and looking at him thoughtfully, "is that I've never wasted a thought on Jocelyn Thew, but that Mr. Reginald Crawshay is it with a capital 'I'?"

"It would make me very happy," he assured her with much conviction.

She laughed at him very softly. Little sparks seemed to flash from her eyes, and her teeth were wonderful.

"You're very nice, anyway," she declared, "although I am not sure that I believe in you as much as I'd like to. I'll just tell you as much as I know. It really doesn't amount to anything. It was just after Jocelyn Thew had come back from Nicaragua and Dick Beverley was having a flare-up of his own in New York. They came together, those two, when Dick was in a tight corner. I don't know the story, but I know that Jocelyn Thew played the white man. Dick Beverley owes him perhaps his life, perhaps only his liberty, and his sister knows it. That's how those three stand to one another."

"I ought to have puzzled that out myself," Crawshay said humbly.

"I am not so sure," she retorted drily, "that you didn't, long ago."

"Surmises are of very little interest by the side of facts," he reminded her. "I like to have something solid to build upon."

She smiled at him appreciatively.

"If I were a sentimental sort of girl," she declared, "I could take a fancy to you, Mr. Crawshay."

"Now you're laughing at me," he protested. "However, I'm going right on with it and then we will dismiss all serious subjects. Miss Beverley has

certainly quit herself of any obligation to Jocelyn Thew. Richard Beverley is no longer free. Besides, he has only a couple of days in England, so there's very little chance of his being of use. Yet," he continued impressively, "I happen to know that every hour just now is of the greatest importance to Jocelyn Thew. Why does he spend another entire evening with these two?"

"Say, which of us is the detective--you or me?" she demanded.

"Professionally, I suppose I am," he admitted. "Just now, however, I consider myself as indulging in the relaxation of private life."

She leaned across the table towards him, her chin supported by her clenched hands.

"Then relax all you want to," she begged, with a smile of invitation.

"We'll drop the other stunt, if you don't mind. And please remember, though I've never enjoyed a dinner more in my life, that we don't want to be too late for the Empire."

Crawshay returned to his rooms about one o'clock the next morning, with his hat a little on the back of his head, and wearing, very much against his prejudice, a white rose in his buttonhole. Brightman, who was awaiting him there, looked up eagerly at his entrance.

"Any luck, Mr. Crawshay?"

Crawshay laid his hat and coat upon the table and mixed himself a whisky and soda.

"I am not sure," he replied thoughtfully. "Are you any good at English history, Brightman?"

"I won an exhibition in my younger days," the detective replied. "I used to consider myself rather great on history."

"Who won the Wars of the Roses?"

"The Lancastrians, of course."

Crawshay nodded.

"They were the chaps with the red roses, weren't they?" he observed. "Brightman, I fancy we are going to reverse that. I am laying five to one that I've found out how Jocelyn Thew counts on getting his spoils into Germany."

The dinner of the red roses, as though in emulation of its rival entertainment, seemed on its way to complete success. Jocelyn Thew, from whose manner there seemed to have departed much of the austerity of the previous evening, had never been a more brilliant companion. He, who spoke so seldom of his own doings, told story after story of his wanderings in distant countries, until even Katharine lost her fears of the situation and abandoned herself to the enjoyment of the moment. His tone was kindlier and his manner more natural. He spoke with regret of Richard Beverley's departure in a couple of days, and only once did he hint at anything in the least disturbing.

"Wonderful feat, that of you flying men," he remarked, "dropping ten thousand copies of Wilson's speech over the German lines. I am not sure that it isn't rather a dangerous precedent, though."

"Why dangerous?" Katharine enquired.

"Because," he answered coolly, "it might suggest a possible means of communication with Germany to a person, say, like myself."

"But you are not a flying man," Katharine reminded him.

He smiled.

"It would not be necessary," he observed, "for me to be my own messenger."

There was a brief and rather a blank silence. The shadow of a new fear had arisen in Katharine's heart. The brother and sister exchanged quick glances.

"I believe I am right," their host went on, a few minutes later, "in presuming that you have told Richard here the details of our little adventure upon the _City of Boston_?"

"I have told him everything," Katharine acknowledged. "You don't mind that, do you? I felt that I had to."

"You were quite right," Jocelyn Thew assented. "There is no reason for you to keep anything secret from Richard."

The young man was conscious of a sudden recrudescence of anger, the flaming up again of his first resentment.

"The whole thing was a rotten business, Thew," he declared. "I should never have resented your making use of me in any way you wished, but to make a tool of Katharine--"

"My dear fellow," Jocelyn Thew interrupted, smoothly but with a dangerous glitter in his eyes, "please don't go on. I have an idea that you were going to say something offensive. Better not. Your sister came to no real harm. She never ran any real risk."

"It depends upon the way you look at these things," the young man replied

gloomily. "Katharine tells me that she is watched at her hotel day and night, and that she has come under the suspicion of the Government for being concerned in this affair."

"That really isn't of much account," the other assured him. "You yourself," he went on, "came very nearly under suspicion once for something infinitely more serious."

It was a chill note in the warmth of their festivities. Katharine glanced reproachfully at her host, and he seemed to realise at once his lapse.

"Forgive me, both of you," he begged. "I fear that I am a little irritable to-night. This constant espionage gets on one's nerves. Look at them all around us,--Crawshay in the corner, trying his best to get something incriminating out of Nora Sharey; Brightman smoking a cigar out there, with his eyes wandering all the time through the glass screen towards this table; and the young man who seemed to haunt your hotel, Miss Beverley--Henshaw I believe his name is--you see him dining there with his back turned ostentatiously towards us and a little pocket mirror by his side. There are three pairs of eyes that scarcely ever leave us. I don't know whether they expect me to produce my spoils from my pocket and lay them upon the table, or whether one of them is a student of the lip language and hopes to learn the secrets of our conversation. Bah! They are very stupid, this professional potpourri of secret-service agents and detectives. Can't you hear them, how they will whisper in the lobby after we have left? 'Jocelyn Thew is entertaining a young Flying Corps man on leave from the front, the brother of Miss Beverley, who has already helped him. What does that mean?' Then they will put their fingers to their noses and you, too, will probably be watched, Dick. They will congratulate themselves upon possessing the subtlety of the Devil. They will see through my scheme. They will say--'This young man is to drop the documents behind the German lines!' Don't be alarmed, Richard, if you find a secret service man in your bedroom when you get home to-night."

Katharine laughed almost joyously.

"Then you're not going to ask Dick to do anything of that sort?" she demanded, her tone indicating an immense relief.

He smiled.

"I am not going to ask your brother to do anything which is so palpably obvious," he replied. "His help I am certainly going to engage, but in a manner which is very unlikely to bring trouble upon him. I promise you that."

She suddenly leaned across the table. The cloud had passed from her features, the dull weight from her heart. Her eyes were more eloquent even than her tremulous lips.

"Mr. Thew," she said, "do you know that I have always had one conviction about you, and that is that all these strange adventures in which you have taken part--some of them, as you yourself have acknowledged, more

creditable than others--you have entered into chiefly from that spirit of adventure, just the spirit in which Dick here," she added with a little shiver, "made his mistake. Why can't you satisfy that part of your nature as Dick is doing? This war, upon which we Americans looked so coldly at first, has become almost a holy war, a twentieth-century crusade. Why don't you join one of these irregular forces and fight?"

Then they both witnessed what they had never before seen in Jocelyn Thew. They saw his eyes blaze with a sudden concentrated fury. They saw his lips part and something that was almost a snarl transform and disfigure his mouth.

"Fight for England?" he exclaimed bitterly. "I would sooner cut off my right hand!"

His words left them at first speechless. He, too, after his little outburst seemed shaken, lacking in his usual *_sangfroid_*. It was Katharine who first recovered herself.

"But you are English?" she protested wonderingly.

"Am I?" he replied. "Will you forgive me if I beg you to change the subject?"

The subject was effectually changed for them by the advent of some of Richard Beverley's brothers in arms. It was some time before they passed on. Then a little note almost of tragedy concluded the feast. A tall and elderly man, gaunt, with sunken cheeks, silver-white hair, complexion curiously waxen, and big, dark eyes, left the table where he had been sitting with a few Americans and came over towards them. His advance was measured, almost abnormally slow. His manner would have been melodramatic but for its intense earnestness. He stood at their table for a few seconds before speaking, his eyes fixed upon Jocelyn Thew's in a curious, almost unnatural stare.

"You will forgive me," he said. "I must be speaking to Sir Denis Cathley?"

Neither of the two young people, who were filled with wonder at the strange appearance of the newcomer, noticed Jocelyn Thew's sudden grip of the tablecloth, the tightening of his frame, the ominous contraction of his eyebrows as for a moment he sat there speechless. Then he was himself again. He shook his head courteously.

"I am afraid," he replied, "that you must be making some mistake. My name is Jocelyn Thew."

"And mine," the stranger announced, "is Michael Dilwyn. Is that name known to you?"

"Perfectly well," Jocelyn Thew acknowledged. "I was present at the production of your last play in New York. I have since read with much regret," he went on courteously, "of the losses you have sustained."

The old man's wonderful eyes flashed for a moment.

"They are losses I am proud to endure, sir," he said. "But I did not come to speak of myself. I came to speak to Sir Denis Cathley."

Jocelyn Thew shook his head.

"It is a likeness which deceives you," he declared.

"A likeness!" the other repeated. "Nine weeks ago I stood in a ruined mansion--so dilapidated, in fact, that one corner of it is open to the skies. I listened to the roar of the Atlantic as I heard it in the same place fifty years ago. A herdsman and his wife, perhaps a girl or two, live somewhere in the back quarters. The only apartment in any sort of preservation is the one sometimes called the picture gallery and sometimes the banqueting hall. You should visit this ruined mansion, sir. You should visit it before you give me the lie when I call you Sir Denis Cathley."

Jocelyn Thew's hand for a moment shielded part of his face, as though he found the electric light a little strong. From behind the shelter of his palm his eyes met the eyes of his visitor. The latter suddenly turned and bowed to Katharine.

"You will forgive an old man," he begged courteously, "who has seen much trouble lately, for his ill manners. Perhaps your friend here, your friend whose name is not Sir Denis Cathley, can explain to you why I felt some emotion at the sight of so wonderful a likeness."

He bowed, murmured some broken words in reply to Katharine's kindly little speech, and moved away. Jocelyn Thew's eyes watched him with a curious softness.

"Yes," he acknowledged, "I can tell you why, if he really saw a likeness in me to the person he spoke of, it might remind him of strange things. You know him by name, of course--Michael Dilwyn?"

"He wrote the wonderful Sinn Fein play, 'The New Green,' didn't he?" Katharine asked eagerly. "I heard you mention it to him. My aunt and I were there at the first night."

"He wrote that and some more wonderful poetry. He has spent more than half his life working for the cause of Ireland. He was the father and patriarch of the last rising. One of his sons was shot at Dublin."

"And who is Sir Denis Cathley?"

"The Cathleys are another so-called revolutionary family," Jocelyn Thew explained. "The late Sir Denis, the father of the man whom he supposed me to be, was Michael Dilwyn's closest friend. They, too, have paid a heavy price for their patriotism or their rebellious instincts, whichever way you choose to look at the matter."

"I think," Katharine declared, "that Mr. Dilwyn is the most

picturesque-looking man I ever saw. I don't believe that even now he is altogether convinced as to your identity."

"He has probably reached an age," was the cool reply, "when his memory begins to suffer.--Ah! I see our friend Crawshaw is taking counsel with Henshaw. They are looking in this direction. Richard, my young friend, you are in a bad way. Suspicion is beginning to fasten upon you. Believe me, one of my parasites will be on your track to-night. I can almost convince myself as to their present subject of conversation. They are preening themselves upon having seen through my subtle scheme. I am very sure they are asking themselves--'When is the transfer of documents to take place?'"

"It may all seem very humorous to you," the young man remarked, a little sullenly, "but it leaves a sort of nasty flavour in one's mouth, all the same. If they were to suspect me of trying to drop documents over the German lines except under instructions, it would mean a court-martial, even though they were unable to prove anything, and a firing party in five minutes if they were."

"Take heart, my young friend," Jocelyn Thew advised him, "and do not refuse the Courvoisier brandy which our saintly friend with the chain is proffering. If it is not indeed a relic of the Napoleonic era, it is at least drinkable. And listen--this may help you to drink it with zest--I am not going to ask you to drop any documents over the German lines."

The thankfulness in Katharine's face was reflected in her brother's.

"Thank God for that!" he exclaimed, helping himself liberally to the brandy. "You know I'd find it hard to refuse you anything, Thew, but there are limits. Besides, you are never really out of sight there. We go out in squadrons, and from the height we fly at nothing I could drop would be very likely to reach its destination."

Jocelyn Thew smiled coldly.

"My dear Richard," he said, "I am not going to make you an unwilling partner in any foolhardy scheme such as you are thinking of, because that is just the Obvious thing that our friends who take so much interest in us would expect and prepare for. All the same, there is just a trifling commission which I will ask you to undertake for me, and which I will explain to you later. When do you leave?"

"Ten o'clock train from Charing Cross on Monday night," the young man replied. "I have to fly on Tuesday morning."

"Then if it pleases you we will all dine here that night," Jocelyn Thew suggested, "and I will take you on to the Alhambra for an hour. Doctor Gant and I were there our first night in town, and we found the performance excellent. You will honour me, Miss Beverley?"

"I shall be delighted," she answered, "but I am not at all sure that you will be able to get seats at the Alhambra."

"Why not?" he asked.

"There is a great benefit performance there on Monday night," she told him. "The house is closed now for rehearsals. All the stalls have gone already, and the boxes are to be sold by auction at the Theatrical Fœte."

Jocelyn Thew was for a moment grave.

"I am very glad that you told me this," he said, "but I think that I can nevertheless promise you the stage box for Monday night. I have a call on it. We must all meet once more. It is just possible that I may have a pleasant surprise for both of you."

"Do give us an idea what it is," she begged.

He shook his head. Somehow, since the coming of Michael Dilwyn, a tired look had crept into his eyes. He seemed to have lost all his old vivacity. He had paid the bill some time before and they strolled together now into the lounge. Katharine was carrying half a dozen of the roses, which the waiter had pressed into her hand.

"To-night," she said, looking up into his face and dropping her voice a little, "I am feeling so much happier--happier than I have felt for a long time. Why do you keep us both, Mr. Thew, in such a state of uneasiness? You give us so little of your real confidence, so little of your real self. Sometimes it seems as though you deliberately try to make yourself out a harder, crueller person than you really are. Why do you do that?"

For a moment she fancied that the impossible had happened, that she had penetrated the armour of that steadfast and studied indifference.

"We are all just a little the fools of circumstance," he sighed. "A will to succeed sometimes, if it is strong enough, crushes out things we would like to keep alive."

She thrust one of the blossoms which she was carrying through his buttonhole.

"I know you will hate that," she whispered, "but you can take it out the moment you have gotten rid of us. Dick and I are going on now, you know, to the Esholt House dance. Shall I thank you for your dinner?"

"Or I you for your company?" he murmured, bowing over her fingers.

They took their leave, and Jocelyn Thew, almost as though against his will, walked back into the foyer, after a few minutes of hesitation, and sat there twirling the rose between his fingers, with his eyes fixed upon the interior of the restaurant. He had the air of one waiting.

Crawshay was awakened the next morning a little before the customary hour by his servant, who held out a card.

"Gentleman would like a word with you at once, sir," the latter announced.

Crawshay glanced at the card, slipped out of bed, and, attired in his dressing gown and slippers, made an apologetic entrance into the sitting room. The young man who was waiting there received him kindly, but obviously disapproved of the pattern of his dressing gown.

"Chief wants a word with you, sir," he announced. "He is keeping from ten to ten-thirty."

"I will be there," Crawshay promised, "on the stroke of ten."

"Then I need not detain you further," his visitor remarked, making a graceful exit.

Crawshay bathed, shaved and breakfasted, and at five minutes before ten entered an imposing-looking building and sent up his card to a very great man, who had a fancy for being spoken of in his department as Mr. Brown. After a very brief delay, he was admitted to the august presence. Mr. Brown waved his secretaries from the room, shook hands kindly with Crawshay and motioned him to a chair close to his own.

"Mr. Crawshay," he said, "this is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting you, but we have received at various times excellent reports as to your work at Washington."

"I am very pleased to hear it, sir."

"From what I gather as to the present situation, however," the great man continued, "I imagine that you were more successful in the conventional secret service work than you have been in the very grave business I have sent for you to discuss."

"I should like to point out, sir," Crawshay begged, "that that foolish journey to Halifax was undertaken entirely against my convictions. I protested at the time! Neither had I any confidence in the summons to Chicago."

Mr. Brown took the circumstance into gracious consideration.

"I am glad to hear that," he said, "and I must admit that your recovery was almost brilliant. A sense of humour," he went on, "sometimes obtrudes itself into the most serious incidents, and the idea of your boarding that steamer from a seaplane and then getting to work upon your investigations will always remain to me one of the priceless unrecorded incidents of the war. But to put the matter into plain words, our enemies got the better of you."

"Absolutely," was the honest confession.

"There is no doubt," the right honourable gentleman continued, "that the person who took charge of this affair is exceedingly clever. He appears to have resource and daring. Personally, I, like you, never believed for a moment that the whole of the records of German espionage in America for the last three years, would be found upon the same steamer as that by which the departing ambassadorial staff travelled. However, I can quite see that under the circumstances you had to yield to the convictions of those who were already in charge of the affair."

"You have had full reports, sir, I suppose?" Crawshay asked. "You know the manner in which the documents were brought into this country?"

"A ghastly business," Mr. Brown acknowledged, "ingenious but ghastly. Yes, Mr. Crawshay," he went on, "I think I have been kept pretty well posted up till now. I have sent for you because I am not sure whether one point has been sufficiently impressed upon you. As you are of course aware, there are many documents and details connected with this propaganda which are of immense value to the police of New York, but there is just one--a letter written in a moment of impulse by one great personage to another, and stolen--which might do the cause of the Allies incalculable harm if it were to fall into the wrong hands."

"I had a hint of this, sir. Mason knew of it, too. His idea was that they would be quite willing to destroy all the rest of the treasonable stuff they have, if they could be sure of getting this one letter through."

"The documents have been in England now," Mr. Brown observed, "for some days. Have you formed any theory at all as to where they may be concealed?"

"To be perfectly frank," Crawshay confessed, "I have not. Doctor Gant, Jocelyn Thew, a young woman called Nora Sharey, and Miss Beverley are the four people possibly implicated in their disappearance, although of these two I consider Miss Sharey and Miss Beverley out of the question. Nevertheless, their rooms and every scrap of property they possess have been searched thoroughly, and their movements since they arrived in London are absolutely tabulated. Not one of them has written a letter or dispatched a parcel which has not been investigated, nor have they made a call or even entered a shop without being watched. It seems absolutely impossible that they can have taken any steps towards the disposal of the documents since Jocelyn Thew arrived in London."

"Have they given any indication of their future plans?"

"Doctor Gant," Crawshay replied, "has booked a passage back in the American boat which sails for Liverpool early to-morrow morning. We shall escort him there, and his effects will be searched once more in Liverpool. Otherwise, we have no intention of detaining him. He and Miss Beverley were simply the tools of the other man."

"And the other man?"

"He has shown no signs of making any move whatsoever. He lives, to all appearance, the perfectly normal life of a man of leisure. I understand that he is entirely a newcomer to this sort of business, but he is, without a doubt, the most modern thing in secret service. He lives quite openly at a small suite in the Savoy Court. He never makes the slightest concealment about any of his movements. We know how he has spent every second of his time since we first took up the search, and I can assure you that there is not a single suspicious incident recorded against him."

"You are satisfied," Mr. Brown asked, "with the aid which you are getting from Scotland Yard?"

"Absolutely," Crawshay declared. "Brightman, too--the man who came down with me from Liverpool--has done excellent work."

"And notwithstanding all this," was the somewhat grave criticism, "you have not the slightest idea where these documents are to be found?"

"Not the slightest," Crawshay confessed. "All that I do feel convinced of is that they have not left the country."

The great man leaned back a little wearily in his chair. There were some decoded cables, lying under a paper weight by his side, imploring him in the strongest possible terms to make use of every means within his power to solve this mystery,--a personal appeal from a man whose good will might sway the balance of the future. He was used to wonderful service in every department he controlled. His present sense of impotence was galling.

"Tell me, Mr. Crawshay," he asked, "how long was the gap of time between your losing sight of Jocelyn Thew and when you picked him up in London?"

"Very short indeed," was the emphatic reply. "Jocelyn Thew must have left the _City of Boston_ at about eight o'clock on Monday morning. He met Gant at five o'clock that evening at Crewe station. Gant had come direct from Frisby, the little village near Chester where he had left the body of Phillips. It is obvious, therefore, that Gant had the papers with him when he joined Jocelyn Thew. They travelled to London together but parted at Euston, Gant going to a cheap hotel in the vicinity of Regent Street, whilst Thew drove to the Savoy. Gant called at the Savoy Hotel at nine o'clock that evening, and the two men dined together in the grill room and took a box at a music hall--the Alhambra. Up to this time neither of them had received a visitor or dispatched a message--Thew, in fact, had spent more than an hour in the barber's shop. They returned from the Alhambra together, went up to Thew's rooms, had a drink and separated half an hour later. This, of course, is in a sense posthumous information, but Scotland Yard have it tabulated down to the slightest detail, and we are unable to find a single suspicious circumstance in connection with the movements of either man. At four o'clock the following morning, when both men were asleep in their rooms, the cordon was drawn around them. Since then they haven't had a chance."

"The fact that the papers are not in the possession of either of them," Mr. Brown said reflectively, "proves that they made some move of which you have

no record."

"Precisely," Crawshay agreed, "but it must have been a move of so slight a character that chance may reveal it to us at any moment."

"Describe Jocelyn Thew to me," Mr. Brown begged.

"He has every appearance," Crawshay declared, "of being a man of breeding. He is scarcely middle-aged--tall and of athletic build. He dresses well, speaks well, and I should take him anywhere for an English public school and college man."

"Did New York give you his record?"

"In a cloudy sort of way. He seems to have had a most interesting career, ranching out West, fighting in Mexico, fighting in several of the Central American states, and fighting, I shrewdly suspect, against England in South Africa. He seems to have been a sort of stormy petrel, and to have turned up in any place where there was trouble. In New York the police always suspected him of being connected with some great criminal movements, but they were never able to lay even a finger upon him. He lived at one of the best hotels in the city, disappeared sometimes for days, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for a year, but always returned quite quietly, with apparently any amount of money to spend, and that queer look which comes to a man who has been up against big things."

"He is an Englishman, I suppose?"

"He must be. His accent and manners and appearance are all unmistakable."

"How long was he suspected of being in the pay of our enemies before this thing transpired?"

"Only a very short time. There was a little gang in New York--Rentoul, the man who had the wireless in Fifth Avenue, was in it--and they used to meet at a place in Fourteenth Street, belonging to an old man named Sharey. That's where Miss Sharey comes into the business. There were some queer things done there, but they don't concern this business, and New York has the records of them."

"Jocelyn Thew," Mr. Brown repeated slowly to himself. "Where did you say he was staying?"

"At the Savoy Court."

Mr. Brown looked fixedly at the cables, fluttering a little in the breeze which blew in through the half-open window.

"All this isn't very encouraging, Mr. Crawshay," he sighed.

"Up to the present no," the former admitted. "Yet I can promise you one thing, sir. Those papers shall not leave the country."

"I am glad to hear you speak with so much confidence," Mr. Brown observed drily. "Mr. Jocelyn Thew seems at any rate to have managed to secrete them without difficulty."

"That may be so," Crawshay acknowledged, "and yet I am convinced of one thing. They are disposed of in some perfectly obvious way, and within the next forty-eight hours he will make some effort to repossess himself of them. If he does, he will fail."

Mr. Brown glanced at his watch.

"I am very much obliged to you for coming to see me," he said. "You are doing your best, I know, and I beg you, Mr. Crawshay, never for a moment to let your efforts relax. The mechanical side of the watch that is being kept upon these people I know we can rely upon, but you must remember that you are the brains of this enterprise. Your little band of watchers will be quiet enough to see the things that happen and the things that exist. It is you who must watch for the things which don't happen."

Crawshay smiled slightly as he rose to take his leave.

"I do not as a rule suffer from over-confidence, sir," he said, "but I think I can promise you that by Wednesday night not only will the papers be in our hands, but Mr. Jocelyn Thew will be so disposed of that he will be no longer an object of anxiety to us."

"Get on with the good work, then," was Mr. Brown's laconic farewell.

Late on the following afternoon, Jocelyn Thew and Gant paced the long platform at Euston, by the side of which the special for the American boat was already drawn up. Curiously enough, in their immediate vicinity Mr. Brightman was also seeing a friend off, and on the outskirts of the little throng Mr. Henshaw was taking an intelligent interest in the scene.

"Perhaps, after all," Jocelyn Thew declared, "you are right to go. You have been very useful, and you have, without a doubt, earned your thousand pounds."

"It was easy money," the other admitted, "but even now I am nervous. I shall be glad to be back once more in my own country."

"You are certainly right to go," the other repeated. "If you had been different, if you had been one of those men after my own heart," Jocelyn Thew went on, resting his hand for a moment upon Gant's shoulder, "one of those who, apart from thought of gain or hope of profit, love adventure for its own sake, I should have begged you to stay with me. I would have sent you on bogus errands to mysterious places. I would have twisted the brains of those who have fastened upon us in a hundred different fashions. But alas, my friend, you are not like that!"

"I am not," Gant admitted, gruffly but heartily. "I have done a job for you, and you have paid me very well. I am glad to have done it, because I love Germany and I do not love England. Apart from that my work is

finished. I like to go home. I am happiest with my wife and family."

"Quite so," his companion agreed. "I know your type, Gant,--in fact, I chose you because of it. You like, as you say, to do your job and finish with it,--and you have finished."

The doctor turned for a moment deliberately round and looked at his companion. He was a heavy-browed, unimaginative, quiet-living man. The things which passed before his eyes counted with him, and little else. The thousand pounds which he was taking home was more than he had been able to save throughout his life. To him it represented immense things. He would probably not spend a dollar more, or indulge in a single luxury, yet the money was there in the background, a warm, comforting thing.

"You have still," he said, "a desperate part to play. Can you tell me honestly that you enjoy it, that you have no fear?"

Jocelyn Thew repeated the word almost wonderingly.

"Fear! Do you really know me so little, my friend of few perceptions? Listen and I will confess something. I have fought for my life at least a dozen times, fought against odds which seemed almost hopeless. I have seen death with hungry, outstretched arms, within a few seconds' reach of me, but I have never felt fear. I do not know what it is. The length of one's life is purely a relative thing. It will come in ten or twenty years, if not to-morrow. Why not to-morrow?"

"If you put it like that," Gant grunted, "why not to-day?"

"Or at any moment, if you will. I am quite ready, as ready as I ever shall be. If I fail to bring off what I desire within the next few days, there will be an end of me. Do I look as though I were worrying about that?"

"You don't indeed," the doctor agreed. "You ought to have been in my profession. You might have become the greatest surgeon in the world."

Jocelyn Thew shrugged his shoulders.

"Even that is possible," he admitted. "Unfortunately, there was a cloud over my early days, a cloud heavy enough even to prevent my offering my services to the world through the medium of any of the recognized professions. So you see, Gant, I had to invent one of my own. What would you call it, I wonder?--Buccaneer? Adventurer? Explorer? Perhaps my enemies would find a more unkind word.--Now you had better step in and take your seat. Behold the creatures of our friend Brightman and the satellites of the aristocratic Crawshay close in upon us! They listen for farewell words. Is this your carriage? Very well. Here comes your porter, hungry for remuneration. Shall I give them a hint, Gant?"

There flashed in the hunted man's eyes for a moment a gleam of almost demoniacal humour.

Gant glowered at him. "You are mad!" he exclaimed.

"Not I, my dear friend," Jocelyn Thew assured him, as he gripped his hand in a farewell salute. "Believe me, it is not I who am mad. It is these stupid people who search for what they can never find. They lift up the Stars and Stripes and find nothing. They lift up the Union Jack; again nothing. They try the Tricolour; *_rien de tout_*. But if they have the sense to try the Crescent--eh, Gant?--Well, a safe voyage to you, man. Sleep in your waistcoat, and remember me to every one in New York. I can't promise when I shall be back. I have taken a fancy to England. Still, one never knows.--Good-by."

Thew watched the long train crawl out of the station, waved his hand in farewell, forced a greeting upon the reluctant Brightman, whom he passed examining the magazines upon a bookstall, and, summoning a taxi, was duly deposited at the Alhambra Theatre. He made his way to the box office.

"I have called," he explained to the young man, "to see you about Box A on Monday night. I understand that there is a benefit performance."

"Quite so, sir," the young man replied, "and I ought to have explained the matter to you at the time, when you engaged the box. If you will remember, although you took it for a week, you only paid for five nights. I omitted to tell you that for Monday night the box is not ours to dispose of."

"It isn't yet sold, I hope?"

"Not yet, sir. The boxes will be disposed of by auction to-morrow afternoon at the Theatrical Garden Party. Mr. Bobby is going to act as auctioneer."

"I see," Jocelyn Thew said thoughtfully. "The performance is, I believe, on behalf of the Red Cross?"

"That is so."

"In that case, supposing I offer you now one hundred guineas for the box?"

"Very generous indeed, sir," the young man admitted, "but we are pledged to allow all the boxes to be sold by Mr. Bobby. I think that if you are prepared to go to that sum, you will have no difficulty in securing it."

Jocelyn Thew frowned slightly.

"I wasn't thinking of going to the Theatrical Garden Party," he remarked.

"You could perhaps get a friend to bid for you, sir," the young man suggested. "We hope to get fifty guineas for the large boxes, but I should think an offer such as yours would secure any one of them."

"I rather dislike the publicity of an auction," Jocelyn Thew observed, as he turned to take his leave. "However, if charity demands it, I suppose one must waive one's prejudices."

He strolled out and hesitated for a moment on the pavement. A curious

change had taken place in what a few hours ago had seemed to be a perfect summer day. The clouds were thick in the sky, a few drops of rain were already falling, and a cold wind, like the presage of a storm, was bending the trees in the square. For a single moment he was conscious of an unsuspected weakness. A wave of depression swept in upon him. An unreasoning premonition of failure laid a cold hand upon his heart. He met the careless gaze of an apparent loiterer who was studying the placards without derision, almost with apprehension. Then he ground his heel into the pavement and re-entered his taxicab.

"Savoy," he directed.

CHAPTER XXIV

Captain Richard Beverley, on his way through the hotel smoking room to the Savoy bar, stopped short. He looked at the girl who had half risen from her seat on the couch with a sudden impulse of half startled recognition. Her little smile of welcome was entirely convincing.

"Why, it's Nora Sharey!" he exclaimed. "Nora!"

"Well, I am glad you've recognised me at last," she said, laughing. "I tried to make you see me last night in the restaurant, but you wouldn't look."

He seemed a little dazed, even after he had saluted mechanically, held her hand for a moment and sank into the place by her side.

"Nora Sharey!" he repeated. "Why, it was really you, then, dining last night with that fellow Crawshay?"

"Of course it was," she replied, "and I recognised you at once, even in your uniform."

"You know that Jocelyn Thew is here? You saw him with us last night?"

"Yes, I know."

"Stop a moment," Richard Beverley went on. "Let me think, Nora. Jocelyn Thew must have seen you dining with Crawshay. How does that work out?"

"He doesn't mind," she replied. "Let that stuff alone for a time. I want to look at you. You're fine, Dick, but what does it all mean?"

"I couldn't stick the ranch after the war broke out," he confessed. "I moved up into Canada and took on flying."

"You are fighting out there in France?"

"Have been for six months. Some sport, I can tell you, Nora. I've got a little machine gun that's a perfect daisy. Gee! I've got to pull up. The hardest work we fellows have sometimes is to remember that we mustn't talk about our job. They used to call me undisciplined. I'm getting it into my bones now, though.--Why, Nora, this is queer! I guess we're going to have a cocktail together, aren't we?"

She nodded. He called to a waiter and gave an order. Then he turned and looked at her appreciatively.

"You're looking fine," he declared.

She smiled with pleasure at the undoubted admiration in his tone. In the new and fashionable clothes which she had purchased during the last few days, the artistically coiffured hair, the smart hat and carefully-thought-out details of her toilette, she was a transformed being, in no way different from the half a dozen other young ladies who were gathered with their escorts at the further end of the room.

"I am glad you think so," she replied. "Seems to me I've had nothing else to do since I got here but buy frocks and things."

He looked at her in a puzzled fashion.

"You didn't come over with Jocelyn Thew, did you, Nora?" "Of course I didn't," she answered indignantly. "If you want to know the truth, it looked as though there was going to be trouble at Fourteenth Street. Dad made a move out West, and I had a fancy for making a little trip this way."

"Kind of lonesome, isn't it?" he asked.

"In a way," she sighed. "Still, I am going on presently to where I fancy I shall meet a few friends."

"And meanwhile," he remarked, "you are still friendly with Jocelyn Thew, and you dined last night, didn't you, with the man who has sworn to hunt him down?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"You know what I think of Jocelyn Thew," she said. "I'm crazy about him, and always shall be, but I've never seen him look twice at a woman yet in his life, and never expect to. Dick!"

"Yes, Nora?"

"May I ask you a question--straight?"

"Of course!"

"Don't think I mean to say a word against Jocelyn Thew. He's a white man through and through, and I think if there was any woman in the world he cared for, she would be his slave. But he's a desperate man. Even now the

police are trying to draw their net around him. It was all very well for you, when you were painting New York red, to choose your friends where it pleased you, but your sister--she's different, isn't she?--what they call over on our side a society belle. I am not saying that there is a single person in the world too good for Jocelyn Thew to sit down with, but at the present moment--well, he's hard up against it. Things might happen to him, you know, Dick."

For a moment the young man was silent. His eyes seemed to look through the walls of the room, seemed to conjure up some spectre from which a moment later he shrank.

"You see, Nora," he explained, dropping his voice a little, "there was just one time when Jocelyn Thew stood by me like a brick. I was hard up against it and he saved me."

She leaned a little closer to him.

"I have often wondered," she murmured. "That was the affair down at the Murchison country house, wasn't it?"

Richard Beverley assented silently.

"Guess we'll drink these cocktails," he said, watching the waiter approach. "Flying takes something out of you all the time, you know, Nora, and although when I am up my nerves are like a rock, I sometimes feel a little shaky at leave time."

"Drink?" she asked tersely.

"I've quit that more or less," he assured her. "Still, I have been taking some these last few days. Finding Katharine over here with Jocelyn Thew hanging around gave me kind of a shock."

"You weren't best pleased to see them together, I should think, were you?"

"No," he admitted, a little sullenly.

"You're angry with him, aren't you?"

"Kind of," he confessed. "I wouldn't have complained at anything he'd asked me to do, but it was a low-down trick to get Katharine into this trouble." His eyes shone out with a dull anger. She watched him curiously.

"Dick, you're not the boy you were," she sighed. "Guess you're sorry you ever came to that supper party at the Knickerbocker, aren't you?"

He turned and looked at her. He was only twenty-two years old, but there were things in his face from which a man might have shrunk.

"Yes, I am sorry," he confessed. "I am not blaming anybody but I shall be sorry all my life."

"Jocelyn Thew treated you very much as he did me," she went on. "He carried you off your feet. You thought him the most wonderful thing that ever lived. It was the same with me. He has never given as much of himself as his little finger, never even looked at me as though I were a human being, but I'd have scrubbed floors for him a month after we first met. It was just the same with you, only you were a man. You'd have committed murder for his sake, a week after that party."

"Murder!"

He gave a sudden start, a start that amazed her. His hand was upon her shoulder. His eyes, red with fury, were blazing into hers.

"What's that you're saying, Nora? What's that?"

She was speechless, paralysed by that little staccato cry. A group of people near looked around. She laughed shrilly to cover the intensity of the moment.

"No need to get excited!" she exclaimed. "Pull yourself together," she went on, under her breath. "Waiter, two more cocktails." He recovered himself almost at once, but the strained look was there about his mouth.

"Nerves, you see," he muttered. "I shall be all right again when I get back to France."

She laid her hand gently upon his arm.

"Dick," she said, "you are often upon my conscience. You were such a nice boy, back in those days. Everything that's happened to you seems to have happened since you met Jocelyn Thew that night. He has got some sort of a hold, hasn't he? What is it?"

The young man moistened his dry lips. The waiter brought their cocktails and he drank his greedily.

"I'll tell you, Nora," he promised. "Perhaps it'll do me good to listen how the story sounds as I tell it. First of all, let us have the thing straight. Jocelyn Thew never helped me into trouble. I was in it, right up to the neck, when I met him."

"You kept it to yourself," she murmured curiously.

"Because I was a fool," he answered, "and because I believed I could pull things straight. But anyway, I was owing Dan Murchison seventy thousand I'd lost at poker. He was kind of shepherding me. He was a rough sort, Dan, and he had an ambitious wife, and I had a name he liked. Well, he was giving a week-end party down at that place of his on the Hudson. He asked me, or rather he ordered me down. I was only too glad to go. Then Mrs. Murchison chipped in--wanted my sister, wanted to put it in the paper. Katharine kicked, of course. So did I. Murchison for the first time showed his teeth--and we both went. Jocelyn Thew was another of the guests."

"Tough, wasn't it?"

"Hell! On the way down--I don't know why, but I was feeling pretty desperate--I told Jocelyn Thew how I stood with Murchison. He listened but he didn't say much. He never does. It was a rotten party--common people, one or two professional gamblers, a lot of florid, noisy, overdressed, giggling women. After the women were supposed to have gone to bed, we sat down to what Dan Murchison called a friendly game--a hundred dollars ante, and a thousand rise. Jocelyn Thew played, three other men, and Murchison. After about an hour of it, I'd lost over twenty thousand dollars. The others had it between them, except Jocelyn, and about his play there was a very curious thing. He put in his ante regularly when it came to him, but he never made a single bet. Murchison turned to him once.

"Say, you must be having rotten cards, Mr. Thew,' he said.

"Jocelyn shook his head very deliberately. I can hear his reply even now. Kind of quiet it was and deliberate.

"I don't fancy my chances of winning at this game.'

"I knew what he meant later. I didn't tumble to it at the time. We played till two o'clock. God knows how much I'd lost! Then Murchison called the game off. He locked up his winnings in a little safe let into the wall. I was standing by him, drinking, and I saw the combination. Jocelyn Thew was sitting quite by himself, as though deep in thought.--We all got up to bed somehow. I sat for some hours at the open window. Pretty soon I got sober, and I began to realise what had happened. And all the time I thought of that safe, chock full of money, and the combination ready set. I heard Katharine moving about in her room, and I knew that she was waiting for me to go and say good night. I wouldn't. I put on a short jacket instead of my dress coat, and I took an electric torch out of my dressing case and I went down-stairs. I'd made up my mind, Nora. I meant to rob that safe."

She was carried away by his narrative. He had let himself go now, speaking in short, quick sentences. Yet his plain words seemed to paint with a marvellous vividness the story he told. It seemed to her that she could see it all, could realise what he went through.

"Go on, Dick," she whispered. "I understand."

"Well, I got down into the room all right, and I got the safe open, and there was the money, and, right facing me, my letters and bonds, and pretty well a hundred thousand dollars in cash. And then I saw the lights flare up, and Murchison was there in his shirt and trousers.

"So that's your game, is it, Richard Beverley?' he said.

"There were two of the others with him who'd been playing cards. There they were, three strong men, and I was a thief! I felt limp. I hadn't an ounce of resistance in me. Murchison stood there, showing his ugly teeth, his small eyes full of anger.

"So you're a thief, are you, Richard Beverley?' he went on.

"I couldn't speak. At that moment they could have done just what they liked with me. And then the door opened very quietly and closed again. Jocelyn Thew came in. I saw Murchison's face. I tell you, Nora, it was something you wouldn't forget in a hurry.

"Is anything wrong?' Jocelyn Thew asked calmly.

"One of the guests pointed to Murchison and me.

"We heard footsteps,' he explained. 'Dan called me and I followed him down. Young Beverley there was at the safe.'

"Probably helping himself,' Jocelyn said, in that same smooth, dangerous tone, 'to his own money.'

"To what?' Murchison cried.

"To his own money,' Jocelyn repeated, coming a little nearer. 'You know, Murchison, well enough what I mean--you and your two confederates here. You're nothing more nor less than common card sharpers. I took a pack of your cards up-stairs. I needn't say anything more. I think you'd better give the boy back his money. I meant to wait until to-morrow. Fate seems to have anticipated me. How much did you lose, Richard?'

"Dan Murchison strode up to him and I saw one of the other men go for his hip pocket.

"Will you take that back?' Murchison demanded.

"Not on your life!' Thew replied.

"Murchison went for him, but he hadn't a dog's chance. I never saw such a blow in my life. Jocelyn hit him on the point of the chin and he went over like a log--cut his head against the fender. He lay there groaning, and I--I swear to you, Nora, that I'm not a coward, but I couldn't move--my knees were shaking. The two of them went for Jocelyn, and before they could get there the door opened and a third man came in--Jake Hannaway, the most dangerous of the lot. Jocelyn kept the other two off and half turned his head towards me, where I was standing like a gibbering, nerveless lunatic.

"I think you'd better take a hand, Richard,' he said."

Nora gasped a little and laid her hand upon his sleeve.

"Don't, Dick," she begged,--"not for a moment. I can't bear it. Just a moment."

She clutched at the side of the settee. Richard Beverley simply sat still, looking through the walls of the room. There was not the slightest change in his face. He just waited until Nora whispered to him. Then he went on.

"I won't tell you about the fight," he said. "I wasn't much use at first. Jocelyn was there, taking two of them on, and butting in sometimes against Hannaway, who'd tackled me. Then I began to get my strength back, and I think I should have settled Hannaway, but the door opened softly and I saw Katharine's face. She gave a little shriek, and Jake Hannaway got me just at the back of the head. I was pretty well done in, but Thew suddenly swung round and caught Jake Hannaway very nearly where he had hit Murchison. Down he went like a log. I stood there swaying. I can see the room now--a table overturned, glasses and flower vases all over the floor, and those two men looking as though they meant to murder Thew. They rushed at him together. He dodged one, but his strength was going. Then for the first time he sprang clear of them, got his back to the wall.--I won't spin it out--he shot one of them through the shoulder. The other one had had enough and tried to bolt. Jocelyn Thew was just too quick for him. He flung a heavy candlestick and got him somewhere on the neck. There they all were now--Murchison sitting up and dabbing his face, half conscious, one of the others groaning and streaming with blood, the other lying--just as though he were dead. Jocelyn turned and spoke to Katharine--I can hear his voice now--I swear, Nora, there wasn't a quaver in it--

"I am afraid, Miss Beverley,' he said, 'that your brother has unwittingly brought you into a den of thieves. I had my suspicions, and my car, instead of being at the garage, is under the shrubs there. One moment.'

"He stepped out into the hall, brought a coat and threw it around her. Then he turned to me.

"Empty the safe, Richard,' he ordered.

"I obeyed him. There was all the money I owed Murchison there, and a lot of other stuff. We stepped out of the French windows. Jocelyn moved the leg of one of those men on one side and held the window open for Katharine to pass through. I tell you he set the switch and started his car without a tremor. Katharine was nearly fainting. I was still fogged. He drove us into New York with scarcely a word. It was daylight when we reached our house in Riverside Drive. He drove up to the front door.

"Perhaps if you don't mind, Richard,' he said, 'you could lend me an overcoat. People are quite content to accept us as night joy-riders, but I am scarcely respectable for anything in the shape of a close examination.'

"Then I saw that he was all over blood on one side. Katharine took him away and sponged him, although he laughed at it. Then he had me in the study and together we went through the stuff we'd brought away. He made me keep what Murchison had done me out of, and the rest he made into a packet, addressed ready for posting and left it on the table.

"For anything else that may happen, Dick,' he said, 'we must take our chance. I have had my suspicions of that man Murchison for a long time. My own opinion is that we shall hear nothing more about the matter.'"

Nora turned and looked at her companion with big, startled eyes.

"But it was Jake Hannaway," she exclaimed, "whom they accused of making a row!"

He stopped her, without impatience but firmly.

"Jake Hannaway died the next day," he said. "I must have hit him harder than I thought--or Jocelyn did! He had no relatives, no friends. Murchison put the whole trouble down to him, admitted that there was a row over a game of cards, and a free fight. The other two swore to exactly the same story. Our names--mine and Jocelyn's, were never brought in. Murchison never came near me again. I have never seen him since. That's the whole story."

"What about the police examination?" she asked curiously. "I know no more than you do," he replied. "I expect Murchison had a pull, and he was terrified of Jocelyn Thew. I--I went to Jake Hannaway's funeral," the young man went on, with a slight quiver in his tone. "I've seen his face, Nora, up in the clouds. I've seen it when I've been flying ten thousand feet up. Suddenly a little piece of black sky would open and I'd see him looking down at me!"

There was a brief silence. From somewhere through the repeatedly opened swing doors came the rise and fall of music, played from a distant orchestra. There were peals of laughter from a cheerful party at the other end of the little room. Nora patted her companion's arm gently, and his eyes and manner became more natural.

"It's done me good to tell you this," he said, half apologetically.

"Katharine's the only other living creature I've dared to speak to about it, and she was there--she saw! Nora, that man can fight like a tiger!"

"Hush!" she whispered. "Here he comes."

The swing door was opened and Jocelyn Thew, back from his visit to the box office at the Alhambra, entered the room. He raised his eye brows a little as he saw the pair. Then he advanced towards them.

"Do you know, for the moment I had quite forgotten," he confided, as he sank into an easy-chair by their side. "Of course, you two are old acquaintances."

Nora murmured something. Richard Beverley rose to his feet.

"Well, I'd better be getting along," he said. "It's been fine to see you again, Nora," he added, taking her hand in his. "See you later, Thew."

He nodded with something of his old jauntiness and swung out of the room. They both watched him in silence.

"Not quite the young man he was," Jocelyn Thew observed thoughtfully. "Is it my fancy, I wonder, or does he drink a few too many cocktails when he is on leave?"

"Richard Beverley's all right," Nora answered. "He is more sensitive than he seems, and there's an ugly little corner in his life to live down. He is doing the best he can to atone. Jocelyn," she went on, with a sudden earnestness in her tone, "you're going to leave him alone, aren't you? You haven't any scheme in your head for making use of him?"

"One never knows," was the cool reply.

She looked at him curiously.

"Jocelyn," she said, "you're a hard man. You set your hand to a task and you don't care whom in the world you sacrifice to gain your end. You were a fine friend to Richard Beverley once, but surely his sister has done her best to pay his debt? Don't do anything that will make him ashamed of the uniform he wears."

"Very pretty," he murmured approvingly, "but I must take you back to your own words--they were true enough. When I have a task to perform, when I pledge myself to a certain thing, I do it, and I must make use of those whom fate puts in my way. Richard Beverley and his sister are a very attractive couple, but if circumstances decree that they are the pawns by means of which I can win the game, then I must make use of them.--Dear me," he added, "my friend Crawshay! I fear that I shall be *_de trop_*."

Nora turned to greet the newcomer, and Thew sauntered away with a little bow of farewell, quite courteous, even gracious. With the handle of the door in his hand, however, he paused and came back.

"My friend Crawshay," he said, "one word with you."

Crawshay turned around.

"With pleasure!"

"Those henchmen of yours--they are so stupid, so flagrantly obvious. I am a good-tempered person, but they irritated me this afternoon at Euston."

"What can I do?" Crawshay asked. "However, you must not let them get on your nerves. They follow you about only as a matter of form. We must keep up the old legends, you know. When," he added, dropping his eyeglass and polishing it slowly, "when we really come to the end of this most fascinating little episode, I do not fancy that you will have cause to complain of our methods."

Jocelyn Thew smiled.

"Your cryptic words have struck the right note," he confessed. "The thrill of fear is in my veins. One more word, though. Miss Nora Sharey is an old friend of mine. There is a tie between us at which you could not guess. Lavish your attentions on her in the hope of hearing something which will prove to your advantage, but do not trifle with her affections. If you do, I shall constitute myself her guardian and there will be trouble, Crawshay--trouble."

Once more he turned away, with a smile at Nora and a little nod to Crawshaw. He passed through the door and disappeared, erect, lithe and graceful. Nora looked after him, and her eyes were filled with admiration.

"I think," she sighed, "although I am getting fonder of you every moment, Mr. Crawshaw," she added, as she saw from underneath the tissue paper the huge bunch of white roses he was carrying, "that my money will go on Jocelyn Thew."

CHAPTER XXV

About three-thirty on the following afternoon, in the grounds devoted to the much advertised Red Cross Sale, that eminent comedian, Mr. Joseph Bobby, mounted to the temporary rostrum which had been erected for him at the rear of one of the largest tents, amidst a little storm of half facetious applause. He repaid the general expectation by gazing steadfastly at a few friends amongst the audience in his usual inimitable fashion, and by indulging in a few minutes of gagging chaff before he proceeded to business. A little way off, a military band was playing popular selections. The broad avenues between the marquees were crowded with streams of pretty women in fancy dresses, and mankind with a little money in his pocket was having a particularly uneasy time. There was nothing to distinguish this from any other of the Red Cross fetes of the season, except, perhaps, its added magnificence.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the comedian began, "I am here to sell by auction the boxes at the Alhambra Theatre for to-night, when, as you know, there will be the greatest performance ever given by the largest number of star artistes--myself included. Owing to a slight difference of opinion with the management, who, as you are probably aware, ladies and gentlemen, are the thickest-headed set of blighters in existence--" Loud cries of "No!" from the managing director in the front row.

"--I have only the four large boxes to dispose of. I shall start with Box B. Who will make me an offer for Box B? Who will offer me, say, twenty-five guineas to start the bidding?"

Half-a-dozen offers were immediately made, and Box B was disposed of for thirty-five guineas. Boxes C and D fetched a little more.

"We now come," the auctioneer concluded impressively, "to the *pièce de résistance*, if I may so call it. Box A is--well, you all know Box A, ladies and gentlemen, so I will simply say that it is the best box in the house. It will hold all the friends any man breathing has any use for. It would hold the largest family who ever received the Queen's bounty. Box A is one of those elastic boxes, ladies and gentlemen, which have no limit. You can fill it chock full, and if the right person knocks at the door there will still be room for another. Who will start the bidding at forty

guineas?"

"I will give you fifty," Jocelyn Thew said, promptly raising his hand.

The auctioneer leaned forward, expecting to see a familiar face. He saw instead a very distinguished-looking and remarkably well-turned-out stranger, smiling pleasantly at him from the front row of the audience.

"You are a man, sir," the former declared warmly. "You are giving me a good push off. Fifty guineas is bidden, ladies and gentlemen, for Box A."

"I'll go to fifty-five," a well-known racing man called out from the rear.
"Not a penny more, Joe, so don't get faking the bidding."

The comedian assumed an air of grieved surprise.

"That from you I did not expect, Mr. Mason," he said. "However, that you may have no cause for complaint, I am prepared to knock Box A down to you for fifty-five guineas, barring any advance."

"Sixty," Jocelyn Thew bid.

The auctioneer noted the advance with thanks. Then he looked towards the betting man, who shook his head. The auctioneer, who was rather wanting to get away, raised his hammer with an air of finality.

"Going at sixty guineas, then."

"Sixty-five," a new bidder intervened.

The comedian, with his hammer already poised in the air, paused in some surprise. A clean-shaven man in dark grey clothes and a bowler hat, a man who had somehow the air of being a little out of his element in this galaxy of pleasure seekers, caught his eye.

"Sixty-five you said, sir. Very good. Going at sixty-five."

"Seventy," Jocelyn Thew bid.

"Seventy-five."

"Eighty."

"Eighty-five."

"Ninety."

"Ninety-five."

"One hundred guineas," Jocelyn Thew bid, turning with a good-natured smile to glance at his opponent.

The auctioneer drew himself up. The contest had begun to interest him.

Every one in the room was standing on tiptoe to watch.

"One hundred guineas is bid by my friend in the front," he declared. "A very princely offer. Shall I knock it down at that?"

One hundred and twenty was promptly bidden by the newcomer. Jocelyn Thew smiled up at the auctioneer.

"Well," he said, "I've invited my party so I suppose I'll have to stick to it. I'll make it a hundred and fifty."

"A hundred and sixty."

"A hundred and seventy-five."

"Two hundred."

"Two hundred and fifty."

The comedian's flow of badinage had ceased. An intense silence reigned in the marquee. He, in common with many of the others, was beginning to recognise a note of something unusual in this duel.

"Two hundred and fifty guineas is a very handsome sum for the box," he said, leaning forward. "Perhaps some arrangement could be made, Mr. ----"

"My name is Jocelyn Thew. The two hundred and fifty guineas bid is mine. I have the notes here ready."

The auctioneer turned towards the other bidder appealingly.

"I am acting under instructions," the latter said, "and I am not at liberty to make any arrangements to share the box."

"In that case, the bid against you at the present moment is two hundred and fifty guineas," the auctioneer told him. "Of course, the more money we get, the better--the Red Cross can do with it--but it seems to me that the present bid is adequate. If no arrangement is possible, however, I must continue the auction."

"Two hundred and seventy-five guineas."

"Three hundred," Jocelyn Thew replied coolly. "One moment, Mr. Bobby."

He leaned forward and whispered in the comedian's ear. The latter nodded and turned to the rival bidder.

"Do you understand, sir," he enquired, "that this is strictly a cash affair? I must have notes for the amount at the conclusion of the sale."

"You will have to wait until I get them, then," was the anxious reply. "I only brought two hundred and fifty with me."

The comedian shook his head.

"There can be no question of waiting," he decided. "If two hundred and fifty guineas is all that you have with you, then the box must go to the other gentleman for three hundred guineas."

"If we'd only thought of mentioning the matter of cash before," Jocelyn Thew said pleasantly, "it seems to me that I might have saved a little money. However, I don't grudge it to the cause."

There was a little murmur of applause, and before any further word could be said, the auctioneer's hammer dropped. Jocelyn Thew stepped up to his side and counted out three hundred guineas in notes, receiving in return the admission ticket for the box. The comedian shook hands with him.

"A very generous contribution, sir," he declared. "I shall do myself the pleasure of remembering it to-night."

Jocelyn Thew made some suitable reply and strolled leisurely off, his eyes searching everywhere for his unsuccessful rival. He found him at last in the main avenue, on his way to the principal exit, and touched him on the shoulder.

"One moment, sir," he begged.

The young man paused. When he saw who his interlocutor was, however, he attempted to hurry on.

"You will excuse me," he began, "I am pressed for time."

"I will walk with you as far as the gate," Jocelyn Thew said. "I am very curious concerning your bidding for Box A. Can't you let me know for whom you were trying to buy it? It is possible that I might feel inclined to resell."

"My instructions were to buy the box by auction, and to go up to five hundred pounds for it," was the somewhat hesitating reply. "I am unfortunately not in a position to divulge the name of my client."

"You can at least tell me your own name, or the name of the firm whom you represent?"

The young man quickened his pace.

"I can tell you nothing," he said firmly. "Good afternoon!"

Jocelyn Thew strolled thoughtfully back, made a few purchases wherever he was accosted, but had always the air of a man who is seeking to solve some problem. Issuing from one of the tents, he came suddenly face to face with Katharine and her brother.

"You are too late for the auction," the latter declared, as they shook hands, "and you wouldn't have got your box, anyhow. Do you know what it

fetches?"

"Three hundred guineas," Jocelyn Thew replied with a smile. "I bought it at that."

They both stared at him.

"For three hundred guineas?" Richard repeated.

"I was rather lucky to get it at that. There was an anonymous bidder who fortunately hadn't got the cash with him, or I gathered that he was willing to go to a great deal more."

They stood for a moment in silence. Katharine laughed a little nervously.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

"A little obstinacy on the part of a millionaire, I suppose," Jocelyn Thew replied carelessly. "By-the-by, if it suits you we will meet at the theatre this evening, instead of dining. I know that you will like to have a little time alone with your brother, as he is off to-night, Miss Beverley, and I have a business friend coming in to see me about dinner time. I shall be in the box, awaiting you, say at half-past eight. You'll be close to Charing Cross, won't you, Richard, and you won't have to leave until ten o'clock?"

"That's all right," the young man agreed. "It's a jolly good send-off for me."

Jocelyn Thew made his farewells and strolled down one of the narrow avenues which led to the exit. About half-way down, he came suddenly face to face with Nora and Crawshay. They all three stood together, talking, for a few moments. Suddenly Crawshay, who appeared to see some one in the crowd, turned away. "Will you excuse me for one moment, Miss Sharey?" he said. "Perhaps Mr. Thew will take care of you."

"Perhaps," Jocelyn Thew observed, as he watched Crawshay disappear, "you need some taking care of, eh, Nora?"

She shrugged her shoulders. Her eyes sought his. She looked at him defiantly.

"Well," she exclaimed, "London's a dull place all alone. So's life."

"I am not interfering in your choice of residence or companionship," he replied, "although it seems strange that you, whom I think I may call my friend, should choose to amuse yourself with the one person in life who is my open enemy, the one man who has sworn to bring about my downfall."

"There isn't any man in the world will ever do that," she declared, "and you know it. You are afraid of no one. You've no cause to be."

"That may be true," he agreed, "but since we have the opportunity of these few moments' conversation, Nora, there is one thing I wish to say to you. I

place no embargo upon your friendship with Mr. Crawshay. I do not presume to dictate to you even as to the subjects of your conversation with him. Tell him what pleases you. Talk to him about me, if you will--you will find him always interested. But there is one thing. If your lips should ever breathe a word of that other name of mine, or of those other things connected with my personal history of which you know, I warn you, Nora, that it will be a very bad day for you. It will be the one unforgivable thing, and I never forgive." Nora shivered, although the afternoon sun was streaming down upon them. Her cheeks were a little paler.

"No," she murmured, "I know that. You would never forgive. You are as hard as the rocks. All the time since I have known you, I have tried to soften you ever so little, just because I was fool enough to like you, fool enough to believe that it was just suffering which had made you what you are. That belongs to the past. When I think of you now, my heart is like a stone, because I know that there is no love in you, nor any of those other things for which a woman craves. I should be very sorry indeed, Jocelyn Thew, for any woman who ever cared for you, and for her own sake I pray very much that there is no one at the present moment who does."

A light breeze was blowing over the place. They were standing a little apart, in the shadow of a tree, and the hum of conversation and laughter, the noisy appeals of the vendors of flowers and other trifles, the strident voices from a distant stage, the far-off strains of swaying music, seemed blended together in an insistent and not inharmonious chorus. Jocelyn Thew stood as though listening to them for a moment. His eyes were following a tall figure in white, walking, a little listlessly by her brother's side. When he spoke, his tone was unusually soft.

"I always told you what you seem to have discovered, Nora," he said. "I always told you that behind the driving force of my life was much hate but no love, nor any capacity for love. That may not have been my fault. If we were in another place," he went on, "I somehow feel that I might tell you what I have never told anybody else--the real story that lay behind the things you know of, things the memory of which was brought back to me only last night. Even now that may come, but for the present, Nora, remember. What you know of me that lies behind that curtain, must never pass your lips."

"I promise," she murmured. "Here comes Mr. Crawshay."

Jocelyn Thew raised his hat, smiled at Nora and strolled away. He smiled also a little to himself, but not so pleasantly. The man from whom Crawshay had just parted, and with whom he had been in close conversation, was the man who had been bidding against him for Box A at the Alhambra that night.

CHAPTER XXVI

From six o'clock until half an hour before the time fixed for the

commencement of the performance, a steady crowd of people elbowed and pushed their way that night into the cheaper parts of the Alhambra Music-hall. Soon afterwards, the earliest arrivals presented themselves at the front of the house. Brightman and Crawshay arrived together, and made their way at once to the manager's office, the former noticing, with a little glint of recognition which amounted to scarcely more than a droop of the eyes, two or three sturdy looking men who had the appearance of being a little unused to their evening clothes, and who were loitering about in the vestibule.

The manager greeted his two visitors without enthusiasm. He was a small, worried-looking man, with pale face, hooked nose and shiny black hair. He had recently changed his name from Jonas to Joyce, without materially affecting the impression which he made upon the stranger.

"This is Mr. Crawshay," Brightman began, "who has charge from the Government point of view, of the little matter you and I know about."

The manager shook hands limply.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Crawshay," he said, "but a little disturbed at the cause. I must say that I hope you will find your impressions ill-founded. I don't like things of this sort happening in my house."

"Might happen anywhere," Mr. Brightman declared, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "By-the-by, Mr. Joyce, I hope you got my note?"

The manager nodded.

"Yes," he assented, "I've made all the arrangements you wished, and the box has not been entered except by the cleaner."

"Mr. Thew himself, then, has made no attempt to visit it?" Crawshay enquired.

"Not to my knowledge," was the brusque reply.

The two men took their leave, strolled along the vestibule, glanced at the closed door of the box and made their way down into the stalls.

"Our friend must be exceedingly confident," Brightman remarked musingly.

"Or else we are on the wrong tack," Crawshay put in.

"As to that we shall see! I don't like to seem over-sanguine," Brightman went on, "but my impression is that he is rather up against it."

"All I can say is that he is taking it very coolly, then!"

"To all appearance, yes. But whereas it is quite true that he has made no attempt to get at the box, Joyce didn't tell us--as a matter of fact, I don't suppose he knows--that three times Jocelyn Thew has visited the theatre under some pretext or other, and spotted my men about. From

half-an-hour after his bid at the fete, that box has been as inaccessible to him as though it had been walled up."

They took their seats in the stalls, which were now rapidly filling. About five minutes later, Jocelyn Thew arrived alone. The box opener brought him from the vestibule, and an amateur programme seller accepted his sovereign--both, in view of the many rumours floating about the place, regarding him with much curiosity. Without any appearance of hurry he entered the much-discussed box, divested himself of his coat and hat, and stood for a moment in full view, looking around the house. His eyes rested for a moment upon the figures of the two men below, and a very grim smile parted his lips. He stepped a little into the background and remained for some time out of sight. Brightman's interest became intense.

"From this moment he is our man," he whispered. "All the same, I should have liked to have seen where he has hidden the papers. I went round the box myself without finding a thing."

Jocelyn Thew had hung up his coat and hat upon one of the pegs, and for a few seconds remained as though listening. Then he turned the key of the door, and, taking the heavy curtain up in his hand, searched it for a few moments until he arrived at a certain spot in one of the bottom folds. With a penknife which he drew from his pocket, he cut through some improvised stitches, thrust his hand into the opening and drew out a small packet, which he buttoned up in his pocket. In less than a minute he had let the curtain fall again and unlocked the door. Almost immediately afterwards there was a knock.

"Come in," he invited.

Katharine and her brother entered, the former in a gown of black net designed by the greatest of French modistes, and Richard in active service uniform.

"We are abominably early, of course," Katharine declared, as they shook hands, "but I love to see the people arrive, and as it is Dick's last evening he couldn't bear the thought of losing a minute of it."

Jocelyn Thew busied himself in establishing his guests comfortably. He himself remained standing behind Katharine's chair, a little in the background.

"We are going to have a great performance to-night," he observed. "Exactly what time does your train go, Richard?"

"Ten o'clock from Charing Cross."

Jocelyn Thew thrust his hand into his pocket, and Richard, rising to his feet, stepped back into the shadows of the box. Something passed between them. Katharine turned her head and clutched nervously at the programme which lay before her. She was looking towards them, and her face was as pale as death. Her host stepped forward at once and smiled pleasantly down at her.

"You will not forget," he whispered, "that we are likely to be the centre of observation to-night. I see that our friends Brightman and Crawshaw are already amongst the audience."

Katharine picked up her program and affected to examine it. "If only to-night were over!" she murmured.

"It is strange that you should feel like that," he observed, drawing his chair up to the front of the box and leaning towards her in conversational fashion. "Now to me half the evils of life lie in anticipation. When the time of danger actually arrives, those evils seem to take to themselves wings and fly away. Take the case of a great actress on her first night, an emotional and temperamental woman, besieged by fears until the curtain rises, and then carried away by her genius even unto the heights. Our curtain has risen, Miss Beverley. All we can do is to pray that the gods may look our way."

She studied him thoughtfully for a moment. It was obvious that he was not exaggerating. His granite-like face had never seemed more immovable. His tone was perfectly steady, his manner the manner of one looking forward to a pleasant evening. Yet he knew quite well what she, too, guessed--that his enemies were closing in around him, that the box itself was surrounded, that notwithstanding all his ingenuity and all his resource, a crisis had come which seemed insuperable. She was suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of the pity of it. All the admiration she had ever felt for his strange insouciance, his almost bravado-like coolness, his mastery over events, seemed suddenly to resolve itself into more definite and more clearly-comprehended emotion. It was the great pity of it all which suddenly appealed to her. She leaned a little forward.

"You have called this our last evening," she whispered. "Tell me one thing, won't you? Tell me why it must be?"

The softness in her eyes was unmistakable, and his own face for a moment relaxed wonderfully. Again there was that gleam almost of tenderness in his deep-blue eyes. Nevertheless, he shook his head.

"Whether I succeed or whether I fail," he said simply, "to-night ends our associations. Don't you understand," he went on, "that if I pass from the shadow of this danger, there is another more imminent, more certain?"

He hesitated for a single moment, and his voice, which had grown softer, became suddenly almost musical. Katharine, who was listening intently, realised like a flash that for the first moment the mask had fallen away.

"I have lived for many years with that other danger," he went on. "It has lain like a shadow always in front of my path. Perhaps that is why I have become what I am, why I have never dared to hope for the other things which are dear to every one."

Her hand suddenly gripped his. They sat there for a moment in a strange, disturbing silence. Then the orchestra ceased, the curtain was rung up, the

performance, which was in the nature of a music-hall show, with frequent turns and changes, commenced. Popular favourites from every department of the theatrical world, each in turn claimed attention and applause. Katharine watched it all with an interest always strained, a gaiety somewhat hysterical; Jocelyn Thew with the measured pleasure of a critic; Richard with uproarious, if sometimes a little unreal merriment. The time slipped by apparently unnoticed. Suddenly Richard glanced at his wrist-watch and stood up.

"I must go," he declared. "I had no idea that it was so late." Katharine's fingers clutched the program which lay crumpled up in her hand. She looked at her brother with almost frightened eyes. Their host, too, had risen to his feet, and down-stairs in the stalls two men had slipped out of their places. Jocelyn Thew threw back his head with a little familiar gesture. The light of battle was in his eyes.

"Richard is right," he observed. "It is twenty minutes to ten."

"My servant will meet me down there with my kit and get me a seat," the young man said. "I shall have plenty of time, but I think I had better make a start."

Katharine came into the back of the box and threw her arms around her brother's neck. He stooped and kissed her on the lips and forehead.

"Cheer up, Katharine," he begged. "There is nothing to worry about."

"Nothing whatever," Jocelyn Thew echoed. "The most serious contingency that I can see at present is that you may have to find your way home alone."

"The number of the car is twenty," Beverley said, handing a ticket to his sister. "I'll send you a wire from Folkestone."

Jocelyn Thew suddenly held out his hand. His eyes were still flashing with the light of anticipated battle, but there was something else in his face reminiscent of that momentary softening.

"Mine, I fear," he murmured, "may be but a wireless message, but I hope that you will get it."

They departed, and Katharine, drawing her chair into the back of the box, faced many anxious moments of solitude. The two men made their way in leisurely fashion along the vestibule and turned upstairs towards the refreshment room. Half-way up, however, Jocelyn Thew laid his hand upon his companion's arm.

"Dick," he said, "I think if I were you I wouldn't have another. You've only just time to catch your train, as it is."

"Must have a farewell glass, old fellow," the young man protested.

His companion was firm, however, and Beverley turned reluctantly away. They walked arm in arm down the broad entrance lounge towards the glass doors.

It seemed to have become suddenly evident that Jocelyn Thew's words were not without point. Richard stumbled once and walked with marked unsteadiness. Just before they reached the doors, Brightman, with a tall, stalwart-looking friend, slipped past them on the right. Another man fell almost into line upon the left, and jostled the young officer as he did so. The latter glanced at both of them a little truculently.

"Say, don't push me!" he exclaimed threateningly. "You keep clear."

Neither of the men took any notice. The nearer one, in fact, closed in and almost prevented Beverley's further progress. Brightman leaned across.

"I am sorry, Captain Beverley," he said, "but we wish to ask you a question. Will you step into the box office with us?"

"I'm damned if I will!" the young man answered. "I have a matter of ten minutes to catch my train at Charing Cross, and I'm not going to break my leave for you blighters."

Crawshay, who had been lingering in the background, drew a little nearer.

"Forgive my intervention, Captain Beverley," he said, "but the matter will be explained to the military authorities if by chance you should miss your train. I am afraid that we must insist upon your acceding to our request."

Then followed a few seconds' most wonderful pandemonium. Jocelyn Thew's efforts seemed of the slightest, yet Mr. Brightman lay on his back upon the floor, and his stalwart companion, although he himself was not ignorant of Oriental arts, lay on his side for a moment, helpless. Richard, if not so subtle, was equally successful. His great fist shot out, and the man whose hand would have gripped his arm went staggering back, caught his foot in the edge of the carpet, and fell over upon the tessellated pavement. There were two swing doors, and Richard, with a spring, went for the right-hand one. The commissionaire guarding the other rushed to help his companion bar the exit. The two plainclothes policemen, whose recovery was instantaneous, scrambled to their feet and dashed after him, followed by Crawshay. Jocelyn Thew, scarcely accelerating his walk, strolled through the left-hand door, crossed the pavement of the Strand and vanished.

Fortune was both kind and unkind to Richard in those next few breathless minutes. An old football player, his bent head and iron shoulder were sufficient for the commissionaires, and, plunging directly across the pavement and the street, he leapt into a taxi which was crawling along in the direction of Charing Cross.

"Give you a sovereign to get to Charing Cross in three minutes," he cried out, and the man, accepting the spirit of the thing, thrust in his clutch, eagerly. For a moment it seemed as though temporarily, at any rate, Richard would get clear away. In about fifty yards, however, there was a slight block. The door of the taxicab was wrenched open, and one of the men who were chasing him essayed to enter. Richard sent him without difficulty crashing back into the street, only to find that simultaneously the other door had been opened, and that his hands were held from behind in a grip of

iron. At the same time he looked into the muzzle of Crawshay's revolver.

"Sit down," the latter commanded.

Brightman, too, was in the taxicab, and one of the other men had his foot upon the step. With a shrug of the shoulders, the young man accepted the inevitable and obeyed. Brightman leaned out of the window, gave a direction to the driver, and the taxicab was driven slowly in through the assembling crowd. Richard leaned back in his corner and glared at his two companions.

"Say, this is nice behaviour to an officer!" he exclaimed truculently. "I am on my way to catch the leave train. How dare you interfere with me!"

"Perhaps," Crawshay remarked, "we may consider that the time has arrived for explanations."

"Then you'd better out with them quick," Richard continued angrily. "I am an officer in His Britannic Majesty's Service, come over to fight for you because you can't do your own job. Do you get that, Crawshay?"

"I am listening."

"I am on my way to catch the ten o'clock train from Charing Cross," Richard went on. "If I don't catch it, my leave will be broken."

"I feel sure," Crawshay remarked drily, "that the authorities will recognise the fact that you made every effort to do so. As a matter of fact, there will be a supplementary train leaving at ten-forty-five, which it is possible that you may be able to catch. Explanations such as I have to offer are not to be given in a taxicab. I have therefore directed the man to drive to my rooms, I trust that you will come quietly. If the result of our conversation is satisfactory, as I remarked before, you can still catch your train."

Richard glanced at the man seated opposite to him--a great strong fellow who was obviously now prepared for any surprise; at Brightman, who, lithe and tense, seemed watching his every movement; at the little revolver which Crawshay, although he kept it out of sight, was still holding.

"Seems to me I'm up against it," he muttered. "You'll have to pay for it afterwards, you fellows, I can tell you that."

They accepted his decision in silence, and a few minutes later they descended outside the little block of flats in which Crawshay's rooms were situated. Richard made no further attempt to escape, stepped into the lift of his own accord, and threw himself into an easy-chair as soon as the little party entered Crawshay's sitting room. There was a gloomy frown upon his forehead, but the sight of a whisky decanter and a soda-water syphon upon the sideboard, appeared to cheer him up.

"I think," he suggested tentatively, "that after the excitement of the last half-hour--"

"You will allow me to offer you a whisky and soda," Crawshay begged, mixing it and bringing it himself. "When you have drunk it, I have to tell you that it is our intention to search you."

"What the devil for?" the young man demanded, with the tumbler still in his hand.

"We suspect you of having in your possession certain documents of a treasonous nature."

"Documents?" Richard jeered. "Don't talk nonsense! And treasonous to whom? I am an American citizen."

"That," Crawshay reminded him, "is entirely contrary to your declaration when a commission in His Majesty's Flying Corps was granted to you. The immediate question, however, is are you going to submit to search or not?"

Richard glanced at that ominous glitter in Crawshay's right hand, glanced at Brightman, and at the giant who was standing barely a yard away, and shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose you must do what you want to," he acquiesced sullenly, "but you'll have to answer for it--I can tell you that. It's a damnable liberty!"

He drank up his whisky and soda and set down the empty glass. The search which proceeded took a very few moments. Soon upon the table was gathered the usual collection of such articles as a man in Richard's position might be expected to possess, and last of all, from the inside of his vest, next to his skin, was drawn a long blue envelope, fastened at either end with a peculiar green seal. Crawshay's heart beat fast as he watched it placed upon the table. Richard seemed to have lost much of his truculence of manner.

"That packet," he declared, "is my personal property. It contains nothing of any moment whatever, nothing which would be of the least interest to you."

"In that case," Brightman promised, "it will be returned to you. Mr. Crawshay," he added, turning towards him, "I must ask you, as you represent the Government in this matter, to break these seals and acquaint yourself with the nature of the contents of this envelope, which I have reason to suppose was handed to Captain Beverley by Jocelyn Thew, a few minutes ago."

Crawshay took the envelope into his hands.

"I am sorry, Captain Beverley," he declared, "but I must do as Mr. Brightman has suggested. This man Jocelyn Thew, with whom you have been in constant association, is under very grave suspicion of having brought to England documents of a treasonable nature."

"I suppose," Richard said defiantly, "you must do as you d----d well please. My time will come afterwards."

Crawshay broke the seal, thrust his hand into the envelope and drew out a pile of closely folded papers. One by one he laid them upon the table and smoothed them out. Even before he had glanced at the first one, a queer presentiment seemed suddenly to chill the blood in his veins. His eyes became a trifle distended. They were all there now, a score or more of sheets of thin foreign note paper, covered with hand-writing of a distinctly feminine type. The two men read--Richard Beverley watched them scowling!

"What the mischief little May Boswell's letters have to do with you fellows, I can't imagine!" he muttered. "Go on reading, you bounders! Much good may they do you!"

There were minutes of breathless silence. Then Crawshay, as the last sheet slipped through his fingers, glanced stealthily into Brightman's face, saw him bite through his lips till the blood came and strike the table with his clenched fist.

"My God!" he exclaimed, snatching up the telephone receiver. "Jocelyn Thew has done us again!"

"And you let him walk out!" Crawshay groaned.

"We'll find him," Brightman shouted. "Here, Central! Give me Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard, quick! Johnson, you take a taxi to the Savoy."

Unnoticed, Richard Beverley had risen to his feet and helped himself to another whisky and soda.

"If you are now convinced," he said, turning towards them, "that I am carrying nothing more treasonable than the love letters of my best girl, I should be glad to know what you have to say to me on the subject of my detention?"

Crawshay for once forgot his manners.

"Damn your detention!" he replied. "Get off and catch your train."

CHAPTER XXVII

On the extreme edge of a stony and wide-spreading moor, Jocelyn Thew suddenly brought the ancient motor-car which he was driving to a somewhat abrupt and perilous standstill. He stood up in his seat, unrecognisable, transformed. From his face had passed the repression of many years. His lips were gentle and quivering as a woman's, his eyes seemed to have grown larger and softer as they swept with a greedy, passionate gaze the view at his feet. All that was hard and cruel seemed to have passed suddenly from his face. He was like a poet or a prophet, gazing down upon the land of his

desires.

Behind him lay the rolling moor, cloven by that one ribbonlike stretch of uneven road, broken here and there with great masses of lichen-covered grey rock, by huge clumps of purple heather, long, glittering streaks of yellow gorse. The morning was young, and little shrouds of white mist were still hanging around. His own clothes were damp. Little beads of moisture were upon his face. But below, where the Atlantic billows came thundering in upon a rock-strewn coast, the sun, slowly gathering strength, seemed to be rolling aside the feathery grey clouds. Downwards, split with great ravines, the road now sloped abruptly to a little plateau of farmland, on the seaward edge of which stood the ruins of a grey castle. Dotted here and there about that pastoral strip and on the opposite hillside, were a few white-washed cottages. Beyond these no human habitation, no other sign of life.

The traveller gazed downwards till he suddenly found a new mist before his eyes. Nothing was changed. Everywhere he looked upon familiar objects. There was the little harbour where he had moored his boat, scarcely more than a pool surrounded by those huge masses of jagged rocks; the fields where he had played, the cave in the cliffs where he had sat and dreamed. This was his own little corner, the land which his forefathers had sworn to deliver, the land for which his father had died, for which he had become an exile, to which he returned with the price of death upon his head.

After a while he slipped down from the car, examined the brakes, mounted to his seat and commenced the precipitous descent. Skilful driver though he was, more than once he was compelled to turn into the cliff side of the road in order to check his gathering speed. At last, however, he reached the lowlands in safety. On the left-hand side now was the rock-strewn beach, and the almost deafening roar of the Atlantic. On the right and in front, fields, no longer like patchwork but showing some signs of cultivation; here and there, indeed, the stooping forms of labourers--men, drab-coloured, unnoticeable; women in bright green and scarlet shawls and short petticoats. He passed a little row of whitewashed cottages, from whose doorways and windows the children and old people stared at him with strange eyes. One old man who met his gaze crossed himself hastily and disappeared. Jocelyn Thew looked after him with a bitter smile upon his lips. He knew so well the cause of the terror.

He came at last to the great gates leading to the ruined castle, gates whose pillars were surmounted by huge griffins. He looked at the deserted lodges, the coat of arms, nothing of which remained but a few drooping fragments. He shook the iron gates, which still held together, in vain. Finally he drove the car through an opening in the straggling fence, and up the long, grass-grown avenue, until he reached the building itself. Here he descended, walked along the weed-framed flags to the arched front door, by the side of which hung the rusty and broken fragments of a bell, at which he pulled for some moments in vain. To all appearances the place was entirely deserted. No one answered his shout, or the wheezy summons of the cracked and feeble bell. He passed along the front, barely out of reach of the spray which a strong west wind was bringing from seaward, looked in through deserted windows till he came at last to a great crack in the

walls, through which he stepped into a ruined apartment. It was thus that he entered the home in which he had been born.

He made his way into a stone passage, along which he passed until a door on his right yielded to his touch. In front of him now were what had been the state apartments, stretching along the whole front of the castle save the little corner where he had entered. Here was dilapidation supreme, complete. The white, stone-flagged floor knew no covering save here and there a strip of torn matting. The walls were stained with damp. At long intervals were tables and chairs of jet-black oak, in all sorts and states of decay. On one or two remained the fragments of some crimson velvet,--on the back of one, remnants of a coat of arms! And here, entirely in keeping with the scene of desolation, were the first signs of human life--an old man with a grey beard, leaning upon a stick, who walked slowly back and forth, mumbling to himself.

A new light broke across Jocelyn Thew's face as he listened, and the tears stood in his eyes. The man was reciting Gaelic verses, verses familiar to him from childhood. The whole desolate picture seemed to envisage thoughts which he had never been able to drive from his mind, seemed in the person of this old man to breathe such incomparable, unalterable fidelity that he felt himself suddenly a traitor who had slipped unworthily away and hidden from a righteous doom. Better that his blood had been spilt and his bones buried in the soil of the land than to have become a fugitive, to have placed an ocean between himself and the voices to which this old man had listened, day by day and night by night, through the years!

Jocelyn Thew stole softly out of the shadows.

"Timothy," he called quietly.

The old man paused in his walk. Then he came forward towards the speaker and dropped on one knee. His face showed no surprise, though his eyes were strange and almost terribly brilliant.

"The Cathley!" he exclaimed. "God is good!"

He kissed his master's hand, which he had seized with almost frantic joy. Jocelyn Thew raised him to his feet.

"You recognised me then, Timothy?"

"There is no Cathley in the world," the old man answered passionately, "would ever rise up before me and call himself by any other name."

"Am I safe here, Timothy, for a day or two?"

The old man's scorn was a wonderful thing.

"Safe!" he repeated. "Safe! There is just a dozen miles or so of the Kingdom of Ireland where the stranger who came on evil business would disappear, and it's our pride that we are the centre of it."

"They've held on, then, in these parts?"

"Hold on? Why, the fire that smouldered has become a blaze," was the eager response. "Ireland is our country here. Why--you know?"

"Know what?" Jocelyn Thew demanded. "You must treat me as a stranger, Timothy, I have been living under a false name. News has failed me for years."

"Don't you know," the old man went on eagerly, "that they meet here in the castle, the men who count--Hagen, the poet, Matlaske, the lawyer, Indewick, Michael Dilwyn, Harrison, and the great O'Clory himself?"

"I thought O'Clory was in prison since the Sinn Fein rising."

"In prison, aye, but they daren't keep him there!" was the fierce reply.

"They had a taste then of the things that are ablaze through the country. The O'Clory and the others will be here to-night, under your own roof. Aye, and the guard will be out, and there'll be no Englishman dare come within a dozen miles!"

Jocelyn Thew walked away to one of the great windows and looked out seaward. The old servant limped over to his side.

"Your honour," he said, his voice shaking even as the hands which clasped his stick, "this is a wonderful day--sure, a wonderful day!"

"For me, too, Timothy!"

"You've been a weary time gone. Maybe you've lain hidden across the seas there--you've heard nothing."

"I've heard little enough, Timothy," his master told him sadly. "There came a time when I put the newspapers away from me. I did it that I might keep sane."

"You've missed much then, Sir Denis. There has been cruelty and wickedness, treason and murder afoot, but the spirit of the dear land has never even flickered in these parts. The arms we sent to Dublin were landed in yonder bay, and there was none to stop them, either, though they laid hands on that poor madman who well-nigh brought us all to ruin. There's strange craft rides there now, where your honour's looking."

A silence fell between the two men. Presently the steward withdrew.

"I'll be seeing after your honour's room," he murmured "and there's others to tell. There's a drop of something left, too, in the cellars, thank God!"

Jocelyn Thew listened to the retreating footsteps and then for a moment pushed open the window. There was the old roar once more, which seemed to have dwelt in his ears; the salt sting, the scream of the pebbles, the cry of a wheeling gull. There was the headland round which he had sailed his yacht, the moorland over which he had wandered with his gun, the meadow

round which he had tried the wild young horses. In those few seconds of ecstatic joy, he seemed for the first time to realise all that he had suffered during his long exile.

More and more unreal seemed to grow the world in which Sir Denis Jocelyn Cathley passed that day. Time after time, the great hall in which he had played when a boy, draughty now but still moderately weather-tight, had echoed to the roars of welcome from old associates. But the climax of it all came later on, when he sat at the head of the long, black oak table, presiding over what was surely the strangest feast ever prepared and given to the strangest gathering of guests. The tablecloth of fine linen was patched and mended--here and there still in holes. Some of the dishes were of silver and others of kitchen china. There were knives and forks beautifully shaped and fashioned, mingled with the horn-handled ware of the kitchen; silver plate and common pewter side by side; priceless glass and common tumblers; fragments of beautiful china and here and there white delf, borrowed from a neighbouring farm. The fare was simple but plentiful; the only drink whisky and some ancient Marsala, in dust-covered bottles, produced by Timothy with great pride and served with his own hand. The roar which had greeted the first drinking of Sir Denis' health had scarcely died away when Michael Dilwyn led the way to the final sensation.

"Denis, my boy," he said, "there's a trifle of mystery about you yet. Will you tell me then, why, when I spoke to you at the Savoy Restaurant the other night, you denied your own identity? Told me your name was Thew, or something like it, and I your father's oldest friend, and your own, too!"

A sudden flood of recollection unlocked some of the fears in Denis Cathley's breast.

"I have not used the name of Cathley for many years," he said. "Was it likely that I should own to it there, in the heart of London, with a price upon my head, and half a dozen people within earshot? I came back to England at the risk of my life, on a special errand. I scarcely dared to hope that I might meet any of you. I just wanted twelve hours here--"

"Stop, lad!" Dilwyn interrupted. "What's that about a price on your head? You've missed none of our letters, by any chance?"

"Letters?" Sir Denis repeated. "I have had no word from this country, not even from Timothy here, for over three years and a half."

There was a little murmur of wonder. The truth was beginning to dawn upon them.

"It'll be the censor, maybe," Michael Dilwyn murmured. "Tell us, Denis Cathley, what brought you back, then? What was this special errand you spoke of?"

"Nothing I can discuss, even with you," was the grim answer. "It was a big risk, in more ways than one, but if to-night keeps calm I'll bring it off."

"You've had no letters for three years," Michael Dilwyn repeated. "Why,

d----n it, boy," he exclaimed, striking the table with his fist, "maybe you don't know, then? You haven't heard of it?"

"Heard of what?" Sir Denis demanded.

"Your pardon!"

"My--what?"

"Your pardon," was the hoarse reply, "signed and sealed a year ago, before the Dublin matter. Things aren't as bad as they were! There's a different spirit abroad.--Pass him the Madeira, Hagan. Sure, this has unnerved him!"

Sir Denis drank mechanically, drank until he felt the fire of the old wine in his veins. He set the glass down empty.

"My pardon!" he muttered.

"It's true," Hagan assured him. "You were one of a dozen. I wrote you with my own hand to the last address we had from you, somewhere out on the west coast of America. Dilwyn's right enough. England has a Government at last. There are men there who want to find the truth. They know what we are and what we stand for. You can judge what I mean when I tell you that we speak as we please here, openly, and no one ventures to disturb us. Denis, they've begun to see the truth. Dilwyn here will tell you the same thing. He was in Downing Street only last week."

"I was indeed--I, Michael Dilwyn, the outlaw!--and they listened to me."

"The days are coming," Hagan continued, "for which we've pawned our lands, our relatives, and some of us our liberty. Please God there isn't one here that won't see a free Ireland! We've hammered it into their dull Saxon brains. It's been a long, drear night, but the dawn's breaking."

"And I am pardoned!" Sir Denis repeated wonderingly.

"Where have you been to these three years, man, that you've heard nothing?" Michael Dilwyn asked.

"In Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Uruguay. You're right. I've been out of the world. I crept out of it deliberately. When I left here, nothing seemed so hopeless as the thought that a time of justice might come. I cut myself off even from news. I have lived without a name and without a future."

"Maybe for the best," Hagan declared cheerfully. "Remember that it's but twelve months ago since your pardon was signed, and you'd have done ill to have found your way back before then.--But what about this mission you spoke of?"

Sir Denis looked down the table. Of servants there was only old Timothy at the sideboard, and of those who were gathered around his board there was not one whom he could doubt.

"I will tell you about that," he promised, leaning a little forward. "You have read of the documents and the famous stolen letter which were supposed to have been brought over to England in a certain trunk, protected by the seal of a neutral country?"

"Why, sure!" Michael Dilwyn murmured under his breath. "The box was to have been opened at Downing Street, but one heard nothing more of it."

"The stolen letter," Hagan remarked, "was supposed to have been indiscreet enough to have brought about the ruin of a great man in America."

Sir Denis nodded.

"You've got the story all right," he said. "Well, those papers never were in that trunk. I brought them over myself in the _City of Boston_. I brought them over under the nose of a Secret Service man, and although the steamer and all of us on board were searched from head to foot in the Mersey before we were permitted to land."

"And where are they now?" Michael Dilwyn asked.

Sir Denis drew a long envelope from his pocket and laid it upon the table before him. Almost as he did so, another little sensation brought them all to their feet. They hurried to the window. From about a mile out seaward, a blue ball, followed by another, had shot up into the sky. Sir Denis watched for a moment steadily. Then he pointed to a bonfire which had been lighted on the beach.

"That," he pointed out, "is my signal, and there is the answer. The documents you have all read about are in that envelope."

There was a queer, protracted silence, a silence of doubt and difficulty.

"It will be a German submarine, that," Michael Dilwyn declared. "She has come to pick up your papers, maybe?"

"That's true," was the quiet answer. "I was to light the fire on the beach the moment I arrived. The blue balls were to be my answer."

The O'Clory, a big, silent man, leaned over and laid his hand on his host's shoulder.

"What are you going to do about it?" he demanded.

"For the moment I do not know," Sir Denis confessed. "Advise me, all of you. I undertook this enterprise partly because of its danger, partly for a great sum of money which I should have handed over to our cause, partly because if I succeeded it would hurt England. Now I have come back and I find you all moved by a different spirit."

"There isn't a man in this island," Michael Dilwyn said slowly, "who has hated England as I have. She has been our oppressor for generations, and in return we have given her the best of our sons, their life-blood, their

genius, their souls. And yet, with it all there is a bond. Our children have married theirs, and when we've looked together over the side, we've seen the same things. We've made use of Germans, Denis, but I tell you frankly I hate them. There are two things every Irishman loves--justice and courage--and England went into this war in the great manner. She has done big things, and I tell you, in a sneaking sort of way we're proud. I am honest with you, you see, Denis. You can guess, from what I've said, what I'd do with that packet."

Sir Denis turned to the O'Clory.

"And you?" he asked.

"My boy," was the reply, "sure Michael's right. I've hated England, I've shouldered a rifle against her, I've talked treason up and down the country, and I've known the inside of a prison. I've spat at her authority. I've said in plain words what I think of her--fat, commerce-ridden, smug, selfish. I've watched her bleed and been glad of it, but at the bottom of my heart I'd have liked to have seen her outstretched hand. Denis, lad, that's coming. We've got to remember that we, too, are a proud, obstinate, pig-headed race. We've got to meet that hand half-way, and when the moment comes I'd like to be the first to raise the boys round here and give the Germans hell!"

Another blue ball shot up into the sky. Sir Denis took the packet of papers from the table and stood by the great open stone hearth. Michael Dilwyn moved to his side, a gaunt, impressive figure.

"You're doing the right thing, Denis," he declared. "What fighting we've done, and any that we may still have to do with England, we'll do it on the surface. I was down at Queenstown when they brought in some of the bodies from the Lusitania. To Hell with such tricks! There's no Irishman yet has ever joined hands with those who war against women and babies."

Denis drew a log of burning wood out on to the hearth and laid the packet deliberately upon it. He stood there watching the smoke curl upwards as the envelope shrivelled and the flames crept from one end to the other.

"That seems a queer thing to do," he observed, with a dry little laugh.

"I've carried my life in my hands for those papers, and there's a hundred thousand pounds waiting for them, not a mile away."

"Blood-money, boy," the O'Clory reminded him, "and anyway there's a touch of the evil thing about strangers' gold.--Eh, but who's this?"

A large motor-car had suddenly flashed by the window. With the instinct of past dangers, the little gathering of men drew close together. There was the sound of an impatient voice in the hall. The door was opened hurriedly and Crawshay stepped in. "It is a gentleman in a great hurry, your honour," Timothy explained.

Crawshay, dour and threatening, came a little further into the room. Behind him in the hall was a vision of his escort. Sir Denis looked up from the

hearth with a poker in his hand.

"My friend," he observed, "it seems to be your unfortunate destiny to be always five minutes too late in life."

Crawshay's outstretched hand pointed denouncingly through the window towards the bay.

"If I am too late this time," he declared, "then an act of treason has been committed. You know what it means, I suppose, to communicate with the enemy?"

Denis shook his head.

"As yet," he said, "we have held no communication with our visitors. If you doubt my word, come down on your knees with me and examine these ashes."

Crawshay, with a little exclamation, crossed the floor and crouched down by the other's side. A word or two in the topmost document stared at him. The seal of the envelope had melted, and a little thread of green wax had made a strange pattern upon the stones.

"Is this the end, then?" he demanded in bewilderment.

"It is the end," was the solemn reply. "Perhaps if you take the ashes away with you, you will be able to consider that honours are divided."

"You burnt them--yourself?" Crawshay muttered, still wondering. "Every gentleman in this room," Denis replied, "is witness of the fact that I destroyed unopened the packet which I brought from America, barely five minutes ago."

Crawshay stood upright once more. He was convinced but puzzled.

"Will you tell me what induced you to do this?" he asked.

"We will tell you presently. As for the submarine outside, well, as you see, he is still sending up blue lights."

Crawshay gathered the ashes together and thrust them into an envelope.

"Your friend will be trying some of our Irish whisky, Denis," Michael Dilwyn invited. "We are hoping to make the brand more popular in England before long."

CHAPTER XXVIII

One by one, the next morning, in all manner of vehicles, the guests left the Castle. Sir Denis bade them farewell, parting with some of them in the

leaky hall of his ancestors, and with others out in the stone-flagged courtyard. Crawshay alone lingered, with the obvious air of having something further to say to his host. The two men strolled down together seaward to where the great rocks lay thick upon the stormy beach.

"These," Sir Denis pointed out, "are supposed to be the marbles with which the great giant Cathley used to play. Tradition is a little vague upon the subject, but according to some of the legends he was actually an ancestor, and according to others a kind of patron saint.... Just look at my house, Crawshay! What would you do with a place like that?"

They turned and faced its crumbling front, majestic in places, squalid in others, one whole wing open to the rain and winds, one great turret still as solid and strong as the rocks themselves.

"It would depend very much," Crawshay replied, "upon the extremely sordid question of how much money I had to spend. If I had enough, I should certainly restore it. It's a wonderful situation."

The eyes of its owner glowed as he swept the outline of the storm-battered country and passed on to the rich strip of walled-in fields above.

"It is my home," he said simply. "I shall live in no other place. If this matter which we discussed last night should indeed prove to have a solid foundation, if this even should be the beginning of the end of the great struggle--"

"But it is," Crawshay interrupted. "How can you doubt it if you have read the papers during the last six months?"

"I have scarcely glanced at an English newspaper for ten years," was his companion's reply. "I fled to America, hating England as a man might do some poisonous reptile, sternly determined never to set foot upon her shores again. I left without hope. It seemed to me that she was implacable. The war has changed many things."

"You are right," Crawshay admitted. "In many respects it has changed the English character. We look now a little further afield. We have lost some of our stubborn over-confidence. We have grown in many respects more spiritual. We have learnt what it means to make sacrifices, sacrifices not for gold but for a righteous cause. And as far as regards this country of yours, Sir Denis," he continued, "I was only remarking a few days ago that the greatest opponents of Home Rule who have ever mounted a political platform in England have completely changed their views. There is only one idea to-day, and that is to let Ireland settle her own affairs. Such trouble as remains lies in your own country. Convert Ulster and you are free."

"You heard what was said last night?" Sir Denis reminded his companion. "The O'Clory believes that that is already done."

The faintest of white mists was being burnt away now by the strengthening sun. Long, green waves came rolling in from the Atlantic. Distant rocks

gleamed purple in the gathering sunshine. The green of the fields grew deeper, the colouring on the moors warmer. Crawshay lit a cigarette and leaned back against a rock.

"Over in America," he observed, "I heard all sorts of stories about you. The man Hobson, with whom I was sent to Halifax, and who dragged me off to Chicago, seemed to think that if he could once get his hand on your shoulder there were other charges which you might have to answer. Brightman, that Liverpool man, had the same idea. I am mentioning this for your own sake, Sir Denis."

The latter shook his head.

"Heaven knows how I've kept clear," he declared, "but there isn't a thing against me. I sailed close to the wind in Mexico. I'd have fought for them against America if they'd really meant business, but they didn't. I was too late for the Boer War or I'd have been in that for a certainty. I went through South America, but the little fighting I did there doesn't amount to anything. After I came back to the States I ran some close shaves, I admit, but I kept clear of the law. Then I got in with some Germans at Washington. They knew who I was, and they knew very well how I felt about England. I did a few things for them--nothing risky. They were keeping me for something big. That came along, as you know. They offered me the job of bringing these things to England, and I took it on."

"For an amateur," Crawshay confessed, "you certainly did wonderfully. I am not a professional detective myself, but you fairly beat us on the sea, and you practically beat us on land as well."

"There's nothing succeeds like simplicity," Denis declared. "I gambled upon it that no one would think of searching the curtains of the music hall box in which Gant and I spent apparently a jovial evening. No one did--until it was too late. Then I felt perfectly certain that both you and Brightman would believe I was trying to get hold of Richard Beverley. The poor fellow thought so himself for some time."

"There is just one question," Crawshay said, after a moment's pause, "which I'd like to ask. It's about Nora Sharey."

Sir Denis glanced at his companion with a faint smile. He suddenly realised the purport of his lingering.

"Well, what about her?"

"She seems to have followed you very quickly from New York."

"Must you put it like that? Her father and brother were connected with the German Secret Service in New York, and on the declaration of war they had to hide. She could scarcely stay there alone."

"She might have gone with her father to Chicago," Crawshay observed.

"You must remember that she, too, is Irish," Sir Denis pointed out. "I am

not at all sure that she wasn't a little homesick. By-the-by, are you interested in her?"

"Since you ask me," Crawshay replied, "I am."

Sir Denis threw away his cigarette.

"I suppose," he said quietly, "if I tell you that I am delighted to hear it, for your own sake as well as hers--"

"That's all I have been hanging about to hear," Crawshay interrupted, turning towards the castle. "I suppose we shall meet again in London?"

"I think not. They talk about sending me to the Dublin Convention here. Until they want me, I don't think I shall move."

Crawshay looked around him. The prospect in its way was beautiful, but save for a few bending figures in the distant fields, there was no sign of any human being.

"You won't be able to stand this for long," he remarked. "You've lived too turbulent a life to vegetate here."

Sir Denis laughed softly but with a new ring of real happiness.

"It's clear that you are not an Irishman!" he declared. "I've been away for over ten years. I can just breathe this air, wander about on the beach here, walk on that moorland, watch the sea, poke about amongst my old ruins, send for the priest and talk to him, get my tenants together and hear what they have to say--I can do these things, Crawshay, and breathe the atmosphere of it all down into my lungs and be content. It's just Ireland--that's all.--You hurry back to your own bloated, over-rich, smoke-disfigured, town-ruined country, and spend your money on restaurants and theatres if you want to. You're welcome."

Sir Denis' words sounded convincing enough, but his companion only smiled as he brought his car out of a dilapidated coach-house, from amidst the ruins of a score of carriages.

"All the same," he observed, as he leaned over and shook hands with his host, "I should never be surprised to come across you in that smoke-disfigured den of infamy! Look me up when you come, won't you?"

"Certainly," Sir Denis promised. "And--my regards to Nora!"

Richard Beverley, after his first embrace, held his sister's hands for a moment and looked into her face.

"Why, Katharine," he exclaimed, "London's not agreeing with you! You look pale."

She laughed carelessly.

"It was the heat last month," she told him. "I shall be all right now. How well you're looking!"

"I'm fine," he admitted. "It's a great life, Katharine. I'm kind of worried about you, though."

"There is nothing whatever the matter with me," she assured him, "except that I want some work. In a few days' time now I shall have it. I have eighty nurses on the way from the hospital, with doctors and dressers and a complete St. Agnes's outfit. They sailed yesterday, and I shall go across to Havre to meet them."

"Good for you!" Richard exclaimed. "Say, Katharine, what about lunch?"

"You must be starving," she declared. "We'll go down and have it. I feel better already, Dick. I think I must have been lonely."

They went arm in arm down-stairs and lunched cheerfully. Towards the end of the meal, he asked the question which had been on his lips more than once.

"Heard anything of Jocelyn Thew?"

"Not a word."

Richard sighed thoughtfully.

"What a waste!" he exclaimed. "A man like that ought to be doing great things. Katharine, you ought to have seen their faces when they searched me and found I was only carrying out a packet of old love letters, and it dawned upon them that he'd got away with the goods! I wonder if they ever caught him."

"Shouldn't we have heard of it?" she asked.

"Not necessarily. If he'd been caught under certain circumstances, he might have been shot on sight and we should never have heard a word. Not that that's likely, of course," he went on, suddenly realising her pallor. "What a clumsy ass I am, Katharine! We should have heard of it one way or another.--Do you see who's sitting over there in a corner?"

Katharine looked across the room and shook her head.

"The face of the man in khaki seems familiar," she admitted.

"That's Crawshay, the fellow whom Jocelyn Thew fooled. He was married last week to the girl with him. Nora Sharey, her name was. She came from New York."

"They seem very happy," Katharine observed, watching them as they left the room.

"Crawshay's a good fellow enough," her brother remarked, "and the girl's all right, although at one time--"

He stopped short, but his sister's eyes were fixed upon him enquiringly.

"At one time," he continued, "I used to think that she was mad about Jocelyn Thew. Not that that made any difference so far as he was concerned. He never seemed to find time or place in his life for women."

They finished their luncheon and made their way up-stairs once more to Katharine's sitting room. Richard stretched himself in any easy-chair and lit a cigar with an air of huge content.

"I am to be transferred when our first division comes across," he told her. "Our Squadron Commander's going to make that all right with the W.O. We've had some grand flights lately, I can tell you, Katharine."

There was a knock at the door, a few moments later. The waiter entered, bearing a card upon a tray, which he handed to Katharine. She read it with a perplexed frown.

"Sir Denis Cathley.--But I don't know of any one of that name," she declared, glancing up. "Are you sure that he wants to see me?"

"Perhaps I had better explain," a quiet voice interposed from outside. "May I come in?"

Katharine gave a little cry and Richard sprang to his feet. Sir Denis pushed past the waiter. For a moment Katharine had swayed upon her feet. "I am so sorry," he said earnestly. "Please forgive me, Miss Beverley, and do sit down. It was an absurd thing to force my way upon you like this. Only, you see," he went on, as he helped her to a chair, "the circumstances which required my use of a partially assumed name have changed. I ought to have written you and explained. Naturally you thought I was dead, or at the other end of the world."

Katharine smiled a little weakly. She was back again in her chair, but Sir Denis seemed to have forgotten to release her hand, which she made no effort to withdraw.

"It was perfectly ridiculous of me," she murmured, "but I was just telling Dick--he is back again for another four days' leave and we were talking about you at luncheon time--that I wasn't feeling very well, and your coming in like that was quite a shock. I am absolutely all right now. Do please sit down and explain," she begged, motioning him to a chair.

The waiter had disappeared. Sir Denis shook hands with Richard, who wheeled an easy-chair forward for him. He sat down between them and commenced his explanation.

"You see," he went on, "as a criminal I am really rather a fraud. When I tell you that I am an Irishman--perhaps you may have guessed it from my name--and a rabid one, a Sinn Feiner, and that for ten years I have lived with a sentence probably of death hanging over me, you will perhaps understand my hatred of England and my somewhat morbid demeanour

generally."

Katharine was speechless. Richard Beverley indulged in a long whistle.

"So that's the explanation!" he exclaimed. "That was why you got mixed up with that German crew, eh?"

"That," Sir Denis admitted, "was the reason for my attempted enterprise."

"Attempted?" Richard protested. "But you brought it off, didn't you?"

"The end of the affair was really curious," Sir Denis explained. "I suppose, in a way, I did bring it off. I caught the mail train from Euston that night, got away with the papers and took them where I always meant to--to my old home on the west coast of Ireland. There, whilst I was waiting to keep an appointment with a German U-boat, I found out what happens to a man who has sworn an oath that he will never again look inside an English newspaper, and been obstinate enough to keep his word."

"Say, this is interesting!" Richard declared enthusiastically. "Why, of course, there have been great changes, haven't there? You Irish are going to have all that you want, after all."

"It looks like it," Sir Denis assented. "I found that my home was the rendezvous of a lot of my old associates, only instead of meeting underneath trapdoors at the risk of their lives, they were meeting quite openly and without fear of molestation. From them I heard that the Government had granted me, together with some others, a free pardon many months ago. I heard, too, of the coming Convention and of the altered spirit in English politics. I heard of these things just in time, for the U-boat was waiting outside in the bay."

"You didn't part with the stuff?" Richard exclaimed eagerly.

Sir Denis shook his head.

"I burnt the papers upon my hearth," he told them. "Crawshay ran me to ground there, but his coming wasn't necessary. A great deal besides the ashes of those documents went up in smoke that night."

Richard Beverley had risen to his feet and was pacing up and down the room. He found some vent for his feelings by wringing his friend's hand.

"If this doesn't beat the band!" he exclaimed. "My head isn't strong enough to take it all in. So Crawshay found you out?"

"He arrived," Sir Denis replied, "to find the papers burning upon the hearth. As a matter of fact, he took the ashes with him."

"He didn't arrest you, then, after all? There was no charge made?"

"None whatever. He was perfectly satisfied. He stayed until the next morning and we parted friends. A few days ago I had his wedding cards. You

know whom he married?"

"Saw them together down-stairs," Richard declared. "I'm off in a moment to see if I can get hold of Crawshay and shake his hand.--So you're Sir Denis Cathley, eh, and you've chucked that other game altogether?"

"Naturally," the other replied--"Sir Denis Jocelyn Cathley. As a matter of fact, I am up in town to arrange for some one else to take my place at the Convention. I am not much use as a maker of laws. They've promised me a commission in the Irish Guards. That will be settled in a few days. Then I shall go back home to see what I can do amongst my tenantry, and afterwards--well," he concluded, with a little gleam in his dark eyes, "they promise me I shall go out with the first drafts of the new battalion."

Richard gripped his friend's hand once again and turned towards the door.

"It's great!" he declared. "I must try and catch Crawshay before he goes."

He hurried out. The door was closed. Sir Denis turned at once towards Katharine. He rose to his feet and leaned over her chair. His voice was not quite so steady.

"So much that I had thought lost for ever," he said, "has come back to me. So much that I had never thought to realise in this world seems to be coming true. Is it too late for me to ask for the one greatest thing of all of the only person who could count--who ever has counted? You know so well, Katharine, that even as a soured and disappointed man I loved you, and now it is just you, and you only, who could give me--what I want in life."

She laid her fingers upon his shoulders. Her eyes shone as he drew her into his arms.

"I ought to keep you waiting such a long time," she murmured, "because I had to ask you first--for your friendship, and you weren't very kind to die. But I can't."

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