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"Do you suppose she is bringing us a message?" Katharine asked. FRONTISPIECE. *See page 47.*

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THE BOX WITH BROKEN SEALS

BY

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY

F. VAUX WILSON

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1919

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THE BOX WITH BROKEN SEALS

CHAPTER I

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

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

His companion treated the suggestion with scant courtesy.

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

The Englishman pacified himself with a whisky

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Hobson found no comfort whatever in the reflection.

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

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

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

Hobson replaced the receiver upon the instrument.

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

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

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

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

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that you were right that we were being flimflammed."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Has he ever been in prison?"

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

"He is well off, then?"

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

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

"Chief Downs," he said, "this is my friend Mr. Crawshay, who is connected with the English Embassy over here. You can shake hands with him later. We're on a job of business, and the first thing before us is to get an answer from you to a

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certain question. Did you send this dispatch or did you not?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A waiter had answered the bell.

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

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

"The Limited's sold out," the man told them.

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"There are two or three persons who've been disappointed, staying on here till to-morrow."

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

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

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

"Anything else?" Crawshay asked indolently.

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

"What else should there be?" he enquired.

"No idea," the Englishman replied. "Secret Service papers of the usual description, I suppose. By-the-by, I hear that this man Jocelyn Thew has

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stated openly that he is going to take all the papers he wants with him into Germany, and that there isn't a living soul can stop him."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And you think you are going to break his record?" Downs asked, with a doubtful smile. "If you find him on the *City of Boston*, you know, the stuff

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you're after won't be in his pocketbook or in the lining of his steamer trunk."

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

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

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

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

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

Chief Downs waved his hand.

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

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CHAPTER II

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

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

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

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

The visitor, left to himself, stood upon the hearthrug with his hands behind his back, waiting for news of the young lady whom he had come to visit. At first sight he certainly was a most prepossessing-looking person. His face, if a little hard, was distinguished by a strength which for the size of his features was somewhat surprising. His chin was like a piece of iron, and although his mouth had

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more sensitive and softer lines, his dark-blue eyes and jet-black eyebrows completed a general impression of vigour and forcefulness. His figure was a little thin but lithe, and his movements showed all the suppleness of a man who has continued the pursuit of athletics into early middle-life. His hair, only slightly streaked with grey, was thick and plentiful. His clothes were carefully chosen and well tailored. He had the air of a man used to mixing with the best people, to eating and drinking the best, to living in the best fashion, recognising nothing less as his due in life. Yet as he stood there waiting for his visitor, listening intently for the sound of her footsteps outside, he permitted himself a moment of retrospection, and there was a gleam of very different things in his face, a touch almost of the savage in the clenched teeth and sudden tightening of the lips. One might have gathered that this man was living through a period of strain.

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

"You wish to see me?" she asked. "I am Miss Beverley — Miss Katharine Beverley."

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"Sometimes known as Sister Katharine," her visitor remarked, with a smile.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I quite understand," he said. "Still, some day

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or other I suppose you expected a visit from me?"

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

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

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

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

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

He bowed.

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

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

"You make things easy for me," he acknowledged, "but may I add that it is only what I expected. The service which I have come to claim from you is

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one which is not capable of full explanation but which will cause you little inconvenience and less hardship. You will find it, without doubt, surprising, but I need not add that it will be entirely innocent in its character."

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

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

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

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

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

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She nodded sympathetically.

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

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

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

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

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

"It is the most extraordinary request I ever heard in my life," Katharine murmured. "If I had ever seen or spoken to the man, I could have under-

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stood it better, but as it is, I find it impossible to understand."

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

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

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

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

The stream of words seemed to fall away from her lips. There was a touch of Jocelyn Thew's other manner — perhaps more than a touch. She looked at him and she shivered. She had seen him look like that once before.

"Your attitude is perfectly reasonable," he continued, "but on the other hand I must ask you to carry your thoughts back some little time. I shall beg you to remember that I have a certain right to ask this or any other service from you."

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"I admit it," she confessed hastily, "but — there is something so outlandish in the whole suggestion. There are a score of nurses in the hospital to any one of whom you are welcome, who are all much cleverer than I. What possible advantage to the man can it be, especially if he is seriously ill, to have a partially-trained nurse with him when he might have the best in the world?"

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

"Clears our debt," she repeated.

"For ever!"

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

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

"Very little," he replied, "only this. You should send your baggage on board the *City of Boston* as early as possible to-morrow morning. Every arrangement has been made for transporting Phillips in his bed, as he lies, from the hospital to the boat. The doctor who has been in attendance will accompany him to England, but it is important that you should be at the hospital and should drive in the ambulance from there to the dock. I shall ask very little of you in the way of duplicity. What is necessary you will not, I think, refuse. You will

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be considered to have had some former interest in Phillips, to account for your voyage, and you will reconcile yourself to the fact that I shall not at any time approach the sick man, or be known as an acquaintance of his on board the ship."

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

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

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

"There is nothing criminal in this enterprise — even in my share of it," he assured her. "What there is in it which necessitates secrecy is political, and that need not concern you. You see," he went on, a little bitterly, "I have changed my rôle. I am no longer the despair of the New York police. I am the quarry of a race of men who, if they could catch me, would not wait to arrest. That may happen even before we reach Liverpool. If it does, it will not affect you. Your duty is to stay with a dying man until he reaches the shelter of his home. You will leave him there, and you will be free of him and of me."

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

He considered the matter for a few moments before answering. She felt another poignant thrill of recollection. He had looked at her like this just before he had bent his back to the task of saving her brother's life and liberty, looked at her like this the moment before the unsuspected revolver had

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flashed from the pocket of his dress-coat and had covered the man who had suddenly declared himself their foe. She felt her cheeks burn for a moment. There was something magnetic, curiously troublous about his eyes and his faint smile.

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

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

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

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

She raised her eyebrows.

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

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

She showed her surprise frankly, but his manner

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encouraged no further confidence. She touched the bell, and he bowed over her fingers.

"My friend Phillips," he said, in formal accents, as the butler stood upon the threshold, "will never live, I fear, to offer you all the gratitude he feels, but you are doing a very kind and a very wonderful action, Miss Beverley, and one which I think will bring its own reward."

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

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

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CHAPTER III

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

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

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

"What should you say," he began, "to Miss

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Katharine Beverley, the New York society young lady —"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Nothing doing," Jocelyn Thew replied mysteriously. "You've got to find that out for yourself, boys. All I can tell you is that he's an Englishman, and she has known him for a long time — kind of love stunt, I imagine. She wasn't having any, but now he's at death's door she seems to have relented. Anyway, she is breaking every engagement she's got, giving up her chairmanship of the War Hospitals Committee, and she isn't going to leave him while

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he's alive. There's no other nurse going, so it'll be a night and day job for her."

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

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

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

"That establishes Phillips all right as Miss Beverley's protégé," he murmured, as he turned into Fifth Avenue. "And now —"

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

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

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

Jocelyn Thew reëntered the box and took up the receiver.

"That you, Rentoul?" he asked.

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

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

"What is it? Speak quickly, please."

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

There was a moment's silence.

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

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

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

Jocelyn Thew paid for his telephone call and walked leisurely out of the hotel with a smile upon his lips. The stimulus of danger was like wine to

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him. The little man was choosing a cigar at the stall. As he leaned down to light it, Jocelyn Thew's practised eye caught the shape of a revolver in his hip pocket.

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

With an anticipatory smile, he entered upon the task of shaking off his unwelcome follower. He passed with the confident air of a member into a big club situated in an adjoining block, left it almost at once by a side entrance, found a taxicab, drove to a subway station up-town, and finally caught an express back again to Fourteenth Street. Here he entered without hesitation a small, foreign-looking restaurant which intruded upon the pavement only a few yards from the iron staircase by which he descended from the station. There were two faded evergreen shrubs in cracked pots at the bottom of the steps, soiled muslin curtains drawn across the lower half of the windows, dejected-looking green shutters which had the appearance of being permanently nailed against the walls, and a general air of foreign and tawdry profligacy. Jocelyn Thew stepped into a room on the right-hand side of the entrance and, making his way to the window, glanced cautiously out. There was no sign anywhere of the little man. Then he turned towards the bar, around which a motley group of Italians and Hungarians were gathered. The linen-clad negro who presided there met his questioning glance with a slight nod, and the visitor passed without hesitation through a curtained opening to the rear of the place, along a

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passage, up a flight of narrow stairs until he arrived at a door on the first landing. He knocked and was at once bidden to enter. For a moment he listened as though to the sounds below. Then he slipped into the room and closed the door behind him.

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

"Mr. Thew!" she exclaimed.

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

"How are things here?" he asked.

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

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

"Any one else coming?" she enquired.

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

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

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

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

"You are going to England!"

"That is what I propose," he assented. "I am sailing on the *City of Boston* to-morrow afternoon."

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

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

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

"They are not quite so credulous," he replied, "but at the present moment they are in Chicago, and if we get off at four o'clock punctually to-morrow afternoon, I scarcely think I shall be troubled with their presence on the *City of Boston*."

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"I have been reading about the trunk," the girl said. "Is it really a fake?"

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

She looked at him wonderingly.

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

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

She caught his wrist suddenly and leaned across the table.

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

He shook his head.

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

"Danger!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "Have I ever shown myself afraid? Have we any of us — my brother or father or I — hesitated to run any possible risk when it was worth while? This house has been yours, and we in it, to do what you will with. It isn't a matter of danger — you know that. I come or go as you bid me."

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He met the fierce enquiry of her eyes without flinching. Only his tone was a little kinder as he answered her.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I came in my car. You will perhaps say that it was not wise, but I could not have stood the subway. My nerves are all rotten."

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Jocelyn Thew's tone and gesture were smoothly disdainful.

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

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

"It would be!"

"But I am in the right," the agitated man protested vigorously. "For five years we have worked and with good result. It is finished with us now for the present. There is no one who would dare to continue. Five long years, mind you, Mr. Jocelyn Thew. That is worth something, eh?"

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

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

"Not I! But listen. There is no need for you to know where I am going, and I am not going to tell you. There is no need for you to remember that you ever knew me in your life. There is no need for you to remember any of the work in which you have been engaged. Your propaganda has developed a few strong men in this country and discovered a good deal of pulp. You are part of the pulp. There is only one other thing. If you should be heard of, Rentoul, shall we say telephoning, or calling upon the police here, offering to sell — No, by God, you don't!"

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The man's furtive tug at his hip pocket was almost pathetic in its futility. Jocelyn Thew had him by the throat, holding him with one hand well away from him, a quivering mass of discoloured, terrified flesh.

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

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

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

Rentoul was white to the lips.

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

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

"Nothing!"

Jocelyn Thew shrugged his shoulders. His vic-

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tim cowered before him. For the first time the girl moved. She came a little nearer, and there was fury in her eyes as she looked down upon the terrified man.

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

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

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

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

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

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

His persecutor threw open the door.

"Nothing! Get into your car and drive home. Keep out of sight and hearing for a time. You are

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no particular ornament nor any use to any country, but remember that everything you have done, you have done when the country of your birth was in trouble and the country of your adoption was at peace. The situation is altered. The country of which you are a naturalised citizen is now at war. You had better remember it, and decide for yourself where your duty lies."

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

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

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

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

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

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CHAPTER IV

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

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

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

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

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"How are we going?" Crawshay had asked perpetually.

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

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

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

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

The American shook his head.

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

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

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

"Are you crazy?" the American demanded.

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

"Where to?"

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

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

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

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

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

The doctor shook his head.

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

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

"Why, I remember him perfectly," she exclaimed. "He was in Number Three Ward for some time.

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Surely he was a clerk at one of the drygoods stores down-town?"

The doctor nodded.

"Very likely."

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

"You have it precisely."

Katharine's eyes were full of perplexity.

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

The doctor frowned.

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

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

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

"A friend of whom?" the doctor enquired.

Katharine reflected and shook her head.

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

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

Katharine glanced up in surprise.

"Surely you are not in earnest?" she asked.

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"What else am I here for? I suppose you realise that I am fully qualified?"

The doctor unbent a little.

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

Katharine nodded.

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

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

"Will he ever get well?" she asked.

The doctor shook his head doubtfully.

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

She nodded and moved away.

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"My stateroom is just opposite, if you want me at any time, doctor," she said.

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

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

"This thing will get on all our nerves before we

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

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

A good deal of courage seemed to be sought in that direction, and presently, although the afterglow of the sunset was still brilliant, the decks were almost deserted. On the starboard side, only a man and a woman remained, and gradually, as though with a certain unwillingness, they drifted closer together. The woman, who wore a black and white check coat over her blue serge steamer dress, and a small black hat from which she had pushed back the veil, was leaning over the side of the steamer, her head supported by her hand, looking steadily into the mass of red and orange clouds. The man, who was smoking a cigar, with both hands in his ulster pockets, seemed as though he would have passed her, but without turning her head she held out her hand and beckoned him to her side.

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

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

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

He did as he was asked, arranging her rugs with

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

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

"Yes?" he murmured.

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

"I think so."

"A friend?"

"No, an enemy," he answered equably.

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

"So you have enemies?"

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

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

Jocelyn Thew smiled.

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

She moved uneasily in her chair.

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

"Not just yet."

There was a brief silence. Then she turned her

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head a little, leaning it still on the back of the chair but watching him as she spoke.

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

"Well?"

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

"Why?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"He was only operated upon for appendicitis a fortnight ago, and they say that he has angina pec-

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toris amongst other complications. They brought him straight from the hospital. Seems he's crazy to get back to England to die."

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

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

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

He smiled.

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

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

He shrugged his shoulders very slightly.

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

"I am."

"And these things," he went on, "make it difficult for you to believe that there is any great tie between us two. Yet it is the exception which proves the rule, you know. I will not say that your patient has ever saved my life or performed any immortal

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action, yet believe me he has courage and a grit you would scarcely believe in, and I am speaking seriously when I tell you that not only I but others are under deep obligations to him."

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

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

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

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

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

"What's that?" she asked. "No, the mast's dipping now — you can't see. There — the other side."

He followed her outstretched finger, and slowly his fine black eyebrows grew closer and closer together. Far away, at a certain spot in the clear evening sky, was a little speck of black, hidden every now and then by the mast of the ship as she rolled, but distinctly there all the time, a little smudge in an amber setting, too small for a cloud, yet a visible

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and tangible object. Katharine felt her companion's arm tighten upon hers, and she saw his face grow like a piece of marble.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Jocelyn Thew watched the blue fire about the mast.

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

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

He shook his head.

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

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

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

The idea was not favourably entertained.

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

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

The steamer was merely drifting now, and its strange visitor had alighted upon the water, rush-

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

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

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

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

"An Englishman," he observed.

"Do you know him?" she asked curiously.

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

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

"Seems a little rough luck to be caught up like this out in the ocean," he grumbled. "I don't know that the man's likely to do me any particular harm," he

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added, "but I'd just as soon he wasn't on board."

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

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

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

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

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

She looked around. They were absolutely alone.

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

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

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

Jocelyn raised his cap as he turned away.

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

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CHAPTER V

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Never," Crawshay confessed. "The sensation was — er — entirely new to me. I found the descent upon the water most uncomfortable."

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"Soaked your shore clothes, eh?" Brand observed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You've hit it, Ned, as usual," Mr. Clark, of the Minneapolis *Record*, acquiesced.

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Crawshay drew his rug about him a little peevishly.

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

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

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

"You don't say!" Brand murmured.

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

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

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

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

The Englishman coughed.

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

Brand rose to his feet.

"Well, sir," he concluded, "I offer you my con-

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gratulations on your trip. We shall just dot a few words together concerning it for the New York newspapers. Anything you'd like to add?"

Crawshay stroked his upper lip.

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

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

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

"A little later," Crawshay announced, "either just before your luncheon or dinner hour, if you and your friends would meet me in the smoking room, I should be delighted to remember in the customary fashion that I have won a rather considerable wager."

"Come, that's bully," Brand declared, with a little real feeling in his tone. "I tell you, Clark," he added, as they made their way along the deck to the writing room, "you've got to prick these damned Britishers pretty hard, but they've generally got a bit of the right feeling somewhere tucked away. He'll have a swollen head for the rest of this voyage, though."

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Crawshay watched the two men disappear, out of the corner of his eye. Then he rose to his feet and commenced a little promenade about the sunny portion of the deck. After two or three turns he found himself face to face with Jocelyn Thew, who had just issued from the companionway.

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

Crawshay paused and looked him up and down.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"My name is Jocelyn Thew."

"Mr. Jocelyn Thew," Crawshay concluded.

"I mean that it was a pity you missed the boat, you and Hobson, wasn't it? What was the weather like in Chicago?"

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"Hot," Crawshay replied. "I was hotter there than I ever expect to be again in this world."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am quite sure," he said, in a tone of kindly approval, "that I shall find you a most interesting

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companion on this trip. You and I must have a little further conversation together. I have won a considerable sum of money, I may say, by my — er — exploit, and I have invited some of these newspaper fellows to take a drink with me before luncheon in the smoking room. I hope you will join us?"

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

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

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

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

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CHAPTER VI

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

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

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

Crawshay sighed.

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

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

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

"Not a word."

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

"I don't see why it should," was the somewhat brusque reply. "I have no doubt that the New York

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papers have some wonderful headlines —'How an Englishman catches the steamer!' or 'An English diplomatist, eager to fight'— and all that sort of thing. But apart from the spectacular side of it, I don't suppose they consider your adventure of national interest."

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

The Captain grinned.

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

"I must confess that I made up my mind to the heroic deed in a rash moment," Crawshay acknowledged. "I am a person of strong and unconquerable impulses. You see, that exceedingly disagreeable American policeman who was sent up to Halifax on a fool's errand with me, and who subsequently led me on another to Chicago, bet me five hundred dollars, as we stood upon the dock, that I couldn't catch that steamer. Now if there is one thing," he went on, crossing his legs, "which excites my interest more than another, it is a bet."

"That and your accent," the captain said, smiling, "are two of your most prominent British traits, Mr. Crawshay."

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The latter took out his eyeglass and polished it.

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

"Not a word."

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

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

"How do you know that?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What do you mean, Mr. Crawshay?"

"Nothing much. I see you have been smoking a pipe, Captain. You will forgive me if I light one of these perfectly damnable cigarettes which are all

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I have been able to buy on board.— Thank you.— I talk better when I smoke."

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

"Intermingled at times," the other insisted, "with a word or two of sense. Now I am going to repeat that I have very little faith in this wireless operator of yours. At three o'clock this morning — I don't wish to tie myself down, Captain, so I will say in the vicinity of that hour — he received a message — a long one, I should imagine. I put it to you, sir — was that dispatch for you?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Mr. Dix," the captain asked him, "can you tell me if you have received any wireless message intended for any one of the passengers at or since three o'clock this morning?"

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"Not one, sir."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I have strange habits," Crawshay confessed. "On board ship I indulge them. I like to sleep when I feel like it, and to wander about when I feel inclined. After my extraordinary, my remarkable experience of yesterday, I was not disposed for slumber."

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"It appears to me, sir," the purser intervened, "that on board this ship you seem to do a great deal of walking about, considering you have only been with us for a little more than twelve hours."

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

The captain turned towards his junior officer.

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

Crawshay extended an eager hand.

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

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

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

"And why?"

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

"Well, to whom?" the captain demanded.

"To a passenger on board this steamer."

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

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "If Robins has failed

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in his duty, which I still take the liberty of doubting, I must cross-question him at once."

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

"You must really oblige me by doing nothing of the sort," he begged. "I am sure that my way is best. Besides, you make me feel like an eavesdropper — a common informer, and that sort of thing, you know."

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

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

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

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

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

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