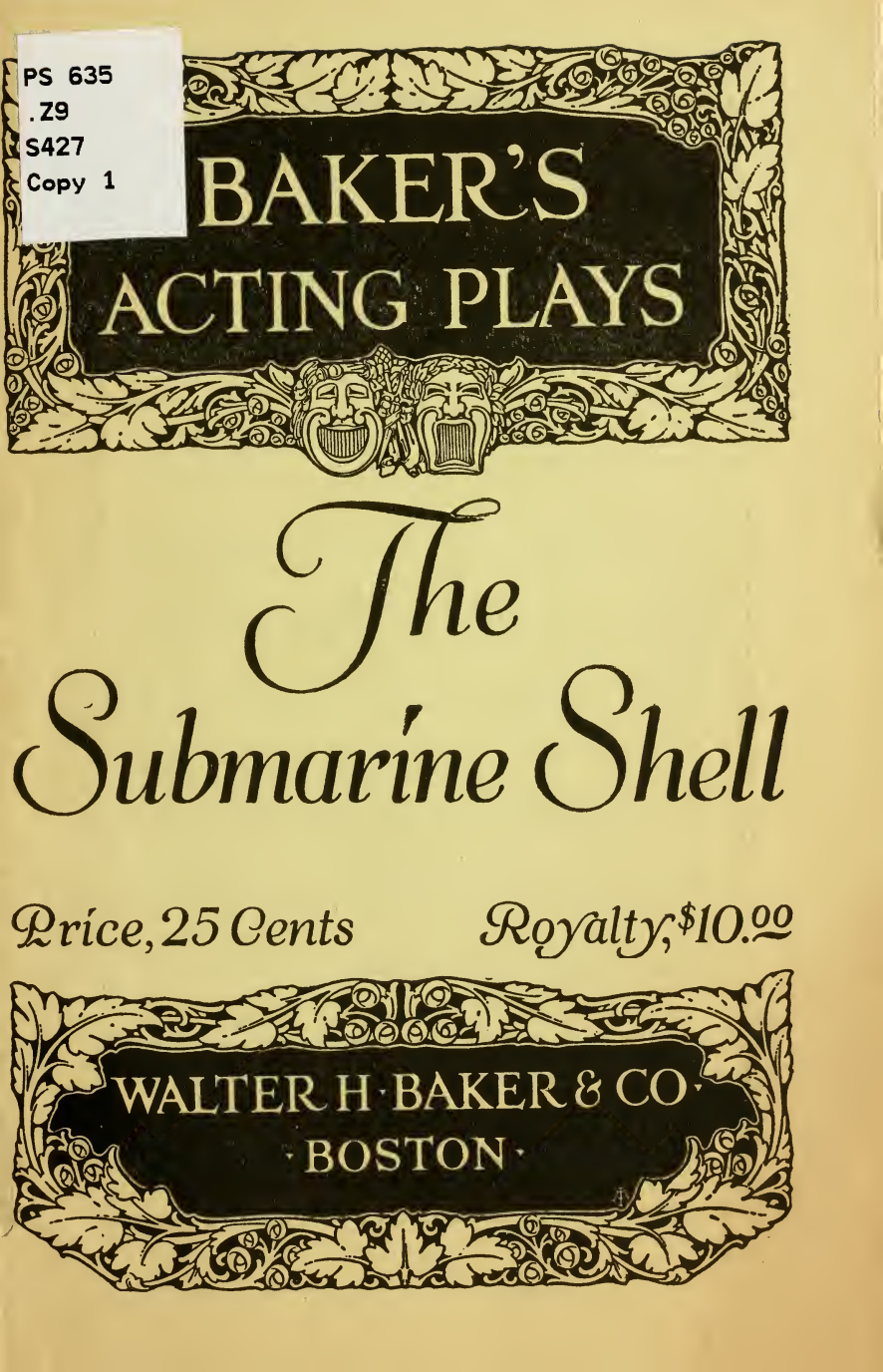


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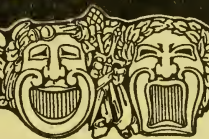
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1918

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The Submarine Shell

CHARACTERS

- HANS KRAFT, *alias James McGrady.*
- OTTO HERMAN, *alias William.*
- MR. WARREN MIDDLEBROOK.
- MONSIEUR CHARLES LECLAIR.
- PROFESSOR HENRY WESTERBERG.
- DETECTIVE ALBERT BRADBURY.
- INSPECTOR MALCOM STEELE.
- "TOM CLOFF."
- MRS. MIDDLEBROOK.
- ELEANOR MIDDLEBROOK.
- MARGARET LINDEN.
- DELIA.

"Tom Cloff" is represented by another member of the cast, and does not call for an additional actor.

THE TIME OF THE PLAY.—August 11 and 12, 1919.

THE PLACE.—The home of Warren Middlebrook, an American inventor, in a suburb of New York City.

SYNOPSIS

- ACT I. The living-room. August 11, after dinner.
- ACT II. Same as Act I. August 12, 1:30 P. M.
- ACT III. The private laboratory. That evening, 7:30.
- ACT IV. Same as Act III. Later, 10 P. M.



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meat

The Submarine Shell

ACT I

SCENE.—*The living-room at the home of WARREN MIDDLEBROOK. August 11, after dinner. The scene is a well-furnished room of comfortable appearance. There is a table near c., and a smaller one at r. Door into library at r. Door into hall near l. at back. Special door into laboratory on side at l.*

(HANS KRAFT and OTTO HERMAN are standing near the laboratory door, talking in low tones. KRAFT is a thick-set, short man, smooth-shaven, about thirty years of age. HERMAN is somewhat older, and appears to be a perfect type of English butler. He is tall, with dark complexion. Both of these men, in their efforts to counterfeit the speech of an Irish-American and of an uneducated Englishman, respectively, are inclined to overdo their impersonations a trifle.)

KRAFT. Yes, yes, my man! Unless Middlebrook gives in at once, we destroy that laboratory at ten tomorrow night!

Enter DELIA from r. She is a stout, good-natured Irish-woman of about thirty-five—not an imitation. The two men glance up at once, and cease talking abruptly.

DELIA. Ah, an' here you are, I see, both o' you! You're one fine laberratorry assistant, you are, Jim Mc-Grady! A right lot o' worrk I've ever seen you do in this place!

HERMAN. That his what they call a "snap" hover 'ere, I guess, Delia. 'E gets the run o' the 'ouse without doing hanything.

DELIA. You said it, William. But just you wait till the misthress comes down! I'll bank on you not doin' much loafin' after that, either one of you! Misther Middlebrook can maybe invent them fancy phwat-cher-may-call-ems of his, an' I'll allow as he's got brains, an' all that, but I'm thinkin' it's the misthress phwat can make folks tend to their worrk!

KRAFT. Faith, Delia, an' you sure —

(He stops suddenly.)

DELIA *(quickly)*. It's Misther Middlebrook. Take care if he catches you here, Jim.

(KRAFT hurriedly retreats to the laboratory, closing the door. DELIA hastens into the hall, accompanied by HERMAN. Enter WARREN MIDDLEBROOK from R. MIDDLEBROOK is a rather large gentleman of middle age. His manner is one of great dignity and gravity. He has a rather pale, smooth-shaven face, and his hair is prematurely white.)

MIDD. *(catching sight of HERMAN leaving)*. Oh—er—William.

HERMAN *(returning)*. Yes, sir.

MIDD. *(carefully removing his glasses and placing them in his case)*. Please—er—please step to the laboratory and tell James that I would like to see him a moment.

HERMAN. Very good, sir.

(Goes to door of laboratory and calls. KRAFT enters.)

MIDD. Thank you, William. That is all. *(HERMAN leaves.)* Now, James, in regard to—er—why, I was certain that there was some matter which I wished to discuss with you. *(He removes his glasses from the case and replaces them upon his nose.)* Ah, yes, I recall it now. It is in regard to to-morrow morning's laboratory work.

KRAFT. Yes, sor.

MIDD. Now, I shall not be able to give any time to laboratory work until after luncheon to-morrow. I am

quite decided upon that point—quite decided indeed—in spite of all the urging which Professor Westerberg has done. Ah, yes, I recall now what I wish you to do this morning.

KRAFT. There is but very little more to be done on the gun, sor. With another two hours' work she would be ready for you to attach the shell.

MIDD. (*rather impatiently*). Er—that is of no consequence, for the present! This is in regard to a very different matter. Besides, James, I have told you many times that you cannot be permitted to work upon that gun unless I am with you. Let that be—er—quite definite! Now, your work for to-morrow morning will consist in—in—er—in making these tests for me. (*He searches vainly in his coat pockets.*) Well, it appears that I have left the required papers on my desk up-stairs. (*He hesitates.*) I believe—er—I believe I had better return and look them up. Er—kindly wait here just a moment. It was quite stupid of me to forget them—quite stupid indeed. [*Exit.*]

Reënter HERMAN from the hall. He glances quickly around the room.

KRAFT. And now to business again. Complete your report.

HERMAN. There is very little more, Herr Kraft, but —

KRAFT. Stop that! Many times have I ordered you to address me as Jim! Come, come, our time is short!

HERMAN. Tom Cloff was here at one this morning. I let him in by the kitchen window. He —

KRAFT. At one, you say? Did you talk with him?

HERMAN. For ten minutes, sir. He wishes your report at once, and must know whether or not you have yet been able to see the inside of the shell.

KRAFT. Ach Himmel! It is always that! Again and again he expects me to accomplish the impossible. How could I have seen the shell, when the gun itself is not yet altogether completed, and when Middlebrook stands over me every instant while the gun is uncovered?

HERMAN. Then you have not succeeded?

KRAFT. That is impossible, Otto! The shell is not yet put together; its parts are in his private room.

HERMAN. Why, surely you have worked upon it! I have seen it in the laboratory myself, covered with canvas.

KRAFT. Ach, Otto, that is not the shell! That is merely the gun itself. Of what value is that to our country? Bah! You are a fool to think that *that* machine could ever harm the submarine! It is the shell which is the vital key of the whole thing! It is the shell alone which can bring downfall to our people!

HERMAN. And *that* you have not seen?

KRAFT. Ach, no, I tell you! But concerning the threat sent here by Tom Cloff. Has Middlebrook taken alarm? Has he shown any sign?

HERMAN. None at all, sir.

KRAFT. Then we'll go through with it to the finish!

HERMAN (*startled*). What? Not that! We'll not cause an actual explosion in the laboratory!

KRAFT. Most certainly, Otto. The orders of Cloff must be carried out.

HERMAN. But the wreckage, sir! The fire, and loss of life, perhaps! And the danger to us!

KRAFT. Enough of that! You are not here to consider your own safety.

HERMAN. But how can it be done? You know as well as I that it is impossible to smuggle any explosive past the guards into this house. As for making it yourself, that is equally impossible. You have not access to any materials. It is useless —

KRAFT. Those are the orders of Tom Cloff, Otto. It is his business to furnish the explosive. It is ours to carry out his commands.

HERMAN. But why must you obey *him*, and carry out this frightful crime? Are you afraid of him?

KRAFT (*sternly*). No more of that! It is not Tom Cloff that I serve; it is the Fatherland.

HERMAN. But that makes it no clearer. Why is *this* man your superior, and mine also, that we must obey his every order? And why does he come here always at

night, with a black band masking his face? Who is this man? What right ——

KRAFT (*quickly*). Stop there! Do you value your life?

HERMAN (*startled*). Most certainly, sir! But what ——

KRAFT. Then let Tom Cloff and his identity alone! He is the agent of Von Holtzer. Is that enough?

HERMAN. Of Von Holtzer? Tom Cloff?

KRAFT. Precisely. It is our part to obey. Understand? Now. Have you overheard anything between Middlebrook and his wife?

HERMAN. I have, sir. Middlebrook is too stupid to suspect any real danger. But when Mrs. Middlebrook came home this morning ——

(*He glances toward the hall door.*)

KRAFT. Yes, yes. Go on.

HERMAN. Mrs. Middlebrook has sensed trouble already. She is considering, sir, sending for Inspector Steele.

KRAFT. Ach Himmel! It is the worst of my fears! The curse of the Fatherland upon the intuition of a woman! Will he come?

HERMAN. I cannot know. She has not yet ——

KRAFT. We must know! Mein Gott! but he would ruin all! Unless—unless ——

HERMAN. Unless we can prevent his coming?

KRAFT. No, no, it is not that. Far better, Otto. If they talk again, you're to overhear them, and find out her decision. Get that?

HERMAN. I understand, sir.

KRAFT. Gut! Then get your results. Keep watch of your cockney English every minute. Make sure that —— (*DELIA suddenly enters from the hall, and he shifts at once.*) Make shure that Misther Middlebrook don't catch you a-loafin' 'roun' here like this. If he does, my man ——

DELIA. Faith, an' there's no tellin' phwat's liable to happen ye if he does, William. Ye'd better mind yerself.

HERMAN. 'Ave little fear of that, Delia. 'E will never find hanything to complain of with me.

(DELIA crosses to the library door, and holds up a warning finger.)

DELIA. Take care now, both o' you. He's comin' back. [Exit.

(HERMAN makes a hasty exit to the hall. MIDDLEBROOK enters from the library, finding KRAFT alone.)

MIDD. These are the—er—I have the papers here, James. They are formulæ for dyes, as you will observe. This is—er—this matter is in connection with the dye compound which my visitors, Monsieur LeClair and Professor Westerberg, wish to obtain. You understand what these are.

KRAFT. Dye formulæ, sor. And the compound?

MIDD. Ah, yes, James. Yes, indeed, the compound. That is what I wish tested again, you see. Here, this will indicate the process.

KRAFT. Then for the present, sor, we are to work upon this dye compound instead of the submarine shell?

MIDD. Er—yes, James. My visitors, you see, would like to complete this matter as quickly as possible. They represent rival European dyeing concerns, you understand, and have come here to make me offers for the use of my latest dyeing secret.

KRAFT. I understand that, sor.

MIDD. It is a contest between these two, you see. So we—we must complete the matter as quickly as possible.

KRAFT. Very well, sor. [Exit to laboratory.

MIDD. Er—William.

HERMAN (*entering*). Yes, sir.

MIDD. If—er—if Mrs. Middlebrook is not with the guests at present—er—kindly tell her that the compound must contain the following— Oh, no, I beg your pardon, William. Er—tell her that a telegram came for her just a moment ago. Dear me! I seem to be becoming more distracted every day!

HERMAN. Very good, sir. [Exit.

(MIDDLEBROOK walks to the table at c., where he searches among the books for an instant. Enter MRS. MIDDLEBROOK. MRS. MIDDLEBROOK is a lady

of medium height and middle age. Her manner, in contrast to that of her husband, suggests alertness and quick-wittedness. As she enters, she is crumpling a yellow envelope in her hand.)

MRS. M. Warren.

MIDD. Er—yes, my dear.

MRS. M. I must talk to you again, about this danger. I feel that we are not —

MIDD. Oh—er—Lucy, this is nonsense! Idiotic! Why, it's absurd for you to think of the submarine shell being discovered, for the thing has not yet been put together. Why—absolutely absurd!

MRS. M. But that is not the only danger. An enemy might easily wreck the gun itself in the laboratory.

MIDD. Er—quite ridiculous! Oh! Upon my word, Lucy! Now that you speak of such a—er—possibility, you bring to my mind a very strange letter that I received Monday. I had quite forgotten it. (*He searches his pockets.*) It was certainly a weird communication, I assure you. But—er—absolutely atrocious! Er—quite preposterous, in fact. Ah, here it is. I shall read it to you.

MRS. M. What could it have been?

MIDD. It is—er—postmarked "New York City." The letter itself is—er—typewritten. (*He reads.*) "Mr. Warren Middlebrook:—You are nearing success in your efforts against the submarine. Your work in this line must cease at once. There are two courses open to you. A group of government men from England and France are due in New York on the evening of August twelfth, to examine your invention. You must give up all work upon your new invention before that date. We are in a position which will enable us to know at once whether or not you have done so. If your work has not been completely given up when the government officials land in New York on the evening of the twelfth, your laboratory, together with a large portion of the rest of your house, will be blown up at the moment that these men land. This is not a boast. We are backed by William Von Holtzer, well known as the chief of German spies in the

United States, and we shall not fail. This is your last warning. Signed, 'Tom Cloff, bomb-setter.'"

MRS. M. Warren! Why haven't you told me of this?

MIDD. You see—er—what a preposterous bit of literature it is. I had *imagined* that it would amuse you.

MRS. M. (*with gesture of despair*). Amuse me? Do you call it amusing to feel that this house may be blown up at any minute? Considering what you are on the point of doing against the submarine, it is only natural that Germany should make efforts to stop you.

MIDD. But—er—this house is under guard, you remember.

MRS. M. Yes, the outside is carefully guarded. But of what use is that, when you permit dangerous strangers to live inside?

MIDD. Oh, I—er—I simply detest that word "dangerous." Er—most especially when you apply it so—er—indiscriminately—to these gentlemen.

MRS. M. But what can we know of their intentions?

MIDD. But I assure you, Lucy, that they are both very estimable gentlemen. Most estimable. Monsieur Le-Clair I met in Paris, nearly five years ago. He is a—er—Frenchman, and of course most loyal to the Allies.

MRS. M. (*doubtfully*). Oh, very well. But what about that other man, Westerberg, may I ask? Is he, also, a Frenchman?

MIDD. Why—er—why, no, Lucy. In fact, he is—er—he is not a Frenchman. But he is quite neutral in regard to the war, you understand. His sole interest here is—scientific.

MRS. M. Warren, there *is* danger from one of those two strangers!

MIDD. Why, that is preposterous! Absurd! You would—er—you would do better if you would—er—investigate this person whom Eleanor is bringing home with her!

MRS. M. Warren, why should you speak that way of Margaret Linden?

MIDD. Oh, I don't know, Lucy! Her—er—her manner simply exasperates me every minute! She's so—er—unnatural!

MRS. M. (*laughing slightly*). Unnatural? Well, perhaps she has a little reason to be unnatural. She's a splendid girl at heart, and the best friend Eleanor ever had. I'm *very* glad to welcome her here. But in the case of these two men, it's different. To think of running such a risk, on the very day when you can prove to the world that America shall not be terrorized by the under-sea boat! Warren, we must have Inspector Steele!

MIDD. Oh—er—Lucy, we can't treat Detective Bradbury that way, especially since his presence here is so—er—enjoyable to Eleanor. And there would not be the slightest chance of our obtaining Steele, the head of the National Secret Service.

MRS. M. Oh, I think there would.

(*She glances quickly toward the hall door. HERMAN is standing in the doorway.*)

HERMAN. You rang for me, sir?

MIDD. Why—er—why, no, William.

HERMAN. I beg your pardon, sir.

Enter ELEANOR MIDDLEBROOK, followed by MARGARET LINDEN. ELEANOR is a very attractive young lady of about twenty-two, rather short of stature, with dark eyes and hair. MARGARET is a complete contrast to ELEANOR. She is rather tall and slight. Her manner seems almost that of a much older woman than a young lady of twenty-five; there is in it an unusual amount of reserve. Her bearing conveys just a suggestion of old-fashioned training. ELEANOR hurries to her mother.

MRS. M. Oh, hello, Eleanor! (*She kisses her.*) Why, Margaret Linden! It does seem wonderful to see you! I'm so glad you're here!

MARG. Oh, thank you, Mrs. Middlebrook. You may be sure I'm glad to be here. I'd rather be with Eleanor than anywhere, you know.

MRS. M. Warren, I'm sure you remember Margaret Linden.

MIDD. (*a trifle coldly*). Er—how do you do, Miss—er—Linden. Why—er—I do remember you.

Enter MONSIEUR CHARLES LECLAIR and PROFESSOR HENRY WESTERBERG, from the library. MONSIEUR LECLAIR is a small, slight gentleman, with a short black moustache. He is very active and talkative. WESTERBERG is almost exactly the opposite, being larger, somewhat older, and usually inclined toward silence. He wears a large, curling moustache of light brown.

LECLAIR (*to WESTERBERG*). Ah, I do most repeatedly assure you, Monsieur. Eet eez next to zee impossible to make zee American servant comprehend!

WEST. Upon mine honor, it is that!

LECLAIR. But see! Here eez Monsieur zee inventor himself.

WEST. It is goot, mine frient.

LECLAIR. Ah, Monsieur Middlebrook, but I find eet all impossible to make comprehend your servant to a thing that I have said! And to rest idle in zee library during zee past hour, in zee effort to make an understanding with your servant, and with this servant more and more uncomprehending as zee hour goes by—eet eez of zee most annoying!

MIDD. I am very sorry, gentlemen. Er—let me present my daughter, Eleanor, Monsieur LeClair, and her friend Miss Linden. Monsieur Charles LeClair. And—er—Professor Henry Westerberg.

WEST. (*quite surprised*). Dat is your daughter? But when I knew you in Berlin, Herr Middlebrook—

MIDD. Oh—er—yes, indeed, Professor Westerberg. My—er—my adopted daughter, Miss Eleanor Middlebrook.

(*They take chairs.*)

LECLAIR (*to ELEANOR*). Mademoiselle has been away during zee last four days, n'est-ce pas?

ELEA. Yes, Monsieur LeClair. I had to go away to Boston, with the members of our club, to attend to the shipment of the bags for the soldiers. It was awfully annoying, wasn't it, Margaret?

(MARGARET gives a little laugh. It is a very quiet laugh—not at all like the merry, care-free ones which accompany ELEANOR'S remarks.)

MARG. But we mustn't try to count the annoying things in war-time.

ELEA. (*sighing*). No, I suppose not. But even when we are home again, I can't get into my own house without all this red tape of passing the plain-clothesmen outside. It's terribly inconvenient!

MARG. I imagine it is. But then, Eleanor, you must remember that such a work as your father has just accomplished is worth almost any cost.

LECLAIR. Eet eez well spoken, Mademoiselle!

MRS. M. Then you've heard about Mr. Middlebrook's invention?

MARG. I certainly have, Mrs. Middlebrook. Why, even our soldiers in France have heard something about it. Even before I left, a month ago, they knew that he had perfected a shell which would cleave the water and wreck a submerged U-boat.

LECLAIR. Your shell eez entirely completed, Monsieur?

MIDD. Er—yes, Monsieur LeClair. We have had several very successful tests. All that remains is to convince the men who are coming from England and France to-morrow.

WEST. It is a most admirable invention!

MRS. M. But tell us, Margaret. You've been to France with the Red Cross, haven't you?

MARG. Yes, indeed. For nearly two years.

ELEA. Oh, Mother, she told me some perfectly wonderful things on the way here! You *must* hear some of them! Oh, tell Mother about —

Enter HERMAN.

HERMAN. Detective Bradbury 'as come, Mr. Middlebrook.

MIDD. Oh—er—yes, William. Show him in, please.

[*Exit HERMAN.*

MRS. M. You remember Mr. Bradbury, don't you,

Margaret? I think it was just after we met him that you left for France.

Enter DETECTIVE ALBERT BRADBURY. *The private detective is an active, powerfully built man of medium height, apparently about twenty-eight or thirty years of age. His face is smooth-shaven and rather handsome. His manner suggests a complete realization of his own importance. ELEANOR rises and goes quickly to meet him.*

BRAD. (to ELEANOR). Oh, good-evening! You've returned!

ELEA. I have, at last! Oh, how kind of you!

(*She takes a small box which BRADBURY hands to her.*)

BRAD. That's the candy I promised you last week, you know.

ELEA. Perhaps you remember my friend, Miss Linden.

BRAD. (*in quick surprise*). Why, I certainly do. I'm very glad to meet you again, Miss Linden. I understand that you have been in France.

MARG. Yes, Mr. Bradbury, I spent two years there.

MRS. M. I remember that you went just after we had met Mr. Bradbury. We had asked you to take a little trip to Washington with us—that time we went with Mr. Bradbury, you know—but you weren't able to do it.

MARG. Yes, indeed, Mrs. Middlebrook, I do remember it. I—I was very sorry that I had to leave at that time.

BRAD. Do you know, I have heard, Miss Linden, and I really understood, in fact, that—well, that you didn't really want to go to Europe at that time, and that you were in some way forced into it.

(MARGARET *nods slowly. Her face shows that the recollection is most unpleasant to her.*)

MARG. It is—quite true. I *was* compelled to go, against my will.

ELEA. It was a shame, too! Simply criminal, I call it! And just because she had given in her name.

MRS. M. Was that the reason, Margaret? I never really knew.

ELEA. Oh, Mother, you mustn't question Margaret about all that. I'm sure it must be an unpleasant topic for her.

MRS. M. Oh, I remember now that there was something—— Oh, you left right after that dreadful night at the Markmans' reception, didn't you?

ELEA. Mother! You mustn't remind her of that!

(ELEANOR'S face shows considerable agitation. MARGARET is greatly disturbed, but does not betray the fact so clearly.)

MARG. I'm sure that I'd be glad to tell you anything that you'd like to know about it. It—it was unpleasant, but it is past, and must be forgotten.

MRS. M. The reception was in June, 1917, wasn't it? It wasn't—it couldn't have been anything connected with the theft of Mr. Markman's state papers.

ELEA. Why, Mother! Of course Margaret didn't have anything——

MRS. M. Why, Eleanor, child! I never suggested such a thing!

MARG. Oh, please don't upset yourselves on my account. I'll try to explain about it. The truth is that I was practically forced to go abroad with the Red Cross—and altogether through the unreasonable order of—of the man who had charge of the enrollment.

BRAD. Then it was this man who was to blame.

MARG. It was, Mr. Bradbury. You see, I had listed my name before I received Mrs. Middlebrook's invitation. When I asked this—this gentleman—if it would be possible for me to withdraw, he saw no objection, at that time, to my withdrawing later if I wished. But then came the excitement at the reception, when the—the theft was made. And the very next morning, when I told him that I had decided to withdraw, and to join your family and Mr. Bradbury in your trip—he refused.

MRS. M. Refused to release you?

MARG. He refused quite decidedly. I appealed to the regular enrollment officer, to the Governor, to every one—without success. His commands are law in this country.

MRS. M. Why, who can he be? What right could he have to compel you to remain in the service?

MARG. I'm afraid that he had every right. You see, Mrs. Middlebrook, he is at the head of the Secret Service in this country. His—his name is Steele.

BRAD. (*with a start of surprise*). Inspector Steele!

MRS. M. I can't believe it!

LECLAIR. But what did you do, Mademoiselle?

MARG. I went, that's all. It was my duty to obey. I—I might have begged him to release me, but I would never give him *that* satisfaction! I have as much patriotism as he, even though he *is* the head of the —

ELEA. You have your self-respect, too, Margaret, and that's more than *that* coward can ever —

(MARGARET *checks her with an involuntary gesture.*)

MARG. We—we mustn't call him quite that, Eleanor. He goes to Europe himself, you know—right into the German lines, where a slip means death. Why, he may be in Germany now—for all I know.

MRS. M. But what could have happened at the reception to cause him to change so quickly?

MARG. Oh, I—I really don't—I can't understand it, myself.

LECLAIR. Eet eez not many who can understand Monsieur Steele!

ELEA. (*quickly*). You know him?

LECLAIR. Bien sur, Mademoiselle. I have met him in Paris, it is now three months. Ah! Comme il est ridicule! (*He laughs.*) He is a man so strange! He speaks almost not at all—and he laughs never—but he listens—forever!

ELEA. Isn't he ridiculous, Monsieur LeClair?

LECLAIR. You have well spoken! And his expressions—forever so idiotic! Surely you have all remarked his expressions zee most ridiculous!

ELEA. Why, what are they?

LECLAIR. Eh bien! He eez forever saying—"Quite right." One thousand times he use those words! And there eez one other which I recall. He eez one expression zee most characteristic, when Monsieur zee Inspector say, one million times to every week—ah, oui, he say—"With great success." I think sometimes he do so in real purpose, but no. Eet eez all unconscious, Mademoiselle. And when I see him, I laugh well, and I say: "Zee Americans, are they all like him?" Ha! Ha! Eet eez one good joke, n'est-ce pas?

MRS. M. A matter of opinion, Monsieur LeClair. If you had made some twenty trips inside the German lines, and had stared death in the face a thousand times, you yourself might not find time to vary your expressions. As for the Inspector, I have decided that we must have his assistance here to-morrow!

MIDD. Oh—er—Lucy, I beg you to be reasonable! Our guests——

MRS. M. But I am considering their safety, also. (*She turns to the others.*) Mr. Middlebrook has received a threat by mail, predicting the destruction of his laboratory when the British and French Government officials land in New York at ten o'clock to-morrow night.

LECLAIR. Mon Dieu!

WEST. But this is terrible!

ELEA. You can't mean it, Mother!

BRAD. But, Mrs. Middlebrook, I can't understand what has happened. Has there been something lacking in my services on this case?

MRS. M. Not at all, I assure you. I—I simply feel that there is great danger. Please don't feel offended by this. Mr. Middlebrook's greatest invention, and also his home, will be in great peril to-morrow night. I simply feel that we must have him to-morrow.

BRAD. But danger is impossible, Mrs. Middlebrook. I have plain-clothesmen guarding the house every minute. I have the laboratory protected by an automatic alarm. (*He points to a small red fixture on the wall near the laboratory door.*) The least pressure upon that door, when the alarm is set, will cause a loud gong to ring in the black box inside the laboratory door.

WEST. In a box, you say? Dat is remarkable, Herr Bradbury!

(*He strolls to the side of the room, and examines the red fixture with considerable interest.*)

MRS. M. You have always been most painstaking, Mr. Bradbury, and I appreciate it. But I—oh, I *can't* take chances at such a time as this!

ELEA. But certainly you wouldn't take the case away from Mr. Bradbury now. He has been splendid, Mother. No one could do any better!

MIDD. Er—I fear our guests must be wearied by this—er—discussion.

ELEA. Oh, you *won't* have him, Mother!

BRAD. (*in wrath*). Wherever I go, it's the same old story! It's Steele that I hear about, and it's Steele that gets half my cases. Danger! Will you kindly tell me what under the skies that is dangerous could ever get in here? This is an outrage! Danger!

LECLAIR. Eet eez a word zee most unhappy, n'est-ce pas?

BRAD. It has been the same thing over and over again. Look at that affair two years ago at the Markmans' reception, when Mr. Markman's papers were stolen. That case was taken away from me, right in the middle of it, and given to Steele.

ELEA. It was outrageous, Mr. Bradbury.

BRAD. You remember it, of course. What happened after Steele took that case? He failed! The person who stole those secrets was never found. And still, Mrs. Middlebrook, you wish him to take my place here.

MRS. M. But I don't want you to leave. I——

BRAD. I've given you the best possible protection, and still I'm to be ousted again for that man! (*Bitterly.*) Oh, I see now what it means to have the reputation! Give a reputation to the biggest, most conceited bungler in the United States, and he's *it!*

MARG. (*moving quickly toward the hall door*). Excuse me, please, Eleanor, but would you mind if I should take a walk in the garden?

ELEA. Why, of course not. But——

MARG. Thank you. (*She leaves.*)

MIDD. You see, it is as I said. We are wearying our guests by this—er—useless discussion.

BRAD. You may call it useless, Mr. Middlebrook, and you may dismiss me from your service. But it's all on account of a danger that never could exist. Listen, please. No stranger could ever hope to set foot inside your grounds!

MRS. M. (*incensed at last.*) I do not intend to argue this matter with you, Mr. Bradbury! I have already sent for Inspector Steele!

MIDD. Er—Lucy!

MRS. M. He has promised to let me know within an hour. I haven't a doubt that he will come. And I wish coöperation from you, Mr. Bradbury!

(MIDDLEBROOK and BRADBURY are nearly stupefied by the news. In the library door the butler HERMAN is standing, staring in consternation.)

BRAD. (*after a silence.*) Very well, Mrs. Middlebrook. But I'll tell you once again: you're most unfair to me.

(*He strides out into the hall, choking with indignation. ELEANOR follows.*)

MIDD. Er—this—er—this disturbance is very unfortunate, Monsieur LeClair. Most unfortunate indeed. I trust both you and the Professor will—er—overlook it.

WEST. It is for a half hour now that I haf oferlooked it, Herr Middlebrook. With your permission, I would now oferlook the laboratory.

MIDD. With—er—great pleasure, gentlemen.

(*He knocks on the laboratory door, and requests KRAFT to remain on watch at the entrance. MIDDLEBROOK, LECLAIR and WESTERBERG enter the laboratory.*)

MRS. MIDDLEBROOK crosses to the library door, calling the butler. (*Enter HERMAN.*)

MRS. M. I am expecting a telegram very soon, William. Kindly let me know the moment it arrives.

HERMAN. Very good, ma'am. (*Exit MRS. MIDDLEBROOK. HERMAN is left alone with KRAFT, who is outside the laboratory door, on watch.*) It is the worst!

KRAFT. Then it is Steele?

HERMAN. She has sent for him. She believes he will come. The work is ruined!

KRAFT. Not yet! Not yet!

HERMAN. But at ten to-night the agents land!

KRAFT. Wait! Who is that young woman visiting here? Is her name Linden? Am I right?

HERMAN. Yes—Linden. But —

KRAFT. Gott! What fortune! Then let Steele come, my friend!

HERMAN. But again he will outwit us, and beat us. Five times has he beaten Tom Cloff; he —

KRAFT. Wait! That's all.

HERMAN. But what is your plan?

KRAFT. I'll show you. He may beat *us*; he knows our game. He'll not beat Miss Linden, for he will trust her.

HERMAN. How can you know that?

KRAFT. Ach, Otto, you forget our theft at Herr Markman's reception. You forget that I was a butler there, my friend. I have eyes, Otto, and —

HERMAN. Now I begin to understand. You have some hold?

KRAFT. Gut! Watch me this afternoon. And, mark my words, at ten to-night we'll send that laboratory northeast by west!

HERMAN. And Steele?

KRAFT. And if Steele comes—he dies! (*The door-bell rings.*) Delia is answering; don't go. Remember, Otto, keep your eyes open. Watch for a telegram from Steele, and be ready for to-night. Are ye wise to that, now, William?

Enter DELIA, followed by a TELEGRAPH MESSENGER. The messenger is tall and ungainly. His face is unshaven and is marred by a long red scar; he wears a beard. His cap and coat are very badly dilapidated. His trousers, however, are well-fitting and

of good material. His low black shoes are polished. His movements are extremely awkward; he wears his cap in the house. MRS. MIDDLEBROOK enters from the library.

MRS. M. A telegram for me, Delia?

DELIA. Yes, ma'am. But this man, ma'am, he can't get a word out but once to an hour, ma'am.

MRS. M. (to MESSENGER). You have a telegram for me?

MESSENGER. F-f-for Mrs. M-M-M-Middlebrook.

(*He hands her a yellow envelope.*)

MRS. M. Is there an answer?

MESSENGER. Y-y-y-yes, ma'am.

(MRS. MIDDLEBROOK reads. *The message is evidently quite long. She suddenly gives a start, and reads on. Finally she gives the MESSENGER a quick glance. He nods.*)

MRS. M. (to MESSENGER). Very well. Wait just a moment, please. (To DELIA.) Delia, I must summon every one in the house to this room at once.

DELIA. Yes, ma'am. [*Exit to hall.*]

MRS. M. (to KRAFT). James, kindly ask the gentlemen in the laboratory to step in here.

Enter ELEANOR, MARGARET, BRADBURY, and DELIA from the hall. MIDDLEBROOK, LECLAIR, and WESTERBERG enter from the laboratory, followed by KRAFT, who has summoned them.

MIDD. Why—er—Lucy, what can this mean?

MRS. M. (to all). I have just received a telegram from Inspector Steele. I would like you all to hear it, and advise an answer.

MIDD. Er—this is astonishing of you, Lucy. Most astonishing.

MRS. M. (*reading the telegram*). "Cannot possibly come to-day. Do you wish a subordinate? M. J. Steele."

BRAD. Cannot come!

HERMAN. Mein ——— (*Coughs violently.*)

ELEA. I thank Heaven for that!

MARG. (*with spirit*). And I, too, Eleanor!

(LECLAIR and WESTERBERG are silent.)

MIDD. But—er—why have you called us together in this manner, Lucy, to hear such a message as that?

MRS. M. (*indicating the telegram*). It is Inspector Steele's wish, Warren.

MIDD. Er—Inspector Steele? But—er—I cannot understand. Why should he arrange such an idiotic affair with you?

MESSENGER. Merely to discover, Mr. Middlebrook, who are the ones who most desire his absence!

BRAD. (*startled*). Who said that?

MIDD. Er—where was that voice? Who spoke?

MESSENGER. Don't be alarmed, Mr. Middlebrook. It was only an innocent telegraph messenger, whose hair makes a very poor match with his beard!

(*He removes his cap. The beard and scar come with it. He straightens up to six feet three.*)

MIDD. Er—the Inspector!

BRAD. Steele!

(HERMAN chokes. The others are dumfounded by the revelation.)

STEELE (*shaking his head with a smile*). Merely a messenger, after all, Mr. Middlebrook. (*He bows in the direction of ELEANOR and MARGARET.*) Very evidently an unwelcome messenger, sir, but he comes with a warning—for you!

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same as ACT I. August 12, 1:30 P. M. A small table has been placed in the center of the room. In chairs around the table are gathered MIDDLEBROOK, LECLAIR, WESTERBERG, and STEELE. STEELE is tall and powerfully built. His face is clear-cut and smooth-shaven. His every movement bears witness to his never-failing energy and his dauntless will-power. One can make no accurate estimate as to his age. Ordinarily, his very quiet speech and deliberate actions would suggest a man perhaps as old as forty; while at times of excitement or danger, the startling quickness of his movements, and the sharp, ringing tones of his voice, would indicate that he could not have passed thirty. He is a man to whom the opinion of the world matters little; he has but one ideal—to serve America. A very light luncheon for four, consisting of salad, cake, and hot chocolate, has been served, and the men have nearly completed their repast.*

(HERMAN is bringing in a tray with two cups of chocolate. He places these before LECLAIR and WESTERBERG.)

MIDD. Won't you—er—change your mind, Inspector, and have another cup of chocolate?

STEELE. I believe not, thank you, Mr. Middlebrook.

MIDD. But—er—perhaps you will have a little more salad?

STEELE. I've had a great plenty, thank you.

MIDD. And Monsieur LeClair, perhaps you would care for a little.

LECLAIR. Merci, Monsieur Middlebrook, but one has served me of a great sufficiency of zee salad. But zee chocolate, eet eez indescribable—so delicious.

MIDD. And—er—Professor Westerberg?

WEST. It is most excellent—the salat, Herr Middlebrook. I should most heartily enjoy —

MIDD. Certainly. Er—William, a little more of the—er—salad, for Professor Westerberg. (HERMAN *takes the plate.*) And—er—William, I—er—have a suggestion to make, which might make this helping a little more—er—enjoyable—to the Professor. Er—a very little more salt on the salad, I believe, might—er—be a little improvement.

HERMAN. Very good, sir. [Exit.

(MIDDLEBROOK *passes the cake again to his three guests.*

LECLAIR and WESTERBERG *accept a second piece, but STEELE declines.*)

MIDD. I trust, gentlemen, that—er—that you —

(*He pauses suddenly, with an expression of annoyance upon his face. From the direction of the hall, which evidently leads into the dining-room, comes the sound of loud voices. DELIA and HERMAN can be heard in a rather heated argument upon some unknown subject. As the noise continues, MIDDLEBROOK'S exasperation becomes more and more apparent. At length HERMAN enters, in considerable confusion.*)

HERMAN (*awkwardly*). I am very sorry, sir, but—er—I am afraid, sir, that Delia will—will not be able to salt the salad.

MIDD. I—er—I don't understand, William.

HERMAN. She declares, sir, that—er—that the salt is gone.

MIDD. Er—William, I surely don't —

HERMAN. Your pardon, sir, but she maintains that hit 'as been stolen, and 'opes that you will not blame 'er for the matter.

MIDD. Er—stolen?

HERMAN. That is 'er statement, sir. According to 'er remarks, sir, there was plenty last evening. But this morning, she says, hevery salt-cellar was hempty, and hall the salt 'ad disappeared from the box in the kitchen cupboard. I am very sorry, sir.

MIDD. Why—er—how extraordinary. Er—rather re-

markable. I consider such an—er—occurrence quite unheard-of. Very well, William—never mind the salt for the present.

HERMAN. Very good, sir. I am sorry. [*Exit.*]

MIDD. Yes, yes, that was certainly—er—most unusual.

LECLAIR. Pardon, Monsieur, but might eet not have been zee resultant of some hemispheric conditions?

MIDD. Er—

LECLAIR. You comprehend, n'est-ce pas? Zee hemispheric conditions—zee conditions of zee air.

MIDD. Oh—er—oh, I understand. Why—er—I hardly think such a thing possible, Monsieur LeClair. Quite improbable, at any rate. Er—wouldn't that be your opinion, Mr. Steele?

STEELE (*laughing*). Such a thing would be a bit remarkable, to say the least, Mr. Middlebrook. That is, unless your atmosphere here is somewhat—unusual.

WEST. Ant I agree, Herr Steele. I cannot see the possibility.

LECLAIR. Eef eet had been of money which you had missed, Monsieur, one might suggest a thefting. But zee salt—who would want him? C'est ridicule! (*HERMAN returns with the salad for WESTERBERG, and leaves.*) But, Monsieur Middlebrook, in regard to zee compound which you prepare for us. Eet eez at four o'clock, n'est-ce pas, that you shall have finished him?

MIDD. Finished him, you said? Er—of whom are you speaking?

LECLAIR. Ah, pardon, Monsieur. Eet eez again my mistake, I perceive. Zee compound, I wished to say. You comprehend, Monsieur.

MIDD. Er—yes. At four o'clock, Monsieur LeClair. But Mr. Steele—er—perhaps you have not been told of the cause of our visit from these gentlemen. You might be interested to hear of this.

STEELE. Yes, indeed, Mr. Middlebrook. To tell the truth, I have already been told that they have come for your latest dyeing compound.

LECLAIR. Ah, Monsieur zee Inspector, but you do learn zee truth of everything! Eet eez many times that I have remarked this, since I have met you in Paris.

STEELE (*a trifle surprised*). You met me in Paris?

LECLAIR. Ah, yes, Monsieur. I see well that you do not remember me. Eet was at the home of Monsieur Rapis, eet eez now three months. Monsieur zee Inspector was there, n'est-ce pas?

STEELE. Quite right, Monsieur LeClair. But there were so many gentlemen there —

LECLAIR. Voilà, Messieurs! Eet eez as I have said!

STEELE. I beg pardon?

LECLAIR. Ah, Monsieur, you will not be in anger with me, because I have spoken of him! But eet eez once again that you say, "Quite right."

STEELE. And you find something unusual in my saying that?

LECLAIR. But no, you do not comprehend. Eet eez merely because you forever use this expression that I have remarked him. I have not wished to offend.

STEELE. Not at all, Monsieur. In fact, now that you speak of it, I realize, myself, that I do use those words quite often. It's strange how some little expression will cling to one person. (*He laughs.*)

LECLAIR. And there eez one other which you have, Monsieur. Eet eez "With great success," n'est-ce pas?

STEELE (*laughing in amazement*). Really, Monsieur LeClair, you shouldn't waste your time in a dyeing concern. With a mind for details such as you have, you should be a detective.

LECLAIR. A detectif? Mais non! That eez more to zee taste of Monsieur zee Professor Westerberg, I believe.

STEELE (*quickly*). You are interested in that line of work, Professor?

WEST. Nein, nein. Dat vas a jest, ant notting more. I, a detective ever? It is ridiculous! But concerning your visit here, Herr Steele, we have heard little.

Enter HERMAN.

HERMAN. Detective Bradbury 'as come, sir.

MIDD. Oh, very well, William. I—er—I shall be out directly. Kindly tell him.

HERMAN. Very good, sir.

[*Exit.*]

MIDD. I must see Mr. Bradbury for a few moments, gentlemen. (*Rises.*) Er—excuse me, please. Perhaps—er—you would care to take a walk in the garden, or on the lawn.

LECLAIR. With zee greatest pleasure, Monsieur.

WEST. Very gladly, Herr Middlebrook.

MIDD. And—er—Mr. Steele, would you care to accompany them, or would you prefer to—er——

STEELE. If you don't mind, Mr. Middlebrook, I feel more like taking a chair here and reading. I seem a trifle tired to-day.

MIDD. Certainly. Make yourself quite at home. Er—now, gentlemen, shall we proceed?

(*Exit to hall, with LECLAIR and WESTERBERG. STEELE, left alone, walks slowly to a Morris chair near the library door. Taking a book from the table near by, he seats himself. Enter MRS. MIDDLEBROOK, from the library.*)

MRS. M. Mr. Steele, I haven't yet had a chance to thank you for coming so willingly to our aid.

STEELE. No thanks are due at all, I assure you. It is my duty to help you at this time.

MRS. M. Still, I realize how busy you are during the war. It was kind of you to help me out, and I appreciate it.

STEELE. No business could be more urgent than this, Mrs. Middlebrook. Your husband is about to do more for America than any man living has yet done. Certainly it is my duty to protect his home at this critical time.

MRS. M. I'm so thankful that you see it that way. Warren can't understand my fears at all; he laughs at me. First of all, I suppose we must awaken him to the real danger.

STEELE (*laughing*). I believe I have already opened his eyes to the inefficiency of his police guard. That little scheme of ours provided for that—with great success. But I fear that Mr. Middlebrook is not yet fully awake to his peril.

MRS. M. Oh, I'm afraid not! And, even with you here, I have a terrible dread of to-night. We might make some slip, and something might happen.

STEELE. Please don't worry.

MRS. M. But—but the Allies' agents will land to-night at ten.

STEELE. Very true.

MRS. M. And at ten o'clock that man will blow up the laboratory there, unless —

STEELE. He will *not* do it! Rest assured of that.

MRS. M. Oh, then you've made sure of this! You've been at work here already, this forenoon.

STEELE. Quite true.

MRS. M. And you've discovered — Oh, I dread the very thought of it! What have you found?

STEELE. Absolutely nothing, as yet.

MRS. M. Oh! Yet you're confident that he can never succeed?

STEELE. Quite confident, Mrs. Middlebrook. His scheme will be clever, I know. There is at present no explosive of any description in the house. To-night he will doubtless manage to have some on hand.

MRS. M. But how can he get inside? Certainly not as you managed it!

STEELE. I can't answer that yet. Have you the least suspicion of any one?

MRS. M. Why, no. That is—except Miss Linden. I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but Warren refuses to trust her, although he trusts these foreigners.

STEELE (*laughing dryly*). There's Mr. Middlebrook again. I *must* awaken him!

MRS. M. Then you don't suspect Miss Linden, as he does?

STEELE (*hesitating*). Why should I, please?

MRS. M. Why, there's no reason. I merely thought—well—after your unpleasant experience with her, you know.

STEELE. You've heard of that, then? (*He shakes his head slowly.*) No, Mrs. Middlebrook. I'll tell you the truth. I would sooner suspect the President himself.

MRS. M. Oh, I'm so glad to hear that! It's—it's so

unjust to her, you know, to have Warren feel this way. I really ——

Enter MIDDLEBROOK, accompanied by BRADBURY.

MIDD. Ah, yes. Here is the Inspector.

BRAD. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Middlebrook.

(He gives STEELE a curt nod.)

STEELE. A very pleasant day, Mr. Bradbury.

MIDD. We were just—er—looking for you, Mr. Steele. There is one other matter which I think should be brought to your attention.

STEELE. You mean the warning letter which Mrs. Middlebrook described to me?

MIDD. Why—er—upon my word! Er—quite astonishing, Mr. Steele. Yes, I have just been discussing it with Mr. Bradbury. He is now—er—quite confident that this affair is merely a boast, in spite of his—er—previous suggesting that I concede to this atrocious demand.

STEELE *(turning quickly to BRADBURY)*. You advised him to abandon work upon the shell?

BRAD. *(rather insolently)*. You've said it exactly, Steele. At that time I was averse to his placing his family in such peril.

STEELE. But you feel now that this peril is not worth considering?

BRAD. Just that. Such a disaster is impossible; the whole business is not worth thinking about. Explosion at ten to-night! Bah!

STEELE. I must differ from you on that point. The letter, please, Mr. Middlebrook.

MIDD. *(searching his pockets)*. Ah, yes, indeed, the letter. A most outlandish communication it was, too. Here it is, I believe. Most atrocious, Mr. Steele. And signed by a—er—person who is quite—er—unheard-of. A most unusual signature.

(Starts to open the envelope.)

STEELE *(without taking the letter)*. Most unusual signature, you say? The name is "Tom Cloff"?

MIDD. Why—er—how remarkable!

BRAD. Then you've heard of him, too!

MRS. M. Is there really any such German agent?

STEELE. There certainly is, Mrs. Middlebrook.

MIDD. Er—this is alarming. Quite shocking, in fact.

BRAD. What do you know of him, Steele?

STEELE (*dryly*). Almost as much as I knew before I started trying to trace him, nearly three years ago.

MRS. M. But who is he?

STEELE. That is just the perplexing point, Mrs. Middlebrook. Under the name of "Tom Cloff" some shrewd man is constantly active against the United States, in close communication with the better known William Von Holtzer. Other than this, I know nothing. I have searched for these men since the beginning of the war, without success.

MRS. M. And now this agent is coming here to destroy the laboratory. This is terrible!

MIDD. But—er—surely this danger is not real!

STEELE. Too real, Mr. Middlebrook. The letter, if you please. (*He takes the letter.*)

BRAD. You can learn nothing from that. I've been over it three times.

STEELE. Mailed from New York City. Postmark could reveal nothing. Letter itself typewritten. Signature scrawled, with writing well disguised.

BRAD. Quite evident. But that's as far as you can go.

MIDD. (*now agitated*). Yes, yes. I fear so.

STEELE. Perhaps. Almost, at any rate. (*Examines the envelope.*) Envelope of ordinary paper. Addressed very hurriedly.

BRAD. Why so?

STEELE. Ink used is same as used in letter for signature. In the signature it was allowed to dry after writing; on the envelope it was blotted at once. Result: criminal's handwriting excellently disguised in signature; poorly disguised on envelope.

MIDD. Astonishing, Mr. Steele!

BRAD. Poorly disguised on the envelope? How—how can you tell that?

STEELE. Oh, it's very superficial there. The writer

has not taken the time necessary to do such a thing properly. Probably a slip on his part; every criminal makes a slip some time.

BRAD. But what do we gain?

STEELE. The key to his real handwriting. I'll tell you a law that is absolutely infallible. Whenever any person with a distinctive handwriting makes a *careless* attempt to disguise that handwriting, he merely succeeds in emphasizing its peculiarities all the more noticeably.

BRAD. All very interesting, I'm sure.

STEELE. Look at the capital "R" there. In the signature it is changed; on the envelope it is the writer's own "R," merely tilted a little to the right. Or look at the "d's" in "Middlebrook." Scrawled, but still quite distinctive. There are a few other points, also.

(BRADBURY *is silent in astonishment.*)

MRS. M. But we can't catch the man this way, Mr. Steele, and to-night is coming.

STEELE. To-night, Mrs. Middlebrook, will take care of itself. And in the meantime ——

(*He pauses, thoughtfully.*)

BRAD. And in the meantime, what can we do?

STEELE. We can hunt, Mr. Bradbury, for the man with a capital "R" that is formed like an "H" and an "F," and two "d's" that are surely not mates. That's about all.

Enter ELEANOR from the hall, followed by MARGARET.

HERMAN follows at once, carrying a box tied with red ribbon.

ELEA. (*to HERMAN*). That is my almond candy, William. Just put it in the table drawer there, for the present. Come, Margaret, we —— (*She hesitates, noticing the four people gathered around the letter. STEELE places the envelope in his pocket. HERMAN obeys ELEANOR'S request, and leaves. MARGARET is carrying a small blue knitting-bag, made of cloth, with several knitting-needles protruding.*) Are we interrupting something important?

MIDD. Why—er—no, my dear. We had practically finished. In fact—er—Mr. Bradbury and I were on the point of making a round of the grounds outside.

MRS. M. Yes, everything seems settled for the present. Margaret, you met Inspector Steele this morning, didn't you?

MARG. Yes, Mrs. Middlebrook. (*She bows coldly. STEELE returns the salutation in silence.*) I was thinking of knitting a little while in the garden.

BRAD. You are knitting for the army, Miss Linden?

MARG. Yes, indeed.

(*She opens the bag upon the table, displaying several articles.*)

BRAD. It seems as though you are always doing something for the country. Here you've just come from France, and you're busy already.

MARG. I'm always willing to do my part, Mr. Bradbury.

BRAD. That's right. We must all do that now. *We* seem to do very little—we secret service men—but we are active every minute, I can tell you.

MARG. I have never doubted that for an instant, Mr. Bradbury.

MRS. M. But you spoke of wanting to knit, Margaret. Let's find some chairs in the garden, while these gentlemen are making their inspection.

MIDD. Er—yes, indeed, our inspection. You are ready, Mr. Bradbury?

BRAD. Any minute. Coming, Inspector?

STEELE. I don't believe I'll be of much use at present, Bradbury. I'll wait here, if you don't mind.

MIDD. Certainly not. Er—let us proceed, Mr. Bradbury. (*MIDDLEBROOK and BRADBURY leave.*)

MRS. M. Come, let's go into the garden. It's too wonderful outside to be indoors. Would you—won't you come with us, Mr. Steele?

STEELE. Thank you, Mrs. Middlebrook. I think, however, that I'll read a few moments. On some cases, you see, I'm very fond of being alone at times.

(Exit MRS. MIDDLEBROOK. She is followed by ELEANOR and MARGARET, who has evidently forgotten to take her knitting-bag from the table. STEELE again takes his book to the Morris chair, and leisurely seats himself. But again there is an interruption when MARGARET reappears at the hall door. Unobserved by the Inspector, she hesitates, and glances several times toward the table. At length she crosses the room rather hurriedly, and goes to the table. In her haste to return to the garden, she grasps the knitting-bag quickly. It slips and falls to the floor, just as STEELE glances up from his book. Numerous articles are upset upon the carpet. STEELE rises quickly and begins to restore them.)

MARG. How careless of me! (STEELE gathers up several knitted articles, and a small ball of red yarn. MARGARET recovers two other balls, of gray color. STEELE then stoops and picks up two small, peculiarly shaped flasks, of very dark green glass. He is evidently quite puzzled as he scrutinizes these.) Oh, thank you, very much. It was — Oh, those—those are perfume holders, Mr. Steele.

STEELE (nodding slowly, and still examining the little bottles). I see. For a moment I couldn't make out what they could be.

MARG. They're of a very unusual design, I believe. You see, Eleanor is just crazy to have me knit a couple of hangers for these two holders—something a bit artistic, she wants. It's a rather strange notion of hers.

STEELE (restoring the bottles). Yes, I suppose so. You'll pardon me, but it really seemed even a trifle more strange to be carrying such articles in a knitting-bag—especially to-day. You—you're quite sure that Miss Middlebrook really was anxious for you to —

MARG. (taking the bag quickly). I really think, Mr. Steele, that the question was quite unnecessary.

STEELE. I—er—beg pardon?

MARG. I don't enjoy having my property examined as though it might contain bombs or something. I don't consider it *your* place to do this. Do you understand?

STEELE (*glancing up in quick surprise, and nodding slowly*). I do understand now, quite clearly, Miss Linden.

MARG. I trust you understand everything about this matter.

STEELE. Ah, no, Miss Linden, that is my great deficiency. I understand America's interests, and how they should be served. Beyond this, I never understand anything. There lies my stupidity.

MARG. Please do not say any more. You are at the head of our secret service. You have forced me to spend two years in France. I have obeyed; I am an American. But I have no desire to converse with you upon any subject. Is—is that clear?

STEELE (*controlling his temper with an effort, and turning toward the library door*). Quite clear, Miss Linden. (*He hesitates.*) I—I'll not trouble you further. [*Exit.*]

(MARGARET exhibits great indignation, staring toward the door where STEELE had stood. The laboratory door opens suddenly. KRAFT enters, closing the door behind him.)

KRAFT (*crossing to hall door*). Mornin', Miss Linden.

MARG. Good-morning, James. You quite startled me for an instant. Why, James, what are you doing? (*KRAFT closes the hall door. He crosses quickly to the library, and closes the door there.*) James, what are you doing?

KRAFT (*quickly*). Not a word, Miss Linden!

MARG. Why, what do you mean by speaking to me in this way? I shall report you to Mr. Middlebrook at once.

(*She starts toward the hall door.*)

KRAFT (*darting forward and intercepting her*). No you don't, Miss Linden!

MARG. How dare you? Open that door at once!

KRAFT. When I am ready. Keep quiet!

MARG. Open that door! I——

KRAFT. Wait a minute, please. Now listen.

MARG. I shall call Delia this instant.

KRAFT. No, you will not. Not when you remember —

MARG. I won't stand this!

KRAFT. One moment, please. Not when you remember the evening of June 27, 1917, at the reception of Charles Markman! (MARGARET starts visibly.) Ah! You recall that evening, I observe. Perhaps—just perhaps—you may have memories of the butler Walters. I wonder, Miss Linden.

MARG. (*with another start*). You! You are Walters!

KRAFT. I am.

MARG. Then *you* are the man who aided in the theft of those papers! I shall have you arrested at once!

KRAFT. But no, my dear Miss Linden. You will not. My name is not James McGrady. Nor is it Walters. I am Hans Kraft, of the German Secret Service.

MARG. A spy! You're here to blow up Mr. Middlebrook's laboratory!

KRAFT. Ach, now you have it. That is my purpose to-night.

MARG. Then it shall fail, Mr. Kraft! I shall —

KRAFT. You're wrong, Miss Linden. We shall *not* fail, with *your* help!

MARG. With *my* — How dare you say this?

KRAFT. I'll tell you how I dare, Miss Linden. I'm very brave indeed, when I remember the timely assistance of a certain young woman who so cleverly hid the stolen papers for us at the —

MARG. (*stunned*). Oh! You—you gave your word to never mention that!

KRAFT. Ach, what is a promise with us? I serve the Fatherland! And thus I say I shall not fail to-night, with your assistance.

MARG. I'll not hear another word of this! Open that door, sir!

KRAFT (*stepping forward*). With great pleasure. I'll open it and inform the honored Mr. Middlebrook about a certain treacherous young lady whom I could mention, who has three times aided the Fatherland, and who is now —

MARG. Oh, you coward!

KRAFT. You understand, Miss Linden? Perhaps this letter here, dropped by this traitoress two years ago, would add force to my statements. (*MARGARET is silent.*) You see, Miss Linden, I hold the winning cards.

MARG. (*with an effort*). So I observe.

KRAFT. You will assist, perhaps? Is it not just possible?

MARG. Oh, very well. I must, that's all. I must!

KRAFT. Gut! And now to business, nicht wahr? One man alone can block our success to-night. That is Inspector Steele.

MARG. Yes, yes. But what——

KRAFT. I've fought that man before, Miss Linden. I've fought him and lost. I can't beat *him* to-night. He'll outguess me; he'll outguess Herman; he'll outguess Tom Cloff himself. But *you*, Miss Linden, he will trust!

MARG. (*starting violently*). You're mad to think such a thing! He is my enemy! He——

KRAFT. Ach, no, Miss Linden. He is an actor; that is all. A clever man—Inspector Steele. But he will trust you as a loyal American. It was Herman, the butler, who overheard him to-day as he declared so.

MARG. Overheard *that*? Why—this—this is certainly impossible. I—I'll not believe one word of it. But what is your wish?

KRAFT. I'll show you. You are not Steele's friend at present. I heard you use offending words to him. But he will forget in one minute, when you apologize.

MARG. I'll never!

KRAFT. Oh, yes. I think you will. Remember——

MARG. Oh, this is——

KRAFT. Enough of that. Now listen, please. Inspector Steele will bar our way to-night. Mein Gott! If I could but slay him with my own hands! I've tried shooting him; I've tried poison; I've tried explosives;—all to no avail. He is too quick. But to-night——

(*MARGARET suddenly draws back in horror.*)

MARG. You mean to—to kill the Inspector? Here, in this house?

KRAFT. He dies at ten to-night! We'll win this time—with your help.

MARG. You'll *not* have my help! I'll tell Mr. Middlebrook this instant!

KRAFT. Very well. I'll let him know about the young lady who hid Markman's stolen secrets.

MARG. Oh, you are terrible! I'll never help you do this frightful thing!

KRAFT (*drawing the letter from his pocket*). Oh, very well, Miss Linden. We'll have a reckoning.

MARG. Oh, I can't help you to kill—any one!

KRAFT. You really can't?

(MARGARET *stands silent, in great agitation*. KRAFT *waits quietly*.)

MARG. (*at length*). Oh—then—very well. I must, that's all.

KRAFT. Gut! Go to the hall door, please, and listen carefully. I must not be interrupted now; it might cost both our lives. Go quickly, please. (MARGARET *obeys in silence*. KRAFT *springs to the table*. *He unlocks and opens a drawer*. *There is a tearing of paper*. *He recloses the drawer*. *Two small bottles are held in his hand*.) This, Miss Linden, is the way I intend to kill Inspector Steele. Look, please.

MARG. (*turning away*). I don't wish to see it.

KRAFT. But I wish you to. See here. I have two bottles, each filled with a liquid, and smuggled here in secrecy by our agents. I shall presently mix these two liquids. Do you know what will be formed—what gas will be set free? Cyanogen!

MARG. Cyanogen?

KRAFT. Yes. That is Prussic acid gas—the deadliest poison known to man. One whiff of that gas is fatal to human life.

MARG. Oh, that is horrible!

KRAFT. You must handle this carefully, Miss Linden.

MARG. I? Am I to touch that?

KRAFT. You must! He'll watch me every instant to-night. If you try, you can make him trust you. Do it,

that's all. Have you any glass receptacle for these liquids? A bottle, or something?

MARG. Why, no, I — Oh, yes. I have a cou — I—I have a small glass flask in this knitting-bag. Is—is this all right? (*She draws out a glass flask, which has already been described.*) It is a perfume flask.

KRAFT. Gut! Is any one near?

MARG. They'll return for me any minute.

KRAFT. They'll not. Otto attended to that. Stand away now, for your life. (*Holding the bottles at arm's length, he pours a little of each liquid into the green flask, quickly screwing on the cover. He shakes the flask carefully.*) There, Miss Linden. There is death for Inspector Steele! Put this in your bag at once. Win back his trust. Keep near him after seven o'clock this evening. He'll watch my every action. I'll rely on you, absolutely. When I give the word, you're to hand that flask to me. I'll throw it! Is that clear?

MARG. Very clear indeed, Mr. Kraft. (*A pause.*) I—I'll do it! And in payment —

KRAFT. My silence.

MARG. Very well. This evening.

KRAFT. That's it. Ring for William, please.

(*He replaces the bottles of liquid in the table drawer, and locks it. MARGARET rings. Enter HERMAN from the hall.*)

HERMAN. How about it, sir? Miss Linden —

KRAFT. Is with us. We cannot fail.

HERMAN. And the gas?

KRAFT. It is ready. Pure cyanogen. Gott im Himmel! When I smash the flask at his feet, he will crumple up like a caterpillar on a hot stove!

MARG. You fiend!

KRAFT. No more of this, Miss Linden! You want my silence. You must work for it. Otto, I hear some one in the library. Mrs. Middlebrook is waiting for Miss Linden in the garden. (*HERMAN and MARGARET leave.*) A brave young woman—with nerve, in spite of all her pale appearance. And loyal! Gott! She should be with the Fatherland, with loyalty such as that!

Enter ELEANOR and BRADBURY from the library, followed by MIDDLEBROOK.

MIDD. Er—good-afternoon, James. The—er—the afternoon inspection, I believe.

KRAFT. Yes, sor.

BRAD. Yes, inspection, please. You have the key?

KRAFT. Right here, sor. (*He unlocks the door.*)

BRAD. Very well. Go ahead. I'll be out very soon, Mr. Middlebrook.

(BRADBURY enters the laboratory, followed by KRAFT.)

ELEA. It's a nuisance, Father—this inspection every day. There's hardly a minute that I don't have to wait for something.

MIDD. I know, my dear. It is—er—trying.

ELEA. (*with a sigh*). Oh, well, I suppose I may as well answer Edith Anderson's letter. (*She goes to the table, and finds a pen.*) Father, where has the writing-paper gone?

MIDD. Oh—er—I laid it in the right hand drawer, my dear. The—er—the ink is there, also, all except that red ink there. I—er—I'll get it. (*He tries the drawer.*) Why—er—this drawer seems to be—er—locked.

ELEA. Oh, never mind, then. I'll just borrow Mr. Bradbury's fountain-pen. You'd not mind if I went in there to get it?

MIDD. Why—er—certainly you may go, my dear. Of course.

ELEA. I'll come right out, and not touch a single thing.

(*Exit to laboratory. MIDDLEBROOK returns and tries the locked drawer several times. He is quite puzzled.*)

MIDD. This is quite strange. Very strange indeed. (*He shakes the drawer.*) It is—er—quite unaccountable that this drawer should be locked. I—er—I can't understand—— (*There is a loud scream from the laboratory, followed by the sound of excited voices.*) Why, upon my word! Er—what is that?

(*He hastens forward. The laboratory door opens. KRAFT enters hastily. He is followed by ELEANOR and BRADBURY. ELEANOR'S right hand is wrapped in a handkerchief. She is evidently in great pain.*)

ELEA. Oh, Father, this awful stuff is — Oh, it's terrible!

MIDD. Why—er—Eleanor, what is it?

BRAD. Oh, be quick, Mr. Middlebrook! She's burned her hand—terribly. I upset a beaker full of acid all over the back of her hand. It's eating right into it! For mercy's sake, do something! You must know what to do!

MIDD. Oh—er —

ELEA. It's terrible, Father!

MIDD. This is shocking, my dear! It—er —

BRAD. Oh, do something, Mr. Middlebrook! Put something on it to counteract the acid.

MIDD. Yes, yes. We must counteract it at once. Come, my dear, what was it?

ELEA. Oh, I don't know!

MIDD. Er—doesn't any one know?

KRAFT. It was sulphuric acid, sor, concentrated. From the beaker on the table, sor.

MIDD. Concentrated sulphuric acid! Oh, my dear, this—er—a great misfortune. We must counteract it at once.

BRAD. Do hurry! What will counteract it—ammonia, or what?

MIDD. Er—yes. Yes, indeed. Strong ammonia is the only thing. Er—ring for Delia, James. (*KRAFT obeys.*) My poor daughter! Er—let me see if it is badly burned. (*He removes the handkerchief. ELEANOR gives an exclamation of pain. The flesh on the back of her hand has turned a bright red.*) Oh—er—this is most unfortunate!

BRAD. It's a terrible thing, Mr. Middlebrook. It was every bit my fault.

Enter DELIA, in haste.

DELIA. Yes, sir. Is there any trouble?

MIDD. Oh—er—Delia, the ammonia. Very quickly, please. Er—the large jar out in the closet, you know. We must act quickly. Perhaps—er—— Come right out now, my dear, and we'll attend to this. I'm very sorry! Very sorry indeed!

(Exit MIDDLEBROOK, with ELEANOR and BRADBURY. DELIA follows hastily. KRAFT turns toward the laboratory. HERMAN enters from the library.)

HERMAN. 'Old on a minute, Jim. I 'ave a letter 'ere for Mr. Middlebrook. (He glances around the room.)

KRAFT. For Mr. Middlebrook?

HERMAN. The letter is a bluff, sir. It was left as a blind, just twenty minutes ago. It was Tom Cloff himself, sir, disguised as a hack-driver. Here are his instructions to you, sir. (He unfolds a paper.)

KRAFT. What? Tom Cloff? Then he must have come less than ten minutes ago. How could he dare ——

(He checks himself.)

HERMAN (quickly). What do you mean? Come here? When? Who are you talking about? He ——

KRAFT. Silence! That was a slip on my part. I want no questions. What is this paper?

HERMAN. Our instructions for to-night, sir. He will come himself soon after seven, and visit the laboratory. He intends to complete the preparation of the explosive at that time. It will be chloride of nitrogen, sir.

KRAFT. Chloride of —— Sh! Quick! It's Middlebrook, right at the door! Get that out of sight!

Enter MIDDLEBROOK, in haste.

MIDD. Upon my word, this is most unfortunate. The poor girl is suffering terribly. Oh—er—is that my mail, William?

(HERMAN is fairly caught, but bluffs desperately.)

HERMAN. Hit his a letter for you, sir. Left by a 'ackman, sir.

(*He starts to cross the room. He intentionally trips over a rug, and apparently saves himself by grasping the back of the Morris chair with his right hand. While he is thus screened from MIDDLEBROOK for a second, his right hand leaves the incriminating paper between the cushion and the woodwork of the chair-back, and his left hand adroitly draws the bogus letter from his vest pocket. He rises at once and hands the letter to MIDDLEBROOK, who fails to observe the clever stratagem.*)

MIDD. Ah, yes, indeed, for me. Thank you, William. But I must see Mrs. Middlebrook at once, about Eleanor's injury. (*He turns toward the hall door.*)

STEELE (*from the library doorway*). I trust your daughter has not been seriously hurt, Mr. Middlebrook.

(*HERMAN and KRAFT turn quickly, to find STEELE entering. HERMAN starts.*)

MIDD. Why—er—upon my word, you startled me!

STEELE. I'm very sorry. I certainly didn't intend to. But I heard considerable excitement in the kitchen, and it seemed as though Miss Middlebrook had perhaps met with some accident.

MIDD. Er—yes, yes. You are right. It was most unfortunate, Mr. Steele. The poor girl has burned her hand very badly with sulphuric acid. Very badly indeed.

Steele. Sulphuric acid! Indeed! It will cause a terrible burn, I fear. I'm sorry to hear of it. You've counteracted the acid, of course.

MIDD. Er—yes. I thrust her hand directly into a gallon jar of strong ammonia. And—er—that reminds me, James. Kindly make certain at once that no more such acids are left about the laboratory.

KRAFT. Very well, sir. I'll attend to it.

[*Exit to laboratory.*]

MIDD. Now, if you'll excuse me, Mr. Steele, I must summon Mrs. Middlebrook.

STEELE. Certainly. I'm very sorry that such an accident has happened.

(*Exit MIDDLEBROOK. STEELE strolls to the table, and*

glances over a pile of books. HERMAN stands in an awkward silence, casting apprehensive glances in the direction of the Morris chair. He starts to approach the chair, but STEELE turns away from the table and walks slowly to the mantelpiece near the library door. HERMAN, alarmed, turns the Morris chair a trifle, to hide the back from the Inspector. STEELE, surveying the mantel, makes no move to leave.)

HERMAN (*taking a box from the table*). Per'aps you would 'ave a cigar, Mr. Steele. You could smoke 'ere or on the veranda, sir.

STEELE. I believe not, thank you, William. I never smoke.

HERMAN. Can I do hanything helse for you, sir? A book or magazine, per'aps, in the library, sir.

(STEELE *considers the matter*.)

STEELE. Why, I'm hardly in the mood for fiction this afternoon. But—er—there is one kind of book that I should particularly like to see for a few minutes. I have no doubt that Mr. Middlebrook has such a book.

HERMAN (*eagerly*). If you will step into the library, sir, I'll do my best to locate what you wish.

STEELE. Oh, please don't go to any trouble, William. (*He still shows no inclination to leave the room.*) It isn't at all necessary. I merely wished to find a special volume of chemistry, on the subject——

HERMAN. There are two full sets of chemistry in the library, sir. Hit will be very heasy for me to point them out to you.

STEELE. But it really isn't worth while, William. I merely wished to brighten up a bit on the preparation process for—er—chloride of nitrogen!

HERMAN (*unable to restrain a start*). Ah—er—yes, sir. Very good, sir. I believe I can find hit, sir.

STEELE. Oh, I'm quite sure that I can find it for myself, William. I wouldn't trouble you for the world, when you're likely to be so busy very soon.

HERMAN (*quickly*). Busy, sir? I don't——

STEELE. Oh, yes, you do. Quite busy with Mr. Middlebrook, and explanations.

HERMAN (*alarmed*). Ex——

STEELE. Yes, explanations. Explanations of a forged reference which you handed him four months ago, of a pantry window that sometimes squeaks as it opens in the dead of night, and of footprints in the garden outside.

HERMAN. What do you mean? It's false! You have no right to accuse me of——

STEELE. I accuse you of being a very careless butler, William. "Very careless indeed," as Mr. Middlebrook would say. You lose the salt at times. You forget to lock windows. You trip over rugs, and leave scraps of paper in most unheard-of places!

HERMAN (*starting*). It is a lie, sir! You have no right to talk like this! It is wholly unwarranted, sir! I——

STEELE. Stop! You're wrong! (*He crosses to the Morris chair, and rests his arms upon the back.*) You don't mean that "it is wholly unwarranted," I'm very sure. You mean, "Hit his 'olly hunwarranted," don't you—William?

HERMAN (*starting back*). Ach Himmel!

STEELE. Ah, that's more like it, Mr. Herman! That's more like the man I met in Berlin last January. Oh, one moment, please, before you leave. I—I fear you've quite forgotten your property. (*He draws the concealed paper from the chair-back, and tosses it at HERMAN'S feet. With a laugh.*) Take this to Mr. Kraft, Herman—with my compliments. Tell him that the walls are solid, and the floor's all right, but the man behind the library door two minutes ago has one pair of eyes and a couple of ears to match. That's all—until this evening.

(*HERMAN stands an instant in terrified silence. Then he snatches the paper from the floor and flees to the laboratory door. He glances back in dread.*)

HERMAN. Mein Gott! What have I done?

(*Exit to laboratory in terror. INSPECTOR STEELE drops back into the Morris chair and shakes in silent laughter.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—MIDDLEBROOK'S *private experimental laboratory*. 7:30 P. M. *The room is a plain one, without windows, and is fitted out with numerous pieces of chemical apparatus. There are two large tables, at L. and R. Each is covered with complicated glass apparatus. Door at R. opening into living-room. Door in C. to closet containing chemicals. Door to storage closet at L. In the farther left-hand corner is a large object, carefully covered by white canvas. On the wall at R., about eight feet from the floor, a large black box is visible. Lower down, there is a small red fixture similar to the one in the living-room.*

(MIDDLEBROOK is at work with KRAFT at the table at L. He is making tests with several liquids, while his assistant tabulates the results.)

MIDD. Two more tests, James. First—er—with dilute hydrochloric acid. (*He pours a liquid into a test-tube.*) No reaction, James.

KRAFT. Yes, sor. No reaction.

MIDD. Lastly, with—with ammonium hydroxide. (*He adds another liquid.*) Ah, yes, indeed. White precipitate, James, you observe.

KRAFT. Yes, sor. (*Makes a note.*)

MIDD. That is—er—quite satisfactory. Very satisfactory indeed. My guests will be greatly pleased by this. (*A knock upon the door.*) Er—who it is, please? Is that Mr. Bradbury? (*Without answering, STEELE enters from the living-room.*) Ah, yes, indeed, Inspector. Er—come right in:

STEELE. Thank you. It seems advisable for me to examine this place a little, Mr. Middlebrook.

MIDD. Certainly. James, you may—er—you may inform Monsieur LeClair and Professor Westerberg that the dye compound is finished.

KRAFT. Very well, sor.

[*Exit to living-room.*]

MIDD. Is there — er — anything in particular, Mr. Steele?

STEELE. I'd like a general idea of the place, that's all. (*He glances around slowly.*) What is that door there, Mr. Middlebrook? (*Points to door at c.*)

MIDD. That is my material closet. I keep all the — er — chemicals there. And this other door (*indicating the one at L.*) leads to my storage closet. All my apparatus is kept there.

STEELE. They are both locked?

MIDD. The — er — the chemical closet is always locked by a combination lock. This other closet here is closed merely by an ordinary spring-lock, which always requires a key to open it.

STEELE. I see. There is no real need for a safety lock in that case. The living-room door, then, is the only possible means of exit from this laboratory. The place has no windows, I observe. I suppose those two sky-lights (*pointing overhead*) furnish plenty of light in the daytime. (*He points to the canvas-covered object in the corner.*) That, I suppose, is the gun which fires your shell.

MIDD. Er — yes, Mr. Steele. You are correct. I keep it always covered, you see.

STEELE. Very wise, Mr. Middlebrook. That is a marvelous invention, sir — by all odds the greatest that I have ever seen. Let the success of your shell be once proven, and we shall have little fear for our safety on the sea. But what is this on the table here, Mr. Middlebrook? (*He has approached the table at R.*)

MIDD. Oh, yes, indeed. A rather complicated apparatus, Mr. Steele. A dye preparation arrangement.

STEELE. Oh, yes, Mr. Middlebrook, so I observe. But I meant this small bottle of red liquid here.

(*He picks up a little bottle from the edge of the table.*)

MIDD. Why — er — why, I certainly don't understand that at all. What can it be? And it is uncorked. I certainly told James not to leave any more substances lying uncovered here. (*STEELE smells the liquid, and examines it carefully.*) Er — could it be acid, with litmus?

STEELE. Possibly. It looks to me more like red ink. It has the smell of ink, also. There's the stopper, on the floor. (*He stoops and recovers it.*)

MIDD. I cannot possibly imagine where this could have come from.

(STEELE *very thoughtfully replaces the bottle upon the table. He then points to the large black alarm-box on the wall.*)

STEELE. I'd like to make sure that that alarm is reliable, Mr. Middlebrook. I believe I'd better take a look at it. (*He takes a chair and stands on it.*)

MIDD. Oh—er—certainly.

STEELE. I see that the box is padlocked. There are several sets of wires here. You say that Detective Bradbury arranged this?

MIDD. Er—yes—Mr. Bradbury. He installed it himself, I understand.

STEELE (*nodding*). I see. Well, I'll have to get him to explain it to me. There appear to be three sets of wires.

MIDD. The alarm is silenced now, of course, by the combination. (*He goes toward the small red box.*) I—er—I'll disarrange the combination, if you wish.

STEELE (*quickly*). No, no! (*He steps down from the chair.*) Not now, Mr. Middlebrook. There is really no need to bother about it until later.

(*A knock upon the living-room door. HERMAN enters.*)

HERMAN (*to MIDDLEBROOK*). Detective Bradbury 'as returned, sir. 'E wishes to speak to you in the living-room.

MIDD. Oh—er—very well, William. Please excuse me, Mr. Steele. I shall return directly.

(*Exit MIDDLEBROOK. HERMAN starts to follow.*)

STEELE. A word with you now, Mr. Herman. (*HERMAN wheels around, instinctively motioning for silence.*)

Oh, you needn't worry. I'm not going to give you away—yet. Now listen. You've probably wondered why I haven't arrested you during the afternoon. I'll tell you. I want this thing to be attempted at ten o'clock to-night. Go right ahead with your scheme, my friend, and blow up this place—if you can! I know your hand——

HERMAN. You *think* you do, Inspector Steele!

STEELE. I *know* I do. You're not arrested yet because I'm not working to get you alone. I'm after bigger game than you to-night, my man! And I'm after bigger game than the worthy Hans Kraft, alias James McGrady!

HERMAN (*startling*). Ach! You mean Tom Cluff?

STEELE. Oh, I've heard enough of that! I know as well as you that the name "Tom Cluff" is only a blind. I'll land that man to-night! You expect him here soon. I know that. When he comes, if you make the slightest attempt to warn him of my knowledge—(*he draws an automatic pistol from his pocket, and replaces it*) I'll give you a taste of your own game, Mr. Herman!

HERMAN. You'll never get Cluff!

STEELE. Oh, very well. But I'll get the man with a capital "R" that is made like an "H" and an "F," and two "d's" that are surely not mates! Verstehen sie das, Herr Herman? Very well. Good-evening, sir!

(HERMAN stands silent for an instant, as if contemplating an attack upon the Inspector. He leaves slowly. STEELE again seizes the chair, and hurries to the black box on the wall. Suddenly he springs down quickly, and turns away. Enter KRAFT, followed by LECLAIR and WESTERBERG.)

KRAFT. Oh, sure, an' I'm sorry, gentlemen. Misther Middlebrook has left the laboratorry.

LECLAIR. Eet eez unfortunate. Mais voilà Monsieur zee Inspector!

STEELE. Good-evening, Monsieur LeClair, and Professor Westerberg. I understand that Mr. Middlebrook has just finished the preparation of your compound.

WEST. Yes, yes. It vas this assistant vich had tolt us dat. But vere to find the gentleman?

STEELE. He will return very shortly, I believe. At present he is busy with the detective.

(KRAFT busies himself at the table at L.)

LECLAIR. Ah, oui, zee detectif! Eet eez ever zee detectif, with Monsieur Middlebrook! Cet homme a peur toujours! Ah, pardon, Monsieur. Again I forget that you do not comprehend zee French.

WEST. Of course the Inspector unterstant the French, minè friend. For vat you tink he spent such great time in Paris, unless he unterstant?

LECLAIR. Then eez eet so, Monsieur Steele? You comprehend? (STEELE nods.) Bien, Monsieur! Perhaps Monsieur zee Professor also comprehends, n'est-ce pas?

WEST. Of course I unterstant! Dat is van insult venn you say I cannot unterstant! I cannot only unterstant, but I can speak the French.

LECLAIR. Ah, Monsieur zee Professor, but I have heard Germans in great numbers who have said that. Eet eez too often but a boast. They come to Paris, et voilà! They are helpless.

WEST. I vill soon show you if is it a boast, Herr LeClair! Ant if you tink to make joke of me, I vill show you better!

STEELE (*greatly amused by the argument*). Suppose you test him, Monsieur LeClair.

LECLAIR. Ah, bon, Monsieur Steele! Eet eez well spoken. Let us imàgine that you are in Paris, Monsieur zee Professor. You have entered into a store.

WEST. Vell, vell? Vat next?

LECLAIR. And you have need of—ah, well, let us imàgine that you have need of a pound of tea. Perhaps you can demand that in French, Monsieur.

WEST. Dat is most simple, I can tell you. I vould say—er—I vould say—vell, I vould say, “Je—je——” Ach, yes! “Je veux un livre de thé.”

LECLAIR (*laughing convulsively*). Ha! ha! ha! Ah, but you do not comprehend what you have said! Have you remarked that sentence, Monsieur Steele? Eet eez idiotic!

WEST. Dat is correct, now I vill tell you!

LECLAIR. Ha! ha! Monsieur has wished to say, "Je veux une livre de thé," and he has said, "Je veux *un* livre de thé." You comprehend the meaning of that, n'est-ce pas, Monsieur Steele! C'est ridicule! Ha! ha! He say, "I wish a *book* of tea." A *book* of tea! Ha! ha! C'est idiot!

WEST. Vell, vell, vat is the difference? It is correct vat I have said, I tink.

LECLAIR. What difference, you say? A book of tea! Ha! ha! I fear Monsieur would have a book zee most crumbly, n'est-ce pas? I permit you to judge this argumentation for us, Monsieur Steele. Have you ever heard spoken of such a book as that?

STEELE (*laughing*). I guess Professor Westerberg wins, this time.

LECLAIR. Non! Non! He cannot be correct! A book of tea! Whoever——

STEELE. That's just the point, you see. He might have a pretty fair book, even at that. It would be crumbly, as you say, but wouldn't it have—leaves—in it?

LECLAIR. Mon Dieu! Tea-leaves, n'est-ce pas? Eet eez one joke zee most remarkable!

WEST. You are mine frient, Herr Steele!

LECLAIR. But no doubt we discommode you, Monsieur Steele, with this joking which is so idle. Were you not standing upon zee chair before we have entered? (*STEELE is startled. KRAFT glances up sharply from his work.*) Eez eet not correct, Monsieur? Did I not hera you stepping down as we approached zee door?

STEELE (*quietly*). I observe, Monsieur LeClair, that you have most excellent ears, as well as eyes.

LECLAIR. Ha! ha! Then I was not deceived? You were upon zee chair?

STEELE. Quite right, Monsieur LeClair. I was.

LECLAIR. Ha! ha! Voilà! Eet eez once more that you have said him! You said, "Quite right," n'est-ce pas? Eef you should try one thousand years, Monsieur, you could never prevent to use this expression. Eet eez impossible for you!

STEELE. Oh, no, not at all. Far from it. If I really

wished, I could stop at any minute, for any length of time. Suppose I should ever go to Germany, Monsieur LeClair—to spy. Do you believe I'd ever use those expressions on such a mission as that? That's my strongest asset in secret service work—the fact that I can lose my personality entirely when in disguise.

LECLAIR (*shaking his head*). You merely think that you could stop using them. If you should start trying now, you would still use them a thousand times within a week.

STEELE. Oh, no.

LECLAIR. But I will make one little bet with you. You could not go—you could not go even the rest of this evening without using them!

STEELE (*after considering the matter a moment*). Just how many of your dollars say that, Monsieur LeClair?

LECLAIR. Bien! Bien! I have twenty dollars which say you cannot!

STEELE (*quickly*). Oh, very well! I have twenty more that say I can. I'll give you a little demonstration, Monsieur LeClair!

LECLAIR. Then eet eez a bet, n'est-ce pas? Twenty dollars that you will say either "Quite right" or "With great success" before midnight!

STEELE (*shaking hands*). It is a bet, Monsieur!

LECLAIR. And I shall be zee winner!

Enter MIDDLEBROOK and BRADBURY.

MIDD. Ah, yes, indeed, gentlemen. The—er—the compound is complete!

(Exclamations of approval from LECLAIR and WESTERBERG.)

WEST. I am very sorry to say vat I haf to say, Herr Middlebrook, but ve must attent to this matter at vonce. I haf only ten minutes hence received a telegram (*exhibiting a yellow envelope from his right coat pocket, and replacing it*) vich is of greatest importance. I must leafe at least by eight o'clock, Herr Middlebrook.

MIDD. Oh—er—this is unfortunate, Professor. Most

unfortunate. I—er—I shall attend to this immediately. (*He steps to the table at L., where KRAFT is still working. LECLAIR and WESTERBERG are close by his side, while BRADBURY and STEELE are just behind.*) There, gentlemen. This is the result obtained from my new compound. (*They bend eagerly over the table.*)

LECLAIR. Ah, that eez marvelous, Monsieur!

WEST. Upon mine honor, dat is right!

LECLAIR. And behold zee color, which eez zee most remarkable!

MIDD. And now, gentlemen, let us try the effect of a weak acid upon this. (*He bends over the table with a bottle in his hand. LECLAIR and WESTERBERG lean over eagerly to watch. BRADBURY pushes forward to observe the result. STEELE, with a quick dexterity, suddenly reaches forward and withdraws the yellow telegram from WESTERBERG's pocket. Swiftly and silently he scans the message inside, while the Professor is absorbed in the experiment. Then with a deft motion he again leans forward and replaces it in the pocket. He nods slowly to himself.*) There, gentlemen! Behold a perfect dyeing compound!

(*LECLAIR and WESTERBERG are wild with delight.*)

LECLAIR. I shall report this to my company to-morrow, Monsieur. And they shall buy!

WEST. Ach, nein! It is not *your* company vich vill buy! I, too, shall make report to-morrow. Ant ve shall see. But I must leafe, Herr Middlebrook. I am very sorry, but I remember my telegram, vich is most urgent. (*He hastens to the door.*) So I vill bit goot-efening to all you gentlemen.

(*MIDDLEBROOK hastens to show him out. He is followed by LECLAIR. The three men leave the room together. STEELE starts to follow, but turns quickly to BRADBURY.*)

STEELE. I would like to question you, Bradbury, in regard to one matter. I'd like a little aid in——

BRAD. Oh, indeed? You'd like to question me?

Doesn't it seem a bit strange for Inspector Steele of the National Secret Service to be asking aid from a private detective? It seems a bit out of place, doesn't it?

STEELE. It seems a bit more out of place for you to make any such reply as that to my request, Bradbury! I'll warn you once, and once only, that I'm here at this house in behalf of the Government's interests. And I'll take just about one more such answer from you!

BRAD. Really? How fortunate that you are willing to take *one* more! Well—what do you wish?

STEELE. I want an explanation of the working of that alarm-box on the wall, if you please. It's padlocked, and I can't open it.

BRAD. I see. Very well. It contains mechanism for controlling the alarms.

STEELE. That is quite evident. But there are three sets of wires there. Please explain them.

BRAD. Oh, very well, if you understand electricity. There are three separate circuits, arranged separately inside the box. The middle one controls the bell inside the box. The one on the left controls the bell in Mr. Middlebrook's room up-stairs. The right-hand one controls the big alarm-bell on the veranda. Can you understand that now, or do you wish me to repeat it?

STEELE. I can. (*He takes a pad of paper and a pencil from his pocket.*) I believe I'll make sure of that right now. (*He begins to write upon the paper.*) A very rough diagram will be all that is necessary. There. Left one controls the bell in the box. Middle one controls the bell in the room up-stairs. Right one —

BRAD. Wait a minute. That's not right.

STEELE. Not right? Wasn't that what you said?

BRAD. And you think I said that? (*He laughs.*) You're a wonder, all right, Inspector Steele!

STEELE. Come, come! That's what you said, and I'll guarantee it!

BRAD. And I'll guarantee that it isn't! I said that the middle one — Oh, what's the use of trying to get it through your head, anyway? Give me the paper, and I'll straighten it out for you. (*Condescendingly he takes the paper, scratches out STEELE'S work, and writes for a*

moment.) There you are—Inspector Steele. Middle one controls the box bell. Left controls Middlebrook's room bell. Right controls veranda gong. That's what I said in the first place!

STEELE (*taking the paper*). I'm much obliged for your trouble. That's all I'll need, for the present.

(*He studies the paper keenly, and places it carefully in his pocket.*)

BRAD. (*turning to KRAFT*). Inspection now, if you please.

KRAFT (*rising*). Yes, sor.

(*A knock upon the door. BRADBURY starts to open it, but STEELE intercepts him.*)

STEELE. Who is there, please?

ELEA. (*from outside*). Oh, it's the Inspector, Margaret. Never mind, then. We were only looking for Mr. Bradbury.

BRAD. I'm in here, now, for inspection. You may both come in, if you like.

STEELE (*quickly*). Do you consider that wise, Bradbury?

BRAD. Of course. What harm? (*Raising his voice.*) Come ahead.

Enter ELEANOR, followed by MARGARET. The latter is still carrying her blue knitting-bag.

ELEA. So you're here again, Mr. Bradbury. Good-evening, Inspector. You—you are still on the lookout for some "danger," I suppose.

STEELE. Quite r—or rather, very true, Miss Middlebrook. I hope that your injury has not been very serious.

BRAD. Yes, indeed. How is your hand now?

ELEA. (*raising her bandaged right hand*). Oh, it's really much better now, thank you. Father attended to it very carefully. But you nearly lost twenty dollars a minute ago, didn't you, Inspector?

STEELE. Oh, then my friend LeClair has been spreading the news of our bet already. Yes, I almost lost. But "almosts" don't count, Miss Middlebrook.

ELEA. I suppose not. But I have a message to deliver to Mr. Bradbury. The chief plain-clothesman is on the veranda, and has a report to make.

BRAD. Thank you. I'll come at once.

ELEA. Come, Margaret. You aren't at all like yourself to-night. I don't believe you've spoken a word for half an hour. You must come with us.

MARG. I'd like very much to come, if I could. But I really—I really must see Mr. Middlebrook for just a minute. (*She turns to KRAFT.*) Could you find him for me, James?

KRAFT. I'll try, ma'am. I don't know where he is, but I'll look him up.

MARG. Thank you. Don't wait for me, Eleanor, please. I'll be right out. (*Exit ELEANOR, with BRADBURY, who has forgotten the inspection. KRAFT follows them. STEELE also starts toward the door.*) I beg your pardon, but may I speak to you for just a moment?

STEELE (*exhibiting surprise*). To me, Miss Linden?

MARG. Yes, please. I—I don't want to see Mr. Middlebrook at all. I know he's out on the lawn, where it will take James a half hour to find him. I—I wanted a chance to speak to you.

STEELE. Why—how strange.

MARG. (*going on with a great effort*). Yes, it does seem very strange, Mr. Steele. But I—I wanted to apologize for my words to you this afternoon. I was too hasty, and I did not mean one of them. I wondered if you could possibly forget them.

(*She is plainly forcing herself to make this hurried apology.*)

STEELE (*coldly*). Certainly, Miss Linden. In fact, they were words which I should be very glad to forget.

MARG. I realize now how unreasonable I was. I had hoped that we might forget our unpleasantness, Mr. Steele, and be friends.

(*STEELE is puzzled. He glances at her quickly.*)

STEELE. Why, certainly, if you like. (*He shrugs his*

shoulders slightly.) Friends we are, then, if it pleases you, Miss Linden.

MARG. I see that you haven't yet forgotten my remarks to-day. I really shouldn't have asked you to.

STEELE. Why, of course I've forgotten them. I'll never mention them again. I'll probably never even think of them. Er—was that all, Miss Linden?

MARG. (*quickly*). Yes, thank you. I'll not keep you any longer. (*She turns toward the door, but hesitates. She glances back at STEELE, who is now studying the apparatus on the table at L. Suddenly she turns and comes quickly back.*) Oh, Mr. Steele, I want to ask you just one question, if I may. I must ask you.

STEELE (*in mild surprise*). Very well.

MARG. It's a strange question, but I—I hope you'll answer it—and think about it. It's in regard to—to—death.

STEELE (*in astonishment*). I certainly don't— This is surprising, Miss Linden.

MARG. I realize that. But please answer me. You've been in Germany many times, Mr. Steele. You've faced death again and again as a probability. But have you ever thought of it as a—as a reality, and as being at hand?

(STEELE gives her a long, searching glance.)

STEELE. Yes. I don't see why you ask such a question, but I'm very glad to answer. There have been three such moments in my life. In all three cases I've had the luck on my side—and here I am. That's all.

MARG. But if you had not had luck? What then?

STEELE. Five years ago, it might have made some difference. But now it wouldn't matter. You see, I've been learning how little a life is really worth in the world.

MARG. But surely you can't mean that you don't—don't care about living.

STEELE. Precisely. I realize that I'll probably be needed in America for a few years yet. For that reason, I'll be careful.

MARG. And as long as the nation is safe, you won't care about —

STEELE. I'll not care about anything, Miss Linden. There's nothing in the world for me except America. There never can be.

MARG. I'm sorry you feel so about things.

STEELE (*quickly*). But why do you ask me such questions, please?

MARG. Oh, I haven't any reason. That is—I feel that I must. I'll not ask any more.

STEELE. But there is something back of this. I ——

Enter KRAFT.

KRAFT. Misther Middlebrook is not in his room, Miss Linden, an' I'm blest if I know where he could have gone, miss.

MARG. Oh, never mind, then. You don't happen to know where he is, Mr. Steele? I thought perhaps ——

(*She chokes suddenly, realizing the mistake that she has made.*)

STEELE. I heard that he was on the lawn, Miss Linden. (*He hesitates, and glances at each.*) I'd be glad to call him into the living-room for you.

(*He turns and walks out slowly.*)

KRAFT. Ach, you are clever, Miss Linden. It was the work of an artist—the way you made a chance to talk with him, and then got rid of him.

MARG. Not so clever as you think, I'm afraid. I've made a mistake—a bad one. I'm not used to playing such a double game as this. It was I who told him that Mr. Middlebrook was on the lawn. And just now I went and asked him if he knew where he was!

KRAFT. Ah, that is bad. But he could never notice a tiny slip like that.

MARG. Oh, but I know that he *has* noticed it! Didn't you see the way he looked at us?

KRAFT. But he didn't say anything. If he noticed it, he must have had you dead to rights, and still kept silent. How can you account for that?

MARG. Oh, I don't know!

KRAFT. Ach! It is impossible; don't spend time worrying about that. Is he satisfied with your apology? Did you make it right with him?

MARG. I—I apologized, as you ordered. But I—I believe he understood that I didn't mean it at heart.

KRAFT. I warned you to guard against that, Miss Linden! If he becomes suspicious of you and causes trouble for us to-night, it will be your fault, and yours shall be the consequences! Let that be plain.

MARG. I understand, Mr. Kraft.

KRAFT. You have the flask of cyanogen there?

MARG. (*exhibiting the knitting-bag*). In the bag, as you ordered.

KRAFT. Gut! See that you keep it there. Now, these are your instructions for to-night. Listen. As soon as we can get this laboratory clear now, Tom Cluff himself is coming into the house, to make final preparations. You know what position he holds in our system, and you realize that he must work in safety. I'm afraid of Steele to-night! You must be close at hand in the living-room, with the cyanogen, every minute. If Cluff should be trapped here in the laboratory by Steele —

MARG. Oh, I *can't* do it! I *won't* do it!

KRAFT. Oh, yes you will, Miss Linden! Not another word of that! You keep the flask in that bag. When I give the signal to you, you are to hand that flask to me, without *one second* of delay!

MARG. (*clenching her hands*). Very well, Mr. Kraft. The signal, if you please!

KRAFT. Gut! It is a German countersign—"Werk' ohne fehler." You can't forget it. "Werk' ohne fehler."

MARG. I understand.

KRAFT. Then be on hand while Cluff is here. When you hear those words from me, hand me that flask! And we'll send Inspector Steele — Sh!

Enter ELEANOR and BRADBURY.

ELEA. Margaret, we've been waiting for you over fifteen minutes. Are you ever coming?

MARG. (*quickly*). Oh, yes. I'll come right away. I'm sorry to have made you wait.

(ELEANOR, MARGARET, and BRADBURY go out, leaving KRAFT alone. He glances quickly at his watch. There is a step at the door. Enter STEELE.)

STEELE. I wonder if you would do a little favor for me—er—James. Please step outside and tell Miss Middlebrook that I would like to speak to her here, for just one moment.

KRAFT (after hesitating). Yes, sor. [Exit.

(STEELE stands quietly gazing around the room for an instant. Again he springs upon the chair and examines the black alarm-box. He draws a knife from his pocket and works upon the wires for a moment, as though he intended to disarrange the alarm. He drops down suddenly, with one hand raised to his head as if in deep thought, and stands for a moment with the other hand grasping the back of the chair. He draws BRADBURY'S diagram from his pocket and studies it an instant. Enter ELEANOR. She has a very puzzled air.)

ELEA. Mr. Steele, did I—er—did I understand James to say that you wished to speak to me?

STEELE. Quite—correct, Miss Middlebrook. I did wish to talk to you, upon a very serious subject.

ELEA. Why—why, I'm sure I don't understand!

STEELE. I'll try to explain. I'm very much worried, Miss Middlebrook, about what may happen to-night.

ELEA. Oh, you still believe there is ——

STEELE. There is danger—great danger. It may seem impossible to you, but it is true. I—I may be in great need of help, a little later. Your father will not be persuaded that this matter is serious. Detective Bradbury is not my friend; I can't depend on him. I—I wish you'd promise to do what you can for me, Miss Middlebrook.

ELEA. I!

STEELE. Yes. I don't know who else there is that I could ask. I'd like to—I'd like to trust you if I could. I'd like to feel that you were willing to help me out.

ELEA. (with her eyes wide with wonder). Oh, Mr. Steele, this is—it's very unexpected. I'm very greatly honored that you should have confidence in me.

STEELE. Then can I trust you?

ELEA. Oh, of course you can! I'd do anything I could for you!

STEELE. I thank you—Miss Middlebrook. You'll promise to help me if you can, won't you? Won't you, please?

(He takes her right hand in his, and presses it firmly. She glances up quickly, her eyes filled with wonder.)

ELEA. Why—— Oh, Mr. Steele, you know there's nothing I'd rather do than—— *(She starts suddenly.)* Oh, my hand! It's burned, and you're hurting it terribly!

STEELE *(releasing her hand quickly)*. Oh, I'm sorry! I beg your pardon. I didn't realize which hand I had taken. I thank you for your willingness to help me.

ELEA. Oh, you know I'd be glad to do it!

STEELE. I'm very much obliged. But I'll not keep you any longer now, if your friends are waiting.

ELEA. Oh, all right. We'll see you later, then. *[Exit.]*

(STEELE stands silent for an instant, gazing at the door through which she has left. At length he nods quietly to himself, a trifle sadly, and slowly walks to the door.)

STEELE. James.

KRAFT *(appearing)*. Yes, sor.

STEELE. I intend to leave the laboratory now, until nine o'clock. You may lock the door. *[Exit.]*

KRAFT. Yes, sor.

(He turns off the light, and leaves, closing the door. The room remains in darkness for a short period. Then a key is quietly inserted in the lock. There is a sound of the door opening. The lights flash on, revealing KRAFT, who is silently beckoning to some one outside. Enter TOM CLOFF. KRAFT closes and locks the door. CLOFF is a man of medium height. He is clad in a long, dark overcoat which extends to his ankles. He wears a dark cap. His face is masked by a carefully arranged black cloth, which completely conceals his features. His voice is in-

tionally low-pitched and unnatural as he converses with KRAFT.)

CLOFF. The explosive all right?

KRAFT. All right, sir.

CLOFF. The cyanogen?

KRAFT. It is ready.

CLOFF. And Steele?

KRAFT. On the veranda.

CLOFF. Keep him there, five minutes. Keep watch outside this door. At any sound, rap four times.

KRAFT. Yes, sir. And the cyanogen is ready for Steele if he comes! (CLOFF checks him.)

CLOFF. Not until needed absolutely. You know my own signal; you remember the words. Not until I give it.

KRAFT. Right, sir. (He steps outside, quietly closing the door. CLOFF hastily starts to remove his coat, but suddenly changes his mind. He turns toward the apparatus closet at L. His own key unlocks the door. He opens it, and hurries back to the other side of the room. He climbs upon the chair and tries to fit a similar key into the lock on the alarm-box. Four quiet knocks upon the door. Instantly CLOFF springs down, snaps off the light, and stands listening. KRAFT, from outside.) But I tell you, I haven't the key here.

DELIA (also from outside). Ah, faith, phwat do I care for you an' yer key! I tell you, Misther Steele wants his book. I've got the key here that Misther Middlebrook gave him, an' I'm goin' to get his book for him! (CLOFF, using a flash-light, creeps back into a corner. DELIA'S key rattles in the lock. The door opens, admitting a faint light.) Faith, man, an' phwat was all yer fuss about? The door weren't no more locked than nothin'. (She advances toward the table at L.) Sure, an' he left it on the table, he said. It's not here.

KRAFT. He never left no book here, Delia. Phwat ails th' man? Here, you don't need the light. Anybody can see there's no such thing here.

DELIA. I've a mind to have a better look fer 't, anyway.

KRAFT. Here, here! Wait! Don't put the light on!

DELIA. Don't be orderin' me 'roun' here, Jim Mc-Grady! (*She seizes the switch. The light snaps on. CLOFF is revealed crouching in the corner. DELIA throws up her hands and gives a blood-curdling shriek.*) Saint Pathrick preserve me! There's a man in the laboratory! Help! Help! (*She races toward the door.*) Help! Help! Murder! Mither Middlebrook! [*Exit.*]

(*The house is in an uproar at once. CLOFF springs from the corner. His voice rings out sharply.*)

CLOFF (*to KRAFT*). Get outside that door, and keep them back one minute! On your life!

(*KRAFT leaps forward to obey. The door bangs behind him. CLOFF races forward and turns a key in the lock. He glances once around the room, and hastens to the open storage closet. Suddenly he stops, and listens intently. A great commotion outside the locked door. Excited voices can be heard in loud tones.*)

DELIA. I swear by Saint Pathrick, Mither Middlebrook, he's in there now!

KRAFT. I can't open the door, sor! He's locked it on the inside! Wait! Wait! My key's up-stairs!

MRS. M. We can't wait, Warren! He may be setting a bomb now.

MIDD. Er—open the door! We *must* open it!

(*The knob is rattled vainly.*)

ELEA. We *can't* open it, Father! Don't go in, with that terrible man in there! Oh, here's the Inspector!

(*CLOFF gives an exclamation of rage, and turns toward the storage closet. He hesitates. The door is struck a violent blow.*)

STEELE. Come now, my man, who's in there?

KRAFT. Faith, an' I'm sure I don't know, sor! I ——

STEELE. Enough of that bluff! I'll give you two seconds to open the door, or I'll smash it in with this hatchet!

(CLOFF stares around the room in desperation. He starts toward the covered gun, but turns back.)

KRAFT. I can't open it without the key!

STEELE. Then stand back! No! No! Right there! In front of me!

(CLOFF dashes across the room to the switch on the wall. The light again snaps out. His footsteps are heard as he races back. There is a heavy crash upon the door, and a sound of splintering timber. This is followed by another. The shattered door swings back, admitting a very dim light.)

ELEA. (in fear). Oh, Mr. Steele, keep out! He has a gun; he'll shoot you!

STEELE. Who has a gun? He'll shoot me, will he, and give away his game at eight o'clock? Into this room with me, Mr. Middlebrook! We'll trap that man! (The crowd pushes into the room in the darkness. Excited voices are heard as they search.) Stand guard by the door, Mr. Middlebrook! Don't let him pass, and keep both your servants out! I'll find him!

(He races forward toward the table at L. Some one else, following, trips over a chair.)

ELEA. It's I, Inspector! I'll help you!

STEELE. No! No, Miss Middlebrook! Keep back! Go back this instant, and keep watch in the living-room!

ELEA. All right! I will! I'll go! (She gropes her way to the door.) Father, let me out! Oh, quick! [Exit.

(The door of the storage closet slams suddenly.)

MIDD. He's gone into the closet!

STEELE. Look out! Don't move from that door! The lights! The lights, this instant!

MRS. M. Here! Here!

(The light snaps on. MIDDLEBROOK is standing in front of the doorway. MRS. MIDDLEBROOK and MARGARET are at his side. Behind them are DELIA, KRAFT, and HERMAN. STEELE and BRADBURY are vainly search-

ing in the center of the room. CLOFF has completely disappeared. The closet door is closed.)

DELIA. He's gone! Disappeared, sir!

(LECLAIR suddenly races into the room.)

LECLAIR. Mon Dieu! Eet eez exciting! Eet eez exciting!

Enter ELEANOR, with a terrified expression.

BRAD. Stand back, now, every one. We'll find that man!

MIDD. Ah, yes, Bradbury; you're just in time. Er—do find him!

(BRADBURY races forward and peers under the covered gun. STEELE follows.)

STEELE. Not there!

MIDD. The closet, gentlemen! The closet!

(BRADBURY springs to unlock the closet door, with STEELE at his side. They peer inside.)

BRAD. Good Heavens! The place is empty!

STEELE. Empty is right, sir!

BRAD. He's gone, Mr. Middlebrook! Gone! Faded away, right from before our eyes! *(MIDDLEBROOK hastens to the little chemical closet, sets the combination on the lock, and opens the door. BRADBURY follows.)* Empty there, too! You've let him get past you at the door!

MIDD. No, no! I'll swear to that!

BRAD. There's nowhere else he *could* have gone, Mr. Middlebrook! He gave you the slip!

MIDD. I'll stake my reputation, Mr. Bradbury! Nobody except my daughter has passed through this door!

BRAD. You must be wrong!

MIDD. Oh, this is—supernatural!

BRAD. Bah! You've let him escape! It's useless to deny that!

MIDD. No, no, no!

BRAD. All right. Then tell us where he went!

(MIDDLEBROOK *shakes his head in despair.*)

STEELE. I'll tell you where he went, Mr. Middlebrook!

BRAD. (*startled*). What's that you say?

STEELE. I know how he escaped, and where he is now! (*He wheels toward the doorway.*) I'll show you "Tom Cloff" within one minute, Mr. Middlebrook!

MIDD. Er—my soul and body! Er—where did he go?

STEELE. I'll soon show you where he went!

(KRAFT and HERMAN *are edging forward.*)

BRAD. Then America is not yet beaten!

KRAFT. To business, Otto! The gun in the table drawer!

MIDD. Er—James! William! Are you crazy?

(*Like a flash HERMAN leaps toward the table at R.*

KRAFT *springs to get behind STEELE. But STEELE is far too quick for them. His hands shoot up from his pockets; two automatic pistols are covering the startled Germans. He backs quickly away from the two, toward L.*)

STEELE. Put up your hands, Herman! Stand away from here, Kraft! Stay where you are! Up with both hands, I told you, Herman! If either of you goes one step nearer that table, I'll load you both with six bullets each!

MIDD. What does this mean?

STEELE. These men are spies, Mr. Middlebrook! They want my life to-night, and yours! Kindly close that door behind you, and — Stand where you are, Herman!

(HERMAN *has made a sudden dash toward the table.*

STEELE *turns and forces him back. In this brief interval, KRAFT whirls about and faces MARGARET. He seizes her arm, and draws her between STEELE'S gun and himself.*)

KRAFT. "Werk' ohne fehler!" Come now, young woman, do your part!

MARG. I'll never do it!

STEELE. Stand away from there, Kraft, or I'll ——

KRAFT. Shoot, if you want to take a chance! (*He screens himself behind MARGARET.*) I'll give you one second to hand me that flask, Miss Linden! Take your choice this instant! Hand me the flask!

(*STEELE hesitates, trying to watch both HERMAN and KRAFT.*)

MARG. Oh—take it, then!

(*She tears open her bag, hands the dark green flask to KRAFT, and stands silent, in great agitation.*)

KRAFT (*raising the flask above his head with a cry of triumph*). Ach Himmel! Shoot now when you like, Inspector Steele! I've got a flask full of cyanogen here, my friend——

STEELE (*starting violently*). Cyanogen! My ——

KRAFT (*laughing in joy*). Ach, yes! Pure cyanogen gas, Mr. Steele. One breath of this, and our nation's debt to you is paid! (*He advances from the group.*) Shoot me! It will be your last act on earth!

(*All present are stunned with horror. STEELE is still holding his two weapons leveled.*)

STEELE (*awakening*). Go back, Mr. Middlebrook! For Heaven's sake go back! He has cyanogen there! One whiff will kill every man in the room!

MIDD. Oh, this is horrible! Lucy!

STEELE. Get out of the room, Mr. Middlebrook! For your life! Take Mrs. Middlebrook!

KRAFT (*holding the terrible flask poised*). I'll let them out! I want not them, but you!

STEELE. Get back, then, Middlebrook, while you can! Miss Linden, you traitoress, get away before he throws that flask! Back! Back!

(*There is a wild scramble as MIDDLEBROOK, MRS. MIDDLEBROOK, ELEANOR, LECLAIR, HERMAN, and BRADBURY retreat toward the door. MARGARET*

draws back a step or two. STEELE stands alone, silently facing KRAFT, with his automatic still leveled at the German's breast.)

KRAFT. Ach, now you'll pay! Shoot me! Kill me now, if you like! Ach, Gott ist gut—to let me die in killing you! You'll pay the Fatherland for the work you've done! *(He takes a step forward in triumph.)* Inspector Steele—Auf Wiedersehen! *(There is a cry of horror from MIDDLEBROOK. KRAFT hurls the deadly flask to the floor at STEELE'S feet, and leaps back. There is a crash of smashing glass, and a scream from ELEANOR. The green flask is shattered into fragments at the Inspector's feet. But STEELE, silently awaiting the end, still stands with his gun directed toward the dumfounded KRAFT.)* Gott im Himmel! It has failed! Cyanogen itself will not kill Inspector Steele!

HERMAN *(starting forward)*. It is impossible!

KRAFT *(in terror)*. And he still stands there, staring me in the face! It is ——— *(He gives a violent start, and stares at the floor.)* Mein Gott im Himmel! What is that?

HERMAN *(springing to his side)*. What is it? *(KRAFT staggers forward, and snatches up a small red object from the ruins of the flask.)* It rolled out of the flask! What can it ———

KRAFT. Mein Gott! It is a ball of yarn!

(STEELE himself gives a start, but keeps his guns in position.)

MIDD. *(dashing forward)*. But the cyanogen, you traitors! Where is it?

MRS. M. *(from the doorway)*. Margaret! What are you doing?

(MARGARET is slowly advancing toward the table where STEELE is standing. At arm's length she holds the second of the two green flasks which she has previously exhibited. With great care she sets the flask upon the table, well out of KRAFT'S reach. Then she turns coldly to STEELE.)

MARG. *There is the cyanogen, Mr. Steele! Kindly take charge of it!*

(There is a startled exclamation of terror from all, and a cry of rage from KRAFT. But STEELE, silent and unmoved, still pointing his weapons at the baffled spies, merely stares in horror at the deadly object upon the table.)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*The same as ACT III. 10 P. M. The room is in darkness, and all is silent. Suddenly the living-room door is softly opened, and then closed. The man who has entered flashes a light around the room from a flash-light. The door to the storage closet is seen to be partly open. The man extinguishes his light and tiptoes softly across the room. He closes the closet door with a bang. The spring lock snaps into place. Again using his flash-light, the man recrosses the room. There is the sound of his quiet laughter. He turns on the light from the switch. The man in the room is STEELE. He steps quickly to the living-room door, and gives a long, loud rapping. Enter MRS. MIDDLEBROOK, in haste.*

MRS. M. Mr. Steele—that knocking! You can't mean that you have—caught this man “Tom Cloff”!

STEELE. Exactly, Mrs. Middlebrook! I have caught the man who is attempting to blow up this laboratory to-night, and I intend to expose him now, before every one! Within twenty minutes he will be in the police station, with Kraft and Herman!

MRS. M. But the explosion!

STEELE. It cannot possibly occur. The explosive itself has been rendered absolutely useless.

MRS. M. But just one minute, Mr. Steele, before I call them in! It's about—Miss Linden! I can't understand why *she* should ever have been carrying such stuff as that cyanogen! I've tried and tried to question her ever since, but she hasn't spoken one word since the servants were arrested. She acts almost as if she were afraid to speak to me—as if she had done me some great injury.

STEELE (*nodding slowly*). I couldn't understand her myself, until this evening. It's quite clear now. The man Kraft has known something; he has been holding some secret over her.

MRS. M. You can't mean that she has been connected——

STEELE. It's been a terrible secret, Mrs. Middlebrook—one that she would give her life to be able to conceal. Step by step Hans Kraft has forced her to obey his orders. And one by one she has carried them out—to win his silence.

MRS. M. But she tricked him at the very moment of his triumph!

STEELE. Ah, yes, that's just the point. At that moment she found out suddenly that the secret was not worth guarding as she had tried to guard it. You can't understand yet, I know. (*He hesitates.*) But before you call them in, I—I must have one promise from you.

MRS. M. (*in surprise*). Why—what can it be?

STEELE (*very slowly*). Merely this: I am here in the Government's behalf. Whatever may happen to-night—whatever I may be forced to do here—I hope you will remember that I am doing the best thing possible for your interests and America's.

MRS. M. (*in wonder*). Why, of course!

(*The door is opened suddenly. Enter MIDDLEBROOK. He is followed by ELEANOR and MARGARET, with LECLAIR.*)

MIDD. Er—Mr. Steele, what is all this? This knocking on the wall?

STEELE. It means, Mr. Middlebrook, that I am now ready to arrest the man who has been plotting to blow up your home! I have caught "Tom Cluff"!

(*There is a slight start from LECLAIR. DELIA enters suddenly, with a yellow envelope.*)

DELIA. A special dispatch, Mr. Middlebrook—from Washington.

(*MIDDLEBROOK hastily tears open the envelope. He gives a violent start.*)

MIDD. The government agents from England and France have landed in New York at ten minutes before

ten to-night. They have been in America over fifteen minutes, Inspector. Er—behold, my laboratory still stands unharmed!

(STEELE comes forward, with his face set in determination.)

STEELE. And I'll show you *why* it is still unharmed! Kindly glance at that black box on the wall, sir! It is your automatic laboratory alarm, you say. I say it *was* an alarm yesterday, perhaps, before "Tom Cloff" himself had entered here this afternoon. It is now a deadly inferno, Mr. Middlebrook, ready to blow this room to atoms, had I not broken the electrical connection this evening!

MIDD. Er—Mr. Steele!

STEELE. Slowly and surely, that machine has been at work this afternoon, manufacturing the explosive which, as you boasted, could never be smuggled into your home—loading that box, bit by bit, with the frightful chloride of nitrogen! It's diabolical! And every particle of material needed to manufacture this explosive has been within easy reach in this house!

MIDD. This is hideous!

STEELE. I've trapped the man who has done all this! I've sifted out every last bit of evidence against him, and he shall pay the penalty! I'm ready now to arrest that man —

LECLAIR. But where eez that man? And *who* eez he?

STEELE. There can be no doubt as to who it is! It's the man who stole all the salt in the house, to prepare chloride of nitrogen—who cleverly obtained a large quantity of the other substance necessary to prepare this explosive—who found a means of smuggling cyanogen into the house—who baffled us all from start to finish, but failed because he rates the characters of all young women alike! (*There is a low exclamation of anguish from MARGARET, and a gasp from ELEANOR, but STEELE goes on mercilessly.*) It's the one whom I trapped in this laboratory at eight to-night, and who then made the most ingenious escape I've ever seen in twenty years. It's the

man with a capital "R" that is made like an "H" and an "F," and two "d's" that are surely not mates!

MRS. M. Mr. Steele, it can't be ——

STEELE. Mr. Middlebrook, how is chloride of nitrogen prepared? Common salt—and ammonia! I'm ready to arrest "Tom Cloff"! And I'm also ready to arrest his most dangerous assistant, the young woman who ——

(There is a startled exclamation from MARGARET. MIDDLEBROOK wheels upon her, pointing an accusing finger.)

MIDD. There we have it, Lucy! This is the result of entertaining Eleanor's friends in our home!

MARG. Oh, I'm guilty, Mr. Middlebrook! I did it all—every bit of it! I hid the cyanogen in my knitting-bag; I helped steal the salt from the pantry; I ——

DELIA. From *where*? Saint Pathrick ——

MIDD. You are a traitress to America! You are false to me, and to my hospitality! You admit that you concealed the cyanogen, and that you stole the salt, and ——

STEELE. From the pantry, you might add for completeness! You're not surprised to learn that the salt was kept in the pantry? I'm sure Delia was!

DELIA. It was kept in the kitchen cupboard, I'll swear by Saint Pathrick, sir!

MIDD. Er—why—er—what does all this mean?

STEELE. I'll tell you what it means! It will break your heart to know, but silence is out of the question now. It means that Miss Linden is not the guilty assistant to William Von Holtzer! She is making a last attempt to take the guilt upon herself. It is true that she concealed the cyanogen. She maintains that she stole the salt. But kindly tell me if *she* was the one who obtained a gallon jar of ammonia, to bathe a terrible acid burn *made by red ink!*

MRS. M. *(starting)*. Eleanor! Oh, my daughter!

(ELEANOR drops into a chair without answering, and buries her face in her hands. MARGARET hastens to her side.)

MARG. I've done my best!

MRS. M. I can't believe this!

STEELE. I fear that you must. It was your daughter who helped steal the government papers at the Markmans' reception, Mrs. Middlebrook! It was *her* guilty secret which lay in Kraft's hands! For two years I've been silent, for your sake! Miss Linden has known that secret, too. It was Miss Linden's aid which seemed invaluable to Kraft to-day. He threatened to lay bare the secret which I had concealed so long.

MRS. M. (*slowly*). Then—then Margaret——

STEELE. She was true to a lifelong friendship, even at the cost of allying herself with German spies. She has done all this for your daughter's sake. She would have given her life to conceal the truth. But when she discovered to-night that her friend was again a traitoress—that she was now endeavoring to betray her own home—it was too much! She wouldn't let Kraft throw cyanogen to save our nation's enemy!

MRS. M. Do you mean to tell me that Eleanor arranged that contrivance on the wall?

STEELE. Not at all! That was done by the mysterious "Tom Cloff" himself, believed to be the assistant of Von Holtzer. (*STEELE suddenly holds up his hand for silence, and goes on in a lower tone.*) I'll tell you the truth, Mrs. Middlebrook! When I came to this room about ten minutes ago, this man was again here! I trapped him; I shut him over there in the storage closet, and let the spring lock close! (*A start of terror from all.*) For ten minutes he has crouched a prisoner in that closet! Silence, Mr. Middlebrook! Silence! I intend to make that man believe that we have left this laboratory. If we can do that, he will at once come out from that closet, and attempt to set the broken combination on that alarm control—in a last attempt to destroy this laboratory! (*There are stifled exclamations. STEELE quickly crosses to the living-room door, and raises his voice. In a loud tone.*) We'll now call the plain-clothesmen, and take our prisoner to the police station! Mr. Middlebrook, I will ask one of them to guard the outside of this place until I return. That's all; you needn't wait here any longer

now. (*He pauses, and glances around the room. All are silent. He snaps off the light, and leaves the room in darkness. He slams the living-room door against the wall. In a low tone.*) Now—absolute silence! Miss Middlebrook, if you give the slightest warning, you'll pay the full penalty!

(*There is a long silence in the room. Suddenly there is the rattle of a key in the storage closet door.*)

MIDD. (*in a loud whisper*). He has a key! Where —

STEELE. Silence! (*The door of the storage closet rattles again. A hinge creaks as it swings open. A ray of light from a flash-light shoots across toward the living-room door. The light falls upon the red fixture of the alarm-box, and misses STEELE. The stranger turns his light upon the floor in front of him, and starts forward, failing to discover any of the silent watchers grouped along the wall. Step by step he advances across the room, playing the light upon the red fixture as he goes. At last he darts forward quickly. There is a sudden rattle as he jiggles the instrument in the red box. Then, a loud scream from ELEANOR. STEELE flashes a beam of bright light upon the man.*) Hands up, Cloff! Hands up! (*CLOFF staggers back from the alarm-box. He stares into the muzzle of STEELE'S gun. It can be seen that he is without his coat and mask.*) There, Mr. Middlebrook, is the traitor in your home! The man who's been unaccountably absent until this minute!

MIDD. (*springing forward in frenzied excitement*). Westerberg! Westerberg claimed he had received a telegram —

STEELE. Hands up, Cloff! Get back, I say! (*The bomb-setter makes one desperate, lightning dash toward the table. He snatches a gun from his pocket. There is the crash of STEELE'S big automatic as it blazes forth. The criminal's revolver clatters to the floor; his right hand hangs helpless at his side.*) Westerberg's telegram was genuine, as I took the trouble to make certain! He is innocent! Let me present to you the chief director of German spies in the United States—Herr William Von Holtzer himself—alias "Tom Cloff"—(*he snaps on the*

lights) and alias Detective Bradbury! (Exclamations of horror from all. STEELE gives them scant time to recover.) This is the man who has been carrying on the secret moves against our government! This is the man who arranged the theft of the government papers at the Markmans' reception two years ago! He is the one who has been plotting to blow up your home! He installed that contrivance on the wall in place of an alarm system! It was he who sent you the threatening letter signed by "Tom Cloff," and who ——

MIDD. Er—most impossible!

STEELE. Ah, not at all! For it was he who wrote out a diagram of his "alarm" system for me this evening—a diagram containing the words "Left," "Middle," and "Right." He is the man who writes a capital "R" like an "H" and an "F," and who can't write two "d's" the same way! He prepared chloride of nitrogen by passing chlorine gas through a solution of ammonia!

MIDD. This is—er—why, this is preposterous! Do you mean—er—Mr. Steele, do you mean to as much as insinuate that my daughter has assisted ——

STEELE. Ah, no, Mr. Middlebrook! It is farthest from my intention to make any insinuations against your daughter. As I told you last evening, I have but one purpose. I have come with a warning—for you. A warning, my dear sir, against a young lady who contrives to receive a double present of candy which she shows little inclination to have examined. A warning against a young lady who allows a certain gentleman to press her injured hand for five full seconds before she remembers that she must cry out in pain! And against that same young lady when she brings about the escape of Detective Bradbury, alias "Tom Cloff," from the darkened laboratory, by simply carrying from the room his cloak and mask!

MIDD. But this is terrible, Mr. Steele! To—er—to think of having my daughter arrested as a—er—as a spy! Why, it would be—er —— Oh, it would be—er ——

STEELE. I could easily supply the proper words. If Monsieur LeClair would allow me, I could tell you that it would be—quite ——

LECLAIR. Quite right! N'est-ce pas, Monsieur! Eet eez well spoken!

STEELE. I shall leave the punishment of your daughter entirely to you, Mr. Middlebrook. (*He turns to BRADBURY, who is still standing with his arms folded.*) Herr Von Holtzer, I arrest you as an agent of the German Secret Service, actively engaged in an attempt against our nation. You've given me the hardest chase of my life, Von Holtzer! But you've overplayed your part of a private detective! You went too far when you induced a young girl to turn traitor to her own home—to the people who had cared for her as a daughter since her birth! We'll pay the heads of your government for this! And we'll pay them with solid shots from submarine shells, Von Holtzer, till we blow every cowardly U-boat out of the Atlantic—till the sea is again open to the world! (*To DELIA.*) The bell for the plain-clothesmen, if you please!

(*Exit DELIA. STEELE motions to BRADBURY to follow her. He obeys. STEELE walks two feet behind him. They leave the room. MR. and MRS. MIDDLEBROOK hasten to ELEANOR, who still sits in silence, with her head bowed. MARGARET turns and motions them back.*)

MARG. Not now, please! I know I can be of more help to her than even you could, for a few minutes. You'll leave us, I know, Monsieur LeClair. (*LECLAIR bows in silence and walks slowly from the room. MRS. MIDDLEBROOK follows, with MIDDLEBROOK endeavoring to comfort her. MARGARET is left alone with her friend.*) Eleanor, you'll believe me when I tell you that I've done my very best to save you, won't you? (*ELEANOR nods slowly.*) I've tried so hard, for you! It isn't true that I deserted you because I found that you were working against your father to-night. Inspector Steele is wrong this time! I never dreamed that you could be involved in such a plot as this! I —

(*She chokes suddenly, with a start which is more than half due to fear. STEELE is standing in silence in the living-room doorway. He enters slowly.*)

STEELE. I have a little suggestion to make, Miss Middlebrook. I advise you to go to your father and mother. Tell them your whole story, from start to finish; then ask them to forgive it all. They may do it.

ELEA. (*raising her head at last*). Oh, I'd rather be shot than face them now. I—I deserve to be shot, Inspector. I've done all that you said. I helped him smuggle in the cyanogen in candy boxes; I painted red ink on my hand; I carried his disguise from the room to-night—and all for Albert Bradbury! I—I'm guilty, Mr. Steele!

STEELE. Yes, Miss Middlebrook, I fear so. But you've done far more than that. You've been unworthy of the truest friend you'll ever have! You may go to your father, Miss Middlebrook. (ELEANOR *rises and turns toward the door*. MARGARET *takes her arm and walks with her*. STEELE *goes to the table at L*. *As the two reach the door, he turns quickly.*) Miss Linden.

MARG. (*turning*). Yes?

STEELE. One moment, please. You may let Miss Middlebrook go on alone. I'll not detain you but a moment.

MARG. (*returning*). Very well. I'd like to go as soon as possible.

STEELE. Certainly. I merely wish to inform you that your services in the American Red Cross are no longer compulsory—that you are now at perfect liberty to withdraw. (MARGARET *hesitates, in surprise*.)

MARG. Oh, I don't want to withdraw, Mr. Steele! I see now your reason for forcing me to go two years ago. I realize what you did for me, when you saved me from Bradbury—and I thank you! (*She pauses an instant*. STEELE *is silent*.) But I don't want to give up the work now. I've been over to France, and have seen the suffering and the horror. I must go back. I—I have found how you are serving the nation every day, in the face of peril and opposition. I must do my small part—to help America and you!

(*She goes suddenly to the chair, and bows her head*,
STEELE *seems quite puzzled*.)

STEELE. It—it's very fine of you to wish to help me, after our—unpleasantness. I'm sure ——

MARG. (*rising quickly*). Oh, Mr. Steele, it's of no use to try to deceive you any longer. I know you overheard me when I told Eleanor just now, and you'll—you won't know what to think of me if I don't explain. You said to-night that I tricked Kraft because I had discovered that Eleanor was again a traitress, and that I wouldn't help her after that. I—that isn't true.

STEELE. But I don't understand!

MARG. I'm sorry if you don't. I hope you won't misjudge me; I wasn't deceiving Eleanor. I had never dreamed that she could be connected with this terrible plot, until you exposed her just now. It—it was for *your* sake that I played false to Kraft, Mr. Steele! I'd give all I have in the world to have been able to save Eleanor, but—I—but I couldn't kill *you* to do it!

STEELE. But you've forgotten! I—I'm your enemy, you know.

MARG. But I'm not yours, Mr. Steele. You hurt my pride when you made me go to France, and my pride has made me treat you with every possible discourtesy. But it couldn't keep me from trying to warn you here this evening. (*She hesitates.*) Will you let me keep on serving the country with you, Inspector Steele?

STEELE (*slowly*). Miss Linden, you can never know what you've done! You've changed everything in the world for me, now that you're not my enemy! I'll go to Germany now with a new feeling. Success for America will be first, as always, but it won't be my only goal. I'll want to live now, and I'll want to live more than anything else in the world, except to help win for our nation! And I'll fight to live, as well as to win! I—I told you to-night that there could never be anything in the world for me, except America. I meant it, then. But ——

(MARGARET *has turned quickly, and raised her eyes to meet his.*)

MARG. Do you mean, Inspector Steele, that there—that there could just possibly be one other—that you could try to have just one? Oh, could you try?

(There is a smile upon the face of the great detective as he turns quietly to her. For just an instant he stands irresolute.)

STEELE. You win, Monsieur LeClair! I—I'll try—
with great success!

(And MARGARET comes quickly to him as the curtain falls.)

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