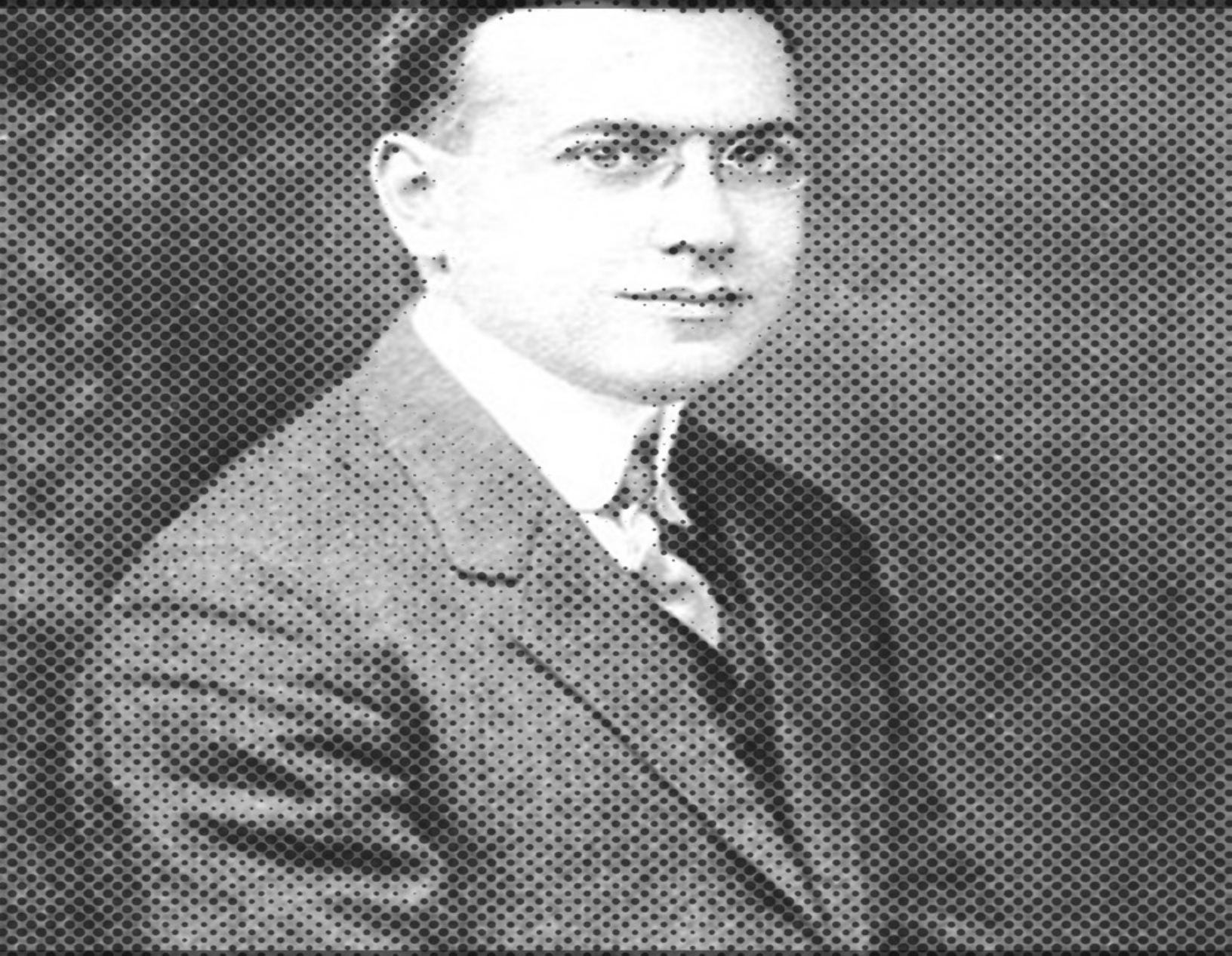
Earl Derr Biggers



Inside the Lines

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I. — JANE GERSON, BUYER

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"I HAD two trunks—two, *où est l'autre*?"

The grinning customs guard lifted his shoulders to his ears and spread out his palms. "*Mais, mamselle*—"

"Don't you '*mais*' me, sir! I had two trunks—*deux troncs*—when I got aboard that wabbly old boat at Dover this morning, and I'm not going to budge from this wharf until I find the other one. Where did you learn your French, anyway? Can't you understand when I speak your language?"

The girl plumped herself down on top of the unhasped trunk and folded her arms truculently. With a quizzical smile, the customs guard looked down into her brown eyes, smoldering dangerously now, and began all over again his speech of explanation.

"*Wagon-lit*?" She caught a familiar word. "*Mais oui*; that's where I want to go—aboard your *wagon-lit*, for Paris. *Voilà*!"—the girl carefully gave the word three syllables—"*mon ticket pour Paree*!" She opened her patent-leather reticule, rummaged furiously therein, brought out a handkerchief, a tiny mirror, a packet of rice papers, and at last a folded and punched ticket. This she displayed with a triumphant flourish.

"*Voilà! Il dit 'Miss Jane Gerson'*; that's me—*moi-même*, I mean. And *il dit 'deux troncs'*; now you can't go behind that, can you? Where is that other trunk?"

A whistle shrilled back beyond the swinging doors of the station. Folk in the customs shed began a hasty gathering together of parcels and shawl straps, and a general exodus toward the train sheds commenced. The girl on the trunk looked appealingly about her; nothing but bustle and confusion; no Samaritan to turn aside and rescue a fair traveler fallen among customs guards. Her eyes filled with trouble, and for an instant her reliant mouth broke its line of determination; the lower lip quivered suspiciously. Even the guard started to walk away.

"Oh, oh, please don't go!" Jane Gerson was on her feet, and her hands shot out in an impulsive appeal. "Oh, dear; maybe I forgot to tip you. Here, *attende au secours*, if you'll only find that other trunk before the train—"

"Pardon; but if I may be of any assistance—"

Miss Gerson turned. A tallish, old-young-looking man, in a gray lounge suit, stood heels together and bent stiffly in a bow. Nothing of the beau or the boulevardier about his face or manner. Miss Gerson accepted his intervention as heaven-sent.

"Oh, thank you ever so much! The guard, you see, doesn't understand good French. I just can't make him understand that one of my trunks is missing. And the train for Paris—"

Already the stranger was rattling incisive French at the guard. That official bowed low, and, with hands and lips, gave rapid explanation. The man in the gray lounge suit turned to the girl.

"A little misunderstanding, Miss—ah—"

"Gerson—Jane Gerson, of New York," she promptly supplied.

"A little misunderstanding, Miss Gerson. The customs guard says your other trunk has already been examined, passed, and placed on the baggage van. He was trying to tell you that it would be necessary for you to permit a porter to take this trunk to the train before time for starting. With your permission—"

The stranger turned and halloed to a porter, who came running. Miss Gerson had the trunk locked and strapped in no time, and it was on the shoulders of the porter.

"You have very little time, Miss Gerson. The train will be making a start directly. If I might—ah—pilot you through the station to the proper train shed. I am not presuming?"

"You are very kind," she answered hurriedly.

They set off, the providential Samaritan in the lead. Through the waiting-room and on to a broad platform, almost deserted, they went. A guard's whistle shrilled. The stranger tucked a helping hand under Jane Gerson's arm to steady her in the sharp sprint down a long aisle between tracks to where the Paris train stood. It began to move before they had reached its mid-length. A guard threw open a carriage door, in they hopped, and with a rattle of chains and banging of buffers the Express du Nord was off on its arrow flight from Calais to the capital.

The carriage, which was of the second class, was comfortably filled. Miss Gerson stumbled over the feet of a puffy Fleming nearest the door, was launched into the lap of a comfortably upholstered widow on the opposite seat, ricochetted back to jam an elbow into a French gentleman's

spread newspaper, and finally was catapulted into a vacant space next to the window on the carriage's far side. She giggled, tucked the skirts of her pearl-gray duster about heir, righted the chic sailor hat on her chestnut-brown head, and patted a stray wisp of hair back into place. Her meteor flight into and through the carriage disturbed her not a whit.

As for the Samaritan, he stood uncertainly in the narrow cross aisle, swaying to the swing of the carriage and reconnoitering seating possibilities. There was a place, a very narrow one, next to the fat Fleming; also there was a vacant place next to Jane Gerson. The Samaritan caught the girl's glance in his indecision, read in it something frankly comradely, and chose the seat beside her.

"Very good of you, I'm sure," he murmured. "I did not wish to presume—"

"You're not," the girl assured, and there was something so fresh, so ingenuous, in the tone and the level glance of her brown eyes that the Samaritan felt all at once distinctly satisfied with the cast of fortune that had thrown him in the way of a distressed traveler. He sat down with a lifting of the checkered Alpine hat he wore and a stiff little bow from the waist.

"If I may, Miss Gerson—I am Captain Woodhouse, of the signal service."

"Oh!" The girl let slip a little gasp—the meed of admiration the feminine heart always pays to shoulder straps. "Signal service; that means the army?"

"His majesty's service; yes. Miss Gerson."

"You are, of course, off duty?" she suggested, with the faintest possible tinge of regret at the absence of the stripes

and buttons that spell "soldier" with the woman.

"You might say so, Miss Gerson. Egypt—the Nile country is my station. I am on my way back there after a bit of a vacation at home—London I mean, of course."

She stole a quick side glance at the face of her companion. A soldier's face it was, lean and school-hardened and competent. Lines about the eyes and mouth—the stamp of the sun and the imprint of the habit to command—had taken from Captain Woodhouse's features something of freshness and youth, though giving in return the index of inflexible will and lust for achievement. His smooth lips were a bit thin, Jane Gerson thought, and the outshooting chin, almost squared at the angles, marked Captain Woodhouse as anything but a trifler or a flirt. She was satisfied that nothing of presumption or forwardness on the part of this hard-molded chap from Egypt would give her cause to regret her unconventional offer of friendship.

Captain Woodhouse, in his turn, had made a satisfying, though covert, appraisal of his traveling companion by means of a narrow mirror inset above the baggage rack over the opposite seat. Trim and petite of figure, which was just a shade under the average for height and plumpness; a small head set sturdily on a round smooth neck; face the very embodiment of independence and self-confidence, with its brown eyes wide apart, its high brow under the parting waves of golden chestnut, broad humorous mouth, and tiny nose slightly nibbed upward: Miss Up-to-the-Minute New York, indeed! From the cocked red feather in her hat to the dainty spatted boots Jane Gerson appeared in Woodhouse's eyes a perfect, virile, vividly alive American girl. He'd met

her kind before; had seen them browbeating bazaar merchants in Cairo and riding desert donkeys like strong young queens. The type appealed to him.

The first stiffness of informal meeting wore away speedily. The girl tactfully directed the channel of conversation into lines familiar to Woodhouse. What was Egypt like; who owned the Pyramids, and why didn't the owners plant a park around them and charge admittance? Didn't he think Rameses and all those other old Pharaohs had the right idea in advertising—putting up stone billboards to last all time? The questions came crisp and startling; Woodhouse found himself chuckling at the shrewd incisiveness of them. Rameses an advertiser and the Pyramids stone hoardings to carry all those old boys' fame through the ages! He'd never looked on them in that light before.

"I say, Miss Gerson, you'd make an excellent business person, now, really," the captain voiced his admiration.

"Just cable that at my expense to old Pop Hildebrand, of Hildebrand's department store, New York," she flashed back at him. "I'm trying to convince him of just that very thing."

"Really, now; a department shop! What, may I ask, do you have to do for—ah—Pop Hildebrand?"

"Oh, I'm his foreign buyer," Jane answered, with a conscious note of pride. "I'm over here to buy gowns for the winter season, you see. Paul Poiret—Worth—Paquin; you've heard of those wonderful people, of course?"

"Can't say I have," the captain confessed, with a rueful smile into the girl's brown eyes.

"Then you've never bought a Worth?" she challenged. "For if you had you'd not forget the name—or the price—very soon."

"Gowns—and things are not in my line, Miss Gerson," he answered simply, and the girl caught herself feeling a secret elation. A man who didn't know gowns couldn't be very intimately acquainted with women. And—well—

"And this Hildebrand, he sends you over here alone just to buy pretties for New York's wonderful women?" the captain was saying. "Aren't you just a bit—ah—nervous to be over in this part of the world—alone?"

"Not in the least," the girl caught him up. "Not about the alone part, I should say. Maybe I am fidgety and sort of worried about making good on the job. This is my first trip—my very first as a buyer for Hildebrand. And, of course, if I should fall down—"

"Fall down?" Woodhouse echoed, mystified. The girl laughed, and struck her left wrist a smart blow with her gloved right hand.

"There I go again—slang; 'Vulgar American slang,' you'll call it. If I could only rattle off the French as easily as I do New Yorkese I'd be a wonder. I mean I'm afraid I won't make good."

"Oh!"

"But why should I worry about coming over alone?" Jane urged. "Lots of American girls come over here alone with an American flag pinned to their shirt-waists and wearing a Baedeker for a wrist watch. Nothing ever happens to them."

Captain Woodhouse looked out on the flying panorama of straw-thatched houses and fields heavy with green grain. He

seemed to be balancing words. He glanced at the passenger across the aisle, a wizened little man, asleep. In a lowered voice he began:

"A woman alone—over here on the Continent at this time; why, I very much fear she will have great difficulties when the—ah—trouble comes."

"Trouble?" Jane's eyes were questioning.

"I do not wish to be an alarmist. Miss Gerson," Captain Woodhouse continued, hesitant. "Goodness knows we've had enough calamity shouters among the Unionists at home. But have you considered what you would do—how you would get back to America in case of—war?" The last word was almost a whisper.

"War?" she echoed. "Why, you don't mean all this talk in the papers is—"

"Is serious, yes," Woodhouse answered quietly. "Very serious."

"Why, Captain Woodhouse, I thought you had war talk every summer over here just as our papers are filled each spring with gossip about how Tesreau is going to jump to the Feds, or the Yanks are going to be sold. It's your regular midsummer outdoor sport over here, this stirring up the animals."

Woodhouse smiled, though his gray eyes were filled with something not mirth.

"I fear the animals are—stirred, as you say, too far this time," he resumed. "The assassination of the Archduke Ferd—"

"Yes, I remember I did read something about that in the papers at home. But archdukes and kings have been killed

before, and no war came of it. In Mexico they murder a president before he has a chance to send out 'At home' cards."

"Europe is so different from Mexico," her companion continued, the lines of his face deepening. "I am afraid you over in the States do not know the dangerous politics here; you are so far away; you should thank God for that. You are not in a land where one man—or two or three—may say, 'We will now go to war,' and then you go, willy-nilly."

The seriousness of the captain's speech and the fear that he could not keep from his eyes sobered the girl. She looked out on the sun-drenched plains of Pas de Calais, where toy villages, hedged fields, and squat farmhouses lay all in order, established, seeming for all time in the comfortable doze of security. The plodding manikins in the fields, the slumberous oxen drawing the harrows amid the beet rows, pigeons circling over the straw hutches by the tracks' side—all this denied the possibility of war's corrosion.

"Don't you think everybody is suffering from a bad dream when they say there's to be fighting?" she queried. "Surely it is impossible that folks over here would all consent to destroy this." She waved toward the peaceful countryside.

"A bad dream, yes. But one that will end in a nightmare," he answered. "Tell me, Miss Gerson, when will you be through with your work in Paris, and on your way back to America?"

"Not for a month; that's sure. Maybe I'll be longer if I like the place."

Woodhouse pondered.

"A month. This is the tenth of July. I am afraid I say, Miss Gerson, please do not set me down for a meddler—this short acquaintance, and all that; but may I not urge on you that you finish your work in Paris and get back to England at least in two weeks?" The captain had turned, and was looking into the girl's eyes with an earnest intensity that startled her. "I can not tell you all I know, of course. I may not even know the truth, though I think I have a bit of it, right enough. But one of your sort—to be caught alone on this side of the water by the madness that is brewing! By George, I do not like to think of it!"

"I thank you, Captain Woodhouse, for your warning," Jane answered him, and impulsively she put out her hand to his. "But, you see, I'll have to run the risk. I couldn't go scampering back to New York like a scared pussy-cat just because somebody starts a war over here. I'm on trial. This is my first trip as buyer for Hildebrand, and it's a case of make or break with me. War or no war, I've got to make good. Anyway"—this with a toss of her round little chin—"I'm an American citizen, and nobody'll dare to start anything with me."

"Right you are!" Woodhouse beamed his admiration. "Now we'll talk about those skyscrapers of yours. Everybody back from the States has something to say about those famous buildings, and I'm fairly burning for first-hand information from one who knows them."

Laughingly she acquiesced, and the grim shadow of war was pushed away from them, though hardly forgotten by either. At the man's prompting, Jane gave intimate pictures of life in the New World metropolis, touching with shrewd

insight the fads and shams of New York's denizens even as she exalted the achievements of their restless energy.

Woodhouse found secret amusement and delight in her racy nervous speech, in the dexterity of her idiom and patness of her characterizations. Here was a new sort of girl for him. Not the languid creature of studied suppression and feeble enthusiasm he had known, but a virile, vivid, sparkling woman of a new land, whose impulses were as unhindered as her speech was heterodox. She was a woman who worked for her living; that was a new type, too. Unafraid, she threw herself into the competition of a man's world; insensibly she prided herself on her ability to "make good"—expressive Americanism, that,—under any handicap. She was a woman with a "job"; Captain Woodhouse had never before met one such.

Again, here was a woman who tried none of the stale arts and tricks of coquetry; no eyebrow strategy or maidenly simpering about Jane Gerson. Once sure Woodhouse was what she took him to be, a gentleman, the girl had established a frank basis of comradeship that took no reckoning of the age-old conventions of sex allure and sex defense. The unconventionality of their meeting weighed nothing with her. Equally there was not a hint of sophistication on the girl's part.

So the afternoon sped, and when the sun dropped over the maze of spires and chimney pots that was Paris, each felt regret at parting.

"To Egypt, yes," Woodhouse ruefully admitted. "A dreary deadly 'place in the sun' for me. To have met you, Miss Gerson; it has been delightful, quite."

"I hope," the girl said, as Woodhouse handed her into a taxi, "I hope that if that war comes it will find you still in Egypt, away from the firing-line."

"Not a fair thing to wish for a man in the service," Woodhouse answered, laughing. "I may be more happy when I say my best wish for you is that when the war comes it will find you a long way from Paris. Good-by, Miss Gerson, and good luck!"

Captain Woodhouse stood, heels together and hat in hand, while her taxi trundled off, a farewell flash of brown eyes rewarding him for the military correctness of his courtesy. Then he hurried to another station to take a train—not for a Mediterranean port and distant Egypt, but for Berlin.

II. — FROM THE WILHELMSTRASSE

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"IT would be wiser to talk in German," the English speech in Berlin " she finished, with a lifting of her shapely bare shoulders, sufficiently eloquent. The waiter speeded his task of refilling the man's glass and discreetly withdrew.

"Oh, I'll talk in German quick enough," the man assented, draining his thin half bubble of glass down to the last fizzing residue in the stem. "Only just show me you've got the right to hear, and the good fat bank-notes to pay; that's all." He propped his sharp chin on a hand that shook slightly, and pushed his lean flushed face nearer hers. An owlish caution fought the wine fancies in his shifting lynx eyes under reddened lids; also there was admiration for the milk-white skin and ripe lips of the woman by his side. For an instant—half the time of a breath—a flash of loathing made the woman's eyes tigerish; but at once they changed again to mild bantering.

"So? Friend Billy Capper, of Brussels, has a touch of the spy fever himself, and distrusts an old pal?" She laughed softly, and one slim hand toyed with a heavy gold locket on her bosom. "Friend Billy Capper forgets old times and old faces—forgets even the matter of the Lord Fisher letters—"

"Chop it, Louisa!" The man called Capper lapsed into brusk English as he banged the stem of his wineglass on the damask. "No sense in raking that up again—just because I ask you a fair question—ask you to identify yourself in your new job."

"We go no further, Billy Capper," she returned, speaking swiftly in German; "not another word between us unless you obey my rule, and talk this language. Why did you get that message through to me to meet you here in the Café Riche to-night if you did not trust me? Why did you have me carry your offer to—to headquarters and come here ready to talk business if it was only to hum and haw about my identifying myself?"

The tenseness of exaggerated concentration on Capper's gaunt face began slowly to dissolve. First the thin line of shaven lips flickered and became weak at down-drawn corners; then the frown faded from about the eyes, and the beginnings of tears gathered there. Shrewdness and the stamp of cunning sped entirely, and naught but weakness remained.

"Louisa—Louisa, old pal; don't be hard on poor Billy Capper," he mumbled. "I'm down, girl—away down again. Since they kicked me out at Brussels I haven't had a shilling to bless myself with. Can't go back to England—you know that; the French won't have me, and here I am, my dinner clothes my only stock in trade left, and you even having to buy the wine." A tear of self-pity slipped down the hard drain of his cheek and splashed on his hand. "But I'll show 'em, Louisa! They can't kick me out of the Brussels shop like a dog and not pay for it! I know too much, I do!"

"And what you know about the Brussels shop you want to sell to the—Wilhelmstrasse?" the woman asked tensely.

"Yes, if the Wilhelmstrasse is willing to pay well for it," Capper answered, his lost cunning returning in a bound.

"I am authorized to judge how much your information is worth," his companion declared, leveling a cold glance into Capper's eyes. "You can tell me what you know, and depend on me to pay well, or—we part at once."

"But, Louisa"—again the whine—"how do I know you're what you say? You've flown high since you and I worked together in the Brussels shop. The Wilhelmstrasse—most perfect spy machine in the world! How I'd like to be in your shoes, Louisa!"

She detached the heavy gold locket from the chain on her bosom, with a quick twist of slim fingers had one side of the case open, then laid the locket before him, pointing to a place on the bevel of the case. Capper swept up the trinket, looked searchingly for an instant at the spot the woman had designated, and returned the locket to her hand.

"Your number in the Wilhelmstrasse," he whispered in awe. "Genuine, no doubt. Saw the same sort of mark once before in Rome. All right. Now, listen, Louisa. What I'm going to tell you about where Brussels stands in this—this business that's brewing will make the German general staff sit up." The woman inclined her head toward Capper's. He, looking not at her but out over the rich plain of brocades, broadcloths and gleaming shoulders, began in a monotone;

"When the war comes—the day the war starts, French artillerymen will be behind the guns at Namur. The English —"

The Hungarian orchestra of forty strings swept into a wild gipsy chant. Dissonances, fierce and barbaric, swept like angry tides over the brilliant floor, of the café. Still Capper talked on, and the woman called Louisa bent her jewel-

starred head to listen. Her face, the face of a fine animal, was set in rapt attention.

"You mark my words," he finished, "when the German army enters Brussels proof of what I'm telling you will be there. Yes, in a pigeonhole of the foreign-office safe those joint plans between England and Belgium for resisting invasion from the eastern frontier. If the Germans strike as swiftly as I think they will the foreign-office Johnnies will be so flustered in moving out they'll forget these papers I'm telling you about. Then your Wilhelmstrasse will know they've paid for the truth when they paid Billy Capper."

Capper eagerly reached for his glass, and, finding it empty, signaled the waiter.

"I'll buy this one, Louisa," he said grandiloquently. "Can't have a lady buying me wine all night." He gave the order. "You're going to slip me some bank-notes to-night—right now, aren't you, Louisa, old pal?" Capper anxiously honed his cheeks with a hand that trembled. The woman's eyes were narrowed in thought.

"If I give you anything to-night, Billy Capper, you'll get drunker than you are now, and how do I know you won't run to the first English secret-service man you meet and blab?"

"Louisa! Louisa! Don't say that!" Great fear and great yearning sat in Capper's filmed eyes. "You know I'm honest, Louisa! You wouldn't milk me this way—take all the info I've got and then throw me over like a dog!" Cold scorn was in her glance.

"Maybe I might manage to get you a position—with the Wilhelmstrasse." She named the great secret-service office under her breath. "You can't go back to England, to be sure;

but you might be useful in the Balkans, where you're not known, or even in Egypt. You have your good points, Capper; you're a sly little weasel—when you're sober. Perhaps—"

"Yes, yes; get me a job with the Wilhelmstrasse, Louisa!" Capper was babbling in an agony of eagerness. "You know my work. You can vouch for me, and you needn't mention that business of the Lord Fisher letters; you were tarred pretty much with the same brush there, Louisa. But, come, be a good sport; pay me at least half of what you think my info's worth, and I'll take the rest out in salary checks, if you get me that job. I'm broke, Louisa!" His voice cracked in a sob. "Absolutely stony broke!"

She sat toying with the stem of her wineglass while Capper's clasped hands on the table opened and shut themselves without his volition. Finally she made a swift move of one hand to her bodice, withdrew it with a bundle of notes crinkling between the fingers.

"Three hundred marks now, Billy Capper," she said. The man echoed the words lovingly. "Three hundred now, and my promise to try to get a number for you with—my people. That's fair?"

"Fair as can be, Louisa." He stretched out claw-like fingers to receive the thin sheaf of notes she counted from her roll. "Here comes the wine—the wine I'm buying. We'll drink to my success at landing a job with—your people."

"For me no more to-night," the woman answered. "My cape, please." She rose.

"But, I say!" Capper protested. "Just one more bottle—the bottle I'm buying. See, here it is all proper and cooled.

Marks the end of my bad luck, so it does. You won't refuse to drink with me to my good luck that's coming?"

"Your good luck is likely to stop short with that bottle, Billy Capper," she said, her lips parting in a smile half scornful. "You know how wine has played you before. Better stop now while luck's with you."

"Hanged if I do!" he answered stubbornly. "After these months of hand to mouth and begging for a nasty pint of ale in a common pub—leave good wine when it's right under my nose? Not me!" Still protesting against her refusal to drink with him the wine he would pay for himself—the man made that a point of injured honor—Capper grudgingly helped place the cape of web lace over his companion's white shoulders, and accompanied her to her taxi.

"If you're here this time to-morrow night—and sober," were her farewell words, "I may bring you your number in the—you understand; that and your commission to duty."

"God bless you, Louisa, girl!" Capper stammered thickly. "I'll not fail you."

He watched the taxi trundle down the brilliant mirror of Unter den Linden, a sardonic smile twisting his lips. Then he turned back to the world of light and perfume and wine—the world from which he had been barred these many months and for which the starved body of him had cried out in agony. His glass stood brimming; money crinkled in his pocket; there were eyes for him and fair white shoulders. Billy Capper, discredited spy, had come to his own once more.

The orchestra was booming a rag-time, and the chorus on the stage of the Winter Garden came plunging to the

footlights, all in line, their black legs kicking out from the skirts like thrusting spindles in some marvelous engine of stagecraft. They screeched the final line of a Germanized coon song, the cymbals clanged "Zam-m-m!" and folk about the clustered tables pattered applause. Captain Woodhouse, at a table by himself, pulled a wafer of a watch from his waistcoat pocket, glanced at its face and looked back at the rococo entrance arches, through which the late-comers were streaming.

"Henry Sherman, do you think Kitty ought to see this sort of thing? It's positively indecent!"

The high-pitched nasal complaint came from a table a little to the right of the one where Woodhouse was sitting.

"There, there, mother! Now, don't go taking all the joy outa life just because you're seeing something that would make the minister back in Kewanee roll his eyes in horror. This is Germany, mother!"

Out of the tail of his eye, Woodhouse could see the family group wherein Mrs. Grundy had sat down to make a fourth. A blocky little man with a red face and a pinky-bald head, whose clothes looked as if they had been whipsawed out of the bolt; a comfortably stout matron wearing a bonnet which even to the untutored masculine eye betrayed its provincialism; a slim slip of a girl of about nineteen with a face like a choir boy's—these were the American tourists whose voices had attracted Woodhouse's attention. He played an amused eavesdropper, all the more interested because they were Americans, and since a certain day on the Calais-Paris express, a week or so gone, he'd had reason to be interested in all Americans.

"I'm surprised at you, Henry, defending such an exhibition as this," the matron's high complaint went on, "when you were mighty shocked at the bare feet of those innocent Greek dancers the Ladies' Aid brought to give an exhibition on Mrs. Peck's lawn."

"Well, mother, that was different," the genial little chap answered. "Kewanee's a good little town, and should stay proper. Berlin, from what I can see, is a pretty bad big town—and don't care." He pulled a heavy watch from his waistcoat pocket and consulted it. "Land's sakes, mother; seven o'clock back home, and the bell's just ringing for Wednesday-night prayer meeting! Maybe since it's prayer-meeting night we might be passing our time better than by looking at this—ah—exhibition."

There was a scraping of chairs, then:

"Henry, I tell you he does look like Albert Downs—the living image!" This from the woman, sotto voce.

"Sh! mother! What would Albert Downs be doing in Berlin?" The daughter was reproving.

"Well, Kitty, they say curiosity once killed a cat; but I'm going to have a better look. I'd swear—"

Woodhouse was slightly startled when he saw the woman from America utilize the clumsy subterfuge of a dropped handkerchief to step into a position whence she could look at his face squarely. Also he was annoyed. He did not care to be stared at under any circumstances, particularly at this time. The alert and curious lady saw his flush of annoyance, flushed herself, and joined her husband and daughter.

"Well, if I didn't know Albert Downs had a livery business which he couldn't well leave," floated back the hoarse