

line, put up his rod, and counted and weighed his fish. Then, lighting a pipe, he reslung the heavy creel across his back and started up the darkening path. From his dripping tweeds the water oozed; his shoes wheezed and slopped at every step; he was tired, soaked, successful—but happy? Possibly.

It was dark when the lighted windows of the lodge twinkled across the hill; he struck out over the meadow, head bent, smoking furiously.

On the steps of the club-house Colonel Hyssop and Major Brent greeted him with the affected heartiness of men who disliked his angling methods; the steward brought out a pan; the fish were uncreeled, reweighed, measured, and entered on the club book.

"Finest creel this year, sir," said the steward, admiringly.

The Major grew purple; the Colonel carefully remeasured the largest fish.

"Twenty-one inches, steward!" he said. "Wasn't my big fish of last Thursday twenty-two?"

"Nineteen, sir," said the steward, promptly.

"Then it shrank like the devil!" said

the Colonel. "By gad! it must have shrunk in the creel!"

But Langham was in no mood to savor his triumph. He climbed the stairs wearily, leaving little puddles of water on each step, slopped down the hallway, entered his room, and sank into a chair, too weary, too sad even to think.

Presently he lighted his lamp. He dressed with his usual attention to detail, and touched the electric button above his bed.

"I'm going tomorrow morning," he said to the servant who came; "return in an hour and pack my traps."

Langham sat down. He had no inclination for dinner. With his chin propped on his clinched hands he sat there thinking. A sound fell on his ear, the closing of a door at the end of the hall, the padded pattering of a dog's feet, a scratching, a whine.

He opened his door; the bull-terrier trotted in and stood before him in silence. His Highness held in his mouth a letter.

Langham took the note with hands that shook. He could scarcely steady them to open the envelope; he could scarcely see to read the line:

"Why are you going away?"

He rose, made his way to his desk like a blind man, and wrote,

"Because I love you."

His Highness bore the missive away.

For an hour he sat there in the lamp-lit room. The servant came to pack up for him, but he sent the man back, saying that he might change his mind. Then he resumed his waiting, his head buried in his hands. At last, when he could endure the silence no longer, he rose and walked the floor, backward, forward, pausing breathless to listen for the pattering of the dog's feet in the hall. But no sound came; he stole to the door and listened, then stepped into the hall. The light still burned in her room, streaming out through the transom.

She would never send another message to him by His Highness; he understood that now. How he cursed himself for his momentary delusion! How he scorned himself for reading anything but friendly kindness in her message! How he burned with self-contempt for his raw, brutal reply, crude as the blurted offer of a yokel!

That settled the matter. If he had any decency left, he must never offend her eyes again. How could he have

hoped? How could he have done it? Here, too!—here in this place so sanctified to her by associations—here, whither she had come upon her pious pilgrimage—here, where at least he might have left her to her dead!

Suddenly, as he stood there, her door opened. She saw him standing there. For a full minute they faced each other. Presently His Highness emerged from behind his mistress and trotted out into the hall.

Behind His Highness came his mistress, slowly, more slowly. The dog carefully held a letter between his teeth, and when Langham saw it he sprang forward eagerly.

"No, no!" she said. "I did not mean—I cannot—I cannot— Give me back the letter!"

He had the letter in his hand; her hand fell over it; the color surged into her face and neck. The letter dropped from her yielding hand; the thrill from their interlocked fingers made her faint, AND SHE SWAYED FORWARD TOWARD HIM, so close that their lips touched, then clung, crushed in their first kiss . . .

Meanwhile His Highness picked up the letter and stood politely waiting.

(The End.)

## The Air Pilot

(Continued from Page 6.)

masquerade of good-fellowship was only a step in some pre-arranged plan, an effort to make me feel at ease. What that plan was I could not, as yet, even guess, yet dimly I connected its revelation with the disappearance of the German reporter, and the pretended drunkenness of Franzen. The latter was so poor an actor I was compelled to suspicion him, but not by so much as a glance in his direction did I reveal my suspicions to his chief. But the fellow was not content to remain unnoticed. He struck the table with one hand, tipping over the half-filled glass, in an endeavor to attract attention.

"Dessaud! Dessaud!" he repeated, hiccupping the name derisively. "Bah! I've heard of him; he's got a damn toy. Who ever heard of a French mechanic?"

"I think the world has heard of several," I answered, surprised at this outbreak, yet holding my temper, "and the toy flies."

"How about Rheims? Did it fly then, Monsieur Frenchman?"

"A plane broke; accidents are always possible." My glance fell upon the man's extended hand; it was that of a mechanic, with stubby fingers and close clipped nails. So he was the expert. "You have such even in Germany."

"Maybe so," stubbornly, "but your whole principle is wrong."

"What do you know about that?"

"What do I know—"

Brandt's hand gripped the fellow's arm.

"That's enough, Franzen," he said, sternly. "We are not here to discuss aviation, or quarrel over flags. Finish your beer, and we'll go."

He leaned closer to me and whispered.

"We'll leave the drunken fool at the hotel. I would like a moment's quiet talk with you somewhere."

"But I am with Miss Probyn."

"A brief appointment tomorrow morning will do, Monsieur. I have a propo-

sition to make which may be of interest, of great interest.

"I cannot imagine—"

"Of course not. However, it is not a matter to be discussed here. I ask for only ten minutes at, let us say, nine tomorrow. Your hotel?"

"The Congress."

"My own also; very convenient. I take it for granted the request is granted. Schmitt, let's get Franzen to bed."

We all arose together, and passed out into the rather narrow entry-way. Schmitt was talking with Miss Probyn, while Brandt held to Franzen, thus leaving me for the moment alone. The proposition for a conference in the morning had relieved me of any fears for the present. I must wait till then to learn more definitely what was being attempted. Brandt, by making this engagement, had apparently accomplished all he desired. I had no longer any reason to suspect trickery, or a resort to violence. Without doubt the Germans considered me approachable, and would attempt the money argument. Very well, I would learn then what he considered my discoveries worth, and could laugh at him. The thought restored me to good humor.

I was chuckling over the situation when Schmitt and Miss Probyn disappeared through the swinging doors onto the sidewalk. Almost at the same instant these opened inward, and the red-faced reporter burst in hastily, coming face to face with Franzen. I heard an oath and the sound of a blow; someone toppled over against me, forcing me to press against the side wall for support. Then I was struck on the head from behind, and went down like a log.

### CHAPTER VI

#### BRANDT SHOWS HIS HAND

The blow felled me flat, and I had but the vaguest impression of what was

taking place. While not rendered totally unconscious, yet my brain was numbed, and it seemed impossible for me to move a muscle. However, I realized, in a dim, impersonal way, that I was lifted up, carried swiftly across the walk outside, and thrust into a cab. I retained a flickering recollection of Brandt's face pressed close to mine in the glare of an electric light, and heard Franzen laugh spitefully.

"He's dead to the world," said someone. "Turn on the juice, Carl; give her the limit."

Then my head fell back on someone's shoulder, and I lost all consciousness. I retain some slight recollection of being aroused again when the cab stopped, of far-away voices talking, and of being lifted out. Then I lapsed again into total darkness. When I awakened the second time I was lying half-dressed on a bed. There was no light in the room, but an open doorway revealed a second apartment in which lights were burning. I saw no one, yet almost the first sound distinguished was that hateful laugh of Franzen. It brought me to an instant realization of all that had occurred.

"Not much reward for the risk, Captain," he said clearly in German. "These letters tell nothing."

"We've got the man, haven't we?" was the gruff answer.

"Yes, if that is any comfort, but there is no proof that he will talk."

"You can leave that to me; he'll either talk, or not fly. Did Schmitt say he couldn't speak German?"

"Sure; that's what the girl said. It was her business to find out. You got his gun?"

"In the drawer there—a nasty weapon. Better look at the fellow again, Fritz."

I heard a chair pushed back, and lay flat with my eyes closed, hoping the investigator would deem me still unconscious, and go back to his conversation. There was much I desired to learn, and

the easiest method was to use my ears. I was surprised at the fellows' boldness, their resorting to the strong-arm; this alone was evidence they were acting under urgent orders. My first theory that money was to be the appeal had utterly failed. They had adopted a shorter and uglier means to obtain their end. How much farther would they venture, if I proved obstinate? The prospect was not pleasant, and I comprehended my own helplessness, unless I learned more of the situation. Yet, I confess, what troubled me most was the apparent perfidy of the young woman. I had trusted her, believed in her friendship, still it was clear enough now that she must have deliberately lured me on to this rough manhandling, and then stood idly by while I was being hustled away. But did she? If so, if she was that sort, a willing part of the conspiracy, why should she have deceived them relative to my knowledge of German? I certainly had reason to bless her for that.

All these thoughts flashed through my mind as I lay there with closed eyes, barely permitting myself to breathe, while Franzen silently crossed the room and bent over me. It seemed as if he would never finish, as he stood with fingers on my wrist counting the pulse, but finally, he released his grasp and turned away. Through slightly parted lashes I watched him disappear into the other room; then lifted my head to listen.

"Still dead to the world," he reported shortly, and a shadow on the wall told me he had paused to pour out a drink. "You must have soaked him good."

"A bit harder than I intended," returned Brandt composedly, "but it is all right; he'll come around. We'll give him a half hour more," and I heard the snap of his watch, "and then try the cold water cure. Go down and call up Schmitt on the 'phone, Fritz. I want to be sure he has got that girl safely corralled."

"Where is he?"

(To be Continued.)