loneliness has been the worst part up till now. Buck up! You and I together are going to put rings round old Clubfoot.

The pressure of that firm, strong hand steadied me. Again I was conscious of the desire to help him. His blue eyes smiled into mine. They were shining now as though he were elated at the prospect of beating our terrible adversary on his own ground. Slowly my confidence flowed back. This strange young man's undaunted assurance seemed to protect me like a shield. I felt that Nigel Druce would see us through.

"A bold face now," he counselled, "and we'll have you home in two ticks. Kemper's is only just around the corner from here. Hold up your head, and remember there are three million people besides ourselves in this city!"

He rapped with a coin upon the marble slab of the table. "Kellner, zahlen!"

CHAPTER XVII

AT SCHIPPKE'S

It was ten minutes to eight when my cab deposited me beneath the glass awning of the Hotel Continental, which loomed large in a short, quiet street behind Unter den Linden. I felt rested and refreshed: my nerves, too, were relaxed, for the afternoon had passed off without the slightest incident.

From the wax-works Nigel Druce had driven me back in a taxi to Kemper's, where I slipped out of my clothes, and lay down on the bed in my room, meaning to rest for a couple of hours. I must have fallen asleep, however, for when I next caught sight of the time it was past six.

The nap did me good. By the time I had had a bath and a cup of tea, put on the change of linen I had laid out
and got into the tailor-made in which I had travelled from Schlatz, I found myself prepared to look on the best side of what was proving to be at any rate an exciting and romantic adventure. And when, my suit-case despatched to the station, and my bill paid, they brought me the police form to fill up, I signed myself Maria Hübel, Spinster twenty-three, from Zurich, with all the aplomb of the practised adventuress. From the indifferent air with which the woman in the office laid my form away with the others, I felt certain that, up to that moment, at any rate, no one had come inquiring after me at the hotel.

My short drive along the Linden to my rendezvous with Rudi went far to restore my mind to normalcy, to use the word with which, a few years later, a prophet arisen in the West was to enrich our English tongue. The evening was serene and warm. Behind the leafy green of the Tiergarten, under the high arch of the Brandenburg Gate, the western sky was softly purple and all tremulous with the first stars, and along the wide avenue the limes were fragrant beneath their powdering of summer dust.

Over hotel and café the house-fronts, one by one, were quietly bursting into radiance, with lettering picked out in electric lights, red and white and green, or with signs that flashed and spun and zig-zagged rhythmically, flaming up to die and flame again, their effulgence yet paled by the sunset after-glow.

After the day’s toil the city was starting on its nightly pleasure round. The cafés were thronged. Each had its serried ranks of habitués grouped about small tables overflowing upon the sidewalk, each had its windows folded back wide to reveal further phalanxes of placid burgesses under the lights within, and waiters, clamouring and perspiring, darting to and fro. There was laughter in the air, laughter and the murmur of light-hearted voices that rose on the still evening from the crowds sauntering
along the broad pavements and mingled with an accom-
paniment of lively sounds, the clanging of bells where the
trams thumped ponderously across the avenue, the stacc-
cato squawk of motor-horns, the brisk clip-clopping of the
little horse cabs, and the smooth whirr of the electric
droschkes over the shining asphalt roadway.

It was as though the approach of night had wrought a
fairy change in the city which had seemed to me so harsh
and inhospitable in the garish light of day. Before the
spontaneous gaiety of the street, my picture of Clubfoot,
crouched behind these peaceable, good-humoured throngs,
 began to recede into the distance and, as I drove along, I
asked myself whether I had not been unduly alarmist.

Amid the lights and laughter of the summer night, the
story of Vivian Abbott was hard to credit. After all, I
mused, I knew nothing of Nigel Druce. He might be one
of those scaremongers who were always prating of the
German menace. What if he had lied to me? If Grundt
were right, and the little Major just a vulgar criminal,
might not the blue envelope contain some proof of the
crime? In that event Nigel Druce would be merely
Abbott’s accomplice. Yet he had honest eyes.

The sight of Rudi carried me still farther along the road
back to my old life of undisturbed peace. I had not
been with him five minutes before it seemed to me that I
had never left Schlatz. I had only just taken a seat at
one of the small tables in the spacious hall of the Conti-
nental facing the swing-door, when he appeared.

Rather to my surprise, for I remembered what Druce
had said, he was in uniform. Directly he caught sight of
me, he rushed forward and fairly fell upon my hand.
"Most beautiful Olivia," he cried, as he kissed it, "the
sight of you is the crowning joy of a most auspicious day.
Gött, what a rush it’s been! I’m dying for a drink.
In your honour I shall be English and drink the whisky-
soda.” He snapped his fingers at a waiter hovering near.
"Zwei whisky-soda!" he ordered.
"If you make me drink whisky," I said, laughing,
"people will take me for one of those strong-minded
Englishwomen you disapprove of so violently. I don’t
want anything; I’ve just had tea."
He changed the order and, hitching up his sword,
dropped into the chair at my side. "My dear, how sweet
of you to have stayed! I’m so delighted that you’re
going to dine with me to-night. I’ve got glorious news to
celebrate. . . ."
"Oh, Rudi," I said, "am I allowed to know?"
"It’s not official yet, but it’s as good as settled. I’m
going back to the Foot Guards. . . ."
"My dear, how wonderful!"
"I should say so," he proclaimed triumphantly. "No
more Schlatz for me, that dead-and-alive nest you’re so
fond of, no more ghastly Kaffee-Klatsches, no more bridge
at a mark a hundred. . . ." He was radiant.
"However did you manage it?" I asked him.
He wagged his head knowingly. "Well, I had a tip
that a sort of relation of mine was going to get command
of my old regiment: at present he’s commanding one of
our battalions at Spandau. I put in for leave to come up
and tackle him. Ever since I arrived at four o’clock I’ve
been on his track. At last I got him on the telephone,
and I think it’s going to be all right. I’m seeing him
later in the evening. That’s why I’m still in uniform:
officially, plain clothes are forbidden, you know." He
looked at me doubtfully. "It means that I can’t take
you bummeling. These night restaurants, you see, are
out of bounds to us in uniform. . . ."  
He seemed quite relieved when I told him that I had
decided to make it an early evening, anyway: it was plain
that he was absorbed with the prospect of his rehabilitation.
"Well," he observed philosophically, "it'll have to be for another time. You'll be in Berlin again, I expect. Now about dinner: d' you mind very much if we dine at Schippke's?"

"I'm entirely in your hands," I told him laughingly.
"What is Schippke's?"

"It's a restaurant near the War School," he explained. "Not frightfully fashionable, you know, but they've got a band and it's amusing at times. Mostly officers and little ladies, if you understand me. But outwardly quite respectable. And the food's good. This Colonel of mine is attending a regimental dinner in a private room there to-night and I'm to see him afterwards. It was the only time he could give me as he's going on leave in the morning..."

He took his drink from the salver the waiter presented. "Prost!" He drained the glass at a draught. "Bravo!" he exclaimed, as he brushed his fine yellow moustache with his handkerchief. "No wonder the English are so tough!" He flung the waiter a coin.
"Come on, proud Albion, let's get to Schippke's before the lads have drunk up all the champagne!"

At the first glance I decided that Schippke's was going to be great fun. It was the kind of place no tourist ever discovers, and infinitely more characteristic of Berlin life, I surmised, than the terrace of the Wintergarten or similar cosmopolitan resorts. In the entrance hall a grim and richly moustachioed beldame hung up my tweed travelling coat cheek by jowl with an extraordinary assemblage of military millinery suspended on hooks round the walls. There were lines of swords and caps and spiked helmets, and I noticed a wonderful Hussar dolman, edged with astrakhan and laced with gold, and a glistening Cuirassier helmet.

While Rudi saw about a table I looked in upon the
restaurant. It was a long room, white-panelled, filled with noise and tobacco smoke and the smell of food. At one end was a band that seemed all brass and cymbals, and in the centre of the floor a table piled high with viands in tiers, Strassburg patties, pots of caviar, faggots of asparagus, melons, boxes of peaches.

Our entrance drew all glances to the door. At almost every table I recognised the officer type, though many of the diners, notably those dining tête-à-tête with ladies, were in plain clothes. There was no mistaking the evidence, however, of the close-cropped heads and the monocles, above all, of the band of deep sunburn ending abruptly on a level with the eyes.

There were many salutations as we entered, a formal bow for me, a friendly hand-wave, a lifted glass, for my companion. Rudi seemed to be known to almost everybody at Schippke's, from the Viennese maître d'hôtel, who greeted him like a long-lost son, to a young Guardsman with a vinous air, who rose up from a party of men as we passed, and shouted: "Kinder, Rudi's back. Now it can start!" which obscure remark was uproariously applauded by his friends.

There was a sort of holiday atmosphere about the place which was most infectious. The band scarcely took a rest: everybody seemed to be drinking champagne and talking to everybody else; and presently I found myself raising my glass with Rudi to different people who insisted on toasting us from adjacent tables. Rudi ordered a marvellous dinner. The caviar was of the freshest: the blue trout broiled to a turn: the chicken en croquillet: deliciously tender. The champagne glasses at Schippke's were capacious; and by the time we had reached the chicken, Rudi, despite my protest, was ordering a second bottle of Pomméry.

Perhaps I didn't protest very hard. I was so happy
for a spell that evening that I believe I actually forgot the imminent ordeal of that long motor journey into the unknown. Rudi was excellent company. He knew stories about almost everyone in the room, particularly the "little ladies," and he kept making me laugh. All this time the restaurant was filling up. With every fresh arrival new tables were squeezed in until we were all sitting elbow to elbow.

The band had been playing old German airs—soldier songs they were, Rudi explained—and people were singing to the music, when suddenly there were cries of "Nein, Nein," a hubbub of voices and laughter.

"What's happening?" I said, looking up from my peach.

Rudi chuckled. "It's rather funny. The band was playing 'Reserve hat Ruh'! That's the song the Reservists sing when they're released from their annual service with the colours, and the fellows won't have it."

"Why not?" I demanded.

The boy sipped his champagne thoughtfully. "Well," he remarked reflectively, "there's a lot of talk about war just now. Of course, if we go to war, the Reservists who are doing their training will be kept on. So, you see . . . ."

"But surely you don't think that there's any real danger of war, do you?"

"Not if Russia behaves sensibly. . . ."

"And if she doesn't?"

He shrugged his shoulders and did not reply.

"I see," said I. "Then that was what your friend meant just now when he called out to you, 'Now it can start!'"

Rudi flushed up. "Nobody pays any attention to old Kurt's nonsense," he answered evasively.

"The people who stopped the band from playing that
Reservist song didn't seem to think the chances of war nonsense," I put in.

"You're right," said the boy solemnly. "There's a limit to Germany's patience, Olivia, as your dear French friends will find out if they go on trying to push Russia into war over these dirty Servians. Germany stands encircled with foes,"—his voice became animated—"but, if needs be, we shan't be afraid to hack our way through. Our good German sword is sharp, as you English and French may discover sooner than you think. There's no nonsense about that, at any rate. . . ."

He spoke with such heat, with a challenging air so foreign to his customary easy-going nature, that I stared. "My dear Rudi, nobody wants to go to war with you . . ."

I was beginning to say, when a great shouting interrupted me. All over the restaurant people were standing up and crying out a name. In a flash Rudi was on his feet, waving his napkin and yelling with the rest: "Prince Eugene, give us the Hymn of Prince Eugene!"

There was a moment's lull and then, with a roll of drums, the band swept noisily into crashing martial music. From group to group the song was taken up. The whole company chanted the words, keeping time by pounding the tables with their fists, with bottles, with anything that came handy, until the glasses jingled. "Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter . . ." they roared: the rest of the words escaped me in the din.

Rudi's voice was in my ear. He was shouting to make himself heard. "It's the song of Prince Eugene, the Austrian General, who captured Belgrade from the Turks," he explained, and added: "Perhaps the Austrians are going to take Belgrade again, to punish these rascally Serbs."

The song ended in a crescendo of cheers. The band stopped and people resumed their seats. An officer in
uniform remained on his feet, a stout man with a purple face, his tunic unbuttoned at the throat, who swayed as he stood. In stentorian tones he was declaiming:

"Jeder Schuss ein, Russ,
Jeder Stoss ein, Franzos,
Jeder Tritt ein, Brit..." *

The whole restaurant broke into hand-clapping and laughter. Some one pulled the officer down into his chair and the band broke into "Puppchen," the popular song of the day. Rudi laughed happily. "Infantry, obviously," he remarked drily. "The trouble about these Line fellows is that they can't hold their liquor. But though the man's drunk, he speaks the truth. We Germans are ready, Olivia, and..."

But I scarcely heard him.

Floria von Pellegrini had just come into the restaurant.

CHAPTER XVIII

I ESCAPE FROM TWIN PERILS TO MEET WITH DISASTER

The Pellegrini certainly knew the value of an effective entrance. Every other woman in the place had an escort; but she came alone. As she paused upon the threshold to gaze upon that animated scene, she looked superb. She was in décolleté, as though she had been to the Opera—I remembered noticing that Burian, the great Wagnerian tenor, was billed to sing Siegfried that night—her exquisite figure moulded in an ivory satin frock, quite plain but marvellously draped, with a bodice that left her gleaming shoulders bare. Her gorgeous hair was loosely gathered up to lie in a thick coil upon her shapely neck, and looped up to show her small and beautifully-moulded

* "A Russian with every shot,
A Frenchman with every thrust,
A Briton with every kick."