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The NURSE'S STORY



BY ADELE BLENEAU

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"The general feels as you do," he answered. "Your American affiliations stand you in good stead. But the one fact which makes us consent at all to your going is that we are prepared to surround them by noon today. If you can get through and escape suspicion for several hours you will be safe. You may tell them the French 70's are being placed tonight by the big bridge. They will recognize the peculiar bark of that gun and know you are telling the truth. I need not go further. The less you know the easier your task will be, for you are wholly unacquainted with a despicable role," and he took my hand affectionately in his own.



By the Flame of the Match I Saw It Was Lord N—

for the benefit of any spies who may be around. The German patrols will be watching for you; however, take no chances; leave your coat and cap and approach their lines with your Red Cross uniform in plain sight. Don't wear even your own uniform coat; it is wiser. Once through you will report to the officer in command, and whatever else you do keep cool. A favorite method of theirs is to humiliate and insult a prisoner until they wear his nerves down and then trick him into a damaging admission. Tell your story, which is a simple one, and stick to it, and always keep in mind that a few hours at best and our men will be there. I don't believe they can connect you with the movement before that time, and their trumped up charge against Ian will hardly be considered valid by the officers higher up. After all, it's the hazards of war. God bless you, my brave child, and I feel we shall meet again, that this is not to be a tragedy.

of ribbon. This clothing suggested a mixed breed of Scotchman and red Indian, who had taken to wearing the Indian headdress as a kilt. I had heard many stories of what their work was like in the trenches. Crouching down among the barbed wire entanglements, with their supporting infantrymen, who carried fixed bayonets, they raised themselves a little from the earth and, setting one of their rocket-like bombs from their belts, grasped it by the stick and hurled it high above the rampart. It twists and travels uncertainly through the air and finally by the force of equilibrium supplied by the streamers of ribbon plunges straight as a plumb line into the trench.

CHAPTER XXV

A Man's Life.

REMEMBERING Lord N's admonition, I had intended as soon as I felt the sentry was near to throw aside my khaki coat, but the snow was so cold, and wet I was chilled to the bone and shivered at the thought of leaving it, so I was still wearing cap, coat, and all when I heard the sentry call out, "Who goes there?"

"A friend!" I cried back quickly and advanced and gave the counter-sign. Evidently I was expected, as he directed me to go a half mile farther down, where I would find some one waiting for me. Passing a little inn, half dead with cold and fatigue, I went in to ask for a hot drink. The landlady was a French peasant, young and pretty. She eyed me curiously, but did not venture to speak. I had to wait, as she was getting breakfast ready for some soldiers. They were fresh from the trenches and were covered with mud from head to foot. I thought idly they looked like football players at the end of the third quarter.

I had just begun drinking my tea when the door opened and a familiar figure, bundled in a great coat, came in the room. In an instant I recognized him; it was Von Schulling. He came straight over to me and said very gently: "Fraulein, I've come for you. I am leaving tonight for home on leave, and I wanted to talk with you, and this seemed a good opportunity. As soon as you are finished we had better be off. They are anxiously awaiting you down there."

I no longer wanted anything, and he tossed a coin across the table, and we went out to the waiting motor. I dreaded the ride. In fact, I shrank from it in a sort of nameless terror, but again I was to find the big black thing that loomed, only loomed and nothing more. We were hardly started before he began. Speaking English, he said: "Miss Bleneau, first I want to ask you to forgive the many unthinkable discourtesies I have inflicted upon you. I think over and over how dear and kind you were to me when I was ill in your hospital. I am afraid you can't forgive what happened there, but I want you to know that I am sorry." He paused, evidently awaiting a reply. I murmured that it was all forgotten as far as I was concerned.

again, if theirs is not diminished, in fact, not almost annihilated, after our heavy fire day and night. They will know the truth—that their guns and gunners are safe, fresh for an attack. While we have been pouring away at Dummlies and—I don't know what may happen." After a pause, "Perhaps nothing until they know definitely we have actual proof, and then you will be"—He turned to me as white as death. "I can't bear to think of it. I've seen so much—things too awful to repeat—I shudder."

He paused, it seemed minutes, and then said gently: "Adele, dear, come with me—marry me—I am afraid I am done for as a soldier—we shall go away out of all sight and sound of war, back to your home in Louisiana, anywhere you say. I am sick of it." I had been so stunned at his words; he had said a great deal too much before I had sufficiently collected my wits to please.

"Don't, please," it's useless and hopeless. I don't love you. Captain von Schulling, and that is the answer to everything." "Is it Frazer?" he asked bluntly. "Yes," I scarcely more than whispered. "Will they shoot him as a spy?" "Perhaps General S. might have done so, but since you have left Prince H. has taken command, and he doesn't 'play the game,' as the English say, that way," he replied with an attempt at a laugh. Then, soberly: "You are in grave danger; he is not. If you had only refused to go on this mad wild mission all would have been well, but that's past now; you did go, you did trick us, and now—what's to be done?"

"I've probably got to pay," I answered. "Not as my wife," he said. "My father is not only a financial power, which is a very important consideration now, but one of the Kaiser's nearest advisers. As my wife you will be with God's help, happy. We may have faith, it is true, but no man can truthfully say we are not good husbands. I had tried again, and again, to stem the torrent of his words, but it was useless. Only by waiting until he had finished could I hope to be heard.

"I am sorry," I said, "sorrider than I can find words to tell you; but my answer is final. But in spite of the pain of it all, I wouldn't exchange what you have told me for much, very much. All my life I shall remember that you are mine and have and—the man I like to think of you as being." We were before the steps of the hospital. "Then—in spite of the danger—everything—this is the end?" he asked sadly.

Holding out my hand, I said gently, "Goodby," and he looked into my eyes with an expression that hurt me. Handing me a card, he said: "If you ever need me this will find me. I am going before they question me. Goodby, little girl. God bless you." His voice broke, and he turned, ran down the steps, jumped in the car and was gone. I looked at the card. It read: "Prince Hago von Schulling, Captain—Dragoons, Berlin."

As I climbed the steps, breathless, my anxiety as to Ian and my thoughts of Von Schulling were interrupted by an orderly calling out to me, "Fraulein, you are wanted at once by his excellency." I followed him. I had no time to get nervous or to think of what to say. Consequently I was calm when I entered. The commander I knew was no longer there, and in his place sat an erect dignified man with gray deep-set eyes and square chin. He would have been handsome had his face been a little less heavy. All his sternness I felt was a mask.

"Is this the girl?" he said to an officer beside him. "Yes, your excellency." "What is your name, and what was your mission?" he said. "Telling him my name in full, I added, 'To place the big guns of the English'." "Have you succeeded?" he asked. "Have I?" I questioned in turn. "I thought so."

To the officer beside him he said, "Has she?" "Yes, your excellency, but—" "Good," he said, interrupting. "What were you to receive in exchange for your work, fraulein?" and without stopping for an answer went on: "The stake must have been a rich one to tempt a girl like you," and he looked me over slowly from head to toe as then back again. I was still wearing men's shoes. He smiled as they caught his eye. "Yes, a very high price. What was it?" he asked abruptly.

"A man's life," I answered, looking at him squarely. "Who is the man and what is he?" "He is Captain Frazer of the Indian army, son of Lord L., and he is my patient." "Your patient?" he smiled. "You were a very devoted nurse, I should say," with emphasis. "A life," he repeated. "Was his life in danger?" "He had been accused of being a spy, and I was told that unless I brought back the location of the battery by tonight he would be shot."



I Had Been on the Point of Flying to Him and Screaming the Truth.

ures that possession gives. You knew I adored you, worshipped you, and that if I lived you would be my wife. You wanted that, and to gratify your tardy passion you bought my life with those of my comrades—my men, perhaps even my own brother! Great God! I am going mad! Leave me before I strangle you! My one prayer is that I shall never see you again!"

A dozen times I had been on the point of flying to him and screaming out the truth, but I was held back not because I feared we might be overheard. That thought never once came to me. Had I been saner I would have known that it was for that very purpose I had been allowed to go to Ian's room. But at that time no thought of any such material thing came to me. I was so absolutely stunned, crushed, that I had no words with which to defend myself. Only one idea came and persisted: Ian had thought me capable of this heinous thing, while even Von Schulling had known better. I staggered from the room and fainted.

It was an hour later when the order had been given for the evacuation of the hospital, and I was desperately needed that I came back to consciousness and found a little German nurse bending over me. Afterward I learned that Ian's speech and my failure to defend myself probably saved, if not our lives, certainly for the time being, our liberties, for it never occurred to the listeners that I would have accepted his denunciations unless I had been guilty.

(To Be Continued.)

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