and that the Austrian Army would occupy Belgrade. The Ulster Conference at Buckingham Palace was still muddling on. And then, under the heading "Society," I came upon an announcement which made my heart leap within me for gladness.

"Herr Geoffrey Transome, Secretary of the American Embassy," I read, "has returned to Berlin from Lausanne."

CHAPTER XXVIII

DRUCE AND I FALL OUT

Dear old Geoff! He wasn't a bit like a "Botschaftsrat," as the Berliner Tageblatt called him. It always struck me, when we used to meet in London, that Geoff, in his dry American way, got a lot of quiet fun out of his diplomatic duties amid the stiff and glittering magnificence of the Imperial Court. This is not to say that, like most sensible people, he did not have at heart a very real respect for the many excellent qualities of the Germans.

But the Court set, especially the military, with their titles, and gold lace, and ribands, and their portentous, mandarin-like formality, filled him with ribald glee. At Palace functions he was entranced when some spangled official would mistake him in his plain evening clothes for a waiter. He used to complain to me that he had never succeeded in "thinking up," as he called it, a really suitable rejoinder for use on such occasions. Geoff seemed to me like a haven of refuge in my present dilemma. Grundt would have no fears for him.

I did not impart my news to Druce; at least not then. I was unpleasantly and increasingly aware of being a drag on him, and, while I knew that he would never desert me of his own accord, I could not help feeling that he would have a much greater chance of making his way out of the
country alone than with me. It gratified me to reflect that, now that he had virtually reached the end of his resources, it might conceivably be I who, through the Transomes, would secure our flight into safety.

This was not mere childishness on my part. Secretly I was a little hurt that Druce had never given me credit for possessing any brains or enterprise in our plight. He appeared to assume that all initiative must proceed from him. Yet he consulted Ottilie eagerly enough. Thus when, at dusk that evening, after a day of gloomy moping on my companion’s part during which we scarcely exchanged a word, the girl arrived, Druce brisked up at once. Snatches of their whispered conversation came to me as I sat on my bed mending a ladder in my stocking.

Apparently Ottilie had visited various garages on our behalf. At one the proprietor became hostile and suspicious directly a trip to the Dutch frontier was mentioned. Ottilie thought he had been put on his guard by the police. At the others, in view of the uncertainty of the political outlook, she was equally unsuccessful. “On all sides,” I heard her tell Druce, “there is talk of mobilisation. That means that all cars will be commandeered. So very few garages will send cars out on long trips.”

They spoke of somebody called “Peter der Dachs,” “Peter the Lynx,” who seemed to be a friend of Black Lola’s, with whom Ottilie was putting up. “If the money’s all right,” I caught Ottilie’s husky whisper, “the Lynx won’t let you down.” Druce made some inaudible remark, to which the girl replied sharply: “Nein, nein, nein! He won’t hear of it.”

Druce’s sibilant “S-sh!” rasped across the room. The voices sank once more to an unintelligible murmur. Then, “Don’t be a fool, Count!” I heard Ottilie exclaim. “You’ll not get a chance like this again. It’s only a question of time before he tracks you down. Any one of
these women in the house will sell you for a thaler. And Clubfoot never gives up. . . ."

The rest escaped me. Presently the door creaked softly. "As you will," said the girl. "They're over at the Apollo Café, so I'll be back within the hour. But I tell you now that, man or woman, he won't hear of it. . . ."

The door closed: and Druce resumed his endless pacing.

She did not return.

A golden evening deepened into a sweltering night. My head ached with the heat. We ate our evening meal in silence. After we had done, with the dividing curtain drawn aside to air the room, we lingered long at the table, smoking and listening to the voice of the city.

That evening it was as though an electric atmosphere rested over Berlin. A rumour, vague and distant, like a fading echo, seemed to hover above the habitual stir. At last I rose and went to the window. I became conscious of continuous waves of sound, like very faint shouting, mounting upward in the stagnant air.

I called Druce over. As he stood beside me listening, the distant tumult swelled up for an instant and died down, like the tremolo of that motor engine which, as I write these lines in the peace of the winter night, goes throbbing in and out of the folds of the Downs.

"That noise is cheering," said Druce. His voice was husky with excitement. "Demonstrations, eh? Is it war already?" His fingers began to drum on the window ledge. "What's keeping that girl?"

He advanced his wrist in the failing light to consult his watch: Ten o'clock past: she had been gone these three hours. In a blur of sound raucous shouts now mounted from the street below. They were crying special editions. The warm evening was vibrant with the clamour. Close at hand a band began to blare. Voices took up the strain
and rose in song, virile, reverent, sonorous, as the Germans
sing, to our crow's nest under the stars:

"Deutschland, Deutschland, über Alle,
über Alles in der Welt. . . ."

"The sands are running out," Druce's deep voice over-
toned the solemn chant. "If this isn't mobilisation,
it's only a question of hours, of days at most. And
mobilisation means no transport, and the frontiers shut
tighter than ever. Why the devil doesn't Ottilie come?"

Little by little the hubbub faded away. Once more
the familiar racket of Berlin by night ascended to batter
at my aching head, the clatter of the little horse-cabs, the
staccato tang-tang of the trams, the winged screech of the
electric trains.

I left the window and, sitting down by the table,
resumed my needlework. But Druce remained where he
was, staring out. After a while he turned about and said
hoarsely: "Ottilie has never failed me before. I'm going
to find out what's happened to her."

I looked up from my sewing aghast. "You wouldn't
be so foolhardy, after what happened the last time?"

His troubled eyes seemed to evade me. "I know
where she lodges with Black Lola," he rejoined. "I can
go by the back streets. There's not much risk at night."

"Don't be so reckless," I urged. "She's sure to be
back soon. . . ."

"I must know what's going on," he broke in wildly.
"I can't afford to wait. Suppose that report has been
held up in the post! How can you expect me to skulk
here, knowing that the only other copy is in my possession?
Besides, the Lynx is due to leave an hour before dawn, and
I must find out if he's willing to take us with him."

"Who is the Lynx?" I asked, "and where are we
going with him?"

"He's a friend of Black Lola's. He and some other
men are starting by car, first thing to-morrow morning, for Cleves. That's near enough to the Dutch frontier for our purpose. The Lynx has no desire to attract attention to himself and his pals, and it's a heaven-sent chance for us to get away quietly, that is, if he's willing to take us...."

"I couldn't help overhearing some of your conversation with Ottilie," I put in. "They won't take me. Isn't that it?"

"We're partners, you and I," he answered doggedly, evading my question, "and we stick together. Ottilie ought to have made that clear to them to start with. I'm going now to find the Lynx and talk to him myself...."

"You needn't risk it," I said. "If this were our only chance, I wouldn't stand in your way, though I appreciate your loyalty tremendously. But I think I have a means by which we can escape together without separating."

His inquiring "Oh!" had a touch of rather patronising surprise which grated on me.

"Geoffrey Transome's back in Berlin. The newspaper says so."

"Who?"

"Geoffrey Transome. I told you I was going to stay with him and his wife here. They're the kindest people in the world and tremendous friends of mine. They'll do anything to help me."

He knitted his brow. "But surely you told me he was at the American Embassy?" His tone was cold.

"Yes. He's one of the secretaries."

Druce gave a short laugh and, pulling open the table drawer, began to transfer to his pockets various articles lying there, the portfolio with his money, his cigarette-case.

"Don't you believe me when I tell you that Geoffrey is sure to help us?" I demanded rather tremulously.

"If you value your friendship with the Transomes," was the cool reply, "you'll leave them out of this."
"You don't know Geoffrey," I retorted. "He's the most unconventional person in the world."

"He may be. But he won't thank you for dragging him into this. He's a diplomatist officially accredited to a friendly Government. And you seriously expect him to assist me, a spy, and you, my accomplice? No, no, my dear, let's try and be practical!"

His superior tone nettled me. "I know Geoffrey Transome better than you do. I tell you he won't let us down."

"And I know this game better than you do, and I tell you that your friend will run a mile from you." He picked up his hat. "We shall probably make an early start. Hadn't you better lie down for a bit? You look dreadfully tired. . . ."

"Don't take this awful risk," I pleaded! "For God's sake, wait. . . ."

He made a gesture of impatience. "I can't afford to wait, I keep on telling you. . . ."

"I shall be scared to death every minute you're away. What's to become of me if anything happens to you?"

He laughed a hard laugh. "It would certainly make your Yankee friend less disinclined to help you. But don't worry about me. I'll be all right."

"If you insist on going," I said, feeling rather desperate, "then let me go too. . . ."

He shook his head. "To run the Lynx to earth I shall have to go to places where one can't take a woman."

"Oh, you're obstinate," I burst out angrily. "Ottilie never failed us before. Why not wait a little, and when she comes, I'll give her a note to take round to Geoffrey Transome in the morning. . . ."

He fixed his blue eyes upon me in a sombre stare. "Has it occurred to you that she may have been arrested?" he asked.
"And if she has been," I flamed back, "what good can you do?"

"Not a great deal. But I can leave money to get her decent food and provide for her defence."

"Oh," I cried out contemptuously, "you only think of her. I understand now why you're so anxious to go out. The rest is just a pretext. . . ."

The shadows in the blue eyes seemed to darken. "I should have thought you too intelligent to be jealous," he answered, and it struck me that his voice was wistful rather than reproachful.

"Jealous?" I gasped wrathfully.

But my exclamation was cut off by the closing of the door. He had turned on his heel and walked out. I noticed that this time he did not lock the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE MAN ON THE STAIRS

If he had called me selfish, unreasonable: if he had reminded me, as well he might have, that his duty came before any consideration of my comfort or safety, I should have cared less. But jealous; I who had been willing to overlook his disgrace, and even to humble myself to the dust to tell him so, and jealous of a street waif at that!

Well, it was finished now. I was beholden enough to this man. I would leave him to liis friends and go to mine. With me out of the way he would be free to accept the Lynx's offer. After all, it was best so. Though I would not have admitted it to Druce, I had an uneasy feeling that it was going to be a little difficult to explain him to Molly and Geoff.

In point of fact, however, I did not stop to think things out properly at all. My stupid pride was bitterly offended