

I SPY

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To MRS. SARAH VAIL GOULD my grandmother to whose affection belongs many joyous days of childhood at "Oaklands" this book is offered as a loving tribute to her memory.

CONTENTS

- I. AT VICTORIA STATION
- II. OUT OF THE VOID
- III. POWERS THAT PREY
- IV. "SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT?"
- V. AN EVENTFUL EVENING
- VI. AT THE CAPITOL
- VII. PHANTOM WIRES
- VIII. KAISER BLUMEN
- IX. THE SPIDER AND THE FLY
- X. SISTERS IN UNITY
- XI. A MAN IN A HURRY
- XII. A SINISTER DISCOVERY
- XIII. HIDE AND SEEK
- XIV. A QUESTION OF LOYALTY
- XV. THE GAME, "I SPY"
- XVI. AT THE MORGUE
- XVII. CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE
- XVIII. A PROPOSAL
- XIX. THE YELLOW STREAK
- XX. THE AWAKENING
- XXI. THE FINGER PRINT
- XXII. "TRENTON HURRY"
- XXIII. IN FULL CRY
- XXIV. RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE
- XXV. LOVE PARAMOUNT

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"He saw Kathleen quickly palm his place card"

"As Henry pushed back the door, she collapsed into her father's arms"

"A flash, the rifle's recoil—and Mr. Whitney still standing just where he was"

"Whitney paused to snatch up a magnifying glass and by its aid examined the finger prints"

CHAPTER I

AT VICTORIA STATION

The allied forces, English and French, had been bent backward day by day, until it seemed as if Paris was fairly within the Germans' grasp. Bent indeed, but never broken, and with the turning of the tide the Allied line had rushed forward, and France breathed again.

Two men, seated in a room of the United Service Club in London one gloomy afternoon in November, 1914, talked over the situation in tones too low to reach other ears. The older man, Sir Percival Hargraves, had been bemoaning the fact that England seemed honeycombed by the German Secret Service, and his nephew, John Hargraves, an officer in uniform, was attempting to reassure him. It was a farewell meeting, for the young officer was returning to the front.

"Much good will all this espionage do the Germans," said the young man. "We are easily holding our own, and with the spring will probably come our opportunity." He clicked his teeth together. "What price then all these suspected plots and futile intrigues?"

"Don't be so damned cocksure," rapped out his uncle, his exasperation showing in heightened color and snapping eyes. "It's that same cocksureness which has almost brought the British Empire to the very brink of dissolution."

His nephew smiled tolerantly, and shifted his thickset figure to a more comfortable position.

"Now, now," he cautioned. "Remember what old Sawbones told you yesterday about not exciting yourself. Said you weren't to read or talk about this bally old war. Leave the worrying to Kitchener; he'll see we chaps do our part."

"If everything were left to Kitchener!" Sir Percival thumped the arm of his chair. "Some of us would sleep easier in our beds. And I know you chaps at the front will do your part. Would to God I could be with you!" glancing at his shrunken and useless left leg. "If I could only take a pot at the beggars!"

"According to your belief the firing line will shortly be on English soil," chaffed his nephew, avoiding looking at his companion. He knew the tragic circumstances surrounding his uncle's maimed condition, and wished to avoid anything touching upon sentiment.

"If the plans to undermine England's home government are perfected and carried out, every man, woman and child will have to band together to repel invasion." Sir Percival lowered his voice. "If there are any able-bodied men left here."

"Don't be so pessimistic. Kitchener has built up a great army, and is only waiting the proper moment to launch it in the field."

"The best of England has volunteered," agreed Sir Percival, "but what about the slackers? What about the coal strikes—the trouble in our munition factories? All are chargeable to the Kaiser's war machine which overlooks nothing in its complete preparedness. Preparedness—England doesn't yet know the meaning of the word."

"It's time for me to leave," said the young officer, consulting his watch. "Take my word for it, Uncle, we're not going to the demnition bowwows—count on England's bulldog grit. God help Germany when the Allies get into that country!"

"When—ah, when?" echoed Sir Percival. "I hope that I live to see the day. Tell me, boy," his voice softening, "how is it with you and Molly?"

His nephew reddened under his tan. "Molly doesn't care for a chap like me," he muttered.

"Did she tell you so?"

"Well, no. You see, Uncle, it—eh—doesn't seem the thing to suggest that a charming girl like Molly tie herself to a fellow who may get his at any time."

"Piffle!" Sir Percival's shaggy eyebrows met in a frown. "Sentimental nonsense! You and Molly were great chums a year ago. You

told me yourself that you hoped to marry her; I even spoke to her mother about the suitability of the match."

"You had no right to," blazed his nephew. "It was damned impertinent interference."

"You have not always thought so," retorted Sir Percival bitterly. "What had that most impertinent American girl you met in Germany to do with your change of front toward Molly?"

"I must insist that you speak more respectfully of Kathleen." John Hargraves' expression altered. "If you must know, I asked Kathleen to marry me and — she refused."

"I said she was impertinent. All Americans are; they don't know any better," fumed his uncle. "Forget her, John; think of Molly. I tell you the child loves you. Don't wreck her happiness for the sake of a fleeting fancy."

"Fleeting fancy?" John Hargraves shook his head sorrowfully.

"When

Kathleen refused me I was hard hit; so hit I can't marry any other girl.

Don't let's talk of it." He smiled wistfully as he held out his hand.

"Time's up, Uncle; the train leaves in an hour, and I must get my kit.

Good-by, sir. Wish me luck." And before the older man could stop him he

was retreating down the hall.

Sir Percival stared vacantly about the room. "The last of his race," he muttered. "God help England! The toll is heavy."

In spite of his haste John Hargraves was late in reaching Victoria Station, and had barely time to take his place before the train pulled slowly out. As he looked down the long trainshed, he encountered the fixed stare of a tall, well-groomed man standing near one of the pillars. Hargraves looked, and looked again; then his hand flew up, and leaning far out of his compartment he shouted to a porter. But his message was lost in the roar of the more rapidly moving train, and the porter, shaking a bewildered head, turned back.

The crowd of women and children and a few men, which had gathered to witness the troop train's departure, was silently dispersing when an obsequious porter approached the tall stranger whose appearance had so excited John Hargraves.

"Ye keb's out 'ere, sir," he said. "This way, sir," and as the stranger made no move to follow him, he leaned forward and lifted the latter's top coat from his arm. "Let me carry this 'ere for you, gov'ner," then in a whisper that none could overhear, he said in German: "For your life, follow me."

"Go on," directed the stranger in English, pausing to adjust his cravat, and made his leisurely way after the hurrying porter. The latter stopped finally by the side of a somewhat battered-looking limousine.

"'Ere ye are, sir," announced the porter, not waiting for the chauffeur to pull open the door. "I most amissed ye," he rattled on. "Kotched the keb, sir, an' tucked yer boxes inside, then I looked for ye at the bookin' office, 'cording to directions. Let me tuck this 'ere laprobe over ye."

As the stranger stepped into the limousine and seated himself the porter clambered in after him.

"They're on," he whispered, his freckles showing plainly against his white face. "The chauffeur is one of us, he'll take you straight to our landing. This packet's for you. Good luck!" And pocketing the sovereign offered, the porter, voicing loud thanks, backed from the limousine and slammed the door shut.

The outskirts of London were reached before the man in the limousine opened the slip of paper thrust into his hand by the porter. It was wrapped about a small electric torch and a book of cigarette papers. Slowly he read the German script in the note.

Be at the rendezvous by Thursday. Hans, the chauffeur, has full directions. Do not miss the seventeenth.

After rereading the contents of the note the man tore it into tiny bits and, not content with that, stuffed them among the tobacco in his pipe. Striking a match he lighted his pipe and planting his feet on the bag he gazed long and earnestly at his initials stamped on the

much labeled buckskin. The slowing up of the limousine aroused him from his meditations, and he glanced out of the window to see which way they were headed. London, the metropolis of the civilized world, lay behind him. Catching his chauffeur's backward glance, he signaled him to continue onward as, removing his pipe, he muttered:

"Gott strafe England!"

CHAPTER II

OUT OF THE VOID

Slowly, the sullen roar of artillery, the rattle of Maxims and rifles sank fitfully away. A tall raw-boned major of artillery stretched his cramped limbs in the observation station, paused to look with callous eyes over the devastated fields before him, then sought the trench. Earlier in the day the Allies had been shelled out of an advance position by the enemy and had fallen back on the entrenchments.

"Devilish hot stuff, shrapnel," commented a brother officer as Major Seymour stopped at his side.

The Major nodded absently, and without further reply advanced a few paces to meet an ammunition corporal who was obviously seeking him. "Well?" he demanded, as the non-commissioned officer saluted.

"Only twenty rounds left, Major." The Corporal lowered his voice. "Captain Hargraves sent word to rush reinforcements here as soon as it is dark, sir."

Major Seymour glanced with unconcealed impatience at his wrist watch.

God! Would night never come!

"Can't we get our wounded to the base hospital, Major?" asked a younger officer. He had only joined the unit thirty-six hours before and while he had faced the baptism of fire gallantly, the ghastly carnage about him shook his nerve. He was not fed up with horrors as were his brother officers.

"The wounded would stand small chance of reaching safety if the German gunners sighted them. They must wait for darkness," re-

plied Seymour. "Here, take a pull at my flask. Got potted yourself, didn't you?" noticing a thin stream of blood trickling down his companion's sleeve.

"Only a flesh wound—of no moment," protested the young man, flushing at the thought that his commanding officer might have misunderstood his question. "I'm afraid Captain Hargraves is in a bad way."

"Hargraves!" The Major spun on his heel. "Where is he?"

"This way, sir," and the Lieutenant led him past groups of men and officers. It was an appalling scene of desolation. The approach of night had brought a slight drizzling rain, and the ground, pitted with shell holes, was slimy with wet, greasy mud. Nearly all the trees in the vicinity were blasted as if by lightning, and along the right hand side of the road was a line of A.S.S. carts and limbers blown to pieces. One horse, completely disemboweled, lay on his back, the inside arch of his ribs plainly showing. His leader was a mass of entrails lying about, and on the other side lay four or five more, one with a foreleg blown clear off at the shoulder, one minus a head. A half-dozen motor cycles and over a dozen push bikes lay in the mud with some unrecognizable shapes that had been riding them. Between the advance trenches, in No Man's Land, the ground was thickly strewn with corpses of Scotties killed in the charge.

"The Huns had us cold as to range," volunteered the Lieutenant, loss of blood and reaction from excitement loosening his tongue. "They outed five guns complete with detachments by direct hits. Here we are, sir," and he paused near a demolished gun emplacement. The ground about was a shambles.

Major Seymour stepped up to one of the figures lying upon the ground, a mud-incrusted coat thrown over his legs. Several privates who had been rendering what assistance they could, moved aside on the approach of their superior officers. Hargraves opened his eyes as Seymour knelt by him.

"My number's up," he whispered, and the game smile which twisted his white lips was pitiful.

"Nonsense." Seymour's gruff tone concealed emotion. Hargraves' face betrayed death's indelible sign. "You'll pull through, once you're back at the hospital."

Hargraves shook his head; he realized the futility of argument.

"Have you pencil and paper?" he asked.

"Yes." Seymour drew out his despatch book and removed a page. "What is it, John?" But some minutes passed before his question received an answer, and Hargraves' voice was noticeably weaker, as he dictated:

DEAR KATHLEEN:

I saw Karl in London at Victoria Station. I swear it was he ... warn Uncle ... Kathleen ... Kathleen ...

There was a long silence; then Seymour laid aside the unneeded brandy flask and slowly rose to his feet. He mechanically folded the scrap of paper, but before slipping it inside his pocket, the blank side arrested his attention.

"Heavens! John never gave me her address or last name. Who is Kathleen?" he exclaimed.

More shaken than he was willing to confess even to himself, by the loss of his pal, he stared bitterly across the battlefield toward the enemy's lines. How cheerily Hargraves had greeted him that morning on his return from a week's furlough in England! How glad he had been to rejoin the unit and be once again with his comrades on the firing line! A gallant spirit had passed to the Great Beyond.

Back in his observation station Major Seymour an hour later viewed the gathering darkness with satisfaction. Two hours more and it would be difficult to see a hand before one's face. Undoubtedly the sorely needed ammunition and reserves would reach the trenches in time, and the wounded could be safely transferred to the base hospital. The Allies' line had held, and in spite of their desperate assaults the Germans had been unable to find a vulnerable spot.

Seymour passed his hand over his eyes. Against the darkness his fevered imagination pictured advancing "gray phantoms." "They

come like demons from the hell they have created," he muttered. "I hope to God they don't use 'starlights' over our trenches tonight. Flesh and blood can stand no more."

The darkness grew denser and more dense. In the long battle front of the Allies no sentinel saw a powerful Aviatik biplane glide over the trenches and fly onward toward its goal. Several times the airman inspected his phosphorescent compass and map, each time thereafter altering his course. Finally, making a sign to his observer, he planed to a lower level and, satisfied that he had reached the proper distance, a bomb was released.

Down through the black void the infernal machine sped. A sickening pause—then a deafening detonation, followed by another and another, cut the stillness, and the earth beneath was aflame with light as the high explosives and shells stored in the concealed ammunition depot were set off. Nothing escaped destruction; flesh and blood, mortar and brick went skyward together, and a great gash in the earth was all that was left to tell the story of the enemy's successful raid.

From a safe height the German airman and his observer watched their handiwork. Suddenly the latter caught sight of an aeroplane winging its way toward them.

"Bauerschreck!" he shouted, and the airman followed his pointed finger. Instantly under his skillful manipulation their biplane climbed into the air in long graceful spirals until they were six thousand feet above ground. But as fast as they went, their heavier Aviatik was no match in speed for the swift French aeroplane, and the bullets from the latter's machine gun were soon uncomfortably near.

The German airman's face was set in grim lines as he maneuvered his biplane close to his pursuer and, dodging and twisting in sharp dips and curves, spoiled the aim of the Frenchman at the machine gun, while his own revolver and that of his observer kept up a continuous fusillade.

For twenty minutes the unequal fight continued. It could not last much longer. Despair pulled at the German's heartstrings as he saw his observer topple for a moment in his seat, then pitch forward into