

"They say the English are obstinate, but commend me to a Frenchman. However a few hours may work wonders, and meanwhile I have other

strings to my bow. Is the room ready, Swigert?"

"Yes," answered the man stolidly in German, his face showing in the open door beside Franzen, "I have it ready."

Brandt bowed to me in mock politeness, his hand over his heart.

"A night's rest, Monsieur, together with an hour devoted to thought in the morning may be sufficient to show you the error of your ways. If not," and I felt the sudden grip of his fingers on my arm, "I will have to convince you by sterner measures. Come."

There was nothing to do but obey, faced as I was by the three of them, all probably armed. However they might fear to use their weapons elsewhere, all danger of alarm was now nullified by the thick walls, and isolated situation of this house. With Swigert leading the way, and Brandt and Franzen close at my heels, I proceeded into the dimly lighted hall. The caretaker turned to the left, his footsteps noiseless on the soft carpeting, and then descended a stairway into the basement. A single small electric bulb gave me glimpses of the surroundings. It was all cement, even to the dividing walls, to the right open, merging into darkness forward, while on the other hand were rooms of different sizes, arranged conveniently for household use. The first was evidently the laundry, as I caught glimpse of stationary tubs; the second held a riff-raff of discarded furniture, and at the door of the third my guide stopped, motioning me to enter. The door, which to my surprise was of iron, opened outwardly and was made

to be secured by a heavy bar. Within I saw a bare cot and single stool, the walls solid and unbroken, save for a small round opening directly opposite. I turned inquiringly to Brandt.

"Rather a neat arrangement," he commented dryly. "Absolute quiet assured. Tradition has it that the owner's brother became insane from drink, and this room was originally prepared to keep him in until he recovered, thus avoiding an unpleasant notoriety. You will kindly enter, Monsieur."

His tone, the expression on his face, was a command, and I stepped over the threshold, still facing them.

"I believe there is nothing more we can do for your comfort," he went on, rather enjoying the situation. "There is running water in the corner; no luxuries, of course, but all that a soldier requires. If the bed is hard you may have more opportunity for thought. My offer remains twenty-five thousand, Monsieur, and a guard will remain without."

I did not answer, and he laughed, signaling Swigert to close the door. It swung into place with a clang, and I heard the bar forced down into its sockets. For an instant I stood motionless staring at the painted iron, half suspecting I was in a dream. Yet this stupor was but for the instant; strange as the events of the night were, rapidly as they had occurred, it was impossible for me to ignore their reality. The warning of my superiors in France flashed across my brain; they had appreciated, as I had not, the desire of other nations to appropriate our secrets. Yet, even now, it was almost impossible for me to conceive that such ruthless tactics would be resorted to. This was the twentieth century, not the seventeenth, and the heart of a great city. Outside, almost within reach of my voice, was modern civilization—law, the police, the newspapers, the quiet home-life of millions. Yet here I was, a prisoner in a dungeon, as completely in Brandt's power as though a captive of the Middle Ages. I had read of such things in fiction, and laughed at their improbability. I had supposed the War Office, in their warning, had merely meant that I should beware of spies. To that end I had taken every ordinary precaution, bearing on my person no papers of value, and having the hangar guarded night and day. But I had never anticipated a situation like this. Keen as was the rivalry in aeronautics throughout Europe, it had never once occurred to me that my invention was of a great money value to a rival nation, or that its representative would resort to force to make me reveal the secret. But I knew now, and the shock of discovery was like a blow. Brandt was in deadly earnest, and had already gone too far to hesitate at going further. His were no idle threats, however smilingly uttered. His reputation convinced me of that, even if I had not read the truth in the face of the man. He had the name of resorting to desperate means, and more than one whispered story of his dealing in such matters, came hauntingly to memory. Some of these even hinted vaguely at murder, at mysterious disappearances, at actual robbery. In Paris some wag had nick-named him "the last resort." Then—then I was not only battling for honor, for the safe-guarding of a French secret—my very life was in peril.

I seemed to awaken anew at the thought, and my eyes, which had been staring, unseeing, at that iron door, glanced about over the gray walls of cement. I was trapped like a rat, but not yet hopeless, or despairing. This was no prison, but merely a refuge for a victim of alcoholism; strong as it appeared, secure as Brandt evidently believed it to be, yet there might be a weakness somewhere to yield to ingenuity and patience. It was worth the try. I sought the round opening first; small as it was, far too small for my body to ever squeeze through; it was effectually blocked by boiler plate, through which small apertures

had been pierced sufficient for the admittance of air. The place itself was solidly set in the wall, imbedded in cement. Finding not even so much as a loosened corner at which I could pry, I began a slow testing of the wall, using the butt of my unloaded revolver with which to sound. There was brick beneath the coating of cement, a hard, glazed brick, as I discovered by painfully gouging out a cracked bit in one corner, set solidly in mortar, so hard it turned my knife-blade. I dared not venture striking with any force, but with ear against the wall, convinced myself that it was both solid and thick. I made the circuit of the room twice, testing it every foot or two, without reward. No hollow sound disclosed any weakness. For the first time I despaired, and sat down upon the couch, not knowing what else to attempt.

No sound reached me through those thick walls, and if, as Brandt had intimated, a guard remained on duty in the basement, the fellow possessed no means of observing my movements within. The door was a solid piece of iron, and, while it might be possible for one outside to use the small holes pierced in the grating over the window, I felt confident I was not being spied upon. Beyond doubt my captors were thoroughly convinced that the cell in which I was confined was absolutely safe. But I was far too restless to remain quiet; too desperate to yield without further effort. Even as my mind reviewed the night's adventures, and speculated on what Brandt might attempt now, he had me safely under lock and key, my eyes were anxiously studying ceiling, side walls and floor.

(To be Continued in Next Issue.)

## The Mystery of the Causeway

(Continued from Page 4.)

Warner's cottage was a straw-thatched, ivy-covered little place, built on the slope of the park. Beneath it a brook that carried the overflow from the lake gurgled monotonously by. A thin, long-legged man, who was digging in a patch of garden, stopped his work at sight of us and waited, leaning on his spade.

"Jake Warner, isn't it?" Pence inquired over the low fence of split-pine.

"Yes, sir."

"I am Inspector Addington Peace of the Criminal Investigation Department."

Warner said nothing, but I saw his fingers clench upon his spade, as he gave the detective stare for stare.

"A fairly good breeding season for the ducks, I should imagine," continued the little man, with a benevolent interest.

There was still no reply.

"I understand the foxes are very troublesome."

Warner threw down his spade and strode up to where we stood. His eyes had in them the dumb agony of a wild thing in a trap.

"I am a married man, sir," he said. "For my wife's sake take me away quietly."

"I have not come to arrest you, Jake Warner," said Peace. "If you are responsible for your master's death, it was by sheer accident. But the question is, are you responsible?"

"No, sir, I am not. But I can never prove it."

"Perhaps it would be best if you explained."

We remained where we were, with the fence between us, while he told his story.

(To Be Concluded Next Issue.)



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