

I SPY

BY NATALIE SUMNER LINCOLN

To MRS. SARAH VAIL GOULD my grandmother to whose affection belongs many joyous days of childhood at "Oaklands" this book is offered as a loving tribute to her memory.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"He saw Kathleen quickly palm his place card"

"As Henry pushed back the door, she collapsed into her father's arms"

"A flash, the rifle's recoil--and Mr. Whitney still standing just where he was"

"Whitney paused to snatch up a magnifying glass and by its aid examined the finger prints"

CHAPTER I

AT VICTORIA STATION

The allied forces, English and French, had been bent backward day by day, until it seemed as if Paris was fairly within the Germans' grasp. Bent indeed, but never broken, and with the turning of the tide the Allied line had rushed forward, and France breathed again.

Two men, seated in a room of the United Service Club in London one gloomy afternoon in November, 1914, talked over the situation in tones too low to reach other ears. The older man, Sir Percival Hargraves, had been bemoaning the fact that England seemed honeycombed by the German Secret Service, and his nephew, John Hargraves, an officer in uniform, was attempting to reassure him. It was a farewell meeting, for the young officer was returning to the front.

"Much good will all this espionage do the Germans," said the young man. "We are easily holding our own, and with the spring will probably come our opportunity." He clicked his teeth together. "What price then all these suspected plots and futile intrigues?"

"Don't be so damned cocksure," rapped out his uncle, his exasperation showing in heightened color and snapping eyes. "It's that same cocksureness which has almost brought the British Empire to the very brink of dissolution."

His nephew smiled tolerantly, and shifted his thickset figure to a more comfortable position.

"Now, now," he cautioned. "Remember what old Sawbones told you yesterday about not exciting yourself. Said you weren't to read or talk about this bally old war. Leave the worrying to Kitchener; he'll see we chaps do our part."

"If everything were left to Kitchener!" Sir Percival thumped the arm of his chair. "Some of us would sleep easier in our beds. And I know you chaps at the front will do your part. Would to God I could be with you!" glancing at his shrunken and useless left leg. "If I could only take a pot at the beggars!"

"According to your belief the firing line will shortly be on English soil," chaffed his nephew, avoiding looking at his companion. He knew the tragic circumstances surrounding his uncle's maimed condition, and wished to avoid anything touching upon sentiment.

"If the plans to undermine England's home government are perfected and carried out, every man, woman and child will have to band together to repel invasion." Sir Percival lowered his voice. "If there are any able-bodied men left here."

"Don't be so pessimistic. Kitchener has built up a great army, and is only waiting the proper moment to launch it in the field."

"The best of England has volunteered," agreed Sir Percival, "but what about the slackers? What about the coal strikes--the trouble in our munition factories? All are chargeable to the Kaiser's war machine which overlooks nothing in its complete preparedness. Preparedness--England doesn't yet know the meaning of the word."

"It's time for me to leave," said the young officer, consulting his watch. "Take my word for it, Uncle, we're not going to the demnition bowwows--count on England's bulldog grit. God help Germany when the Allies get into that country!"

"When--ah, when?" echoed Sir Percival. "I hope that I live to see the day. Tell me, boy," his voice softening, "how is it with you and Molly?"

His nephew reddened under his tan. "Molly doesn't care for a chap like me," he muttered.

"Did she tell you so?"

"Well, no. You see, Uncle, it--eh--doesn't seem the thing to suggest that a charming girl like Molly tie herself to a fellow who may get his at any time."

"Piffle!" Sir Percival's shaggy eyebrows met in a frown. "Sentimental nonsense! You and Molly were great chums a year ago. You told me yourself that you hoped to marry her; I even spoke to her mother about the suitability of the match."

"You had no right to," blazed his nephew. "It was damned impertinent interference."

"You have not always thought so," retorted Sir Percival bitterly. "What had that most impertinent American girl you met in Germany to do with your change of front toward Molly?"

"I must insist that you speak more respectfully of Kathleen." John Hargraves' expression altered. "If you must know, I asked Kathleen to marry me and--she refused."

"I said she was impertinent. All Americans are; they don't know any better," fumed his uncle. "Forget her, John; think of Molly. I tell you the child loves you. Don't wreck her happiness for the sake of a fleeting fancy."

"Fleeting fancy?" John Hargraves shook his head sorrowfully. "When Kathleen refused me I was hard hit; so hit I can't marry any other girl. Don't let's talk of it." He smiled wistfully as he held out his hand. "Time's up, Uncle; the train leaves in an hour, and I must get my kit. Good-by, sir. Wish me luck." And before the older man could stop him he was retreating down the hall.

Sir Percival stared vacantly about the room. "The last of his race," he muttered. "God help England! The toll is heavy."

In spite of his haste John Hargraves was late in reaching Victoria Station, and had barely time to take his place before the train pulled slowly out. As he looked down the long trainshed, he encountered the fixed stare of a tall, well-groomed man standing near one of the pillars. Hargraves looked, and looked again; then his hand flew up, and leaning far out of his compartment he shouted to a porter. But his message was lost in the roar of the more rapidly moving train, and the porter, shaking a bewildered head, turned back.

The crowd of women and children and a few men, which had gathered to witness the troop train's departure, was silently dispersing when an

obsequious porter approached the tall stranger whose appearance had so excited John Hargraves.

"Ye keb's out 'ere, sir," he said. "This way, sir," and as the stranger made no move to follow him, he leaned forward and lifted the latter's top coat from his arm. "Let me carry this 'ere for you, gov'ner," then in a whisper that none could overhear, he said in German: "For your life, follow me."

"Go on," directed the stranger in English, pausing to adjust his cravat, and made his leisurely way after the hurrying porter. The latter stopped finally by the side of a somewhat battered-looking limousine.

"'Ere ye are, sir," announced the porter, not waiting for the chauffeur to pull open the door. "I most amissed ye," he rattled on. "Kotched the keb, sir, an' tucked yer boxes inside, then I looked for ye at the bookin' office, 'cording to directions. Let me tuck this 'ere I probe over ye."

As the stranger stepped into the limousine and seated himself the porter clambered in after him.

"They're on," he whispered, his freckles showing plainly against his white face. "The chauffeur is one of us, he'll take you straight to our landing. This packet's for you. Good luck!" And pocketing the sovereign offered, the porter, voicing loud thanks, backed from the limousine and slammed the door shut.

The outskirts of London were reached before the man in the limousine opened the slip of paper thrust into his hand by the porter. It was wrapped about a small electric torch and a book of cigarette papers. Slowly he read the German script in the note.

Be at the rendezvous by Thursday. Hans, the chauffeur, has full directions. Do not miss the seventeenth.

After rereading the contents of the note the man tore it into tiny bits and, not content with that, stuffed them among the tobacco in his pipe. Striking a match he lighted his pipe and planting his feet on the bag he gazed long and earnestly at his initials stamped on the much labeled buckskin. The slowing up of the limousine aroused him from his meditations, and he glanced out of the window to see which way they were headed. London, the metropolis of the civilized world, lay behind him. Catching his chauffeur's backward glance, he signaled him to continue onward as, removing his pipe, he muttered:

"_Gott strafe England_!"

CHAPTER II

OUT OF THE VOID

Slowly, the sullen roar of artillery, the rattle of Maxims and rifles sank fitfully away. A tall raw-boned major of artillery stretched his cramped limbs in the observation station, paused to look with callous eyes over the devastated fields before him, then sought the trench. Earlier in the day the Allies had been shelled out of an advance position by the enemy and had fallen back on the entrenchments.

"Devilish hot stuff, shrapnel," commented a brother officer as Major Seymour stopped at his side.

The Major nodded absently, and without further reply advanced a few paces to meet an ammunition corporal who was obviously seeking him. "Well?" he demanded, as the non-commissioned officer saluted.

"Only twenty rounds left, Major." The Corporal lowered his voice.
"Captain Hargraves sent word to rush reinforcements here as soon as it is dark, sir."

Major Seymour glanced with unconcealed impatience at his wrist watch. God! Would night never come!

"Can't we get our wounded to the base hospital, Major?" asked a younger officer. He had only joined the unit thirty-six hours before and while he had faced the baptism of fire gallantly, the ghastly carnage about him shook his nerve. He was not fed up with horrors as were his brother officers.

"The wounded would stand small chance of reaching safety if the German gunners sighted them. They must wait for darkness," replied Seymour.
"Here, take a pull at my flask. Got potted yourself, didn't you?"
noticing a thin stream of blood trickling down his companion's sleeve.

"Only a flesh wound--of no moment," protested the young man, flushing at the thought that his commanding officer might have misunderstood his question. "I'm afraid Captain Hargraves is in a bad way."

"Hargraves!" The Major spun on his heel. "Where is he?"

"This way, sir," and the Lieutenant led him past groups of men and officers. It was an appalling scene of desolation. The approach of night had brought a slight drizzling rain, and the ground, pitted with shell holes, was slimy with wet, greasy mud. Nearly all the trees in the vicinity were blasted as if by lightning, and along the right hand side of the road was a line of A. S. S. carts and limbers blown to pieces. One horse, completely disemboweled, lay on his back, the inside arch of his ribs plainly showing. His leader was a mass of entrails lying about, and on the other side lay four or five more, one with a foreleg blown clear off at the shoulder, one minus a head. A half-dozen motor cycles and over a dozen push bikes lay in the mud with some unrecognizable shapes that had been riding them. Between the advance trenches, in No Man's Land, the ground was thickly strewn with corpses of Scotties killed in the charge.

"The Huns had us cold as to range," volunteered the Lieutenant, loss of blood and reaction from excitement loosening his tongue. "They outed five guns complete with detachments by direct hits. Here we are, sir," and he paused near a demolished gun emplacement. The ground about was a shambles.

Major Seymour stepped up to one of the figures lying upon the ground, a mud-incrusted coat thrown over his legs. Several privates who had been rendering what assistance they could, moved aside on the approach of their superior officers. Hargraves opened his eyes as Seymour knelt by him.

"My number's up," he whispered, and the game smile which twisted his white lips was pitiful.

"Nonsense." Seymour's gruff tone concealed emotion. Hargraves' face betrayed death's indelible sign. "You'll pull through, once you're back at the hospital."

Hargraves shook his head; he realized the futility of argument.

"Have you pencil and paper?" he asked.

"Yes." Seymour drew out his despatch book and removed a page. "What is it, John?" But some minutes passed before his question received an answer, and Hargraves' voice was noticeably weaker, as he dictated:

DEAR KATHLEEN:

I saw Karl in London at Victoria Station. I swear it was he ... warn

Uncle ... Kathleen ... Kathleen ...

There was a long silence; then Seymour laid aside the unneeded brandy flask and slowly rose to his feet. He mechanically folded the scrap of paper, but before slipping it inside his pocket, the blank side arrested his attention.

"Heavens! John never gave me her address or last name. Who is Kathleen?" he exclaimed.

More shaken than he was willing to confess even to himself, by the loss of his pal, he stared bitterly across the battlefield toward the enemy's lines. How cheerily Hargraves had greeted him that morning on his return from a week's furlough in England! How glad he had been to rejoin the unit and be once again with his comrades on the firing line! A gallant spirit had passed to the Great Beyond.

Back in his observation station Major Seymour an hour later viewed the gathering darkness with satisfaction. Two hours more and it would be difficult to see a hand before one's face. Undoubtedly the sorely needed ammunition and reserves would reach the trenches in time, and the wounded could be safely transferred to the base hospital. The Allies' line had held, and in spite of their desperate assaults the Germans had been unable to find a vulnerable spot.

Seymour passed his hand over his eyes. Against the darkness his fevered imagination pictured advancing "gray phantoms." "They come like demons from the hell they have created," he muttered. "I hope to God they don't use 'starlights' over our trenches tonight. Flesh and blood can stand no more."

The darkness grew denser and more dense. In the long battle front of the Allies no sentinel saw a powerful Aviatik biplane glide over the trenches and fly onward toward its goal. Several times the airman inspected his phosphorescent compass and map, each time thereafter altering his course. Finally, making a sign to his observer, he planed to a lower level and, satisfied that he had reached the proper distance, a bomb was released.

Down through the black void the infernal machine sped. A sickening pause--then a deafening detonation, followed by another and another, cut the stillness, and the earth beneath was aflame with light as the high explosives and shells stored in the concealed ammunition depot were set off. Nothing escaped destruction; flesh and blood, mortar and brick went skyward together, and a great gash in the earth was all that was left to tell the story of the enemy's successful raid.

From a safe height the German airman and his observer watched their handiwork. Suddenly the latter caught sight of an aeroplane winging its way toward them.

"Bauerschreck!" he shouted, and the airman followed his pointed finger. Instantly under his skillful manipulation their biplane climbed into the air in long graceful spirals until they were six thousand feet above ground. But as fast as they went, their heavier Aviatik was no match in speed for the swift French aeroplane, and the bullets from the latter's machine gun were soon uncomfortably near.

The German airman's face was set in grim lines as he maneuvered his biplane close to his pursuer and, dodging and twisting in sharp dips and curves, spoiled the aim of the Frenchman at the machine gun, while his own revolver and that of his observer kept up a continuous fusillade.

For twenty minutes the unequal fight continued. It could not last much longer. Despair pulled at the German's heartstrings as he saw his observer topple for a moment in his seat, then pitch forward into space. The biplane tipped dangerously, righted itself and sped like a homing pigeon in the direction of the German lines. There was nothing left but to fly for it. The German dared not look behind; only by the mercy of God were the Frenchman's shots going wild. It could not last; he must get the

range. Surely, surely they were past the last of the Allies' trenches?

The German turned and fired his revolver desperately at his pursuers. Glory to God! one of his bullets punctured the latter's gasoline tank. It must be so--the French aeroplane was apparently making a forced landing. The shout on the German's lips was checked by a stinging sensation in his right side. The Frenchman had his range at last.

Almost simultaneously his machine turned completely over. With groping, desperate fingers the German strove to gain control over the levers and right himself. In vain--and as he started in the downward rush, the hurrying wind carried the frenzied whisper:

"The cross, dear God, the cross!"

CHAPTER III

POWERS THAT PREY

Not far as the crow flies from the scene of the German airman's catastrophe, but with its presence hidden from general knowledge, was the Grosses Hauptquartier, the pulsing heart and brain of the Imperial fighting forces. Vigilant sentries patrolled the park leading from the chateau commandeered for the use of the War Lord and his entourage, to the quarters of the Great General Staff. In a secluded room of the latter building a dozen men sat in conference about a table littered with papers; they had been there since early evening, but no man permitted his glance to stray to the dial of a library clock whose hands were gradually approaching two o'clock. Truly, the chiefs of the divisions were tireless toilers.

The Herr Chief of the Great General Staff was emphasizing his remarks with vigor unusual even for him, when the telephone, no respecter of persons, sent out its tinkling call. Hitching his chair closer to the table, the Herr Chief of the Aviation Corps removed the receiver from the instrument. A courteous silence prevailed as he took the message. Replacing the receiver, he turned and confronted his confrères.

"An outpost reports," he began formally, "that Captain von Eltz in his Aviatik biplane was pursued and wrecked by a French airman who was obliged to make a forced landing inside our lines. The French airmen were shot in their attempt to escape. Owing to the Aviatik biplane catching in the branches of a tree and thereby breaking his fall Captain von Eltz was rescued alive, although desperately wounded. The observer who accompanied him is dead. On regaining consciousness Captain von Eltz reported that his mission was successful, the new ammunition depot having been completely destroyed by his bomb."

A low hum of approval greeted his words. "Well done, gallant von Eltz!" exclaimed one of the hearers. "He deserves the Iron Cross."

"He will receive it," declared another officer enthusiastically.

"The information as to the location of this new ammunition depot, which von Eltz has just destroyed, came from the man of whom I have been telling you tonight," broke in the Herr Chief of the Secret Service. "He has been our eyes and ears in England. Gentlemen, is it your wish that he be intrusted with the delicate mission of which we have just been speaking?"

The eyes of the Herr Chief of the Great General Staff swept his companions. "Is it that I speak for all?" A quick affirmative answered him. "Then, we leave the matter entirely in your hands." The Herr Chief of the Secret Service bowed. "You know your agents; the selection is left to you, but see there is no unnecessary delay."

"There will be no delay," responded the Herr Chief of the Secret Service. "My agent is not far from here. With your permission, I take my leave," and saluting he hastened from the room.

The sun was halfway in the heavens when a limousine drew up before a wayside inn near a semi-demolished city. Before the orderly sitting by the chauffeur could swing himself to the ground, a tall man had stepped to the side of the car and opened the door. For a second the Herr Chief of the Secret Service and the stranger contemplated each other without speaking, then the former motioned to the vacant seat by his side.

"We can talk as we ride," he announced brusquely. "Your luggage--"

"Is here," thrusting a much labeled suitcase inside the limousine and jumping in after it.

At a low-toned word from the Herr Chief of the Secret Service the orderly saluted and quickly resumed his seat by the chauffeur. There was a short silence inside the limousine as the powerful car continued up the road. They were stopped at the first railroad crossing by a trainload of wounded soldiers.

"Your pardon," and before the Herr Chief of the Secret Service could stop him, the stranger pulled down the sash curtains of all the windows. "You are well known; being recognized is the penalty of greatness. It is to my interest to escape such a distinction."

"I approve your caution, Herr Captain," observed the older man. "Will you smoke?" producing his cigarette case, and as the other smilingly helped himself and accepted a lighted match, he surveyed him critically. Paying no attention to his chief's scrutiny, the Secret Service agent contemplated the luxurious appointments of the limousine with satisfaction and puffed contentedly at his cigarette. His air of breeding was unmistakable, but the devil-may-care sparkle in his gray-blue eyes redeemed an otherwise expressionless face from being considered heavy. The spirits of the Herr Chief of the Secret Service rose. His recollection and judgment was still good; his agent, by men and women, would be deemed extremely handsome.

"The new ammunition depot was destroyed last night by our airmen," he said, with some abruptness. "Your information was reliable."

"Pardon, is not my information always reliable?" interpolated the Secret Service agent.

"So it has proved," acknowledged his chief cordially, but a mark was mentally registered against the Herr Captain. German bureaucracy does not tolerate presumption from a subordinate. "And owing to your excellent record, you have been selected for a most delicate mission."

"Under the same conditions?"

"The Imperial Government cannot be questioned," retorted his chief, his anger rising.

"I am different from other operatives." A puff of cigarette smoke wreathed upward from the speaker's lips. "A free-lance."

"And you have been given a free hand. We have not inquired into your methods of procuring information, being content with the result."

"And does not the result justify not only your confidence but promotion?"

The Herr Chief of the Secret Service considered before replying; then he answered with a question.

"Have you been to Ireland?"

The Secret Service agent smiled grimly as he took from his pocket a book of cigarette papers. Counting them over, he selected the seventeenth paper, and passed it to his companion, who examined the small blank sheet with interest. "Just a moment," and the young man again slipped his hand into a vest pocket, this time bringing out a nickel flashlight. Pressing his thumb on the switch he held the glass bulb against the rice paper. In a few minutes a faint tracing appeared on the blank page, which grew brighter as the rays of light generated more heat.

"Hold it a moment," said the Herr Chief of the Secret Service. "Keep it over the bulb," and taking out his notebook he made several entries, then closed it with a snap.

"Finished?" As he asked the question, the Secret Service agent replaced his pocket flashlight, drew out his tobacco pouch, poured a little in the rice paper, and proceeded to roll the cigarette with practiced fingers.

"About Sheerness?" questioned the Herr Chief of the Secret Service.

"All is arranged."

"Good." The Herr Chief of the Secret Service permitted himself to settle back more comfortably on the roomy seat so that he faced his companion. In the closed and semi-darkened limousine there was no danger of their conversation being overheard.

"I reserved for myself, Herr Captain," said the Herr Chief slowly, "the pleasure of informing you that your valuable services to the Kaiser and the Fatherland"--the Secret Service agent raised his hat--"are recognized. The Cross may yet be yours."

"How can I express my gratitude?" stammered the Secret Service agent.

"By not jumping to hasty conclusions," smiled his chief. "Never again question your orders."

"Be just," protested the Secret Service agent warmly. "I have risked my life daily for the Kaiser and the Fatherland in a hostile country. There have been hours which I do not care to remember." The speaker's tone grew husky. "Some day--a short shift; and I must make provision for another."

"I understood you were not married?"

There was a barely perceptible pause. "Spies do not marry, sir."

"And if a Secret Service agent has a healthy regard for his own safety, he is careful of serious entanglements," cautioned his chief. "However, judging by your past work, I believe you are quite able to take care of yourself. Thanks to the warnings and information of your organization we have been able to meet some of the Allies' contemplated concerted attacks, and your information as to the sailing of transports and the movements of ammunition trains has been of inestimable service."

"Do you still wish me to keep up this particular work?"

"No." The Herr Chief of the Secret Service leaned forward in his earnestness. "This war has demonstrated again and again that victory goes with the heaviest artillery."

"True! Antwerp, one of the strongest fortified cities on the Continent, crumpled up before our siege guns," broke in his companion.

The older man paid no attention to the interruption, but continued gravely: "Hand to hand conflict and cavalry charges are a thing of the past. We shell out the enemies' trenches from batteries six to twelve miles away. All this you already know; I repeat it now to explain what I am about to say. We are in possession of the mining district of France, they are getting hard pushed for ammunition; England's supply is not inexhaustible; Russia cannot half arm her fighting forces. They one and

all are appealing to the manufacturing capitalists of the United States to furnish them with arms and ammunition."

"And with success," dryly.

The Herr Chief of the Secret Police frowned. "It must be stopped. You are to go to America--"

"I?"

"Yes, at once. You have a genius for organization; your work in England proved that. Let us know what merchant vessels and passenger steamers are carrying munitions of war. Be sure, doubly sure, that your information is correct, for we shall act upon it. Our Government stands ready to take most drastic measures to stop such traffic."

"I see." The Secret Service agent stroked his clean-shaven chin in meditative silence. "In England I went hand in hand with death; in the United States I am likely to outlive my usefulness."

"Perhaps," with dry significance. "But recollect our Government is ready to adopt any expedient to stop the exporting of arms and ammunition to our enemies."

"As for instance--?"

"Leave our methods to us; you have your work. You will make your headquarters at Washington City. There you will be able to place your hand on the pulse of the nation, and there you will find--idle women."

"Have we not already representatives at the United States capital?"

The Herr Chief of the Secret Service eyed him keenly. "Our embassy is concerned only with the diplomatic world. You are to send us word whether the United States Government arsenals are working under a full complement of men; of the orders placed by the Navy Department for submarines, and the activities obtaining in private munition plants. Be certain and study the undercurrent of sentiment for or against us. Report as you have heretofore."

"How am I to get in touch with the private shipyards and munition plants?"

"I will give you letters to residents loyal to their Fatherland. A number of the owners of powder companies and munition plants usually winter in Washington. I am also told that Mexican juntas still make Washington their headquarters." The eyes of the Secret Service agent were boring into him, but the older man's countenance remained a mask. "You must bear in mind that if the American capitalists persist in selling assistance to our enemies the attention of the United States must be diverted to other issues...."

"Such a plan could only be carried out by creating a necessity of home consumption for war munitions," supplemented the Secret Service agent softly.

Without replying the Herr Chief of the Secret Service pulled forward a small despatch-box from a cleverly concealed pocket in the upholstery of the limousine.

"We are motoring to your nearest destination," he said soberly, opening the box. "Here are your letters of credit, your passport, and introductions to our friends across the water," handing him a leather wallet. "They will see that you are properly introduced to Washington hostesses. Go out in society; I am told it is most delightful at the Capital. Make friends with influential public men and prominent Washingtonians. Above all," with emphasis, "cultivate the gentler sex; remember, idle women make excellent pawns, my dear Herr Captain von Mueller."

CHAPTER IV

"SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT?"

Mrs. Winslow Whitney, gathering her wraps together, stepped from the limousine.

"I shall not need you again tonight, Henry," she said, as the chauffeur sprang to the sidewalk to assist her.

"Very good, ma'am," and touching his cap respectfully, he took from the limousine the heavy fur laprobe and hastened to ring the doorbell for his mistress.

Halfway to her front door Mrs. Whitney paused to scan the outward appearance of her home. The large, Colonial, brick double house, with lights partly showing behind handsomely curtained windows, looked the embodiment of comfort, but Mrs. Whitney heaved a sharp sigh of discontent. The surroundings were not pleasing to her. Again and again she had pleaded with her husband to give up the old house and move into a more fashionable neighborhood. But with the tenacity which easy-going men sometimes exhibit, Winslow Whitney clung to the home of his ancestors. It had descended from father to son for generations, and finally to him, the last of the direct male line. Although business had encroached and noisy electric cars passed his door, and even government buildings dwarfed the impressive size of the old mansion, he declined to give up his home, stating that he had been born there and there he would die.

"Very well, you and Providence can settle the point between you, Dad," answered Kathleen, his only child, who had been brought in to use her persuasive powers upon her irate parent. "But as long as mother and I have to inhabit this old shell you must, simply must, put new works inside her."

And Whitney, with the generosity which marked his every action to those he loved, rehabilitated and remodeled the mansion until it finally rivaled in up-to-date completeness the more ornate homes of the newly rich in the fashionable Northwest.

"Has Miss Kathleen returned?" asked Mrs. Whitney, handing her wraps to the breathless Vincent, who had hurried to answer the chauffeur's imperious ring.

"No, ma'am."

"When she does return, tell her that I wish to see her."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Is Mr. Whitney in his studio?"

"Yes, ma'am. Shall I send Julie to you?"

"Tell her to go to my room and wait for me." As she spoke Mrs. Whitney crossed the broad hall and, passing the Colonial staircase, entered the elevator. The automatic car carried her to the first bedroom floor but, changing her mind, she did not open the door; instead she pressed the electric button marked "Attic." Her slight feeling of irritation aroused by not being met downstairs by any member of her family was increased by stepping from the elevator into a dark hall.

"Winslow!" she called. Meeting with no response she walked over to the opposite wall and by the aid of the light in the elevator found the electric switch and turned it on. Not pausing to look about her, she went

to the back of the large high-roofed attic and tried the handle of a closed door. Finding that it would not open to her touch, she rapped sharply on the panel. She waited several seconds before she heard a chair pushed back and the sound of advancing footsteps. The inside bolt was shot back with distinct force.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Whitney, jerking open the door. "Oh, my dear," his tone changing at sight of his wife, "I had no idea you were returning so soon."

"Do you call half-past six o'clock soon?" asked Mrs. Whitney following him into the room. "Winslow, Winslow, I warn you not to become too absorbed in your work."

Whitney laughed somewhat ruefully. "Does the kettle call the pot black? What do you do but give up your time to the Sisters in Unity? I'm a secondary consideration. There, there," noting his wife's expression. "Don't let us dispute over trifles. I'm making headway, Minna--headway."

"I congratulate you, dear." Mrs. Whitney laid a caressing hand on his tousled gray hair. "I never doubted that you would. But, Winslow, such complete absorption in your work is not healthy. The doctor has warned you not to shut yourself up in this room for hours, and particularly that you are not to lock your door on the inside. Remember your recent attacks of vertigo."

"McLane's an ass. The vertigo sprang from indigestion; hereafter, I'll be more careful what I eat," he protested. "There's nothing the matter with this room; it's well ventilated and heated. And I will lock my door--I won't be interrupted by any jackass servant wanting to feed me pap"--pointing scornfully toward the hall where a tray laden with a teapot and tempting dishes stood on a table near the door. "Do you not yet realize, Minna, that this is my life work?" With a sweeping gesture he indicated the models, brass, wood, and wax, which filled every cranny of the sparsely furnished room.

Mrs. Whitney sighed. The room was her bugbear. She had dignified it with the name of "studio," but it looked what it was--a workshop. Winslow Whitney, considered in clubdom as a dilettante and known to scientists as an inventor of ability, frowned impatiently as he observed his wife's air of disapprobation.

"My dear, we must agree to disagree," he said, lowering his voice. "My brain is carrying too much just now; I cannot be confused by side issues. Everything must wait until my invention is completed."

"Is your daughter's welfare of secondary importance?"

"What?" Whitney surveyed his wife in startled surprise, and her handsome face flushed under his scrutiny. "What is the matter with Kathleen's welfare? Do I illtreat her? Is she refused money? Do I make her spend hours here helping me in this"--sarcastically--"sweatshop? Four years ago she took up this fad of painting; you encouraged her at it--you know you did," shaking an accusing finger at his wife. "You persuaded me to let her study in Germany, and she hasn't been worth a button since--as far as home comfort goes."

"Winslow!"

"It's true," doggedly. "Formerly she was willing and glad to help me with my modeling, help me in making calculations, tracings--now she spends her time philandering."

"All young girls flirt, Winslow."

"But Kathleen was always so shy," Whitney shook his head. "Now I'm asked at the club if she isn't engaged to this man and that."

"Will you never realize that Kathleen is exceptionally pretty, with the

gift of fascination?"

"A dangerous power," said Whitney gravely. "I do not entirely approve of the men whose attentions Kathleen encourages."

"As for instance...."

"Young Potter, and this Baron Frederic von Fincke--you know, Minna, I do not approve of international marriages, and I am very glad that Kathleen refused that Englishman, John Hargraves, whom she met in Germany...."

"I sometimes wonder if she regrets," said Mrs. Whitney musingly. "Kathleen hears from him occasionally--and at times she is so very odd in her manner."

"Humph! I hope not. I don't want her to be a war bride," retorted Whitney. "And all Englishmen of family are at the front these days. You don't think, Minna," with quickly suppressed nervousness, "that Kathleen can be fond of Sinclair Spencer."

"Sinclair Spencer?" echoed Mrs. Whitney. "Why he is double her age, and besides, Winslow, his habits are not...."

"I know," gloomily, as his wife paused. "I would certainly never give my consent to such a marriage. But, Minna, he is forever hanging around Kathleen and haunts this house."

"So much so that Kathleen is heartily sick of him," said Mrs. Whitney comfortingly. "She is not the girl to really care for a man of his caliber. After all, Winslow," unable to restrain the dig, "you are responsible for Sinclair Spencer's intimate footing in this house...."

"Intimate footing? Nothing of the sort. Just because I employed him as my patent attorney, you and Kathleen did not have to throw yourselves at his head and have him sitting in your pockets."

Mrs. Whitney laughed outright. "My dear Winslow, neither Kathleen nor I encouraged him to come here. If you are afraid," her eyes twinkling, "that Kathleen considers his attentions seriously, I will sound her on the subject. And this brings me back to what I was going to say originally; you must inquire about the men Kathleen meets. She is at the impressionable age and as apt as not to pick up an undesirable _parti_."

"Why didn't Kathleen remain a school girl?" fumed Whitney. "Then we only had to engage competent nurses and look up their references and our responsibility ended."

"Your responsibility is just beginning," said Mrs. Whitney cheerfully. "By the way, the days are short, and Kathleen should be at home by five o'clock at least; this is a rough neighborhood for a beautiful girl to walk through unattended."

"My forefathers found no fault with this neighborhood," replied Whitney stiffly. "Then it was fashionable, now it is a good respectable business section; and if dividends continue to dwindle you may thank your stars we are in a business section--for convenience' sake. I will not give up this house, Minna, even to please you."

"Dear Winslow, don't excite yourself." Mrs. Whitney laid an affectionate hand on his arm. "Remember Dr. McLane's advice ... and dinner will be served in an hour. Please come down and get it while it is hot," and not waiting to hear his halfhearted promise she walked from the room and closed the door. It was some seconds before Whitney resumed his interrupted work.

"Only a little while now," he muttered--"only a little while."

Before proceeding to her bedroom Mrs. Whitney sought the suite of rooms which had been given to Kathleen on her coming of age two months before.

Finding the prettily decorated and furnished sitting-room empty she walked into the adjoining bedroom and saw Kathleen sitting at her dressing table.

"What detained you?" she asked kindly, as the girl turned on her entrance.

"The symphony concert was not over until twenty-five minutes ago. Won't you sit down, dear?" pulling forward a chair. "I must go on with my dressing. My pink satin, Julie, thank you," as the French maid appeared.

"Are you dining out tonight?" in surprise. "I thought you told me you had no engagement for this evening."

"I hadn't, mother. This invitation was quite unexpected," explained Kathleen, arranging her hair with care. "On my return from the concert I found this note from Miss Kiametia Grey asking me to fill a place and prevent thirteen at her dinner tonight."

"I see." Mrs. Whitney inspected the dainty note-paper and forceful handwriting through her gold lorgnette. The word of Miss Kiametia Grey was as the law of the Medes and Persians to her many friends, and Mrs. Whitney had a high regard for the wealthy spinster who cloaked her warm-hearted impulsiveness under an erratic and often brusque manner. "You cannot very well refuse. Who sent you those orchids?" pointing to a handsome bouquet lying half out of its box on the bed.

"Sinclair Spencer," briefly. "Be careful, Julie, don't muss my hair," and discussing unimportant matters Kathleen hurried her dressing as much as possible.

"Not knowing you were going out I told Henry he would not be needed tonight," said Mrs. Whitney, suddenly waking up to the fact that Kathleen was ready to go. "You had better order a herdic."

"Oh!" Kathleen gazed at her blankly. "And the dinner is at the Chevy Chase Club."

"Pardon, madame," Julie, the maid, spoke in rapid French. "Mademoiselle Grey telephoned to ask if mademoiselle had returned and said that she hoped she could dine with her. Knowing madame had no engagement this evening, I took the great liberty of telling Henry to be here with the limousine."

"Quite right, Julie," Mrs. Whitney rose. "Don't forget your orchids, Kathleen."

"I am not going to wear them; they"--not meeting Mrs. Whitney's eyes--"they would stain my dress. Good night, mother. I am likely to be late; don't either you or Dad wait up for me."

An hour later, her naturally rosy cheeks a deeper tint from the consciousness that she was late, Kathleen made a charming picture as she stood just within the entrance to the assembly room of the Chevy Chase Club, waiting to greet her hostess who was at that moment marshalling her guests out to the private dining-room. It was several minutes before Miss Kiametia Grey discovered Kathleen's presence.

"So very glad you could come," she said, squeezing her hand warmly. "Not only did I want to be helped over the thirteen bugaboo, but I have such a nice dinner partner for you. Captain Miller. Yes, Judge, you are to take me out. Kathleen, introduce yourself to the Captain."

"Am I to find him by the process of elimination?" laughed Kathleen, as Miss Kiametia laid her hand on the Judge's arm.

"He is just back of you," she called, and Kathleen turned around. Every vestige of color left her cheeks as she encountered the steadfast gaze of a tall, broad-shouldered man in immaculate evening dress.

"You?" she blurted out, her white lips barely forming the word. "_You_?" There was an agonizing pause, then Captain Miller stepped toward her. "Suppose we go out to dinner," he suggested suavely.

CHAPTER V

AN EVENTFUL EVENING

While keeping up an animated conversation with Judge Powers, Miss Kiametia Grey saw with inward perturbation that her vis-à-vis, Captain Miller, was spending much of his time between courses making bread pellets. What possessed Kathleen Whitney? She was usually the soul of courtesy, and yet her hostess had not seen her address one word to her dinner partner. Possibly Kathleen had taken offense at her off-hand introduction to the handsome officer. But that was not like the warmhearted, charming girl she had come to love and admire, and Miss Kiametia ate her dinner with less and less relish as she tried to keep up her end of the conversation and forget about the pair seated opposite her.

Captain Charles Miller had just finished helping himself to an ice when, from the tail of his eye, he saw Kathleen quickly palm his place card.

"Let us make it an exchange," he said, and reaching across her plate, picked up the pretty hand-painted Japanese card bearing her name, and slipped it inside the pocket of his white vest.

For the first time that evening there was color in Kathleen's cheeks.

"You have not lost your--"

"Courage?"

"Effrontery," she finished. "I cannot see that the years have brought much change."

"To you, most certainly not," and there was no mistaking the admiration in his eyes.

"I object to personalities." She paused. "And particularly on slight acquaintance."

Miller bowed. "It is my loss that we have not met before," and he did not miss the look of relief that lighted her eyes for the fraction of a second. Swiftly he changed the subject. "Who is the man glaring at us from the end of the table?"

"Baron Frederic von Fincke." Her manner was barely civil and that was all. Under his heavy eyebrows Miller's eyes snapped. She should talk to him, and he squared his broad shoulders.

"I have already met the young girl sitting next him," he said, "and who is her dinner partner?"

"Captain Edwin Sayre, United States Army."

"Of what branch of the service?"

"Ordnance."

"Is it true, Miss Kathleen," broke in the man seated on her right, "that Captain Sayre has resigned from the army to take a position in the Du

Pont Powder Works?"

"I believe so."

"Is that not establishing a bad precedent, Mr. Spencer?" inquired Miller. He had met the lawyer on his arrival before dinner. "Suppose other officers follow his example, what will the army do in case of hostilities with--eh--Mexico?"

"Probably the officers will apply for active service." Sinclair Spencer, glad of the pretext that talking to Miller gave him of bending nearer Kathleen, turned his back on his dinner partner. That Kathleen had given him her full attention throughout the dinner had partly compensated for the fact that she was not wearing his orchids. It had been weeks since he had enjoyed so uninterrupted a talk with her. That her manner was distraught and her replies somewhat haphazard escaped him utterly. The drive to Chevy Chase was both long and cold, and while waiting for Miss Kiametia's other guests to assemble before he presented himself, he had enjoyed more than one cocktail. That stimulant, combined with Miss Kiametia's excellent champagne, had dulled his perceptions. "The officers will be given their old rank," continued Spencer. "In the meantime they will have gained most valuable experience."

"There is really no prospect now of a war with Mexico." As she spoke Kathleen looked anxiously across at Miss Kiametia, but her hostess showed no disposition to give the signal for rising. Kathleen was aware by his thick speech and flushed features that Spencer had taken more wine than was good for him. She desired to ignore Captain Miller, but she was equally desirous not to encourage Spencer's attentions. She moved her chair back as far as she could from the table to avoid the latter's near presence as he bent toward her. Deliberately she turned and continued her remarks to Miller. "As soon as a fair election is held and a president elected, he will be recognized by our Government."

Miller laughed. "A fair election and Mexico are a contradiction of terms. Trouble there is by no means over. I hope that you are not a peace-at-any-price American?"

"Indeed I am not," and Kathleen's eyes sparkled. "I am for peace with a punch."

Again Spencer cut into the conversation, but his condition was so apparent that Kathleen shrank from him. "Miss Kathleen, give me first dance," he demanded, as Miss Kiametia laid aside her napkin and pushed back her chair.

In a second Baron Frederic von Fincke was by her side, and with a sigh of thankfulness Kathleen accepted his eager demand for a dance, and they hastened into the assembly room, which, stripped of its furniture, was already filled with dancers. It was the regular Wednesday night dance at the club and the room was crowded. Kathleen had no difficulty in avoiding Captain Miller. Since her debut she had reigned an acknowledged belle in society, and she was quickly importuned by men eager for a dance. But as she laughed and jested with her partners, she was conscious of lagging time and numbing brain. Could she keep up the farce much longer?

From one of the doorways Sinclair Spencer watched the gay scene with surly discontent. An attempt to dance, while its result had no effect upon his understanding, had caused his partner hastily to seek her chaperon. His only ray of consolation was that she had not been Kathleen Whitney. Come to think of it, she had never thanked him for his orchids. The oversight worried him, and he was about to attempt to dodge the dancers and cross the room in search of Kathleen when Baron von Fincke stopped and addressed him.

"She is very beautiful, your Miss Whitney," he said slowly. His English was not fluent "But she has not the tact of her pretty mother. _She_ would never have shown her avoidance of Captain Miller quite so plainly as did Miss Whitney during dinner."

"'Twasn't 'voidance," protested Spencer. "I cut him out."

"Then why postpone your wooing?" The foreigner permitted no hint of his secret amusement to creep into his voice as he glanced from Spencer to where Kathleen was dancing.

"Go-going to ask Kathleen tonight," replied Spencer, with drunken dignity. "I'm no la-laggard. Speak to Whitney, too; though that isn't important--he won't refuse." He cogitated darkly for a moment. "If he does ... I'll make things hot for him...."

"Hush!" Von Fincke laid a heavy hand on Spencer's shoulder as he looked carefully about them; apparently no one was within earshot. "Collect your wits. The time is not ripe for threats, Spencer. The invention is not yet completed; until it is--no threats. We must not kill the goose before the golden egg is laid."

"Washn't makin' threats," stammered Spencer, startled by the angry gleam in his companion's eyes. "Now, don't get mad, von Fincke, think of all I've done in that Mex--"

"Come this way," and with no gentle hand the foreigner propelled Spencer down the hall out of sight of the guests and out of doors.

Miss Kiametia Grey, enjoying watching the dancing as much as her guests enjoyed participating in it, was interrupted in her desultory conversation with two chaperons by one of the club attendants. Upon receiving his message she made her way to where Kathleen and her partner had just paused after a breathless extra.

"Having a good time, dearie?" she questioned. "It is a shame to interrupt your pleasure, but your father has telephoned that you must be at home by midnight."

"And your car waits, Cinderella," put in Spencer who, suddenly returning, had overheard Miss Kiametia's remark. He had a particularly hard time with the pronunciation of "Cinderella."

The spinster favored him with a frown, and the back view of a sharp shoulder blade. To her mid-Victorian mind Sinclair Spencer was not conducting himself as a gentleman should, and her half-considered resolve to drop him from her visiting list became adamant as she observed his appearance. Slipping her hand inside Kathleen's arm she led her to the cloakroom.

"Catch me asking fourteen to dinner again!" she exclaimed. "It always dwindles to thirteen at the last moment, and I have a nervous chill until the number is completed."

"Whose place did I fill?" asked Kathleen, presenting her cloak check to the maid.

"Nobody's, to be quite candid," Miss Kiametia smiled ruefully. "My dinner was originally twelve, but Captain Miller was so charming this afternoon, that I asked him on impulse, and then sent for you to pair off with him."

"Thank you." The dryness of her tone was not lost on the spinster. There were times when she wished to box Kathleen's ears. She was a born matchmaker, and Kathleen's indifference to matrimonial opportunities was a constant source of vexation to her.

"Never saw two people look so ideally suited to each other," she snapped. Kathleen started as if stung. "And I'm told mutual aversion is often a good beginning for a romance. I never saw you discourteous before, Kathleen; you simply ignored Captain Miller until dessert."

"Possibly I had good reason." Kathleen's color rose. "Where, pray, did you pick him up?"

"Tut, tut! Don't forget you are talking to a woman nearly old enough to be your mother." But Miss Kiametia's kind heart softened as she saw Kathleen felt her words. "There, dearie, don't mind an old crosspatch. Captain Miller was introduced to me by Senator Foster. You can see with half an eye that Captain Miller is a gentleman born and bred. All ready? Then I'll run back to my other guests. Come and see me Sunday," and with a friendly wave of her hand, Miss Kiametia returned to the dining-room where the dancers had adjourned for supper.

Kathleen found her limousine waiting at the entrance, and bidding the club attendant good-night she stepped inside the car, but as her chauffeur started to close the door he was pushed to one side.

"Fa-sheer tele-telephoned I was to shee you home," announced Spencer, striving to enunciate clearly. His haste and unsteady gait precipitated him almost on top of the girl as he endeavored to seat himself by her side. "D-don't get scared," placing a moist hand on her wrist. "Fa-sheer's orders. Ask H-Henry."

The chauffeur touched his cap. "Mr. Whitney did telephone me to bring Mr. Spencer back with you, Miss Kathleen," he volunteered, and without waiting for further orders he banged to the door and climbed into his seat.

With an indignant exclamation Kathleen leaned over, seized the speaking-tube and whistled through it. But apparently the roar of the open throttle drowned the whistle, for Henry did not pick up his end of the tube. As the car started down the drive a man jumped to the running-board, jerked open the car door, and without ceremony pushed Spencer into a corner and seated himself between the latter and Kathleen.

"Hope I didn't keep you waiting, Miss Whitney," he apologized. "Sorry to have been late."

Kathleen shrank back. She did not need the light from the lamp at the entrance of the club grounds to tell her the intruder was Captain Miller. She was too well acquainted with his voice. A voice she had hoped never to hear again.

Spencer, considerably shaken by the force Miller had used in thrusting him back against the side of the car, muttered a string of curses, which ended abruptly as Miller's elbow came in sharp contact with his ribs.

Too bewildered for speech, Kathleen rested her head against the upholstered back of the limousine. Neither of the men seemed inclined to break the silence as the car sped swiftly toward Washington, and gradually Kathleen's reasoning power returned to her. She was furiously angry with herself, with the world, with Fate. Ah, she would be mistress of her own fate. Kathleen compressed her lips in mute determination. Captain Miller must be made to understand that she would not tolerate his further acquaintance. How dared he thrust his presence upon her? Kathleen's hot anger cooled for a second; if Miller had not thrust himself into the limousine she would in all probability have either had to order Henry forcibly to eject Spencer, which might have given rise to unpleasant gossip, or have endured alone the intoxicated man's society for the five-mile drive into town.

High-power arc lights were strung along the roadway, and under their white glare Kathleen stole a glance at Miller. Handsome still, she admitted to herself, and the same broad-shouldered, athletic figure. He was the type of man which appeals to both men and women. She caught her breath sharply as bitter memories crowded upon her, and slipping down her hand, drew her skirts surreptitiously away from touching Miller. If he noted the movement he gave no sign.

As the lights of Washington appeared, the chauffeur reduced the limousine's speed to that required by law. They were in the heart of the resident section when a snore from Spencer explained his long silence.

The warmth and motion of the limousine, combined with his overindulgence in wine, had lulled him to sleep. With an effort Kathleen roused herself from her dismal reflections.

"Can I leave you anywhere, Captain--Miller?" she inquired frigidly.

"No thanks, I will walk to my hotel after I have seen you safely home."

Kathleen fumbled with the clasp of her evening wrap and stared down the empty streets. She waited until they were approaching Lafayette Square, then broke her silence for the second time.

"I desire that you leave me here," she stated calmly. "I am now within a few blocks of my home." Without waiting for comment she leaned forward, tapped upon the front window, and signaled Henry to stop.

Miller rose as the limousine drew up to the curb. "As you wish," he said courteously. "But I do not think this man a suitable companion for you," and collaring Spencer, he opened the door and, thrusting the still sleeping man out on the pavement, sprang out after him.

Henry's eyes bulged as he saw the two men, but Miller's manner stopped the ejaculation upon his lips.

"Take Miss Whitney home," directed Miller, and lifting his hat to Kathleen he watched the limousine turn a corner and disappear. Then he glanced down at Spencer sprawling on the pavement. A queer smile lighted his face as he stared at the lawyer.

"What's your little game, Spencer?" he asked softly, and a hearty kick punctuated the question.

CHAPTER VI

AT THE CAPITOL

Mrs. Whitney's usually placid disposition was decidedly ruffled, and she took no pains to conceal her displeasure.

"Really, Kathleen, you are greatly at fault," she said, as the girl joined her in the vestibule. "The idea of keeping Henry at the Club until after midnight! No wonder he is late now. No chauffeur can work both day and night."

"I'm sorry, mother," but Kathleen did not look particularly penitent; she considered that the faithful Henry had a soft berth. That he worked occasionally would not prove harmful. She had hoped to avoid going to the Capitol that morning, and when told that Henry had not appeared either at the house for orders or at the garage, she had supposed the trip would be given up. But Mrs. Whitney was of the persevering kind, and with her to plan was to accomplish. Decidedly upset by Henry's non-appearance in her well conducted household, she had ordered the garage to fill his place temporarily, and her limousine was at last at the door.

Mrs. Whitney was giving her final direction to the new chauffeur as to which she considered the best and safest route to the Capitol and the speed she wished maintained, when her husband joined them.

"I've decided to take a morning off and go with you," he announced, entering the limousine. "Room for me on the back seat?"

"Surely," and his wife patted the wide cushion. "We do not possess a superabundance of flesh in this family."

"Except Dad," interpolated Kathleen mischievously. She knew her father

disliked the idea of getting fat, while lacking the initiative of keeping thin. "What you need, Dad, is a cold plunge and a ten-mile walk before breakfast."

Whitney shuddered. "Nice comfortable ideas you have, Kathleen, for a winter day. It strikes me you should take a dose of your own medicine." Inspecting her keenly. "Late hours do not improve your appearance, young lady."

"Thanks," but her usually sunny smile was strained. "And I suppose you still work all night, Dad, disobeying Dr. McLane's orders."

"I don't take orders from McLane," shortly. "And I didn't work very late last night. Your mother came up and tried some of her Sisters in Unity persuasion upon me, and I capitulated."

Mrs. Whitney did not take the jest in good part. While she reveled in society, she was essentially a clubwoman, and nothing delighted her so much as debating and delivering addresses. She was a capital extemporaneous speaker, and had held prominent offices in different clubs. Possessing no sense of humor, which her husband and Kathleen had in abundance, she seriously objected to their poking fun at her beloved organization, the Sisters in Unity, of which she was a charter member. Any allusion to it in fun she considered an offense in good taste. Therefore withdrawing into dignified silence she permitted Whitney and Kathleen to keep up the conversation. In fact, Whitney did most of the talking, and neither he nor his wife perceived Kathleen's inattention.

"I'm on the high road to solving the last problem," he exulted. "The invention is simple, so very simple, but, Minna, it will revolutionize many things in warfare. You won't be ashamed of your old Dad, Kathleen, when the world acknowledges what I've done."

"I'm proud of you now, and always have been," affirmed Kathleen, and leaning over she placed a spray of lilies-of-the-valley from her bouquet in his buttonhole.

"Who sent you the flowers, Kathleen?" inquired Mrs. Whitney.

"I don't know; I could find no card or note with them."

"Perhaps Sinclair Spencer has decided to send them anonymously." With a look of repugnance, Kathleen pulled the flowers off and before her father could interfere, opened the door and tossed the bouquet into the street. "Good gracious, Kathleen, don't take everything that I say literally!" exclaimed Mrs. Whitney. "I am sorry I suggested...."

"I am not, mother. After last night, nothing would induce me to wear his flowers again," declared Kathleen with spirit. "Father, what made you tele--"

"Here we are," broke in Whitney, apparently not hearing Kathleen's remark, as the limousine drew up at the entrance to the Senate side of the Capitol. "Jump out, Kathleen. Careful, Minna." But without assistance Mrs. Whitney sprang lightly to the ground, a worried look on her face.

"I do believe, Winslow," she said, "that I have left my admission card to the private gallery at home. It isn't in my bag."

"Don't mind, I'll look up Randall Foster; he'll see we get in. Come this way."

They found the corridors of the huge building filled with hurrying men and women, and Whitney spent fully twenty minutes before he succeeded in obtaining the coveted card to the private gallery from his friend, Senator Foster. To Mrs. Whitney's dismay they found the gallery filled; but fortune favored them, for just after their entrance three women seated in the front row rose and made their way out. With a quickness which showed her familiarity with conventions Mrs. Whitney pounced upon

the seats, and sank into hers with a sigh of thankfulness. She had overcome a number of obstacles that morning to get there, and though it was a small matter she hated to be thwarted in anything she undertook.

Kathleen, like many another Washingtonian, confined her visits to the Capitol to sightseeing trips with out-of-town friends, and she had come there that morning only because she could think of no good reason for staying away. To her inward surprise she soon found her attention absorbed by the debate going on in the Senate, and when one of the distinguished lawmakers commenced a characteristic speech she became unconscious of the flight of time. As the Senator ended his fiery peroration, she raised her head and, glancing toward the Diplomats' Gallery, recognized Captain Charles Miller sitting in the front row regarding her.

"Have you seen Medusa's head?" asked Whitney, tugging at her elbow. "Wake up, Kathleen, unless you've been turned into marble. Your mother's told you three times that Senator Foster has invited us to lunch with him. She is waiting for us in the corridor. Come along."

As they joined Mrs. Whitney, a young man hurried up to them. "I am Senator Foster's secretary," he explained. "The Senator has gone direct to the dining-room on the ground floor. This way, please," and he piloted them to an elevator. On reaching the private dining-room of the Senate they found not only Foster but Miss Kiametia Grey awaiting them.

"This is my lucky day," exclaimed Foster, heartily. "First, you tell me your wife and Miss Kathleen are here, Whitney; then I meet Kiametia on the way to the gallery." Mrs. Whitney smiled covertly. The Senator's courtship of the wealthy spinster was one of the most discussed topics in smart society. "Couldn't resist the temptation to have you all lunch with me," added Foster. "Won't you sit here, Mrs. Whitney," pulling out a chair on his right, "and Kiametia," indicating the chair on his left, "and Whitney next to you. Miss Kathleen, it's not etiquette to place father and daughter together, but I have a stranger for your other hand. Ah, here he comes...."

Kathleen's back was to the entrance of the dining-room, but a sixth sense warned her who the newcomer was, and her face was expressionless when Foster introduced his friend, Captain Miller, to Mrs. Whitney and her husband. After greeting Miss Kiametia, Miller stepped to Kathleen's side.

"Good morning," he said quietly, and held out his hand. Kathleen drew back, then good breeding mastered her indignation. A second later her hand was laid in his and instantly withdrawn, but her fingers tingled from his strong clasp.

"Jolly party you must have had last night, Kiametia." Foster's cheery voice enabled Kathleen to control her somewhat shaken nerves. "Telephoned Sinclair Spencer to stop and see me this morning, but his servant said he never showed up until noon today."

"Kathleen pleaded guilty to a sleepless night," volunteered Mrs. Whitney, to the girl's secret indignation.

"It was the lobster," answered Miss Kiametia. "I tried to warn you not to eat it, Kathleen."

"Well, your lobster won't account for the non-appearance of Henry," mourned Mrs. Whitney, her mind harking back to her own grievance. "How d'ye do, Mrs. Sunderland," as an elaborately gowned woman swept by their table, barely returning their greeting.

"It is the regret of my life," announced Miss Kiametia, her eyes twinkling, "that I never kept a photograph of Mrs. Sunderland taken when she first came to Washington ten years ago. It would provide a study in expression and expansion in social snobbery."

Mrs. Whitney, conscious that she was perhaps rude by her silence, turned

to Captain Miller who had taken no part in the conversation.

"Is this your first visit to Washington, Captain?" she inquired.

"Yes, and I find its residents so delightful that I hope to prolong my stay."

"What did you think of the speech today?" broke in Foster.

"Capital! The Senator is right; if this government ship purchase bill goes through, the country will indeed be buying a quarrel."

"Quite right," agreed Whitney, laying down his fork. "The only people who fail to see it in that light are those advocating the bill's passage. Every nation thinks the same."

"Except possibly Germany," argued Foster. "She would probably try and sell us the hundreds of interned ships in our seaports."

"Well, why shouldn't she?" Miss Kiametia, with recollections of her misgivings the night before, declined the lobster croquettes. "With the German steamships and freighters interned here we should have a merchant marine ready to our hand."

"And thereby provide instant use for our navy," retorted Whitney.

"Uncle Sam had better think twice before taking issue with the German submarines," grumbled Miss Kiametia.

Whitney's eyes lit with an angry sparkle, and he opened his mouth to speak, but his wife gave him no opportunity.

"Are you pro-German, Kiametia?" she asked in astonishment.

"Well, I lean that way," admitted the spinster. "You know I'm named for the sister of Pocahontas, and my drop of Indian blood gives me a good memory. It strikes me that this nation is overlooking the American Revolution, not to mention 1812, and I also recollect that England did not show us particular friendship during the Civil War."

"The idea of waving the bloody shirt of '76!" exclaimed Kathleen. "For shame, Miss Kiametia! We Anglo-Saxons must stand together. And another thing: Germany may have wiped the Belgians off the map, but she's lodged them in every American heart."

"And we'll wake up some day and find the Germans sitting in Canada," retorted Miss Kiametia. "Looking at U. S."

"'Over the garden wall,'" quoted Whitney laughing. "No, no, Kiametia. Wave the bloody shirt, but don't try to scare us with a straw man."

"Straw or not, the Kaiser is the world's bogey man. He has taught us a lesson in preparedness which this country will be slow to imitate."

"Uncle Sam is a good disciplinarian but a poor student," acknowledged Whitney, fingering the table ornaments nervously. "Well, Foster, I've enjoyed myself immensely, but there's work awaiting me at home, and I really must run along."

Mrs. Whitney, talking placidly with Captain Miller, looked considerably taken aback by her husband's precipitancy. Hastily draining the last drop of her demi-tasse, she added her thanks and good-byes, and followed her husband and Kathleen from the room.

"I'll walk home," announced Kathleen, as Whitney signaled to their chauffeur. "It will do me good, I need a constitutional."

"But--but it's over a mile," protested Mrs. Whitney.

"All the better," and waving her muff in farewell, Kathleen hastened off through the grounds in the direction of Pennsylvania Avenue. She found the cold invigorating air a bracing tonic after the steam-heated atmosphere of the Capitol, and was thoroughly enjoying her walk when she became conscious that a figure was keeping pace with her. Looking up, she recognized Captain Miller. Kathleen stopped.

"Which way are you going?" she demanded, totally unconscious of the pretty tableau she made, her dark beauty enhanced by a becoming hat and silver fox furs. Not anticipating her abrupt halt, Miller was forced to retrace his footsteps.

"I spoke to you twice, Miss Whitney, but you apparently did not hear me," he answered, lifting his hat. "I asked if I might accompany you, and took silence for consent. My way lies your way."

Kathleen's fingers clenched tightly together inside her muff. "Are you dead to all sense of decency?" she asked. "Can you not see that your presence is an offense?"

Miller's color rose, and there was an ominous flash in his blue-gray eyes, but she met his look undauntedly. "I think you take an exaggerated view of the matter," he said quietly. "I desire your friendship."

"You dare ask that after...."

With a quiet masterful gesture Miller stopped her. "We are living in the present," he said. "I repent the past. Come"--with deepening earnestness, "you are warm-hearted, impulsive, generous--be generous to me--give me a chance to make good. Before God, I will not fail you."

Kathleen scanned him keenly. Could she place faith in his sincerity? As she met the penetrating glance she knew of old, now softened by the fascination of his winning smile, she came again under the old personal charm.

"I cannot be friends with a man whom I do not respect," she stammered.

"But you shall respect me," with dogged determination, "and then...."

A bevy of girls, coming out of Galt's, paused to greet Kathleen, and Miller, not waiting to complete his sentence, bowed to her and continued up the Avenue. He paid no attention to the streets he traversed, but on turning into F Street sought shelter near a shop to light his cigarette. As he threw the burnt match to the pavement he was attracted by a large photograph of Kathleen Whitney in the window. It was an excellent likeness, and Miller, studying the clear-cut features, the lovely eyes, and soft rippling hair, felt his heart throb. He glanced at the sign above the window and found he was standing before Edmonston's Photographic Studio. On impulse he entered the building.

Miller's absorption in Kathleen's photograph had not gone unnoticed, and when he emerged from the studio, the observer accosted him.

"Beg pardon, sir, I'm Henry, Mr. Whitney's chauffeur," he said. "Mr. Spencer, sir, was much put out to wake up this morning, sir, and find himself in a strange hotel."

"Better that than being registered 'drunk and disorderly,'" smiled Miller.

"Yes, Captain Miller. I told him, sir, that you had done him a service."

"Ah, indeed? May I ask how you know who I am?"

"I made out you'd have trouble with Mr. Spencer, sir, and as soon as I'd left Miss Kathleen at home, sir, I ran the car back down by the park, sir, just in time to see you leading Mr. Spencer into the hotel. The doorman there gave me your name, sir."

"I see," replied Miller thoughtfully. "I lunched with Mr. Whitney today, and it was mentioned that you had not shown up," and his eyes were guilty of a peculiar glint as he scrutinized the intelligent face and finely proportioned figure of the chauffeur.

Henry reddened. "I wasn't feeling very well in the night, sir, and overslept," he explained. "Eh, Captain," as Miller turned away. "I saw you looking, sir, at Miss Kathleen's picture. Did you get a copy in Edmonston's?"

"No," curtly.

"I thought not, sir. They never part with their photographs in there, sir. But there's an extra one in Mr. Whitney's library, sir, which I could ... could...." he stopped abruptly as he met Miller's gaze.

After a pause Miller slipped his hand into his pocket and on pulling it out disclosed a gold coin lying in his bare palm. "I see you are amenable to reason, Henry," he said serenely, and the chauffeur stammered his thanks.

CHAPTER VII

PHANTOM WIRES

Sinclair Spencer walked up and down the Whitney drawing-room examining the costly bric-a-brac, totally blind to the merits of each piece and in several instances replacing them with entire disregard as to whether they rested on the edge, or on firm foundation. His occupation was interrupted by the return of Vincent, the butler.

"Miss Kathleen is not at home, sir," he announced.

"Quite certain, Vincent?" holding out a treasury bill with a persuasive gesture.

"Quite, sir." Vincent looked offended, but slipped the large tip in his pocket with inward satisfaction. He saw Spencer's crestfallen appearance and thawed. "Julie, the maid, says Miss Kathleen hasn't returned from the Red Cross meeting, sir, but that she's liable to come in 'most any time."

"Well, perhaps--is Mr. Whitney at home?"

"Yes, sir; but I d'assent interrupt him, sir. He's working in his studio."

"Then I'll wait here for a time, at least. Don't wait, Vincent"

"Very good, sir." But Vincent paused irresolutely. His conscience was reproaching him. Miss Kathleen's orders had been very explicit; if Mr. Spencer called to see her father, well and good; if he came to see her, he was not to be admitted.

For six weeks the seesaw had kept up, and Vincent had grown weary of answering the door for Spencer. He had been an almost daily caller, occasionally admitted when Winslow Whitney was downstairs, and always a visitor on Mrs. Winslow's weekly day at home. But these latter visits had profited him nothing. Kathleen never gave him an opportunity to see her alone, and it was the same at dinners and dances to which they were both invited. Spencer had come there that morning fully determined to see Kathleen and, as he expressed it to himself, "have an understanding with her." Having for once gotten by Vincent's relaxed guard, wild horses would not have dragged him away.

Vincent's harassed expression altered to one of relief as he heard the

front doorbell sound, but his feelings underwent a change when he saw Kathleen standing in the vestibule instead of Mrs. Whitney, who had announced that she would return early as she was walking and not using the limousine.

"Any mail for me in the noon delivery?" asked Kathleen, and her smile faded at the butler's negative reply. Why did her letters to England remain unanswered? John Hargraves was the promptest of correspondents, and the question she had asked him required an answer. Preoccupied with her own thoughts, she was about to enter the elevator totally oblivious to Vincent's agitated manner. As she placed her hand on the elevator door, Sinclair Spencer walked into the hall.

"How are you?" he said, his off-hand salutation concealing much tribulation of spirit. Vincent caught one glimpse of Kathleen's face and discreetly vanished.

"Do you wish to see my father, Mr. Spencer?" asked Kathleen, utterly ignoring his outstretched hand.

"No. I came expressly to see you," and his air of dogged determination was not to be mistaken. Kathleen came to a sudden decision.

"Suppose we go into the drawing-room," she suggested. "I can spare you a few minutes." But once in the room she did not sit down. "Why do you wish to see me, Mr. Spencer?"

"To ask you to marry me." Sinclair's usually florid face was white, and his customary self-assurance had departed.

"I thank you for the compliment," with icy politeness, "but I must decline your proposal."

"You--you refuse?" Spencer spoke as in a dream.

"Yes. Surely, Mr. Spencer, you cannot have expected any other answer--cannot have deluded yourself into thinking that I could possibly accept you? I have tried in every means within my power to discourage your attentions."

"But why?" Spencer's air castles were tumbling about his ears, but he stuck to his guns. His affection for Kathleen, fanned by her indifference, had become all-absorbing. Courted and flattered by mothers with marriageable daughters, he had come to believe that he had but to speak to win Kathleen.

"Why discuss the matter further?" asked Kathleen. She heartily wished the scene over; it had not been of her seeking. To wantonly hurt another's feelings was alien to her nature, and that Spencer was suffering his demeanor betrayed.

"I must." Spencer came a step nearer. "Tell me why you refuse me."

"Your habits ..."

"I haven't touched a drop of wine since that dinner at Chevy Chase," triumphantly. "And if you don't approve, I'll not take another drink as long as I live."

"I certainly think it would be better for you to stick to that resolution." Kathleen moved toward the hall door. "I really do not see any object in prolonging this discussion."

"But I do," following her. "I have perhaps startled you by my abrupt manner. I do love you, Kathleen"--his voice shook--"love you better than anybody. I know that I can make you care for me. I have money ..."

"That makes no difference."

"With you, perhaps not," but Spencer looked dubious. "I swear never to touch wine again. I will gratify your every wish"--Kathleen shook her head, and he added heatedly, "What is there about me you don't like?"

"I--I cannot tell--" Kathleen edged toward the door. "It's a case of 'Dr. Fell.'"

"Fell?" Spencer turned red, his self-esteem pricked at last. "Is that another name for Captain Miller?" with insolent significance.

Kathleen stepped back as if struck. "I think it time to end this conversation," she said, but her remark received no attention.

"I see it all now," muttered Spencer. "Captain Miller has won your affection."

"He has not." The contradiction slipped from Kathleen with more vehemence than she intended. Spencer brightened. In endeavoring to convince herself, she had thoroughly convinced him.

"You are not engaged to him?" he asked eagerly.

"Certainly not." Kathleen crimsoned with indignation. How dared Sinclair Spencer catechise her! "I must insist that you leave. And, Mr. Spencer, please remember, I desire that you never again allude to your proposal of marriage."

"But I shall," doggedly.

"Then our acquaintance will cease." Her manner even more than her words roused Spencer to sudden wrath.

"No, it won't," he retorted. "And I will make you--understand--make you reconsider your refusal to marry me. Good morning," and without a backward look he departed.

Kathleen drew a long breath of relief as the front door closed behind him. "Thank God, he's gone," she said aloud, unconscious that her words were overheard. "He is insufferable. I cannot understand why father ever encouraged him to come to the house."

Rapid walking soon brought Spencer to the corner of Seventeenth and H Streets, and hailing a taxicab he gave the chauffeur an address on Nineteenth Street. Fifteen minutes later he was ushered into the presence of Baron Frederic von Fincke.

"And how is the excellent Mr. Spencer this morning?" asked von Fincke genially, offering his guest a chair.

Spencer, however, remained standing and disregarded the question as well as the chair.

"Who is this fellow, Charles Miller?" he asked in his turn.

Von Fincke laughed softly. "Consult your 'Who's Who,' my dear friend; do not come to me, an outsider."

"You know why I come to you," with pointed accentuation. "I am determined to find out Miller's antecedents, and I am convinced you can tell me if you will."

Von Fincke shook his head. "You overrate my powers," he insisted suavely. "I have met Captain Miller as one meets any visitor to this cosmopolitan city. My acquaintance extends no further than our meeting at Miss Grey's dinner at the Chevy Chase Club six weeks ago."

Spencer paused in indecision; for the moment, the foreigner's candid manner disarmed his doubts. "Quite sure you can't find out about Miller?" he persisted.

"I can but question my few friends in Washington; their information of Captain Miller may be of the vaguest. Why do you not apply to Senator Randall Foster? He and the Captain are what you call--inseparable."

"So they are, but I'm not going to Foster for anything."

"No?"

"_No!_" The repetition was almost a roar. Spencer's temper, always uncertain, had been severely tried that morning, and was rapidly giving way under the strain of bitter disappointment. "I ran up against Foster in those Senate lobby charges, and of all the cantankerous--" He paused expressively, then added, "I used to have a high regard for his sagacity and business judgment until he lost his head over that Grey woman. Because she don't choose to be decently civil, he's turned surly. You wait! I'll bring them to time, and Kathleen Whitney also."

"Ah!"

"You may 'Ah!' all you wish, but I am going to marry that girl, in spite of her refusal."

"And how is that to be accomplished if you have not the young lady's consent?"

Spencer thrust his hands deep into his pockets and faced von Fincke resolutely. "She idolizes her father; his word is law to her."

"And you have his consent to the match?"

"Not yet, but I mean to get it; if necessary, by moral suasion."

"Gently, my dear Spencer, gently." Von Fincke held up a warning hand. "Whitney must not be annoyed."

"Indeed?" Spencer eyed his companion suspiciously. "And why not?"

"His invention...."

Spencer's laugh was not pleasant. "How do you know it isn't completed and patent applied for?"

"Is that so?" Von Fincke walked over to his desk and seated himself. "Suppose we sit and talk...."

"No," defiantly. "The time for talking has gone by. You know, I'll bet my last cent that Whitney has patents pending in the United States Patent Office for his invention. All this waiting for him to finish his work is poppy-cock. Why are you protecting Whitney, unless he's your tool?"

Von Fincke laughed. "You have strange ideas. Do sit and let us change the topic of conversation."

"I won't." Spencer strode to the door. "I've done with your dirty work...."

"Tut! tut!" Von Fincke, who had been leaning back in his revolving chair, straightened up. "Your language, my dear friend, can be improved...."

"And so can my knowledge," significantly. "I'm going to investigate Whitney's affairs and his house before I'm much older. Don't bother to ring for a servant," he added, seeing his host's hand hovering over the electric desk bell, and not waiting for an answer, bolted from the room.

Von Fincke's hand descended on the electric bell button with imperative force, and rising he hastened into the hall. He paused at sight of his breathless valet ushering Spencer down the staircase. Not until he was thoroughly convinced that Spencer had left the house did he turn back

from the head of the stairs.

"He grows troublesome, that Spencer," he mused as he made his way to his own suite of rooms.

An hour later Captain Charles Miller turned in at the main entrance of his hotel and went directly to his room on the eighth floor. Humming softly to himself he hung up his overcoat and hat in the closet, and removing his coat placed that also on a hanger. Back once more in his bedroom, he carefully arranged the heavy draperies over his window so that his movements were completely screened, and taking a black silk muffler fastened it securely over the knob of the hall door. The window and door of his private bathroom were likewise draped. Finally satisfied that he was secure from observation and all sound deadened, Miller took from his overcoat pocket four porcelain castors, and dropping on his knees by the side of his brass bed, he deftly inserted them in place of the bed's regular steel castors.

Pausing long enough to clear the toilet articles from his bureau, he lifted from a box-shaped leather bag marked "Underwood" a Massie Rosonophone and deftly installed it on the bureau top. Taking a slight copper wire he attached it to one of the posts of the bed and connected it with the apparatus, making sure that the wire was suspended clear of the ground and surrounding objects. With another suspended wire he grounded the apparatus on the radiator.

At last convinced that all was adjusted properly, Miller moved over to his desk and gazed intently at a large photograph of Kathleen Whitney. It was an occupation of which he never tired. The faint buzz of the alarm bell sent him back to the wireless apparatus, and slipping on his headpiece telephone he picked up his pencil. Listening intently to the dots and dashes, Miller took down the message passing through space.

As he jotted down the last letter and the wireless apparatus ceased to receive, Miller regarded the written coded message before him on his writing pad with deep satisfaction. He was at last in tune with the transmitting station. The code only remained to be solved.

CHAPTER VIII

KAI SER BLUMEN

Miss Kiametia Grey was having her last Tuesday at home before Holy Week, and the drawing-room of her apartment was hardly large enough to hold all her callers comfortably. She was assisted in receiving by several of her friends, and Kathleen Whitney presided over the tea-table.

Kathleen, chatting gayly with first one visitor and then another, was unaware that with the passing of time her eyes strayed more and more frequently to the hall doorway, nor was she conscious that they gained an added brightness on perceiving Captain Charles Miller enter the room.

Owing to the departure of other guests Miss Kiametia contented herself with shaking Miller's hand warmly. "Come and talk to me later," she called, and turned her attention to those waiting to say good-bye. But she was not so absorbed as not to note Miller's progress down the room. From the corner of her eye she saw him stop and speak to Kathleen, accept a cup of tea, and walk over and seat himself on the sofa by Mrs. Whitney. That Mrs. Whitney was pleased by the attention was plain to be seen.

"Hum!" chuckled the astute spinster to herself. "'Always kiss the blossom when making love to the bud' --Captain Miller is nobody's fool."

"Stop looking at Miller," admonished Senator Foster, standing by her

elbow. "Pay attention to me."

"I will, if you will inform me who Miller is," she retorted.

Foster looked at her oddly. "The Pied Piper, judging from the way you women run after him," he grumbled. "Can't a good-looking man come to Washington without being swamped with invitations?"

"Sour grapes!" Miss Kiametia's kind smile took the sting from her words, and Foster, whose looks were his sensitive point, laughed. "You haven't answered my question."

"He brought me letters from the president of a big munitions factory in Pennsylvania," he answered readily. "I gather--mind you I know nothing positively and must not be quoted...."

"Quite so. Well, I'm no parrot." The spinster nodded her head vigorously. "You're safe; go on."

Again Foster hesitated. He knew Miss Kiametia dearly loved a morsel of gossip, but he also knew that she could be trusted not to divulge matters of real importance. He, as well as the other members of the set in which the Whitneys and Miss Grey belonged, had observed Captain Miller's attention to Kathleen, had noted the gradual thawing of her stiff manner to him as the weeks went on, and he believed that Miss Kiametia's questions were prompted by the affection she bore Kathleen. He also was aware that the spinster cordially detested Sinclair Spencer and was secretly elated at Kathleen's indifference to the lawyer's attentions.

"I imagine Miller is here in the interests of the Allies," he said, lowering his voice. "I know that he has entered into negotiations for the purchase of war munitions, and that he is hoping to put through a deal for certain cavalry horses. I am so positive that he is what he represents himself to be that I have given him letters to influential men in my State."

"That possibly explains his many abrupt absences from the city," commented Miss Kiametia sagely. "He has the habit of backing out of dinner engagements at the eleventh hour. But tell me, do you know nothing about the man's family--his character?"

"Not a word. His letter of introduction was good, his business references excellent, and so"--the Senator's gesture was expressive. "I had no idea he would prove such a Beau Brummel when I introduced him to my Washington friends." Foster turned and looked across the room at Miller. "I should judge that he has seen service, his carriage is military."

"He appears to be an American, but he has certain mannerisms"--Miss Kiametia paused and, not completing her sentence, turned her attention to other guests. After their departure she beckoned Foster to join her by the door.

"Captain Miller piques my curiosity," she whispered. "You say you know nothing about his family--I am going to find out about his character now."

"How?" Foster looked mystified. "Where are you going?" as she moved forward. "Remember, what I told you was confidential."

"Trust me," and with a most undignified wink, Miss Kiametia sailed down upon Mrs. Whitney and Captain Miller. "You can't escape me," she said to the latter, as he rose on her approach. "You must come and be victimized."

"In what way?"

"By my latest fad--palmistry. Come, Minna, well go into the library," and laying a determined hand on Miller's arm she led the way into the cozy room, followed by Mrs. Whitney and the highly amused Senator.

Miss Kiametia was a good organizer, and she marshalled her three guests into seats by the library table, placing Miller between herself and Mrs. Whitney.

"Is this a séance?" inquired Kathleen, watching the group from the doorway. Another of Miss Kiametia's receiving party had taken her place at the tea-table.

"Come and lend Captain Miller your moral support," called Miss Kiametia, while his character is being divulged. "No, you are to sit still," as Miller made a motion to rise. "Kathleen can stand behind us and prompt me if my deductions go astray; she knows you better than the rest of us."

Kathleen advanced with lagging steps into the room. She had turned singularly pale, and Miss Kiametia, watching her closely, wondered if she was taking the game seriously. She stopped just back of Miller's chair and rested her hand lightly on Miss Kiametia's shoulder as the latter pulled the electric lamp nearer so that its rays fell full upon Miller's palm.

"Has the size of the hand anything to do with the subject?" asked Miller, as the spinster picked up a magnifying glass.

"Don't make suggestions to the oracle," laughed Foster. "Go ahead, Kiametia."

"Your life line is good," pronounced the spinster, "but as it divides toward the end you will probably die in a country different from that of your birth."

"Any particular time scheduled for the event?" questioned Miller, skeptically, but Miss Kiametia ignored the remark.

"This branch from the head line to the heart"--indicating it with a slender paper-cutter--"denotes some great affection which makes you blind to reason and danger." She paused irresolutely. "Pshaw! I'm reading from the left hand, let me see the other...."

"Isn't the one nearest the heart the surest guide?" inquired Miller.

"It is not," with decision, and Miller, smiling whimsically, extended his hand toward them.

"The right hand of fellowship," he remarked, placing his palm directly under the light.

"My theory is correct." Miss Kiametia shot a triumphant look at Mrs. Whitney. "There are always more lines in the right palm than in the left; and see, here is a wider space between the lines of the head and life--contact with the world, Captain Miller, has taught you self-reliance, promptness of action, and readiness of thought. Hello, what is that on your index finger--a half-moon?"

"Yes." Miller smiled covertly; the spinster's seriousness amused him immensely. "Isn't that according to Hoyle?"

"No, nor according to Cheiro, either," tartly. "Hold your palm steady so that I can see more clearly. It's a scar, isn't it?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Whitney and Senator Foster were closely following Miss Kiametia's words, and neither saw the perplexed frown which wrinkled Kathleen's forehead as she stared down at Miller's right hand. She was distinctly puzzled.

"The strength of your own individuality will carry you over many obstacles," finished Miss Kiametia, giving Miller's hand a friendly tap with the paper-cutter.

"Read mine next," and Foster held out his right hand.

"Haven't time; besides," the spinster's eyes twinkled, "I know your character like a book. What is it, Sylvester?" as her colored butler appeared, card tray in hand. "More visitors? Oh, yes, the Peytons--I particularly want you to know them, Minna; no, you must not think of leaving yet," and with her accustomed energy Miss Kiametia whisked Mrs. Whitney into the drawing-room, Senator Foster following. As Kathleen stepped toward the door, Miller stopped her.

"Don't go," he pleaded, his voice, though low, vibrating with pent-up feeling. "Kathleen, my beloved, don't go."

She placed an unsteady hand on the portiere. "I must," she stammered. "They need me...."

"No, I am the one who needs you. My last chance of happiness lies in the balance. Kathleen, give me a hearing."

Slowly, reluctantly she turned in his direction. "Be wise, leave things as they are...."

"I cannot." Miller was white with the intensity of his emotion. "I love you, love you."

Kathleen's hand crept to her heart as if to still its wild throb.

"Don't, don't"--she looked beseechingly at him. "Have you forgotten..."

"Yes," boldly. "I only realize you are all in all to me."

In the dead silence that followed the ticking of the small desk clock was distinctly audible.

"Why not leave well enough alone?" she begged, a trifle wildly.

"Because I cannot stand it," huskily. "To see you day after day--Will nothing I say convince or move you? Am I outside the pale of affection?"

No answer. In the prolonged silence Miller's self-control snapped, and stepping to her side he drew her in his arms. For a second she struggled to release herself, then her strength gave way and she leaned limply against him.

"I am a fool, a fool to listen to you," she gasped, "but I--I--love you now as I never did before."

With a low cry of unutterable happiness Miller bent his head and their lips met in a passionate kiss.

The hall clock was chiming six when Mrs. Whitney and Kathleen reached home. Not waiting for her mother, Kathleen ran upstairs and shut herself in her own room. Without troubling to switch on the electric lights she made her way to a chair by the window and flung herself into it.

Love, the all-powerful, had conquered reason. Against her better judgment she had pledged her faith to Charles Miller. Her heart throbbed high with hope, and with dreamy, happy eyes she stared out of the window into the darkness. Slowly she reviewed the events of the past six weeks. Never intrusive, yet always by her side and at her beck and call, never at a loss to do and say the right thing, Miller had wooed her in his own masterful way, trampling down prejudice, suspicion, unbelief, until he had gained his heritage--love. The specter of the past was laid--involuntarily Kathleen shivered.

"Is Mademoiselle here?" asked the French maid, peering in uncertainly from the hall door. She had rapped repeatedly and getting no response had gone downstairs to look for Kathleen, only to be told that she was

in her own room.

"Come in, Julie, and turn on the electric switch," directed Kathleen, and blinked as the room was suddenly flooded with light. Without rising she removed her hat-pins and handed her hat and coat to the maid. "Just the blue foulard tonight. What have you there?"

"Some flowers, mademoiselle," handing the box to Kathleen. "Captain Miller left them at the door himself, and seeing me in the hall asked that I give them to you at once." With a Frenchwoman's tact she busied herself in getting out the blue foulard and pretended not to see the blush and smile which accompanied Kathleen's opening of the box. She did not speak again, helping Kathleen with deft fingers to finish her toilet, and then stood back to contemplate the effect. "Will mademoiselle attend the meeting tonight?" she asked.

"No, I am not a member of the Sisters in Unity. I had forgotten the club was to meet here. Perhaps mother will need you now. Don't wait."

But the Frenchwoman lingered. "Mademoiselle," she began. "Mademoiselle."

"Yes, Julie."

"_Pardon_". Turning abruptly, Julie opened the door and glanced up and down the hall, then gently closed and locked it. With equal quietness she bolted the sitting-room door. Watching her with growing curiosity Kathleen saw that her comely face was white and drawn.

"Listen, mademoiselle." The Frenchwoman was careful to keep her voice low-pitched. "I dare to speak tonight--for France."

"For France!" echoed Kathleen.

"France." Julie's tone caressed the word. "My country needs your father's invention--Ah, mademoiselle, do not let him sell it to another."

"He will offer it first to our own Government."

"Will he, mademoiselle? Ah, do not be offended," catching Kathleen's swift change of expression. "I dare speak as I do--for France; think me not disrespectful--but others wait to tempt your father."

"Nonsense!"

"I know what I know, mademoiselle. It has gotten abroad that Mr. Whitney has completed his invention, that tests prove it successful--and, mademoiselle, this house is watched."

Kathleen looked at Julie incredulously. Had the maid taken leave of her senses? Between nervousness and anxiety the Frenchwoman was trembling from head to foot.

"Warn your father, mademoiselle; he will listen to you."

"I will," with reassuring vigor. "Tell me, Julie, what has aroused your suspicion?"

"Many things. When it creeps out that M. Whitney has succeeded, I say to myself--the Germans, they will be interested. And I wait. Then madame engages Henry...."

"Henry? The chauffeur?"

"But yes. I do not like Henry, mademoiselle. He is too much in the house for a chauffeur; I meet him on the stairs, always on his way to the attic with some message to M. Whitney who works in his studio there. He laughs and teases me, that Henry, but wait!" Julie's eyes were blazing. "And that Monsieur Spencer; I trust him not also. Ah, mademoiselle, do not let him be closeted with your father--he is the

younger and stronger man."

"Julie, are you quite mad?" exclaimed Kathleen, her eyes twice their usual size.

"No, mademoiselle. I watch; yes, always I watch and listen. Your father did well to have iron shutters on the windows and new bolts on the door, but he knows not that I am within call--on the other side of the door."

"Upon my word!" Kathleen's brain was in a whirl. Was Julie's mind unbalanced? She knew that the Frenchwoman's fiancé and two brothers had been killed early in the war. Had grief for them and anxiety for her beloved country developed hallucinations? One thing was apparent--it would never do to disagree with her in her overwrought condition. Kathleen laid her arm protectingly about her shoulders and gave her a squeeze. She was very fond of the warm-hearted Frenchwoman.

"Do not worry, Julie. I will see that father takes every precaution to safeguard his invention." She hesitated. "I, too, sympathize deeply with France." "God bless thee, mademoiselle." With a movement full of grace Julie raised Kathleen's hand to her lips, then glided from the room, her slippers making no noise on the thick carpet.

Left alone Kathleen picked up her box of flowers and walked thoughtfully into her sitting-room. Her interview with Julie had depressed her. As she passed her desk she saw a note addressed to her lying on it, but recognizing Sinclair Spencer's handwriting she tossed it down again unopened. It would keep to read later. She walked over to the pier glass and began to adjust the flowers which Miller had sent her. More interested in his note which accompanied his gift, she had at first taken them for violets, but looking more closely at the corsage bouquet she found it contained cornflowers. Again she read his note:

"MY DARLING:

"I send you the harbinger of spring, of hope, of happiness. Ever fondly your lover,

"CHARLES."

Back to Kathleen's memory came a vision of waving wheat in a field on the outskirts of Berlin and scattered among the grain grew the cornflower--_Kaiser blumen_. She raised her hand to her hot cheeks. How came Miller to send her flowers which he knew were connected with that past he so ardently wished forgotten?

CHAPTER IX

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

Whitney scanned the long drawing-room and library beyond in comic despair. The furniture of both rooms, which opened out of each other, had been carried into another part of the house, and in its place were rows on rows of gilt chairs, while in the bow window stood an improvised platform.

"Can I get you a seat, sir?" asked Vincent, placing a pitcher of ice water and tumblers on the speaker's table.

"No, thanks; my days as parliamentarian are over, thank the Lord. I have learned, Vincent, that when the Sisters in Unity hold an election it's safer to be on the other side of the bolted door."

"Yes, sir." Vincent removed a cherished Sevres vase from its customary abiding place on the mantel and tucked it carefully under his arm. "Miss

Kathleen is looking for you, sir. I think I hear her in the hall now, sir," and he hastened into the library as Kathleen stepped into the drawing-room.

"Where have you been since dinner, Dad? I went from the top of the house to the bottom looking for you."

"Had to go over to the drugstore to get a prescription filled. Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes. Come and spend the evening with me," she coaxed.

Whitney laughed. "Can't, my dear. I have important work ahead of me tonight."

"It must wait until tomorrow," coaxingly, stroking his cheek softly. "I don't like these lines, Dad. Your health is more to be considered than your work."

Whitney's air of tolerance turned to one of determination. "You are wrong; my work is of primary importance. It's only a matter of hours now, Kathleen; then I can loaf for the rest of my days."

She shook her head. "Unless you take rest you cannot stand the strain. Mother tells me you worked all last night and far into the morning."

"My brain is clearer at night, and I have always required very little sleep." He frowned with growing impatience. "There is no use discussing the subject." He spoke in a tone which forbade further argument.

"Dad," Kathleen lowered her voice and moved closer to him, "has it occurred to you that--that people are unduly curious about your invention?"

Whitney eyed her keenly. "It has," he admitted tersely, "and I have taken precautions." He stared at the clock and frowned impatiently. "Nearly eight--the meeting will commence soon; let's get out of here."

"Wait, Dad," Kathleen laid a restraining hand on his shoulder. "I cannot bear to think of you alone in the attic--so far away from--"

"Sisters in Unity--the very best of reasons for going to the attic--"

"Let me come with you," eagerly. "I'll bring my own work and not say a word to you. I'm nervous, Daddy, I--I don't want to be by myself tonight--and there's something I want to--to--" her voice broke.

Whitney glanced at Kathleen in surprise. What had come over her?

"Oh, come along," he agreed roughly. "Only remember, I won't be tormented with small talk."

Kathleen's eyes brightened with relief as she accompanied him into the hall. As they appeared the elevator door opened and Mrs. Whitney stepped out into the hall.

"Why, I thought you were lying down, Kathleen; you said that you were too tired to come in later to our club meeting and hear Senator Foster's address on 'Peace,'" she exclaimed, and not waiting for an answer, turned to Whitney. "Can you spare me a moment, Winslow? I wish your advice," and with a quick tilt of her head she indicated the small reception room on the left of the front door. "Come in here."

"Certainly, Minna. Don't wait for me, Kathleen," but the girl paused irresolutely.

"Shall I go to the studio?" she asked.

"No, you cannot get in; the door is locked. Go to your sitting-room and

"I'll stop for you on the way to the studio."

"Honest Injun, Dad?" And her father, nodding vigorous assent, watched her go up the stairs, then with a brisk step entered the reception room.

"How charming you look, Minna!" he exclaimed, in honest admiration.

"You think so?" and Mrs. Whitney dimpled with pleasure. "I do want to win the election tonight--and clothes count for so much in woman's politics."

"I back you to win against all comers," and Whitney gave her shapely shoulder a loving pat as he stooped to kiss her. "What is the matter with Kathleen tonight? Her behavior troubles me."

His wife laughed softly. "She is suffering from an old complaint--she is in love."

"What!" Whitney stared at her in blank astonishment. "With whom?" and sudden, sharp anxiety lay behind the abrupt question.

"I suspect--Captain Miller."

"Miller? That silent--" Whitney checked his impetuous words. "Miller? Good Lord!"

"What can you tell me about Captain Miller?" Her feminine curiosity was instantly aroused at his quick change of expression.

"Just what I have seen of him and nothing more. He never talks of himself."

"Such a relief," sighed Mrs. Whitney. "There is Randall Foster--talks always of his own achievements. Wait until Kiametia Grey marries him. I sometimes wonder...."

"I can't see that we are directly concerned with that romance," broke in Whitney with characteristic impatience. "What's your opinion of Miller?"

"I rather like him; he's very agreeable, good-looking, and seems to have plenty of money...."

"Then you...."

"Favor his suit? Yes," tranquilly.

"But, heavens, Minna, you know nothing about Captain Miller's past."

"You can inquire about it; in fact, I think it is your duty to do so. He calls here entirely too frequently not to be asked his intentions."

"What the--" Whitney reddened angrily and his voice rose. "A nice task you put before me. I dis--"

"Sh!" Rising hurriedly, Mrs. Whitney laid a warning hand on his arm. "There's the bell, and this room is needed for the cloaks. Where is Julie?"

Paying no attention to her husband's apparent desire to say something more, Mrs. Whitney stepped into the hall. Whitney stood in deep thought for a brief moment, then hastened after her, but his hope to slip upstairs unseen was frustrated. Miss Kiametia Grey, enveloped in a heavy fur coat, promptly hailed him and as he stood chatting to her in the hall the front door again opened and Henry, the chauffeur, who had been requisitioned to assist Vincent, ushered in Sinclair Spencer.

"Good evening, Mrs. Whitney," Spencer's loud cheery voice boomed through the hall, and under cover of his jovial manner he scanned Whitney and his wife. Had Kathleen spoken to them of his proposal of marriage that morning and her refusal? "Just dropped in to see your husband, Mrs.

Whitney; hadn't hoped for the pleasure of seeing you. Hello, Whitney. Evening, Miss Grey." But the spinster, with a stiff bow, slipped past the lawyer and into the reception room without seeing his outstretched hand. Spencer's florid complexion turned a deeper tint as he met Henry's blank stare, but a covert glance at the Whitneys convinced him that they had not seen Miss Kiametia's rudeness.

"Do take Mr. Spencer upstairs, Winslow," suggested Mrs. Whitney, as the chauffeur opened the door to admit more guests. "I have a meeting of my club tonight, Mr. Spencer, and therefore..."

"Certainly, certainly; please don't let my presence put you out," with a courteous bow. "Come on, Whitney, let's go up to your studio," and he followed his host into the elevator.

Whitney stopped the car at the first bedroom floor. "We will be far more comfortable in my wife's boudoir than in my studio," he said. "Go ahead, Spencer, first door to your right. I'll stop in my bedroom and get some cigars."

Glancing curiously about the large attractive hall, Spencer entered the daintily furnished boudoir, and was examining the many water colors and photographs which hung on the walls, when Whitney came in carrying a cigar box and a tray containing Scotch and vichy.

"That's some of Kathleen's work," he explained, observing that the lawyer had picked up a miniature of Mrs. Whitney. "She is clever with her brush."

"Very clever," agreed Spencer enthusiastically. "There is no one, Whitney, whom I admire as I do your daughter," drawing a lounging chair near the table on which his host put the tray. "Why does Kathleen avoid me?"

"Does she?"

"She does," with bitter emphasis. "And it cuts--deep."

"You are supersensitive," protested Whitney politely. "I do not for a moment believe Kathleen would intentionally hurt your feelings."

Spencer did not answer at once, and chafing inwardly at being kept from his work in the studio, Whitney glared first at his guest and then at the clock, but the hint was lost.

Suddenly Spencer's right fist came down on the table with a resounding whack. "Kathleen turned me down this morning." Whitney's eyes were riveted on his guest but he said nothing, and Spencer continued earnestly. "I want you to use your influence...."

"No." The monosyllable was spoken quietly, but the gleam in Whitney's eyes was a silent warning. "We will leave my daughter's name out of the discussion. Was there anything else you wished to see me about? If not...." and he half rose.

Instead of answering Spencer lolled back in his chair and, taking his time, lighted a cigar.

"Your note for twenty thousand dollars is due in ten days," he announced. "Are you prepared to take it up?"

There was a protracted pause before Whitney spoke. "Are you willing to let me curtail your note with a payment of five thousand dollars?" he asked.

"No."

Whitney's hand closed spasmodically over the bottle of whiskey, and he was livid with anger as he glared at the younger man. Spencer's good

Looks were marred by signs of recent dissipation, and the coarse lines about his thin lips destroyed the air of refinement given him by his well-cut clothes. Whitney cast a despairing look about the room, at the pretty knick-knacks, pictures, and handsome furniture--all indicated a cultivated woman's taste. How his wife loved her belongings!

With the curtailing of his income through the shrinking and non-payment of dividends, he had drawn upon his principal and--keeping up appearances was an expensive game. Every piece of property that he owned was heavily mortgaged, and every bit of collateral was already deposited to cover notes at his bank. Slowly Whitney's fingers loosened their grip upon the bottle of whiskey.

"Well," and his voice cut the stillness like a whiplash. "What is your pound of flesh?"

Spencer knocked the ash from the end of his cigar into the tray with care that none should fall upon the polished mahogany table top.

"Kathleen might reconsider--eh?" suggestively. "And--eh--there is your invention--_your latest invention_."

It was approaching midnight when Whitney stepped alone into the hall. The hum of voices rose from the room below; evidently Vincent had neglected to close the drawing-room doors, or else the Sisters in Unity needed air. Listening intently, he judged from the direction of the voices that the women had not gone into the dining-room.

Whitney walked toward the elevator, paused, then continued down the hall and without rapping entered Kathleen's sitting-room. But he stopped on the threshold on beholding Kathleen sitting before her desk with her head resting upon its flat top, sound asleep. By her side lay paint box and brushes and a half-completed miniature of Captain Miller. Without disturbing her, Whitney crept softly from the room.

CHAPTER X

SISTERS IN UNITY

It was a very much flurried Vincent who admitted Senator Randall Foster, and helped him off with his overcoat.

"They're still argufying," he said, indicating the closed drawing-room doors with a jerk of his thumb. "I'll get word to Mrs. Whitney, sir, that you have come."

"No, no, don't interrupt the meeting," hastily interposed the Senator. "I may be a few minutes early. Can I see Mr. Whitney?"

"Yes, sir, certainly, sir. Come this way," and Vincent moved toward the elevator shaft. "I don't believe Mr. Whitney has gone to his studio, yet, sir; he never takes anyone there, and I haven't seen Mr. Spencer leave."

"Mr. Spencer?" Foster drew back. "Is he with Mr. Whitney?"

"Yes, sir, so Henry told me."

"After all, I don't believe I'll disturb Mr. Whitney, Vincent. Is there some place I can wait downstairs?"

"Yes, sir, the reception room." The butler led the way to it "I'm afraid, sir, you'll find it very uncomfortable in here, sir," looking at the racks of coats and cloaks, "but"--brightening--"here's a copy of the evening paper; Mr. Whitney must have left it; and this chair, sir--"

"Yes, yes, Vincent, thank you, I'll be all right." Foster took possession of the solitary uncovered chair. "This is an excellent opportunity of reading over my speech. Be sure and let me know, Vincent, the instant I am wanted in the drawing-room."

"Surely, sir. I'll tell Mrs. Whitney that you are here, sir," and Vincent retired.

Inside the closed drawing-room and library the atmosphere was surcharged with electricity. Miss Kiametia Grey, who had locked horns with her opponents on numerous subjects, sat back, flushed and victorious; she was beginning to feel the fatigue incident to having borne the brunt of the discussion, and was secretly longing to have the meeting adjourn to the dining-room where she suspected Mrs. Whitney had provided a bountiful supper. She felt the need of refreshments, if only a Roman punch.

Mrs. Whitney was also feeling the strain. She had designated a sister official to occupy the chair when the nominating speeches were in order, and was awaiting the announcement of the result of the ballot with inward trepidation. Her composed manner and smiling face won Miss Kiametia's admiration; she was herself of too excitable a temperament to keep her equanimity unimpaired, and she watched Mrs. Whitney's calm demeanor and unruffled poise, conscious of her own disheveled appearance. She missed Kathleen; the latter's presence had become an almost virtual necessity to the spinster. Despite the disparity in ages, their tastes were similar, and both had a keen sense of humor. It had added zest to the spinster's enjoyment of the season's gayeties to have Kathleen with her, and she had watched the girl's gradual absorption in Captain Miller with lynx eyes. The obliteration of Sinclair Spencer as a possible suitor had filled her with delight. But she had seen Spencer in the house that very night. What did that mean? What was he there for? Surely, Kathleen had not....

A stir in the back of the room recalled Miss Kiametia's wandering thoughts, and she leaned eagerly forward to hear the report of the chairman of the tellers. Mrs. Whitney was elected and Miss Kiametia had also carried the day. Round after round of hearty applause greeted the announcement, and as it died out the two successful candidates for first and second place in the organization stepped to the platform. But after expressing her thanks, Miss Kiametia again resumed her seat among the members, while Mrs. Whitney took up the duties of presiding officer.

As the regular business of the meeting drew to a close one of the members rose, and on being recognized announced that she had a resolution to offer, and read in a high singsong voice:

"Be it resolved that this organization of Sisters in Unity indorse the peace movement, and that it use its wide influence to check the tendency toward militarism which injudicious and misguided Americans hope to foist upon the American public."

Applause greeted the speaker, and a gray-haired woman across the room demanded recognition from the chair.

"I would like to say a few words in favor of that resolution," she began, finally catching Mrs. Whitney's attention. "Our wars with England, our mother country, were but as the wrangle of relatives. The leaders in the warring nations in Europe today are all related. Let us keep clear of all international entanglements. Let us have peace. Through peace this country has achieved greatness. Peace and prosperity go hand in hand. Peace uplifts; war retards. Militarism is a throw-back to feudal days. On its lighter side, militarism is an appeal for gold lace and brass buttons. A man puts on our uniform because it is a thing of show, in other words, conspicuous..."

"Madam chairman!" Her face flaming, an irate woman arose. "No, I don't care whether I'm in order or not; I will be heard--Mrs. Lutz is quite right, the United States uniform is conspicuous, and has been conspicuous on many a bloody battlefield since 1776. The uniform is honored alike in court and camp in every nation of the world."

As she sat down pandemonium reigned. Instantly Miss Kiametia was on her feet, and her strident call, "Madam chairman, madam chairman," rose repeatedly above the hubbub. Mrs. Whitney pounded for order and gave the spinster the floor.

"I rise to a question of information," explained Miss Kiametia, in tones which echoed through the rooms. "Is this an indignation meeting or an assemblage of Sisters in Unity?" she demanded, and sat down. In the comparative quiet that ensued, the peace resolution was seconded and passed by a small majority.

Mrs. Whitney stepped to the edge of the platform. "Senator Randall Foster has very kindly consented to address us tonight," she said. "So distinguished a lawmaker needs no introduction to this organization. Mr. Senator," as Foster entered through the door held open for him by Vincent, "we invite you to the platform."

Bowing his thanks, Foster joined Mrs. Whitney and immediately began one of those adroit, well-worded addresses which had made him a marked man in the Senate. "I come to you a special pleader," he continued, with growing earnestness, "to spread the gospel of peace. It is your privilege to weld public opinion, and opinion can be as a yoke upon a man's neck. In this free America opinion governs. Jingoism would try to plunge us into war. When a boy is given an airgun, his first impulse is to go out and shoot it off. Arm the men of this country and their impulse will be the same. A small standing army does not tend to militarism; its size does not lend itself to the issuing of imperative mandates; and mandates, ladies, lead to war.

"It is especially a woman's duty to demand peace. In war, upon the woman falls the suffering and the sacrifice. The lover, the brother, the father, the son may find honorable death upon the field, but at home the woman pays. God pity the woman left desolate and alone, her loved ones sacrificed on the altar of militarism!

"And mothers? What of your children and the fate of yet unborn generations? Are they brought into the world to be tools of militarism? Lift up your voice for peace; carry the message, 'Peace on earth' to the very portals of Congress. Make any and every sacrifice, but guard your man child."

As Foster stopped speaking enthusiastic applause broke out, and a rising vote of thanks was given him. As the gratified Senator stepped down from the platform he found himself by Miss Kiametia's side.

"I did it to please you, Kiametia," he whispered, holding her hand tightly. "Have I earned one kind word?"

Miss Kiametia favored him with a quick expressive look and a faint blush.

"You are a staunch friend," she said warmly, and Foster brightened. "Only--only why did you lay such stress on the 'man child'? Nearly all are spinsters in this peace organization."

CHAPTER XI

A MAN IN A HURRY

Heavy clouds hung low and not a star was visible. The darkness was intensified by the gleam of distant city lights, for in that section of Washington lying to the southwest of Pennsylvania Avenue a defective fuse had caused the dimming of every electric light in the vicinity. Far up on one of the roofs a man, crouching behind the meager shelter offered by a chimney, blessed the chance which fortune provided.

Crawling on hands and knees, he cautiously made his way to the edges of the roof, on which he had dropped from the higher building next door, and looked down. His eyes straining in the darkness, every sense alert to danger, he scanned intently each window ledge and cornice. No hope there. Not even a lead pipe or telephone wires afforded a hold for desperate, gripping fingers. Unlike the building adjoining on the south, the new house had no party wall, and a gulf too wide to jump separated it from its northern neighbor. The sheer drop to the garden beneath was suicidal.

The man lay for a few seconds striving to collect himself. He could not return the way he had come. He would be caught like a rat in the trap with the arrival of dawn, if not before. Perhaps his pursuers were on his trail already. The thought spurred his numbed body to action, and lifting his head he glanced along the flat roof. Toward the center of it rose a box-like structure with apparently an arched skylight above it. A little distance away from the structure, he distinguished the outlines of what appeared to be a scuttle. Warily he approached it, and using every precaution to make the least possible sound, he attempted to raise the scuttle. A long sigh of relief escaped him as he succeeded. The scuttle was not locked.

He paused long enough to glance keenly about him. There was no sign of another human being, but a sound smote his ear. Someone was moving on the pebbled roof of the building he had just left. Without an instant's delay he groped about until his feet touched the rung of a ladder, and drawing to the scuttle behind him, he made his way down the ladder.

On reaching the bottom he paused in indecision. He could make out nothing in the inky blackness, and with every sense alive to danger, he waited. But apparently his entrance had disturbed no one, and taking heart of grace, he pulled out a tiny flashlight and pressed the button.

The light revealed a large attic partly filled with trunks and worn furniture. A large wine closet, the bottles shining as the light fell on them through the slat partition, occupied one part of the attic, while a wall partition, with closed door, ran across the entire western side. To his right, the man made out the head of a narrow staircase. He was making his way to the staircase when his acute hearing caught the sound of a softly closing door on the floor below and approaching footsteps.

Casting a hunted look about him, he spied a closed closet door. He doused his light while making his way to the closet, and jerked open the door, at the same time throwing out his right hand, the better to judge the depth of the dark closet. His groping fingers closed on cold steel. His heart lost a throb, then raced madly on, as he clung weakly to the metal. An elevator shaft, and he had mistaken it for prison bars!

For a second his chilled body was shaken with hysterical desire for laughter; then his strong will conquered. He had not forgotten the advancing footsteps. A desperate situation required desperate chances. Stepping back he closed the outer door of the elevator shaft and pressed the button for the elevator. Which would reach him first--the person creeping upstairs or the automatic electric elevator?

CHAPTER XII

A SINISTER DISCOVERY

Mrs. Whitney sat up in bed and contemplated her husband reproachfully as he entered her room.

"Have you been working all night?" she inquired.

Whitney nodded absently as he stooped to kiss her. "Now, don't worry,

dear; work will not injure me. I've just had a cold shower and feel ten per cent better, and all ready for my breakfast. You are the one who looks tired; that's a very becoming cap you are wearing, but you need more color here," pinching her cheek. "I don't like to see you so pale. Were the Sisters in Unity as strenuous as ever?"

"Just about--but, Oh, Winslow, I was elected...."

"That was a foregone conclusion, you modest child." Again Whitney kissed her. "Congratulations, my darling, though why you should want it...."

Mrs. Whitney laughed good-naturedly. "I'm too happy today to argue the question," she broke in.

"Kiametia Grey frightened us all last night by fainting ..."

"Fainting! Kiametia? I thought she was as tough as a horse?"

"So she is usually, but she has been doing too much socially, and late hours do not agree with a woman of her years."

"She isn't so old," protested Whitney.

"She is older than I, and I'm not so young," Mrs. Whitney, whose years sat lightly upon her, jerked a dainty dressing-gown about her shoulders. "Kiametia did faint and when she came to, declared it was the overheated atmosphere of the rooms and the continuous talking which had upset her."

"Well, you must admit, Minna, the Sisters are famous for noisy discussions. Kiametia is generally able to hold up her end of an argument. I am sorry she had to give in to superior numbers," Whitney laughed. "You'll never convince me that she fainted."

"She did, too; and felt so badly that I persuaded her not to go home, but to spend the remainder of the night in our blue bedroom."

"Good heavens!" Whitney gazed blankly at his wife. "Did she--did ..."

"No, she did not stay there," pausing dramatically. "She found Sinclair Spencer sound asleep in the bed." She waited expectantly for her husband's comment, but getting no reply, she burst out, "What was he doing there--how came he to be there?"

"I was foolish enough to offer him whiskey." Her husband seated himself carefully on the edge of the bed, "Spencer had been drinking before he came to see me, and a very little more made him tipsy. I was fearful that if I took him downstairs he would try and break up your meeting, so persuaded him to go and lie down on the bed in the blue room."

"Sometimes, Winslow, for a thoughtful man, you ball things up dreadfully," sighed Mrs. Whitney. "Why did you select that room? You always put your friends in the hall bedroom."

"Never gave the matter of the rooms a thought." Whitney moved restlessly; he hated to see a woman cry, and his wife looked perilously upon the point of tears. In spite of his assertion that he did not miss the loss of sleep, his nerves were not under full control. Ordinarily not a drinking man, he had stopped on his way from his bedroom to help himself to the small amount of Scotch left in the bottle.

"Such a scene as I had with Kiametia," groaned Mrs. Whitney sighing dismally at the recollection. "Finally, I convinced her that I knew nothing of Mr. Spencer's presence, and she consented to sleep in the hall bedroom."

"I'm glad Kiametia discovered Spencer in time." His chuckle developing into a laugh, Whitney rose and walked to the door. "It's no crying matter, my dear. Kiametia will be the first to enjoy the joke."

"If it had been anyone but Sinclair Spencer!" Mrs. Whitney shook her head forlornly. "She has developed an intense dislike for him."

"And Kiametia is usually a woman of discernment." His sarcasm passed unheeded, and he opened the hall door. "Hurry and dress, Minna, I'll wait for you in the dining-room. Heavens! What's that?"

A muffled cry, long drawn out, agonizing, vibrated through the stillness.

Spellbound, husband and wife eyed each other, then Whitney stepped into the hall just as Miss Kiametia tore out of her bedroom.

"What is it?" she demanded. "Oh, stop it, stop it!" clapping her hands over her ears as the cry rose again.

"It comes from the elevator shaft, sir," panted Vincent, appearing up the stairs, Henry, the chauffeur, close at his heels. Without moving, Whitney stared stupidly at the two servants, and it was Henry who laid a trembling finger on the elevator button. As they heard the automatic car come to a standstill on the other side of the closed mahogany door there was a second's pause; then Miss Kiametia, summoning all her fortitude, laid her hand on the door knob and pulled it open. A horrified exclamation escaped her as her eyes fell upon Kathleen, whose bloodless face was pressed against the iron grating of the inner door, to which she was clinging for support.

"Let me out," she pleaded, her eyes dark with horror. "Let me out."

At sight of his daughter Whitney recovered himself. "Stand back, Kathleen," he directed. "Then we can slide open the door." He had to repeat his words twice before she took in their meaning. Releasing her hold upon the grating, she covered her face as if to shut out some terrifying spectacle. As Henry pushed back the door, she collapsed into her father's arms.

"Bring Kathleen in here," called Mrs. Whitney from her doorway, where she had stood, too frightened to move. "There are smelling salts on my bureau. What can have brought on this attack of hysterics, Kiametia?"

"The Lord knows. Perhaps the machinery's out of order and she's been stuck between floors." The spinster, suddenly remembering her extremely light attire, backed toward her room.

Whitney, reentering the hall, caught her words. "Go to Kathleen, Minna; she asked for you," and as his wife turned back into her bedroom, he added, "See if there is anything wrong with the elevator, Henry."

Obediently the chauffeur stepped through the narrow entrance to the elevator and into the steel cage. The next instant he turned an ashy face toward his companions.

"Look!" he gasped. "Look!" And his shaking hand pointed to that part of the elevator concealed by the solid wall of the shaft from the view of those standing in the hall. With one accord they crowded into the elevator, and a stricken silence prevailed.

Crouching on the floor at the far end of the shallow cage was Sinclair Spencer. The rays of the overhead electric lamp, by which the cage was lighted, showed plainly the gash in his throat, while crimson stains on his white shirt added to the ghastly tableau. Death was stamped upon the marble whiteness of his upturned face.

"Good God!" Whitney reeled back and but for Vincent's arm would have fallen.

"Here, sir, sit here, sir," and the butler half lifted him to a chair in the hall. "Go get whiskey, Henry," noting the pallor of Whitney's face. "Quick, man!"

"Telephone for a doctor, Vincent," directed Miss Kiametia, pulling herself together. She had been the first to bolt out of the elevator. "I will stay with Mr. Whitney until you get back," and flashing her a grateful look, the butler, relieved to have responsibility taken from his shoulders, fled downstairs after Henry.

Miss Kiametia laid trembling hands on Whitney's bowed shoulders.

"It's awful, Winslow," she stammered. "Awful!"

As he paid no attention to her, but stared vacantly at the floor before him, she paced to and fro, always careful, however, never to go in the direction of the elevator. The exercise brought back some semblance of self-control, and her eyes were beginning to take on their wonted snap when Whitney rose unsteadily and stepped toward the elevator. Miss Kiametia's voice stopped him on its threshold.

"I wouldn't go in there again," she advised. "Wait until the coroner comes."

"The coroner?" staring stupidly at her.

"Yes, hadn't you better send for him?"

Whitney's hands dropped to his side with a hopeless gesture. "The coroner," he muttered. "God help us!"

"Winslow!" Mrs. Whitney appeared in the doorway, tears streaming down her white cheeks. "Kathleen is completely unnerved; come and help me quiet her."

At that moment Henry arrived, tray in hand. "I couldn't find the whiskey, sir," he explained, breathless with hurry. "But here's some cognac, sir. Let me pour it out," and he handed a filled liqueur glass to Whitney, who swallowed the stimulant at a gulp.

"Shouldn't mind having some of that myself," announced Miss Kiametia. "Bring the tray here, Henry," walking over to a table. "And, Winslow, take a glass to Kathleen; it will do her good. Henry, did Vincent telephone for the doctor?" she added below her breath, as Whitney and his wife disappeared in the latter's bedroom and closed the door.

"Yes, Miss Grey, but he was out. So Vincent rang up the hospital and the coroner."

"Good." Miss Kiametia debated a moment whether or not to take more cognac, and ended by refilling her glass. "Stay right in this hall, Henry; don't leave it for a moment until the doctor comes. I'm going in to dress."

As the door closed behind the spinster, Henry stood in deep thought, then pouring out a glass of cognac he hastily drank it. Setting down the glass, he tiptoed over to the elevator, but one look at the still figure crouching with head thrown back and sightless eyes turned to the ceiling sent him back into the center of the hall. Drawing out his handkerchief, he mopped his damp forehead.

From Mrs. Whitney's bedroom came the murmur of voices, and Henry, darting a quick, searching look about the empty hall, slipped over to the door and applied his ear to the keyhole. The sound of approaching footsteps and voices warned him of the arrival of the physician, and when Vincent appeared, followed by two men, he was standing on guard near the elevator shaft.

A quick word of explanation sufficed, and then the younger of the newcomers entered the elevator. He recoiled at sight of Spencer, then advancing tested the dead man's pulse and heart.

"This is a case for you, Penfield," he exclaimed backing out into the

hall, and without a word the coroner took his place beside Spencer. The young physician turned to Vincent. "Didn't you tell me that someone was ill and required medical assistance? Mr. Spencer is dead; I can do nothing for him."

Without answering, Vincent tapped on Mrs. Whitney's door, and Whitney's voice bade him enter. "Dr. Hall, sir," announced the butler. "Want him to come in, sir?--Yes, sir; this way, Doctor," and he pulled to the door after the physician. The elevator drew Vincent's eyes as a magnet draws steel, and he started violently at sight of the coroner beckoning to him from its entrance.

"Call up Police Headquarters," directed Penfield. "Tell them I am here, and ask to have Detective Mitchell and three plain-clothes men sent over at once. Be quick about it," and his peremptory tone caused the agitated butler to hasten his usually leisurely gait. Henry started to follow him, but the coroner called him back. "Explain to me exactly what happened when Mr. Spencer was found," he said, stepping into the hall.

The tale lost nothing in Henry's telling, and Penfield was gnawing his fingernails, a trick he had if perplexed, when Vincent escorted the detective and plain-clothes policemen into the hall. The coroner rose with alacrity.

"Glad you could come, Mitchell," he said. "Let me put you in possession of all facts so far known," and he repeated all that Henry had told him. Mitchell listened in silence; only the gleam in his eyes attested his interest, as his face remained expressionless. And that gleam deepened as he stepped into the elevator and examined Spencer. When he came out he was wrapping his handkerchief around a knife. Exchanging a glance with the coroner, he turned to Vincent.

"Show my men over the house," he directed, "and you," addressing Henry, "inform Mr. Whitney that Coroner Penfield and I would like to see him at once."

"I am here." Whitney, who had entered the hall unnoticed a second before, joined the group. "What can I do for you?"

"Answer a few questions," and Penfield, observing the strain under which he was laboring, pushed a chair in his direction. "Sit down, Mr. Whitney." He turned back to Henry. "You need not wait," and the chauffeur reluctantly went down the stairs. The coroner waited an appreciable moment before again speaking to Whitney. "Was Mr. Spencer visiting you?" he questioned.

"Only for the night."

"When did you see him last?"

"About midnight."

"And where was that?"

"In the bedroom across the way," pointing to it, and the detective crossed the hall and entered the room, the door of which was closed.

"And what was Mr. Spencer doing the last time you saw him?" asked the coroner, with quiet persistence.

"Falling asleep," tersely. "Spencer was drunk," added Whitney after a pause. "His behavior led me to believe that he would intrude upon my wife's guests if he went downstairs, so I suggested that he spend the night here." Whitney drew a long breath, "Is Spencer really dead?"

"Yes."

Whitney shrank back in his chair; he had aged in the past hour, and he was conscious that his hands were trembling. "I feared so," he muttered,

"I feared so. Can"--clearing his throat--"can Spencer be moved?"

"Not just yet; there are certain formalities to be gone through with first." Penfield paused to make an entry in his notebook. "Of course, there will be an autopsy--at the morgue. Oh, Mitchell," as the detective returned, "have you any questions to ask Mr. Whitney?"

Before answering the detective drew up a chair near Whitney. "I am told your daughter's screams aroused the household," he said. "Can I see Miss Whitney?"

"No, you must wait until she is composed; the doctor is just administering an opiate," replied Whitney hastily. "Kathleen has been through a most harrowing experience."

"I see." Mitchell drummed impatiently on the arm of his chair. Whitney eyed the two men askance. Their manner, combined with the events of the morning, was telling on him. At any price he must break the silence--he could endure it no longer.

"I wish to God," he exclaimed, "Spencer had chosen any other spot to kill himself in than our elevator!"

The coroner was the first to reply. "The wound was not self-inflicted."

"What!" Whitney sprang to his feet. "Do you mean--Spencer was murdered?"

"Yes." Both men never moved their gaze from Whitney's ashen face. "Were all members of your family on good terms with Mr. Spencer?"

"They were," Whitney moistened his parched lips, and only the detective caught his furtive glance behind him.

"Did anyone beside your immediate family spend last night in this house, Mr. Whitney?" he asked.

"No--yes," confusedly. "Miss Kiametia Grey...."

"Winslow"--Mrs. Whitney, fully dressed, stepped into the hall from her boudoir. "Pardon me," with a courteous inclination of her head as the coroner and Mitchell rose. "Winslow, I've asked the servants, and they tell me she has disappeared...."

"She? Who?" chorused the three men.

"Julie, my French maid."

CHAPTER XIII

HIDE AND SEEK

Charles Miller was generally an early riser, but the head waiter at the Metropole was surreptitiously scanning his watch before giving the signal to close the dining-room doors, when the Captain walked in and took his accustomed seat at a distant table. Miller had but time to glance at the headline, "Stormy Cabinet Meeting Predicted at White House Today," in his morning newspaper, when eggs and toast were placed before him. His attentive waiter poured the hot coffee and placed cream and sugar in his cup without waiting for instructions.

"Eggs all right, sir?" he asked anxiously, a trace of accent in his pleasant voice.

"Yes, thanks." Miller looked at him casually. "I haven't seen you before; where's Jenkins?"

"Transferred to the café, sir," smoothing a wrinkle out of the tablecloth as he spoke. "I'll try to give satisfaction, sir."

Miller nodded absently. "Oh, it's all right," he said, stifling a yawn, and propping his newspaper against his coffee pot, ate his breakfast leisurely, so leisurely that the other habitués of the hotel had finished their breakfast and departed before he pushed back his chair. Turning, he signed to his waiter to bring his check, and not appearing to do so, watched his approach with keen interest.

"Been a steward, haven't you?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir." The waiter pocketed the tip with alacrity. "Hamburg-American Line, sir."

"Thought so." Miller signed his name with careful attention to each stroke of the pencil. "How many of you are employed here?"

"Eight, sir. The lines are tied up; we must have work, and it's hard to get good berths, sir, with so many ships interned."

"Quite so," Miller rose. "Your name--?"

"Lewis. Just a moment, sir," as Miller started to cross the deserted dining-room, "Shall I reserve the table for you for luncheon, sir?"

"Luncheon?" Miller reflected. "I rather think not."

"Thank you, sir." The waiter's manner was apologetic. "I asked, sir, because, sir, today the Cabinet officers lunch here, and..."

"They require your undivided attention?" mildly. "I quite understand--Ludwig." Their eyes met, then Miller turned on his heel. _"Auf wiedersehen"_ he exclaimed under his breath, and the waiter's stolid expression changed to one of relief.

Miller, who had checked his overcoat and hat before entering the dining-room, wasted no time but entered a public telephone booth. When he emerged he was whistling cheerily, and the doorkeeper watched him hail a street car with curious eyes.

"Always running in and out," he muttered. "It beats me when he sleeps."

First stopping at a florist's and then a jeweler's establishment, Miller bent his footsteps toward the Portland, and to his satisfaction found Senator Foster enjoying a belated breakfast in his apartment.

"I'm glad to discover a man keeping later hours than I" he remarked, accepting the chair Foster pulled forward. "You must have an easy conscience to sleep so late in the morning."

"Or enjoyed the devil of a night--er--mare." The Senator's face was flushed and his strong voice husky. "You mistake; this is luncheon, not breakfast. Keep me company? No?" Foster pecked viciously at his lamb chop. "I've no appetite at all. Caught a beastly cold at the Sisters in Unity meeting last night. Cough all the time--beastly climate, Washington."

"Why stay here?"

"Oh, Congress...."

"But that adjourned three weeks ago."

Foster frowned, then smiled. "A woman's whim--we are not always independent, Miller"--a shrug completed the sentence. "Change your mind and have some Scotch?"

"No, thanks." Miller drew his chair closer to his companion, and lowered

his voice. "I called this morning, Senator, to ask some questions about Winslow Whitney."

Foster's smile vanished, and the glance he shot at Miller was sharp.

"It depends on the questions," he began stiffly, "whether they are answered or not."

"Quite right," with unruffled composure. "I shall ask nothing which cannot be answered with propriety." Miller ceased speaking to light a cigarette. "All Washington knows Whitney is a man of wealth"--his keen eyes detected the sudden alteration in Foster's expression--"of standing in the social and business world, but has he achieved success as an inventor?"

"Yes," was the instant and unqualified response, and Miller's eyes lighted, but it was some seconds before he put another question.

"Are you familiar with his latest invention?"

"You mean his camera for use in aeroplanes?"

"Yes. Do you think it has any hope of success?"

"I believe so; Whitney declares the experiments are entirely satisfactory."

"Have you seen results of the tests?"

"Whitney showed me views of New York City and its environs taken from an aeroplane. They were--wonderful--" the Senator puffed nervously at his cigar--"perfect maps."

"Indeed?" Miller made no effort to conceal his eager curiosity. "At what height were they taken?"

"Ah, that I do not feel at liberty to disclose. How, when, and where this new camera can be utilized is of interest to all military men; but as Whitney's friend, I could not divulge details he may desire kept secret, even if I knew them."

"Pardon me, I thought you his most intimate friend...."

"I am, but not his confidant. And as his friend, I cannot discuss his private affairs with you."

"I don't agree with you there." Miller tossed his cigarette stub into the iron grate. "Would it not be a friendly act to place Whitney in a position to coin money?"

"Ah, so that is why you take an interest in his invention?" Foster laid down his cigar and contemplated his companion closely. "You wish to buy ..."

"Exactly."

"Is the purchaser to be the same for whom you are collecting horses and ammunition?"

"Yes."

Foster did not answer at once, and Miller, without seeming to do so, took silent note of the handsome appointments of the dining-room. The silver service on the sideboard, the cut-glass decanters and liqueurs seemed somewhat out of place in a bachelor apartment. Somewhat puzzled, Miller looked more fully at his host, hoping to find an answer to his unspoken doubts. Careful of his dress, deportment, and democracy, Foster had early gained the sobriquet "Dandy," but there was nothing effeminate in his spare though muscular form, and his long under jaw indicated bull-dog

obstinacy. Confessing to fifty, Foster did not look his age by ten years.

"I shall have to ponder your question, Miller." As he spoke Foster rose. "Frankly, I've been striving to interest our Government in Whitney's invention, and that is one of the things which has kept me in Washington. Suppose we go and see Whitney now. I know that he is anxious to dispose of his invention--he is hard pressed for money,"

"Indeed!" The pupils of Miller's eyes contracted suddenly. "Possibly Whitney will give me a hearing, and I need not offer"--he stopped, looked at his cigarette case, returned it to his pocket, and followed Foster out of the room--"a large sum," he finished, helping the Senator into his overcoat.

Foster laughed shortly. "You will get no bargain. Whitney's politeness is on the surface; underneath he is as hard as nails, and suspicious--" The Senator's cough cut short his speech and echoed down the corridor as he closed the door to his apartment. "Won't even let me look at the camera, much less let me examine the lens, specifications, drawings, plate, et cetera. In fact, refused to give me any details, although he knows I must have the information so as to interest others in his invention."

"But surely he has had the camera tested thoroughly?"

"Oh, yes. It has leaked out that the lens is so powerful and the mechanical parts of the camera so perfect that maps of the country taken at a remarkable height depict fortifications to the minutest detail. No one knows the method employed to bring about such a result. That is the secret locked inside Whitney's studio and his brain. Whitney is a genius, and unlike others of his ilk, is extremely modest about his own achievements. He covers his real nature under a mantle of eccentricity. I doubt if his wife and daughter really gauge his capabilities." A violent fit of coughing interrupted him, and he did not speak again for some minutes. As the elevator reached the ground floor, Foster saw his chauffeur standing near the office. "My car at the door?" he asked, as the man approached.

"Yes, sir," touching his cap. "Will you drive, sir?"

"Not today, too much cold, don't want pneumonia. Jump in, Miller." Foster signed to him to enter first. "Take us to the Whitneys', Mason," he directed, and sprang into the tonneau.

Five minutes later they stopped in front of the Whitney house, and directing his chauffeur to wait, Foster accompanied Miller up the steps, but before either could touch the bell, the door was opened by Vincent whose white face brightened at the sight of the Senator.

"Step right in, sir," he begged. "The master was just telephoning for you, sir." Vincent paused and looked doubtfully at Miller. "Did you wish to see Miss Kathleen, sir?"

"Yes," taking out his visiting card.

"Miss Kathleen is sick in bed." Vincent appeared still more confused, but Foster, standing somewhat in shadow, caught Miller's look of alarm which the butler missed.

"What is the matter with Miss Kathleen?" demanded Miller, and there was no mistaking the feeling in his voice and manner.

"She had a shock, sir, a most awful shock." While speaking Vincent tiptoed toward the library; he felt that he could never make a loud noise in that house again. "An awful shock," he repeated. "We all felt it."

"What do you mean?" Foster laid an impatient hand on the old servant's shoulder.

"Why, sir, he's dead...."

"Whitney?" The question sprang simultaneously from Foster and Miller.

"No, no, sir. Mr. Sinclair Spencer, sir. He was murdered"--Vincent shuddered as the last word crossed his lips.

His hearers stared stupidly at each other, and then at the butler. "Who murdered him?" asked Miller, the first to recover speech.

"We don't know--they say Julie; leastways we only know for positive that Miss Kathleen was with him ..."

Miller turned first white then red, and an angry gleam lit his eye as he stepped nearer the agitated servant.

"That will do. Go tell Mr. Whitney we are here," and his tone caused Vincent to hurry away in deep resentment.

Foster gazed dazedly at Miller. "What can have happened?" he asked. "Was Spencer so foolish as to bait Winslow ..."

"Careful," cautioned Miller, his quick ear detecting a footstep in the adjoining drawing-room. An instant later Miss Kiametia Grey stepped into the library.

"Thank goodness you have come," she exclaimed, darting toward Foster. "I've wanted you so much ..."

"My darling"--Foster, forgetful of Miller's presence, clasped her hand in both of his.

"There--there--this isn't any time for sentiment," and Miss Kiametia's chilly tone recalled the Senator to the fact that they were not alone. Looking a trifle foolish, he dropped her hand and stepped back.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, coldly. "You said you needed me."

"Well, so I do, as legal adviser," with unflattering emphasis. "Good morning, Captain Miller; I did not recognize you at first. I suppose you have both heard of Sinclair Spencer's tragic death."

"Yes, but none of the particulars," answered Miller. "And also that Kathleen is ill. Do tell me how she is," and though he strove to conceal his anxiety, his manner betrayed his emotion to the sharp-eyed spinster.

"The doctor gave her an opiate," she said quickly. "She will be herself again when she awakes. Her condition does not worry me." She hesitated, shot a quick furtive look at Miller's intent face, and added: "But I am alarmed by the mystery surrounding Sinclair Spencer's death."

"Tell us the details," urged Foster.

"Details," echoed the spinster. "There are none. We were awakened this morning by Kathleen's screams, rushed into the hall and found her in the elevator with Sinclair Spencer's dead body. She appeared completely unstrung, could make no coherent statement, and when the doctor came, was given an opiate." She paused and looked hopelessly at the two men. "We know no more of the murder than that."

"We must wait until Kathleen awakens," said Whitney, and Miss Kiametia started violently at the sound of his voice; so absorbed had the others been in her remarks that his quiet entrance a few minutes before had passed unnoticed. "I trust that she will then be more composed."

"Did she say nothing to you and Minna when you were with her before the doctor arrived?" questioned Miss Kiametia, smothering her eagerness with difficulty.

"Nothing that made sense." Whitney ran his fingers through his gray hair

until it stood upright. "She babbled Spencer's name, alternating with the moaning cry, '_Kaiser blumen_.'"

"'_Kaiser blumen!_' What in the world--" The spinster checked her hasty speech on catching sight of Detective Mitchell loitering just inside the library door. "Do you want to see Mr. Whitney?" she asked, raising her voice a trifle, and all turned to face the detective as he advanced toward them. Bowing gravely to Senator Foster and Captain Miller, Mitchell stopped opposite the spinster, but his first remark was directed to Whitney.

"Your wife tells me, sir, that the French maid, Julie, has been in your employ over four years."

"She has," acknowledged Whitney, making no effort to conceal his impatience. "Will you kindly postpone your questions, Mitchell, until later; I desire to converse with my friends now."

"I will intrude but a moment longer." Mitchell slipped one hand inside his coat pocket. "When will it be convenient, sir, for you to take me into your studio?"

Whitney looked at the detective as if he did not believe his ears.

"Why the devil should I take you through my studio?" he thundered, his anger rising. "I take no one there--you understand, no one."

"Pardon me, these are exceptional circumstances. As an officer of the law it is my duty to examine the entire premises where a crime has been committed. On reaching your attic, I found the door leading to your studio locked, and I have come downstairs, sir, to ask you to take me into that room."

"And I absolutely refuse."

"In that case, sir," there was a steely glint in Mitchell's eyes which betokened trouble, "I shall send for a locksmith and have the bolt forced."

"Wait," Foster laid a restraining hand on Whitney's shoulder as the latter made a hasty step in the detective's direction. "I assure you, Mitchell, that the so-called studio is Mr. Whitney's workshop; he is, as you no doubt know, an inventor." Whitney opened his mouth to speak, then closed his jaws with a snap. "Mr. Whitney is now engaged upon a most important invention. It is quite natural that he does not wish...."

"It is hardly a matter of wishes, Mr. Senator," broke in Mitchell. "A murder has been committed here, and it is imperative that everything be done to apprehend and convict the criminal."

"Ha!" Whitney's snort was almost a triumphant challenge. His altered demeanor did not escape the shrewd eyes watching him so keenly. "So you think I murdered Spencer?"

"I have not said what I think," retorted the detective brusquely. "Come, sir, we are wasting time; take me over your studio at once."

Whitney's haggard face reddened with anger; twice he opened and shut his mouth, then thinking better of his first impulse, he turned on his heel.

"Follow me," he directed ungraciously. As he stepped toward the doorway he looked back and encountered Miller's intent gaze. The Captain's gray eyes, their devil-may-care sparkle dampened by anxiety for Kathleen, broad forehead, and firm mouth inspired confidence. He looked a man whose word could be relied on. Whitney, harassed by conflicting doubts, and agonizing apprehensions, acted on impulse. "Come with us, Captain. We'll be right back, Kiametia; you and Foster wait for us here."

By common consent the three men avoided the elevator and walked up

stairs. On reaching the attic, Whitney made at once for his studio and inserting keys in the double lock turned the wards, and opened the door.

"Go in," he said, and waited until the two men had preceded him in the room, then entered and closed the door, shooting the inner bolt. The detective looked around as the faint click of the metal caught his ear. "Force of habit," explained Whitney. "Hurry and make your examination, Mitchell; I wish to rejoin my friends downstairs as quickly as possible. Have a seat, Captain?"

But Miller declined, and stood watching Mitchell as he made a thorough search of the apartment. Nothing escaped his attention, and such furniture as the room boasted was minutely scrutinized, even the Cooper Hewitt lights and cylinder arc lights being switched on to assist in the examination. Models, large sink, darkroom, cabinets, tool chest, drawing tables, and small chemical laboratory were subjected to a thorough search. Miller's silent wonder grew; nowhere did he perceive a model resembling a camera, or the camera itself.

Whitney, sitting astride an ordinary wooden chair, followed the detective's movements with sardonic amusement, which now and then found vent in a grim smile. Whitney's expression was not lost upon Miller, who, finding him a more interesting study than Mitchell, watched him intently while appearing to be deeply engaged in examining an elevator model.

"Isn't this the design copied in building your elevator, Mr. Whitney?" he asked.

"Yes; that is the model I made when the elevator was built. It was one of the first installed in a private residence in Washington."

"It is somewhat different from others that I have seen," commented the detective, replacing a bottle carefully on a shelf. "The cage is so very shallow in depth and so long in width."

"I had to cut my coat according to my cloth," curtly. "This house is very old and the outer walls are of unusual thickness, also the inner ones, which accounts for the peculiar shape of the elevator. The brick shaft had to be built to conform to the walls and staircase. I also invented that safety air brake catch," he added, as Miller ran the elevator to the top of the shaft and released the cage with a sudden jerk. The elevator slipped down a flight, then automatically adjusted itself and stopped.

"A clever idea," said Miller admiringly. "When I first used your elevator, Mr. Whitney, I was struck by its unexpected capacity to hold six people. Its shallowness is deceptive."

"That's so." Whitney stared at the clock suggestively. "Kathleen, as a child, used to slip in unseen, and as the majority of the people enter the elevator facing the floor button plate with their backs to where she stood, she gave her governesses many scares."

The detective stopped to examine the elevator model carefully, and pressed the button marked "Attic." "Persons entering the elevator instinctively pull to the inner door with their left hand and push the floor button with the right, and they would be standing with their backs to where Spencer lay," he said.

"And anyone could have started the elevator without knowing of his presence," put in Miller softly, and the detective nodded assent.

"You have no floor indicator connected with the elevator, Mr. Whitney," commented Mitchell thoughtfully.

"No." Whitney rose abruptly. "Finished your search?" Not waiting for a reply he prepared to leave, and a covert sneer crossed his lips as he asked, "Found anything criminal?"

"Only these bottles," indicating the shelves near the laboratory.

"There's enough poison here to kill a regiment."

"And only for use in photography," Whitney busied himself in adjusting shades which the detective had raised or lowered the better to see the room. "Rather a commentary on the laws governing the sale of poisons, Mitchell; can't buy them at a druggist's, but any man, woman, or child can go into a photographic supply store and buy any quantity of deadly poison and no questions asked."

"Perhaps," was Mitchell's sole comment, as he removed a stopper from a blue glass bottle and sniffed at its contents.

"Hm! You are of an inquiring turn of mind." Whitney's eyes contracted suddenly. "May I remind you that Spencer, whose death you are investigating, was stabbed."

"With a dull knife," answered Mitchell, setting down the bottle. "And it must have taken muscular force to drive the knife home."

Whitney was suddenly conscious of both men's full regard, and his thin, wiry figure stiffened. His eyes snapped with pent-up feeling.

"Is a man to be convicted of crime because it is physically possible for him to commit murder?" he demanded harshly, and not waiting for an answer unbolted the door. "I fear, Mitchell, you have wasted both my time and yours. Remember this, sir." He stepped directly in front of the detective. "Those making a charge must prove it. Now go."

CHAPTER XIV

A QUESTION OF LOYALTY

Miss Kiametia Grey waited until the sound of Whitney's, Miller's and the detective's footsteps had died away down the hall before addressing Senator Foster.

"Suppose we sit over there," she suggested, indicating a large leather sofa, and not waiting for his assent, walked over to it and seated herself.

The sofa stood with its back to one of the windows, and from its broad seat its occupants would have a complete view of the attractive library with its massive furniture, huge old-fashioned chimney, and bookcase-lined walls. Foster, following Miss Kiametia, was startled by a glimpse of her face as she stepped into the sunlight whose merciless rays betrayed the new lines about her closely compressed lips. A touch of rouge enhanced her pallor. Suddenly conscious of his intent regard she seated herself, turning her back squarely to the light.

"Sit there," she exclaimed pettishly, pointing to a Morris chair which stood close to the sofa. "I prefer to have the person I'm talking to face me." Without remark Foster made himself comfortable, first, however, pulling down the shade to protect his eyes from the glare of sunlight.

"We can't be overheard," began Miss Kiametia. "At least I don't think we can," and her sharp glance roved inquiringly about the room. "What was Sinclair Spencer doing in that elevator?"

"Going downstairs," hazarded the Senator, "or up."

"Or waiting."

"Eh?" Foster shot a quick look at her. "Waiting? What for?"

"That is what we have to discover," and Miss Kiametia sat back and folded

her hands.

"Yours is hardly a reasonable supposition. People do not usually wait in elevators, Kiametia."

"There's no law against it," was her tart reply. "I have very good reason to believe Spencer was not going out of the house."

"May I ask what that reason is?"

"He wore no shoes," and for an instant a smile hovered on her lips as she caught his startled expression. She was woman enough to enjoy creating a sensation, and it was not often that she surprised the Senator.

"Is that so!" he exclaimed thoughtfully. "That puts a somewhat different complexion on the matter."

"It does. Why was Sinclair Spencer gallivanting about this house in his stocking feet?"

Foster played with his watch chain. "Upon my word, I don't know," he replied at last.

"Well, you might hazard a guess." But Foster's only answer was a negative shake of his head. "Pshaw! use your imagination--suppose Spencer was unduly inquisitive about Winslow's invention--"

"Stop, Kiametia!" Foster held up a warning hand. "You are treading on dangerous ground. Be sure of your facts before suggesting that a man of Winslow's known integrity is involved in--murder."

"How you men do jump at conclusions," grumbled Miss Kiametia. "I believe Julie, the maid, killed Spencer because she found him snooping around where he had no business to be."

"Why should the maid play watchdog?"

"Because she's French, stupid; and I believe, firmly believe, Sinclair Spencer was in the pay of Germany. Both he and the maid were after Winslow's invention, one to steal, the other to protect."

"You have astonishing theories." Foster leaned back and regarded her in silence, then resumed, "Suppose you give me an exact account of what transpired this morning."

He listened with rapt attention to the spinster's graphic description of the finding of Kathleen and Sinclair Spencer in the elevator.

"Strange, very strange," he muttered, as she brought the recital to an end. "How did Kathleen come to enter the elevator without seeing its occupant?"

"You take it for granted that Spencer was dead at that time?" asked the spinster.

A look of horror crept into Foster's eyes. "Kiametia, what do you mean to insinuate? Your question implies--"

"Nothing," hastily. "I only want you, with your sane common sense, to kill an intolerable doubt. Kathleen cannot--cannot know anything of this crime."

"If you doubt, why not ask Kathleen how and when she came to be in the elevator with Spencer's dead body?"

"Kathleen is still under the effects of the opiate, and you heard what Winslow said a few minutes ago about her behavior before the physician's arrival."

"Don't worry." Foster laid a soothing hand on hers. "Kathleen's condition is not surprising under the circumstances; the shock of finding Spencer's dead body was quite enough to produce hysteria and irrational conduct. When herself, her explanations will clear up the mystery. Therefore, why harbor a doubt of her innocence?"

"If you had seen the expression of her eyes," exclaimed Miss Kiametia. "It betrayed more than shock and horror. If ever I saw mental anguish depicted, a naked soul in torment, I saw it then. God help the child!" She paused and stared at Foster. "Why should Kathleen betray such emotion? Sinclair Spencer was less than nothing to her."

"He was very attentive," said Foster slowly. "I have even heard it reported last fall that they were engaged."

"Engaged? Fiddl esticks!" Miss Kiametia's head went up in a style indicative of battle. "Imagine Kathleen caring for a man who openly boasted he had held the best blood of America in his arms--she isn't that kind of girl!"

"Come, Spencer wasn't so unattractive," protested Foster. "I hold no brief for him; in fact, some of his business transactions were shady; but upon my word, he was exceedingly good-looking, and if I remember rightly, you encouraged him to come to your apartment."

"I've done some remarkably stupid things occasionally," said Miss Kiametia composedly. "That was one of them."

"Kiametia!" called a voice in the hallway, and the next moment the portières parted and Mrs. Whitney walked into the library. "Oh, there you are, my dear; I feared you had gone. I am so glad to see you, Senator," clasping Foster's extended hand warmly. "Winslow and I both hoped you could come to us. We want your advice."

"I am entirely at your disposal." As he spoke, Foster dragged forward a comfortable chair. "Sit here, Mrs. Whitney; you look quite done up," and his sympathetic tone and manner brought tears to her hot, tired eyes.

"It is such a comfort to see two such dear friends," she said, looking gratefully at them. "And to talk to you openly, away from those dreadful detectives. I haven't had an opportunity to speak privately to Winslow. Detective Mitchell is his shadow."

"A little brief authority," Foster shrugged his shoulders. "How is Kathleen?"

"Sleeping, thank God!" Mrs. Whitney lowered her voice. "I really feared for her reason before the doctor came. I could not soothe her, or quiet her wild weeping." She stopped to glance hastily over her shoulder. "Vincent said something about Captain Miller having called--is the Captain here?"

"He has gone upstairs with your husband and Detective Mitchell," answered Foster. "Tell me, Mrs. Whitney, was Sinclair Spencer visiting you for any length of time?"

"Oh, no; his stopping here last night was quite unexpected; in fact so unexpected to me that I accidentally put Kiametia in the same room with him."

"I didn't stay there," hastily ejaculated the spinster, crimsoning. "The moment I saw him in bed, I fled."

"Was he asleep?" questioned Foster; Miss Kiametia had not told him these details in her description of events at the Whitney residence.

"I presume so; his eyes were closed--thank goodness!" she added under her breath, and quickly changed the subject "Any news of Julie's whereabouts, Minna?"

"Apparently not; I telephoned to Police Headquarters half an hour ago, and the desk sergeant said they had found no trace of her."

"Where is your maid's bedroom, Mrs. Whitney?" asked Foster.

"She rooms with the cook on the third floor."

"What does the cook say about Julie's disappearance?"

"She is as mystified as the rest of us; declares Julie went to bed at the same time she did, and that when she awoke this morning, the covers on Julie's bed were thrown back. Thinking Julie had preceded her downstairs, she dressed and attended to her usual duties. It was not until I rang for Julie that the other servants realized that none of them had seen her this morning. Not one, apparently, has the faintest idea as to when she disappeared, and where."

"So!" ejaculated Foster unbelievably. "I imagine the police will jog their memories."

"Let us hope they will succeed in finding Julie," snapped Miss Kiametia. "I confess the situation is getting on my nerves. If she committed the murder, she should suffer for it. If not, she should come forward and prove her innocence."

"It is essential that Julie be found," agreed Foster. "For my part, I...."

"Beg pardon, sir," and Vincent approached. "This note has just come for you," presenting his silver salver to the Senator. "There's no answer, sir. The clerk at the Portland sent the messenger here with it, as it was marked 'Immediate.'"

With a word of apology to his companions, Foster tore open the envelope and hastily scanned the written lines.

"I must leave at once," he announced, carefully placing the note in his leather wallet. "I had forgotten entirely that I had an important business engagement. Please tell Winslow, Mrs. Whitney, that I will come back this evening; and you must both count on me if there is anything I can do for you."

"Won't you wait for Captain Miller?" asked Miss Kiametia, concealing her disappointment at the abrupt termination of the interview.

"Miller? I'm afraid not. Please tell him I was called away and that I leave my touring car at his service."

"If you plan to do that, may I get your chauffeur to take me home?" asked Miss Kiametia quickly.

"Why, of course; I only wish that I could accompany you." Foster wavered, he desired most ardently to see the spinster alone, but the note was urgent, and considering the source, could not be ignored. "Good-bye." Shaking hands warmly with Mrs. Whitney and Miss Kiametia, he hastily departed.

Foster's appointment consumed over an hour, and on leaving the government building where it had taken place, he walked aimlessly through the city streets, so deep in thought that he gave no heed to the direction he was taking. His absorption blinded him to the appearance of an inconspicuously dressed, heavily veiled woman who, at sight of him, shrank back under cover of the archway leading to a movie theater, until he had passed safely up the street. She was about to step out on the sidewalk again when the sight of a man walking rapidly down the street in the direction Foster had disappeared, caused her to remain in partial concealment. The woman peered at the last man irresolutely, while pretending to examine a gaudy, glaring poster of the movie, one hand

pressed to her rapidly beating heart. Coming to a sudden decision, she hastened after him, and nearing an intersecting street, overtook him.

"Captain Miller," she called timidly, and at sound of his name, Miller turned toward her.

"Yes?" his hand raised toward his hat at sight of a woman. "You called me?"

"Yes, Captain." She drew nearer. "You do not recognize me, but"--sinking her voice--"I am Julie."

"Julie?" he echoed.

"_Oui, monsieur_," in rapid French. "Mademoiselle Kathleen's maid. Ah, monsieur, for the love you bear her, advise _me_ now. It is for her sake, not for mine."

The Captain eyed her intently. "I don't catch your meaning," he said, in her native tongue.

"You have surely heard, Captain, of the death of that devil, Spencer"--Behind her veil, the Frenchwoman's eyes sparkled with rage. "Well, Captain, his death was--justified."

"I have no doubt of it," agreed her companion. "But, in the eyes of the law, it will be termed...."

"Murder." Her white lips barely formed the word, and she glanced fearfully behind her. Her half-conscious action recalled the Captain to their surroundings, and he, too, glanced up the street. Apparently they had it to themselves; in that unfrequented part of the city there were few passers-by. The Captain's eyes narrowed; he preferred never to be conspicuous; a crowded street was more to his liking.

"Suppose we move on," he suggested, but the Frenchwoman held back.

"I have spent all the morning at the moving pictures," she said. "There it is dark. Let us find another."

"Very well; we can talk as we go," and the Captain suited his step to hers. "And suppose also that we confine our remarks to English."

"As monsieur pleases." She half repented her impulsive act. She had intrusted her secret to another. Would that other prove loyal? A faint shiver crept down her spine, and she pressed one mittened hand over the other. "I seek seclusion, monsieur, because--I know too much."

"'A little knowledge' "--the Captain did not finish the quotation. "Let us turn down here," and not waiting for her consent, he piloted her up a side street. "You do not, then, wish to make a confidant of the police?"

"_Non, non, monsieur_," lapsing again into rapid French. "I think only of Mademoiselle."

A sudden gleam lighted the Captain's eyes. "Kathleen," his voice lingered on her name. "You think she is in danger?"

"I do, monsieur, in great danger. Did I not see"--she paused in her hasty speech and bit her tongue; one indiscretion was leading to another. "It matters not what I saw, monsieur--I am sometimes nearsighted."

"In that case, your eyes will be examined if testifying in a trial for murder," and he smiled covertly as he saw the fear tugging at her heart-strings. "Enough, Julie; I will respect your confidences. You know--how, I do not inquire--of my deep affection for Mademoiselle Kathleen...."

"Who would not love her?" broke in Julie passionately. "So generous, so

fearless and loyal! Ah! she will be faithful to France--she will guard her father's secret--aye, even to the bitter end."

"Hush! not so loud," admonished the Captain, laying a steady hand on her arm. "Let me think a moment." Totally unconscious of the tears which fell one by one on her white cheeks, the excited Frenchwoman kept step with him in silence for three blocks; then the Captain roused himself. "You are willing to shield Mademoiselle Kathleen at all costs?" he asked.

"_Oui, monsieur._"

"And you think you can best accomplish that result by avoiding the police?"

"_Oui, monsieur._"

"Have you money?"

"A little, monsieur." She turned her troubled countenance toward him. "I cannot travel far."

"It is wiser not to travel at all." The Captain slackened his walk before an unpretentious red brick residence. "The landlady of this house takes paying guests and asks no questions. Here you can remain _perdue_, " with emphasis, "and no one inside will trouble you; but be cautious, Julie, how you venture on the street day or night."

"But, monsieur"--Julie drew back--"I do not fear for myself, only for mademoiselle, and I like not to be indoors all day. The police, they will only trouble me with questions should I return to the Whitneys."

"If you do not return to the Whitneys, Julie, the police will think you guilty."

"Me, monsieur?"

"Yes."

"But--but--" stammered the Frenchwoman, overwhelmed. "I have committed no crime. I but left because I could not bear to tell what I know."

"Your departure is construed as a confession of guilt." The Captain bent his handsome face nearer hers. "It is only a question, Julie, of the depth of your affection for Mademoiselle Kathleen. Are you willing to shield her at all costs?"

The Frenchwoman faltered for a second, then drew herself proudly erect. "_Oui, monsieur._ Mademoiselle was kind to me when I lost all--my lover, my brothers died for France. There is no one who cares for me now but mademoiselle. I shall not betray her."

"Good!" The Captain wrung her hand. "Come," and he led the way into the house.

CHAPTER XV

THE GAME, "I SPY"

Barely pausing to dip his pen in the inkstand, Charles Miller covered sheet after sheet of thin paper with his fine legible writing. As he reached the final word he laid down his pen and stretched his cramped fingers and gently rubbed one hand over the other. For the first time conscious of the chill atmosphere, he rose and moved about the room. Stopping before the steam heater to turn it on, he walked back to his desk and carefully read what he had written, correcting a phrase here and

there. Finally satisfied with the result, he selected an envelope and placing the papers inside, sealed and addressed it. For a second he held the envelope poised over the unstained blotting-paper, then raising it gently, breathed on the still wet ink. At last convinced that it was dry, he placed the envelope in the pocket of his bathrobe, and picking up his pajamas went into the bathroom which opened out of his bedroom, and closed the door.

Five seconds, fifteen seconds passed, then the long curtains before the window alcove gently parted and a man looked into the empty room. With head and shoulders protruding he waited until the sound of running water reached his ears, then advanced softly into the room. The desk was his objective point, and his nimble fingers made quick work of sorting its meager contents. His search was unrewarded; there was not a scrap of incriminating writing in any drawer, and the neat pile of blotting-paper was untouched.

The intruder's expression altered; curiosity gave way to doubt. Without wasting time he replaced every article where he found it, pausing occasionally to listen to the sound of splashing coming from behind the closed bathroom door. Convinced there was no immediate danger of interruption from that quarter, he walked swiftly to the closet and minutely examined Miller's clothing. Just as he was leaving the closet a box-shaped leather bag marked "Underwood" attracted his attention, and pushing aside a bundle of soiled underclothing, he knelt down and inserted a skeleton key in the lock, and after a second's work, forced back the wards and opened the lid of the box. The typewriter it contained proved uninteresting, and putting back everything as he had found it, he returned to the window by which he had entered. Pushing it open, he climbed out on the ledge and, closing the window behind him, by the aid of ropes swung himself over to a near-by fire escape and disappeared inside a room opening from it.

The slight sound occasioned by the closing of his bedroom window was drowned in Miller's cheery whistle as he emerged from the bathroom. Refreshed and invigorated by his bath, he switched off the lights and climbed into bed.

The sunlight was streaming in the windows when he awoke, and it was a full minute before his sleepy senses grasped the fact that someone was pounding on the hall door. Hastily donning his bathrobe, he turned the key and opened the door. Henry, the Whitneys' chauffeur, was standing on the threshold.

"May I have a word with you, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, come in," and Miller, conscious of his negligé attire and that two pretty women were passing down the hall, precipitously retreated into his bedroom. "Shut the door after you." He waited until his order had been followed, then demanded impetuously: "How is Miss Kathleen?"

"Better, sir."

"Thank God!" The fervid exclamation escaped him unwittingly, and a faint tinge of red stained his cheeks as he met Henry's attentive regard. "Did you give her my note?"

"I sent it to her by the nurse, sir; Miss Kathleen still keeps her room," said Henry respectfully. "Vincent tells me that she refused even to see her mother and father."

"Have you an answer for me?" as the servant paused.

"The nurse came to the kitchen and gave me these"--pulling a letter and package out of his pocket--"to deliver personally to you, sir; Miss Kathleen asked to have them sent at once."

Taking them Miller examined the addresses; the note was the one he had written Kathleen, and the package bore the label of a prominent jeweler,

upon which was written Kathleen's full name in Miller's handwriting. Both were unopened. Miller placed them in his pocket with unmoved face.

"Why did you not deliver them to me last night?" he asked curtly.

"I started to, sir, but seeing you walking with Baron von Fincke down Massachusetts Avenue, sir, I...." Henry's eyes wavered and fell before Miller's scrutiny.

"Followed me?" prompted the latter, bending forward.

"Only a little way"--quickly. "I did not like to intrude, sir, and by following hoped to get a chance to give you Miss Kathleen's package and note. I lost sight of you at Thomas Circle, sir, and went home. That is the gospel truth, sir, as sure as my name is--Heinrich."

Miller viewed the chauffeur in silence. "So!" he exclaimed, and a pleased smile brightened his face. "Naturalized, or born in this country?"

"Born here, sir, of naturalized parents." The chauffeur twisted his cap nervously. "German-American, sir."

"There is no such thing, Heinrich." Miller's voice deepened. "The hyphen cannot be recognized. You are either American or German."

The chauffeur straightened himself, and his heels clicked together as he raised his hand in salute.

"Hoch der Kaiser!"

The words were echoed by Miller as he sprang forward and grasped the chauffeur's hand. "For the Fatherland!" he added in German. "Why have you not declared yourself before?"

"Until last night, Herr Captain, I was not absolutely sure you were one of us. But later in the evening Baron von Fincke...."

"Stood sponsor for me," finished Miller, thrusting his hand in his pajama pocket, and thereby pushing an envelope still deeper in it. "What have you to report? Wait, speak English; the walls have ears."

The chauffeur whitened and moved closer to Miller. "Was Mr. Spencer in your confidence?"

"No."

"And the Baron did not trust him," said Heinrich, reflectively. "If he was not one of us, how came he to be killed?"

"God knows." Miller threw out his hands in a hopeless gesture. "I don't."

"But there must be some motive for the crime," argued the chauffeur. "Miss Kathleen must have suspected something before taking..." Powerful hands on his throat choked his utterance.

"Never mention Miss Kathleen's name in that connection again," commanded Miller, his voice low and stern. "You hear me, you dog!" and he shook Heinrich until his teeth rattled, then released him.

"Pardon," gasped the badly frightened man. "I meant no offense."

"See that you follow my instructions hereafter."

"Yes, sir"--Heinrich caressed his throat tenderly, and looked at Miller with a new respect. "I was only going to mention, sir, that Mr. Spencer meddled in what did not concern him. I believe he suspected what I have come to believe."

"And what is that?"

"That this photography business is only a blind."

"A blind?" Miller looked thoughtfully at his companion. "Suppose you pull up a chair; wait, first hang your cap over the keyhole of the hall door." While waiting for Heinrich to follow his instructions Miller seated himself. "A blind?" he repeated. "No, no, Heinrich, you are mistaken; Mr. Whitney has invented a very perfect aeroplane camera, of that I am thoroughly convinced. And our country needs it...."

"Undoubtedly, sir," Heinrich almost stuttered in his growing excitement. "But he has invented something that we need more...."

"What is that?"

"I don't know, sir."

Miller, who had been leaning forward in his eagerness, drew back. "Don't waste my time, Heinrich," he said roughly.

"Your time won't be wasted," protested the German. "Have patience and let me explain. I cannot manage this affair alone, I need assistance--and --you are a frequent caller at the Whitney house...."

"Well, what then?"

"Mr. Whitney may be persuaded to take you to his studio ..." the chauffeur hesitated.

"Proceed," directed Miller shortly. "You can count on me."

"Good," the chauffeur hitched his chair closer. "Day before yesterday I carried a telegram up to the studio. Not hearing any sound in the room, I carefully turned the knob of the door and found it unlocked. For months I have tried that door, hoping for just such luck," he interpolated. "Opening it very softly, I saw Mr. Whitney standing with his back to me, and facing the muzzle of a rifle. I had only time to note that the rifle was braced on two iron brackets and that Mr. Whitney was holding a string which was attached to the trigger; when I saw a flash, the rifle's recoil--and Mr. Whitney still standing just where he was."

Miller stared incredulously at Heinrich, down whose face sweat was running; the man was obviously telling the truth--at least, what he believed to be the truth.

"Wake up, Heinrich," he said skeptically, and the chauffeur flushed hotly.

"It's God's truth I'm telling you," he declared solemnly. "For the sake of the Fatherland, believe me."

"I will," and Miller's fist came softly down on his desk. "Did you hear no report?"

"None; there was a Maxim silencer on the rifle." "I see--and blank cartridges in the breech." "That is what I first thought on seeing Mr. Whitney still standing," admitted Heinrich. "I believed he was trying to commit suicide. Then I heard him exclaim: 'God be thanked! I've solved the problem; it stood the test.'"

"Hardly a suicide's speech." Miller stared at Heinrich. "Probably he was testing the Maxim silencer."

"No, Herr Captain." The chauffeur almost jumbled his words over each other in his haste. "An instant after the flash, I saw Mr. Whitney sway upon his feet, recover his balance, and stand upright."

"The blast of powder must have caused that."

"He was fully the length of the room from the muzzle of the rifle. There were no powder marks on his vest and coat when he opened the door in response to my knock a few minutes later. You see, Herr Captain, as soon as I got back my wits, I closed the door. When Mr. Whitney pulled out his gold pencil from his vest pocket to sign for the telegram I heard something drop on the floor, and letting the receipt slip fall, I stooped over and picked up with it--this--" and he laid on the desk a Mauser bullet.

Miller examined it curiously. His companion was the first to break the silence. "It is flattened on one side, Herr Captain."

"I see it is." Miller weighed the bullet in his hand. "You have something more to tell me, Heinrich; out with it."

"Yes, Herr Captain. That night I bribed Vincent to let me valet Mr. Whitney, and I found the vest he wore that afternoon. In it, over the heart, was a round hole."

"Did the bullet fit it?"

"Exactly." There was a protracted silence, which the chauffeur broke with a question. "What do you make out of it, sir?"

Miller did not answer directly. "Was Mr. Whitney wearing his ordinary business suit?" he inquired.

"Yes, Herr Captain."

"You are sure he wore nothing over it?"

"Absolutely positive."

Miller handed back the bullet. "It rather looks as if Mr. Whitney has invented some wearing apparel which Mauser bullets cannot penetrate," he said slowly, "or else...."

"Yes, Herr Captain."

"You are a great liar."

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE MORGUE

Shortly before three o'clock on that same afternoon in which Heinrich had confided in Miller, dashing turnouts and limousines, their smartly liveried coachmen and chauffeurs asking now and then the direction from street-crossing policeman, trotted and tooted their way down busy Seventh Street toward the wharves, their destination a modest two-storied stuccoed building bearing the words, "D. C. Morgue." The inquest on Sinclair Spencer was to be held there at three o'clock.

Spencer's tragic death twenty-four hours before had indeed created a sensation in the nation's Capital. The wildest rumors were afloat. Was it deliberate murder or suicide? The press, ever keen to scent sensational news, had devoted much space to the little known facts and hinted at even more startling developments; all of which but whetted the curiosity of the public. The social prominence of the Whitneys had precipitated them still further into the limelight; not often did the smart set have so choice a titbit to discuss, and gossip ran riot. It had few facts to thrive upon, as both the coroner and the police refused to give out the slightest detail.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Miss Kiametia, as the touring car in which

she and Senator Foster were riding threaded its tooting way through the many vehicles. "This street resembles Connecticut Avenue on Saturday afternoon. Where _is_ the morgue?"

"Right here," and Foster sprang out of the car with alacrity as it drew up to the curb. He had been, for his cheery temperament, singularly morose, and Miss Kiametia's attempt to make conversation during their ride had failed. The spinster's talkativeness was a sure indication that her nerves were on edge; she usually kept guard upon her tongue.

"Do you suppose the Whitneys are here?" she asked, adjusting her veil with nervous fingers as she crossed the uneven sidewalk.

"Probably; I imagine we are late. Look out for that swing door." Foster put out a steady hand. "This way," turning to the left of the entrance.

"One moment, sir," and Detective Mitchell, who with several others from the Central Office had been unobtrusively keeping tab on each new arrival, joined them. "Miss Grey, being a witness, must stay with the others in this room. The inquest is being held in that inner room, Mr. Senator. Will you sit over here, Miss Grey...."

But the spinster hesitated; she relied upon Foster more than she was willing to admit, and the promise of his presence had reconciled her to the prospect of a trying afternoon.

"I prefer to go with you," she objected, turning appealingly to him.

"But, Kiametia, you can't," interposed Foster hurriedly. "The law forbids it. I will be in the next room should you need me." He gave her hand a reassuring squeeze, then glanced hastily about the room. In one corner the Whitney servants, their inward perturbation showing in their white scared faces, sat huddled together, but there was no sign of Mr. and Mrs. Whitney and Kathleen. Apparently he and Miss Kiametia were earlier than he had at first thought. Turning from Miss Kiametia, he addressed Detective Mitchell in a low tone.

"Have you caught Julie, the French maid?" he asked.

"All developments in the case will be brought out at the inquest," replied Mitchell politely, and Foster, his curiosity unsatisfied, walked away. He found the room used for inquests crowded to the doors, and made his way through the knot of men standing about, to the reporters' table, where a seat had been reserved for him by the morgue master. Across the east end of the room was the raised platform upon which stood a long table and chairs for the coroner, the deputy coroner, and the witnesses, while to their left were the six chairs for the coroner's jury. As the Senator seated himself he spied Charles Miller among the men standing at the back of the room. There was a vacant chair next to his, and after a few hurried words with the coroner, Foster beckoned Miller to join him.

"I called you up repeatedly this morning," said Miller, pushing his chair closer to the Senator so as to make room for a reporter on his left. "But your servant declared you were not at home."

"I spent most of the morning at the Whitneys' and lunched with Miss Grey. Horrible affair, this; the Whitneys are all unstrung."

"Did you see Kathleen?"

"No," Foster stroked his chin nervously. "She has steadily refused to see anyone, even her parents. Her conduct is most strange."

"I don't agree with you," warmly. "She has undergone a great shock, finding a friend dead in an elevator...."

"Ah, did she?" The words seemed forced from Foster; he would have given much to recall them on seeing the look that flashed in Miller's eyes.

"She did," he asserted tersely. "Kathleen is the soul of honor--you have but to know her to appreciate that--she and evil can never be associated together."

"You are a warm champion," exclaimed Foster. "I should almost imagine--"

"That I am engaged to her?" calmly. "Quite true, I am."

Foster drew back. "I--I beg pardon," he stammered in some confusion. "I had no idea affairs had progressed so far--I am sorry I spoke as I did."

"You were but echoing what I hear on all sides," answered Miller bitterly.

"True," Foster nodded. "Kathleen's extraordinary silence, when by a few words she could explain what happened yesterday morning before her screams aroused the household, is causing unfavorable comment and unfortunate conjecture."

"The mystery will be explained this afternoon," and quiet confidence rang in Miller's pleasantly modulated tones. "Hello, I see some members of the Diplomatic Corps are present."

"And the so-called 'four hundred,'" growled Foster. The close atmosphere had started him coughing, and he scowled at Baron Frederic von Fincke who was seated near by. "Where is the jury?" he asked, as soon as the paroxysm of coughing was over.

"Viewing the body in that room." Miller indicated a closed door to his right. "The jury is sworn in there by the morgue master."

As he spoke the door opened and the six men, led by the morgue master, filed into the room and took their places, and the low hum of conversation died away as the coroner, stepping to the platform, stated briefly the reason for the inquest, and summoned Dr. Hall, of the Emergency Hospital, to the witness chair. He was quickly sworn by the morgue master, and in response to the coroner's question, stated that he had reached the Whitney residence shortly after eight o'clock Wednesday morning in answer to a telephone call.

"Tell the jury what you found on your arrival," directed the coroner.

"I was shown upstairs by the butler, whose incoherent remarks led me to suppose that someone was ill in the elevator. On entering it I found Mr. Spencer, whom I knew slightly, lying there dead."

"Did you make a thorough examination?"

"Only enough to prove that life was extinct. The butler informed me that my services were needed by Miss Whitney, and I went at once to her."

"In what condition did you find her?"

"Hysterical. To quiet her, I finally administered an opiate, and sent for a trained nurse."

"Did you consider her case dangerous?"

"No, but she was completely unstrung; her nervous system had undergone a severe shock, and I feared for her mental condition if not given immediate relief and complete rest."

"Have you seen her today?"

"Yes, this morning."

"How was she?"

"Much improved."

"Did Miss Whitney speak to you of Mr. Spencer?"

"She did not."

"Did you question her on the subject of the mystery surrounding Mr. Spencer's death?"

"I did not. In her condition I judged it a topic to be avoided. I also cautioned her parents not to discuss it with her unless she voluntarily alluded to it."

"How long had Spencer been dead, Doctor, when you saw him?"

"I cannot answer positively, as I did not make a thorough examination, but judging from appearances, I should say he had been dead at least four hours."

Miller shot a triumphant look at Foster, then turned his attention to the coroner, who was scanning his notebook.

"I think that is all, Doctor," he announced, "you are excused."

There was a slight pause, and the deputy coroner, who had been taking the testimony, laid down his pen and gently massaged his hand. The next instant at the coroner's direction, the morgue master ushered in Detective Mitchell. The detective, after being duly sworn, told his full name and length of service in the District force, and briefly described his arrival at the Whitney residence.

"You examined the body in the elevator?" questioned the coroner.

"Yes, Doctor."

"Was Mr. Spencer dressed?"

"Yes, sir, except for coat, waistcoat, collar, and shoes."

"Are these the clothes he had on at the time of his death?" The coroner pointed to a pile of wearing apparel lying on the desk.

"Yes, Doctor."

"Did you search for the weapon with which Mr. Spencer's throat was gashed?"

"At once, sir," answered Mitchell promptly. "At the back of the elevator near the body I found this"--holding up a short bone-handled knife which he took from his coat pocket. "The blade was covered with blood."

Coroner Penfield took the knife and after examining it, handed it to the foreman of the jury who, upon scanning it closely, passed it on to his companions.

"Have you ever seen such a knife before?" questioned the coroner. "The blade is a peculiar shape."

"Yes, sir; that shape of knife is sometimes used in modeling clay and by glaziers when handling putty."

Penfield and the deputy coroner exchanged glances, then the coroner resumed his questions. "Did you examine the bedroom Mr. Spencer occupied Tuesday night, Mitchell?"

"I did, sir."

"Had the bed been slept in?"

"Apparently it had, sir. The pillows and covering had been tossed about."

"Did you find anything in the room belonging to the deceased?"

"Yes, the coat and waistcoat of his suit, his collar and shoes."

"Was there any indication, besides the tossing of the bedclothes, that the deceased had made preparations to sleep there?"

"Yes; I found a pair of pajamas lying on the floor near the bed, apparently hastily discarded, as they were turned wrong side out."

"Did you examine the deceased's clothes?"

"Yes, sir. They were what any gentleman would wear in the evening. In his pockets I found a wallet containing twenty dollars in bills, three dollars in loose change, and his keys. Here they are, sir," and Mitchell, as he mentioned each ticketed article, laid them on the table before the coroner, who examined them carefully.

"Was there anything about the room which especially claimed your attention?" Mitchell paused and glanced thoughtfully at his polished shoes. "Let me alter that question," said the coroner hastily. "Did you find any indication in the room that Mr. Spencer expected to return to it?"

"His clothes were there, and the electric light by the bureau was burning, notwithstanding the fact that it was nearly nine o'clock in the morning."

The coroner consulted his papers, "That is all just now," and Mitchell departed. "Ask Mr. Whitney to step here," directed Penfield, a second afterward.

"Beg pardon, sir," and the morgue master stepped before the platform. "Mr. Whitney went back to his residence to escort his daughter here. Mrs. Whitney, however, is waiting in the next room."

"Very well, bring Mrs. Whitney here," and the coroner left his seat to assist her to the platform. Mrs. Whitney's customary self-control and air of good breeding had not deserted her, and whatever her inward tribulation at appearing before a coroner's jury, it was successfully concealed as she repeated the oath after the morgue master.

"Your full name?" questioned Coroner Penfield.

"Minna Caswell Whitney, daughter of the late Judge William Caswell, of New York."

"You were married to Winslow Whitney in--"

"1896."

"And you have resided in Washington since then?"

"Yes, except in the summer months when we went to our home in Massachusetts or, occasionally, abroad."

"Will you kindly state what took place at your house on Tuesday evening, Mrs. Whitney?"

"I entertained the Sisters in Unity, and afterward went to bed." The concise reply wrung a smile from Foster.

"At what hour did the members of your club depart?"

"A little before one o'clock, Wednesday morning."

"Then did you go direct to bed?"

"No, I first showed Miss Kiametia Grey who, owing to an attack of faintness, was spending the night at my home, to her room; then I retired."

"Were you aware that Mr. Spencer was also spending the night under your roof?"

"Not until Miss Grey informed me of the fact; I had inadvertently placed her in the same room with Mr. Spencer. I immediately took her to another room."

"Was Mr. Spencer's bedroom in darkness when you ushered Miss Grey into it?"

"It was."

"Did not your husband tell you of Mr. Spencer's presence?"

"I did not see my husband until Wednesday morning; he had gone to his studio in the attic when I went to my bedroom. He frequently works all night on his inventions."

"Were you awakened during the night by any noise?"

"No."

"Did you see your daughter before retiring?"

"No."

"Did she attend the meeting of your club?"

"No, she is not a member."

"When did you first hear of Mr. Spencer's death?"

"The next morning, when my daughter's screams aroused the household."

"How long has Julie Genet, your French maid, been in your employ?"

"Four years."

"Have you heard from her since her disappearance?"

"No."

"Was she acquainted with Mr. Spencer?"

"I really don't know."

The coroner flushed at her tone. "Was Julie discontented with her place?" he asked, somewhat harshly.

"I have no reason to suppose so; she never complained."

"How did you come to employ her?"

"A friend of mine brought her to this country, and a year later Julie came to me; she was highly recommended."

"Has she any relatives in this country to whom she might have gone?"

"None that I ever heard of." Mrs. Whitney reflected for a second, then added, "Julie told me some months ago that her only near relatives had been killed in the war in France."

"Was Julie a well trained servant?"

"She was indeed; also good-natured, thoughtful, and obedient."

"When did you last see Julie?"

"Downstairs, when giving final directions to Vincent. I told her to assist him in closing the house, and then go direct to bed; that I would undress myself as it was so late."

"Did she appear as usual?"

"Yes."

"Did you go at all to Mr. Spencer's bedroom yesterday morning after hearing of his death?"

"No."

"We will not detain you longer, Mrs. Whitney," and with a slight bow to the jurors and the coroner she made her way from the room.

Her place was taken by Vincent, the butler, who testified that he had gone about his work on Wednesday morning as customary, that all windows and doors were locked as he had left them the night before, and that he and Henry, the chauffeur, were busy replacing the drawing-room furniture, removed the night before to make room for chairs for the meeting of the Sisters in Unity, when startled by Miss Whitney's screams. He also stated that having gone to bed very late, he had slept heavily and had not been awakened until aroused at seven o'clock by the cook. His bedroom was across the hall from the other servants. He had not realized that Julie Genet was absent until Mrs. Whitney rang for her; he had supposed the maid was upstairs waiting upon either her or Miss Whitney. No, Julie was not quarrelsome; she was quiet, deeply engrossed in her own affairs, and spent much of her time sewing in Miss Whitney's sitting-room. He had heard that she was to have been married the previous December, but the war had taken her fiancé back to the colors, and he had been killed in the retreat on Paris.

Henry, the chauffeur, was the next to testify. He admitted admiration for Julie and stated that she had not encouraged his attentions, and the remainder of his testimony simply corroborated that of Vincent. He did not sleep in the Whitney residence, but took his meals there.

When giving their testimony the chambermaid, laundress, and scullery maid also stated they did not sleep at the Whitneys'; that Julie, while always pleasant, kept very much to herself. They one and all declared that they had never entered Sinclair Spencer's bedroom Wednesday morning after the discovery of the tragedy. The coroner quickly dismissed each one, and Rosa, the cook, looking extremely perturbed, was the last servant to be questioned. She stated that she had not gone upstairs Wednesday morning until noon.

"Sure, I dunno whin Julie went downstairs Wednesday mornin'," she declared. "I slept that heavy I niver hear her a' movin' around."

"Was it her habit to get up before you did?" asked Coroner Penfield.

"Yis, sor. She had oneasy nights, like, an' would be off downstairs at the foist peep o' day. She brooded too much over the papers, I'm feared; though 'twas natural to read av the divils who killed her kin and swateheart in France."

"Did Julie ever speak to you of Mr. Spencer?"

"Wance or twice, maybe," admitted Rosa reluctantly.

"Did she ever meet Mr. Spencer away from the house?"

"Niver, sor." Rosa looked shocked. "Julie was real dacent, she niver sought her betters' society. Nay, she was afeared Miss Kathleen might

listen to his courtin'. She didn't consider no wan good enough for Miss Kathleen."

"Ah, then she was fond of Miss Kathleen?"

"Sure, fond's not the word; she was daffy about her. An' no wonder, Miss Kathleen was that good to her; comforted her whin bad news came from the wars, let her sit and sew wid her, and give her money to send to France."

"Was Julie on good terms with the other servants?"

"Yis, sor. She and Henry had words now and thin; when Henry got teasin', she didn't always take ut in good part."

"Have you any idea where Julie went on leaving the Whitneys?"

"No, sor; she has no real friends in Washington. I dunno where she can be, an' I'm sick o' worryin' over her." The warm-hearted Irishwoman's eyes filled with tears. "Julie was excitable like and quicktempered, but she niver did wrong, an' don't let yourselves be thinkin' ut."

"There, there." The coroner laid a kindly hand on her arm. "We won't keep you any longer, Mrs. O'Leary. Careful of that step," and as the morgue master appeared, he asked, "Is Miss Kiametia Grey here?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Then ask her to come in." He exchanged a few remarks with the deputy coroner in a tone too low to reach the ears of the attentive reporters, then turned back to the witness chair as Miss Kiametia seated herself.

"We will only keep you a few minutes," he began, after the preliminary questions had been asked the spinster. "I understand you were accidentally shown into the bedroom already occupied by Mr. Spencer."

"I was," stated Miss Kiametia, as the coroner paused. "Neither Mrs. Whitney nor I was aware he was within a mile of us."

"Did you discover his presence at once?"

"No." The spinster's tone was short. "The bed is in an alcove, and I had only turned on the electric bulb by the bureau; thus the room was in partial darkness. I--eh--eh--" then with a rush--"I did not know he was there until I was ready to get in bed."

"Was Mr. Spencer asleep?"

"I never waited to see."

Coroner Penfield stifled a smile and changed the subject. "Were you aroused during the night by any noise?"

"No," sharply. "When once in the hall bedroom I took a pretty stiff drink of whiskey as a nightcap, for I was feeling pretty shaky about then. Consequently I slept soundly all through the night."

"Was Mr. Spencer a great friend of yours?"

"No," with uncomplimentary promptness. "But I did occasionally ask him to large entertainments."

"Did you see Miss Whitney before retiring on Tuesday night?"

"No. Her mother told me she had gone to bed early."

"Did you see Mr. Whitney?"

"No."

"Did you see Julie, the French maid?"

"Not upstairs. Mrs. Whitney gave me the whiskey and a dressing-gown."

"Can you tell me if Mr. Spencer was wearing his pajamas in bed?"

"I cannot," dryly.

"Did you enter Mr. Spencer's bedroom the next morning after hearing of his death?"

"I did not."

"While in his room Tuesday night did you observe his clothes on a chair or table?"

"No, and after discovering his presence, I was too keen to get out of the room to notice anything in it."

"Then possibly you left the light burning by the bureau?"

"I did nothing of the sort. It is a hobby of mine never to waste gas or electricity, and I remember distinctly stopping to put out the light after I had picked up my clothes."

"Quite sure, Miss Gray?" and the spinster bridled at his quizzical glance.

"I am willing to take my dying oath," she said solemnly, "that I left that room in total darkness."

CHAPTER XVII

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

"Mr. Winslow Whitney will be the next witness," announced Coroner Penfield, first signifying to Miss Kiametia Grey that her presence was no longer required in the witness chair, and the spinster, with an audible sigh of relief, picked up her gold mesh purse and its dangling accessories and hastily left the room.

There was an instant craning of necks and raising of lorgnettes as the door opened to admit Winslow Whitney. Courteously acknowledging the bows of several friends seated near the entrance, he made his way to the witness chair with a firm tread, and his clear voice was plainly heard as, in answer to the morgue master's questions, he stated his full name, age, and length of residence in Washington, having first taken the oath to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Charles Miller, watching him intently, was relieved to find that the nervous twitching of the muscles of his face and hands, so noticeable the day before, was missing. Though his haggard face testified to a sleepless night, Whitney was outwardly composed.

"For how many years have you known Sinclair Spencer?" asked the coroner.

"Fully ten."

"Were you intimately acquainted?"

"No. I knew him as I know dozens of other men; he was frequently at my house, and on several occasions he assisted me in protecting my patents in the law courts."

"But you would not call him an intimate friend?"

"Most assuredly not."

"Was he in the habit of spending the night in your house?"

"He has sometimes stopped with me during the summer months when I was detained in Washington and my wife and daughter were away."

"He was familiar with your house, then?"

"You mean--architecturally?"

"Yes. Could he find his way about it alone in the dark?"

"I presume he could--provided he was sober," dryly. "The arrangement of the rooms is not complicated, and one floor is very much like another."

Coroner Penfield cleared his throat. "Was Mr. Spencer a welcome guest in your house?"

"Certainly; otherwise I should not have invited him," replied Whitney, with quiet dignity.

"Let me amend my question." The coroner laid down his pencil. "Was Mr. Spencer on a friendly footing with each member of your household?"

"I have every reason to believe he was."

"Was Mr. Spencer's manner the same as usual when he called upon you Tuesday evening?"

"No."

"In what way was it different?"

"He had been drinking."

"Was he rough, boisterous?"

"The latter, yes. So much so, that I suggested he spend the night. I did not wish him to go downstairs and disturb my wife's guests, which he was quite capable of doing had the whim seized him."

"Were you then upstairs, Mr. Whitney?"

"Yes, in my wife's boudoir on the first bedroom floor."

"When did you last see Mr. Spencer alive?"

"When I showed him into his bedroom and loaned him a pair of pajamas."

"Did you help him undress?"

"No, as he assured me, with drunken gravity, that he could manage it himself."

"Did you inform your wife and daughter that Mr. Spencer was spending the night in your house?"

"No. My wife was downstairs entertaining her guests, and my daughter was asleep in her room. I did not see either of them until the next morning."

"Where did you go after leaving Mr. Spencer in his bedroom?"

"To my studio in the attic. I remained there all night absorbed in my work."

"Did you hear any unusual sounds during the night?"

"No; my studio, or workshop, is sound-proof. And it is the same

throughout the house," he added. "The walls, besides being of unusual width, were all deadened by my grandfather's direction. He had a horror of noise."

"When did you leave your studio?"

"About seven o'clock Wednesday morning."

"Did you use the elevator then?"

"No, I seldom use it." Whitney twisted about in his chair. "I had the elevator installed for the convenience of my wife and daughter."

Penfield made an entry in his notebook, then faced Whitney directly.

"Have you in connection with your workshop a photographic outfit and darkroom?" he asked.

"I have."

"I am told that you are working on a sort of camera which, used in an aeroplane, makes a map of the country over which the machine passes. Is that correct, Mr. Whitney?"

"Yes," acknowledged Whitney. "A patent is pending."

"Had it gotten about among your servants that you were working upon an important invention?"

"It's very possible," Whitney conceded.

"Did Julie, your wife's maid, ever evince undue curiosity in your work?"

Whitney wrinkled his brow in thought. "No," he said. "I can't say that I am aware she did. When I go to my studio, as we usually call my workshop, it is an understood thing that I am not to be disturbed by anyone. It is a rule I enforce by dismissal if broken, and the servants have learned by experience to obey."

"Has your household access to your studio when you are not there?"

"No, I securely lock the door whenever I leave the room."

"Are you ever joined while in your studio by your wife and daughter and their friends?"

"Occasionally they bring Miss Grey and Senator Foster in to see my models."

"Did you confide the particulars of your latest invention to Mr. Spencer?"

"I did not."

"Did he ever show deep interest in it?"

"Only questioned me about it now and then," replied Whitney casually, and Charles Miller alone noted the nervous twitching of his eyelids.

"Was the electric light turned on in Mr. Spencer's room when you left him for the night?"

"Y-yes." Whitney reflected for a moment, then added, "I believe the bulb by the bureau was burning, but I can't swear to it."

"Did Mr. Spencer give you any inkling Tuesday night that he intended to be an early riser on Wednesday morning?"

"No, he never mentioned the subject."

"Was it his custom on previous visits, to walk about your house before the servants were up?"

"Not that I am aware of," Whitney hesitated. "Possibly his intoxicated condition made him desire the fresh air."

"That is possible," admitted the coroner. "But witnesses testify that Mr. Spencer had on no shoes."

"Which confirms my statement of his condition," replied Whitney quietly. "No man in his sober senses seeks the street in his stockings."

The coroner, making no comment, held up the knife with the black bone handle. "Have you ever seen this knife before?"

Whitney turned a shade whiter. "I may have; there is nothing distinctive about the knife."

"Is it not used for modeling in clay?"

"I believe so."

"Who made the clay models in your studio, Mr. Whitney?"

"I did."

"Unassisted?"

The question remained unanswered, and after a brief pause the coroner pushed back his chair and rose. "That is all, thank you, Mr. Whitney; kindly wait in the adjoining room to the left; you will find a chair there."

With a stiff bow Whitney stepped down from the platform and made his way through the silent crowd to the room indicated.

As the door closed behind him, Penfield called the deputy coroner to the stand. Laying down his pen, Dr. North took his seat in the witness chair, and after being sworn, turned to face the jurors, chart in hand.

"You made the autopsy upon Mr. Sinclair Spencer?" questioned Penfield.

"I did, Doctor, in the presence of the morgue master."

"Please state to the jury the result of that autopsy."

The deputy coroner glanced at the notes on the back of the chart, then reversed it, holding it aloft so that all in the room could see the anatomical drawing of a human figure.

"The knife penetrated this section of the neck, just missing the carotid artery," he began, using his pencil to indicate the spot marked on the chart. "While the wound bled profusely it was superficial and did not cause death."

His words created a sensation. Men and women looked at each other, then sat forward in their chairs, the better to view the deputy coroner and his chart.

"Were there indications of death from extreme alcoholism, then?" questioned the coroner, and his voice sounded unusually loud in the deep silence which prevailed.

"No. Judging by the contents of the stomach Mr. Spencer had not taken alcohol to excess."

"Then if the knife wound was not fatal, and there was no indication of intoxication, what caused Mr. Spencer's death?" demanded the coroner.

"On examination," Dr. North weighed his words carefully, "I found a powerful drug had evidently been used, producing instantaneous death by paralyzing the respiratory center and arresting the heart action."

All in the room were giving the deputy coroner rapt attention. Many had come there purely from love of sensation, and they were not being disappointed. The eyes of Charles Miller and Senator Foster met for a second, then quickly shifted back to the deputy coroner. The reporters, their pencils flying across the sheets, were the only ones in the room who had not glanced at the witness.

"Have you discovered the drug used?" questioned the coroner.

"By tests I found it to be cyanide of potassium, a most deadly poison, generally instantaneous in its action."

"How large a dose was given?"

"I don't know, as there were no indications of it in the gastric contents."

"Then how was the drug administered?"

"Through the blood."

"By means of the knife?"

The deputy coroner looked puzzled. "Possibly," he admitted. "But I could find no trace of the poison left on the knife blade. There was no mark on the body to show how the poison was administered."

"At what hour did death occur?"

"Between three and four in the morning, judging by the condition of the body."

"Was there any indication, Doctor, of resistance on the part of the deceased? Did he make an effort to defend himself?"

"No, Judging from his expression and the condition of the muscles I should say that Mr. Spencer never knew what killed him, never knew even that his life was threatened."

"Were his hands opened or clenched?"

"His right hand was clenched," acknowledged the deputy coroner. "Not, however, for the purpose of defense, but to retain his grasp upon this--" and drawing an envelope from his pocket he carefully shook into his open palm a crushed and faded flower. "It is a cornflower," he explained. "Sometimes called bachelor's button. The stem is broken short off." And he held the flower so that all might view it.

Senator Foster, who had followed the testimony with unflagging interest, heard a sudden sharp intake of breath to his right, but glancing quickly at Charles Miller he found his face expressionless.

Penfield took the cornflower and envelope from the deputy coroner and laid them carefully on his desk, while continuing his examination. No one paid any attention to the lengthening shadows of the late afternoon, and the coroner's next question was awaited with breathless interest.

"Is cyanide of potassium used in photography?" he inquired.

"It is."

"That is all, Doctor, you are excused," and the deputy coroner returned to his seat.

The next witness was the morgue master, and his testimony simply corroborated that of the deputy coroner. He was followed by William Banks and John P. Wilson, respectively, both well known in the financial world of Washington, who testified to Sinclair Spencer's standing in the community, and stated that his financial condition precluded any suggestion of suicide; and that to their knowledge he had no enemies.

The lights were burning when the last named witness left the chair, but there was no sign of weariness among the men and women in the room. Although several consulted their watches, no one rose to go. Their already deeply stirred interest was quickened into fever heat as, in obedience to the coroner's summons, Kathleen Whitney took her place in the witness chair.

Dressed with the strict attention to detail and taste which made her one of the conspicuous figures in the younger set, Kathleen's appearance and beauty made instant impression upon juror and spectator alike. But her chic veil failed to hide the pallor of her cheeks, and the unnatural brilliancy of her eyes. Despite every effort at control, her voice shook as she repeated the oath word for word and stated her full name and age.

"Have you always resided in Washington?" asked the coroner.

"Yes."

"Were you educated in this city?"

"Yes, except for a winter in Germany."

"Did you take up a special study while in Germany, Miss Whitney?"

"Yes, miniature painting--"

"And modeling?" as she paused.

"Oh, no, I never studied that abroad although I occasionally help my father by modeling in clay."

"When did you make your debut in Washington society?"

"Last winter."

"Did you then make Mr. Sinclair Spencer's acquaintance?"

"No." She moved involuntarily at the mention of Spencer's name. "I had known him previously. He was one of father's friends, and much older than I."

"Were you not reported engaged to him last fall?"

Kathleen flushed at the question. "I never heard of it," she said coldly. "I do not encourage gossip."

"Miss Whitney." Coroner Penfield surreptitiously scanned a small note handed him before the commencement of the inquest. The handwriting was distinctly foreign. "Miss Whitney," repeated Penfield. "Did you not refuse Mr. Spencer's offer of marriage on Tuesday morning?"

For a moment Kathleen stared at him in speechless surprise. "Where did you get that piece of information?" she demanded, recovering herself.

"You have not answered my question, Miss Whitney," and the quiet persistence of his manner impressed Kathleen.

"Yes, I refused him," she admitted.

"Did Mr. Spencer make any attempt to persuade you to reconsider your refusal?"

"Yes." Kathleen shot an impatient look at the coroner. "I cannot see what my private affairs have to do with the regrettable death of Mr. Spencer," she protested.

Penfield ignored her remark. "Did Mr. Spencer communicate with you Tuesday by letter or telephone?" he asked and waited, but the question remained unanswered. To the disappointment of the reporters, he did not repeat it, but asked instead: "Were you aware on Tuesday evening that Mr. Spencer was spending the night at your house?"

"No."

"Did you see either your father or your mother that night before retiring?"

"No."

"When did you last see Julie, your mother's maid?"

"Before dinner when she came to my bedroom to help me change my dress."

"Did she seem discontented with her situation?" questioned the coroner.

"No."

"Did Julie ever evince dislike to Mr. Spencer?"

Kathleen's hand crept to her throat and she plucked nervously at her veil. "Julie was too respectful to discuss our family friends with me," she said.

"You have not answered my question, Miss Whitney," was Penfield's quick retort, and Kathleen flushed under the rebuke.

"Because I am aware that you are striving to make me incriminate Julie in Mr. Spencer's death," she began heatedly. "Instead, you and the police should make every effort to find Julie and protect her ..."

"From what?"

"I don't know," hopelessly. "Julie has no friends in this city, no one whom she could turn to in trouble but me. I cannot understand her disappearance; I fear, greatly fear, foul play."

"Circumstantial evidence points to her having disappeared of her own volition, Miss Whitney, to escape being charged with a heinous crime."

"Pardon me, her disappearance is the only scrap of evidence which leads you to think she might possibly have murdered a man whom she knew by sight," retorted Kathleen.

"Was it your habit to supply Julie with money?" questioned the coroner.

"Yes, which she sent to France as her mite toward the war fund," answered Kathleen heatedly. "I am confident Julie had nothing whatever to do with the death of Mr. Spencer."

"Can you tell us who did, Miss Whitney?" asked Penfield, and he saw the terror which crept into her handsome eyes.

"I cannot," she answered with unsteady lips. "I never awoke that night."

"What took you downstairs at so early an hour yesterday morning?"

"I had rung the upstairs bell for Julie, and as she did not come, I started to go down and find her," she hesitated uncertainly.

"Continue," directed Penfield. "Tell your story of finding Mr. Spencer's body in your own way."

It was some minutes before Kathleen obeyed his request. "I went to the elevator and pushed the button," she began slowly. "I was in a hurry, and when I heard the click which indicated the cage was there I opened the outer mahogany door, pushed back the inner steel grille-work door, stepped into the elevator and without looking about me, closed the doors, and pushed the basement button. Then I turned about"--Kathleen moistened her dry lips--"and saw--and saw--Mr. Spencer lying there--the blood"--she closed her eyes as if to shut out the recollection--"I think for a time I lost my reason. I have no intelligent recollection of anything that occurred until I found myself in bed with a trained nurse in attendance."

As her charming voice ceased, Charles Miller, who had never taken his eyes from her face, gently moved his chair so that Foster's figure cast him in shadow. Never once had Kathleen glanced his way; she sat for the most part with her eyes downcast or looking directly at the coroner. Kathleen was visibly moved by the recital of her experiences in the elevator, and Penfield waited an instant before questioning her further.

"Could you tell from what floor the elevator came when you pushed your floor button?" he asked.

"No," was the disappointing answer. "The elevator runs practically noiselessly, and we have no floor indicator such as you see in stores."

"Was the electric light turned on in the elevator when you entered it?"

"No."

"Then how could you see Mr. Spencer so clearly?"

"The brick elevator shaft is lighted by a skylight," answered Kathleen. "The electric light is only needed at night."

"Do you recognize this knife?" and Penfield held it before her as he spoke. Kathleen's eyes did not shift their gaze, but her teeth met sharply on her lower lip.

"I see that it resembles one that I have," she said.

"You still have yours?"

"Yes, you will find it in my desk drawer at home."

"Had you only the one knife, Miss Whitney?"

"I may have had others," indifferently. "I do not recall; I buy my painting and modeling supplies as I need them."

The coroner replaced the knife without further comment.

"You use azurea perfume, do you not?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What was your object in trying to rub out a blood stain on the front of Mr. Spencer's white shirt, Miss Whitney, while you were in the elevator?" asked Penfield.

Kathleen looked at him dully. "Wh-what d-did you say?" she stuttered.

For answer Penfield took from the pile of clothing on the table a white shirt and pointed to a discoloration on its glazed surface.

"When I first saw this shirt on Mr. Spencer it reeked of perfume," he said sternly. "Submitted to chemical tests, I find a blood stain was partially removed by azurea. Again I ask, what was your object in attempting to remove the blood stain?"

But Penfield spoke to deaf ears. Kathleen had fainted. Excitement waxed high in the room as Kathleen was carried out by Charles Miller, the first to reach her side, and placed in the tender care of Mrs. Whitney and the trained nurse. Waiting only to see her brought back to consciousness by Dr. Hall, Miller slipped back into the inquest room. Detective Mitchell was again in the witness chair.

"You made a thorough examination of Miss Whitney's room?" inquired the coroner.

"Yes, Doctor."

"And what did you find?"

"This torn note"--and the detective held up the pieces in each hand.

"Read its contents aloud," ordered Penfield.

"The Connecticut,

"Tuesday afternoon.

"KATHLEEN, MY DARLING:

"I implore you to reconsider--before it is too late. Consult your father's best interests before you reject _me_.

"Yours, with undying affection,

"SINCLAIR."

Mitchell paused after reading the signature, then continued. "Here is a sample of Mr. Spencer's handwriting, attested by his cousin, Captain Dunbar; the handwriting of the notes is identical, sir," and he placed the papers in Penfield's hand. Reading them carefully, the coroner passed them along to the jury for examination.

"Where did you find this note?" he asked Mitchell.

"Among Miss Whitney's painting materials in her sitting-room."

"What is that in your lap?" and the coroner pointed to a paper box. In answer Mitchell raised the cover and displayed a bouquet of faded cornflowers.

"I found it in Miss Whitney's sitting-room also," he stated. In tipping the box, the better to show its contents, a small piece of white muslin rolled to the floor. Quickly Penfield retrieved it. "I discovered that handkerchief secreted in the folds of Miss Whitney's blue foulard gown," added Mitchell, as the coroner spread open the handkerchief. It was badly mussed and its white center bore dark stains. Penfield sniffed the faint perfume still hanging about it; then without comment handed the handkerchief to the foreman of the jury.

"That is all, Mitchell," announced Penfield, and as the detective departed, he turned and addressed the jury. His summing up of the case was quick and to the point, and at the end the jurors silently filed into another room. It was long after seven o'clock, but no one stirred in the room, and the silence, which none cared to break, slowly grew oppressive. The long wait was finally terminated by the reappearance of the jury. Coroner Penfield rose and addressed them.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, "have you reached a verdict?"

"The jury find," answered the foreman, "that Kathleen Whitney is responsible for the death of Sinclair Spencer by poison on the morning of Wednesday, March 24, 1915, in her family residence in the city of Washington."

Quickly the crowded room emptied, reporters rushing madly for motors; not often had the district morgue housed a cause célèbre, and its sensational details had to be rushed on the wire. Charles Miller, separated from Foster by the sudden crowding of the doorways, waited to one side for him.

"Americans are an emotional people," commented a quiet voice at his elbow, and turning hastily Miller recognized Baron Frederic von Fincke. "One death more or less does not create a furor elsewhere."

"That depends on who dies," retorted Miller.

"True. If it should be a member of the Imperial Family"--Von Fincke's gesture was eloquent. "To them, all give way. We others are pawns."

CHAPTER XVIII

A PROPOSAL

The atmosphere inside the house matched the leaden skies outside in point of gloom, and even the wood fire, crackling on the hearth, failed to mitigate the air of restraint and cheerlessness which prevailed in the dining-room. The rain, falling in torrents, had brought with it a penetrating cold wind, a last reminder of winter, and Vincent, passing noiselessly to and from the pantry with sundry savory dishes, was grateful for the heat thrown out by the blazing logs.

Mrs. Whitney, whose eyes were red and inflamed from constant weeping, gave up her attempt to eat her breakfast and pushed her plate away.

"Let me give you some hot coffee, Winslow," she suggested. "Your cup must be stone cold, and you haven't touched your fish balls."

Absorbed in his newspaper, Whitney did not at first heed her request, but the pulling back of the portieres aroused him, and glancing over his shoulder, he saw Kathleen entering the room.

"Good morning, Dad," laying her hand for a second on his shoulder before taking the chair Vincent pulled out. "Just a cup of coffee, mother dear, that is all," and Kathleen unfolded her napkin.

"You told me upstairs you would remain in bed, Kathleen." Mrs. Whitney looked solicitously at her. "Are you prudent to tax your strength after all you were subjected to yesterday?"

"I couldn't stay still a moment longer." Kathleen's slender, supple fingers played with a piece of toast. "You need not bother to conceal the newspapers, Dad," as Whitney surreptitiously tucked the Herald and the Post behind his back. "I read them up in my room."

"My dearest, I'm sorry you did that." Whitney leaned over and clasped her hand tenderly. "I gave orders that...."

"Vincent is not to blame," broke in Kathleen. "I borrowed the nurse's newspapers before she left."

"There was no sense in your reading all this jargon," protested Whitney warmly. "And there is no need, Kathleen, of paying attention to one word published here. Your friends believe in you absolutely, as we do."

"Thank you, Dad." Kathleen returned the strong pressure of his hand, and leaning over, kissed Mrs. Whitney. "Bless both your dear loyal hearts." Her eyes brimmed with tears, and she dashed them impatiently away. "It was better that I should see the papers," she continued a moment later, "and know the world's unbiased opinion."

"Unbiased opinion in a newspaper!" Whitney laughed mirthlessly. "That and the millennium will arrive together. Have you everything you want, Kathleen?"

"Yes, Dad."

"Then you need not wait, Vincent. Now, Minna, what did you ask me a few minutes ago?"

"If you will have some hot coffee. Yes? Then send me your cup," and Mrs. Whitney, taking it from Kathleen, poured out the coffee and hot milk. As she returned the cup and saucer, she glanced carefully about the room, but Vincent had departed to the kitchen. Satisfied on that point, she lowered her voice to a confidential pitch. "I hear the servants are planning to leave."

"Who cares?" Whitney shrugged his shoulders. "There are better where they came from."

"Quite true," agreed Mrs. Whitney. "Then, will you give me their wages ..."

"Wages?" Whitney flushed with anger. "No, if the dirty dogs wish to leave us in the lurch without notice, they will not get one cent from me."

"They won't leave us," declared Kathleen. "At least, I am sure that Vincent and Rosa will not go. They have been with us too long."

"I only know what Henry told me he heard in the kitchen this morning," explained Mrs. Whitney.

"Oh, Henry!" exclaimed Kathleen contemptuously. "I wouldn't put any faith in what he says; he is forever making trouble in the kitchen. He is ..."

The violent ringing of the telephone bell interrupted her.

"I have finished my breakfast, I'll go," volunteered Mrs. Whitney, and she hastened into the pantry where a branch telephone had been installed for the use of the servants. Before the swing door closed tightly, they heard her say: "Oh, Kiametia ..."

"What is the reason the servants are so anxious to decamp?" asked Whitney, handing Kathleen the dish of fruit, which she declined.

"You forget this house has become a chamber of horrors." Kathleen's voice shook, and she paused to take a hasty swallow of hot coffee. "Possibly the presence of the detectives makes them nervous."

"Well, a sudden leave-taking from here will probably center the detectives' attention upon them more than if they stayed and did their work."

"That is highly probable. Tell me, Dad"--Kathleen regarded Whitney intently--"how is it that I am not in jail? Did not the coroner's jury convict me?"

"Their verdict read that you were responsible for Spencer's death, and as such you are under suspicion and will be held for the Grand Jury."

"Oh!" Kathleen shuddered slightly.

"I had no difficulty arranging bail," continued Whitney. "The officials themselves realize--must realize," he interjected, with bitter force--"there is little real evidence against you. The coroner's jury--the d----fools"--the words escaped between his clenched teeth--"to place faith in circumstantial evidence!" Whitney's clenched fist descended on the table with a force that made the goblets ring. "My dear, why, why did you try to whitewash Julie?"

"Because I knew she had nothing to do with Sinclair Spencer's death."

"You knew nothing of the sort"--with subdued violence. "You are totally wrong. That Julie ran away is confession of complicity in the crime."

"I don't believe Julie ran away; I do not"--meeting her father's angry eyes steadily. "I believe she was enticed away. I tell you, Dad, if this mystery is ever to be cleared, you must find...."

"Captain Miller," announced Vincent, drawing back the portières from the doorway, and Miller, emerging from the hall, advanced into the room.

Kathleen's coffee cup descended with a clatter on its saucer as her nerveless fingers released their hold, and placing one hand on the back of her chair to steady herself, she rose slowly to her feet.

"Senator Foster would like to speak to you a minute, Mr. Whitney," added Vincent. "He is waiting at the front door, sir."

"Certainly," Whitney shook Miller's hand cordially. "Excuse me a second, Captain, I'll be back in a jiffy," and he followed Vincent from the room.

Impulsively Miller stepped toward Kathleen, hands extended and eyes alight with passionate tenderness. "My love, my dear, dear love!"

"Stop!" Kathleen spoke in a dangerously low tone. "I must request you to leave this house at once."

"Kathleen!"

"You understand the English tongue?" Her cold repellent manner caused him to pause in uncertainty. "Or shall I translate my request into German?"

"I will not put you to that inconvenience," he retorted hotly; then his manner changed. "Ah, Kathleen, do not let us waste the precious seconds bickering. Tell me what I can do for you."

"_You_ ask me that?" Her tone was impossible to translate.

"Yes." Miller held her gaze, his handsome eyes speaking a language all their own. "You gave me the right, my darling, to protect you--and I _shall_ protect you."

Her strength suddenly deserting her, Kathleen sank down in her chair.

"You will protect me," she echoed. "_You?_"

Her tone stung him to the quick. "Yes--I," he said slowly. "Do you not realize the depth of my love? I would willingly sacrifice my career, my life for you--and count it no sacrifice."

"Would God I could believe you!" The cry was wrung from her, and she raised her trembling hands to brush away the blinding tears.

Miller dropped on one knee beside her. "My dearest, my heart's desire!" he whispered passionately, taking her hands prisoner. At his touch she shrank back, remembrance crowding upon her.

"Go!" she stammered. "I have kept faith; go, before I say too much."

Before Miller could answer he heard his name called, and the sound of rapid footsteps. With a bound he was on his feet, and pausing only long enough to whisper "Courage, Kathleen," he joined Winslow Whitney in the hall.

But Kathleen was hardly conscious of his departure. With an exceedingly bitter moan, she dropped her head upon her arms and cried as if her heart would break. Mrs. Whitney, entering from the pantry a second later,

paused aghast, then running to Kathleen, soothed her with loving word and hand back to some semblance of composure.

Miller found Winslow Whitney walking rapidly up and down the hall. He stopped at sight of the latter. "Come in the library," he said. "I've given instructions that we are not to be interrupted," closing the door and also pulling to the folding doors behind the portières leading to the dining-room. "Make yourself comfortable, Captain," producing a box of cigars. "Don't mind if I walk up and down; I think better when moving about."

"Same here," but Miller selected the most comfortable chair in the room and puffed slowly at his cigar, while never taking his eyes from his host. Neither man spoke for fully five minutes, then Whitney pulled up a chair and sat down near his companion.

"Have you seen Senator Foster today?" he inquired.

"Not to talk to; but I caught a glimpse of him coming here as I entered." Miller knocked the gathering ash from the end of his cigar. "I was with him at the inquest yesterday."

"I saw you both there." Whitney selected a cigar and, lighting it, sat back. "Did Foster happen to tell you that Sinclair Spencer had in his will made him executor of his estate?"

"No."

"Well, he came here today to tell me that, and also that Kathleen is mentioned in Spencer's will as residuary legatee."

"What!" Miller's surprise was shown in his face, which had grown suddenly white.

"Spencer evidently really cared for Kathleen," went on Whitney, paying no attention to his ejaculation. "A queer fellow, Spencer; I did not give him credit for possessing sincere feeling, except where he himself was concerned."

"Was Spencer wealthy?" The question shot from Miller against his will.

"Report says so; I never inquired, myself." Whitney puffed a cloud of smoke, and as it cleared away, turned impulsively to Miller. "I'm damned if I like Foster's manner to me today!" he burst out.

"Why, what happened?" Miller bent eagerly forward.

"I only asked him to postpone probating Spencer's will," began Whitney, laying down his cigar.

Miller's eyes opened. "Did he agree to it?"

"No--refused curtly." Whitney's eyes flashed. "And the manner of his refusal--rankles," he confessed.

"Your request was somewhat singular," commented Miller slowly.

"Nothing singular about it," retorted Whitney. "I was thinking of Kathleen when I made the request. Man, do you not see," and the haggard lines in his face deepened, "the instant that will is offered for probate its contents become public. And its publication now will but strengthen the suspicion already centered about Kathleen, by supplying a possible motive for Spencer's murder."

"Suspicion cannot injure the innocent," protested Miller.

"Oh, can't it! That's all you know about it," growled Whitney, wiping beads of moisture from his forehead. "So much for Foster's friendship when put to the test. I made it plain to him that my request was prompted

by my desire to shield Kathleen from further publicity."

"I understand, Mr. Whitney," said Miller gently.

"Yes, I believe you do," went on Whitney feverishly. "That an old friend should be the first to go back on me; there's the sting. We are a proud family, Miller, united in our affections." He cleared his throat of a slight huskiness. "I would have given everything I possess to have spared Kathleen that scene at the inquest yesterday; I never for a moment imagined"--He straightened up.--"I am going to move heaven and earth to clear Kathleen from this vile suspicion that she is in some way responsible for Sinclair Spencer's death."

"I'm with you, Mr. Whitney," Miller's voice rang out clear and strong, carrying conviction, and a flash of hope lighted Whitney's brooding eyes. "I love your daughter, sir, and came this morning to ask your consent to our marriage."

Whitney looked at him long and intently, and Miller bore the scrutiny without flinching, his direct gaze never shifting, and his strongly molded features set with dogged determination.

"You make this proposal, and at this time?" asked Whitney at last.

"Yes." Miller's hand tightened its grip on the arm of his chair. "Clouds can be dispelled, sir; and my faith in your daughter will never be shaken."

Without a word Whitney extended his hand, and Miller grasped it eagerly. "You have my consent, Captain," he said, the huskiness of his voice more pronounced. "I cannot, of course, answer for Kathleen; I would not force her acceptance of any man." He turned to relight his cigar, and Miller's swift change of expression escaped him. "Tell me, Captain," continued Whitney, tossing away the match. "What conclusions did you draw at the inquest?"

"I think the jury acted on inconclusive evidence," said Miller thoughtfully. "Before rendering any verdict they should have waited to hear Julie's testimony."

"You have hit the nail on the head," declared Whitney. "I firmly believe, in spite of the other servants' testimony, that Julie and Sinclair Spencer knew each other well, and his death is the result of a clandestine love affair with her."

"Love may have entered into it," acknowledged Miller. "But I think there is also another motive behind Spencer's murder, the significance of which we have not fully grasped."

"And that is--?"

Miller did not answer directly. "What motive inspired Spencer to feign drunkenness," he asked, "and when everyone was asleep, to steal over this house like a thief in the night?"

Whitney drummed impatiently on the desk. "There is but one apparent answer," he admitted reluctantly. "You believe that he was interested in my inventions?"

"I do; his actions certainly point to that conclusion."

Whitney shook his head. "His behavior that night would have been just the same if planning a clandestine meeting with Julie."

"But, my dear sir, he could have met Julie elsewhere with far less danger of discovery. Besides," Miller hesitated, "let us give the devil his due. Spencer was evidently very much attached to Kathleen. With her image before him, I do not believe he spared a thought for the French maid."

Whitney looked his disbelief. "In this instance, I cannot speak well of the dead," he said slowly. "I know too much of Spencer's past. He was not above courting the maid and the mistress at the same time."

"Well, at least Spencer was no fool; if he did court Julie, it was not done in this house." Miller tossed his cigar stub into the ash receiver. "It might be that he used the maid to assist him in securing information about your inventions."

"You may be right." Whitney started from his chair. "And Julie, perhaps believing in his protestations of affection at first, awoke to his duplicity, and took the occasion of his spying to kill him."

"Yes, that's about my idea."

"But--but--" Whitney turned bewildered eyes on his companion. "What prompted Spencer to desire to steal my inventions?"

"That we have still to learn. That he did try, I am as convinced as if I had seen him." Miller picked up another cigar. "And, Mr. Whitney, permit me to call attention to one very essential fact...."

"Go on," urged Whitney.

"That what Spencer failed to accomplish, others may."

"Nonsense."

"It is very far from nonsense." Miller's earnestness impressed Whitney. "I do not for one moment believe that Spencer was working alone."

"You hint at conspiracy?" Whitney frowned perplexedly.

"Call it that if you wish; only, sir, take every precaution to safeguard your inventions from prying eyes."

"I have, already."

"How, for instance?"

"With double locks, iron shutters, and electric wires, my workshop is hermetically sealed."

"Until a clever thief gains entrance." Miller laughed faintly. "The science of house-breaking keeps step with modern inventions to protect property. What one man can conceive another man can fathom."

"You may be right." Whitney took a short turn about the room, then stopped in front of his companion. "What precautions would you suggest?"

Miller did not answer immediately. "It is very likely that another attempt will be made to secure the drawings and specifications of your inventions, if not your models," he said finally. "And if on guard, you may not only catch the thief but Spencer's murderer."

"A good idea," acknowledged Whitney. "But how would you suggest going about to catch the thief?"

"By laying a plot for him; forget to lock your studio door occasionally, lay prepared paper inconspicuously about, and powder your tables and floor with fine dust. The thief will leave an indelible trail behind him."

"And walk off with all necessary data," answered Whitney skeptically. "As clever a thief as you paint will never leave that room, once he is inside it, without full knowledge of my inventions."

"The thief will not have an opportunity of stealing what he came for, because the specifications and drawings of your inventions will not

be there."

"Eh!" Whitney's cigar fell unheeded to the floor. "Where will they be?"

"In my possession."

Too astounded to speak, Whitney stared at his companion. It was over a minute before he recovered himself.

"Do you think I will trust you with the drawings and models of my latest inventions?" he asked.

"You did not withhold your consent when, a short time ago, I asked for Kathleen's hand in marriage," said Miller slowly. "Do you hold your inventions dearer than your daughter's future happiness, which you are willing to intrust to my care?"

Never taking his eyes from his companion's face Whitney stepped back. The seconds lengthened into minutes before he spoke. "Come upstairs," he said and, turning, made for the closed door.

CHAPTER XIX

THE YELLOW STREAK

Leaving the War Department; Detective Mitchell debated for a second whether to walk around the back of the White House grounds to the Municipal Building, or to go to Pennsylvania Avenue and take an east bound electric car. But there was no sign of let-up in the pelting rain, and pulling his coat collar up about his ears, he hastened toward the avenue, and at sight of an approaching car broke into a run. The usually empty sidewalks were filled with hurrying government employees, anxious to get their luncheon and return in the prescribed half-hour to the State, War, and Navy Departments, and the detective had some difficulty in dodging the pedestrians.

Seeing an opening among the lowered umbrellas, he stepped off the curb and dashed for the street car. He was almost by its side when the hoarse sound of a motor siren smote his ear, and glancing sideways, he saw a touring car bearing down upon him at full speed. In trying to spring backward his foot slipped on the wet asphalt and he sprawled forward on his knees. The automobile was almost upon him when strong hands jerked him safely to one side. Scrambling to his feet, Mitchell turned to look at the man whose strength and quickness had saved him from a nasty accident.

"Much obliged, Captain Miller," he said. "I owe you a great deal."

Miller stooped over and picked up the detective's hat. "Why don't you chaps arrest such speeders?" he inquired, pointing to the vanishing car.

"We do in most cases," returned Mitchell, brushing the mud from his trousers, and limping back to the sidewalk. "However, the driver of that car is exempt."

"Why?"

"We can't arrest a United States Senator."

"Ah, then you got his number." Miller led the way to the sidewalk.

"That car doesn't need a number to identify it," grumbled Mitchell. "Its color and shape are too distinctive. We on the force call it the 'Yellow Streak.' The car belongs to Senator Randall Foster; when he's at the wheel, the Lord help the pedestrians!"

"So it would seem," dryly. "Where are you going, Mitchell?" observing the detective's rather shaken appearance.

"To the Municipal Building."

"Suppose you come and lunch with me first at the Occidental," and the smile which accompanied the invitation was very persuasive. "It's near where you are going."

Mitchell had not lunched, and a hurried breakfast had been consumed before six o'clock. It was his hunger which had occasioned his haste to reach the Municipal Building and later a near-by café. His official business was not very pressing, and since meeting Miller at the Whitneys' two days before, he had heard of his attentions to Kathleen Whitney. The rumor had interested him as much as Miller's personality. Promptly he accepted Miller's invitation, and the two men boarded the next downtown car.

Within a short time they were both eating an appetizing lunch in the attractive restaurant of the Occidental. Just before the arrival of coffee and cheese, Mitchell sat back in his chair with a sigh of physical content. The Martini had warmed his chilled body, and the lassitude which comes after a hearty meal was stealing over him. Miller had proved an agreeable companion, able to talk upon any subject--except one, in spite of the detective's hints in its direction. Their table was in one corner apart from the others, and there was no danger of their conversation being overheard. Taking in their isolated position at a glance, the detective changed his tactics.

"I saw you at the Spencer inquest," he said abruptly, applying a match to his cigar. "What do you think of the verdict?"

"What every sane man thinks," answered Miller. "That the prosecution will have to secure more material and tangible proof before it can secure an indictment by the Grand Jury."

"I'm not so certain of that," responded the detective, ruffled by Miller's casual manner. "Our evidence against Miss Whitney was pretty conclusive."

"It would have been just as conclusive if applied to any other inhabitant of the Whitney house that night."

"Hardly." Mitchell smiled broadly. "I fear your friendship blinds you to the danger in which Miss Whitney stands."

Miller refrained from answering until their waiter had served the coffee and cheese and departed. "Circumstantial evidence will not always convict--fortunately," he said, helping himself to the Camembert. "What have you proved...."

"That Spencer was Miss Whitney's rejected lover," broke in Mitchell. "That the knife belonged to her; that she tried to remove incriminating blood stains on his shirt with her perfumed handkerchief; and that he held in his hand a flower, possibly broken from the bouquet which she was wearing at the time."

"It sounds formidable," commented Miller quietly. "But there are a number of flaws. You have not absolutely proved that the knife belonged to Miss Whitney, only proved that it is probable she might have owned it. Wait"--as Miller started to interrupt. "The deputy coroner testified that Spencer was killed by cyanide of potassium."

"Which, as Spencer did not swallow it, was administered by aid of the knife," retorted Mitchell hastily.

"The deputy coroner said he found no trace of the poison on the knife blade." Miller paused to refill Mitchell's coffee cup. "Secondly,

cyanide of potassium is not a drug which Miss Whitney would be apt to have around."

"I saw a half-filled bottle of it in Whitney's work-shop last Wednesday."

"Quite true, I saw it there myself," admitted Miller. "I also saw that Whitney kept his studio workshop under lock and key."

"To outsiders; but it is just possible he is not so strict about the members of his household, his testimony to the contrary," argued Mitchell. "The point is not well taken, Captain, and even if it were," he stirred his coffee thoughtfully, "Miss Whitney did not need to enter her father's workshop to secure the cyanide of potassium; I find she buys all his photographic supplies at a shop not far from here, and recently purchased a new supply of cyanide."

"Purely circumstantial evidence," responded Miller, keeping his expression unaltered by an effort. The detective's last statement had startled him. "In regard to the flower which Spencer held in his hand: you say it was probably broken from the bouquet which she wore at the time of committing the crime--I am, for the sake of argument only, admitting that she might be guilty. The medical evidence went to prove that Spencer was killed between three and four in the morning; it is straining probabilities to claim that a young girl, in donning her wrapper, pinned on a bouquet of flowers."

"How do you know she was not fully dressed? It was not so late in the morning; she could have gone to bed after the crime, or she may not have gone to bed at all."

"All supposition," scoffed Miller.

"Not quite all." The detective, nettled by his jeering smile, spoke hastily. "On further inquiry I learned from one of the servants today that Miss Whitney had on the same dress Wednesday morning, when her screams aroused the household, which she wore at dinner the night before."

"Ah, indeed?" Miller's smile had ceased to be skeptical, it was strained. "And which servant imparted that information to you?"

"Henry, the chauffeur."

"For a chauffeur, Henry seems to know a great deal about what transpires inside the Whitney house," observed Miller thoughtfully. "Tell me, Mitchell, what motive do you attribute to Miss Whitney for the killing of Sinclair Spencer?"

Mitchell looked uncomfortable, and it was not until Miller repeated his question that he spoke. "I believe Spencer persuaded Miss Whitney to meet him clandestinely that night, and threatened to compromise her if she refused again to marry him."

"Oh, come!" Miller spoke more roughly than he realized. "Wake up, Mitchell; you've been reading penny dreadfuls. Try and think up a motive which will hold water."

The detective flushed. "That is quite motive enough," he said. "If Miss Whitney takes the stand in her own defense she can, on that motive, enter a plea of killing to protect her honor...."

"And any jury in the country would acquit her," broke in Miller. "She would...."

"Thus escape the gallows," finished the detective.

"But I can suggest an even better solution of the problem," put in Miller suavely, although his fingers itched to choke his companion.

"And that is--?"

"That the detective force find the guilty party."

Mitchell suppressed a smile. "And where would you suggest that we hunt for this guilty party?" he asked. "Provided he or she is still at large, and not out on bail under indictment."

"Search among the men and women who spent Wednesday night at the Whitneys', servants as well as guests."

"Captain," in his earnestness Mitchell leaned across the table, "it is contrary to all records of crime that a man or woman will commit murder without motive...."

"You forget homicidal maniacs."

"True, but they do not belong in this category," protested Mitchell. "No person in that house, except Miss Whitney, had a motive for killing Spencer."

"Motives are not always on the surface; I advise you to investigate ..."

"Yes--?" eagerly.

"Is it true that arc lights have been installed at the United States navy yards and arsenals, which make them as light as day on the darkest night?"

"I believe so." Mitchell glanced perplexedly at his companion. Why was he changing the conversation?

"And that visitors are not encouraged to loiter on government reservations?"

"I believe such an order has been issued," conceded the detective.

"Also visitors are forbidden at the Government Radio Station at Arlington?"

"Yes."

"And still there is a leak--government secrets are secrets no longer."

"How do you know that, Captain?" and the detective shot a look full of suspicion at him.

"I only know what Senator Foster has told me," carelessly. "I believe Foster's advice has been sought in the matter."

"And why did he confide in you?"

"He desired my help," responded Miller. "Seemed to think my opinion might be worth something, but, honestly, Mitchell, I can't see anything to this secret leak business--the Secret Service operatives are putting a scare over on the government."

"It's more than that, sir. No more coffee," and the detective, his sudden doubts dispelled by Miller's sunny smile, leaned back once more in his chair. "It seems that officials here are awakening to the realization that government secrets are being betrayed. If the American troops are ordered to a certain point on the border, the order is known in Mexico before it is executed. It is the same with coded communications to Foreign Powers. The movements of our fleet are known to foreign naval attachés even before the maneuvers are carried out. The whereabouts of the smallest torpedo boat and submarine is no secret--to any but the American people."

"Is that so?" Miller looked politely incredulous. "And is the Secret

Service not investigating the matter?"

"Sure; they'll handle it all right." Mitchell twisted about in his chair. "At present, Captain, my entire attention is claimed by the Spencer murder. Where would you suggest that I begin my search among Whitney's household for a motive which will explain the murder?"

"Why not try and find Julie, the French maid?"

The eagerness died out of Mitchell's face. "We are trying," he said. "But we can convict Miss Whitney without her evidence."

"So you think Julie's testimony will implicate Miss Whitney still further in the crime?"

"I do. I have no doubt she is accessory after the fact, and, provided with funds by Miss Whitney, stole away so as not to give evidence against her."

"You have a curious conception of human nature, Mitchell," was Miller's only comment as he signed to their waiter to bring his check. He did not speak again until he and the detective were in the street. "You have overlooked a very important point, Mitchell, in your investigation of Spencer's murder."

"What is that?"

"You apparently believe that Miss Whitney murdered Spencer between three and four in the morning and then went back to her bedroom ..."

"Go on," urged Mitchell.

"At the inquest all witnesses testified that Miss Whitney was the first to find Spencer and that she was in the elevator with him." Miller spoke with impressiveness. "Even the most hardened criminal would not have deliberately walked into that elevator and shut himself in with the man he had murdered a short time before--and yet, you argue that a highly strung, delicately nurtured girl did exactly that. It's preposterous!"

"It does sound cold-blooded," admitted the detective. "It is just possible that after committing the crime, she lost consciousness and remained in the elevator all night...."

"Talk sense!" ejaculated Miller disgustedly and, without waiting to hear the detective's thanks for his luncheon, turned on his heel and hurried up Fourteenth Street. Mitchell watched his tall, erect figure out of sight with absorbed attention.

"I'd give a lot to know who he suspects murdered Spencer," he muttered under his breath, and started for the Municipal Building.

As Miller approached his hotel, he thought he saw Foster's yellow touring car move away from the ladies' entrance. After procuring his mail he went at once to his room. He was about to open his letters when his eyes fell on an open drawer of his desk. Putting down the bundle in his hand, he carefully investigated every pigeonhole and drawer. The papers he looked for were missing.

Rising quickly, Miller examined the windows of his room and bathroom. They were securely fastened on the inside. In deep thought he went out into the hall to where the floor chambermaid and a companion were sitting in full view of his door.

"Have you been here long?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the elder girl. "I've been on duty here ever since noon, and Mary," laying her hand on her companion, "was here all the morning."

"Has either of you seen anyone enter my bedroom?"

"No, sir, only yourself, sir," answered the first speaker, and Mary echoed her words.

CHAPTER XX

THE AWAKENING

The prospect was uninviting at any time and to Julie, who had stared at the rows of slatternly kept backyards until she grew familiar with each battered garbage can, the sight was hateful. The rain had driven even the starved alley cats to cover, and with a sigh forlorn in its wretchedness, she turned from the window and contemplated her nicely furnished bedroom. The two days she had been there had passed on leaden feet. Captain Miller's money had secured her a haven of refuge--food and a roof over her head--but had deprived her of liberty and the daily newspaper. The first had been the only restriction he had placed upon her acceptance of his bounty. His plea--protect Kathleen--had found a ready echo in her loyal heart, and blindly she had obeyed him.

The first day had passed in numb resignation, then had followed the reaction. As she recovered from bodily fatigue there came a quickening of the blood, and in spite of the cold driving rain, a longing for the out-of-doors possessed her.

Since the breaking out of the great world war, with its invasion of Belgium and her beloved France, she had become an inveterate newspaper reader, and during the days of "extras" she had formed the habit of depending upon them. From day to day, month to month, she had followed the ever shifting, always fighting forces on the firing line, and her knowledge of the situation in Europe would have shamed some of the students of the times. Her own personal loss and agonizing sorrow had been engulfed in her acceptance of the world's tragedy, but it had made adamant her desire to serve France.

Forty-eight hours had passed and she had not seen a daily paper. She had asked her landlady, Mrs. Robinson, for the loan of her Star, only to be told that Mrs. Robinson never took it. She had thereupon presented her with three cents and asked her to secure the morning papers. But Mrs. Robinson, on her return from market earlier in the day, had forgotten to comply with her request. The one servant, when appealed to in the hall, had promised to get her an evening Times, but on inquiry, Mrs. Robinson had informed her that the woman had finished her work and gone home.

What was happening in Europe? Had the Allies attempted the drive hinted at during the winter months? Had Italy cast her lot with the Allies? Julie's restlessness increased as each question remained unanswered. From whom could she get a newspaper? Mrs. Robinson had assured her that she was the only boarder in the house, and on the one occasion on which she had left her room, she had seen no one but the servant. The latter had gone out, and Mrs. Robinson had not responded to her call ten minutes before. Julie sighed again and gazed wearily out over the backyards; then a thought came to her. Why not go to a front window and hail a newsboy; there might be one in the vicinity?

With brightened eyes Julie left her room and, walking down the hall, turned the knob of the door opposite her own. It would not open. Bethinking herself, Julie rapped timidly on the door panel; then receiving no reply, she rapped again. No voice nor footstep responded to the summons; apparently the room was empty. Considerably perplexed, Julie turned and made her way to the second bedroom floor. Quickly she rapped at each closed door and tried its knob. Each door was locked and her repeated raps went unanswered. In the fourth floor she met with the same results, and, returning again to the stairs, she made her way down them

almost at a run.

The silent and apparently empty house frightened her, and it was with a fast beating heart that she made her way to the ground floor and into the drawing-room. Its sumptuous furnishings astounded her. Mrs. Robinson had neither the air nor the well-dressed appearance of a woman of wealth. From her swarthy skin and black eyes and hair Julie had taken her for a Creole.

The stair door leading to the basement was not locked, and Julie laid a hesitating hand on it. Should she seek Mrs. Robinson in the kitchen? Almost without her own volition she released her hold on the knob and retraced her steps to the front door. She needed air; the silent house was getting on her nerves. She suddenly remembered the noises she had heard in the night and which, in the morning, she had attributed to her feverish condition.

Noislessly she removed the night latch and slipped into the vestibule. She stood for a moment filling her lungs with the cold refreshing air, then bethinking herself, stepped behind the closed section of the outer door. She must not be seen by a chance policeman. As she stepped back her foot encountered a small bundle, and she looked down. Joy of joys! It was a folded newspaper. As she opened it she saw in the dim light of dusk the red letter stamping: "Subscriber's copy." What had Mrs. Robinson meant by telling her she did not take newspapers?

Not pausing to worry further over that problem, she hastily scanned the first page of the five-thirty edition of the Times; and her eyes dilated as she read the scare headings:

SPENCER'S WILL OFFERED FOR PROBATE

KATHLEEN WHITNEY, CONVICTED BY CORONER'S JURY, IS RESIDUARY LEGATEE OF MURDERED CLUBMAN

SOCIETY GIRL OUT ON BAIL FURNISHED BY SENATOR FOSTER

Too stunned to move or cry out, Julie stared dumbly at the newspaper. Kathleen Whitney, her kind friend rather than employer, was convicted--then her absence had not benefited her? Captain Miller's advice had been wrong. Her faith in him was misplaced. To what had he brought her? She cast a terrified look at the partly closed door behind her. Better jail than--The thought of jail brought her whirling senses back to Kathleen. But Kathleen was not in jail; the paper stated that she was out on bail. If at home, she could be reached.

Utterly regardless of her hatless condition, she dragged the shawl, previously borrowed from Mrs. Robinson, over her head, and closing the front door, bolted up the street, the newspaper still clutched in her hand. Darkness was closing in, and the rain had driven the few pedestrians usually in that location scurrying to their homes. Julie was five or more blocks from the Robinson house when she saw a yellow touring car draw up to the opposite curb and a man spring out. He paused for a second to examine one of the lamps and its light threw his face in bold relief against the darkness. It was Henry, the chauffeur. Julie shrank back behind a tree-box, muffling her face in the friendly shawl. But the precaution was unnecessary, for Henry did not glance toward her as he hastened around the touring car and entered a near-by house.

For some seconds Julie stood peering doubtfully in the direction he had gone. Why was Henry driving a car other than the Whitneys'? Had they, by chance, discharged him? Or was he up to some particular deviltry? Her latent distrust of Henry and her suspicions as to his nationality surged uppermost, and not waiting to count the cost, she darted across the street and peered into the empty touring car. Opening the door, Julie climbed into the tonneau and, seating herself on the floor, pulled the heavy laprobe over her. Thus protected, she sat in the darkened interior of the car for what seemed an interminable time. The slam of a door and the sound of approaching footsteps caused her to half rise and peep

through the storm window. At sight of Henry standing by the bonnet lighting his pipe she sank hastily back and secreted herself under the laprobe. His pipe drawing to his satisfaction, Henry, with barely a backward glance into the dark tonneau, stowed himself behind the steering wheel and started the car up the street.

Baron Frederic von Fincke looked from his bank book to his companion, a pleasant-featured, gray-haired man. "The balance is low," he said.

"I come with unlimited financial credit," and the short, stockily built man drew from an inside pocket a leather cardcase and passed it to the Baron, who read its contents carefully before returning it.

"I am glad you have arrived, Hartzmann," he volunteered. "As a diplomatic center Washington is dull. I call at the State Department--no news; it is not in touch with secret history."

"My dear Baron, what can you expect?" Hartzmann shrugged his shoulders amusedly. "Trained diplomats do not confide state secrets to a premier who derives his income from a newspaper and the lecture platform."

"True. Diplomat and politician are synonymous in America; oil and water would sooner mix in the Old World." Von Fincke carefully replaced his bank book in a dispatch-box. "Your friend, Captain von Mueller, has won many friends during his sojourn in Washington."

"A brilliant man; he will go far." Hartzmann rubbed his hands with satisfaction. "His work in England will not be forgotten. He has courage, and the instinct of the hunter; he never blunders."

"High praise," said von Fincke. "I am the more glad to hear it because I have intrusted a most delicate mission to him--the securing of Whitney's latest invention"--with peculiar meaning. "My other efforts in that line having proved failures." Quickly he forestalled the question he saw coming, "And your plan of campaign, Hartzmann, what of it?"

"First, let me give you this," taking several papers from his vest pocket. "It is a list of factories throughout the United States supplying munitions of war to the Allies. You may find it useful."

"Thanks." Von Fincke read the paper with minute care before placing it inside his dispatch-box. "A concerted movement has been commenced by us to secure a majority control of many of these plants."

"In several instances it is planned to buy the great gun and munition factories outright," explained Hartzmann. "Our agents are already trying to engage the output of munitions until 1916, so that even if the United States requires powder and high explosives, it will be impossible to supply the Government."

"Anything, anything to stop the supply going to the Allies." Von Fincke emphasized his words with a characteristic gesture.

"Our work is already telling." Hartzmann carefully replaced several papers in an inside pocket. "In Russia, the men of the first Russian reserve have to wait before engaging the enemy until the Russian soldiers in the outer trenches are dead so as to get their guns and ammunition to fight with."

"Excellent!" and von Fincke beamed with pleasure.

"I shall instigate strikes in the munitions factories," continued Hartzmann. "Tell me, how have you succeeded with the passports?"

Von Fincke's expression changed. "Not so well as I hoped. The Secret Service are active in investigating all that are issued. It is difficult to circulate them under such espionage."

"It is risky," agreed Hartzmann. "Our agents have opened headquarters in

New York. We hope to destroy by means of fire bombs British ships clearing from American ports."

"If that is accomplished, it will lend material aid to our war zone policy," exulted von Fincke.

"And later on we hope to establish the American seaports as bases for a fleet of naval auxiliaries, loaded with supplies for our swift submarines and cruisers. I am making arrangements for taking care of the necessary clearance papers."

"Excellent!" ejaculated von Fincke for the second time, and opened a notebook which he took from his dispatch-box. "Our reservists in this country report regularly. Under the guise of rifle clubs they keep themselves in excellent practice. Bodies of them are unobtrusively seeking employment along the Canadian border."

"Well done; it is a wise move." Hartzmann helped himself to a cigar. "What about this Spencer mystery, Baron? As our agent in Mexican affairs he received a small fortune. Does not his death come at a most unfortunate moment?"

Von Fincke pursed up his lips. "No. Spencer was a good tool, but sometimes too inquisitive; however, I shall not be sorry if Miss Whitney receives the full penalty for her crime." The two men regarded each other in silence for a brief second, then von Fincke added: "From reports which have reached me, I judge the mine is well laid, and Mexico will yet prove troublesome to her northern neighbor."

"And useful to us," mused Hartzmann. "The United States when angry with Germany will make war--on Mexico."

"Perhaps," skeptically, "but to me it appears intervention in Mexico will hang fire until ..."

"Engineered," Hartzmann smiled meaningly. "Huerta will leave shortly for the Panama-Pacific Exposition, and then ..." Not completing his sentence, he pointed to a paragraph near the bottom of the first page of the Times which lay spread on the table by him. "The Sisters in Unity, I see, is a strictly neutral organization for peace at any price."

"The dear ladies!" Mockingly von Fincke's hand rose in salute. "They are the best propagandists in the country, and Senator Foster proves an able advocate of peace--when urged by a woman."

"He is a clever speaker," agreed Hartzmann.

"Most men in public life have their uses. Have you nothing to report of the pernicious activities of the United States Government?"

Without replying von Fincke pressed the button of his electric bell. "Is Heinrich here?" he asked a moment later as his servant entered.

"Yes, Baron."

"Then show him in." Von Fincke turned back to his guest. "A clever man, Heinrich, and useful. Come in," as a discreet tap sounded on the door; and the chauffeur, carefully closing the door, saluted. "Any news of the Atlantic fleet, Heinrich?"

"Its departure for the Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco via the Panama Canal has been indefinitely postponed."

"The Department must have awakened to the fact that if sent there the fleet would have to return by rail," growled von Fincke. "There is not enough coal in California at present to supply the fleet--the battleships and cruisers could not escape from attack, but might even be captured at the dock."

"Have you learned where the fleet will be sent?" asked Hartzmann, watching the chauffeur narrowly.

"It is to go to New York for a grand review, Herr Captain."

"Ah, a mobilization?"

"No, Herr Captain; I think not. The reserve fleet will be missing."

"Will the President review the fleet?"

"It is so believed, Herr Captain."

Von Fincke, who had been silently eyeing his companions, stood up. "Would that not give us an opportunity to bottle up the fleet in the North River by slipping down one of our biggest ocean steamers and sinking her in the channel?"

"It might be done," but Hartzmann looked doubtful. "The Harbor Police of New York are vigilant. I fear the warping of a great steamer from her berth would attract instant attention."

"Not if properly engineered, Hartzmann." A soft tap at the door interrupted von Fincke. "Come in," he called.

"Captain von Mueller," announced the valet, and von Fincke advanced eagerly to meet the newcomer.

"Welcome, Herr Captain. I hoped that you would get my note in time."

"I found it on my return to the hotel. Hartzmann, well met." Von Mueller returned the older man's firm clasp. "It is some years...."

"Years? What are they when old friends foregather," exclaimed Hartzmann. "Let us sit and talk."

"Wait, wait," remonstrated von Fincke. "Heinrich," turning to the chauffeur, who stood respectfully waiting, "did you learn the strength of the fleet?"

"Of the thirty-five United States battleships, only twenty-one are in commission and ready for emergency," he said. "Of these twenty-one three have broken shafts, and the fourth is a turbine engine battleship, which needs overhauling."

"Is this all the fighting strength of the United States navy?" questioned Hartzmann, jotting down the figures in a notebook.

"No, Herr Captain; there are seventy fighting craft; but not in commission and all require overhauling. Half of the submarines will not--er--'sub,' so to speak." A ghost of a smile crossed Heinrich's lips. "The complement of torpedo vessels has been reduced from fifteen to twenty-five per cent, and the Atlantic Fleet needs five thousand men."

"Interesting data," said von Mueller. "I congratulate you, Heinrich. What of the army?"

"Nothing definite to report today, Herr Captain. If rumor speaks truly, discontent will shortly reduce the standing army to a man and a mule."

"A mule can fight on occasions," laughed von Mueller.

"But not against trained men, backed up by field guns firing in one hour two hundred thousand shells carrying high explosives," boasted Hartzmann triumphantly. "Weapons such as these, von Mueller, alter the face of nature as well as the fate of nations."

"Any further news tonight, Heinrich?" asked von Fincke.

"No, Baron." The chauffeur saluted. "Any orders?"

"A moment," broke in von Mueller. "I will be at the Whitney residence tonight, Heinrich; see that I am admitted," he added, observing the slight change in the chauffeur's expression.

"It can be arranged, Herr Captain," hastily. "I was but thinking of Julie--the French she-devil. Should she come ..."

"She will not return." Von Mueller spoke with confidence. "I have convinced her that she will better protect Miss Whitney by remaining in hiding, thus directing attention to herself as the criminal."

"But will she not read the papers?" touching the Times.

"No; the landlady will keep them from her."

"The police are ransacking the town for her," persisted Heinrich.

"They will not find Julie"--von Mueller lowered his voice. "They never investigate Robinson's."

"So!" Von Fincke elevated his eyebrows, and his smile was not pleasant.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FINGER PRINT

Kathleen Whitney breathed inward thanks when dinner was over. It had been a trying ordeal on top of an agonizing day. Cloistered in her room with only her sad thoughts for company, she had been relieved to find that Miss Kiametia Grey had been prevailed upon by Mrs. Whitney to prolong her afternoon visit to include a family dinner. But the spinster's endeavor to divert her by relating society gossip finally palled, and! she permitted her thoughts to stray to other scenes.

"Did you receive your invitation to the Morton reception, Kathleen?" asked Miss Kiametia, breaking off her conversation with Mrs. Whitney with her customary abruptness, and startling Kathleen back to the present.

"Yes--no; I don't know," was her confused reply.

"It is here." Mrs. Whitney went into the library and returned with a large envelope.

"What night?" Miss Kiametia took the card and examined its heavily embossed surface with interest. "Nouveau riche stamped all over it, as well as R. S. V. P. --'Real Slick Vittles, People,'" and she laughed disdainfully.

"All the trimmings." Mrs. Whitney replaced the card in its envelope. "I have written our regrets. I understand the reception is given to announce the engagement of Mona Morton to some South American Monte Cristo."

"Speaking of engagements," Whitney turned to the spinster, "what about you and Randall Foster, Kiametia?"

"I shall never marry." Miss Kiametia's half bantering tone dropped, and the eyes she turned to Kathleen were shadowed with a haunting regret. "The habits of a life-time cannot be broken."

"Oh, Kiametia!" exclaimed Mrs. Whitney in open disappointment. "Senator Foster is splendid--and I had hoped--why_ do you discourage his attentions?"

"Can't stand the way he wears his hair," announced Miss Kiametia with an air of finality which warned against further discussion.

"Marry him and make him change his barber," advised Whitney rising. "I have to go out, Minna; you and Kathleen must not wait up for me. Good night, Kiametia; Henry is downstairs, he can take you home in the car, if you wish. See you tomorrow," and he moved toward the door. After a brief hesitation Kathleen followed him into the hall.

"Must you go out, Dad?" she asked helping him with his overcoat. "It is still stormy tonight, and I feel lonely"--her voice broke, and turning Whitney impulsively took her in his arms.

"My darling little girl." He stopped and steadied his voice as he kissed her tenderly. "There, don't worry, trust old Dad to put things straight--as he did your broken dollies. Go early to bed, dear, and get some rest."

"Rest!" Kathleen strove to suppress all trace of bitterness. "Now, don't have me on your mind; come home early," and she returned his kiss and went slowly back into the drawing-room, as the front door closed after her father.

"We are going up to my boudoir, Kathleen; won't you come, dear?" asked Mrs. Whitney.

"Not just now, mother; I want to talk to Vincent when he gets the table cleared away."

"I envy you, Vincent," chimed in Miss Kiametia. "Such an excellent servant. Oh, Minna, don't go to the elevator; suppose we walk upstairs."

Left by herself Kathleen went in search of Vincent. He was not in the pantry, but judging by the still unwashed dishes that he was probably eating his supper in the kitchen, she refrained from calling him upstairs, and walked listlessly back into the drawing-room.

Sick at heart, utterly discouraged, she threw herself down on the large sofa and sank back among the pillows. Throughout the long day she had tried to banish all thought of Charles Miller. It was hopeless; his image was in her heart as well as before her mental vision. To some women it is given to love lightly, tasting but the essence, while to others love is a lifetime of steadfast devotion. And that winter had brought to Kathleen her one great passion; for weal or for woe she had given her heart to Charles Miller, and she must drain the cup to the bitter dregs.

With the gradual awakening to the belief that Charles Miller was really a blackguard, a--she shuddered, and raised her hands as if to ward off an overwhelming horror. And he had dared to approach her that morning with loving words on his lips. His eyes had met hers frankly--there had been no effort to avoid, no show of fear--no, he was only facing a loyal woman. Kathleen choked back a moan. Truly, he understood the art of dissimulation. If she had not known of his duplicity, of his guilt, his expression as he addressed her that morning would have proclaimed him innocent of all wrongdoing. His expression, ah, it had been that which had sowed a little seed of hope in her heart. Perhaps she could sketch his face as he appeared that morning, again catch the expression that inspired confidence in spite of all.

She sat bolt upright and glanced eagerly about for a scrap of paper and a pencil. The white back of a magazine on a lamp table caught her eye and she went toward it. By the lamp lay Miss Kiametia's gold mesh purse, vanity box, and pencil. Kathleen snatched up the dangling baubles and the magazine and returned to the sofa. If only she could get her impression down on paper before remembrance faded! She could copy it at her leisure. She jerked feverishly at the gold pencil, and as she pulled it out laid its point on the white paper--and then sat petrified. It was a hypodermic needle. Some seconds passed before she moved; then she raised the gold cylinder--outwardly it resembled a pencil, inside were concealed the

syringe and needle. With anxious haste she manipulated its delicate mechanism, and slipped back the needle to its hiding place.

Forgotten for the moment was her own problem. Brilliant, gifted Kiametia Grey a drug fiend--Oh, the pity of it! In the light of her discovery Kathleen remembered many idiosyncrasies which the drug habit would explain; often that winter she had found Miss Kiametia dozing in her chair at the theater, at dinners, in motors, but had put it down to over-fatigue from too much social gayety. Miss Kiametia's variable likes and dislikes, her sudden whims and fancies, her irritability--all were traceable to the same cause.

The sound of her name caused Kathleen to raise her head with a start. Henry, the chauffeur, was standing just inside the hall door.

"Beg pardon, Miss Kathleen," he said. "Mrs. Whitney wished me to tell you that Miss Grey will spend the night here and has retired to her bedroom. And I was to ask you if you had any orders for the motor tomorrow."

"No, none, thanks. As you go downstairs, tell Vincent that I wish to see him."

"Vincent has gone, Miss Kathleen." Meeting her quick glance, he added, "It is his evening out."

"Oh! Please ask Rosa to stop in my room before she goes to bed."

"Very good, Miss Kathleen." As he turned to leave, the loud buzz of the front doorbell sounded. Not waiting to hear the directions Kathleen called after him, Henry darted into the hall.

Picking up Miss Kiametia's gold purse and the hypodermic needle, Kathleen replaced them on the table, but halfway to the hall door she hesitated. Should she not take them to Miss Kiametia? Suppose Henry, for instance, should take it into his head to examine them? At the thought Kathleen's face hardened, and she returned to pick up Miss Kiametia's property. Henry's voice from the doorway arrested her.

"Captain Miller," he announced, and retired.

Kathleen stood as if carved from stone, every vestige of color stricken from her. If her life had depended upon it, she could not have turned around.

"Have you no word for me?" asked the familiar voice, and Miller stepped in front of her, his wistful eyes pleading for him. But Kathleen was mute. Slowly, unwillingly his eyes dropped before her level gaze and rested finally on the gold baubles in her hand. "Why do you not wear my ring, Kathleen?"

The question stung her out of the bewildered trance into which his unexpected appearance had thrown her.

"The ring was returned to you for good and sufficient reasons," she said icily. "That you choose to ignore these reasons does not affect the issue. Will you leave this house, or shall I ring for the servant?"

"Kathleen, are you mad?" He whitened to the lips. "Think what you are to me, dearly beloved; your words cut me like a knife."

"Your similes are unfortunate," she stammered, with dry lips. "I do not use knives. I leave that for others, the coroner's jury to the contrary."

"Do you think the coroner's jury influenced my judgment, sweetheart? Shame--I have more faith than you. I know that you are innocent of Spencer's death."

"You have every reason to know that I am innocent." Kathleen was thoroughly roused. "It is not a question of faith on your part,"

significantly. "I see no use in these discussions. It is better that we do not meet. Again I ask you to go--forever."

Without replying he turned and paced the room rapidly, hands in pocket, head bent forward. Kathleen watched him with burning eyes and aching heart. To outward seeming he had the attributes which make for success. What mad blood-lust had made him throw the world away?

"Suppose I accede to your unreasonable request, Kathleen," he said, stopping before her. "Will you do something for me?"

"Yes," huskily.

"Then get from your father the specifications and drawings of his latest invention for me."

As if she had not heard aright, Kathleen stared at him.

"Wh-what is it you ask?" she stammered.

"The plans of your father's _latest_ invention," patiently. "I do not mean the camera."

"Either you or I are mad," she looked at him dazedly. "Do you realize that my father would not give me those plans--that I should have to steal them."

"Expediency knows no law," he muttered, not meeting her eyes. "Call it borrowing." Kathleen shrank back appalled.

"Good God! That you should be so base!" she cried. "For more than forty-eight hours I have closed my eyes to reason; deluded myself that you acted from temporary mental aberration--that Sinclair Spencer's death was unpremeditated. My impulse was to help--to save. Ah, you wooed me well this winter." Her voice broke and she drew a long quivering breath. "It is a pitiful thing to kill a woman's love. Some day, perhaps, I shall be grateful to you. Go!"

He flinched at the scorn in her voice, but stood his ground doggedly. "Not until I get the drawings and specifications of the invention," he answered.

The slamming of the front door caused Kathleen to look in that direction, and Henry's entrance the next instant stayed the words on her parted lips.

"A special delivery for you, Miss Kathleen," he said, "from the State Department."

Kathleen took the proffered envelope mechanically.

"Wait, Henry," steadying her voice. "When Captain Miller calls again, he is not to be admitted, under any pretense."

"Very good, Miss Kathleen," and concealing his curiosity, the chauffeur moved swiftly away.

There was a pause which Miller broke. "Read your letter," he said composedly. "I can wait."

Kathleen was on the point of collapse; desperately she clung to her remnant of composure. Hardly conscious of her action, she tore open the outer envelope, and read the brief statement that the letter inclosed had been sent to her, care of the Department of State. With some stirring of curiosity not unmingled with dread, she examined the contents of the second envelope. It read:

"United Service Club,

"London, England.

"MY DEAR MISS WHITNEY:

"I send the inclosed, forwarded to me by Major Seymour, who was until recently a prisoner in Germany. My nephew, John Hargraves, was killed in action.

"Very truly yours,

"Percival Hargraves."

John dead! Her loyal friend dead--and killed in action! Through a blur of tears Kathleen read the stained scrap of paper inclosed in the Englishman's note:

"DEAR KATHLEEN:

"I saw Karl in London at Victoria Station. I swear it was he--warn Uncle--Kathleen ... Kathleen...."

Shaken with grief Kathleen raised her head and looked at her companion sitting immovable in his chair. If he felt any interest in the letter and her emotion, he did not evince it. Three years before, he, she, and John Hargraves had been friends in Germany. John, the soul of honor, loyal and unselfish in his friendship, had laid down his young life for his country. His last dying word had been of her--to warn her.... Kathleen stood erect, wrath drying the tears which affection had brought. John had seen Karl in London in war times; there was but one answer to the puzzle.

"Captain Karl von Mueller," she said cuttingly, "to use the name by which I knew you abroad, do you wish my father's invention for Germany?"

"I do." Rising quietly, he faced her, stern and unyielding. "Why dissemble any longer? Your father promised to sell it to us; then went back on his given word. In handing me the invention you will but redeem his pledge."

"You have a strange conception of honor." Her eyes were blazing with fury. "Your statement about my father is open to doubt. Captain von Mueller, I give you forty-eight hours to leave this country before I denounce you as a German spy."

"Really?" His slow smile of unbelief caused her to writhe inwardly. "Do you think the unsupported statement of a woman suspected of murder will find credence?" Kathleen clenched John Hargraves' letter until her knuckles shone white under the taut skin. "Secondly," he continued in the same quiet tone, "you speak tonight only of this winter. Have you forgotten our relationship in Germany?"

"That is hardly the term for it," she said proudly. "I met you at the house of a German schoolmate ..."

"And our friendship rapidly ripened into love," he said softly, never removing his gaze from her bloodless face. "Our walks in the meadows about Berlin, our elopement ..."

"But not our marriage," she burst in. "John Hargraves can testify that I left you."

"John Hargraves is dead."

"True," she could hardly articulate. "But we were not married."

"Quite so; that is my point--_I_ did not _marry_ you."

Kathleen swayed upon her feet and threw out her hand blindly for support. "You cur! you despicable cur!" she gasped. "Don't touch me." But though

she shrank from him, his strong hand steadied her toward the hall door.

"Washington society is surfeited with scandal," he said. "When more composed think of your father's latest invention."

If she heard him she gave no sign. Mental torture had exhausted her emotion. She never raised her head as he guided her to the staircase; her eyes stared only at his open right hand.

The house was dark except for the hall light burning dimly, when Winslow Whitney inserted his latchkey and entered the front door. Removing hat and overcoat, he made his way noiselessly to his studio in the attic. With cautious movement he fingered the locks on his door. Would Miller's plan for catching Spencer's murderer work out? According to their arrangement he had left the door insecurely fastened.

Just as he was about to creep into the room, he heard distinctly in the stillness a whispered word in a voice his keen ear instantly recognized. All idea of caution forgotten, he threw open the door and switched on the electric light. To outward appearances the room was empty.

Darting over to where he kept his secret papers, he lifted a powerful Mazda lamp, the better to scan the prepared paper left where an incautious thief would be obliged to rest his hand with some degree of force. Under the powerful light the finger prints stood out distinct and clear. But with eyes starting from his head, Whitney paused to snatch up a magnifying glass, and by its aid examined the finger prints minutely.

"It's--his--finger print--but the voice, my God! the voice... Kathleen, Kathleen!" A gurgle choked his utterance, and the magnifying glass clattered beside him as he fell inertly on the floor.

CHAPTER XXII

"TRENTON HURRY"

Charles Miller, completing a hurried toilet, paused at the sound of a sharp rap on his bedroom door.

"Come in," he called. "Ah, Henry, good morning," as the chauffeur stepped briskly over the threshold. The latter's white face and agitated manner indicated that he was the bearer of portentous news. Miller made a hasty step in his direction.

"Kathleen--is she ill?" he asked.

The chauffeur looked to see that the bedroom door was securely fastened before he answered.

"It isn't Miss Kathleen," he answered cautiously. "Mr. Whitney has had a stroke."

"What?" Miller recoiled. "When?"

"Some time last night."

"Will he recover?"

"Dr. McLane says that he cannot tell yet, Herr Captain. He was alive but still unconscious when I left the house to come here."

"What"--Miller looked anxiously at the chauffeur--"what brought on the stroke? Mr. Whitney appeared to be in robust health when I saw him last."

"The Doctor seemed to think it was caused by sudden shock, Herr Captain."

Henry stepped closer. "Miss Kiametia Grey found Mr. Whitney in his studio lying on the floor unconscious."

"Miss Grey found him!" Miller's eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"Yes, Herr Captain; at four o'clock in the morning," with significant emphasis, and the two men looked at each other.

"And what was Miss Grey doing in the attic at that hour of the morning?"

"She said she had gone upstairs to see Rosa, the cook, who was suffering from a bilious attack early in the evening."

"But," perplexedly, "if I remember correctly, Rosa testified at the inquest that the servants' bedrooms are not in the attic but on the floor beneath."

"They are, Herr Captain. On answering the bell from Mr. Whitney's studio I found Miss Grey there trying to revive him."

"You answered the bell at four in the morning?" in surprise. "I understood you did not sleep at the Whitneys'."

"Nor do I, Herr Captain; but last night I took Vincent's place and occupied his bedroom. When I reached the studio, I at first thought Mr. Whitney dead," continued the chauffeur, after a slight pause, "and rushed to summon a physician. On his arrival I assisted him to carry Mr. Whitney to his bedroom."

"Did you see Miss Kathleen?"

"Not after giving her the special delivery letter"--Henry's sidelong glance escaped Miller's attention--"when you were with her in the drawing-room; but I did hear her talking to Mrs. Whitney and the nurse in her father's bedroom just before I left the house to come here."

"Keep me informed of what transpires at the Whitneys'," directed Miller, picking up his coat.

"Very well, Herr Captain. Permit me to help you." The chauffeur stepped closer to his side and while assisting him, whispered: "Did you get the invention?"

Miller thrust his right arm into the coat sleeve with slow precision, and his left arm into its sleeve with equal care before answering.

"Yes."

"God be praised!" Henry stepped back, his eyes snapping with delight. "Ah, we will win it yet, that Cross!" he exulted; then cautiously took from an inside pocket a folded sheet of letter paper and with care removed from between the pages a piece of paper. "When Miss Grey was occupied in her effort to revive Mr. Whitney I looked quickly about the studio," he explained. "This paper caught my eye--and I bring it to you, Herr Captain."

"Thanks," laconically, laying the paper down on the desk. "One moment before you go," and from a well-filled wallet he extracted a treasury bill whose denomination caused Henry's eyes to beam with pleasure.

"At service, Herr Captain," he said, saluting. "I will return and report later."

"Very well, Henry," and the chauffeur bowed himself out, but on the other side of the door he hesitated, fingering Miller's tip with satisfaction.

"He is liberal, that von Mueller," he muttered. "But it is just as well not to tell him that there were two sheets of finger prints," and he went whistling down the corridor.

Tiptoeing to his door, Miller listened for a second, then, convinced that the chauffeur had moved away, he turned the key in the lock. Going to his desk, he picked up the sheet of finger prints and studied them long and attentively; then glanced down at his right hand. Horror lurked in the depths of his frank eyes.

"The mark of Cain," he stammered, and opening the silver frame containing Kathleen Whitney's photograph, he deftly slipped the paper between the two pieces of cardboard.

* * * * *

It was getting toward dusk when Mrs. Whitney stole softly into Kathleen's bedroom and stood looking down at her as she lay, eyes closed, white face pillowed on one shapely arm, her breath hardly stirring the laces on her gown. Convinced that she was asleep, she moved cautiously away, hoping not to disturb her, but at that moment Kathleen opened her eyes and raised herself on her elbow.

"Don't go, dear," she begged. "How is Dad?"

"Just about the same." Mrs. Whitney carried a chair to the bedside. "It is too bad to have roused you."

"I wasn't asleep--only thinking"--drearily--"I am glad you came in. Does Dr. McLane hold out any hope?"

"Yes," and Mrs. Whitney's care-worn face brightened. "Is it not good news?"

"The very best," Kathleen smiled through her tears. "You must be worn out," and she stroked the hand on the bed with loving fingers. "You should take some rest."

"I am not tired," protested Mrs. Whitney. "The nurse has just come in from her afternoon constitutional, and I felt that I could leave Winslow for a little time. Tell me, dear," sinking her voice. "Can you let me have a hundred dollars?"

"I would gladly, mother, but I don't believe I have half that amount left. You are welcome to that, though; my purse is in my desk."

"Thank you, dear, I'll get it later," but the troubled shadow did not lift from Mrs. Whitney's pretty face. "Both Vincent and Henry have asked me for their wages; I have given Henry part ..."

"Give him the whole, only get rid of him," burst out Kathleen. "I cannot bear the man."

"Why, Kathleen! Has he been disrespectful?"

"N-no, only--I don't trust him."

"Please, dear, don't excite yourself." Mrs. Whitney noticed with alarm the hectic flush that dyed Kathleen's white cheeks. "I will fill his place. Come to think of it, I did not like his manner this morning when he asked for his wages, and he went out without leave ..."

"He selected a curious time to make his request, with Dad so ill."

"Well, you see, my dear," coloring faintly. "I gathered your father has not paid him recently."

"Don't believe that story until you have asked Dad." Kathleen choked back a sob, remembering that her father, her dear father, might never answer another question, no matter how trivial. "Don't look so worried, mother; Dad will get better shortly."

"I pray so." Mrs. Whitney's eyelashes were wet with tears. "Kathleen, did your father ever speak to you of a note for twenty thousand dollars?"

"No, never."

"It comes due next week." Mrs. Whitney looked hopelessly about the room.

"Surely the bank will hold over the matter until Dad is in a condition to attend to his affairs?"

"I sent word to that effect when answering the note teller's letter."

"Who is the holder of the note?"

"Sinclair Spencer." With ashy face Kathleen dropped back on her pillow as if shot. Failing to observe her expression in the semi-dark room, Mrs. Whitney continued wearily: "In your father's mail today I found a notice from his bank stating that he had overdrawn his account heavily. It just happens that my housekeeping allowance is almost exhausted, or I would never have mentioned the matter to you, Kathleen."

"I am glad you did, mother; you must not have this responsibility on your shoulders, in addition to your anxiety for Dad. I have a little money in the bank, and will turn it over to you tomorrow."

"Thank you, dear," stooping and kissing her. "My heart is wrung for you, Kathleen. It is shameful what you have had to go through!" and her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Hush!" placing her hand over Mrs. Whitney's mouth. "My affairs sink into insignificance alongside of Dad's illness."

"You are such a blessing, Kathleen," squeezing her hand fondly.

"Then let us forget there is such a thing as money difficulties, and turn to...."

"Me!" exclaimed a voice by the door, and Miss Kiametia Grey advanced further into the room. "I rapped several times but you did not hear...."

"Do come and sit with us," suggested Kathleen.

"I will, if you will turn on the light; I can't bear to talk in the dark. There, that's better," as Kathleen switched on the reading lamp by her bed. "Before anything further is said," began the spinster, reddening, "I must confess that I overheard Kathleen mention money difficulties--I didn't mean to hear it"--hastily--"but I just want to say that I'll be your banker until Winslow gets better."

"You dear!" Kathleen sat up and kissed her warmly and Mrs. Whitney, quite overcome, embraced her with tears in her eyes.

"What's a friend for if she can't be of use!" Miss Kiametia's manner was always most brusque when seeking to cover emotion. "Land sakes! I forgot to tell you that Randall Foster wishes to see you both."

"Now!" Kathleen looked down at her negligée attire. "Can't he wait until tomorrow? Dr. McLane said I could get up then."

"He is very anxious to interview you this evening, Kathleen. Put on this pretty dressing-gown," and Miss Kiametia picked it up from the couch.

"You help her into it, Minna, while I go and get Randall," and not waiting for a reply she whisked out of the room, returning a few minutes later with Senator Foster.

"I am here under the doctor's order," explained Kathleen, taking his proffered hand, after he had greeted Mrs. Whitney. "Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you," muttered Foster, recovering with an effort from the shock

her appearance occasioned him. She looked wretchedly ill, and the hand he held for a second in his was hot with fever. "I can stay but a minute, Miss Kathleen. Do you think that tomorrow you can sign some papers in reference to Sinclair Spencer's will?"

"Why should I sign any such papers?" in quick surprise. "What have I to do with his will?"

"Hasn't your mother told you?" Mrs. Whitney shook her head, and answered for Kathleen.

"Winslow said not to mention the matter to Kathleen yesterday, and today his illness put everything out of my mind," she explained.

Kathleen looked from one to the other. "What have I to do with his will?" she repeated.

"Sinclair Spencer made you residuary legatee."

"What!" Kathleen sat up, for the moment bereft of further speech. "I shan't take any legacy left me by him," she announced, passionately. "Mother, you hear me, _I won't_."

"Yes, yes, dear," soothingly, and Senator Foster broke in hastily:

"We understand how you must feel."

"Feel!" echoed Kathleen. "Did you for one moment suppose I would accept a penny from Sinclair Spencer or his estate?" and the scorn in her eyes hurt Foster as she looked at him.

"The law requires certain formalities," he said hurriedly. "As executor, I shall have to talk over his will with you, but later will do."

"Both now and later, I flatly refuse to consider any such bequest he may have made me," went on Kathleen, unheeding his words as her excitement increased, and Miss Kiametia hastened to avert the threatened scene.

"Where were you yesterday afternoon, Randall?" she asked.

"In Baltimore." Foster flashed her a grateful glance. "I hope you made use of my car yesterday, Mrs. Whitney; I told Henry to take it out until yours was repaired."

"You were very kind; Winslow went out in it." Mrs. Whitney's glance strayed to the door; she was anxious to return to her husband's bedside.

"And with your permission, Randall, I'm going to use your car now to take me home," chipped in Miss Kiametia.

"Oh, Kiametia, you must not go," protested Mrs. Whitney. "You are such a comfort--such a help...."

"Don't go," added Kathleen. "Your presence makes my enforced idleness here easier to bear."

"Thank you, my dears." The spinster looked immensely pleased. "Of course I'll stay, if you really feel you want me."

"I am the only one bereft," said Foster wistfully. "I cannot call upon you tonight, Kiametia."

"Of course you can," exclaimed Mrs. Whitney, smiling faintly. "We are not so selfish as to keep Kiametia to ourselves all the time. If you will excuse me, I must go back to Winslow."

"Certainly." Foster rose and opened the door for her. "I must not stop longer. Good night, Miss Kathleen, I hope that you will feel better in the morning."

"Thanks; please come here just a moment," and reluctantly Foster approached the bed. He did not wish to resume discussion about Spencer's will. "Tell me," Kathleen lowered her voice, "when will the Grand Jury meet?"

"Not for ten days or more."

"That is all, thanks," and Foster moved away. At the door he signaled to Miss Kiametia to step into the hall with him, and after a quick glance at Kathleen's averted face, the spinster followed him, softly closing the door behind her.

As the click of the latch reached her, Kathleen, seeing that she was alone, leaned over and put out the light. The darkness was pleasant to her, and she buried her hot hands under her pillows, the better to feel the cool linen. Soothed by its contact she struggled to reduce her chaotic thoughts to order. Sinclair Spencer had left her money--Sinclair Spencer had left her money--the sentence beat in her brain tirelessly. The idea was as repugnant to her as his personality had been. In life he had plagued her, and in death he had involved her in conspiracy and subjected her to cruel suspicion.

Her father's illness has aroused her from the torpor following Charles Miller's departure the night before. She writhed even at the recollection of her scene with him. Again and again she had been on the point of sending for the police and denouncing him, but remembrance of the forty-eight hours of grace which she had granted him stayed her impulse.

He had killed every spark of affection, she assured herself repeatedly; and then turned and tossed upon her pillows as vivid recollection painted each happy hour with him that winter.

A moan broke from her, and at the sound a stealthy figure advancing from the sitting-room adjoining, stopped dead. Hearing no further sound, the intruder moved cautiously forward and bent over Kathleen.

"Mademoiselle!"

Kathleen's eyes flew open. "Julie! You have come back!"

"Hush, mademoiselle! Not so loud," and Julie, dropping on her knees by the bed, laid a warning finger on Kathleen's lips. Reaching out her hands, the latter clasped the Frenchwoman in a warm embrace, which was as warmly returned.

"You have come back," she repeated in a whisper. "Julie, you met with no harm?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"Where have you been?"

"No matter now, mademoiselle. I spent last night with Vincent's sister, Marie Tregot. He smuggled me into the house a little while ago. He told me of all that you have been through. Oh, that I had stayed; but I acted for the best, mademoiselle."

"I am sure of that, Julie"--touched by the feeling in the maid's voice.

"I was misled"--bitterly--"and by one I thought to be trusted--Captain Miller."

"Julie! He did not offer...."

"No, no, mademoiselle"--Kathleen's taut muscles relaxed and she sank weakly back in bed. "But I have reason to believe that Captain Miller is not what he seems. Listen, mademoiselle: I was in M. Foster's touring car--no matter how I came there now--last night. Henry was driving it. He

knew not that I was in the tonneau. When he stopped the car and got out I watched him enter a residence in Nineteenth Street. I dared not stay longer in the car, and hid in the vestibule of the house adjoining the one he had entered. They are what you call semi-detached, and concealed I was very close at hand. I had been there but a short time when a man ran up the steps of the next house and I recognized Captain Miller. He entered and I waited long, oh, so long, when out came Henry and Captain Miller . . ."

"Well?" prompted Kathleen, as Julie came to a breathless pause.

"The Captain entered the car with Henry and drove off. After their departure I rang the bell of the house where I was hiding and asked the butler who were their next-door neighbors. He said Baron Frederic von Fincke."

"Oh, more evidence against him!" Kathleen drew in her breath sharply.

"Mademoiselle?" But Kathleen did not explain her remark, and Julie continued hurriedly; "I at first thought to return here at once, but remembered Marie Tregot. She gave me house room, and I arranged with Vincent last night to admit me after dark today."

"But why not come openly, Julie? No one will harm you."

"Henry is a spy--a traitor--it did not suit my plans to have him know my whereabouts."

"But Julie. . . ."

"Mademoiselle, have patience--bear with me but a little longer--" The excited Frenchwoman rose and going to both doors locked them. She returned and switched on the reading lamp. "Quelle horreur! Mademoiselle, what have these beasts done to you?" she exclaimed, aghast, inspecting Kathleen in consternation. "They shall pay for every sign of suffering in your face."

"Do not let us discuss me," Kathleen sighed wearily. "Will you tell the police of your suspicions concerning Henry?"

"No, mademoiselle." Julie's expression changed. "I like not the police just now. I have a plan of my own." She checked herself abruptly. "Have you seen the _Star_?"

"No, Julie."

"See, it says here"--pointing to a paragraph in a folded sheet torn from a newspaper which she drew from under her apron--"'Fire at Roebbling's Plant of Incendiary Origin.' Tell me, mademoiselle, what is Roebbling's?"

"A factory near Trenton, New Jersey, which I believe"--Kathleen spoke somewhat uncertainly--"manufactures insulated as well as barbed wire."

"Ah, that is used in trench fighting!" The Frenchwoman took from the bodice of her black gown a crumpled telegram singed at the edges. "Henry received this but an hour ago. I watched, oh, so carefully. I saw him turn pale, and such was his haste to leave the house that he did not wait to see that the paper burned when he threw it in the grate. Can you translate it for me, mademoiselle?"

Smoothing out the telegram, Kathleen, with the maid intently peering over her shoulder, read the words it contained besides the address, in puzzled silence:

Trenton, hurry.

Hartzmann.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN FULL CRY

Senator Foster, buttoning his overcoat against the March wind, left Calumet Place and sought his yellow touring car standing at the curb of an intersecting street near by. He had dispensed with the services of his chauffeur for that night. Seating himself behind the steering wheel, he started the machine down Fourteenth Street, so deep in thought that he barely missed running over two belated pedestrians scurrying to the sidewalk, and entirely missed the signals of a street-crossing policeman, who contented himself with a string of curses as he recognized the yellow car and bullied the next automobile chauffeur as a slight vent to his feelings.

As Foster sped by the War, State, and Navy Building he noted the lights burning in widely separated office rooms and smiled grimly to himself. Parking the car near the Whitney residence, he made his way to the front door. Miss Kiametia Grey answered his impatient ring at the bell.

"A nice hour for you to keep your appointment, and for me to see attractive men," she grumbled, leading the way to the library. "Fortunately, I have a reputation for eccentricity--it saves me a great deal of annoyance, and covers--er--indiscretions."

"You--the most discreet of women," protested Foster, seating himself on the sofa by her. "And I have come tonight to confide in you...."

"Have you?" dryly. "I doubt it; but go ahead"--generous encouragement in her tone.

"How is Whitney?"

"Pulse stronger, but still unconscious. Minna, poor child, insists that he knows her, and will not permit herself to believe in what I fear is the inevitable."

"Perhaps it is better so," compassionately. "What should we do without hope in this world? I should not be surprised if Kathleen's condition is graver than her father's." Meeting her surprised look, he tapped his forehead significantly. "Brain fever."

"She is acting queerly," admitted the spinster. "Tonight she locked herself in her room, won't see even the nurse, and refuses food."

"I fear the breaking point is near," conceded Foster. "I did not like Dr. McLane's manner when we met him on leaving Kathleen; he also is worried."

He paused and asked abruptly, "Has Kathleen seen Charles Miller?"

"Not today."

"When was he last here?"

"Let me see," calculating on her fingers. "He came with you on Wednesday when I was here--today is Saturday."

"Did Kathleen see him on Wednesday?"

"I don't think so."

"Has he been here since?"

"I can't say; possibly the servants can tell you."

"Will you find out from them before I go?" Miss Kiametia nodded

affirmatively, and he asked; "Has Kathleen spoken to you of seeing him since Spencer's death?"

"No."

"Has she ever confided to you whether she cares for him or not?"

"Not in words," dryly. "But my woman's intuition tells me ..."

"Yes?" as she paused.

"That Kathleen worships the ground he walks on."

"Too bad." Foster sat back, looking troubled. "Too, too bad."

"What's this? A deathbed repentance? You introduced Miller in Washington," and the spinster's sharp eyes bored into him.

Foster moved uncomfortably. "I am sincerely sorry," he mumbled. "I have been grossly deceived."

"Humph!" Miss Kiametia moved closer to his side. "Go on--confession is good for the soul."

"I can't tell you just now," was the disappointing rejoinder. "Who found Whitney in his studio this morning?"

"I did; and a nice shock I had," with a shudder. "The antics in this house are deranging my nervous system. I can't even sleep."

"How did you happen to be around at that hour?"

"Rosa had a bad attack of indigestion after serving dinner, and I promised to look in and see how she was during the night. Just as I came out of her room I thought I heard groans and rushed upstairs; found the studio door open, and by aid of my electric torch, found Winslow lying on the floor."

"Did you see anyone else in the room?"

"No, I only had the light from the torch to guide me, and that is a very big room, with models and furniture standing around in odd spots."

"Why didn't you turn on the electric lights?" impatiently.

"Couldn't find the switch. I did press a button, the only one I could locate in my haste, and it brought Henry, who switched on the lights for me."

"And afterward did you find any trace of papers' having been stolen? Drawers opened, or anything?"

"I never looked to see." Foster sat back in bitter disappointment. "All I thought about was breaking the news of Winslow's condition to Minna and Kathleen, and getting a doctor. Henry attended to that; and I went downstairs, awoke Minna," she hesitated perceptibly, "Kathleen I found sitting in her bedroom--dressed."

"What!" Foster shot her a swift glance. "Asleep?"

"No. Just sitting there, apparently too dazed to realize my presence, let alone what I told her. Finally she grasped the news of her father's illness, and her grief was bitter."

"Poor girl!"

Miss Kiametia fingered her gown nervously. "You were in Baltimore when the newspapers published Spencer's will, and this afternoon Dr. McLane interrupted us," she began. "Is it really true that Sinclair Spencer left

Kathleen a small fortune?"

"Yes. On investigation, I find he held valuable stock, as well as improved real estate of known value."

"Sinclair Spencer was a bad egg," said Miss Kiametia slowly. "It would have been like him to boast of his wealth to Kathleen, and by its power seek to influence her to accept him."

"A man will do anything to win the woman he loves," said Foster, with a sidelong look of affection utterly lost on the spinster, who sat deep in thought.

"A large legacy," she commented aloud. "It establishes a motive which I thought lacking before."

"Kiametia!" Foster shook her elbow roughly. "What are you hinting at?"

"Hush!" The spinster pointed to the portières in the doorway leading to the drawing-room. "Who is lurking there?"

She spoke in a subdued whisper which reached Foster's ears alone, but as he rose, startled, the portières parted and Detective Mitchell walked over to them.

"Have you seen Captain Charles Miller?" he asked eagerly, omitting other greeting.

"No," they replied in concert.

"Strange! I saw him enter the front door half an hour ago, using a latchkey."

"Charles Miller with a latchkey of this house!" gasped Miss Kiametia.

"Yes," declared Mitchell, "and I have searched the house and cannot find him."

"Perhaps he came to see Kathleen," suggested Foster.

"Could you go and see if he is with her, Miss Grey?" urged Mitchell. "Her suite of rooms is the one place where I have not looked."

"Yes, I--I suppose so," but the spinster held back.

"Do go," put in Foster gently. "A clandestine meeting is not wise for either Kathleen or Miller. Think of the construction which may be put upon it."

"True." But Miss Kiametia rose reluctantly, and to gain time to collect her ideas, walked over to the table to gather up her scarf and gold mesh purse. As she picked up the latter a slight scream escaped her. Instantly the two men were by her side.

"See, it's missing!" she cried, raising the gold mesh purse with its dangling vanity box.

"What is missing?" demanded Foster. "Don't look so distracted, my darling."

"M-m-my g-gold p-p-pencil," she stuttered.

"Is that all?" and Foster smiled in relief. "I'll buy you another tomorrow."

"Indeed you won't," recovering some degree of composure. "I'll find mine, if I have to search this house from the top to the bottom."

"But please see Miss Whitney first," broke in Mitchell.

Miss Kiametia cast him a strange look. "That is the first place I shall go," she announced, and the two men watched her depart in silence. Foster was about to speak when the electric lights flickered, grew dim, and then went slowly out.

"Trouble in the power house," grumbled Mitchell, searching his pocket for his electric torch. "I noticed a tie-up in the street cars just before I came in. Can you find any candles on the mantel, sir?" flashing his torch in that direction. "Every light in the house must be out."

* * * * *

Henry, the chauffeur, paused in indecision on Baron Frederic von Fincke's doorstep. "You are quite certain the Baron said he would return on the night train?"

"Quite," answered the valet. "He is due here at seven o'clock in the morning. Good night."

"Good night," echoed Henry, and turning went swiftly down the street. He stopped for a moment at a news stand, talked with the proprietor, and then turned his footsteps toward the Whitneys'. As he passed the War, State, and Navy Building the lighted windows attracted his attention. With deepening interest he noted the location of the rooms from which the light shone. Officials of the government were working late.

Turning, Henry sped down a side street and slipping up an alley, entered the Whitney house by the rear entrance. He stood in deep thought outside the kitchen door for a moment before opening it; a flash from his electric torch showed the dark room was totally empty. Satisfied that Rosa had gone to her bedroom, he crept softly up the back stairs and along the front hall of the first bedroom floor. He had almost reached Miss Kiametia Grey's bedroom door when a slight noise made him pause and glance up the winding front stairs. He shrank farther back in the shadows of the dark hall as a faint light appeared, outlining a white face peering down the staircase.

Henry caught his breath sharply. How came Julie to be back in the house? The she-devil! Spying upon him. By God! The reckoning was close at hand, and he crawled forward a pace, then stopped. Julie had vanished, and with her the light. Henry debated for a moment. With Julie in the house, his plans were changed.

Losing no time, and as noiseless as the shadows about him, Henry made his way down the back stairs, into the kitchen, down another flight of steps into the sub-cellar, past the bottom of the elevator shaft, the motor room, and to the front of the house. With swift, deft fingers he swung aside a panel of shelves containing rows of preserve jars and pickles, and stepped inside a small chamber. Carefully he drew to the panel which, with its strong, well-oiled hinges, made no sound as it slipped into place. A second more and the small chamber was flooded with light as Henry found the switch. Never glancing at the batteries lining the wall, he went direct to the small pine table, and his fingers sought the telegraph instruments and set them in motion.

Upstairs in the library the two candles which Foster had been able to find in the desk drawer burned brightly in their improvised candlesticks. The flame, however, served but to intensify the darkness of the large room. The minutes had ticked themselves away in swift succession, but still Miss Kiametia Grey did not return. Mitchell shut his watch with an impatient snap, and Foster, his nerves not fully under control, looked up at the sound.

"What can be keeping Miss Grey?" he asked.

"Can't imagine, unless--" The detective never completed the sentence.

"Come quickly," whispered a voice over his shoulder, and swinging about

with a convulsive start, Mitchell recognized Charles Miller. With common impulse he and Foster sprang up, but he was the first to reach Miller's side, and the candlelight shone on burnished steel. "Put up the handcuffs, Mitchell," directed Miller contemptuously. "The time has not yet come to use them."

"I am not so sure of that," retorted Mitchell. "You are ..."

"We can argue the point later." Miller made for the door. "Both of you come with me; but for God's sake, make no noise." His manner impressed them, and after one second's hesitation, the detective replaced the handcuffs, and in their stead produced a revolver.

"Go ahead," he said. "But remember, Miller, if you attempt to escape you will be arrested."

Without replying Miller led the way through the silent house, his torch and occasional whispered direction guiding them to the sub-cellar.

Inside the chamber under the parking of the house, Henry worked with tireless energy, taking down the coded messages as they flashed from the skilled fingers of the Government operators in the great War, State, and Navy Department but a stone's throw away. Suddenly, above the click of the sounder his abnormal sense of hearing caught a faint noise on the other side of the closed panel. One movement of his hand and the chamber was in darkness and the telegraph instrument stilled. Backing into a corner, Henry waited, his eyes still blinded by the change from light to darkness; but he heard the opening of the panel, and the soft swish of a woman's skirts.

"Julie!" His lips formed the word, but no sound issued from him as he launched himself forward. For a few seconds he closed with his adversary. Backward and forward they rocked; then a shot rang out and with a sob a figure sank limply across the pine table.

"This way!" shouted Miller, and guided by his voice Mitchell and Foster dashed after him. They stopped just inside the chamber. Miller's torch cast its beams across the pine table and its silent burden. A gasping cry broke from Foster:

"Mrs. Whitney!"

CHAPTER XXI V

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

"Dead!" The detective bent over Mrs. Whitney. "Shot through the heart." He turned to his silent companions. "Who fired that revolver?" and his own covered Miller menacingly.

Miller, spying the electric lamp, switched it on before answering. Still silent, he pointed to the telegrapher's outfit which confronted them and to the tell-tale wires leading to the outer world.

"The shot was fired," he said, "by the man who tunneled out to the conduit in which are the cables running to the White House and War, State, and Navy Building, and tapped them."

"Where is he?" Mitchell cast a bewildered look about the small chamber.

"I felt someone brush by me on the stairs in the darkness," volunteered Foster, recovering somewhat from his stupefaction. "I fear he has got safely away."

"No." Miller stepped back from Mrs. Whitney's side. "Chief Connor of

the Secret Service has a cordon of operatives about the house. Heinrich Strauss, alias Henry Ross, chauffeur, cannot escape. Listen, isn't that a shot?"

"I hope to God they've caught him alive!" exclaimed Mitchell, looking sorrowfully at the dead woman. "He'll swing for this murder, if not for the death of Sinclair Spencer."

"I doubt if he was guilty of that crime," said Miller quietly.

"What!" Mitchell stared incredulously at him. "What leads you to think that?"

"Hush!" Miller held up a warning hand as the sound of hurrying footsteps reached them. A second more and Julie appeared in the sub-cellar, guided by their light. Her eyes were gleaming with a strange excitement. Unnoticed by the others, Miller swiftly removed his coat and threw it over Mrs. Whitney so that it covered her face.

"He is caught, that Henry!" called Julie, catching sight of Foster standing in the opening of the secret chamber. "He was getting away, oh, so softly in the dark, and I tripped him. But yes, and he fired"--touching a red gash in her cheek. "But the others, they pounced upon him. La--la! And they are bringing him here. But what--?" trying to peer past Foster.

Miller stepped forward. "Crouch down behind those barrels, Julie," he ordered, and the Frenchwoman, startled by his sudden appearance, obeyed mechanically. By sheer force of personality Miller took command. "Go back and wait in the telegraph room," he whispered hurriedly. "You do the questioning, Mitchell; I'll keep out of sight here."

Before Mitchell could ask the question burning on his lips, a number of men made their way down the staircase, Heinrich Strauss in their midst, handcuffed to the tallest operative. Mitchell saluted as he recognized the foremost man.

"This room will interest you, Chief," he said, making way for him, and Connor took a comprehensive look over the chamber.

"We've found the leak," he acknowledged. "Clever work that," inspecting the arrangement of the wires. He drew back at the sight of the covered figure stretched across the table. "What's this--murder?"

"Yes," answered Mitchell. "Henry, here," jerking his thumb toward the erstwhile chauffeur, "killed the woman before we could interfere."

"Did I?" demanded Heinrich. "How are you going to prove it? I wasn't in this room ..."

"You waste time," said a cool voice behind him, and Miller stepped into the circle. "The game is up, Heinrich."

"You renegade!" Heinrich was livid with fury.

"This man is Heinrich Strauss," continued Miller quietly. "One of the most expert electricians and telegraph operators in Germany. He could be described as an electrical genius."

"His work shows that," acknowledged Chief Connor.

A slight stir in the doorway caused Heinrich to turn, and he smiled evilly at sight of Kathleen and Miss Kiametia Grey.

"I'm glad you've come," he said, addressing Kathleen directly, as she shrank back at sight of him. "That man there," pointing to Miller, "is Karl von Mueller, captain in the Secret Service." A low moan broke from Kathleen, and she looked anywhere but at Miller, who had stepped forward to stand between her and the pine table with its pathetic burden. "Von

Mueller," continued Heinrich, "killed Sinclair Spencer."

"I deny it," exclaimed Miller.

"Lies won't help," retorted Heinrich. "Miss Whitney, did you not attempt to rub off with your handkerchief from Spencer's blood-stained shirt, Captain von Mueller's finger print?"

The question from that source was unexpected. Twice Kathleen strove to answer. She cast an agonized look about the circle of men, but their set, stern faces gave her no help.

"Yes," and the monosyllable was little more than a murmur.

"Ah, take that down, Detective Mitchell," exclaimed Heinrich, triumphantly. "And von Mueller was in the house that night--do you deny it?"

"No." Miller's clear voice did not falter nor did his gaze, and Mitchell, handcuffs in evidence, looked perplexedly at Chief Connor. The latter was watching Miller like a lynx, and the Secret Service operatives closed up in the entranceway--there was no chance to escape, handcuffs seemed unnecessary.

The smile that crossed Heinrich's lips was cruel. "We will swing together, von Mueller," he said. "Turning state's evidence will not save you, you traitor!" With an effort he controlled his rage, and spoke more calmly, "Chief Connor, your informer last night stole Whitney's invention; besides admitting to me that he had it, he left these tell-tale finger prints"--his hand sought his pocket, but a quick jerk on the handcuffs stopped him. "Take it out yourself," he snarled to the operative next him, "inside pocket." His request was quickly complied with. "There, that tells the story; open it."

Detective Mitchell bent eagerly forward and gazed at the sheet, then turned to Miller.

"Let me see your hands," he directed. Obediently Miller held them palm uppermost, and the detective and Chief Connor examined the half-moon scar on the index finger of his right hand with minute care.

"It tallies," exclaimed Mitchell. A cry from Kathleen broke the silence. Miller whitened as he heard it.

"The evidence is conclusive, is it not?" mocked Heinrich. "If that dead woman could speak"--pointing to the table--"she would tell you how she saw the crime committed."

"Suppose we take her mute testimony"--and with a swift movement Miller removed his coat.

"Merciful God!" With eyes starting from his head Heinrich recoiled. "Mrs. Whitney! Why didn't she let me know she was coming down here?"

"Ah, then she was in the habit of coming?"

Miller's remark remained unanswered. Heinrich stared and stared again at Mrs. Whitney, great beads of sweat standing on his forehead. "I thought it was Julie--that hell-cat!" he muttered. "Why, why didn't she speak, and let me know who she was?" Then suddenly he collapsed on the one chair in the chamber and bowed his head.

At sight of Mrs. Whitney a gasping cry escaped Kathleen. Involuntarily her eyes strayed about the chamber, her dazed senses slowly grasping the situation. In the appalling silence one idea became paramount--Henry, the chauffeur, was a spy, and both his words and behavior implicated Mrs. Whitney. She, his accomplice? Oh, impossible! She put the thought from her, but memories, unconsidered trifles, rose to combat Kathleen's loyalty. Had Mrs. Whitney's smilingly collected manner and dignified

reserve cloaked a cold, calculating, and treacherous nature?

Kathleen shuddered in horror, and reeled back into Miss Kiametia's arms. The spinster, shaken out of her forced composure, was crying without realizing it. She placed a protecting arm about Kathleen and held her in close embrace. Over the shoulders of the men, Julie, who had crawled from her hiding place behind the barrels, peered at them in mingled curiosity and incredulity.

"Heinrich!" Miller's voice penetrated even the spy's benumbed brain. "Why is Mrs. Whitney wearing these finger tips?" and he held up the limp right hand. Each finger was fitted with a wax tip, and on the index finger, distinct and plain, was the scar shaped like a half moon.

Stunned, the men and women present looked first at Mrs. Whitney's hand, then at Miller, and last at Heinrich. No one spoke, and in the heavy silence the spy's labored breathing was distinct.

"The game is up," he admitted slowly. "I wish I hadn't done that," nodding to the silent figure. "She didn't deserve to be shot by me. She was faithful to Germany ..."

"Do you mean to insinuate that Minna Whitney was a German spy?" asked Miss Kiametia, shocked into speech.

"Well, yes, you might call it that," taunted Heinrich. "I term it loyalty to the Fatherland, where she was born and brought up. Her mother was a German."

"She would never have aided you but for your devilish wiles," broke in Miller hotly.

"The fact that she was deeply in debt did influence her," admitted Heinrich insolently. "Money was her god. I had to pay handsomely before she would engage my services as chauffeur, and let me make use of this nice little box."

"Did you construct this tunnel under the pavement"--pointing to where the telegraph wires entered the chamber--"and install this outfit by yourself?" asked Chief Connor, breaking his long silence.

Heinrich smiled. "You will never learn that from me--and you should remember that your conduits are laid only seven inches below the surface of the street; it was hardly a man-sized job." He smiled again, and continued. "Neither Mrs. Whitney nor I wished to take anyone wholly into our confidence. She was a perfect assistant; she knew the antecedents of nearly everyone in society here, and she invariably found out, or got others to find out, the motives which inspired strangers to come to Washington. Her husband never interfered with our plans, as he spent most of his time, both day and night, in his studio. The servants never came down in this sub-cellar, and with Mrs. Whitney's connivance, I frequently managed to keep the limousine in the repair shop--and my time was my own. My surroundings were ideal, even the location of this house favored my plans ..."

"Until you grew too ambitious," added Connor softly.

"Perhaps." Heinrich gnawed at his underlip as he shot a glance full of venom at Kathleen who stood with head averted, drinking in all that was said. To hurt her, to lower her pride appealed to Heinrich; his silence would not benefit the dead woman, while speech would cruelly hurt and mortify both Kathleen and her father. "My government was anxious to secure Mr. Whitney's inventions; he would not sell to them, although Baron--" he stopped and scowled at Miller--"offered him a large sum. Whitney stuck to it that none but his own country could have the inventions. Then I suggested to Mrs. Whitney that she get the drawings and specifications for me; and again I paid her a large sum of money. But it was as difficult for Mrs. Whitney to get into the studio as for me, and the danger to herself was not small. Her husband was very suspicious,

and he never permitted her to remain in the room alone.

"However, because she was not aware I had perfected, as I thought, another plan to secure the invention, and tempted by the sum of money I held before her to succeed, she made another attempt last night. She cried out with disappointment when, after entering, she found only blank paper, and Whitney heard her." He stared at the horrified faces about him, and clearing his voice, added, "The shock finished Whitney."

"You are the devil incarnate!" exclaimed Miss Kiametia, wrathfully.

"I'm not, but he is." Heinrich raised his manacled hands menacingly toward Miller. "I never fully trusted you, von Mueller; although I never found any evidence of your double dealing in your room. But while outwardly appearing to confide in you, I took the precaution to incriminate you should my plans miscarry. I observed the peculiar scar on your finger, and conceived the idea of copying your finger tips in wax. With Mrs. Whitney's help, I secured an impression of your finger prints and had it copied in wax. The workman, another German sympathizer, achieved a wonderful copy of the original, and by my advice Mrs. Whitney wore the wax finger tips whenever she had work to do."

"An ingenious plan, very," ejaculated Mitchell, "and one new to me."

"Mrs. Whitney was wearing them on the night that Sinclair Spencer took it into his besotted brain to investigate this house," went on Heinrich.

"Mrs. Whitney told me afterwards that she was on the way here to see me, when she spied Spencer crouching in the elevator, the door of which was open. She was afraid of being discovered if she went upstairs again, and to stay was equally dangerous.

"She had with her a hypodermic syringe which I had given her to use in an emergency." Kathleen straightened up, and for the first time stared full at the spy. "The syringe was filled with a solution of cyanide of potassium," continued Henry. "Adjusting the needle, Mrs. Whitney entered the elevator, and before Spencer could move, thrust it into his neck. Spencer gave one convulsive start, attempted to get up, and his heavy body lurched full against her. She held a knife in her left hand, and as he half arose from his knees, the force of contact against the worn edges of the knife gashed his throat. I had asked Mrs. Whitney to bring me one of the knives which her daughter had for modeling, as I wanted to use some putty down here.

"With great presence of mind," continued Heinrich, after a brief pause which no one cared to break, "Mrs. Whitney ran the elevator to the attic, and before leaving dipped her wax finger tip in the blood flowing from Spencer's throat, and made a distinct impression of von Mueller's finger print on Spencer's white shirt front. Mrs. Whitney left the elevator at the attic, but Detective Mitchell arrived before she missed the syringe. On discovering Miss Grey had it, she made various attempts to get it back.

"I found the hypodermic syringe," confessed Miss Kiametia. "It was lying inside the elevator, and I picked it up just after Kathleen was carried from the elevator. The syringe was marked 'K.W.', and some impulse made me keep it, and after the inquest, when I learned cyanide of potassium had killed Spencer, I hardly let it out of my sight"--Kathleen turned bewildered, grateful eyes on the spinster--she was not a drug-fiend, but the most loyal of friends. Her hand tightened on the spinster's, and her pressure was returned twofold. "Did Kathleen's unnatural mother deliberately have that syringe marked with her daughter's initials?"

"Put it down to coincidence," sneered Heinrich. "Or say I had it marked 'K.W.' for--Kaiser Wilhelm."

"I doubt it; malice alone governed your actions to all in my house." Kathleen faced the spy proudly. "Miss Kiametia, you do Mrs. Whitney one injustice. She was not an unnatural mother--as she was no blood kin of mine, but my father's second wife. She never told anyone that I was not

her child. I don't know why she kept the matter a secret, but I only learned it accidentally a year ago, and respecting her wishes, never said anything about it."

"Mrs. Whitney was secretive by nature," said Heinrich. "And that instinct made her a willing pawn."

CHAPTER XXV

LOVE PARAMOUNT

Pausing only long enough to say a parting word to Coroner Penfield and Chief Connor, Miller hastened up the back stairs and entered the library. Kathleen and Miss Kiametia Grey, utterly unmindful of the hour, sat on the sofa, and near them stood Julie, a neat bandage wound about her cheek and head, while Senator Foster paced agitatedly up and down the room. He stopped on seeing Miller.

"Will you kindly inform us who you are?" he demanded peremptorily. "The Secretary of State showed me a letter tonight from Vincent stating that you were a German spy . . ."

"Oh, that Vincent!" exclaimed Julie. "I talked too much to him."

"I came here at once," went on Foster, paying no attention to Julie, "hoping to elicit some facts about you from Miss Grey and Miss Kathleen. Tell us at once who you are."

"Charles Miller Trent," was the calm reply.

"Then why"--Kathleen sprang to her feet--"why were you masquerading as Karl von Mueller when I knew you in Germany?"

"I beg your pardon, you did not know me in Germany." Kathleen crimsoned at the direct contradiction. "But you did know my cousin, Karl von Mueller."

Too dazed for utterance, Kathleen stared at him, studying his face as never before, and gradually her incredulity gave place to belief. Feature for feature, coloring matching coloring, the man before her resembled Karl as she remembered him, but the honesty and steadfast purpose to be read in Miller's square jaw and fine eyes had been lacking in his cousin.

"The likeness is extraordinary," she stammered.

"Yes," agreed Miller. "But I do not think you would have been so thoroughly certain of my identity if I had not copied my cousin's mannerisms as well as his handwriting."

"Then you were brought up together?" asked Foster.

"In a way, yes. I was never in Germany, but my aunt, Frau von Mueller, spent many winters at my father's home in Rio Janeiro. . . ."

"What, are you the son of the coffee importer, Charles M. Trent," demanded Foster, again interrupting him.

"Yes. As boys Karl and I were perpetually changing identities and confusing our playmates, as well as our parents. To that end I was a willing German scholar, and Karl also became proficient in his English studies."

"Were you entirely educated in South America?" asked Miss Kiametia.

"Oh, no; I spent a great deal of time in Santa Barbara, my mother's home,

and later attended Stanford University. But I have seldom been in the East, and have few friends here. Last fall I overcame my mother's objection (she unfortunately sympathized with Germany), and went to England to enlist in the British army," continued Miller, after a brief pause. "The night of my arrival in London I was arrested, charged with being a spy. I had great difficulty, even with my passport and letters to my bankers, in proving I was not a spy. Finally, I was told that a man resembling me had been arrested, tried at once, and executed that day."

"They keep such things quiet over there," commented Foster.

"To cut a long story short, I was taken to see the dead spy, and found he was my cousin, Karl von Mueller"--He hesitated and glanced sorrowfully at Kathleen who sat with head averted. How would she take the news he was imparting--how deep was her affection for the dead spy? Sighing, he continued his statement. "The indorsement of my father's influential friends, whom I had called upon to establish my identity, evidently carried weight, for on my release it was suggested to me by one high in authority that, instead of enlisting in the army, I use my cousin's identity and spy upon the Germans. There was a spice of deviltry in the scheme and--I accepted.

"They gave me his papers, clothes, money, and I slipped straight into his place. None of his companions had heard of his arrest and death. Those whom I saw I told I had been out of London on a special mission, and they believed the statement without question. By aid of such papers as my cousin had kept concealed on his person, I learned something of his methods, and contact with his companions in London taught me assurance. No one doubted my identity. Karl had assumed the name of Charles Miller and it was easy for me to drop my surname. Finally I was sent to a certain town in the warring countries, and there I received instructions to come to the United States."

"Did the Germans accept your identity without question?" asked Foster.

"Apparently so; but I was not in Germany twenty-four hours, and the Herr Chief of the Secret Service was familiar with my cousin's appearance and never doubted he was talking to Karl," answered Miller. "On my arrival here I communicated at once with Chief Connor, giving him the credentials I had brought from the London office. By his advice I followed out the instructions given me by the Herr Chief of the German Secret Service, and to all intents and purposes was a German spy. But as I grew to know Baron von Fincke better, I became convinced that another and cleverer man was responsible for the leak in the carefully guarded offices of this government. I suspected everyone," Miller smiled suddenly, "even you, Senator Foster--your peace propoganda fooled me...."

"Wait," broke in Miss Kiametia. "Randall shan't be blamed for that; Minna Whitney insinuated that he would not make a peace speech even for me, so I--I...."

"Proved her wrong," Foster laughed ruefully. "Mrs. Whitney was a keen student of human nature; but continue, Miller--er--Trent--I won't interrupt again."

"Chief Connor confided to me that messages were being wirelessed to German cruisers, and that while the station at Sayville, Long Island, was under surveillance, they were powerless to check the new use of the wireless." Miller drew his chair closer. "I made a study of wireless while at college, and the problem here fascinated me. I finally reached the conclusion ..."

"Yes, go on," urged Foster.

"That messages to the German cruisers were being relayed from stations close together; in other words, that the station in the heart of this city had a wave length shorter than Arlington's minimum wave length, and the Arlington Radio Station was unable to hear--you already know that a transmitting and receiving station can only hear each other when in tune;

that is, the wave length of each must be equal. I therefore established a receiving station in my room with a short wave length--and the result justified my reasoning."

"Good!" ejaculated Foster heartily.

"But at that, while I had the messages to turn over to Chief Connor, I was still in the dark as to the location of the sender. You know it is impossible to determine the direction or distance of a transmitting station by its waves--a ship at sea cannot be found by wireless unless its bearings are given. I concluded that the transmitting station must be in the vicinity of the government buildings, and the next relay within five miles--a greater wave length could be picked up by Arlington.

"On Tuesday night I got on the roof of one of the tall government buildings near here, and examining each roof as I crossed it looking for wireless antennae, I finally reached this house. I suspected I was being watched by Baron von Fincke, but managed to confuse him as to the direction I was taking, and finally clambered down into this attic through the scuttle. I was certain he was not aware of my identity, and for the sake of my plans, could not risk discovery.

"I had never been in your attic before," went on Miller, addressing Kathleen directly. "I was not even positive this was your house. When trying to find my way about I chanced upon the elevator shaft; I thought I was walking into a closet. At that moment I heard a footstep on the stair." Julie started and bent eagerly forward. "Desiring to get away as quickly as possible, I pressed the button for the elevator...."

"But the elevator must have been right there," interrupted Kathleen. "You could not have opened the outer mahogany door otherwise."

"So I realized when I had collected my wits," responded Miller. "Opening both doors, I bolted into the elevator a few minutes before the footsteps reached the attic."

"Was Spencer in the elevator then?" questioned Foster.

"I don't know; the elevator was dark, and I only used my flashlight for a second to show me the proper button to push for the first floor. It may be that Spencer was in the elevator, but I did not see him."

"But I did," volunteered Julie, coming forward. "And I it was you heard creeping upstairs. I believed that Henry was a spy and feared that he would steal Mr. Whitney's invention. Oh, monsieur, I was so intent on guarding the studio I never gave a thought to the sub-cellar. Frequently I watched all night in a niche I had fashioned near the wine closet, but on Tuesday, alas! I slept. The soft closing of the elevator door awoke me, and a person whom, by her walk and height, I judged to be mademoiselle, moved away from the elevator and went downstairs. Inspired by curiosity I entered the elevator a moment later, and switched on the light. I was almost overcome by the sight of M. Spencer, and turned out the light to shut away the view. I rushed to my room; but I could not rest. I was in agony for you, mademoiselle; that very afternoon I had warned you against Monsieur Spencer, and I feared--Oh, forgive me! that you had killed him because he had injured your father. After a long interval I crept upstairs to the attic and there tried to puzzle out what would be best to do for mademoiselle. Fearing the police would make me tell what I had seen, I ran away."

"When did you discover Sinclair Spencer in the elevator, Kathleen?" asked Miss Kiametia.

"When I went to find Julie on Wednesday morning," began Kathleen. "I was very absent-minded that morning, and after pressing the button for the elevator never noticed whether it was long arriving at my floor or not--the length of time it takes to reach a floor is the only way we have of judging from where it comes," she explained. "I entered the elevator intent only on pushing the basement button, which I did with my right

hand, pulling the folding grille-work steel door to with my left hand. My back was turned to where Sinclair Spencer lay." She shuddered at the recollection. "Just before the elevator reached the basement I turned around and saw him. At first I was too stunned to move; then impulsively turned on the electric light so that I might see better, and discovered the finger print on his shirt.

"I don't suppose I would have been so quick to recognize the finger mark had not Miss Kiametia called my attention to it the day before when reading Captain M--Trent's palm," she resumed, not looking at Miller. "Horri-fied, I took my handkerchief and strove to make the stain unrecognizable; then suddenly I lost control of myself, and gave vent to scream after scream, and pressed my finger to the button nearest my hand. I was taken to the third floor, but the stopping of the elevator did not bring me self-control, and I think I should have lost my mind if the elevator had not moved of itself; I realized someone had pushed a floor button, but when the elevator stopped again and Miss Kiametia opened the door, I had lost all reason ... I...." She stopped, overcome by the recollection.

"My poor darling!" Miss Kiametia kissed her tenderly.

"How did you get that scar on your finger, Trent?" inquired Foster.

"While on a hunting trio with my father in the interior of South America my cousin and I, then fifteen and sixteen respectively, played a trick on one of our Indian guides. With the assistance of other Indians he branded my finger, saying by the half-moon we would be identified one from the other."

"That explains." Kathleen drew a long breath. "I racked my brain to remember whether I had seen the scar on your finger in Germany, and concluded you had perhaps received the injury since--since our last meeting."

"Tell me, Kathleen," broke in Miss Kiametia, "how did it happen that Sinclair Spencer had a flower from your bouquet in his hand?"

"I don't know, except that I wore the flowers the night before, and one may have fallen on the floor of the elevator and he picked it up."

Julie, who had followed Kathleen's every word with the closest attention, stepped to Miller Trent's side. "Monsieur, can you explain this telegram?" handing it to him. "Heinrich dropped it here late this afternoon."

Miller read the two words, then drew out a pencil. "Divide the word 'Trenton' to 'Trent on' and it reads: 'Trent on, hurry.' Yesterday afternoon I met a man named Hartzmann; he had known Karl intimately, and before I left him I realized something had aroused his suspicions. In New York he communicated with Buenos Ayres, found my whereabouts was unknown to my family, and jumped to the conclusion that I was impersonating my cousin."

"How do you know that?" demanded Foster.

"The Secret Service operative shadowing Hartzmann notified me of it today," answered Miller. "Obviously Hartzmann neglected to give any key to his dispatch to Heinrich, and the latter must have been entirely in the dark as to the real meaning of the warning. Von Fincke, whom Hartzmann apparently relied on to enlighten Heinrich, is out of town."

"Was it the operative's message to you about Hartzman which brought you here tonight?" asked Foster.

"No; I came hoping for an opportunity to examine Mr. Whitney's studio, and used a key to the front door which I had had made without Heinrich's knowledge. I thought by examining the studio I could find out who really went there last night; Heinrich brought me a set of the finger prints,

and their startling resemblance to mine convinced me that a plot, devilish in its ingenuity, was being concocted and an attempt made to involve me in their machinations. On my way to the studio I saw Heinrich creeping downstairs and followed him. I never for one moment suspected Mrs. Whitney."

"Nor did anyone else," agreed Foster. "Except that Heinrich was shocked into confession by his having unintentionally killed Mrs. Whitney, thinking her Julie, we might never have learned the whole truth. Mitchell, after seeing Vincent's note to the Secretary of State, was thoroughly convinced you were guilty. By the way, Kiametia, what kept you so long upstairs when Mitchell asked you to find out if Miller was with Miss Kathleen?"

"Searching for that hypodermic needle; I believed Kathleen had taken it back."

"Did you see Mrs. Whitney upstairs?"

"No, I stopped for a moment in Winslow's room, and the nurse told me Minna had gone to her bedroom to lie down."

"What possessed her to go to the sub-cellar?" asked Foster.

"Probably a demon of unrest, or she may have had some message to leave for Heinrich," suggested Miller. "When he grappled with her in the dark she undoubtedly thought him a detective and dared not call out for fear of disclosing her identity. Probably she thought Heinrich out of the house, and never dreamed of his attacking her."

"And Heinrich mistook her for me." Julie's eyes glowed. "The hand of God! But, monsieur, why did you advise that I stay away from mademoiselle, and take me to that dreadful house?"

"Because, Julie, you were hysterical, and I feared if interviewed, you might make some statement in all good faith which would do Miss Kathleen irreparable injury. I also believed that your absence would serve to divert suspicion until I had a chance to find the real criminal; I met you before the inquest, and did not realize that your disappearance could be used to militate against Miss Kathleen. As for Mrs. Robinson"--he laughed slightly--"she keeps a private sanitarium, but just now has no patients. You were perfectly safe there, and I had Connor detail an operative to see that Heinrich did not torment you."

"What will become of Baron von Fincke?"

"Chief Connor and the State Department will handle his case. Connor told me he found the Baron's next door neighbor--a man named Frank Lutz...."

"Mercy, his wife's a member of the Sisters in Unity!" ejaculated Miss Kiametia.

"Lutz has a complete wireless transmitting station," went on Miller. "He was stunned by his arrest, and attempted suicide; Connor believes he can induce him to tell the locations of the other relay stations. Lutz had the wireless antennae strung along the ceilings in the upper corridors of his house. He declares they have just perfected a method to overcome static interference."

"And what about Heinrich?" asked Julie anxiously. "Will he escape?"

"No, he will undoubtedly pay the penalty of his crime; Mitchell took him in charge. Coroner Penfield was here a short time ago," added Miller, turning to Miss Kiametia. "He assisted us to take Mrs. Whitney to her bedroom; I left Rosa, the cook, there."

"Thank you," murmured Kathleen.

"I think I had better go upstairs and see to everything," and the

spinster rose.

"Just a minute," Miller hesitated. "I felt that another and more determined attempt would be made to get Mr. Whitney's invention, Kathleen, and so suggested to him that he trust me with the drawings and specifications."

"Did he?"

"Yes, and I took them over and deposited them in the care of Chief Connor."

"A capital idea," exclaimed Foster.

"Then father's inventions are quite safe?" asked Kathleen.

"Yes. One is a camera for taking a map of the country from an airship; the other, still more marvelous--glass armor."

"Glass what!" chorused his listeners.

"Armor. A suit woven from a combination of mica and glass which Mauser bullets cannot penetrate."

"Good Lord!" Foster tugged at his hair until it stood upright.

"We can discuss the inventions at another time," announced the spinster, recovering from her astonishment. "I'll be upstairs, Kathleen, if you want me."

"Wait, I'm coming," but Foster turned on the threshold of the door, his curiosity mastering him. "There's just one question, Miss Kathleen; if you knew Karl von Mueller in Germany and, as you thought, met him here using the name of Charles Miller, why did you not at once conclude he was a German spy?"

"Because a year ago a school friend in Germany wrote me that Karl had disappeared after a duel, and she believed he was living in America under an assumed name," replied Kathleen, rising hurriedly. "Under those circumstances I thought it natural that he should have anglicized his name. Won't you stop--?"

"No, thanks," hastily. "I must see Kiametia. Good-night," and he disappeared into the hall. Miss Kiametia was talking to a white-capped nurse, who continued on her way upstairs on Foster's approach.

"Winslow has regained consciousness," announced Miss Kiametia, "and is sleeping naturally at last."

"I am delighted to hear it." Foster's tired face lighted with pleasure. "Shall I tell Kathleen?"

"No, not just yet; good news will keep, and I think she is entitled to the happiness of being with the man she loves."

"Do you never crave for that happiness, Kiametia?" and there was a wistful tenderness in his voice which made the spinster blink suspiciously. Suddenly she slipped her hand in his.

"Suppose I say yes, for a change," she whispered, burying her head on his shoulder, and with a thankful heart Foster held her close as he whispered tender, soothing words in her ear.

Neither Kathleen nor Miller cared to break the silence which prevailed after Foster's departure. Julie had slipped away at the same time. The pause became embarrassing, and in desperation Miller broke it.

"Kathleen, can you ever forgive me?" standing tall and straight before her. "I acted what seems now a contemptible part--but I had to know whom

you were protecting, whom you suspected of killing Spencer--I thought--forgive me--your father guilty. Until you said last night that you were shielding me, I had no idea of such a possibility; then I jumped to the conclusion that you had seen me in this house on Tuesday night, and imagined you were the person creeping up to the attic. Then, then--God help me!--came the idea that German gold had corrupted you, also. I put you to a severe test; but I wanted my doubts that you might be in German pay absolutely refuted. Even when I threatened, you stood firm." He drew in his breath sharply. "You will never know how I admired you and hated myself."

She answered with a question. "How did you know of my friendship with your cousin, Karl?"

"We have always been confidentially intimate. In a moment of remorse he wrote me about you, telling me of your elopement, and stating that he took you to a village removed from a railroad for the wedding, and there found the priest too ill in bed to perform the ceremony; he confessed that he got drunk, lost his head, and--and--suggested that you dispense with the marriage ceremony."

Kathleen crimsoned to the roots of her hair. "Did he tell you that I indignantly refused, escaped from him, and started out to walk to the nearest railroad station. There I met John Hargraves, told him of my elopement, then accompanied him to the hotel in the next town where his cousin was stopping and spent the night with her, returning next day under her escort to the school. She explained to the principal that I had been visiting her, and smoothed over what promised to be a scandal."

"Yes, Karl wrote me of that also, but he did you the tardy justice of never mentioning your full name. When I met you at Chevy Chase I realized suddenly that you had mistaken me for him and--" Miller hesitated for a brief second--"I followed the game. Kathleen," his hitherto clear voice faltered, "I followed it to my own undoing. Each time that you repulsed me, you inspired me--first, with admiration; then, all unbidden, came love--love, so faithful and unswerving that not even the toils of treachery and false witness which threatened to envelope you, could alter it." He hesitated again, his face white and strained. "Tell me frankly, Kathleen, did you accept me on Tuesday only because you thought me Karl?"

"No." Kathleen's face was rosy with color and her eyes shone with a new radiance. Eagerly Miller clasped her hands and, bending his head, kissed them. "Whatever schoolgirl affection I cherished for Karl was long since dead before I met you. To you alone I gave my heart."

"My love, my love," he murmured softly. "May God aid me to atone to you for the sorrow of the past!" and looking up into his eyes, as his arms stole round her, Kathleen read there that the glory of life was hers at last.