in his. "I know what you feel. But, believe me, there's no other way. Be brave a little longer, won't you? Every second we linger we risk being seen by someone in the house. And it's essential that no one should know you're in hiding here. . . ." He lit another match.

"Oh, all right," I capitulated listlessly.

In silence we climbed into the stuffy darkness, up and up, landing after landing, until, the staircase ending under a grimy glass lantern, we stood in a low-pitched corridor lined with doors. Druce laid a finger on his lips and went softly to the end of the passage. A key grated, a switch clicked, and a stream of light, falling through an open door, illuminated the mobile, valiant face.

"Sanctuary!" he whispered, and drew me in.

CHAPTER XXV
SANCTUARY

You know how it is when you are expecting one thing and stumble upon another: any merits the substitute may possess are apt to be overlooked in the first keen shock of the disappointment. I had looked to find a flat: two rooms and a bath, say, at the least; but I discovered that my sanctuary was nothing but an attic under the eaves.

I did not then perceive that this humble refuge, though naked as a convent cell, was also as scrupulously neat and clean. I was weary and fractious, and saw with disgust only that the walls, blotched with damp, sloped at an acute angle up to the ceiling that arched itself not a yard above our heads; that of furniture, beyond a deal 'table and a pair of chairs, there was none, and that, to complete the garret setting, a packing-case with a division did duty for a cupboard to store some odds and ends of crockery; and that an assemblage of chimney-pots, with rusty and
dilapidated cowls, peered, like a throng of hooded beggar-
men, through the unscreened panes of the two small
dormer windows. A pink check curtain drawn across a re-
cess at one end of the attic suggested the presence of a bed.

If my companion remarked my obvious discontent, he did
not comment upon it. Whilst I looked about me, he busied
himself at a sink fitted into the corner opposite the alcove.

"Pretty squalid, what?" he observed chattily, as he
filled a pan at the tap. "But in my position I can't
afford to attract attention. And the best way to avoid
remark in a big modern city is to pitch your tent among
people who are equally intent on evading inconvenient
inquiries." He chuckled, and set his pan down on a gash-
ring which stood on a shelf beneath the sink. "I've got
some devilish queer neighbours, my dear, I don't mind
telling you, as you'll hear for yourself presently, when
the bong tong starts coming home to bed. . . ." He put
a match to the gas. "There, that'll be hot in a minute.
I dare say you'd like a tub before you turn in. I've got
a rubber bath. I'll just dig you out some clean sheets. . . .
So saying, he turned round to the alcove and pulled back
the curtain. Then I heard him utter a sharp exclamation.

On the narrow camp-bed which stood in the recess, a girl
lay fast asleep on the coverlet. She was fully dressed,
with her handbag beside her, as though she had come in
from the street, but her hat, a shabby black hat with a
cherry-coloured ribbon, was skewered to the curtain with
one of its long pins. Her back was to the room, her face
pillowed on her hand, and her hair, which had begun to
come uncoiled, lay in an ashen-blonde rope along her slim
young neck.

"Why, Ottelie!" I heard Druce say, and at his words
she instantly awoke. She moved her head round and
opened her eyes, and I recognised the little waitress from
the Café zur Nelke. She did not sit up, but Druce stooped
down and, stretching up like a child, she put her thin hands on the lapels of his rough jacket. Under its mask of paint her small face was haggard in the early morning light.

"Ach, Count," she murmured in a soft little voice, "I thought you’d never come. I was so tired, I lay down to wait for you, and I must have fallen asleep. Listen, I came to warn you. You can’t go back to the café. It’s shut up...."

She addressed him as "Du"; and I was not unaware of the sentimental significance of the second person singular in the relation of the sexes in Germany. I felt a sharp sense of irritation. It was bad enough of Druce to expect me to share a garret with him: but to find that garret in the occupation of his mistress...

"Raided, eh?" said Druce. (They seemed to have forgotten all about my existence.)

She nodded.

"I thought as much. When was it?"

"Just before two. And they’ve nabbed Frau Hulda. I heard the Kommissar tell Lenchen. But that’s not the worst...." She paused and drew him closer. "They’ve got your photo, Count. It’s printed on a handbill as large as life, with a reward, a thousand marks, for your arrest...."

I saw his eyes narrow quickly; but he said no word.

"Hans offered to help track you down," she went on in her rather husky voice. "I didn’t wait to hear any more. Fortunately, the joint was crowded, and while they were rounding up the gang, Black Lola—you remember her?—and I, we slipped away through the pantry and the court at the back. I came straight off here to put you wise." She uttered a little crooning sigh. "Du, I can stay with you now, nicht wahr, and do the shopping and look after you....?"

I saw him gently detach her fingers and straighten himself up. "You’re a good friend, little Ottalie," he
said—he, too, used the familiar tense, and it jarred on me again. "But you can't stay here. You see..." He moved aside and disclosed me.

Her eyes widened at the sight of me, and her short upper lip trembled. For a moment I thought she was going to cry. Instead, she sat up abruptly and, snatching her hat, swung her feet to the ground and crossed to a mirror which stood above a wash-hand stand at the foot of the bed. In the moment of awkward silence that ensued, I heard, somewhere within the house, heavy footsteps mounting, and then a door bang dully.

Druce looked at me thoughtfully. "Let me deal with this, will you, please?" he interjected in a hurried undertone. "It's quite all right..."

"It's nothing of the sort," I rejoined, with heat. "You know I'd never have come here if I'd dreamed that you expected me to share a room with you. And in a place like this..."

"There was never any question of such a thing," he retorted indignantly. "Of course I'm going elsewhere...

"You needn't bother," I told him icily. "I've no wish to upset your domestic arrangements,"—I saw him flinch at that. "The only thing I must ask of you is to advance me some more money, enough for me to get my ticket home."

While we thus senselessly sparred, all the unseen labyrinth of the great tenement beyond our threshold mysteriously crepitated, with stealthy footfalls, the drawn-out whine of a door, hushed laughter. Suddenly out of the rustling stillness a strident voice began screeching. A woman shrieked abuse. "Schwein, Schwein!" she screamed over and over again. There was the scrape of feet, a stifled cry, the thud of a door, then quiet again.

"Go out with all that scum on the stairs?" said Druce, rather scathingly. "Be reasonable! Besides, by this time your description is in the hands of every Schützmann
in the city. You'd be grabbed before you were a dozen
yards from the house. . . ."

I held out my hand. "Please do what I say. . . ."

"You're crazy!" he exclaimed, exasperated.

I suppose I was; but I was nerve-racked and furiously
irate into the bargain. "Very well," I cried, and swung
about. "Then I'll just fend for myself. . . ."

But even as I turned to leave him, a little voice cried out,
"Adieu!" Ottlie's slim figure flashed past me and
whisked through the door. Druce sprang forward, but
he was too late. She was away along the corridor and
down the stairs before he could stop her.

He made no attempt to follow. He closed the door and
placed himself before it.

"It's better so, maybe," he declared sombrely. "At
any rate, she'll know how to keep out of harm's way,
which is more than can be said for you." He broke off,
and contemplated me gravely. "Won't you please be
sensible? Believe me, I know what I'm talking about
when I tell you that you've got to stop here. And so
have I. At any rate, for the present. When you're rested,
it'll be time enough to talk about your plans. . . ."

I make no excuses for myself. The long, long years of
heartbreak have brought their punishment with them,
although afterwards I did try to make amends. When I
look back upon the way I behaved, that morning in Nigel's
attic, the scene I made, the flood of wrathful tears in which
my outburst culminated, and, when he forcibly prevented
me from reaching the door, the hateful, mean things I
flung at him, I am sick with shame to think I could ever
have been such a stupid, caddish little prig.

But in 1914 we were not worldly-wise as the maidens of
today. For all my Continental experience I was far from
having flaked off the starch of Aldershot and Camberley.
And, utterly ignorant, like every other English girl of my age and upbringing, of the trend of world politics, I was still incapable of appreciating the urgency of the circumstances. Despite all I had seen, and heard, and gone through, even at that date, a bare fortnight before the outbreak, I had no realisation of the swift approach of war as a fatality resolved, ineluctable!

The irony of it was that, where Nigel Druce was concerned, little though I knew about his private life, and that little how incredibly shameful; I had no fears for myself. I don’t think it even occurred to me that there was any danger in my being thus alone with him in a lonely garret in the heart of what I suppose one would call the Berlin red light district. It was only my wretched dignity that was offended, part and parcel of that miserably smug conventionality which the war, glory be, has blown sky-high. Perhaps, too, a certain stirring of jealousy played a rôle; but that part comes later.

Why is it that in anger we women must always seek to wound? Men, too, say cruel things in their wrath, the crueller, perhaps, because they come from the heart; but women deliberately barb their tongues with falsehood. Actually, I had thrust that photograph, and the tale that went with it, far into the back of my mind, meaning to forget it unless my own impression of this man, who had so strangely entered my life, were in the upshot to be falsified. I had no wish to judge him: and I nursed a secret hope that somehow things might not be what they seemed.

But now that he held me prisoner in that sordid place, the thought came to me that this stranger, who had so sorely wounded my pride, was a convicted thief, a felon, with his niche in the Rogues’ Gallery. He could not know I did not myself believe a tithe of what I said as, in a burst of indignation, I flung his past in his face. Though he attempted no denial, or, indeed, any rejoinder, but only
gravely considered me with those blue eyes of his rather sorrowful, I repented of my taunts as soon as they were spoken. God knows that in the years between I have done penance for them in many hours of bitterness.

The tears which blur the lines I have written cannot dim the memory. I can see him now, as he stood that morning between me and the attic door, in his shabby clothes, with the first flush of sunrise reddening the naked walls of his sordid lodging. For the second time, in the brief and crowded span of our acquaintance, I discerned a look of lassitude, of desperate unhappiness, in the lean, proud face: the first time had been at the wax-works when I told him of the fate of his friend: and my heart misgave me.

He let me storm myself out. Then very quietly he said: "You 'll find clean sheets in the box under the bed, and some clean pyjamas too. I 'll be back later and bring you some food."

With that he went away. And then I realised what I had done. How could I drive him from our only refuge, when by this, no doubt, the streets from end to end were flaming with the bills of the hue-and-cry? I was springing forward to call him back, when the sound of the key turning in the lock banished all unselfish thoughts from my mind. He had dared to lock me in. The mysterious noises of the house deterred me from hurling myself against the door. But I flung myself down upon the bed and gave vent to my outraged feelings in another storm of tears.

CHAPTER XXVI

TREED

How wee my bedroom seemed! And surely the wallpaper had changed colour? How silly of me: this pinkness, with the sunlight glowing through it, was not wallpaper,