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could not understand it. He was an old soldier, he had served in India, had been through the Boer War, and he felt sure that the plans he had submitted to the Divisional Headquarters had been sound and good. He had been complimented upon them too, and yet they had ended in failure, and he had narrowly escaped disaster.

"If I could see a glimmer of light anywhere," said Colonel Blount to his senior major, "I wouldn't mind. But I can't. Only General Withers at the Divisional Headquarters, the Brigadier, you, and myself knew the details of our last scheme, and yet the Bosches got wind of them. It's maddening, maddening!"

"Whoever the blighter is he's got brains," said the Major.

"Ah, here are two staff officers coming now!"

For some time after this Colonel Blount was more than ordinarily active. He was constantly in communication with the commanding officers of other battalions, and there were frequent journeys to Headquarters; but no one knew what was on foot. The presence of staff officers was constantly noted, and all felt that some big action was to take place, but when or in what way no one knew. Even the Tommies in the trenches felt that something of more than ordinary importance was in the air, and they discussed it one with another. They, too, could not help realising that things had been going bad with them, and that, to say the least of it, the Germans were not getting the worst of it.

Tom Pollard felt this more keenly than any one. He had been the man who had been questioned by the Colonel, and he had more than once fancied that he had been specially watched. Indeed Tom had determined to keep both ears and eyes well open, and if possible to do a little detective work on his own account. He entertained suspicions too, which he dared not breathe to any one. They seemed so wild and unfounded that they would not bear the test of a minute's careful thought, and yet they constantly haunted him.

Of course he knew nothing of what was being settled between the officers; he had not the slightest idea of the nature of the plans which had miscarried, he like the others only had a vague feeling that something was wrong.

One day, while near the canal which runs round the foot of the old ramparts of the city, he noticed that the Brigadier and Colonel Blount were talking with two staff officers; one of the latter was a general, while the other was a captain. Tom felt sure that the captain was Waterman, whom he had known in Brunford.

Tom was reclining near a dangerous corner, close by the Potijze Road which runs straight to the beginning of the British communication trench. German shells were constantly screeching their way through the air, and falling in various parts of the old town; but by this time he had become so accustomed to these ominous sounds that he had almost ceased to take notice of them. There was only one chance in a hundred that one of them might fall near him, and as he had been so far fortunate, he, like hundreds of others in a similar condition, thought he might escape altogether. Besides, although he stood near the dangerous crossing he was in a sheltered position, and as the day was hot he sat under the shade of a wall and looked out on the ruins of the old city.

A few seconds later the group of officers passed close by him, and Tom immediately rose and saluted.

"Oh, this is the man," said Colonel Blount as he caught sight of Tom. "Come here, Pollard."

Tom did as he was commanded, not without some fluttering around the region of his heart.

"Now, Private Pollard," said Colonel Blount, "repeat what you told me some time ago."

Again Tom found himself submitted to a keen cross-examination after he had told his story, and he noticed that all the officers, including Waterman, listened very attentively.

"There's something wrong," said Tom to himself; "they tried to shake me, but they failed; I know what I heard well enough." And then he watched them as they quickly crossed the dangerous corner, and hurried into a sheltered position.

That same night, after the staff officers had returned to their Headquarters, Tom, who was passing the Water Tower, saw, much to his surprise, the retreating form of a staff officer. Of course this might mean nothing—he was utterly ignorant of the movements of those above him; all the same he felt as though hammer were beating against his forehead so excited was he.

The next night Tom's company was ordered to relieve a number of men who had been a good many hours in the trenches, and just as the shadows of evening were falling they crept along the Potijze Road towards the communication trench. An hour later Tom had taken up his post in the zig-zag cutting with a feeling that something of importance was going to happen.

Hour after hour passed away, and still Tom wondered at what he had seen and heard. He had no definite data upon which to go, no tangible reason for his suspicions, and yet with that bulldog tenacity characteristic of the sharp Lancashire boy he kept thinking of what he ought to do. Presently he heard a voice which he recognised; it was that of Major Blundell, in reply to something that had been said to him.

"Yes, yes," said the Major, "I quite understand."

"You are sure you have the instructions plain?"



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"Perfectly sure."
"Then I will get along here and speak to Captain Winfield."
"Let me come with you," said Major Blundell.

"Oh no, certainly not." I know the way perfectly well. Good night, Blundell.

"Good night, Waterman."

It was a fairly bright night, although a few clouds hung in the sky. Tom heard approaching footsteps, and then hid himself in a sharp corner of the trench while Waterman passed him. Tom followed noiselessly, all the time keeping out of sight of the man he watched. This he was able to do with comparative ease, owing to the zig-zag nature of the trench. Tom knew that at this particular point they were only a little more than a hundred yards from the German lines, and that the German snipers were constantly on the watch for any one who might happen to show himself above the sand-bags. He had not gone more than twenty yards when he saw Waterman stop and look around.

Tom stopped almost instinctively, still hidden by a sharp turn in the trench. The light was fairly good, and Tom's eyes were keen. He saw that the man had adopted a listening attitude. That particular part of the trench was for the moment deserted, any moment a patrol might appear. Evidently Waterman was keenly watchful; he looked each way with evident care, and listened attentively. Then he took a piece of white paper from his pocket which seemed to be attached to something heavy. Even in the dim light Tom saw the white gleam of the paper which Waterman had taken from his pocket. Quick as a thought Waterman stepped on to the ledge of the trench, and then, leaning over the sand-bags, threw the paper towards the German lines. This done he stepped back and hurried quickly away.

For a second the lad was almost paralysed; then the meaning of it came to him like a flash of light, and before Waterman had proceeded half a dozen yards Tom had sprung upon him.

"What do you mean, fellow? Get away from me!" and Waterman struggled to free himself.

But Tom held on like grim death. "You are a German spy, that's what you are!" he said hoarsely. "A mean, skulking German spy!"

"This will mean death for you, my man," said Waterman, still struggling. "You are enough of a soldier to know that for a private to strike an officer in war time means court martial and death."

"It will not be I who will be court martialled," panted Tom. "Ah, you swine!" for at that moment Waterman had pulled out his pistol, and had not Tom struck his arm a bullet would have gone through his brain.

"I say, what's this?"

"A German spy!" cried Tom hoarsely, "he tried to shoot me, sir!"

"A German spy!" said the newcomer. "You must be mad."

"I am not mad, sir. I saw him."

"He is mad!" said Waterman. "I'm here on duty and the fellow attacked me. Pull him off, Lieutenant Penrose, he's strangling me!"


(To be continued.)

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TOMMY

By Joseph Hocking

Author of "All for a Scrap of Paper," "Dearer Than Life," etc. Published by Hodder & Stoughton, Limited, London and Toronto

CHAPTER VIII.

"Yes," said Colonel Blount to Major Blundell, "there's treachery around; we may as well face it."

"A man must be as blind as a bat not to see that," was the Major's reply, "but where is it?"

"That's the question. But we cannot close our eyes to facts. Time after time our plans have been discovered, and not only discovered, but evidently revealed to the enemy. I've talked the matter over with General Withers, and while he agrees with me that these constant mishaps are strange, he cannot see where the treachery can come in. Why, man, he has even guarded himself against his own staff officers! He keeps his plans to himself, and only makes them known to those who have to carry them out; he's taken every precaution a man can take, and you know what a keen fellow Withers is! Yet before we can strike our blow, the Huns get wind of our intentions!"

The Colonel sighed as he spoke. The constant mishaps were getting on his nerves; he felt that his brother officers regarded him as incapable. He wondered sometimes whether he would be relieved of his command, so unsuccessful had he been.

And yet he had been known as a capable, farseeing officer, and earlier in the war his name had been mentioned in the dispatches. He had been spoken of in the General Headquarters, too, as an officer of more than ordinary ability, and yet for the last few weeks everything he had touched seemed to miscarry. There had been no great set-back, but there had been no advance worth speaking of. A spirit of restlessness and suspicion was felt in the whole regiment. It seemed to them as though there was an Achan in the camp, yet no one knew who the traitor might be.

Of course all these misadventures might have been owing to unfortunate accidents, or because the plans of the British officers were not well thought out. All the same Colonel Blount

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