gates behind us, sprang into the seat beside our leader. We shot away into the streets of Berlin.

It was only when I sank back into the comfortably cushioned seat that I realised how utterly exhausted I was, body and mind. I felt too weary even to concern myself with the forbidding looks of these travelling companions of ours, or the nature of their business. If they were good enough for Nigel, I told myself drowsily, they were good enough for me. What a blessed relief to yield up my cares to him! Merely the touch of his arm against mine lent me confidence: his presence was like a buckler between me and a world of foes. I put my fears away and closed my eyes. Before we were clear of the Berlin trams, I was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE END OF THE JOURNEY

I have but mixed recollections of that trip, excepting the shocking and terrible episode that marked its close. I was as though drugged with sleep. All through the morning I slept in snatches, as one sleeps in a car on a long journey, my impressions a jumble of vignettes: an endless ribbon of road glaring white in the sunshine of a flawless summer day; level crossings with black and white striped barriers which rose and fell to the clang of a gong; villages where the sound of bells floated on the air of our passage, and peasants, stiffly clad, and grasping large umbrellas, wended their way to church. And all the time the furious drumming of the engine throbbed like a pulse in my brain.

I remember feeling the eager nip of morning before the sun got up, and basking in its warming rays when we slowed down in a clean and bustling city which some one said was Magdeburg. Once Nigel sought to rouse me, and
I opened my eyes to find the car at a standstill in the midst
of brown moorland bright with gorse, and the party out
on the road eating sandwiches.

But I was too sleepy to eat, and I soon dropped off
again, nor woke until my arm was shaken, and I perceived
Moritz unstacking the petrol cans under my feet. Again
we had stopped in the open country, this time among the
oak and beech of a dense wood. I felt refreshed and
hungry, and was glad of the sandwich which Nigel had
kept for me. Everybody appeared to be in the best of
spirits. We had passed Hanover, Nigel told me, and were
well up to time.

The tank replenished, and the empty cans, with most
un-German extravagance, flung away into the under-
growth, we started off again. We did not halt again for
a hundred miles. All the afternoon long we raced through
the clinging dust, roaring through the villages, bouncing
over the cobbles of sleepy little towns, dipping down
through the green and resinous depths of great, mysterious
forests: all through a mellow afternoon and a gorgeous,
purple-hued sunset into a warm and moonless night,
vibrant with the clamour of frogs. It was already dark
when between Osnabrück and Münster, on a lonely
stretch of road, the Doctor, leaning forward, tapped the
Lynx on the shoulder, the car slowed down and we drew
up outside a solitary tavern.

Rapturous greeting rang from the threshold, and a fat
man bustled into the glow of our head-lights. He led us
into the tap where supper was waiting: raw Westfalian
ham, smoke-flavoured and pungent; Edamer cheese,
scarlet-rinded; heavy, sweetish black bread, what the
Germans call Pumpernickel; and little glasses of a fiery
white spirit that burned my throat.

The Lynx and Moritz ate and drank voraciously, and
without speaking; but the Doctor, contenting himself
with a cigarette and a glass of schnaps, sat conversing in undertones with the inn-keeper, who appeared to be his particular friend.

"They're mighty jumpy over Cleves way, so they tell me," I heard the inn-keeper say.

The Doctor made a contemptuous gesture. "We've had these war scares before..."

"Permit me," rejoined the host importantly, "but this time a regular frontier control is in operation. They're stopping cars..."

"It doesn't affect us," his companion put in. "We're not crossing the frontier, as you know."

"The car I heard of," the host insisted, "was held up in Cleves itself!"

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders. "They haven't manned the frontier with troops, at least?" he questioned.

"I didn't hear that," replied the inn-keeper.

"Na, ja," said the Doctor, "don't you try and make our flesh creep with your war scares, Fatty! We shan't reach Cleves until after midnight, and by that time the police will all be snugly tucked up in their beds. And, apropos..." He lowered his voice and I heard no more.

I caught Nigel's eye and, rising from the table, strolled across to the tap-room door. It was one of those old-fashioned inn doors in two parts, and the upper half was folded back. I leaned over it, gazing out upon the dusty chaussée gleaming whitely under the stars. Presently Nigel joined me, and I told him what I had heard. He was not greatly perturbed.

"It was only to be expected that Clubfoot would take his precautions," he remarked. "But we needn't worry, Olivia darling. I know Cleves. Where they would stop cars would be at the Customs post, just outside the town, on the Cranenburg road, which is the main road into Holland. As long as we drop off in the town we shall be
all right. By the way," he added, "I believe I've placed our friends." He moved his head in the direction of the supper table.

"Oh, Nigel," I exclaimed, "who and what are they?"

His eyes twinkled. "Can't say for certain. But as I got out of the car just now I kicked the Doctor's bag, and it clinked!"

"I don't understand. . . ."

"Professional apparatus: they're going to crack a crib!"

"You mean... oh, Nigel, not burglars?"

He glanced cautiously over his shoulder. "You've said it. And I think I can guess the job they're on. There's only one place at Cleves, so far as I know, which could possibly interest high-grade operators from the capital, such as the Lynx and his assistants appear to be, and that's Schloss Bergendal. Its collection of old Dutch gold and silver work is celebrated. But it don't concern us, my dear. Once in Cleves, we go our way and they theirs." He gave my hand a gentle squeeze. "Buck up, sweetheart, we're doing splendidly!" He looked into my face with his happy smile.

I clung desperately to his hand. "This story about cars being stopped scares me," I said. "I thought we were done with Clubfoot for good!"

"Well," Nigel remarked thoughtfully, "I tied him up pretty tight. And we've come nearly three hundred miles without being molested. It's beginning to look to me as though we'd shaken the old man for good. . . ."

But this time, as events were to prove, my young man spoke without the book.

Once more we went drumming into the night. The open road, a darkened hamlet, the hush of the fields again, another flying streak of rare lights and blind
windows as yet a fresh village stood up in the glare of our lamps: so, in endless alternation, it went on. We travelled in silence. Our companions spoke no word now; and the steady beat of the engine, hammering out the kilomètres, was the only sound.

But their taciturnity was only a cloak to cover up their growing nerve tension. We burst a tyre; and the Lynx fretted and fussed while Moritz adjusted the Stepney wheel, a job which seemed never-ending in the dark. Then, at a village before Münster, we missed a turn, and had to go back a considerable distance. The Lynx roundly abused Moritz, who held the map, and the man swore back at him. The Doctor had quite a business to restore peace.

It was half-past ten by the Münster clocks as we slid through; and beyond, on the Wesel road, the villages were fast asleep. At Wesel, two hours later, even the cafés were dark, and the Lynx cursed aloud when he saw the time over the station. But our troubles were not yet over. We had crossed the bridge of boats, and the dark and swiftly rushing Rhine was at our backs, when there came a series of splutters from the exhaust. The Lynx raved, while Moritz stolidly set about exploring for the seat of the trouble. Nigel, with a glance at his watch, shook his head gravely at me. It was a good half-hour before we got going again, and close on two o'clock when Nigel nudged me, pointing ahead to where brilliant lights seemed to ride in the sky above a cluster of railway signals dully gleaming. "Cleves!" he said.

My spirits soared. We had almost two hours of darkness before us, and the frontier, Nigel had told me, was but five miles away. The arc-lamps that glittered coldly above the factories grouped about Cleves station were not brighter than my hopes as we nosed our way along the narrow, cobbled streets of the little town.
Nigel was speaking to the Lynx. "I'll put you down all right," the latter said. "But you'll have to wait until we reach the Tiergarten, where we turn off. It's dark there under the trees, and you'll be less noticed...."

And then, as we turned a corner, a raucous voice called "Halt!" and a policeman stepped out of the shadow. So promptly did the Lynx accelerate that the man had to leap back to save himself from being crushed. In the light of the ancient bracket lamp jutting out from the wall above his head, I had a glimpse of his face, scared but exceedingly wrathful.

The car seemed to bound forward, and we went thundering down the empty street. There was a wheezing sound beside me. The Doctor was laughing. I looked at Nigel. "This means we're in it to the end!" he whispered, frowning.

And, in truth, the Lynx showed no intention of stopping to let us descend. He seemed to be as familiar as Nigel with the geography of this remote corner of the vast German Empire. The street we had taken soon became a boulevard of villas with the steep, wooded banks of a park on one side. A narrow lane opened off on the right, and into this the Lynx recklessly swung the car.

We were now following a country road, a handful of houses on one side, flat fields on the other. The surface was appalling, and the three of us on the back seat were flung this way and that as the car bounced along. The last house was passed, and we were in the open country, when suddenly there was a muttered execration from the driving-seat, and our mad pace was checked. Ahead, a ruby light gleamed from the middle of the road, beyond it the glint of metal in the yellow rays of a lamp. We had reached a level crossing; and the barrier was down.

We stopped, and in that moment a large gendarme—the Gendarmen are the German country police: I used to
see them in their green uniforms in the villages about Schlatz—appeared at the Lynx's elbow. He had a holster on his belt, and a lighted lantern dangled from his left hand. "Your papers, please!" he said in a stern, official voice.

There was an ominous pause. It was broken by a terrific report, so close at hand that it made my ears sing. Crying "Ah!" in a voice shrill with surprise, the gendarme toppled forward and fell. The car rocked with the impact of his body as it struck the running-board.

"Up with the barrier, quick, Moritz!" said a sleek voice at my side, and I saw the Doctor leaning forward with a smoking pistol in his hand. Hardly had he spoken, however, than, with tremendous roar, an orange flame streaked the darkness about us and, with a grunt, the Doctor collapsed in a heap at my feet.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE STORY OF MARSTON-GORE

A WHISTLE trilled clamorously. Without an instant's delay, Nigel was out of the car. By the glow of our lamps blazing on the lowered railway barrier I saw him on the road with his arms held out to me, behind him a low iron fence enclosing a fir plantation. It was only a fleeting glimpse, for in the same moment the head-lights were switched off, and the utter blackness of a moonless night in the open countryside dropped down upon the scene. Another shot went crashing out, and a piteous voice, shrill with fear, was screeching "Nicht schiessen!" as I sprang into Nigel's arms. He swung me clear of the railing and dropped me on my feet among the shrubs, then vaulted over himself.

He dived forward on his face and hands, and on all