

“ It seems strange,” I remarked one morning to Sergeant Cassidy, as we sat together in the Park, whither he had hobbled on his crutches, “ that those fellows run their spy system so well. Why aren’t they spotted more easily ? ” Only that morning I had been reading in the paper of a German officer who had spent some four or five days behind the British lines, his identity only being suspected when he was back safely behind his own again.

“ Maybe, sir, maybe,” answered my guide and counsellor. “ But ’tis not so strange after all, when you come to think of it. For when a man, dressed as a French officer comes behind the English lines, and another dressed as an English officer is himself behind the French, ’tis hard to tell where you are. For our knowledge of the language is not all it might be, and ’tis hard to tell if it’s a German talking English or a Frenchman—even for the officers.”

Reluctantly I was compelled to admit that my gardener's unhealthy wish for pens, ink, and paper, and my aunt's notorious predilection for cheese in all forms—the only blot on our otherwise stainless escutcheon—which in the days of my youth I had so frequently translated into perfect French, had not fitted me for the onerous task of spy-hunting behind the lines.

“But, bedad, it's right that you are, sir,” continued Cassidy, when he had temporarily taken over my cigarette case. “They are extraordinary—the way they send men behind our lines and find things out, and no one can deny that those same men are full of pluck. For they know the penalty when they are found out—and there is not much glory over their work at all. They do what our own officers would not like the doing of, because they would be after thinking it was dirty work.

“I mind me once when we caught one of them at it. 'Twas more by luck than anything else that we did that same, but 'tis a story that bears the telling.”

A temporary lull occurred at that moment,

owing to the excitement of his catching what I believe is known as the "glad-eye" from a passing fairy, and very nearly slipping off the seat. When he had waved his crutch twice, and comparative calm again reigned, I ventured to recall the great man to the affairs of earth.

"Tell me about the spy, Cassidy," I said firmly.

"What a peach!" he murmured. "Begorra—a darling; and 'tis Irish she was with her eyes." He sighed deeply. "But 'tis of the spy you would be hearing, sir. For the proper understanding of what I would be telling you, it is clear you must know how the firing-line is at the present moment—and what the lads are after doing. You will mind that there are farmhouses—dotted they are all over the place—and barns and old mills and the like. Those same barns were occupied by the Germans in most cases before they were taken over by us as we pushed them back. Of course, as you know, they have not moved at all lately, but I am speaking of maybe two or three months ago. What was easier than for those fellows to

leave a stray man or two behind them who was able to talk the English or French, and put a telephone or the like in one of those same barns which was connected with their own lines, and where they knew they would be?

“ You will mind also that the lingo they speak up in the north, where they are now, has a heathenish sound to it, and a man might be a German or a Jew from Patagonia before one was the wiser for it. And there is another thing too, sir, that you must be after bearing in mind, and that is, the importance of this same spying. For with the aeroplanes and the like, 'tis impossible to move the lads during the day, as it is seen they would be, and any big massing of them is bound to be known. So 'tis at night that the moves are done, and 'tis then that these fellows come in. For you will mind that, with the line as it is, if maybe a bit of a hill like is captured—though it may only be an advance of a few hundred feet—yet the new position may enfilade their line, and when the guns are brought up may cause them great uneasiness for two or three miles. Then maybe the winning of that little bit of ground may

allow our lads to get the range of a railway they are using, or the like. So you will see, sir, that those little advances are much more important than they would appear in the papers; but the success of them depends on secrecy, and if 'tis given away beforehand by a spy, the lads have no chance.

“ We were in a farm at the time. 'Twas a funny old bird that had that same farm, all screwed up and wizened like. The boys called him Gilbert the Filbert—and his appearance was like to a monkey that had not washed for months. It was all alone in the farm he was, so the interpreter told me—you mind that all our regiments and batteries yonder have a French interpreter with them—and his wife had died of the shock when the Germans had been in the farm.

“ I says to him, I says, when he told me, ‘ By the Holy Saints,’ I says, ‘ if the old lady’s face was like most of those I’ve seen creeping about round here, ’twas probably a heavy casualty list those Boches had themselves when they see her.’

“ We never saw him most of the day. Down in the café he was, they said—or rather

'estaminet,' as they call 'pubs' in those parts—drinking to drown his grief. The old devil! 'Twas great the way he had us boiled. Well, one morning the General he comes round to the farm, and his staff with him. I misremember what actually he had come for; 'twas an inspection or something, but 'tis of no account. When 'twas all over the officer gentlemen were sitting in the farm having a bit of lunch, and from what Mr. Tracey told me after, the General was talking a bit open like about the intentions of the big guns, and what they were going to do. Nothing much, you mind me, but things it would be inconvenient for them German lads to know. Now, in that farm we were in then there was a cellar—they have them in many of them—where they keep the beer and the like."

Cassidy paused a moment and laid his hand on my arm. "While I think of it, sir," he said impressively, "when you get there, be careful of that same beer—for 'tis cold on the stomach it lies, and there is but little warmth in it."

I duly noted the fact, for when an expert

speaks it behoves all who can to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.

“As I was after saying,” he went on, after a short but solemn pause, “there was a cellar in this same farm, and one way of reaching it was from the room where the officers were sitting. As luck would have it, the lad who was the cook—that same M’Doolan of whom I have already told you—had run short of milk, and the officers were thinking a little hot milk and rum would be good for their health. The Doctor—the lad that had the way with him—was a great believer in it as a medicine, and the Major, I am told, did not disagree with him on the matter. So M’Doolan was in a great way, for the General was minded to try it, and devil a drop of the cow oil was there. He was shouting for Gilbert, and making a noise he said was like a cow, for not a word of the lingo could he speak. ’Twas a terrible commotion, and when he came outside to find the old man, making this noise, we thought the ration lorry was upset.

“ ‘ ’Tis not another drop the old cow will lay if she hears you,’ I says.

“ ‘ I cannot find Gilbert,’ says he, ‘ and the General is dying of thirst and the cold.’

“ Away he goes, and for some reason he went into the cellar, for there was another way in besides the one I have told you of. He gets in, and, bedad, he had not been gone a minute before there was a noise like a Black Maria inside.

“ ‘ ’Tis the cow,’ I cried. ‘ He has her caught, and it’s milking her he is.’

“ ‘ ’Tis not,’ he cries. ‘ ’Tis Gilbert, and ’tis a spy he is, the dirty devil.’ And with that he comes up with the old farmer man. He had him by the back of the neck, and his clasp-knife was in his other hand, to make him move the faster. ‘ I found him,’ he says, ‘ with his ear at the door of the officers’ room, and ’tis listening he was to the General.’

“ And then, as you may think, there was the devil and all. The lads came running, and the officers appeared, and the General, wiping his moustache, for without the necessary milk they had been drinking it neat.

“ ‘ What is it at all ? ’ he says, ‘ and why is there all this commotion ? ’

“ ‘ ’Tis a spy, sir,’ says M’Doolan, ‘ and



it's his ear he had to the door when I caught him.'

" And then a change came over them all, and they became very silent. The Major puts in his eyeglass and looks at the men. ' You may dismiss,' says he, quiet like, and they dismissed. The General he looked at the farmer, and then he turned to the Major.

" ' Is this the source,' says he, ' of the leakage of information ? ' For I may tell you, sir, that though at the time I did not know of that same—Mr. Tracey, he told me after—there had been a great leakage, and the reason had them all beat. ' What have you to say ? ' he says, and he turned to the farmer.

" The farmer he stood there, sullen like, for it was afraid to move he was, seeing that M'Doolan's clasp-knife was touching his neck.

" ' *Comprends pas,*' he says, or some such words, though not knowing the language I could not say exact like.

" ' Go down, Tracey,' says the Major, ' and search the cellar ' ; and Mr. Tracey he went off. While he was away we were all silent, and the General's face was stern, for we knew without the searching. In a few minutes

Mr. Tracey came back, and in his hand he held a telephone.

“ ‘ ’Twas under the sacks, sir,’ he says to the General. ‘ I cut the leads and here it is.’

“ The General looked at the telephone, and then at the farmer. ‘ What have you to say ? ’ he says, and his voice was terrible to hear.

I was watching the farmer, and ’twas a strange sight, for on the sudden he seemed to change. He realised ’twas the end, and he straightened himself up. ’Twas acting he’d been, and he was not an old man at all. He brought his heels together and stood to attention, giving him look for look.

“ ‘ Nothing,’ he says.

“ ‘ You know the penalty ? ’ says the General.

“ ‘ I do,’ he says, and he did not falter.

“ I suppose it was the change in him, but the Brigade Major he gives a start and then he looks at him close. ‘ Good God ! ’ he says, ‘ were you not shooting with Lord — ? ’ — he mentioned one of the quality—‘ were you not shooting with him last year ? ’

“ ‘ I was, Major Drayton,’ says he, and his voice was cold.

“ Major Drayton turns away, and his mouth was sneering, for he liked not finding him a spy.

“ ‘ Is there any letter you wish to write ? ’ says the General. ‘ I will send it for you when I have read it.’

“ ‘ There is not,’ he says, still standing stiff and rigid like.

“ ‘ Is there anything you would wish to say ? ’ says the General.

“ ‘ One thing, and one thing only.’ says he, and his voice rang out clear and loud. I remember it well, for the lads were looking from the barn to see what was occurring. ‘ We have different ideas,’ he says, ‘ you and I. There are thousands of us doing this—glorying in it—for ’tis the work of a man. I am of the Prussian Army, and I tell you that your day is over. For you English your star is setting—you have ceased to be a great nation—you are on the wane. What matter my death ? There are others. For years we have prepared, we have made ready, we have waited—and now your hour has come. It is

*der Tag,*' and he raised his hand above his head.

"Everyone was silent, and the General was silent too, for the man was terribly in earnest, At last the General spoke, and his voice was not terrible any more. 'We will not argue the matter,' he said. 'As you say, we see things differently. Perhaps in time, you and your nation will find that you have made a terrible mistake, and that the star of England has not set, but is blazing fiercer than ever.' And then he paused, and the officers round stood stiffly—just like the German—and one, I remember, caught his breath in a sob almost, for he was young and just out. 'There is no more to be said,' went on the General, 'and as you have no letter to write I will not delay. You will be shot in half an hour.'

"The German he saluted, and not a muscle of his face moved.

"Twas very gravely and quietly the officers saluted too, for, German or no German, spy or no spy, he was a brave man."