

It would be but a small exaggeration to say that in every God-forsaken hole and corner of the world, where soldiers lived and moved and had their being, before Nemesis overtook Europe, the name of Spud Trevor of the Red Hussars was known. From Simla to Singapore, from Khartum to the Curragh his name was symbolical of all that a regimental officer should be. Senior subalterns guiding the erring feet of the young and frivolous from the tempting paths of night clubs and fair ladies, to the infinitely better ones of hunting and sport, were apt to quote him. Adjutants had been known to hold him up as an example to those of their flock who needed chastening for any of the hundred and one things' that adjutants do not like—if they have their regiment at heart. And he deserved it all.

I, who knew him, as well perhaps as any one; I, who was privileged to call him

friend, and yet in the hour of his greatest need failed him ; I, to whose lot it has fallen to remove the slur from his name, state this in no half-hearted way. He deserved it, and a thousand times as much again. He was the type of man beside whom the ordinary English gentleman—the so-called white man—looked dirty-grey in comparison. And yet there came a day when men who had openly fawned on him left the room when he came in, when whispers of an unsuspected yellow streak in him began to circulate, when senior subalterns no longer held him up as a model. Now he is dead : and it has been left to me to vindicate him. Perchance by so doing I may wipe out a little of the stain of guilt that lies so heavy on my heart ; perchance I may atone, in some small degree, for my doubts and suspicions ; and, perchance too, the whitest man that ever lived may of his understanding and knowledge, perfected now in the Great Silence to which he has gone, accept my tardy reparation, and forgive. It is only yesterday that the document, which explained everything, came into my hands. It was sent to me sealed, and with a short

covering letter from a firm of solicitors stating that their client was dead—killed in France—and that according to his instructions they were forwarding the enclosed, with the request that I should make such use of it as I saw fit.

To all those others, who, like myself, doubted, I address these words. Many have gone under: to them I venture to think everything is now clear. Maybe they have already met Spud, in the great vast gulfs where the mists of illusion are rolled away. For those who still live, he has no abuse—that incomparable sportsman and sahib; no recriminations for us who ruined his life. He goes farther, and finds excuses for us; God knows we need them. Here is what he has written. The document is reproduced exactly as I received it—saving only that I have altered all names. The man, whom I have called Ginger Bathurst, and everyone else concerned, will, I think, recognise themselves. And, *pour les autres*—let them guess.

\* \* \* \* \*

In two days, old friend, my battalion sails for France; and, now with the intention full

formed and fixed in my mind, that I shall not return, I have determined to put down on paper the true facts of what happened three years ago : or rather, the true motives that impelled me to do what I did. I put it that way, because you already know the facts. You know that I was accused of saving my life at the expense of a woman's when the *Astoria* foundered in mid-Atlantic ; you know that I was accused of having thrust her aside and taken her place in the boat. That accusation is true. I did save my life at a woman's expense. But the motives that impelled my action you do not know, nor the identity of the woman concerned. I hope and trust that when you have read what I shall write you will exonerate me from the charge of a cowardice, vile and abominable beyond words, and at the most only find me guilty of a mistaken sense of duty. These words will only reach you in the event of my death ; do with them what you will. I should like to think that the old name was once again washed clean of the dirty blot it has on it now ; so do your best for me, old pal, do your best.

You remember Ginger Bathurst—of course you do. Is he still a budding Staff Officer at the War Office, I wonder, or is he over the water? I'm out of touch with the fellows in these days—(*the pathos of it: Spud out of touch, Spud of all men, whose soul was in the Army*)—one doesn't live in the back of beyond for three years and find Army lists and gazettes growing on the trees. You remember also, I suppose, that I was best man at his wedding when he married the Comtesse de Grecin. I told you at the time that I was not particularly enamoured of his choice, but it was *his* funeral; and with the old boy asking me to steer him through, I had no possible reason for refusing. Not that I had anything against the woman: she was charming, fascinating, and had a pretty useful share of this world's boodle. Moreover, she seemed extraordinarily in love with Ginger, and was just the sort of woman to push an ambitious fellow like him right up to the top of the tree. He, of course, was simply idiotic; he was stark, raving mad about her; vowed she was the most peerless woman that ever a wretched being like himself had been privileged to

look at ; loaded her with presents which he couldn't afford, and generally took it a good deal worse than usual. I think, in a way, it was the calm acceptance of those presents that first prejudiced me against her. Naturally I saw a lot of her before they were married, being such a pal of Ginger's, and I did my best for his sake to overcome my dislike. But he wasn't a wealthy man—at the most he had about six hundred a year private means—and the presents of jewellery alone that he gave her must have made a pretty large hole in his capital.

However, that is all by the way. They were married, and shortly afterwards I took my leave big game shooting and lost sight of them for a while. When I came back Ginger was at the War Office, and they were living in London. They had a delightful little flat in Hans Crescent, and she was pushing him as only a clever woman can push. Everybody who could be of the slightest use to him sooner or later got roped in to dinner and was duly fascinated.

To an habitual onlooker like myself, the whole thing was clear, and I must quite

admit that much of my first instinctive dislike—and dislike is really too strong a word—evaporated. She went out of her way to be charming to me, not that I could be of any use to the old boy, but merely because I was his great friend ; and of course she knew that I realised—what he never dreamed of—that she was paving the way to pull some really big strings for him later.

I remember saying good-bye to her one afternoon after a luncheon, at which I had watched with great interest the complete capitulation of two generals and a well-known diplomatist.

“ You’re a clever man, Mr. Spud,” she murmured, with that charming air of taking one into her confidence, with which a woman of the world routs the most confirmed misogynist. “ If only Ginger——” She broke off and sighed : just the suggestion of a sigh ; but sufficient to imply—lots.

“ My lady,” I answered, “ keep him fit ; make him take exercise : above all things, don’t let him get fat. Even you would be powerless with a fat husband. But provided you keep him thin, and never let him decide

anything for himself, he will live to be a lasting monument and example of what a woman can do. And warriors and statesmen shall bow down and worship, what time they drink tea in your boudoir and eat buns from your hand. Bismillah ! ”

But time is short, and these details are trifling. Only once again, old pal, I am living in the days when I moved in the pleasant paths of life, and the temptation to linger is strong. Bear with me a moment. I am a sybarite for the moment in spirit : in reality —God ! how it hurts.

“ Gentlemen rankers out on the spree,  
Damned from here to eternity :  
God have mercy on such as we.  
Bah ! Yah ! Bah ! ”

I never thought I should live to prove Kipling's lines. But that's what I am—a gentleman ranker ; going out to the war of wars—a private. I, and that's the bitterest part of it, I, who had, as you know full well, always, for years, lived for this war, the war against those cursed Germans. I knew it was coming—you'll bear me witness of that fact—and the cruel irony of fate that has made



that very knowledge my downfall is not the lightest part of the little bundle fate has thrown on my shoulders. Yes, old man, we're getting near the motives now ; but all in good time. Let me lay it out dramatically ; don't rob me of my exit—I'm feeling a bit theatrical this evening. It may interest you to know that I saw Lady Delton to-day : she's a V.A.D., and did not recognise me, thank Heaven !

*(Need I say again that Delton is not the name he wrote. Sufficient that she and Spud knew one another very well, in other days. But in some men it would have emphasised the bitterness of spirit.)*

Let's get on with it. A couple of years passed, and the summer of 1912 found me in New York. I was temporarily engaged on a special job which it is unnecessary to specify. It was not a very important one, but, as you know, a gift of tongues and a liking for poking my nose into the affairs of nations had enabled me to get a certain amount of more or less diplomatic work. The job was over,

and I was merely marking time in New York waiting for the *Astoria* to sail. Two days before she was due to leave, and just as I was turning into the doors of my hotel, I ran full tilt into von Basel—a very decent fellow in the Prussian Guard—who was seconded and doing military attaché work in America. I'd met him off and on hunting in England—one of the few Germans I know who really went well to hounds.

"Hallo! Trevor," he said as we met. "What are you doing here?"

"Marking time," I answered, "Waiting for my boat."

We strolled to the bar, and over a cocktail he suggested that if I had nothing better to do, I might as well come to some official ball that was on that evening. "I can get you a card," he remarked. "You ought to come; your friend, Mrs. Bathurst—Comtesse de Grecin that was—is going to be present."

"I'd no idea she was this side of the water," I said, surprised.

"Oh, yes! Come over to see her people or something. Well! will you come?"

I agreed, having nothing else on, and as

he left the hotel, he laughed. "Funny the vagaries of fate. I don't suppose I come into this hotel once in three months. I only came down this evening to tell a man not to come and call as arranged, as my kid has got measles—and promptly ran into you."

Truly the irony of circumstances! If one went back far enough, one might find that the determining factor of my disgrace was the quarrel of a nurse and her lover which made her take the child another walk than usual and pick up infection. Dash it all! you might even find that it was a spot on her nose that made her do so, as she didn't want to meet him when not looking at her best! But that way madness lies.

Whatever the original cause—I went: and in due course met the Comtesse. She gave me a couple of dances, and I found that she, too, had booked her passage on the *Astoria*. I met very few people I knew, and having found it the usual boring stunt, I decided to get a glass of champagne and a sandwich and then retire to bed. I took them along to a small alcove where I could smoke a cigarette

in peace, and sat down. It was as I sat down that I heard from behind a curtain which completely screened me from view, the words "English Army" spoken in German. And the voice was the voice of the Comtesse.

Nothing very strange in the words you say, seeing that she spoke German, as well as several other languages, fluently. Perhaps not—but you know what my ideas used to be—how I was obsessed with the spy theory: at any rate, I listened. I listened for a quarter of an hour, and then I got my coat and went home—went home to try and see a way through just about the toughest proposition I'd ever been up against. For the Comtesse—Ginger Bathurst's idolised wife—was hand in glove with the German Secret Service. She was a spy, not of the wireless installation up the chimney type, not of the document-stealing type, but of a very much more dangerous type than either, the type that it is almost impossible to incriminate.

I can't remember the conversation I overheard exactly, I cannot give it to you word for word, but I will give you the substance of it.

Her companion was von Basel's chief—a typical Prussian officer of the most overbearing description.

“How goes it with you, Comtesse?” he asked her, and I heard the scrape of a match as he lit a cigarette.

“Well, Baron, very well.”

“They do not suspect?”

“Not an atom. The question has never been raised even as to my national sympathies, except once, and then the suggestion—not forced or emphasised in any way—that, as the child of a family who had lost everything in the '70 war, my sympathies were not hard to discover, was quite sufficient. That was at the time of the Agadir crisis.”

“And you do not desire *revanche*?”

“My dear man, I desire money. My husband with his pay and private income has hardly enough to dress me on.”

“But, dear lady, why, if I may ask, did you marry him? With so many others for her choice, surely the Comtesse de Grecin could have commanded the world?”

“Charming as a phrase, but I assure you that the idea of the world at one's feet is as

extinct as the dodo. No, Baron, you may take it from me he was the best I could do. A rising junior soldier, employed on a staff job at the War Office, *persona grata* with all the people who really count in London by reason of his family, and moreover infatuated with his charming wife." Her companion gave a guttural chuckle; I could feel him leering. "I give the best dinners in London; the majority of his senior officers think I am on the verge of running away with them, and when they become too obstreperous, I allow them to kiss my—fingers.

"Listen to me, Baron," she spoke rapidly, in a low voice so that I could hardly catch what she said. "I have already given information about some confidential big howitzer trials which I saw; it was largely on my reports that action was stopped at Agadir; and there are many other things—things intangible, in a certain sense—points of view, the state of feeling in Ireland, the conditions of labour, which I am able to hear the inner side of, in a way quite impossible if I had not the *entrée* into that particular class of English society which I now possess. Not

the so-called smart set, you understand ; but the real ruling set—the leading soldiers, the leading diplomats. Of course they are discreet——”

“ But you are a woman and a peerless one, chère Comtesse. I think we may leave that cursed country in your hands with perfect safety. And sooner perhaps than even we realise we may see der Tag.”

Such then was briefly the conversation I overheard. As I said, it is not given word for word—but that it immaterial. What was I to do ? That was the point which drummed through my head as I walked back to my hotel ; that was the point which was still drumming through my head as the dawn came stealing in through my window. Put yourself in my place, old man ; what would you have done ?

I, alone, of everyone who knew her in London, had stumbled by accident on the truth. Bathurst idolised her, and she exaggerated no whit when she boasted that she had the *entrée* to the most exclusive circle in England. I know ; I was one of it myself. And though one realises that it is only

in plays and novels that Cabinet Ministers wander about whispering State secrets into the ears of beautiful adventuresses, yet one also knows in real life how devilish dangerous a really pretty and fascinating woman can be—especially when she's bent on finding things out and is clever enough to put two and two together.

Take one thing alone, and it was an aspect of the case that particularly struck me. Supposing diplomatic relations became strained between us and Germany—and I firmly believed, as you know, that sooner or later they would; supposing mobilisation was ordered—a secret one; suppose any of the hundred and one things which would be bound to form a prelude to a European war—and which at all costs must be kept secret—had occurred; think of the incalculable danger a clever woman in her position might have been, however discreet her husband was. And, my dear old hoy, you know Ginger!

Supposing the Expeditionary Force were on the point of embarkation. A wife might guess their port of departure and arrival by



an artless question or two as to where her husband on the Staff had motored to that day. But why go on? You see what I mean. Only to me, at that time—and now I might almost say that I am glad events have justified me—it appealed even more than it would have, say, to you. For I was so convinced of the danger that threatened us.

But what was I to do? It was only my word against hers. Tell Ginger? The idea made even me laugh. Tell the generals and the diplomatists? They didn't want to kiss *my* hand. Tell some big bug in the Secret Service? Yes—that anyway; but she was such a devilish clever woman, that I had but little faith in such a simple remedy, especially as most of them patronised her dinners themselves.

Still, that was the only thing to be done—that, and to keep a look-out myself, for I was tolerably certain she did not suspect me. Why should she?

And so, in due course I found myself sitting next her at dinner as the *Astoria* started her journey across the water.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

I am coming to the climax of the drama, old man ; I shall not bore you much longer. But before I actually give you the details of what occurred on that ill-fated vessel's last trip, I want to make sure that you realise the state of mind I was in, and the action that I had decided on. Firstly, I was convinced that my dinner partner—the wife of one of my best friends—was an unscrupulous spy. That the evidence would not have hung a fly in a court of law was not the point ; the evidence was my own hearing, which was good enough for me.

Secondly, I was convinced that she occupied a position in society which rendered it easy for her to get hold of the most invaluable information in the event of a war between us and Germany.

Thirdly, I was convinced that there would be a war between us and Germany.

So much for my state of mind ; now, for my course of action.

I had decided to keep a watch on her, and, if I could get hold of the slightest incriminating evidence, expose her secretly, but mercilessly, to the Secret Service. If I could

not—and if I realised there was danger brewing—to inform the Secret Service of what I had heard, and, sacrificing Ginger's friendship if necessary, and my own reputation for chivalry, swear away her honour, or anything, provided only her capacity for obtaining information temporarily ceased. Once that was done, then face the music, and be accused, if need be, of false swearing, unrequited love, jealousy, what you will. But to destroy her capacity for harm to my country was my bounden duty, whatever the social or personal results to me.

And there was one other thing—and on this one thing the whole course of the matter was destined to hang: *I alone could do it, for I alone knew the truth.* Let that sink in, old son; grasp it, realise it, and read my future actions by the light of that one simple fact.

I can see you sit back in your chair, and look into the fire with the light of comprehension dawning in your eyes; it does put the matter in a different complexion, doesn't it, my friend? You begin to appreciate the motives that impelled me to sacrifice a

woman's life ; so far so good. You are even magnanimous : what is one woman compared to the danger of a nation ?

Dear old boy, I drink a silent toast to you. Have you no suspicions ? What if the woman I sacrificed was the Comtesse herself ? Does it surprise you ; wasn't it the God-sent solution to everything ?

Just as a freak of fate had acquainted me with her secret ; so did a freak of fate throw me in her path at the end. . . .

We hit an iceberg, as you may remember, in the middle of the night, and the ship foundered in under twenty minutes.

You can imagine the scene of chaos after we struck, or rather you can't. Men were running wildly about shouting, women were screaming, and the roar of the siren bellowing forth into the night drove people to a perfect frenzy. Then all the lights went out, and darkness settled down like a pall on the ship. I struggled up on deck, which was already tilting up at a perilous angle, and there—in the mass of scurrying figures—I came face to face with the Comtesse. In the panic of the moment I had forgotten all about her. She

was quite calm, and smiled at me, for of course our relations were still as before.

Suddenly there came a shout from close at hand, "Room for one more only." What happened then, happened in a couple of seconds; it will take me longer to describe.

There flashed into my mind what would occur if I were drowned and the Comtesse was saved. There would be no one to combat her activities in England; she would have a free hand. My plans were null and void if I died; I must get back to England—or England would be in peril. I must pass on my information to someone—for I alone knew.

"Hurry up! one more." Another shout from near by, and looking round I saw that we were alone. It was she or I.

She moved towards the boat, and as she did so I saw the only possible solution—I saw what I then thought to be my duty; what I still consider—and, God knows, that scene is never long out of my mind—what I still consider to have been my duty. I took her by the arm and twisted her facing me.

"As Ginger's wife, yes," I muttered; "as

the cursed spy I know you to be, no—a thousand times no.”

“ My God ! ” she whispered. “ My God ! ”

Without further thought I pushed by her and stepped into the boat, which was actually being lowered into the water. Two minutes later the *Astoria* sank, and she went down with her. . . .

. That is what occurred that night in mid-Atlantic. I make no excuses, I offer no palliation ; I merely state facts.

Only had I not heard what I did hear in that alcove she would have been just—Ginger’s wife. Would the Expeditionary Force have crossed so successfully, I wonder ?

As I say, I did what I still consider to have been my duty. If both could have been saved, well and good ; but if it was only one, it *had* to be me, or neither. That’s the rub ; should it have been neither ?

Many times since then, old friend, has the white, twitching face of that woman haunted me in my dreams and in my waking hours. Many times since then have I thought that—spy or no spy—I had no right to save my life at her expense ; I should have gone down

with her. Quixotical, perhaps, seeing she was what she was ; but she was a woman. One thing and one thing only I can say. When you read these lines, I shall be dead ; they will come to you as a voice from the dead. And, as a man who faces his Maker, I tell you, with a calm certainty that I am not deceiving myself, that that night there was no trace of cowardice in my mind. It was not a desire to save my own life that actuated me ; it was the fear of danger to England. An error of judgment possibly ; an act of cowardice—no. That much I state, and that much I demand that you believe.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now we come to the last chapter—the chapter that you know. I'd been back about two months when I first realised that there were stories going round about me. There were whispers in the club ; men avoided me ; women cut me. Then came the dreadful night when a man—half drunk—in the club accused me of cowardice point-blank, and sneeringly contrasted my previous reputation with my conduct on the *Astoria*. And I

realised that someone must have seen. I knocked that swine in the club down ; but the whispers grew. I knew it. Someone had seen, and it would be sheer hypocrisy on my part to pretend that such a thing didn't matter. It mattered everything : it ended me. The world—our world—judges deeds, not motives ; and even had I published at the time this document I am sending to you, our world would have found me guilty. They would have said what you would have said had you spoken the thoughts I saw in your eyes that night I came to you. They would have said that a sudden wave of cowardice had overwhelmed me, and that brought face to face with death I had saved my own life at the expense of a woman's. Many would have gone still further, and said that my black cowardice was rendered blacker still by my hypocrisy in inventing such a story ; that first to kill the woman, and then to blacken her reputation as an excuse, showed me as a thing unfit to live. I know the world.

Moreover, as far as I knew then—I am sure of it now—whoever it was who saw my action,



did not see who the woman was, and therefore the publication of this document at that time would have involved Ginger, for it would have been futile to publish it without names. Feeling as I did that perhaps I should have sunk with her ; feeling as I did that, for good or evil, I had blasted Ginger's life, I simply couldn't do it. You didn't believe in me, old chap ; at the bottom of their hearts all my old pals thought I'd shown the yellow streak ; and I couldn't stick it. So I went to the Colonel, and told him I was handing in my papers. He was in his quarters, I remember, and started filling his pipe as I was speaking.

" Why, Spud ? " he asked, when I told him my intention.

And then I told him something of what I have written to you. I said it to him in confidence, and when I'd finished he sat very silent.

" Good God ! " he muttered at length.  
" Ginger's wife ! "

" You believe me, Colonel ? " I asked.

" Spud," he said, putting his hands on my shoulders. " that's a damn rotten thing

to ask me—after fifteen years. But it's the regiment." And he fell to staring at the fire.

Aye, that was it. It was the regiment that mattered. For better or for worse I had done what I had done, and it was my show. The Red Hussars must not be made to suffer; and their reputation would have suffered through me. Otherwise I'd have faced it out. As it was, I had to go; I knew it. I'd come to the same decision myself.

Only now, sitting here in camp with the setting sun glinting through the windows of the hut, just a Canadian private under an assumed name, things are a little different. The regiment is safe; I must think now of the old name. The Colonel was killed at Cambrai; therefore you alone will be in possession of the facts. Ginger, if he reads these words, will perhaps forgive me for the pain I have inflicted on him. Let him remember that though I did a dreadful thing to him, a thing which up to now he has been ignorant of, yet I suffered much for his sake after. During my life it was one thing; when I am dead his claims must give way to a greater one—my name.

Wherefore I, Patrick Courtenay Trevor, having the unalterable intention of meeting my Maker during the present war, and therefore feeling in a measure that I am, even as I write, standing at the threshold of His Presence, do swear before Almighty God that what I have written is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me, God.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fall-in is going, old man. Good-bye.