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,
but a curtain, a pink check curtain, shutting off the bed. But how did a curtain come to be there? I must ask Franziska. Funny, she hadn't called me. Yet I could hear her in the kitchen: Lord, the row she made! And those bells that kept on clanging, what could they be?

My hand, straying to my throat, encountered an unaccustomed constriction about the neck, an unfamiliar button. I opened sleepy eyes again and found myself blankly contemplating brandenbourgs that unaccountably slashed the front of my nightdress. Hold on, it wasn't a nightdress: I was wearing blue silk pyjamas.

Now I was wide awake. Abruptly I sat up in bed. The garret was like an oasis of quiet amid a desert of clamorous voices, the multitudinous din of the city. In the street children were calling shrilly and, with incessant gonging, trams bumped over the points; and every now and then, with a roar and a rattle and the shrill wobbling whinny of dynamos, an Elevated train trailed a streamer of individual noise across the picture.

The hands of my watch pointed to a quarter to six. They had stood at half-past five when, having fished myself out an expensive-looking sleeping-suit of Nigel Druce's, I had finally gone to bed. The watch had not stopped. I had merely slept for twelve hours. Now, when I drew back the curtain the empurpled sky behind the guard of solemn chimney-pots told me that evening was falling.

For a little while I lay still and listened to the restless surge of the city beat, like a tide, upon the stillness of my retreat. The last human being left alive upon the earth will not, I swear, feel more utterly forlorn and dejected than I did then, realising that I was at the end of my resources, feeling that amongst the teeming millions, whose voices seemed to mount in a dull roar to my hiding-place, the hand of every one was against me.

Presently, I noticed certain changes in the appearance
of the room, upon which, twelve hours before, I had closed my eyes. It was evident that some one had visited the garret whilst I slept. A great pan of water simmered on the gas-ring above a dim circle of blue flame: on a towel neatly spread upon the floor a rubber bath stood prepared; and a coffee-pot, flanked by a jug of milk, rolls and butter, and two eggs in a saucepan, in water ready for boiling, the whole set out upon a clean red and white tablecloth, reminded me that I was inordinately hungry.

During the mechanical operation of tubbing and dressing and tidying up the room, what time the water was boiling for the coffee and the eggs, I thought about Nigel Druce. On getting out of bed I had tried the door, and the discovery that it was still locked, brought back with a rush all my irritation against him. But I was conscious that, in reality, my resentment sprang from my own keen sense of humiliation over my behaviour to him on the previous night.

The hot coffee, the delicious rolls: this welcome meal, complete down to the newspaper folded by my plate, which, as I began to realise, he could have procured for me only at imminent risk to himself, went far to smooth down my ruffled feelings. I told myself that I had treated him abominably. I should have to try and make amends when he came back.

But would he come back? What if it were the girl Ottilie—I had heard her volunteer to do the shopping—who, at his bidding, had brought me breakfast? She must have a key to have gained access to the room the evening before. Supposing Druce had decided to have nothing more to do with me? Or, if he had meant to come back, what if he had been arrested? Had not Ottilie said that the streets were placarded with his photograph?

The thought appalled me. Already I missed that
strong, unfurred presence at my side. Deserted by Druce, to whom should I turn? What should I do?

The problem kept my mind busy while I cleared away and washed up the breakfast things under the tap. One thing was clear: I could not continue to keep Druce out of his room. And yet how could we share it?

To take my mind off my thoughts I sat down at the table and picked up the newspaper. It was the afternoon edition of the Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, a journal which I saw at a glance was far more up-to-date and enterprising than the staidly monarchical and unspeakably dreary Kreuz-Zeitung or the smugly Evangelical Reichsbote, which, together with the Schlätzer Volksfreund und Kreisblatt (thrice weekly), had constituted the sole newspaper fare of Dr. von Hentsch's household.

A big headline right across the front page announced that the delivery of the Austro-Hungarian Note to Servia was hourly awaited. There were columns about the crisis from Vienna and Belgrade and Paris and London. Madame Caillaux was about to stand her trial in Paris for the murder of the editor of the Figaro; and the London news was mostly about a conference sitting at Buckingham Palace to settle the Irish question. The long columns of print made my head swim, the serried files of wiggly, gnarled-looking German characters, planted as close together as the trees in a primeval forest, with great clumps of adjectives, like undergrowth blocking the trail through the prodigiously long sentences, and at the very end, as welcome as the glimpse of a distant roof through the foliage, the isolated and indispensable verb.

So I turned with relief to a column of short paragraphs headed "Vermischtes," that is to say, "Miscellaneous." Here, boiled down to a line or two, all the horror and misery of a great metropolis were packed away. Murder, robbery, arson: tragedies of love and of drink: suicides and
attempted suicides: all were there, a single day's record of the stirring, pulsating existence of three million humans.

Suddenly, as I listlessly scanned the column, my eye fastened on a name, Von Linz. I thought at once of Rudi. In the spate of happenings since Grundt had carried me away from the villa, the boy had passed from my mind; but the sight of his name reminded me that Clubfoot had despatched him to his quarters to await the arrival of the Provost-Marshal. With a sudden pang I turned to the heading of the paragraph. What I read there was:

"Selbstmord eines Offiziers"; "Suicide of an Officer."

The announcement was brief enough. "Early this morning," it stated, "in an hotel of the Dorotheen-Strasse, the dead body of an officer was discovered, a revolver in the right hand. The victim has been identified as Leutnant von Linz, of the 56th Infantry Regiment (Vogel von Falckenstein). Leutnant von Linz was formerly in the Fifth Regiment of Foot Guards. The suicide is attributed to money difficulties."

Poor, wretched Rudi! The utter horror of it, to think of him, with his sunny nature, sitting in his hotel bedroom all through the long night, waiting for the arrival of the Provost-Marshal, which he must have guessed would signal the end of his military career! He had chosen his own way out, no, not his, the way which Clubfoot had suggested. I could see that poor boy, the last sight I was to have of him, standing at the desk looking hopelessly down upon the revolver which Grundt, so meaningly, as I now understood, had laid there.

Clubfoot again! There was no limit to the power of this man. Swiftly, noiselessly, the Crouching Beast had sprung. Only a little bullet-hole was there to show for it, and blood on a young face where laughter once had dwelt. No fuss or scandal: the tale of money troubles was there to stifle that. And it was I who had sent this care-free charming youth, whose lips, now cold, had kissed
mine, to his ignominious death. Horrible, horrible! While all the muted noises of the city came rising into the garret along the last rays of the setting sun, I sat and stared benumbed at the fatal sheet.

The sound of a key in the door aroused me. Thank God, it was Druce coming back. At that moment I yearned for some one staunch and unafraid like him to share with me this new burden. But when the door opened, it was Ottile who entered. And she was alone.

"I knocked," she said, "but there was no answer. So I let myself in with my key. . . ." She broke off and, after a swift glance round, brought her pale eyes to rest on me. "Where's the Count?" she demanded.

Her tone was imperious, and it set my back up.

"As you can see for yourself, he's not here," I answered.

She clasped her hands before her, and her eyes grew large with dismay. "You don't mean to tell me he's gone out?"

"I'm afraid I know nothing about his movements," I retorted. "He went away early this morning and I haven't seen him since. Was it you who brought me coffee and eggs for breakfast?"

"No," she replied wonderingly.

"Then he must have come back. And not so long ago, for he left me the afternoon paper. I was asleep, and I didn't hear him. . . ."

Her eyes were fixed on my face in a sort of menacing stare. She nodded several times impressively. "So, and you let him go out. He must needs risk his life so that Madame can have her comfortable breakfast when she condescends to wake." With a violent movement she slammed the door behind her and advanced rather threateningly to where I sat at the table. "Do you realise that they're raking the whole town for him? They're making the round of every Kaschemme between
this and the Wedding Platz, and they'll not rest until they've hunted him down. That clubfooted dog is at the head of the pack, and the Crouching Beast always gets what he watches for." Her voice broke. "Why, you poor fool, you must be crazy! If he were my man, I'd have tied him to the bed there, I'd have locked him in, I'd have gone out and foraged myself, rather than let him risk his life in the streets..." Tears strangled her utterance.

"As true as there's a God in heaven," she cried, "if anything happens to him, I'll go to the police and see that they grab you too!"

At that moment the door behind her was softly rapped. In a flash she was at it. "Gott sei Dank, it's you!" I heard her cry. "Ach, Count, I've been so terribly afraid..." The door opening disclosed Druce, his arms full of packets. She hung upon his neck and his parcels rained upon the ground. "Du, du," she repeated over and over again, "how could you be so foolish!"

He laughed in his quiet way, and the sound of his laughter fell like a balm upon my distress. "Na, na, Kind," he told her, "I know my way round as well as most. And I never was a one for taking risks. Why, have you been shopping too?" He was looking at a basket which I perceived for the first time standing by the door.

"A few trifles... I never imagined you would dare venture out..." Ottilie was fumbling at her eyes with her handkerchief. "I... I must be going now. I just looked in..." She turned hastily to the door.

He patted her shoulder affectionately. "You're a real friend, my dear. But you must let me pay you for these things..."

She shook her head. "I don't want your money..."

"But I'm counting on you to bring us our breakfast in the morning," he retorted. "If you won't let me pay you, however..."
"Then you don't mean to go out any more?"
I was conscious that he flashed me a rapid glance.
"Perhaps not for a day or so," he laughed. "It must be the weather, I think, but I find the streets of Berlin unpleasantly hot at present..."
She took the note he held out to her. "I'll be round first thing. 'But you... you stay at home.' She flung me a defiant look. "If I were you, I'd hide his clothes!"
Druce laughed. He emptied her basket and handed it to her.
"Until to-morrow, then..." she said and paused, reluctant to be gone.
"Until to-morrow," Druce rejoined. "And bring me all the morning papers, will you?"
She stood before him, a slight, shabby little figure, looking up into his face. He laid his hand softly along her cheek and said: "Thank you, dear Ottilie!"
With that she stole away.
Druce shut the door after her and locked it. Then, whistling a little air, he began to assemble the various packages on the table. He sorted them into little groups, calling out their respective contents as he did so. "Cutlets," he announced, "butter, cheese, eggs, bread, some peas and carrots—I adore fresh vegetables, don't you?—a ham"—he slapped a large bundle—"for boiling and as a stand-by—sound eating, ham, for all the Mosaic law—fruit, cigarettes, and some tinned stuff,"—he emitted a little ripple of laughter—"in case of a siege. Powder, face cream, eau de cologne, hairpins, a box of handkerchiefs, for you—I took a chance on the powder and bought the cream tint: I hope it's all right. If there's anything else you want, we'll have to make use of Ottilie. And now let's see what she's brought us in that basket of hers..."
His debonair manner did not deceive me. His face
wore a pinched look and, when he flung aside his hat, I saw that his hair was dank with perspiration. His clothes and shoes were white with dust. He gave me the impression of being utterly exhausted.

"Do sit down and rest," I said. "You look absolutely worn out. Have you had anything to eat to-day?"

He dropped into the chair I gave him, and the whole of his lean, muscular frame seemed to sag. "Well," he remarked, his features crinkled up in that easy smile of his, "now that you mention it, I don't believe I have!"

"It's too bad," I said. "I'm going to make you some tea and do you some scrambled eggs. While you're eating those, the cutlets can be cooking. You must be famished!"

"I could do with a cup of tea," he answered. "But don't you worry! I'm quite used to fending for myself. . . ."

"You stay where you are," I told him, as I filled the kettle at the tap. "What have you been doing to get yourself into such a state?"

He flung back his head, gazing at the ceiling, and gurgled a dry laugh. "I've been running, running like hell, from the police. . . ."

"You were followed, then? Your . . . your friend said you were crazy to go out. It was foolhardy of you. . . ."

"Not foolhardy: I had a job of work to do. Besides, I always like to see for myself. I wasn't followed either. But a nose—I beg pardon, I mean a detective—spotted me as I came out of Wertheim's, where I'd been doing my little shopping, and gave chase. . . ." He gurgled again.

"Gosh, it was funny. Like a comic film. In and out of the crowds in the Leipziger-Strasse, through that restaurant with the double exit—I forget its name—and along the Kronen-Strasse. Fortunately, I don't think my fellow was sure of me: at any rate I shook him off. But little Ottlie's right. We've got to lie low for a bit."

I was at the gas-ring, stirring up his eggs in the pan.
The flame fired my cheeks anyway as I said: "I blame myself for your going out like that this morning. . . ."

"You needn't do that," he put in hastily. "I should have gone in any case."

"I owe you an apology," I went on doggedly. "I said things I had no right to say."

Dusk was stealing into the room, and the failing light seemed to spread a shadow across his weary face.

"You said nothing that was not true," he answered, rather tonelessly. "You don't understand, probably, that the Service can't afford to lay much store by what are conventionally known as morals. It uses such instruments as come to its hand. And it's a rare bit of luck, I can tell you, for an officer, dismissed as I was, to be taken on again in the King's service. For I have been in gaol, my dear Miss Dunbar, at the Scrubs and at Parkhurst, twelve months of the best for theft. . . ."

His voice was hard, hard: it had a stabbing quality that seemed to pierce me through.

"Please!" I said. "I don't want to hear any more. Won't you forgive my abominable behaviour? Nothing you can tell me about your past will make me forget again all I owe to your splendid courage in getting me out of the hands of that awful man. . . ."

"I don't desert my pals," he rejoined roughly. "I told you from the first that we were in this thing together. It's much better," he added more gently, "that you should know all about me. Ottie's presence here, I admit, was an unlooked-for complication. Perhaps you will believe me when I say that, had I foreseen it, I should never have brought you to this place. . . ."

"Let's say no more about it, shall we?" I put in. "Your eggs are done, and you must have them while they're hot. And while I'm frying the cutlets you shall tell me about our plans."
“Plans?” he repeated rather grimly, as he took his seat at the table. He paused, and in the twilight silence a train, far below, rushed screaming by. “I’m afraid we can’t make any plans for the present. We’re treed in this garret, you and I!”

CHAPTER XXVII

NEWS OF A FRIEND

With that he began to eat. Because I saw that he was famished, I questioned him no further but busied myself with my cooking. When I brought the cutlets he wanted me to join him. But I told him I had only just had the food he had left ready, and retired to the alcove to freshen myself up with the eau de cologne and put on a dab of powder. There were not many men, I reflected as I creamed my face, who, hunted, as he had been that day, would have been so thoughtful. In all the crowded hours we had passed together nothing he had done touched me quite so much as this.

When I returned to the table he had finished his meal, and sat quietly in the dusk smoking a cigarette. He gave me one and, fetching a cup, poured me out some tea. For a little spell while the darkness slowly deepened, we faced each other across the littered table, and smoked in silence.

“Well,” he remarked at last, “we’re cornered right enough. For how long, the Lord knows. I was lucky to-day, devilish lucky. But I did what I meant to do, anyway.”

I thought he was alluding to his shopping excursion. “I’ve not thanked you yet for the powder and things . . .” I began.

“I wasn’t thinking of that,” he rejoined hastily. “What I really went out to do was to get rid of you know what. . . .”