OVER THERE WITH THE CANADIANS AT VIMY RIDGE

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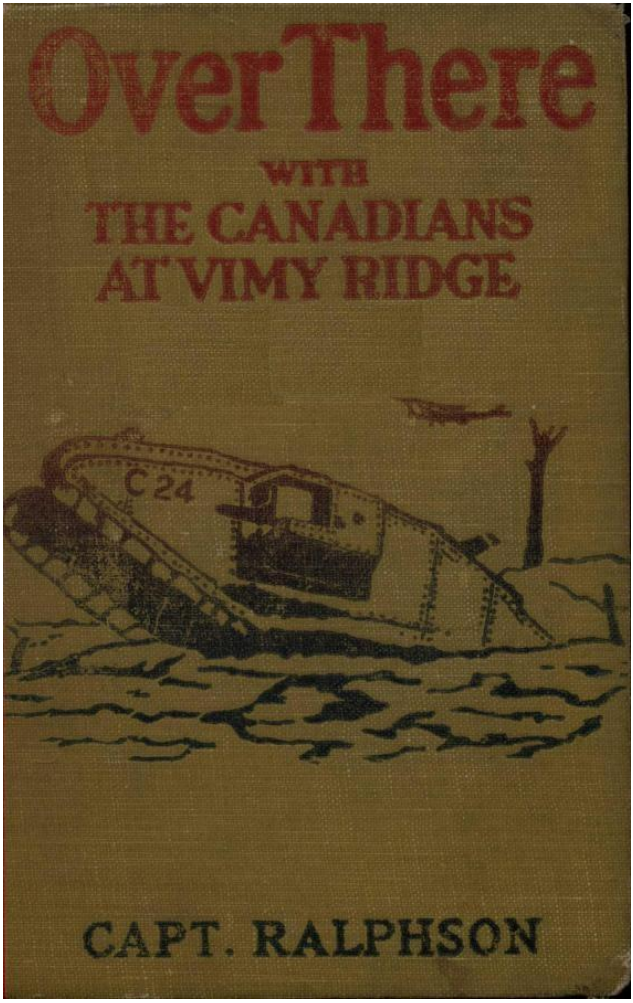
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CAPT. RALPHSON

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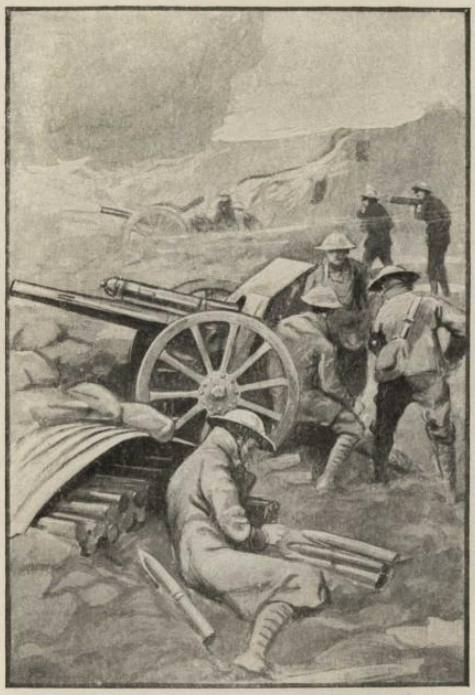

THE CANADIANS WERE MASTERFUL FIGHTERS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE WAR.
[The Canadians at Vimy Ridge]

THE CANADIANS WERE MASTERFUL FIGHTERS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF THE WAR.
(The Canadians at Vimy Ridge)

VIMY RIDGE

By
CAPT. GEORGE H. RALPHSON
Author of
OVER THERE WITH PERSHING'S HEROES AT CANTIGNY,
OVER THERE WITH THE DOUGHBOYS AT ST. MIHIEL,
OVER THERE WITH THE MARINES AT CHATEAU THIERRY

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Over There with the Canadians at Vimy Ridge

CHAPTER I

SHELLS AND MINNENWERFER

”Look out! There she comes.”

These words were whispered, for it would have been a serious military offense if the speaker had lifted his voice to a resonant tone in addressing his companion. Both were in khaki uniform, and had helmets on their heads. They had been crouching in a camouflaged pit out in No Man’s Land in the Vimy Ridge sector of the western battle front in Prance.

It was dusk of evening, a mist-laden dusk, quite as serviceable for secret movements as the darkness under a clear sky. One could not see an object as large as a man twenty yards away because of the fog.

All day it had been raining, just a slow drizzle, but nevertheless, a good deal of water had fallen, and the chief characteristic of the trenches was mud. ”Second Looie” George Tourtelle and Private Irving Ellis had been sent out through the communication trench to the listening post, in which they were crouched when Irving whispered the words ”Look out! There she comes!”

There was really no need of his offering any such warning to his companion, for the latter could hear the whistle of the approaching shell just as well as he, but there was also no call for the punishment that the second lieutenant administered. The shell passed harmlessly over their heads and exploded behind the front line trenches of the Canadian company, of which the occupants of the spy pit were members, and almost simultaneously with the explosion, Lieut. Tourtelle struck Irving a sharp blow in the face with the back of his hand.

”There!” he said viciously, with apparently no effort to subdue the tone of his voice in accord with the strict precautionary rules of such positions. ”See that you keep your thoughts to yourself hereafter or I’ll send you back to report to the captain.”

Irving was astonished, as well as angered at this treatment. He was sure there was no call even for a reprimand, whereas the officer had spoken in tones quite loud enough for the enemy to hear fifty, or possibly a hundred, yards away. In fact, he was sure that if the ”second looie” had any reflection in him at all, he must have experienced a thrill of apprehension very soon afterward lest the sound of his voice had been heard by some of his superior officers in the front trenches. If so, an inquiry into its meaning most certainly would follow.

Of course,-Irving resented the uncalled-for exhibition of brutality just exhibited by Lieut. Tourtelle, but he had too much military sense to show his resentment by look or act. Instead, he decided to take his punishment and the accompanying rebuke as provocative of a little self-discipline and to profit from

the experience, in spite of the injustice that went with it.

"I never did like that fellow from the first day I met him," Private Ellis told himself, grinding his teeth with rage under the first impulse of revenge. "Now I know him to be the very sort I thought he was. Nobody but a coward would do what he did. He knows he'd never dare to meet me on even terms. I'd clean him up so thoroughly there wouldn't be anything for a minnenwerfer to smell if one came along and dropped onto the spot where he ought to be. Goodness! there's one now."

The "minnie" referred to in Irving's soliloquy lighted right in the communication trench not more than 200 feet from the outlook pit in which the officer and the private were stationed. The explosion threw up a mass of earth, several bucketfuls of which came down into the pit as if from a giant pepper-box. One stone about the size of two fists struck Irving on his left shoulder, and for several minutes the boy feared some of the bones were broken or the joint dislocated.

But it proved to be only a bruiser and presently the young soldier was using his arm confidently, although with considerable pain. In the excitement that followed almost immediately after the explosion of this shell, he forgot the injury, although under ordinary circumstances, every movement of his left arm must have been more or less painful.

There was no shriek of warning preceding the next explosion fifty feet to the right, such as had called forth the whispered "look out" from Private Ellis that was rebuked with a blow of the hand and an equally unmilitary reprimand from the second lieutenant. But it was much more mighty in force and sound. It tore up the ground almost, it seemed, to the very edge of the pit in which the outpost was located. Strange enough, too, not nearly as much of the upheaved earth fell back into the pit as had fallen there after the explosion of the first shell. Irving felt that he knew the reason.

"That was a minnie dead sure," he told himself with a shudder. "I like the others much better. You know when they're coming and maybe can dodge 'em. But a minnie never gives any warning. They've spotted this outpost and the next one'll probably wipe us out. We'll never know what hit us."

Evidently something of this sort was going on in the mind of Lieut. Tourtelle, for suddenly he darted back through the communication trench toward the front line.

"That's funny," Irving muttered under his breath. "He's ducked without giving any order to me. What'll I do–stick? I feel like sticking just to show him that I'm made of different stuff. But no, I guess I hadn't better. He's just mean

enough to report that he ordered me back, but I disobeyed his order."

CHAPTER II
IRVING'S IDEA

Private Ellis had not been back in the front line trench long before he had good cause to congratulate himself for resisting the temptation to offer himself as an example of bravery in the face of the cowardly actions of the second lieutenant. A second minnenwerfer dropped unannounced right into the pit they had just left and the size of the bowl-shaped listening post was increased many times.

"Now, if I were an officer and in position to make suggestions, I'd advise that that pit be remanned in about half an hour," Irving mused. "The boches, no doubt, have a report of the success of their last shot, and will naturally assume that the place has been put out of commission as a lookout, and the occupants reduced to their original elements. I believe that hole in the ground is just as serviceable as it ever was to play peek-a-boo at Heinie."

Lieut. Tourtelle was in the trench within a few feet of Irving and the latter would have made an effort to get the proposition to him if it had not been for the experience he had had with the insufferable nature of the officer in the listening pit.

"I wish it weren't against orders to whisper in the front trenches–that is, when you have something of importance to communicate to the higher-up," the boy continued to himself. "I'd really like to go out there and try it again."

At this moment someone took hold of his arm–the sore one, as the pain in his shoulder reminded him–and gave it a pull. This was as much as to say, "Follow me." He obeyed, and soon reached the communication trench that connected the first and second line trenches. His leader, a first lieutenant named Osborne, led the way through this trench back to the second line. During the passage, Irving became conscious of the fact that others were following along behind. What was up, young Ellis wondered. It was not time for him to be relieved, for he had been in the trenches only about fifteen hours.

He was not long kept in doubt. Immediately on their arrival at the second line, Lieut. Osborne gathered them together–one officer and five privates–and gave the following instructions in low tones:

"I want you boys to go out beyond the barbed wire and see what you can

find out. Remember your stock instructions. Don't get into any fights. If you meet anybody, retreat. We want to find the location of any patrols of theirs out in No Man's Land. Look out for evidences of their work laying mines, repairing barbed wire, sinking listening pits, or anything of the sort. Then get back as soon as possible, keeping your bearings and the locations of your discoveries well in mind. If any 'very lights' go up, you must lie or stand still, or remain unwaveringly in your positions and attitudes until they go out, unless the light is directly between you and our trenches. In that case, you must duck and make the best of your way back under a hail of bullets, for you'll be seen. You will be armed only with pistols, hand grenades, and trench knives. Use the bombs or pistols only to save yourselves from death or capture. Remember it is information we want from you, not scalps. You will be under charge of Second Lieutenant Tourtelle."

Irving's heart went "way down" in his hob-nailed shoes at this latter announcement. He had had no idea who his companions during this patrol excursion were to be, for the night had fallen heavy and it was difficult for those in the group to recognize identities in one another's dimly silhouetted forms. The last information handed to them was almost enough to cause Private Ellis to do something desperate. As a substitute for the impulse he did the thing that had been uppermost in his mind most of the time since he left the listening post out in No Man's Land.

"Lieutenant," he said; "may I offer a suggestion which, it seems to me, would be of service to us right now?"

"Certainly, Ellis," the officer responded encouragingly. "What is it?"

"It seems to me that that pit that was increased to the size of a small volcano crater since Lieut. Tourtelle and I left it could be used with almost perfect safety now," the boy said eagerly. "The boches won't be expecting anybody to use it now. They, no doubt, think they've settled the question of its usefulness for all time to come. Now, if you'd send a couple of machine guns out there with some men to operate them, we could report back at that point to them and they could do quick execution. After they'd done their work, they could run back to our front line and the boches 'u'd have a merry time dropping some more minnies into an empty bowl."

Lieut. Osborne was quick to see the value of the suggestion.

"That's a good idea, Ellis," he said in tone of hearty approval, "and I'm going to do that very thing. Lieut. Tourtelle, see that these men are supplied with pistols, grenades and trench knives, or persuasion sticks, as they prefer, while I

get the machine gunners."

CHAPTER III
IN NO MAN'S LAND

Private Ellis felt fully compensated for the treatment he had received from the second lieutenant by the recognition and adoption of his suggestion to utilize the "minnenwerfered listening pit" for the purpose for which it was originally intended. Fully an hour had elapsed since this pit had been converted into a miniature crater, and not another explosion had taken place in the vicinity. It seemed, indeed, that he had not erred in his surmise that the enemy had checked up the results of their firing and concluded that any more shells dropped at this point would be a waste of ammunition.

But Irving was not without misgiving as the party started out through the communication trench for their patrolling and machine gun battery headquarters out in No Man's Land. The fact that Lieut. Tourtelle had been put in command of this expedition dampened his spirits and caused him to fear disaster. He fought hard against this apprehension. It had been too dark for him to discern from the "second looie's" countenance how that officer received the adoption of Private Ellis' suggestion, but he was certain it was not accepted with the best of grace. He could well picture in his mind a darkening of the countenance of "the turtle," a clenching of his hands, and a dogged sullenness of demeanor as the ill-natured officer contemplated the favor shown the boy whom he evidently hated for no good reason whatever.

Irving renamed the second lieutenant "the turtle" in a kind of subconscious way. It was not done with malice aforethought. The term just came to his mind, like a flash, and was inspired, no doubt, by the contemptible conduct of the "shave-tail," as flippant military fancy has dubbed the "second looie," and by the play of idea suggested in the spelling of his name.

The communication trench was partly a tunnel. From the front line as far as the barbed-wire entanglements it was just a plain trench, seven or eight feet deep. Then it became a subterranean passage with about two feet of earth overhead, continuing thus until beyond the wire belt, when it opened overhead again. When the patrol reached the spot where the first "minnie" exploded, they found it necessary to proceed with special caution, for the passage was blocked

there on both sides of the crater with heaps of earth. However, they managed to pass this place safely, and presently were in the listening pit that had recently been very much increased in capacity with minnenwerfer aid.

A period of waiting and listening followed the arrival at this ”crater.” Not a word was uttered, not even a whisper. Everybody gave the keenest attention of which his senses were capable to everything that offered stimulation to eye or ear. However, their careful looking and listening was unrewarded with aught save what appeared to be the most unwarlike silence and inactivity in the immediate vicinity. Now and then in the distance could be heard the thunder of heavy cannon or the nasty spit-snap of machine guns.

Conditions appearing to be satisfactory, Lieut. Tourtelle gave the agreed signal, which consisted of placing one hand on the left shoulder of each of the scouts, and the latter climbed up over the sloping embankment at several points in the big cup and crept cautiously out over No Man’s Land.

By this time the fog had lifted, and stars were beginning to peep out through rifts in the cloud-swept sky. Added to the muddiness of the ground, the chill of the atmosphere rendered life in this sector exceedingly uncomfortable.

Each member of this patrol went alone out over the rising slope of land that lay between the front line trenches of the Canadians and the common enemy of the Allies. They either crouched low or crawled on all fours. Each scout was assigned to a section of the territory as clearly defined as possible in order that there might be no crossing of paths or mistaking one another for members of a boche patrol.

Irving took a course to the right, advancing with a cautious, low crouch. His instructions were to proceed about 100 yards along a line parallel to the trenches and then advance toward the enemy line to see what he could discover.

He proceeded the distance stipulated southward as nearly as he could estimate over a half-mud and half-sod surface and then found himself close to a thicket of low bushes, the extent of which he knew to be not very great, for he had observed this feature of the terrain in the daylight. He decided that he ought to examine these bushes carefully, but realized that he must not take much time for the investigation, as each member of the patrol had been limited to half an hour in which to gather material for his report.

Private Ellis, therefore, decided to make a detour around the bushes, listening meanwhile for any sound of moving bodies among the leaves and twigs. The detection of such sounds would be ample reason for sweeping the patch with machine gun bullets.

He made almost the entire circuit without detecting the faintest noise that could command the respect of his suspicion, and was about to turn around and creep back toward the enemy lines, when a bunch of ”very lights,” fired from

boche pistols, threw their brilliance over the scene. The unwelcome illumination was prolonged in a manner that Irving had not witnessed before. The lights floated down slowly, being suspended in the air by small parachute arrangements that opened out with the increasing resistance of the air.

But something else startled the boy even more than these lights. Instinctively he remained stock still in the crouching position in which the illumination caught him. But right in front of him, not more than twenty feet away were the figures of two soldiers. They were standing erect and facing each other. One of the faces was turned well toward Private Ellis, who could hardly smother an exclamation of astonishment as he recognized him.

It was Lieut. Tourtelle!

"What in the world does he think he's doing?" Irving questioned to himself. "He doesn't seem to be very anxious to protect himself. He hasn't a pistol, knife or bomb in his hand."

The lights went out, and presently a new cause for wonder came to the ears of the crouching boy.

"Kamerad!"

Could he believe his senses? No, he wouldn't. It came to him very clearly, that utterance, from the spot where Lieut. Tourtelle stood. And yet, this was impossible. It must surely have been the enemy soldier who uttered the word of friendly greeting.

CHAPTER IV

"KAMERAD!"

"That's a piece of boche treachery as sure as I'm a Yank fighting with the Canadians," was Irving's speedy conclusion after witnessing the scene exposed by the lights and hearing the salute which he decided must have come from the enemy scout. "That's the way they work it! They're noted for treachery of that very sort."

"Kamerad!"

The salute was repeated, scarcely above a whisper, but clear enough for Irving to hear it distinctly. And with the utterance of that word another thrill of apprehension, doubt, confusion, electrified the mind and body of the listening scout, who had not been discovered by Tourtelle and the boches when the lights

illuminated the field, undoubtedly, because he happened to be crouching close to a bush large enough to cast a shadow about him.

"My!" exclaimed the boy under his breath; "I'd 'ave sworn that word came from the very spot where Tourtelle was standing. They can't 'ave changed positions so quickly. And yet, I must be mistaken. Common sense tells me it must 'ave been the boche who gave that salute. I wonder what's the matter with my hearing.

"But I'll have to go to that miserable 'shave-tail's' rescue if the other fellow plays a trick on him. I think I'll get close and see what's going on."

Irving crept cautiously toward the spot where he had seen the second lieutenant when the lights blazed forth. The distance was so short that he fancied he ought to have been able to see both the officer and the enemy scout from his position near the bush. The boche, unless he had moved since the lights went out, was a similar distance away from the watcher and about twenty-five feet to Private Ellis' right.

In a few seconds Irving reached approximately the spot where he had seen Lieut. Tourtelle, when the "very lights" illuminated the vicinity, and was surprised and just a little worried on failing to find him still there. Then he began to look around him to see if his eyes could not pierce the surrounding darkness far enough to discover the form of the officer. His search was interrupted by another startling incident.

Something struck the calf of his right leg a rather severe blow, and the boy gripped his trench-knife in one hand and his pistol in the other, ready to defend himself if attacked. Nothing further of disturbing nature followed immediately, and Irving stooped down to examine the object that had struck him. It was a short, stout club of the kind known in No Man's Land as a "persuader stick," which can be used effectively, like a policeman's billy, in the dark.

"Who in the world threw that?–not the boche, surely," the boy muttered. "It's like the one I've seen in 'the turtle's' possession; but what could he want to throw it back here for?"

"Kamerad!"

"There it goes again," buzzed through Irving's head. "I don't believe it's a trap set for me, but maybe it is for the 'looie,' and he may be just fool enough to fall for it. I owe it to–to–Uncle Sam to save him, if I can, though I'm afraid Uncle Sam 'u'd be better off without 'im."

Private Ellis put his knife and pistol away, gripped his club, and advanced toward the spot whence the last "kamerad" seemed to have come. As he moved ahead slowly he became conscious gradually that a dark object stood before him a few yards away. Would he be able to determine whether it was friend or foe? He was in doubt on this question and determined to exercise the greatest care

and caution.

He moved around in a semi-circular path to the other side of the object that had attracted his attention. But he had scarcely done this when the presence of another and similar obstruction to his vision caused him to stop and remain motionless.

This object was moving slowly and with seeming caution toward the other one. His attitude and manner were not clear because of the darkness, so that Irving could not interpret his purpose from any such indication.

"Kamerad!"

This time there could be no mistake from whom of the two scouts the salute came. It was from the one who apparently had thrown his "persuader stick" away, the one who was nearer the spot where he had seen Lieut. Tourtelle during the illumination.

"What's he doing–surrendering?"

Irving might have suspected that the officer in charge of this patrol was working a "boche trick" on a boche if it had not been for the fact that he had thrown his stick away. But this act made it appear that a panic had seized him and he was signaling his desire to surrender because he feared to enter into mortal combat with the enemy scout.

"Why doesn't he retreat if he's afraid to fight?" Irving wondered. "He could do that with perfect grace, for he's under orders not to fight unless he has to. But he seems to be advancing right toward Heinie without any reason for doing it. Maybe he's going to shove a pistol in that fellow's face, but it looks to me more as if he's lost 'is senses from fright. Anyway, I'm goin' to help 'im just for the sake of Uncle Sam. I'll hit that boche a tap on the head that'll make 'im see the Star Spangled Banner."

The boy with the club quickened his steps silently, for he was skilled with the "moccasin tread" even on hobnails. Moreover, the softness of the wet earth was in his favor. In about a minute he had stolen around behind the boche, who was advancing cautiously toward the "kamerad saluter."

He was morally certain that the soldier now within ten feet of him was an enemy, but he resolved to be very careful lest he attack one of his own comrades. So he continued to approach with the utmost caution, hoping to identify the fellow by an inspection of his uniform. In the darkness this was an exceedingly difficult thing to do, for there is a general similarity in the make of the uniforms of soldiers of most nations, so that when silhouetted they differ very little to any but a keenly observing expert.

But Irving was not forced to depend alone upon his vision in the darkness of the night to verify his identification of the two patrol scouts. There was another salute in low tone, and this time an answer was given.

”Kamerad!”

”Was willst du, hund?”

Crack!

The ”persuader stick” in the hand of the Yank swung with sharp impact against the head of the boche just under his helmet. The ”Canadian-hund” hater dropped in his tracks.

CHAPTER V

”THE TURTLE” IS WOUNDED

The next instant Lieut. Tourtelle turned and scuttled away as fast as he could scuttle. Irving’s first impulse was to follow him, but he checked it.

However, knowing well the pyramid fashion in which boche patrols work in No Man’s Land, the boy governed his next actions with caution that took this into consideration. The man he had just put hors de combat may have been the ”apex” of such a ”pyramid,” which is a very treacherous sort of trap. It is the game of the ”apex” to retreat and induce a lone enemy scout to follow him if possible. A short distance on toward the boche trenches, perhaps twenty or thirty feet apart, the distance depending upon the darkness of the night, are two more Heinies, who close in behind like a pair of pincers as the intended victim passes the line of their positions. Still a little farther on are two other soldiers, the ”cornerstones” of the ”pyramid,” who also close in upon the victim just as the attack is made. His capture is inevitable.

Irving did not purpose to be caught in any such trap; so he moved away twenty or thirty feet from the scene of his victorious exploit and waited and watched for developments.

They were not long coming. Apparently the Yank’s suspicion of a ”pyramid trick” was not in error. Apparently also the other component parts of the man-trap had heard the crack of Private Ellis’s club on the head of the ”apex” of the ”pyramid,” for they soon were gathered around the unconscious form of their comrade and muttering a torrent of ”hund curses.”

”Gee! I must get back in a hustle and we’ll get those Huns,” was Irving’s next thought. ”No doubt they’ll carry that fellow to their trench, and necessarily they’ll go pretty slow.”

He scuttled back to the listening pit even more rapidly, if possible, than ”the

turtle" had scuttled, and soon was with his comrade scouts.

"Is everybody here?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yes, you're the last one out," Lieut. Tourtelle replied in, Irving fancied, a sneering tone.

"Then sweep that section right over there"–indicating with his right hand. "There are several boches 200 yards in that direction carrying in a comrade that I cracked on the head."

The other scouts had returned with information of interest to the machine gunners, and presently the "typewriters" were rattling away with a hail of steel-jacketed messages. Cries and groans from several quarters of the arc swept by the guns indicated the effectiveness of the firing. Irving was rewarded for his evening's work by hearing several evidences of hits from the neighborhood of the scene of his adventure.

After the firing, there was a quick retreat to the Canadian front line. They got back before the Heinies were able to collect their wits and concentrate an answering fire upon the pit which undoubtedly they thought they had recently converted into a combined shambles and tomb.

This last statement is true, but misleading. The patrol did not get back without some punishment. One machine gun of the enemy got busy just before the scouts leaped back into their trench. Again we are misleading. One of the returning scouts did not leap into the trench–he fell. It was Lieut. Tourtelle.

Irving sprang to his aid, lifting the officer to his feet and supporting him thus. But his efforts were of little use. The wounded man had fainted.

Another soldier offered assistance, and together they carried him to a lighted dugout. There speedy first-aid remedies brought the wounded soldier back to consciousness, but it was evident that he was severely injured.

A telephone call in the dugout soon brought a team of stretcher bearers, and in a short time Lieut. Tourtelle was being conveyed to a Red Cross ambulance.

Next day Irving's left shoulder was so sore that he was unable to use the arm. He tried to conceal his embarrassment, but it was observed by Sergt. MacDonald, who reported it to Lieut. Osborne. Then followed an examination, which proved that the young American's shoulder was discolored and swollen as a result of the wound he received following the explosion of minnenwerfer No. 1 near the listening pit early in the evening, and he was ordered behind the lines

for treatment.

CHAPTER VI
A LITTLE HISTORY

Irving was not confined to an invalid's couch at the hospital behind the Canadian lines. His left arm was put in a sling and his shoulder bandaged in hot cloths, frequently changed. It was found that the stone that struck him had strained and bruised the muscles and ligaments severely, so that the subsequent use of the arm had brought about a condition resembling results of a bad sprain.

He was in the hospital a little over a week, and although he was not subjected to any of the heroic treatment that is administered to many of the wounded, yet the exciting thrills that had filled his short experience in trench and No Man's Land with "lots of pep and pepper" had a very fitting sequel in his hospital sojourn, very much unlike the usual wearisome wait of the wounded.

As we have intimated, Private Irving Ellis was an American of the United States brand. His home was in Buffalo, N.Y. His father was a ship captain employed by a company that operated a line of passenger and freight steamers on the Great Lakes. As a result the boy grew up a "fresh water tar." He worked with his father on the latter's boat most of the time during the summer vacations after he reached his teens.

The steamer of which Mr. Ellis had charge touched at several Canadian as well as United States ports. In one of these lived an uncle of Irving's, John Douglas, and the latter's family.

Mr. Ellis had married a Scotch Canadian bride, and as both families lived near Lake Erie, there was frequent visiting between them back and forth across the mid-water line.

As a result, Irving's best chum of his schoolboy days was his cousin, Bob Douglas. They were about the same age, and both were fond of life on the lake. Bob also was given work under Mr. Ellis's command in the summer when he became old enough to be of service on board.

Soon after England declared war against Germany, Canada began the organization of an army to aid her mother country in the great fight, and Bob was one of the first to enlist. On the day of his enlistment he wrote a long letter full of fiery patriotism to his cousin over in the United States, and perhaps you can

imagine the sensation this communication created in the family of the steamboat captain.

But no, you can't, for the big sensation was not immediate. Of course, there was a good deal of excitement among Irving's brothers and sisters–two boys and two girls, all younger than he. Cousin Bob was a real hero in their minds, and Irving envied him. The violation of the Belgian treaty, the storming of Liege and the invasion of France across the Belgian frontier were still fresh in the minds of the people everywhere. The "scrap of paper" was still waving like a red flag in the face of popular demand for the inviolability of international honor.

Well, two days later, Irving electrified the family circle at the breakfast table with the announcement that he wished to enlist. Nobody protested; nobody approved. In fact, Mr. Ellis had paved the way for his oldest son's wish by expressing the opinion that the United States would be drawn into the war before it was over. Even the younger children were so imbued with a sense of the seriousness of the great struggle as a result of things they had heard father, mother, and older brother say, that they just looked awed when Irving's announcement came.

Mr. and Mrs. Ellis had too good sense of the logic of things to start an argument to dissuade their son from his unexpected desire. They rather decided upon a plan of silence, which put an end to discussion of the war in their household. The radical change that suddenly transformed the family conversations was almost grewsome in its emptiness; the substitution of silence for talk frequently became embarrassing. But there was one thing that did not stop; that was the arrival of letters from Bob. They came almost with every mail, and Irving devoured them eagerly.

At last the boy was able to stand the embarrassing silence no longer, for the desire to take part in the great struggle against the hosts of a hated military power was growing every day. Mr. and Mrs. Ellis saw the inevitable coming. They knew that they would not forbid their son to enlist when once they were convinced of his deep-seated desire to do so. They could sacrifice their son for a great cause just as well as for country.

"Father, mother, I want to go," the boy said one day.

It was an isolated statement, that would have been Greek to one not intimately familiar with the campaign of silence that had preceded. The consent was given in silence and the subject was not discussed again until Irving began to make preparations for his departure.

He went to Canada and enlisted. Partly through a deliberately planned purpose and partly by good fortune, he was able to get into the regiment with which his cousin was training and a few months later was aboard a transport on a zig-zag, submarine-dodging course for England. After their arrival in France,

Irving because of his training in certain technical lines was put in the engineering service, but shortly before the occurrence of the events already related herein, he succeeded in getting a transfer back to his regiment on the plea that he wished to do some real fighting.

Then for the first time he learned that his cousin had been severely wounded and sent back to Canada incapacitated for further service several months before. This information came in a letter from Bob written at home. Two weeks later, while Irving was in the hospital recovering from the injury he received in the listening pit in No Man's Land, another letter came from his cousin, communicating a seemingly innocent but strange bit of news which was destined to have an important bearing on Private Ellis's future experiences as a soldier.

CHAPTER VII
TOURTELLE APOLOGIZES

But something remarkable and of great importance, affecting Irving's soldier career, took place between the time when he entered the hospital and the time when he received the second letter from his cousin at home. The deep significance of the event did not develop at once, but the novelty of the thing kept the attention of interest upon it until the real meaning was uncovered. From that time on the young American soldier's war experiences were a succession of thrills, surprises, and dangerously interesting work.

The field hospital to which he was taken consisted in part of a group of farm buildings that might have served as the nucleus of a village a short distance behind the rear battle line. Everything was slow and uninteresting to him during his first two days at this place. Then came the first incident in the chain of events that was to mean so much to Private Ellis as an American fighter in France.

He received a message from one of the guards patrolling the grounds that a wounded officer in one of the buildings wished to see him. No explanation as to why he had been sent for was given by the bearer of the message. The head nurse of the building would direct him to the man who wished to see him, he was informed.

Wondering a little who the officer could be and what was the nature of his interest in him, Irving hastened to answer the call. He was conducted by a nurse

upstairs in a former rural residence and into a small room, little larger than a closet and occupied by a single patient on an army cot.

On the way he ran over, in his mind, the list of officers with whom he could claim anything in the nature of a personal acquaintance and found it very small. Moreover, he had not known that any of these had been wounded. In this review of acquaintances of both commissioned and non-commissioned rank, however, he missed one who should not have been disregarded, although their intimacy had been of anything but friendly nature. This officer he found lying on the cot in the little room which he now entered. It was Second Lieut. Tourtelle.

The surprise became almost startling when Irving saw the face of the "shavetail" brighten up with a look of apparent eagerness as he recognized the caller. The nurse withdrew immediately and the American soldier was left alone with his strange "comrade enemy" of No Man's Land.

"Hello, Ellis," the "second looie" greeted, extending his right hand to his visitor and making an effort to smile pleasantly. "I sent for you because I wanted to have a talk with you. Sit down on the edge of the cot. Sorry there's no chair here, but I'm not the housekeeper."

This latter "breath of levity" didn't sound bad at all, and Irving began to have a vague suspicion that there might be an intelligent side to the nature of this young officer who had behaved so brutally toward him. However, he indicated that he preferred to stand and waited patiently for Tourtelle to continue.

"I called you to ask you to do me a favor," the wounded officer continued; "but first I want to apologize for the way I treated you. I won't attempt to explain why I did it because I don't know. But I acted like a bum scoundrel and ought to have been reported for it. The fact that you made no complaint against me shows that you're a real man and makes me feel ashamed of myself."

Irving was rather embarrassed by this unexpected speech on the part of his supposed "comrade-enemy." He could not well reject the profession of humility, and yet he was uncertain just how to take it. Lieut. Tourtelle apparently desired to convey the impression that he was suffering from pangs of deep regret, but although the "pangs" twisted the muscles of his countenance the visitor was unable to convince himself as to the depth of the patient's mental suffering.

"I hope you will forgive me, Ellis," the injured soldier said after a few moments' silence. "I had a spell of very bad temper that night and have regretted nay actions ever since. If there's anything I can do to make it right, I'll do it."

This seemed to be as much as any reasonable person could ask under the circumstances; so Irving replied:

"I'm sure I don't bear you any ill will under the circumstances, lieutenant. I admit I was pretty much offended by what you did, but I'm sure, after what you've just said, I can let bygones be bygones. We must remember that we are

fighting a common enemy and it is ridiculous for us to be fighting one another. We ought rather to be helping one another."

"That's an excellent idea," Tourtelle declared. "Now what would you say if I should ask you to do something for me? Would you resent it?"

"I couldn't very well, after the principle I just laid down," Irving answered with the shadow of a smile; "provided it were reasonable," he added.

"Oh, I don't see how there's anything unreasonable in it," the officer replied quickly. "The only thing is, you may think it a very odd request, freakish perhaps. But I think I can explain it satisfactorily. First, let me enlist your sympathy a little by informing you that my wound is more severe than was thought at first. I'm going to lose my left arm. One of the doctors told me today that it would have to be amputated between the elbow and the shoulder."

"That's too bad," Irving said with evidence of fellow feeling for the second lieutenant. "If there were anything I could do to save your arm for you I'd surely do it. But what's the matter?"

"A bad compound fracture and gangrene. The doctor said he'd have to cut it off today or my whole system might be poisoned. But here's the favor I want you to do for me:

"When the doctor told me my arm would have to be cut off, I asked him if it would be possible to save the limb, so I could take it back home with me."

Irving interrupted this statement with a start of surprise.

"That's what the doctor did when I suggested the idea to him," Tourtelle continued, noting the effect of his suggestion. "He wanted to know why I wished to save the arm, and I replied that it was for two reasons: first, because I thought it would make an excellent souvenir; second, because it was tattooed in a very artistic manner and I don't want to lose the art. I'm of an artistic temperament, and it would break my heart more to lose that bit of tattooing on my arm than to lose the arm and keep the art."

"I think I get you," said Irving with a smile. "You want me to put the arm in alcohol and preserve it, tattooing and all?"

"That's a clever inference, but not quite to the point," Tourtelle commented without much change of expression on his face. "The doctor offered a substitute suggestion, and that's what I'm going to put to you now."

The patient paused a moment or two, and Irving waited expectantly for the

next development in the strange narrative of novel events.

CHAPTER VIII
CUBIST ART

"Yes, I am of an artistic temperament," Lieut. Tourtelle continued in a sort of dreamy way, which tended rather to give his audience-of-one "the creeps" than to "soften his soul," as art is supposed to do.

"If he's an artist, he ought to be painting kaisers, crown princes, Hindenburgs, and Ludendorfs with horns on their heads and arrow-tipped tails," he thought grimly. "But maybe he means it all right. Perhaps he really believes he has artistic temperament, but hasn't sized himself up right. A few years ago I thought I could write poetry, but found I couldn't even write an acceptable advertisement in verse for sentimental candy or floating soap. I'll humor 'im a while and see what's on 'is mind."

Tourtelle's mind was wandering now, either with a purpose in view or because of a real genius delusion. He rambled along thus:

"I made a study of art ever since I was old enough to daub with a little box of colors and a paint brush. When I was old enough to attempt something better than a smear, I went to an art school and there made quite a hit with the professors with some of my novel ideas. Then when that craze of the cubists and the futurists swept the country a few years ago, I took it up and made quite a hit with some of my paintings. One painting in particular, a cubist production representing a basket of eggs spilling down a stairway, was regarded as a student masterpiece. The praise I received over that work intoxicated me, I guess, for I caused a copy of it to be tattooed on my arm by a fellow student.

"Well, the original was lost and I had only the copy on my arm. So, you see, I became very fond of that copy, as the original was acknowledged to be worthy of exhibition along with masterpieces of well known painters. By the way, you remember something of that cubist craze a few years ago, don't you?"

"Yes," Irving replied, "I remember something about it. There was a good deal about it in the magazines. I suppose I recall it because it was so perfectly crazy. Those artists seemed to take great delight in making a human being look as if he had gone through a threshing machine and afterwards raided a hornet's nest."

”You’ve got the idea exactly–I mean the layman’s idea,” said the self-styled cubist enthusiastically. ”And I don’t blame you, in a way. But if you could only have got an artist’s view of the idea, you’d look at life a good deal differently. But that’s neither here nor there. Oh, yes, it is, too–I forgot myself on the moment. It’s here–on my arm–and I want to save it. Now, this is what the doctor told me to do. He told me to peel off the skin where the tattooing is, as soon as the arm is sawed off. That is, he didn’t tell me to do it myself, for I’d be in no condition to perform such an operation on my amputated limb. He meant that’s the way it should be done. But I don’t believe he’d ever look after the job himself. He’d cut the arm off while I’m under the influence of ether, and that ’u’d be the last I’d ever see of it, including the miniature copy of my painting.

”So I decided to get somebody else to look after the matter, and that’s what I called you here for. It isn’t much of a job. All you have to do is to cut the skin around the tattooing and peel it off, then pack it in salt to preserve it. The doctor said it would peel off easily and that salt packing would keep the skin and the tattooed colors in good condition. The nurse got me a little box and some salt, so everything is ready as soon as the doctor comes along with his saw.”

”When is he coming?” Irving inquired.

”Sometimes this afternoon, he said,” Tourtelle replied. ”What do you think about it, Ellis? Will you do me the favor?”

”Sure,” the private answered with a smile. ”I’m sorry you’re going to lose your arm, but I’ll take care of your cubist art for you with pleasure. I’m really very curious to see what it looks like.”

”I’d roll up my sleeve and show you, but I’m afraid I’d hurt my arm,” the ”second looie” said in response.

”Oh, no,” Irving returned hurriedly, ”I wouldn’t have you do that for anything. But I’ll kind o’ hang around until the surgeon comes. If I’m not here right on the dot, the nurse’ll be able to find me without much trouble.”

CHAPTER IX
BOB’S LETTER

Irving almost forgot that there had ever been any difficulty between him and Lieut. Tourtelle in contemplation of the novel service he had promised to perform. Perhaps his remembrance of that trouble had been smothered by his cu-

riosity as to the character of this tattooed copy of a ”Basket of Eggs Spilling Down Stairs.”

The surgeon came at 3 o’clock in the afternoon and got busy at once. However, before administering the ether, he acknowledged an introduction to Private Ellis and promised to ”skin the tattoo off the arm” after the amputation and turn it over to its delegated caretaker.

Irving was permitted to be present during the operation. He watched with a good deal of curiosity for a first vision of the cubist art on the patient’s arm, and was not at all disappointed. It surely was a clever piece of work, from the point of view of a votary of this sort of art. This was the conclusion of all who saw the operation, and it was the general subject of conversation until the arm was removed.

The surgeon took more interest in the subject now than he had taken at any time previously. This doubtless was due to the special preparations made by the patient for the preservation of the tattooed skin. While the ether was being administered by a nurse, he bared the wounded arm and examined the ”copy of quaint art” with interest.

”What does he call this picture?” the ”military sawbones” asked as he gazed at the seemingly unmethodical arrangement of distorted ”cubes” of all sorts of shapes and angles.

The patient was not yet unconscious, although the nurse was dropping ether into the mask covering his mouth and nose. In a low dreamy voice he answered the question thus:

”It’s ’The Basket of Eggs Spilling Down Stairs.’”

The surgeon and the two attending nurses laughed at this answer.

”His mind is wandering under the anæsthetic,” said the surgeon.

”No, it isn’t,” Irving interposed. ”He told you the same thing he told me. You see, he’s a cubist. That’s his idea of art. That tattooing on his arm is a copy of a picture painted by him when he was a student in an art school. That’s the story he told me this morning.”

The expression on the surgeon’s face went through a motion-picture metamorphosis while the boy onlooker was making his statement. First it indicated a kind of professional resentment at the contradiction; then followed a wave of incredulity, succeeded by an enigmatical smirk. As he cast a glance of still-smirking amusement at young Ellis, the latter interpreted it to mean that he questioned the sanity of the patient.

”If I were to perform this operation in the manner that cubists execute their art, he’d probably want to sue me for malpractice,” said the scientific man as he finished preparation for the use of the knife.

The operation was quickly performed, and the surgeon obligingly peeled

off the portion of skin containing the cubist tattooing and handed it to Irving. The latter proceeded at once to pack it in the box of salt provided for the purpose, and said to the nurse in charge:

"I'll lay it here on the bed beside his pillow, so that he'll find it when he wakes up. Will you please call his attention to it?"

The nurse promised to do as requested, and Irving left the building and heard nothing more of the incident for several days. At last his shoulder recovered from its lameness and he was ordered back to the front.

Before returning to the trenches, however, he received a letter from his cousin, Bob, that stirred in him a thrill of excitement that no sensational activities of battle could have aroused. The affair thus revealed over a distance of thousands of miles confronted Irving with what seemed at first a most remarkable coincidence. But the boy was unable to accept it as such without first making an inquiry about certain suspicious circumstances. He suspected at once that something was doing that ought to be laid before army officials for investigation.

"I'm getting along first rate, Irving," Bob wrote. "My wounds have all healed. I was pretty badly shot to pieces. One of the bones of my left leg was pretty much shattered. They thought, at first they'd have to amputate the limb, but it was saved, thank goodness, although the knee will always be stiff. I had half a dozen shell and machine gun wounds in my body, too, though fortunately all of them were well removed from vital spots. But, although these injuries were as bad as one would care to receive, all of them together were not nearly as dangerous or uncomfortable as the dose of gas I got. Believe me, Irving, I don't want any more of that. If you want my opinion of it, I'll tell you I think it's more cruel than submarine warfare where they sink passenger ships without warning. The doctors thought for a while that I was going to have the 'con,' but I'm about over the effects of my dose now."

"Well, while I was convalescing, I had to have some amusement–I mean after I was able to be up and around, but hardly strong enough to shovel snow. Say, we've had some awful heavy snow storms this winter. Regular blizzards, with snow over your shoetops when you're standing on your head. That's snowing some, isn't it?

"Well, about the time I was able to get around without doing myself any harm–the gas effects kept me pretty weak quite a while,–I went up to Toronto to visit some friends. I was invited up there by one of the boys who was gassed at the same time I was. He and others had organized a 'Gas club,' consisting of fellows who had been gassed in the war. Grewsome idea, wasn't it? But it took famously. They wanted me to join, and I went up there and was initiated.

"Well, while I was up there, I saw considerable outdoor life. Several of us went hunting on snowshoes one day, and that capped the climax of my physical

exertions. I ought to have been more careful, for I was not strong enough yet for such life. Well, I became ill on the way, and the boys got me to a hospital in the outskirts of the city and a physician examined me. The doctor said there was nothing serious the matter with me, only over-exertion in my weakened condition, so I did not notify father and mother.

”Two days later the doctor said I was in good enough condition to leave the hospital, but advised me to go straight home and not try any more such vigorous exercise until I was in condition to return to the trenches. This was in the evening, and I decided to remain in the hospital until morning. I was sitting up when the doctor called, and after he left I went out into the hall to find a telephone to call up my friend and tell him of my plan to return home next day.

”The building is an old brick structure that undoubtedly would have been condemned for hospital purposes if the interior woodwork had not been of the best material and well put together. However, the layout was decidedly old-fashioned and confusing to one accustomed to modern architecture. Anyway, I got lost, so to speak, in the hall while trying to find my way to the stairway.

”I found a stairway, but soon realized that it was not the one I wanted, and was about to turn back, when something caught my attention and held it for several minutes. I was on a kind of half-floor landing before an entrance into a low rear addition, and from that position found myself gazing into a laboratory in which something very strange was going on. Three men were in the room, one of them little more than a boy and in the khaki uniform of a soldier; the other two in civilian clothes. In the upper half of the door were two glass panels, through which I could see very clearly, and the transom over the door was swung partly open.

”There was something peculiar about the two older men which almost fascinated me. Both had a decidedly foreign look. One was smooth-shaven, except for a heavy kaiser mustache; the other, the older of these two, wore a full beard.

”The young fellow in khaki was seated on a chair, with his left arm bared above the elbow, resting on a table. The other two men were working over the arm in a most studious manner. Over them was a brilliant calcium light which illuminated their work. I could see the arm very plainly and it took me only a minute or two to determine what the two older men were doing to it.

”They were tattooing the arm, and a most remarkable kind of tattooing it was. They were extremely careful with their work and progressed slowly. Judging from the care they took and the slowness with which they progressed, they must have worked on that arm several days. Also, spread out before them, was a small sheet of white paper, to which they referred frequently.

”It is hard to describe to you the appearance of the result of their work, but I’ll send you a copy of the original they were working from and explain how I

got it. I think you'll agree with me that it looks more like a piece of kindergarten patchwork than anything else imaginable.

"While I was gazing in a kind of fascination at the strange scene, the man with the kaiser mustache turned suddenly and saw me. His next movement was just as sudden and much more astonishing. He sprang to the door, flung it open, and before I could realize what was taking place he had seized me by the arm and was dragging me into the laboratory. I struggled to prevent him from getting me inside, but, because of my weakened condition, was unsuccessful. My next impulse was to cry out for help, but the situation seemed to me so ridiculous that I decided I would only make myself look foolish by so doing. This hospital was surely a highly respectable institution, I reasoned, and the misunderstanding of which I was a victim would soon be cleared up. Perhaps these men thought I was a spying meddler bent on some malicious mischief.

"After they got me inside–for the other men sprang to my captor's assistance–they closed and locked the door, also the transom, and began to quiz me as to what I was doing out in the hall. I was too sore at their treatment of me to give an explanation and demanded what they meant by their actions. I saw that they were very uneasy about something and that made me bolder. It soon dawned upon me that they had been doing something that they wanted to keep secret. That resolved me to get back at them with interest, and while they were busy with their excited demands, I got my wits together to devise some sort of trick that would show them it wasn't quite so easy to browbeat me as they seemed to imagine.

"All three of them huddled together right in front of me and rained questions at me excitedly. This suited me first rate as soon as I had decided what to do. I wasn't afraid of any desperate violence on their part; the place was too public for that. I retreated slowly to the table at which they had been working and leaned back resting my hands on it. They never caught on to what I was up to, but pressed close to me with their excited questions. I met these with noncommittal replies, and at the same time got one hand closer and closer to the mysterious slip of paper on the table. It was not more than six inches long and three wide, and I figured that if I could get one hand on it I might crumple it in my fist without their observing what I was doing. After I had been dragged into the room, I saw the young fellow hurriedly draw down the sleeve of his shirt over the tattooed portion of his forearm. He seemed so nervous while doing this that my suspicion of something wrong became very acute; and yet, the mystery could hardly have been more baffling.

"Well, I got my hand on the paper and crumpled it in my fist, and they never got onto my trick, at least, not until I got out of that room and away from them. I was now ready to answer their questions. I told them I was a patient in

the hospital and was just trying to find my way to the office and started down the wrong stairway–that was all there was to it. I then demanded that they release me at once or I would make serious trouble for them. They asked me my name, and I told them. Then the bearded man left the laboratory, and I presume he went to the office to make inquiry about me, for he came back in a few minutes and reported that he guessed I was all right. But they held a whispered conversation in German–I caught enough of their words to be sure of that–and then told me I might go. But before the door was unlocked, the bearded man apologized, as nearly as I can remember, in the following words:

"I hope you will forgive our rough conduct, but we are engaged in very important government work, and when we saw you looking through the glass at us and apparently listening to our conversation, we presumed you were a German spy. You have satisfied us that you are all right, and we recommend that, as you love your country and wish to aid us to win the war, you keep this affair strictly to yourself."

"I was astonished and more confused than ever. That statement convicted them of something on the face of it, but of what I could not conjecture. The idea that a responsible secret agent of the government should make such a speech as that under any circumstances was simply ridiculous. I was mighty sure they were not doing work for the government. They were trying to cover something up, but what I could make no rational guess.

"I decided not to remain in the hospital any longer than it would take to get my few belongings together and pay my bill. I was afraid they would discover the loss of the paper I had stolen. Well, I got out of that place so rapidly that I had everybody staring at me who beheld my movements.

"I went to a hotel, but I am dead sure I was followed. In the morning when I went down to breakfast I was conscious of being watched. I telephoned to my friend, but while in the booth I glanced about with apparent unconcern and caught one of my shadowers looking in my direction over the top of a newspaper from a seat in the hotel lobby. I met my friend, but said nothing to him about my adventure. I wanted to get back home as soon as possible. I wasn't in condition physically to undergo any great strain.

"At last I was on the train and speeding toward home, but hadn't covered more than half of the journey when I discovered that one of my shadowers was making the journey with me. He got off when I got off and for several days had a room in one of our local hotels. I talked the matter over with father and we came to the conclusion that I had fallen into a nest of the kaiser's spies. We examined the paper I had taken from the table in the laboratory of the Toronto hospital and I made a copy of it. Then we went to the chief of police and I told nay story to him. He said the matter ought to be taken up with government officials and

asked me to let him show the mysterious paper in my possession to them. I had expected this, and gave him the paper.

”A few days later I read in a newspaper that the hospital had been raided by government agents. Also, I saw nothing more of the fellow who had followed me from Toronto after I made my report to the chief of police.

”Now, what do you think of all this? Isn’t it some adventure? I’m sending to you, just for your amusement, a copy of the drawing on the paper that I stole from the hospital laboratory. Can you make anything out of it? It may afford you some diversion during long, dreary watches in camp, trench or dugout.”

CHAPTER X
DOTS AND DASHES

Not more than a minute after reading this letter and examining the slip of paper that accompanied it, Irving said to himself:

”This drawing is very similar to the cubist tattooing on the arm of Lieut. Tourtelle.”

He studied over the matter a little more and then added:

”I believe that both were made from the same copy, or original.”

A little more puzzling over the problem caused him to supplement thus:

”It looks very much as if Tourtelle and the soldier who bared his arm over the table in the hospital laboratory are one and the same person.”

The suggestion startled the boy as a realization of the logical sequence flashed in his mind.

”Gee whillikens!” he exclaimed. ”That means that his story about being an art student and about the tattooing of that picture on his arm by one of his fellow students is a fake. But why should he have faked it? Why wouldn’t the truth have served his purpose just as well?”

Irving was at battalion headquarters, awaiting orders, which were expected to come after sundown, to move forward into the trenches. While reading the letter he was seated on the log of a tree that had been literally uprooted by a concentrated shell fire at this point a week or two before. Nobody else was interested in what he was doing and he was too much preoccupied to feel much interest in anybody right now except the mysterious Lieut. Tourtelle and his equally mysterious ”amputation souvenir.”

”Now,” continued the boy, resuming his reasoning soliloquy, ”if he told me a fake story about being an art student and having one of his fellow students copy one of his pictures on his arm, what was the motive? He wanted to deceive me, of course, but why? I’ll have to leave that question unanswered for the present, I’m afraid. If I could get at his real reason for wanting that picture tattooed on his arm, I might feel some encouragement in trying to get at his motive in deceiving me. There’s no doubt the picture on his arm is practically the same as the copy on this paper. I shouldn’t wonder if they were the same size, drawn with precisely the same dimensions. Supposed to represent a basket of eggs spilling down stairs. What a ridiculous title. I’m sure I’d have hard work picking out the basket and the smashed eggs. It looks to me almost as if someone had pinned this paper up on a wall and fired a lot of eggs at it–and hit it, too, every crack. After all, it’s the best title to a cubist art picture I ever heard of. I remember our teacher gave us a talk about that kind of art and showed us some copies of cubist paintings in magazines at the time when everybody was gossiping–yes, that’s the word–about cubist art. And we surely had a lot of fun over it.

”Tourtelle told me that another student tattooed that picture on his arm. Bob’s description of the scene in the hospital laboratory makes that ’second looie’ look very much like a liar. I take it from this letter that both of those men were pretty well advanced in years. Art students as a rule are younger people. Moreover, students wouldn’t act so strangely just because they suspected somebody of secretly watching them at their work. Then, again, Bob says the government raided that hospital. What for? Enemy agents, of course; there could be no other reason. And this raid followed Bob’s report of his experience to the police. Plain as daylight. And yet, what possible connection can there be between enemy spies and cubist art? I give it up.”

Irving would have liked to make a report of some kind concerning the web of strange events that clung in confusing tangle to the mystery of the ridiculous tattooing recently peeled from the amputated arm of Lieut. Tourtelle, but the more he studied over the matter, the more probable it appeared to him that such action on his part would be unwise. His conclusions must of necessity be exceedingly vague. He could not figure out a motive in any way explaining the apparently eccentric ideas and actions of the ”hobby ridden second lieutenant.” Yes, that phrase characterized Tourtelle exactly when the spy suspicion contained in Bob’s letter was dismissed, and undoubtedly the average officer, unless he be of a very suspicious nature, would take that view of it.

”I’d be laughed at if I made a report of this affair without being able to place my finger on anything more definite than I seem to be able to single out now,” he concluded. ”So I guess I’ll have to keep this thing to myself or else whittle my wits to a sharper point than I have been able to whittle them thus far.”

About an hour after nightfall Irving returned to the front line trenches together with seventy-five or a hundred other soldiers who constituted a relief shift, to take the place of a like number of tried and muscle-cramped boys whose capacity for efficient service was in need of recuperation. The sector was quiet on this occasion and the relief exchange was effected without notable incident. In fact, conditions were such that it was considered safe to permit most of the soldiers to sleep under ground of sentries here and there along the trenches and in listening posts out in No Man's Land.

But Irving did not "sleep a wink," although general conditions were favorable for sleep in the dugout where he wrapped himself in a blanket and attempted to follow the reposeful example of half a dozen comrades with little on their minds save the ordinary routine of bloody battle in the past and prospect of much more fight and blood in the future. No mystery racked their minds, and they rested peacefully enough. With Private Ellis, however, it was different, and in a very few minutes after he lay down a plausible solution of the puzzle that had been teasing him for several hours popped into his brain with startling suddenness and rendered sleep about as impossible to him as peaceful surrender was to outraged Belgium.

After the excitement of the first thrill was over, Irving was unable to trace the process by which he arrived at his conclusion. After all, "process" is too slow a word to use in this relation. "The first thing he knew," his mind had jumped from the rough pen sketch of the cubist art drawing in his pocket to the tattooed copy as he had seen it on Tourtelle's arm. A moment later he found himself almost weirdly interested in the recollection of a marked difference in these two copies which had not impressed him before.

Then came a new thrill of eagerness, followed by incredulity, then eagerness and incredulity battling for supremacy, over a suspicion that would not be downed in spite of its almost laughable character. Could it be possible? Yes, no, yes, no–back and forth the contradictions swung. But one thing was certain; Irving recalled it distinctly: In the maze of configurations of "distorted cubes" were myriads of dots and dashes, dots and dashes. What could they mean? If the theory which forced itself upon him was correct there was only one reasonable solution of the whole mystery.

The boy in the dugout could scarcely contain his excitement as the seemingly logical explanation of the mystery "dotted and dashed" itself into a position

of settled conviction in his mind.

CHAPTER XI
IRVING TELLS THE SERGEANT

”Dots and dashes, dots and dashes, dots and dashes,” kept running through Irving’s mind.

He took Bob’s letter from his pocket and drew from the envelope the paper containing his cousin’s copy of ”The Basket of Eggs Spilling Down Stairs.”

”Bob drew this in a hurry, or at least he had no appreciation of the value of minute details which, I believe, are more important than a thousand baskets of eggs,” the young soldier mused as he gazed at the cleverly drawn, but rather inaccurate, copy in the light of the trench lamp. ”He disregarded most of those clots and dashes, except in a few places, thinking, I suppose, that continuous lines would do just as well. And he was right so far as the picture is concerned. In fact, I believe those dots and dashes that were on Tourtelle’s arm detracted from the art of the artist, if I may pose as an art critic; but for the purpose intended they are absolutely essential.

”Now, I wish I could get hold of an officer who would listen to me and maybe I could start an investigation that would result in something worth while. But Sergt. Wilson, who messes in here, is out with some other men in a listening post and I’m sure it would be better to approach the lieutenant through him. That means I’ve got to wait here probably until morning before I can get this great weight of responsibility off my mind.”

And that was exactly what he did. He lay there thinking over and over again the events of his own and his cousin’s adventures concerning Lieut. Tourtelle. There was no use of his attempting to slumber, and it was not long before he gave up the idea entirely. However, he was in no great need of sleep, inasmuch as he had almost reveled in the luxury of rest ever since he was ordered to the field hospital for treatment of his shoulder.

Through all the rest of the night, Irving continued to review and analyze the strange case of ”freak art.” And perhaps it was fortunate that he had ample opportunity to do this, for it is quite possible that otherwise he would not have had certain important points sufficiently in mind to make a strong and convincing case when at last he found opportunity to make his report.

”It seems to me those dots and dashes explain Tourtelle’s anxiety to keep that tattooing on his arm,” the boy mused. ”Now, if he’s a spy, he was putting over just a clever ’con game’ when he sent for me and begged my forgiveness and then asked me to do him a favor. After all, I’ve got to admit that that fellow is pretty smooth. No, I don’t think he overdid it at all. I did think it a little strange when he followed his plea for forgiveness with a request that I do him a favor. But the favor was so simple, although unusual enough, goodness knows, and there appeared to be so little opportunity for him to trick me into something I wouldn’t like to do, that it seemed foolish for me to hesitate. It looks now as if he tricked not only me, but the surgeon and nurses, too. I wonder what that surgeon would say if he knew that a spy had made clever use of him to prevent a very deep enemy plot from going to pieces at a time when the bottom was about to drop out of it. He’d be a lot sorer, I bet, than he was when I contradicted him after he said Tourtelle’s mind was wandering under the anæsthetic.

”’A Basket of Eggs Spilling Down Stairs’–that’s some name for a painting. I wonder what’s behind it. Now, it’s just possible that that name’s written somewhere in cipher in the picture, and maybe a key goes with it and that key applied to the name will produce the message he’s carrying to the enemy. I suppose he’ll watch his opportunity and–

”My goodness!”

Irving uttered this exclamation aloud and the sound of his voice awoke one of the sleepers in the dugout, who asked what was the matter. The soliloquist replied ”nothing,” that he had merely startled himself with a ”bright idea,” whereupon the awakened soldier grumbled, ”You’re a nut,” and rolled over and went to sleep again.

”I wonder if the sergeant will call me a nut, too, when I tell him my story,” Irving reflected a little apprehensively. ”In spite of the way everything fits into everything else as logically as can be, the whole account is bound to sound a good deal like a fairy story. Sometimes I feel like giving it up and casting the whole affair out of my mind, but–but–I can’t. Now, that idea that made me burst out like a ’nut,’ as that soldier called me, fits in just as pat as can be with all he rest. It looks, it looks, yes, sir, it looks just as if Tourtelle was trying to surrender out in No Man’s Land the other night when we were scouting there together. I don’t know how I can prove it, but it’s plain enough to me, unless my whole theory falls down, and I don’t see how it can.”

At last, shortly before the break of day, reliefs were sent to the various sentry posts, and Sergt. Wilson returned to the dugout with several other men. Irving seized the first available opportunity to tell the ”non com” that he had some important information that he wished to ”get off his mind,” and they withdrew to one side of the underground room to talk the matter over.

In a few minutes Private Ellis had Sergt. Wilson interested by his simple, direct method of presenting his subject. In fifteen minutes, the boy had finished his narrative and turned over his cousin's letter to the officer to read. The latter pored with intense interest over not only the epistle but the accompanying copy of the mysterious "Basket of Eggs Spilling Down Stairs." Presently he said:

"You've got something very important here, Ellis. I'm going to see Lieut. Osborne right away. I think you had better come along. Unless I'm badly mistaken this matter will get to the major in a very short time and something important will be doing."

The sergeant climbed up out of the dugout into the trench, and Irving followed, and soon they were making their way to another similar excavation which was the headquarters of Lieut. Osborne.

CHAPTER XII
QUIZZING A SPY

Sergt. Wilson's prediction that Private Ellis's spy story would go to the major of the battalion was more than realized. Affairs moved rapidly from the time when the non-commissioned officer got a clear idea of the importance of the situation. He and Irving made a rapid transit from their trench cave to the dugout where Lieut. Osborne was stationed, and there the story was repeated. The lieutenant was interested at once and took the matter up with the captain. The latter instructed the lieutenant to remain at the telephone until he could communicate with his superior officers.

There followed a wait of rather nervous expectancy for Irving. It really was not more than half an hour, although it seemed much longer to the young soldier who made the original complaint. At last, however, came a ring of the muffled telephone bell, and Lieut. Osborne lifted the receiver to his ear. He listened a minute or two, then hung up the receiver and said:

"Ellis, you and I are ordered to proceed to the hospital and confront this young spy of yours with the fact that we have the goods on him. The captain communicated with the major, and the major with the colonel; so, you see, your story has gone up to the head of the regiment. Sergt. Wilson, I am going to leave you here in my place while I'm gone. I hope to be back before nightfall. If I'm delayed longer than I expect to be, I'll communicate with you by 'phone. Ellis,

we'll start at once. The colonel has ordered an automobile to be ready to meet us at the nearest relief station back of the lines. Come on."

In a few minutes the officer and the private were racing through the nearest communication trench, which was deep, sinuous and well camouflaged, on past the second and third lines to the relief station just beyond a small inn covered with a growth of trees and a thicket of tall bushes. The promised automobile was waiting for them, and they were soon speeding away toward the field hospital which, in the last hour, as a result of Private Ellis's story, had become a center of very serious interest in a strange admixture of an elaborate spy system and "high art."

Lieut. Osborne and his companion were both apprehensive lest they find the second lieutenant in condition so weakened that it would be inadvisable to subject him to the strain of a "third degree." They discussed this possibility on the way, and the officer decided that he would broach the subject gently in order to avoid the danger of defeating their purpose through a physical and mental collapse of the patient.

But Lieut. Tourtelle proved to have withstood the shock of the operation much better than might have been expected. They found him looking really bright and vigorous. Apparently he had had the best of care and had rested well. Nevertheless, Lieut. Osborne called a nurse aside and asked her to administer a stimulant to him, as he had important business with the patient under instructions from the commander of the regiment. The nurse did as requested without arousing any suspicion in the "cubist art spy."

"This is quite a surprise to receive a visit from a superior officer under such circumstances, and I'm sure it's very much appreciated," Tourtelle remarked after he had answered several questions put by Lieut. Osborne regarding his condition and the attention he was receiving.

"The occasion fully warrants our coming to see you," the superior officer replied in a purposely peculiar tone of voice. Tourtelle noticed it and looked inquiringly at Lieut. Osborne.

"Private Ellis told me about that art souvenir that was peeled off your arm and I have come to see it," continued the leader of the "visiting expedition."

Tourtelle shot a furtive, searching glance at each of his callers. These glances did not escape the observation of either the officer or the private, for both were looking for evidence of this sort; but they were well on their guard and did not betray, by the slightest expression, any evidence of what was going on in their minds.

"Of course you have it here," Lieut. Osborne continued in tone of assurance. "Ellis tells me he laid it by the side of your pillow and asked the nurse to call your attention to it after you came out from the effects of the anæsthetic."

Plainly enough Tourtelle was struggling within himself over something, and his visitors did not have much trouble convincing themselves what it was. But finally he settled the problem tentatively in favor of the evident inevitable and replied:

"Yes, of course, I have it here, only I hate to unpack it; but if your curiosity over a freak idea is uncontrollable, I must submit. I'm very jealous over that affair, because the average person is utterly incapable of appreciating it and would only laugh at me."

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of our doing anything of the kind," returned the lieutenant reassuringly. "We're deeply interested, both of us."

"You must be profoundly interested if you can leave your places at the battle front just to inspect a sample of what most people would call freak art. You didn't call a truce and sign an armistice just for this, did you?"

The lieutenant realized by this time, as Irving had realized before, that he was dealing with a young fellow of no puny intelligence. Tourtelle, although signifying willingness to do as requested, was evidently fencing with weapons of jest and banter, intended to be accepted as conversational pleasantry. He made no motion as yet to produce the box containing the tattooed section of skin packed in salt.

"No," the visiting officer replied quietly; "but I'm sure you won't disappoint me after I've gone to the trouble to get permission from the colonel to come here and see that remarkable curiosity that Ellis says you possess. Where is it?–under your pillow?"

Lieut. Osborne made a move as if to reach under the pillow. The patient made no motion to object; he maintained a passiveness of manner which the inspecting officer accepted as an admission as to the whereabouts of the article of interest. The next moment the box was produced from its "hiding place," for Irving and the lieutenant were certain that when Tourtelle put it under the pillow his purpose was primarily to conceal it from inquisitive eyes.

The officer opened the box and poured the contents out on a paper lying on the floor. Then he picked out the "cubist parchment" and gazed at it with deep interest.

"By the way, Lieut. Tourtelle," he said after an inspection lasting a minute or two, "would you mind telling me what these dots and dashes mean in this work of art? They look to me like letters of the Morse telegraph code."

As he spoke he looked sharply at the soldier on the cot, whose face in an instant became an interesting study of struggling effort to appear calm and curious and only superficially concerned. Irving realized, however, that Lieut.

Osborne was getting down to business without any preliminary foolishness.

CHAPTER XIII
TOURTELLE ADMITS

"Nonsense," replied Tourtelle, with remarkable calmness, after what must have been a desperate effort at self-control. "Nothing of the kind. I drew the original picture and I don't know the first thing about telegraphy."

"But it's here," Lieut. Osborne insisted. "I've had a course in wireless and can read the code like a book. Let me read some of it to you–'h-e-f-c-k-a-w-r-t-m-c-a-a-b-l'–and so on, all around every one of these cubes."

"Is that so?" exclaimed the patient, rising slightly on his remaining elbow, but falling back. "Let me see it. I never noticed that. Bickett must have put one over on me if you're right. Bickett was the student who tattooed the picture on my arm."

"Where was that tattooing done?" asked Lieut. Osborne.

"In our room in Montreal," replied Tourtelle, without hesitation. "He and I roomed together and attended art school."

"You're sure it wasn't in a laboratory of a hospital in Toronto?" was the inquisitor's next query.

This was too much for the bedridden "second looie." He opened his mouth as if to speak, but his jaw dropped and remained in its lowered position half a minute as if paralyzed. At last, however, he managed to find his voice again, but it came with a succession of stammers.

"Wh–wh–why," he said, with a brave enough effort to transform confusion into astonishment. "Wh–wh–what do you mean? I–I don't understand you. You talk like a sphinx. I hope you're not questioning my word. I can't understand what your motive can be. But maybe you're making sport of me. If I told you that I was born in–in New Brunswick, would you try to make out it was in Saskatchewan?"

"Not unless the fellow who was seized out in the hall and dragged into the laboratory should appear suddenly and contradict your statement," the investigating officer answered. "By the way, did you know the hospital was raided by government agents a few days after the tattooing operation?"

By this time, Tourtelle, who must have realized the gravity of the situation,

had summoned all the nerve needed to provide him with a bold front to meet the emergency. He just sat and stared blankly at his visitors.

"Why don't you answer?" Lieut. Osborne demanded.

"Because I haven't the faintest idea what you're driving at," Tourtelle replied, with well assumed mystification. "But I'm sure of one thing, or rather one of two things, and that is that either somebody has put you on a very bum steer, or you have got things very badly twisted. You'll have to straighten matters out some way or else stop this line of questioning, for I don't know how to answer you except by denying absolutely more than half you say."

"Now, see here, Tourtelle," returned the visiting officer severely; "this camouflage of yours has gone far enough. I came here to get from you an admission of the main truth and some additional information. I already have all the proof needed to convict you of being a spy. Unless you do what I ask you to do, undoubtedly you will be courtmartialed and shot. Now, the question is, do you want to save yourself from such a fate?"

"That is a grave accusation," Tourtelle answered icily. "At any rate, I'll listen to the evidence you have against me. Suppose you tell me what it is."

"It's right here in this," Lieut. Osborne replied, unhesitatingly, holding up the section of skin containing the tattooed outlines of strange art. "You have here a message of secret information for someone on the other side of the Rhine. I want to know whom it is for and the substance of the message."

"But how do you figure that I could get it into the hands for whom it is intended, admitting for the sake of argument that you are correct in your inference?" the soldier on the bed inquired.

"By surrendering to our enemy at the first opportunity," was the answer. "That's what you tried to do out in No Man's Land the night you were wounded."

This was a new startler for the wounded spy, as was evident from the expression on his countenance. After a few moments of undoubtedly painful meditation, he continued:

"Again, just for the sake of argument, how could I be certain that you would keep your word after promising to save my life if I acted according to your instruction?"

"All you have is my word for it and your own common sense. If you give us some valuable information that could not have been obtained otherwise, it stands to reason–doesn't it?–that we'd forget that you'd been a spy, particularly so if the value of your information was greater than your menace as a spy."

"All right, I'll admit I'm a spy," said Tourtelle, a little doggedly; "but I'm not going to tell you anything until I have more authoritative assurance that I'll not be courtmartialed."

"I don't mean to assure you that you won't be courtmartialed," Lieut. Os-

borne answered, hastily. ”I mean that I will intercede for you. Moreover, there is no evidence that can be produced against you except through Private Ellis and me. We have the information, and will either produce it or keep it under cover as we see fit.”

”But suppose I really have no information of great value; suppose I’m merely a bearer of a cipher message, which I can’t read and don’t even know the person to whom it is addressed–what then?”

”I don’t ask anything impossible,” the inquisitor replied. ”All I want is a straight-forward story from you, with all details. If you keep anything back or lie to me, I’m very likely to find it out, and then you’ll fare worse than if you refused point blank to enter into an agreement with me.”

”All right,” said Tourtelle, ”I suppose I may as well give in, for you seem to have some real information, although I can’t understand where or how you got it. Anyway, here’s my story:

CHAPTER XIV
TOURTELLE’S STORY

”I must first tell you who I am,” Lieut. Tourtelle began, after some moments’ deliberation. Ordinarily his countenance was almost expressionless, for he belonged to a certain type of pulseless-souled humanity that talks little with the face, except through that orifice where the tongue wig-wags the signals of the mind. But on this occasion, he looked not only serious, but seriously concerned over his predicament. Before he got farther with his introduction, however, Lieut. Osborne interrupted him with this warning:

”I want to urge you, Tourtelle, to be very careful to tell the truth and the whole truth, because you are surely going to get yourself into trouble if you don’t. We know a good deal more than I have told you, and I promise you that I have some information on which I can catch you if you tell me any lies.”

”You needn’t be afraid of my lying to you,” the spy returned quickly; ”for, to tell the truth, I’m sick of this whole business. I wish I’d never got into it, and if I succeed in getting out with a whole skin, I’ll admit I’m glad you caught me.

”I’ve done a whole lot of thinking since I agreed to put this thing over or try to put it over. There’s a lot of difference between sitting still and dreaming how you love your father’s fatherland before he emigrated, and plotting in the

midst of your fellow countrymen to help a lot of tyrants whom you've never seen on the other side o' the world. I didn't think of that until I got up to my neck in this business and found it almost impossible to get out.

"You see, my father was an Austrian, and my mother was from Alsace-Lorraine. Both of them died when I was five or six years old and I was adopted by a brother of my father, also an Austrian, of course. By the way, my name is not Tourtelle and never was. That was just a bit of camouflage, so that I might pass as being of French descent. My real name is Hessenburg. My uncle was most bitterly anti-British in this war, and is yet. He was a man of considerable means and position in the business world, was a member of the board of directors of that hospital in Toronto where my arm was tattooed. Yes, that hospital was a hotbed of spies, and I'm glad they raided it.

"I wasn't taken into the confidence of the high-ups in the spy organization in Canada, but I know it was a big one. I suppose they thought I was too young to be trusted with any more information than was necessary to make me useful. And for that reason, you see, they did not translate to me the message that was tattooed on my arm, and they didn't give me the key to work out the cipher. Besides, I'm no telegrapher. You'll understand, therefore, that they didn't pick much of an expert to carry their message."

"Didn't you know that there were telegraphic characters in that picture on your arm?" asked Lieut. Osborne.

"Yes, or rather I suspected it pretty strongly," was the reply.

"And you don't know what the message is?"

"No, I don't."

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Well, yes, I have an idea, but it's pretty vague. I overheard a little of a conversation not intended for my ears, and from that I got the notion, or perhaps it's only a suspicion, that the message contains the British naval or aeronautical wireless code."

"At any rate, it's of great importance," suggested Lieut. Osborne.

"Oh, there's no doubt about that," Tourtelle, or Hessenburg, assured.

"Are you an artist?" was the inquisitor's next question.

"Yes, I am; that is, I was an art student, and the story I told Ellis about making a hit with a cubist painting is true. That's what started the scheme of tattooing a picture message on my arm."

"Who suggested it?"

"One of the fellows who did the work. He was something of an artist as well as a chemist.

"The fellow with whiskers?"

"Yes," replied the spy. "I see you have had a pretty thorough report of that

affair."

"We have. Did you know that the boy who was seized in the hall and dragged into the laboratory left with the pen-and-ink sketch of your painting crumpled up in his hand?"

"No. Is that what became of it? One of the men suggested that he must have stolen it, but I didn't think he was right."

"Did you know they put detectives on his track?"

"No. Did they?"

"That's what they did. And that is probably the reason why the hospital was raided a few days later. If they hadn't followed him, the boy probably would have passed the matter up and dismissed it from his mind. But he became restlessly curious and reported the affair to the police."

"Hm!" Tourtelle grunted at this elucidation.

"Do you mean for me to understand that you have no idea whom this message is for?" asked Lieut. Osborne, indicating the section of skin illuminated with cubist art.

"That's exactly what I mean," the cubist spy replied.

"But what were you supposed to do after you got over into Germany?"

"Seek out an army officer and tell him my story. Any officer, I was told, would know at once what to do with me."

"Do you speak German?"

"Not much, nor Austrian, either. I studied German at school and learned enough to be able to make myself understood on the other side of the Rhine."

"Come on, Ellis," said Lieut. Osborne, rising suddenly. "We've got all we want now. I'll report to the colonel and probably in a day or two Tourtelle will hear from us again. I'm going to take this cubist souvenir with me."

In the course of the conversation he had repacked the section of tattooed skin in the salt, and as he arose to leave he put the box in one of his overcoat pockets. Irving followed him out of the building, and soon they were speeding back over the road by which they had reached the field hospital.

CHAPTER XV
IRVING AN ORDERLY

"We will go direct to Col. Evans' headquarters," Lieut. Osborne announced

shortly after the return trip had been begun. ”He asked me to report back to him as soon as possible.”

The trip was soon made. The colonel’s headquarters were less than a mile behind the rear line trenches, and the road to this point was in fairly good condition.

Irving felt a deep interest in this visit aside from the bearing it had on the matter under investigation. He had never seen a colonel’s headquarters and was curious to know what appearance such a place might present.

He was not greatly surprised to find it a dugout, although he had not pictured it such in his mind. The first suggestion that had offered itself to him was that the head of the regiment probably had stationed himself in the palatial residence or chateau of some wealthy fugitive civilian. However, when the truth appeared to him with the most commonplace simplicity, he decided that it was the very thing that he ought to have expected.

The dugout was a two-room affair in the side of a hill on the outskirts of a small village. The hill was covered with fruit trees and berry vines, affording an excellent camouflage. One of the rooms was occupied by the colonel and the other by his orderlies. The walls and roof were of concrete, thick enough to resist heavy bombing from the air. Other attaches of this headquarters were housed in several homes of the otherwise deserted village.

The commander of the regiment received the visitors in his elaborately furnished living room, bedroom and dining room. Lieut. Osborne began at once a rapid account of the interview he had had with Second Lieut. Tourtelle, or Hessenburg. The colonel listened attentively, every now and then casting a sharp and sometimes lingering glance at Private Ellis, who had all he could do to suppress the anxious eagerness he felt relative to impending developments. Naturally, as he had rather dubiously offered the original information that led up to the partial disclosure of extensive spy activities, he felt as if his whole future depended upon the full success of the investigation.

Lieut. Osborne opened the box containing the tattooed message and took it out of its salt packing. Col. Evans examined it curiously while the reporting officer explained all he knew about it, calling attention to the telegraphic dots and dashes running around the numerous ”cubes.”

”We ought to get somebody who is skilled in cryptographic work busy on this at once,” said the colonel. ”I’ve been in communication with the brigadier general’s headquarters and suggested that to them, and now that I have this in my possession, I’m going to urge it stronger. I’ll get them on the wire again.”

They were seated at a table at one side of the room, and as he spoke, the regiment commander cranked the telephone box at his right and lifted the receiver to his ear. The conversation was short, for the intelligence department at

the brigade headquarters had been busy on the colonel's suggestion and already had found an expert qualified to probe the mystery of the cubist cryptogram. He would start at once for the regimental headquarters.

"Just wait here till our cryptologist arrives," said the colonel, after reporting the result of his conversation over the telephone; "and maybe he'll be able to clear up matters so that we may begin to see bottom."

The expert, Lieut. Gibbons, attached to the divisional commander's intelligence staff, arrived half an hour later, and the spy story had to be told all over again for his benefit, while he examined curiously the "freak-art camouflaged message."

"I may be able to work this out in a few hours, and then again, it may take several days," he said. "I'd better take it with me back to headquarters and work on it there and report back results as soon as I get them."

The colonel assented to this and the expert prepared to depart with the cubist cryptogram in his possession. Then the regimental commander turned to the officer and the private and said:

"Lieutenant, you will return to your company. I will call on you when I wish to communicate with you again on this matter. Private Ellis, you will remain here. I can use another orderly, and, besides, I'd like to have you close at hand in case of further developments in this spy investigation. By the way, can you operate a motorcycle?"

"Yes, sir," Irving replied.

"Good. You can be useful at once. I have some papers that I want delivered to the brigadier general. You may follow Lieut. Gibbons' automobile and learn the way. He goes past the brigadier general's headquarters."

A motorcycle was soon produced and Irving, after a hurried examination of it, announced that he understood it thoroughly. A minute later he was in the saddle and "lickety-chugging" along after the intelligence official's automobile.

And meanwhile there was buzzing in his brain this new wonder with eager expectation:

"What was the real purpose of Col. Evans in keeping him at headquarters"? Was that officer likely to have further army detective work for him to do?

Already he was beginning to feel like a government secret service man, and he longed to be of further service to his country and the cause of world freedom in this romantic line.

He little dreamed how far beyond the scope of his saner imagination his

patriotic longing was to be realized.

CHAPTER XVI
A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT

Three days later Col. Evans summoned Irving into his dugout office and said to him: ”Well, the cubist cryptogram has been read.”

The officer smiled with a kind of grim exultation as he spoke. Then he added:

”And it contained very important information.”

”I’m glad of it,” the boy answered simply, although he felt almost as if he would burst with a ”hurrah!” that threatened to explode within him.

”Of course you are,” the commander concurred. ”And I suppose you’d like to know what’s in it.”

”Naturally,” Irving replied; ”but I doubt very much if you are going to tell me.”

”Why?”

”Because, in the first place, it’s none of my business as a private; and, secondly, I presume it is information of a character that the war department wishes to keep secret.”

”Right you are, Ellis. That’s the main reason I put the matter up to you. I wanted to find out what you thought of it. But there’s another reason why you shouldn’t know the contents of that message, and I’ll tell you that later. Meanwhile, I have another important matter that I want to quiz you on. Do you want to go back to the trenches?”

”I’m perfectly willing to go back if that is the best thing I can do,” Irving answered readily. ”But I’ll say this, that if there’s any other place where I can be of greater service, I prefer to be sent there. It’s a question of service pure and simple with me. Naturally, I have my selfish preferences, but I manage to suppress them.”

”Have you any idea where you could be of greater service than in the trenches?” asked the colonel.

”I’ll answer your question in this way: I’m sure that the time I spent helping to run down a dangerous spy was put to much better purpose than it would have been if spent in the trenches, although I think I did some good work out in No

Man's Land in front of the trenches. But, of course, there's no more of that kind of work left for me to do."

"Are you sure about that?"

Irving looked curiously at the putter of this question, considered a moment or two, and then replied:

"No, I'm not; but I don't know of anything more."

"Suppose some more of that kind of work should be found, would you like to do it?"

"Surely."

"Irrespective of the size of the task or the danger?"

"I don't know how I could find anything much more dangerous than that skirmish in No Man's Land," Irving replied slowly. "The other part of your question I don't wish to answer rashly. Tell me the task, and I'll tell you if it's too big for me."

"That's the very answer I wanted you to make," said the colonel, almost eagerly. "Now, suppose we should ask you to go over into Germany on an important spy mission, how would that strike you?"

This was something Irving was not looking for, and he was so astonished that he did not answer for several moments. Then he said:

"It would strike me all right."

"Suppose you were given a credential that would effect admittance for you into high official circles–would you go there and attempt to obtain information that might be available, because of your credential?"

"Yes, sir," Irving replied firmly.

"What do you think of that stunt of tattooing a message in the form of a freak art production on the arm of Lieut. Tourtelle?"

Irving smiled.

"Of course," he said, "it was clever and under ordinary circumstances ought to have been successful; but I'd rather not go through life with a thing like that on my arm. It might brand me as a freak, if not something worse."

"I don't blame you," returned the colonel, but as he spoke a peculiar shrewdness lighted his eyes, causing the boy to wonder a little. Then he added: "Still, it might be possible for one to submit to such nonsense if thereby he might advance a great and worthy cause."

"Sure, that's quite possible," Irving agreed; "but I don't see how Tourtelle, or Hessenburg, can claim any such motive."

"No, but if he had done it for his own country, the British empire, to advance the cause of human freedom, what then?"

"Well, in spite of the ridiculous appearance of the picture on his arm, I'd say he ought to be proud to keep it there. I would. I think I'd be proud to show it. It

would be something to show and tell about to–to–my great-great-grandchildren when I got old, you see," Irving finished with a really illuminating smile.

"I think I've quizzed you far enough on this subject," Col. Evans announced at this point, throwing off the manner of vagueness that had hitherto characterized a good deal of his conversation, and speaking with unmistakable directness. "I'm now going to ask you to consent to have that cubist picture tattooed on your arm."

Irving looked in astonishment at the commanding officer of the regiment, being scarcely able to believe his ears. Surely the proposition was nonsensical. And, yet, this was no occasion for nonsense. But the boy's wondering conjectures were interrupted by the officer, who was adding to his last announcement.

"After the art work on your arm is finished," he said, "I'm going to send you into Germany to find out some things we want to know."

"Yes?" Irving responded, with a rising inflection that carried with it a suggestion of an interrogation.

"Yes," the officer continued; "I want you to take the place of the spy whose tattooed arm had to be amputated."

CHAPTER XVII
PARACHUTE PRACTICE

Private Ellis looked hard into vacancy and thought just as hard for half a minute; then he said:

"I get you, I think, Col. Evans, all except one point; and that, I suppose, would come to me all right if I knew the contents of that tattooed message."

"No, you wouldn't," the colonel returned quickly. "It wouldn't do you a bit of good."

"I'd know whether it's important," Irving insisted.

"I can tell you that much," was the officer's reassurance; "and then you're no better off. It's of vast importance and would be of incalculable value to our enemies if it fell into their hands."

"Then there's only one explanation of your proposition," Irving concluded. "You will change the dots and dashes so that they will convey information different from that originally intended."

"Good!" exclaimed the colonel. "You'll do all right. Are you willing to

undertake it?"

"I am," said Irving.

"Very well. So far so good. Now I'm going to test your nerve some more. Look out, for this is going to be a corker. If you drop, you'll drop hard."

"I'm waiting," said the boy, with a kind of gritty grin.

"All right. Would you dare make a descent with a parachute from an altitude of several thousand feet?"

This was a tester, indeed. Irving knew it the instant the last word of the question left the colonel's lips, but he did not flinch.

"Of course, I ought to have some preparation for such a feat," he replied. "I've never been up in an aeroplane."

"To be sure," Col. Evans agreed, with a vigorous nod. "You'll get all the schooling necessary. You'll start out on the venture well equipped. I'm going to send you to the aviation field near brigade headquarters, and there you'll learn to do your umbrella stunt. Then you'll come back here and go through some more preliminaries. The work of a spy, you see, is just as much of a science as the handling of an army."

That ended the interview, and an hour or two later Irving started in an automobile for the aviation field with a note from the colonel to the flying commander. There he was placed under an expert, and his schooling in the art of dropping from lofty heights began.

Private Ellis did not clearly understand just how all this program was to be carried out, but he had no doubt that Col. Evans had a complete plan in mind and that the missing details would fit in well with what had already been revealed to him. So he went about his new work confident that the outlook for success was good.

His training at the aviation field lasted a week. During that time he made half a dozen descents by parachute from various altitudes. The last descent was from a height of 3,000 feet. By this time the experience had become almost as commonplace a thriller as coasting on a long toboggan slide or "dipping the dips" at an up-to-date amusement park. He had never dreamed that descending with a parachute could become so matter-of-course a performance.

"I understand now how circus people can look on their death-defying stunts without being awe-struck with their own daring," he mused after he had floated down the fourth time at the rate of three-and-a-half feet a second. "Just think of it: a good swift sprinter would run a hundred yards in about one-third the time that I take to fall thirty-five feet. This is quite a revelation of physical science to me."

Irving was by nature a very observing youth. His instructor was something more than a mere bird-man, for he had studied aviation as a mathematical, as well

as a physical, science. He showed the boy how to figure out the rate of falling after being given the diameter of a standard-made parachute and the weight of the aeronaut.

The parachute with which the young spy-student got his experience as a diver from the sky was one of several supplied for experimental work following reports that the enemy had perfected a similar device which had proved successful as a life saver in air battles. But the experiments of Allied aviators had not proved sufficiently successful to warrant providing all air fighters with "high-dive umbrellas." Descents could be made with reasonable assurance of safety from aeroplanes flying in good order, but if a pilot lost control of his machine the chances were small that he or his companion gunner or bomb dropper would be able to leap free from the struts and other framework with a parachute.

Irving would have liked to learn to pilot an aeroplane, but there was not time enough for him to take up that study. Indeed, before half the week had elapsed he decided he could like no occupation better than that of an aviator. He saw several expeditions start out to meet the enemy at the front, and also saw them return, followed by the announcement on two occasions that several of the British and Canadian flyers who had gone out to meet the foe, full of confidence in their own prowess, would return no more. They had been either shot down or forced to descend within the enemy's lines.

Nothing was said at the aviation field regarding the reason for the training that was being given to Private Ellis. No questions were asked and Irving did not volunteer any information. At last the instructor stated to the boy that he had completed his course and had learned his lessons well, and that he was now at liberty to seek further directions from the colonel. He accordingly returned to the latter's dugout.

Col. Evans asked him a number of questions, and then said:

"I want you to return to the field hospital and get some more information from that spy, Tourtelle, or Hessenburg. And in getting your information, remember that you are to impersonate him on the other side of the Rhine. Now, this is going to be a test of your spy-intelligence. Let's see how well equipped you can return here after your next interview with him. Do you get me, or must I give you some tips?"

"Don't give me any tips, but let me show you what I can do," Irving replied. "If I fall down on this mission, you'll know I'm not the fellow for the job."

"All right," said the colonel. "I've telephoned for Lieut. Osborne to come here and accompany you again. But this time, remember, you are to do the quizzing, and the lieutenant is to report to me how efficiently you went at it."

"I'm glad to be put on my own responsibility, sir, before I drop down from

the clouds into the midst of the enemy," the boy said grimly.

CHAPTER XVIII
STUDYING TO BE A SPY

An hour later Lieut. Osborne arrived at the colonel's headquarters, and he and Private Ellis started at once for the field hospital. There they found Hessenburg, alias Tourtelle, much improved physically, but not a little nervous regarding his own rather precarious prospects. Instead of being an officer helping to direct, in his small way, the battle against the autocratic presumption of a great military power, he was something more than an ordinary prisoner of war–a trapped spy, who had conspired with others for the downfall of his own country. With seemingly genuine repentance, he exhibited much eagerness to give all the information possible in order to induce leniency for himself from a court-martial.

"I am instructed by Col. Evans to make this statement to you as coming from him," Irving announced early in the interview: "He desires all the information you can give him regarding your program that was to have been followed if you had succeeded in making your way beyond the enemy lines. He has certain plans in view, the success of which will depend largely on the correctness of your information. If you should misinform him, through us, those plans undoubtedly would fail. Moreover, if any enemy spy should get a tip through you or anybody else, that the information supplied by you was being used to attain important ends, those ends probably would never be reached.

"What we must have from you, therefore, is the truth, and the whole truth. To insure his receiving this, Col. Evans has asked me to inform you that the only thing that can save you is the success of his plan. If the plan fails, he will assume that the blame is yours and you will be shot."

Irving paused a moment, and Hessenburg seized the opportunity offered to interpose thus:

"You mean to say that he will have me shot for something for which I'm not the least responsible?"

"Not at all," Irving replied. "You will be shot for being a spy, which has already been proved against you. But if you're careful to tell us the truth, even though I don't cover some of it with my questions, your chances to escape that penalty are good."

”I understand,” said the spy. ”Fire away. I’ll do the best I can.”

The three were seated about a small table in a small room selected for the purpose. The door was closed. Irving drew a note-book and pencil from his pockets and prepared to jot down reminders of the information received by him.

”First,” he said, ”we’ll all talk in low tones to prevent, if possible, anybody’s overhearing us. Now, begin by telling me what was the extent of your acquaintance with spies in Canada and their system of operations.”

”My acquaintance with those people and their affairs was very limited,” Hessenburg replied. ”I can’t even say that my uncle was, or is, a spy, although it would be natural to suspect him. Government agents watched him pretty closely, and it’s possible that he didn’t actually do anything that would call for his arrest. But I’m pretty certain he knew a good deal more than I did. I think he knew all about my affair and approved of it. To tell the truth, I believe that it was through him that the spy organization learned that my sympathies were treasonable and decided to approach me on the subject of making a spy agent out of me.

”It was the man with whiskers at the hospital who first broached the subject to me: You seem to have a pretty complete report of that affair. That man was a physician, and I got acquainted with him while making business trips to the hospital for my uncle. He learned that I was an art student, and one thing led to another, until he knew I wanted England and France to be defeated and was willing to do anything I could secretly to bring that about. After that it didn’t take him long to persuade me to be the bearer of a tattooed message on my arm into Germany. The other fellow who helped tattoo the message was the artist, an architectural draftsman with considerable skill at free-hand drawing.”

”What are their names?” asked Irving.

”Dr. Adolph Marks and Jacob L. Voltz.”

”What is your uncle’s name?”

”Ferdinand J. Hessenburg.”

”What does the ’J’ stand for?”

”Johan.”

Irving put a long string of questions of this kind, and thus obtained much detailed information regarding the spy and his family connections and home surroundings, also concerning the art school he attended in Toronto. He made copious notes of the answers, so that the process of questioning the confessed enemy agent was necessarily much slower than it otherwise would have been.

”I’m up against one difficulty that I’d like to clear away,” the inquisitor mused in the course of his examination of the wounded ”second looie”; ”and that is the fact that this fellow is an artist and I am not. Suppose when I get over in Berlin, some wise fellow, full of information from Canada, should ask me to paint a cubist picture. What would I do? I must find out if there’s any danger of my

being asked to do anything of that sort to test my identity."

He continued his questioning thus:

"Did those two men who tattooed that picture on your arm know that you were an art student?"

"Oh, sure," Hessenburg replied. "That's how they happened to suggest the art method of conveying the message."

"And how about your credentials, your identification when you got into Germany? How were the German officials to know who you were, that you weren't a fake?"

"By the message itself."

"You think your instructors believed that was enough?"

"Yes, they said so. We had that question up for discussion. I raised it myself."

"How did you raise it?"

"I wanted them to get word to Berlin by another route to look out for me, but they said that would involve a danger that they were trying to avoid by the tattoo method. If they tried to get a wireless code message to Berlin, it might be intercepted and deciphered, and then a thorough search would be made for me."

Irving was much relieved by this statement. There was no reason to suspect Hessenburg of trying to deceive him in this regard. The spy could have no grounds to suspect that his inquisitor was planning to take his place and carry an altered copy of the cubist message to the war lords of the enemy.

"I guess I'm safe enough in that regard," he told himself. Then he added aloud:

"You think they have no information regarding you in Berlin?"

"Yes–I don't see why they should. I was informed that the contents of the message would be all the credential I'd need, that it would make me so popular among the high-ups that I could have anything I asked for."

"But they wouldn't tell you what was in the message?"

"I didn't ask. I knew better. The plan we were working on was directly opposed to my knowing the information I was to carry."

The quizzing of Hessenburg continued half an hour longer, and Irving and the lieutenant started back for the colonel's headquarters.

"Did I omit any questions I should have asked?" the spy-student inquired after they had ridden a short distance.

"You did fine," Lieut. Osborne replied. "I couldn't think of another question

that I would have asked."

CHAPTER XIX
LAST PREPARATIONS

The next move in Irving's program of preparation for spy work in Germany had to do with the tattooing of an altered copy of the cubist art message on his arm. The alterations were made by the cryptologist who had deciphered the original message. He made the changes after consulting with intelligence officials, who prepared a system of dots and dashes that ostensibly conveyed valuable information. This "information," however, was not only misleading, but it was of such character that the deception could hardly be discovered before the lapse of months and possibly a year or more.

By the time the spy-student had "completed his course of study" the material, instruments, and artist were ready for the pictorial operation. The instruments had been supplied by a surgeon, the artist had been discovered after a search by telephone communication with the various official headquarters of the regiment, and the material, some pure aniline dye, had been found in a moving laboratory, or automobile chemical outfit, maintained for surgical, sanitation, pure food, and pure water purposes for the army.

The artist, aided by a surgeon, and the dye and some sharp-pointed needles, did the work. It was a long and tedious task, and many rests were required for the users of the dye-dipped needles in order to keep their nerves steady and their judgment sure in the delicate workmanship. After it was finished, the boy compared it with the salt-preserved original, and decided that the result could hardly have been more satisfactory for the desired purpose.

Then Irving had another session with Col. Evans, who gave him his final instructions.

"I haven't given you much of an idea yet what we want you to find out for us at Berlin, or wherever you can get the information," said the commander of the regiment. "We know, of course, that there is an extensive enemy spy organization in both Canada and the United States, and while we are able to get a few of those fellows now and then, still they're pretty smart as a rule, and we feel that we have only scratched the surface. We want their names, or the name of every leader of consequence among them. That's what we're sending you into Germany for. You

must realize, therefore, that the mission on which you are being sent is one of no small consequence. The highest officers in the army have been acquainted with the plan and not only concurred in it, but offered suggestions for its improvement and perfection.

”You have learned from Hessenburg what you are to do when you land on German soil. You will probably be taken to Berlin or some important German military point, and there your message will be read. You will be a hero in the minds of the highest commanders and will undoubtedly be granted any favor you ask. My suggestion is that you ask to be assigned for study to qualify you for the most confidential and important work in the enemy secret service. Tell them you wish to return to America as a leader in the work and call their attention to the fact that, as you have become pretty thoroughly Americanized, or Canadianized, and lost most of the foreign appearance and accent of your father, you can pass successfully as a loyal citizen of the dominion. Then work your way into the confidence of those who are directing the spy system of our enemies and get at their records. Get the names of all the leaders you can find. You may be able to do this openly, for your own information when you return to take up more important work in Canada and the United States. Give special attention to the spy activities in the United States, for we want to show that the pro-German agents in that country are violating its policy of neutrality.

”Now, let me tell you frankly why we have selected you for this work in spite of your youth. Any man,–I won’t call you a boy, for from now on you must be a man in every sense of the word,–any man who can put together the twos and twos you summed up after your experience with Hessenburg, or Tourtelle, and after reading your cousin’s letter, is a natural-born investigator. The average person would have been confused by that evidence; he would not have had the nerve to form the conclusions you formed. I’m not saying this to flatter you. If you feel in the least flattered, you had better say so at once, and give up the whole scheme, for there is great danger of your failing and being shot. Let me tell you why:

”The man who has one second’s time to entertain a conceited or self-conscious thought, devotes just that much time to the undermining of his own strength. Get me?”

”Absolutely,” Irving replied. ”I’ve told myself that many times, although not in those words.”

”Now,” continued the colonel, ”I believe you told me that you had studied German at school?”

”Yes, I had one year of it.”

”And Hessenburg said he knew only a little of the language?”

”Yes.”

”Does he know any Austrian?”

”No. His uncle and his father, although Austrians by birth, lived mostly in Germany until they emigrated.”

”Good. You will not be under suspicion because of your ignorance of the German language. Still, it would be well for you to be able to make yourself understood and to understand others from the moment you get into that country. So I’m going to put you under an instructor for a few days.”

In accord with this announcement, Private Ellis talked nothing but German for a week with an orderly of German parentage who had enlisted with the Canadian army to help ”get the kaiser.” By the end of that time he felt as if he could hold his own, conversationally, at anything from a kaffee klatsch to a Berliner royal turnverein, and announced that he was ready to make his ”high dive” into the land of the enemy.

CHAPTER XX

”SECOND LOOIE ELLIS”

Meanwhile activities at the front had been progressing in a decisive manner, although familiarity with the progress and its significance was restricted to an exclusive class, consisting of certain officers and an army of industrious workers, who might be classed as the moles of modern warfare.

The latter were the engineers and workmen whose occupation at times was a good deal like that of a miner. It had been their duty to tunnel, tunnel, tunnel, until you’d think the whole of the country in this vicinity must be a system of underground passages that would almost rival the catacombs of Rome.

This tunneling, or sapping, was one of the most important forms of strategy in the war. Undoubtedly in future years, remnants of many of these underground passages, preserved for their value as historical curiosities, will be inspected by thousands of tourists visiting the scenes of the world’s greatest conflict.

Vimy Ridge, near the end of the historic fight at that long elevation of earth, was a veritable human anthill. The work of opposing armies in their efforts to undermine each other is an exceedingly interesting, if terrible, operation, and Vimy Ridge furnished an excellent illustration of this.

Early in the fight for possession of the hill the tunneling began. At the beginning of this narrative, when Private Irving Ellis and ”Second Looie Tourtelle”

were scouting in No Man's Land, this boring of the elongated mole on the earth's surface was as much of a fencing contest as a sword battle between two seventeenth century Frenchmen. The Germans held the hill, had taken possession of it and intrenched themselves on the eastern slope as one of the strongholds of their advanced positions in France. The Canadians and the British in attempting to dislodge the invaders, found themselves at a considerable disadvantage. There seemed to be only one way to overcome this difficulty without a great slaughtering of the forces of the Allies. This was by boring under the hill, mining it with trinitrotoluol, touching off the explosive with electric sparks and blowing the fortified mound into Kingdom Come.

Who first started the undermining process may never be known, unless both kept records of dates and doings along this line. It is probable, however, that it was begun by the Canadians, for the opposing army had not as great incentive for haste as had the Allies. Moreover, they did not have to go back so far to start their tunnels, and their subterranean operations were more of defensive than offensive character.

Statements from authoritative sources since the close of the war indicate that this tunneling contest was somewhat of a "diving" nature. It was a contest of depth as well as progress. The Allied engineers began operations at a certain level and went forward. As they advanced they listened. It was like an American Indian putting his ear to the ground to listen for the approach of distant enemy horsemen, or a physician examining the chest of a patient with a stethoscope for "unfriendly" sounds in the heart and lungs. The engineers carried a sort of subterranean stethoscope to detect the approach of enemy tunnelers. The instant they heard sounds of Prussian engineers boring their way to meet the sappers of the Allies, they stopped operations and went back to a new starting point and began over again, this time on a lower level. This process was repeated many times, the Prussians ever planning to get near enough to the Canadian sappers to enable them to stop their subterranean operations with high explosives, and the Allied tunnelers purposing to plant enough trinitrotoluol under Vimy Ridge to blow it sky-high.

Meanwhile, Private Irving Ellis, in preparation for the greatest event of his young career, was oblivious to all these activities, which were destined to culminate in one of the biggest sensations of the war. He knew in a vague way that something was going on under the ground at the front. He had heard more or less reliable trench gossip to this effect and had enough real information to assure him that there was something behind it. Moreover, it was reasonable, to one of modern warfare training, to suspect very extensive sapping activities in positions of this kind. However, he would have been greatly astonished if an intimation had come to him of how his own preparations for a plunge from the

skies were converging in point of time with the preparations of the Canadians for blowing up Vimy Ridge.

At last the occasion arrived for the carefully planned departure by night of the ”boche spy” with his tattooed message camouflaged in a ”spasm of cubist art,” as it was characterized by the architectural draftsman who helped copy it on Irving’s left forearm. The latter sat in the rear seat of the aeroplane from which he had taken his lessons in dropping from the sky and which was specially fitted up with an elaborate parachute mechanism of the latest and most approved development.

Apparently it was an important occasion in aircraft activities aside from Irving’s scheduled stunt, for a large squadron of machines was preparing for flight at the same time. Probably a big raid was about to be made on the boche lines or some important ammunition or supply station of the enemy, the boy reasoned. But no information was volunteered to him on this subject and he asked none, for it had nothing to do with his affair. He was merely to watch for his opportunity, pick his own time for taking ”French leave,” signal the pilot by an agreed touch on the shoulder, ”put up his umbrella,” and depart.

Irving had more than one good cause to feel elated at the manner in which circumstances had shaped themselves for an all-around success of his venture up to the present time. And not the least of these was the presentation to him, a few hours before his flight over the boche lines, of a second lieutenant’s commission. Accompanying this was a note from Col. Evans wishing him the ”best of good fortune,” and concluding thus:

”You will take your leave in the same rank that Hessenburg might have taken his, namely, as a second lieutenant, if your shrewd interpretation of developing events had not intervened. If you have any reasonable degree of success in this big venture of yours–and I’m sure you will–I’ll guarantee you a first lieutenancy, and it will take only a continued exhibition of the good sense and judgment that I have seen in you up to date to bring you eventually a captain’s commission.”

”It’s ’Second Looie Ellis’ now,” Irving mused, as he took his seat in the rear cockpit, strapped himself in, buckled about his waist, chest and shoulders the parachute harness, and waited for the pilot to start the motor that would send them away off on a wild night trip through the air over a wilder scene of human slaughter and with one of the wildest spy-plans in view that ever put thrills into

the records of international secret service agents.

CHAPTER XXI
THE BLOWING UP OF VIMY RIDGE

The aeroplane in which Lieut. Ellis made his "get-away" flight was equipped with two machine guns, one for the pilot and one for the gunner in the rear cockpit. While practicing the art of parachute descent, Irving also acquired some practical knowledge of the use of a machine gun in the air, not with the idea of engaging an enemy plane in battle, but in order that he might put up an appearance of being skilled in sky fighting if it became advisable for him to make such pretense in order to avert suspicion as to the motive of his "escape." In other words, he must be careful not to create a suspicion that there was collusion between him and the pilot.

The parachute was folded compactly and deposited in a cylindrical chamber behind the rear seat. The mechanism by means of which this aero life-preserver was put in operation may be described as follows: Directly in front of the parachute container was a device which, when put in action, effected the release of the giant "umbrella." In front of this device was a compressed-air reservoir. Within easy reach of the person occupying the rear seat was a ratchet-lever, which, when pulled, threw the seat back to an angle of about forty-five degrees and jerked open the compressed-air reservoir. The opening of this reservoir put the release machinery into action, and this in turn threw out of the containing chamber the compactly folded parachute, which automatically, on being released, spread out and encompassed a great volume of resisting atmosphere. This powerful resistance, acting like a hurricane in a tent, caused the occupant of the rear cockpit to be jerked along the slanting back of his seat out into the vast expanse of empty space.

One great beauty of this device, when used for exhibition purpose, was the fact that if it failed to work, the aviator retained his seat as comfortably as if nothing had happened. As a life-saver, of course, this peculiarity had little or no value, inasmuch as a flyer in distress would be lost if the parachute failed to pull him out of his seat.

Before each of his experiments, Irving had tested the "sky-umbrella" with a dummy heavier than himself in order to be certain that there was no danger of

ripping the silken cloth. A slight tear produced by the strain on the parachute while he was being dragged from his seat might become larger during the descent and cause him to fall with sufficient shock to seriously injure or kill him. This was really the only considerable danger in the whole performance, but it was one that needed to be guarded against very carefully.

Up flew the aeroplane with graceful sweep and joined the flock of two score other ”night birds” that were starting out on a raid. The flight to the front lines was quickly made and without incident of note. In fact, not an enemy plane arose in the air to oppose the attacking squadron until the leading flyers were directly over No Man’s Land, brilliantly illuminated with the fireworks of battle, and then something happened that must have thrilled every aviator who witnessed it, accustomed though he was almost daily to thrills that make the life of a soldier on land or a Jackie of the navy seem like a tame existence in comparison.

Suddenly there was an upheaval of earth almost directly below him, followed by another and another in quick succession; then a regular concert of upheavals in almost a straight line, and a very long line at that, evidently, even to a pair of eyes looking down from a great height in the air. There was a magnitude in the scene that could not be mistaken, although the ridge of land that was visible only a few moments before looked like little more than an elongated anthill.

”My goodness!” Irving exclaimed, though the noise of the motor and the propeller and the rush of air about him made it impossible for him to hear himself. ”My goodness! they’ve actually blown up Vimy Ridge.”

The machine swept on with the flock of mechanical war-birds, on over No Man’s Land and past the enemy front lines. Meanwhile Irving gazed down, fascinated by the scene far, far below. It was a scene of the most diminutive dwarfs now. The trenches looked like little more than pen scratches on a dim-colored sheet, certainly not more than chalk marks, of no particular color, on a ”faded blackboard.” And the people–the soldiers! Yes, he could see them now, in large numbers. They looked like ants–no, let’s not understate it,–they looked like mice, small mice, however; and they arose–on the Canadian side–out of the ”chalk marks” and dashed forward, a very short distance, it seemed, only a few inches or feet at the most, but they chopped off their steps so short that they appeared just to creep along. Irving was astonished at the clearness of the night scene under the battle’s illumination.

But they made it finally, up the side of the hill, if indeed any hill remained, and into the crater–Irving could see an altered condition following the trinitrotoluol explosions, and concluded that there must be a long, a very long, crater–miles of it–in the place of Vimy Ridge. They were cheering like mad–Irving knew it, though he could not hear a voice. Yes, into the crater they went, a myriad of

insects, or wee animals,–they had possession of it–the enemy seemed not to offer any resistance. They were whipped, thoroughly–they knew it. Tons and tons of high explosive planted under that ridge had blown it to the sky.

"No, it didn't, either," Irving mused with a smile of "altitude amusement." "It was only a flash in the pan. Not a pebble came half as high as we are, and the sky is hundreds of miles–umph! How much higher is it? My! if the world could only get up here and look at itself, I wonder if things wouldn't go a little differently. No, I'm afraid not! There'd always be somebody then trying to grab a bigger slice of the moon than he's entitled to.

"But what am I thinking about? My head must be getting giddy. That won't do a bit. I'm on very serious business. The bombing planes are hovering over the rear line trenches and dropping their flower-pots on 'em. The anti-aircraft guns are getting busy, too. There went one right ahead of us. They're getting our range. And here comes a fleet of German planes to meet us. Well, it won't be safe to wait very long, and it won't be fair to my pilot. Just as soon as we get well beyond that third trench there, I'll take my plunge."

Irving set himself fixedly as if about to make a mighty leap or a pistol-shot start in a foot race. As a matter of fact, he was going to do nothing of the kind. Only a sort of passive effort was required of him, and yet, his nerves had never been more tense. He put his right hand on the release lever and leaned forward, his left hand almost touching the pilot, and looked down over the side of the car, then off toward the approaching enemy squadron, then at the camouflaged positions of the belching anti-aircraft guns, then here and there at the exploding shells in the midst of the invading fleet, then back again at the ground scene directly below.

Suddenly he leaned farther forward and slapped his hand smartly on the pilot's shoulder. The latter nodded and turned the nose of the sky machine downward. This was Irving's cue. He leaned back and pulled the release lever as far as it would go.

CHAPTER XXII
BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES

The "escape" was successful in every respect. The boy rocked to and fro all the way down, like a cork on a billowy sea. Down, down he went, the scene

continuing, in the glare of innumerable lights of the battle, almost as bright as day. Irving could see clearly where he was going, although it was just beyond the zone of blazing activities. Between the chosen landing place and the fighting terrain was a small belt of timber, but the surroundings were lighted so brilliantly that the general character and lay of the land could be determined even from a height of several thousand feet.

Reinforcements were being rushed forward from points farther in the rear. Irving could see a wave of men advancing toward the lighted area. It looked as if attempts were being made to retake the hill, or what was left of it. Undoubtedly the enemy had lost heavily as a result of the volcanic explosions and the need of reserves was pressing at the front.

Irving landed right in the midst of a company of advancing men. The lieutenant called a halt and remained long enough to make inquiry as to the meaning of the parachute descent. The boy replied in fairly good German that he was a spy in the service of the emperor, and asked to be directed to regimental, divisional or army headquarters. The officer assigned a sergeant to accompany the ”arrival from the sky” and, after a tramp of more than an hour over a highway on which they had to dodge camions and autos and motorcycles and troops almost as watchfully as one must dodge heavy traffic in a warehouse district in a large city, they arrived at a small town where they found a brigadier general’s headquarters in what had formerly been the chief municipal building of the place.

Lieutenant Ellis was taken in charge here by an intelligence attache, who, observing the Canadian uniform worn by the boy, questioned him as to his identity and mission. Irving was greatly pleased, as the conversation progressed, to find that he understood almost everything his inquisitor said and could answer intelligibly all the questions put to him. The conversation, freely translated into English, was as follows:

”Who are you?”

”My name is Hessenburg. I am a second lieutenant in the Canadian army. But I am a Prussian sympathizer and the bearer of a message from agents of Emperor William working secretly for him on the other side of the Atlantic ocean.”

”To whom is the message addressed?”

”I don’t know. It is in cipher.”

”Then how are you going to find the person to whom it should be delivered?”

”I was informed that any high officer in the German army, from brigadier general up, could tell me what to do the instant he heard my story.”

”How did you get past the Canadian and German lines without being captured; or did you surrender in battle?”

”No, although that was my plan at first. I managed to get into the air service

temporarily and dropped with a parachute, from an aeroplane in the midst of a big battle after we got over on this side."

The intelligence attache uttered a guttural something that sounded like an oath. From the tone and facial expression accompanying it, Irving mentally translated the ejaculation into the much milder, "You don't say so!"

"That's true," interposed the sergeant who accompanied Irving from the scene of his descent. "I saw him come down. The lieutenant of my company ordered me to bring him here."

"If all this is true, I suppose you'll have to see the general," the attache concluded. "Just wait here and I'll find out how long you'll have to wait. You say your message is important?"

"I haven't read it," the spy answered; "but I was informed that it was very important. I think you'd better help me get it to him as soon as possible."

The attache left Irving and his companion seated on a long bench in the orderly room and entered the adjutant's office. A few minutes later he came out again and announced that the message was "on its way to the general" and an order to "come in" would probably come out in a short time.

The "short time" was more than two hours, however. The brigadier general had been napping. Ordinarily his night repose might fittingly have been called sleep, but the taking of Vimy Ridge rendered any such peaceful term inappropriate. It is probable, indeed, that there were naps for few German officers of whatever rank, attached to that sector, on the night of the great battle on the Canadian front. At any rate, this officer was one of the few, and he awoke at break of day. One of the first matters brought to his attention was the arrival of a spy from America with an important message.

"Bring him in," he ordered.

A minute later Irving was standing before a very burly and very fierce looking individual in the uniform of a high commanding officer and saluting him with an appearance of self-confidence, in spite of a most provoking nervousness that unexpectedly seized him.

CHAPTER XXIII
OFF FOR BERLIN

Irving Ellis recovered his composure and his nervousness left him in full control

of his faculties as he answered the first question put to him by the brigadier general. It was a very simple question, thus:

"You are Second Lieutenant Hessenburg of the Canadian army?"

"I am."

"But a subject of Kaiser Wilhelm?"

"No, I am not," Irving replied. "I'm a subject of Great Britain, for my father was naturalized in Canada. But my sympathies are over here and when I am old enough, you'll find my citizenship where it ought always have been."

"There, I got a little truth into my bunch of lies," Irving interpolated to himself. "My citizenship will be where it always ought to have been, and was, and is, and always will be, as long as I live–in the United States. I spoke with a double tongue and satisfied my own conscience at the end. Oh, I can see that I'm going to be some prevaricator before this adventure is finished. Really, it never occurred to me before, but a spy must have the biggest imagination on earth to be successful. However, it's a good cause, that's some consolation."

Before the boy finished this soliloquy, the brigadier general was asking another question:

"And you were sent here by some of our agents in Canada?"

"Yes."

"With a message?"

"Yes."

"Let me see it."

Irving took off his coat and rolled up his left shirtsleeve, exposing to view the "cubist art" tattooing recently pricked into the skin with sharp pointed needles and aniline dye. The brigadier general gazed at it with deep interest two or three times; then looked into the spy's face and said:

"You're all right. You must go to Berlin at once."

He contemplated the hieroglyphic oddity a minute longer and then said:

"My curiosity is keen to know how you got over here."

"I flew over," Irving replied.

"How could you manage that? Were you in the air service?"

"Yes, during the last few weeks. I was out with a pilot last night and slipped away with a parachute in the heat of the battle."

It was the brigadier general's turn now to utter something of the explosive character of an oath. As Irving's schooling and recent drill in the Teutonic tongue did not comprehend such ultra-rhetorical figures of speech, he did not get the full significance of the expletive.

But it was evident that the officer's outburst was anything but an expression of anger. Admiration popped into his eyes and spoke out of them in "violent harmony" with his oath. But this overflowing endorsement of the spy's activi-

ties was suddenly interrupted by a change of manner that caused Irving a little uneasiness as a new thought took possession of the burly military man's mind.

"What do you suppose they think about you now over in the Canadian lines? They're onto you now, aren't they? If we want you to return on another mission over there, you've spoiled the game by your manner of escape, haven't you? How could you explain it if they put you on the grill?"

"That'll be very easy," Irving replied. "I waited for the right conditions. We got into a fight with a couple of German planes and it was looking pretty bad for us. Then a shell from an anti-aircraft gun exploded so near to us that it seemed impossible for us to have escaped serious damage. Well, two seconds later I saw the pilot was having trouble with his engine; so I concluded it was time for me to take my departure."

The look of gleeful admiration returned to the officer's face.

"You handled it well, very well," he said, with a disagreeable, gloating laugh.

Irving's sentiments, however, were of much different nature. He was thoroughly disgusted with his own "string of falsehoods," as he characterized the stories he had told to the intelligence attache and the brigadier general.

"I know very well that a spy is a personified fib, pure and simple," he told himself with a reflective compression of his lips. "I don't think it's any worse than that, and I don't think the stories I told were any worse than fibs. A spy is just a misrepresentation walking around on two feet. If he doesn't tell a single fib, it's his business to make the enemy think he's something he isn't. If he does this for a bad cause, he's a bad man; if he does it for a worthy cause, he's a good man, not because he fibs, but because of the cause he misrepresents. So long as he doesn't misrepresent the cause, he ought to be all right. Still, the world will admire him more if he's smart enough to get what he wants without telling any downright li–fibs like the ones I told. I'm going to see if I can't get along hereafter without fibbing."

Irving worked this reasoning out in his mind as the conversation with the officer proceeded. He was much relieved also on finding that he was able to answer all succeeding questions without resorting to any gross misstatements of facts. At last the brigadier general closed the interview by saying:

"I'll excuse you for the time being. Meanwhile I'll communicate with my superior officers and you'll wait under orders of the adjutant for instructions from me."

Irving returned to the orderlies' room. He had not eaten breakfast and informed an officer of the hungry condition of his stomach. This resulted in his being turned over to an orderly who conducted him to the officers' mess, where he was served with a very good meal.

"I guess I'm in right," he mused. "They give me the best feed and show me

considerable attention. The auspices are good. Hope I can keep things coming my way, and I'll get what I'm after."

About an hour after breakfast, the adjutant summoned Irving into his office and spoke to him, thus:

"We have just received orders to send you to Berlin. Are you ready to go?"

"I haven't any luggage to pack," the spy answered.

"You will be supplied with what you need," the adjutant continued. "You will also be accompanied by a young lieutenant who is recovering from wounds received at the front and who has been granted home leave for a month or two. He lives in Berlin. He will be here soon and go with you to the train."

An hour later Irving was on a troop train, speeding away to the northeast, away from the still thundering battle front and toward the objective city of his secret-service aims, hopes, plans and patriotic ambition.

CHAPTER XXIV
IN BERLIN

Berlin!

The name was well worth the exclamation. If Irving did not utter it aloud, he thought it in the "tone of voice" in which it appears here.

He had ridden more than half of the preceding day, all night and well into another day with a companion in whom he was able to find little of sympathetic interest. The fellow, an infantry lieutenant, about 30 years old, was a cold-eyed, emotionless individual and about as cruelly boastful Prussian as one would care to meet. There was no fate too frightful for an English soldier in his opinion, and all other Allies fighting on the side of the British ought to be reduced to vassalage and forced to pay tribute to the House of Hohenzollern.

Irving tried for a while to engage in intelligent conversation with him, but at last found this impossible and decided to encourage him along the line of least resistance with the view of obtaining as much information from him as his prejudiced mind was capable of giving. By discounting every thing uttered with a burst of passion or with sneer of contempt or tone of bravado and by watching for inadvertent admissions, Irving gleaned enough to convince him that the central allies were not nearly as confident of winning the war as they wished the outside world to believe.

Lieutenant Ellis was a good enough spy not to confine his observations to the one supreme purpose of obtaining a list of enemy agents in Canada and the United States. He saw at once, after landing with his parachute in the boche lines, that he could be of great service to the cause for which the Allies were fighting by gathering a fund of information regarding the man power, supplies, ammunition and the general attitude of the people in the kaiser's country. By the time he reached Berlin, he felt considerably compensated for the uncongeniality of his traveling companion during the trip.

They took a horse-cab–there were no automobile taxis in evidence–and were driven at a very sleepy gait to a high-class hotel in Friederichstrasse. The horse behind which they rode looked as if he might have had a full meal of oats and corn some time before the war. There was little in the scenes through which they passed that impressed Irving as bearing any indications of the ravages of war, except perhaps the scarcity of automobiles and the lack of that spick-and-span condition for which the streets of Berlin had long been famous. The boy spy was unable to discover any quality of excellence at all superior to that of Buffalo, N.Y., in general appearance.

The hotel he found well furnished, decorated and supplied with rugs. The rooms taken by Irving and his companion were all that a "particular," if not fastidious, guest would demand. True, a girl operated the elevator, but the young spy had learned, through letters from his cousin, that Canadian girls went much farther than this in their patriotic efforts, sharing not a little in the heavy labors of munition shops and the general industries.

Irving's companion, whose name was Fritz Vollmer, spoke a few words to the clerk in an undertone, and the clerk nodded knowingly, as if to indicate that everything was all right.

"An old friend o' mine," Lieut. Vollmer remarked as they walked toward the elevator. "I just told him you were all right in spite of your uniform, that you'd been a spy over in the enemy's country and hadn't had time to change your clothes since you got through the lines. You won't be bothered about room rent or any other expenses here. Those will be taken care of. You're not to change your uniform until after you've had a session at intelligence headquarters."

"When will that be?" Irving inquired.

"This afternoon some time," was the answer. "I'll go over and make arrangements and then come back and go with you. Meanwhile we'll go out and have some lunch."

In spite of Lieut. Vollmer's supercilious ways and boastful language, the young boche officer evinced a deep personal interest in his companion. But undoubtedly the reason for this was the daring and romantic record that the young spy had behind him. And this record necessarily obtruded itself so conspicuously

in Irving's affairs right now that the vainglorious Teuton could not subordinate it even when picturing his own "high excellence." Therefore Lieut. Vollmer's uncontrollable admiration for the venturesome youth whom he was companioning was just a result of the over-awed condition of his own mind.

They went out to a cafe in Friederichstrasse and ate a very modest luncheon for which Vollmer paid fifteen marks. Then they returned to the hotel, and Irving remained in his room while Vollmer went to Wilhelmstrasse to announce the arrival of "the spy" and make arrangements for presenting him to the proper official. The boy would have been glad to go out and stroll through the streets of the capital of the great war-making nation, but hesitated to do this because he feared that his Canadian uniform might get him into needless difficulty.

An hour later Fritz returned and announced that he had found the proper official to receive the spy's message. That official, he said, was eager to meet the kaiser's daring agent, and would he please return with Lieut. Vollmer at once?

Irving assented, and together they left the hotel. On the way the Prussian officer thrilled the spy with patriotic fervor which he was able to suppress only with great difficulty by informing him that the United States had declared war against Germany a few days before.

"America will bitterly rue the day she took that action," Lieut. Vollmer declared vengefully.

CHAPTER XXV
THE READING OF THE CRYPTOGRAM

It was a rather imposing structure with gray-stone front that Irving and his companion entered in Wilhelmstrasse as the headquarters of the globe-encircling spy system of the terrible German empire. They walked through the doorway and passed down the cavernous corridor, with its innumerable ramifications of mystery, secrecy, penetration. All of these ramifications were by no means physical and evident to the inquisitive eyes of the visitor from across the sea. Most of them, nearly all, in fact, were pictured in the brain of Lieut. Ellis, who saw visions of thousands of communicating branches reaching out into every part of the civilized world.

The names of Bernstorf, Von Papen, Boy-Ed, and other former leading agents of the kaiser in the United States flashed through his mind, and he was

curious to know what sort of men directed their activities from central headquarters. It was not long before his curiosity was rewarded with visual evidence.

Lieut. Ellis and Lieut. Vollmer walked up a broad flight of flagstone steps to the second floor and into the waiting room of a large suite of offices. There they were met by a girl of freshman high-school age, who evidently served in the capacity of office boy.

"Have the office boys all been drafted for military service?" Irving asked himself as his companion answered the girl's questions.

They were directed to wait a few minutes, which they accordingly did, and in a quarter of an hour were ushered into the presence of a mild-eyed man whose least prepossessing characteristic was the undependability of the mildness of his gaze. Irving had not been long in the room with him before he realized that the fellow's "gentleness" was a carefully cultivated "attribute," schemed, plotted, and devised to qualify him for the shrewdest and most subtle of government secret service. He was a large man of good proportions, with a mustache that stood out like a tooth-brush parted in the middle and a very fair and well rounded face. Although he might have passed for thirty-five years of age, Irving subsequently learned that he was nearly ten years older. He answered to the title of "the baron," addressed familiarly by Lieut. Vollmer.

"Here he is," said the latter, who seemed to think this was all the introduction needed.

Irving bowed, and "the baron" bowed. There was no shaking of hands between them.

"Very well," said the intelligence official, indicating thereby that the announcer's duty was performed and that he might now retire. Vollmer did as suggested by the manner of the receiving nobleman, and Irving and his world-plotting host were alone.

"I have heard your story from Lieut. Vollmer," "the baron" began. "He said you had a message tattooed on your arm. Let me see it."

Irving took off his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeve and exhibited for inspection the "cubist art cryptogram" on his left forearm. The official gazed at it closely a minute or two; then said:

"Just wait a minute and I'll have it read."

He lifted a telephone receiver to his ear and called out a local number through the transmitter. Presently he was talking to the desired department.

"Send Kiehler and Joe Weber in here," he said.

Three minutes later two middle-aged men entered. Neither of them was of striking appearance. In fact, each had a rather stolid look, but it was not long before Irving realized that there was some real mechanical, if not imaginative, ability underneath their apparent stupidity.

”Take this young man into your office and read that cipher message on his arm,” ordered ”the baron.”

The two cryptogram readers bowed and one of them requested Irving to follow. They left the office and proceeded to another on the top floor of the building.

It was a very light suite of rooms that Irving now found himself in. One room particularly was supplied with the best of daylight illumination through a skylight overhead. It reminded Irving of an architectural drafting room. Half a dozen men were seated at as many desks working as diligently over record and manuscript material before them as so many college students ”cramming” for a trigonometry or chemistry exam. Irving was conducted to an unoccupied desk in a remote corner of the room and there he and his two companions sat down and the consultation began.

The two cryptologists, however, had little to say. They seemed to have little interest in Irving save as to the cipher message he had brought for them to translate. They exhibited no surprise when the boy spy rolled up his sleeve and disclosed the manner in which he had conveyed his message. They seemed to have become so accustomed to the discovery of unusual things that nothing could astonish them. Stolidity of manner was a term that fitted them exactly, but certainly not unqualified stolidity. Irving felt almost as if their eyes burned right into his arm.

They worked diligently for more than an hour over the boy’s bared arm, frequently jotting down characters on tabs of paper before them. At last they finished and informed him that he might go.

”Go where?” Irving inquired.

Without answering, one of the men picked up the receiver of a telephone and put it to his ear. He gave a number to the operator and soon he was talking to someone. The waiting boy was sure that the person ”at the other end” was ”the baron.”

”Go back to the hotel and remain there for instructions,” the man at the ’phone said presently, as he hung up the receiver.

Irving left the building, intending to take a cab to the hotel. He had scarcely reached the street, however, when it suddenly occurred to him that he had no money with him.

”I’ll have to walk,” he mused. ”Well, it isn’t very far and I can make it easy before suppertime. But I wonder if I’ll get through with this uniform. Well, I’ll use my nerve and see what happens.”

He started out briskly, but observed as he went that he attracted attention from a good many persons on the street, some of them soldiers. Undoubtedly it was his nerve that got him through, but he could not avoid several times turning

his head with whatever nonchalance he could command and stealing glances to the right and left and behind. After looking back two or three times, he became curious regarding the purpose of a middle-aged man in civilian clothes whom he had observed in front of the intelligence building as he came out of the main entrance.

"I wonder if that fellow is following me?" he said to himself, a little nervously.

He walked a few squares farther, then stopped and looked into a tailor show-window. He remained there several minutes, really interested in the display and the prices. With a kind of meditative look, he glanced down the street, but could see nothing of his supposed shadower. Then he moved on again, turned a corner, walked half a square, and suddenly faced about as if he had made a mistake in his direction and must retrace his steps.

The middle-aged man in civilian clothes, who was not more than a hundred feet away, turned almost as suddenly as the boy in Canadian khaki had turned and entered a cafe that he seemed about to pass.

"I'm being followed," muttered the spy with a real chill of alarm. "I wonder what's up. Have they found something wrong with that message? Did those cryptogram readers discover that the message had been tampered with?"

CHAPTER XXVI
FOLLOWED

Irving walked on as if nothing unusual had occurred to disturb his peace of mind, and yet nothing more disquieting perhaps had ever moved the quakings of fear within him. If the man who had followed him could have looked into the face of the young second lieutenant in khaki as the latter passed the cafe, undoubtedly he would have seen there an expression of countenance exceedingly interesting to him.

The day was now rapidly drawing to a close, and the damp April atmosphere, chilly enough when the sun was at its zenith, was becoming cold toward night. Irving had no overcoat. He had worn only a flying-coat and "cover all," aside from his ordinary fair-weather garments, on the night of his ascent in an aeroplane and descent with a parachute, but he was not particularly uncomfortable even under present conditions. Still, he felt that it would be much more

pleasant within four walls of a first class hotel, even though, as he suspected, the management was burning coal under war emergency limitations. So he hurried on, and did not slacken his pace until he was back at the hostelry.

About a square from the hotel he turned and looked down the street to see if the middle-aged man in citizen's clothes was still following him. Yes, there he was, 200 feet back, sauntering with a long stride, which rendered it possible for him to keep pace with the spy without an appearance of haste. As the latter entered the lobby and walked toward the elevator, he said to himself:

"I'll have to bluff it through. I'm not going to pretend ignorance of the fact that I've been followed. But I mustn't appear to be afraid of being watched. I must present the matter in a different light."

He knocked on the door of Vollmer's room, but received no response. Then he went to his own room to wait until his guide returned.

"I'll have to wait for him before I can get any supper," he mused. "I'm in a peculiar situation, and don't know exactly where I'm at. I think I'll have to have a plain talk with him tonight, much as I hate to rest any of my fortunes on his questionable goodwill."

Lieut. Vollmer returned at about 6 o'clock and announced without any formal greeting that they would go out to supper. Irving picked up his hat from the bed where he had thrown it on entering the room and signified his readiness to go at once.

He was eager to begin conversation on the subject that interested him most, but decided that he must await a favorable opportunity. His companion had relapsed again into unsociable aloofness, and the walk of three squares to the cafe where they had their luncheon was made without the passing of a word between them.

The meal, too, was eaten almost as quietly. Irving made a few attempts to draw his companion into conversation, hoping to lead up gradually to the subject that was weighing rather heavily on his mind, but he failed utterly. At last just as they were about to leave the restaurant, the young German lieutenant altered the aspect of affairs very much by saying:

"I'm going to leave you to your own devices now, Hessenburg. For anything you want, get in touch with the baron; he'll give instructions for taking care of you. They'll probably give you an army uniform and send you to the front to fight for the fatherland. I'm on a leave of absence and am going home to stay there until my leave expires."

Irving was stunned by this announcement from his uncongenial guide, who was about to leave him unceremoniously in the lurch. He did not know how to reply and so made no attempt to do so aside from the utterance of a few conventionalities, such as, "I hope you'll enjoy your furlough," and "I thank you for the

courtesies you have shown me."

Lieut. Vollmer did not return with Irving to the hotel, but gave him a limp handshake out on the sidewalk, tossed a careless "aufwiedersehn" at him and sauntered away. The deserted spy went back to his room and passed an uncomfortable night, tormented with so many doubts of conflicting nature that he soon found himself in a very nervous condition. After he had lain awake an hour or two trying to clear up the obscurities in his mind, he decided that the course of thinking that he had permitted to sway him would result disastrously even if there was no reason for him to feel apprehensive of the outlook.

"I must throw this out of my mind and get a good night's rest," he told himself. "If my nerves are all shot to pieces tomorrow, it'll be folly for me to attempt to get any satisfaction from the government officials. They'll see there's something wrong, dead sure. I'm proving myself a mighty poor spy, and ought to have stayed in the Canadian trenches. Of course, I must expect to run into the most dangerous situations and depend on my wits, bluff, and nerve–yes NERVE–to get me out. What if I am under suspicion? If they have no goods on me, I'm safe enough so long as I don't convict myself by a guilty manner. I must be mistaken in my suspicion that they have found something wrong in that cubist art message. They'd 'ave arrested me right away if they'd discovered the change. I'll probably find everything all right tomorrow when I talk with the baron. Why, he may even decorate me with an iron cross. Hope it won't be too heavy to carry around, that's all. Or maybe they need all the iron to make shells with and will give me a leather cross–no, they need that for shoes; or a rubber cross–no, they need that to make rubber heels so they can pussy-foot out in No-Man's-Land. There! I've got my nerves in better shape; think I can go to sleep now, but I do wonder why that middle-aged man in civilian clothes was following me. I wonder if he wore rubber heels."

That was the way Irving managed to induce sleep an hour or two before midnight. He adopted the method very systematically and determinedly, and it worked. But his slumber was not as undisturbed as he would have had it, for he dreamed the most violent and mysterious of dreams enlivened and peopled with aeroplanes and booming cannon and minnenwerfers and parachutes and rubber-heeled secret service men who followed him so softly, gently, stealthily that it seemed as if even the thunder of battle was being toned down to zephyrs

of inconsequential ghostly conflict.

CHAPTER XXVII
THE SPY'S DECISION

Irving arose at daybreak next morning. In spite of his uneasy night, he was much refreshed and felt confident that he had good command of his nerves. This was an important reassurance, and the young spy decided that he would not let it get away from him.

"I'll tie it down with a string of self-confidence and a knot of determination," he told himself resolutely.

This way of putting the idea amused him a little and added to his strength of purpose.

"First of all, how about breakfast?" he asked himself as he combed his hair with a pocket comb which he carried with him and regarded the puzzled wrinkling of his brow in the wash-room mirror.

"Well," he added, as he returned the comb to its case-and the case to his pocket, "I guess I'll have to go without breakfast. Not a very comfortable idea, either, but there seems to be no way out of it. That fellow Vollmer seemed to take a malicious delight in forgetting every one of my comforts. I wish I had something to do between now and 9 or 10 o'clock. I don't like to stroll around any more than is necessary in this uniform."

But there seemed to be nothing for him to do except remain in his room and wait for his wristwatch to tick several thousand seconds. It seemed, too, as if all of these ticks hammered away right in the center of his brain, always striking on the same pin-point spot and irritating his nervous system almost beyond endurance. At 8:30 o'clock he decided to wait no longer and grabbed his hat and hastened from the hotel. Without making particular note of his surroundings, he set out at a brisk pace for the building that contained the intelligence offices which he had visited the day before.

Meanwhile he had forgotten all about the middle-aged man in civilian clothes who had followed him through the streets. It had not occurred to him that the fellow might return to the hotel and continue his espionage next day. He had presumed that the man would make a report to his superiors and the affair would be taken up again in some other manner if, indeed, there should be

any resumption at all of the investigation.

”If I’m suspected of being a British spy, they’ll probably arrest me when I report back at the baron’s office,” he mused before leaving the hotel.

After walking a square or two, Irving slowed his pace considerably, realizing that it was still early and that he probably would have to wait an hour or more for ”the baron” after his arrival at the latter’s office if he continued to walk as rapidly as he had started. To ”kill” a little of the surplus time ahead of him, therefore, he stopped and looked into several shop windows, the last being an ”eat shop,” which teased his appetite not a little and caused him to feel that he could chew a piece of army meat of the consistency of leather, or rubber, with a good deal of relish at that moment.

The suggestion contained in the word rubber, for which there seemed to be no appropriate reason in connection with a steaming breakfast, revived his burlesque musings of the night before as he was drifting away into a nervous slumber. The semi-dream pictures in his mind of a government sleuth on rubber heels brought him back to his startling experience of the previous day so suddenly that he turned almost involuntarily and gazed in the direction from which he had come.

If he had been a person of superstitious susceptibility wandering through a country cemetery in the ghostly moonlight, he could not have been more apprehensively thrilled by what he saw. Half a square up the street was the mysterious middle-aged man in civilian clothes who had followed him from the intelligence building to the hotel.

”Gee! I must hustle along and get to the baron’s office as soon as possible,” he decided as he quickened his steps. ”I must bluff this thing through as I never bluffed before. I must put the matter up to him and find out what it means.”

He hurried on more rapidly than the pace with which he started from the hotel and did not slow up again until he reached the building in Wilhelmstrasse for which he was headed.

He decided not to pretend to be ignorant of the fact that he was being followed; indeed, he would have retraced his steps and accosted his shadower if it had not seemed probable that such a course would have been futile. So, just as he was passing through the pillared entrance, he turned and looked again up the street.

Yes, there he was, 150 feet away, sauntering along as if his greatest object in life was the sniffing of the damp April ozone. One look was enough, and the shadowed spy entered the building and walked up the flagstone stairway.

”I’m going to find out who that fellow is and what he’s up to if such a thing is possible,” he resolved. ”I’m going to put it up to the baron right now and if I’m under suspicion I’ll soon find out and, I hope, drive the suspicion away.”

The young spy was now exhibiting real qualities necessary to make a successful army secret service man.

CHAPTER XXVIII
MAKING PROGRESS WITH THE BARON

Irving entered "the baron's" outer office and asked to see the big intelligence official. To his surprise, that secret service dignitary was in, and the caller was requested to wait a few minutes until he was at leisure.

"Even the nobility are getting up early to help win the war," Irving ruminated as he waited. "Well, that shows a good trait of character–if they only had a good cause to fight for. I wonder if they really think they have. I don't see how they can."

Presently he was informed by an office girl that "the baron" would see him, and he entered the latter's private office. The big, usually mild-eyed official looked at him rather sharply, he thought, but he resolved not to be overawed by his dominating personality.

"I am here," he began, rather abruptly, but with a bow of seeming respect, "to find out what is to become of me. I feel lost in this big city. Lieut. Vollmer left me last night and informed me that if I wanted anything, I should apply to you. In the first place, I should like to have some breakfast."

"The baron" seemed to be amused by this speech. He did not, however, indicate any particular concern over the hungry condition of the spy, who had proved himself a daring and spectacular hero "in the service of the fatherland." But he smiled and answered in reassuring tones:

"No breakfast? Ach himmel! You shall have all you can eat, and by the time you have finished your breakfast, you'll realize how futile is the English blockade."

"What kind of plans have you for me?" Irving asked, deeming it of no advantage to enter into a discussion of conditions in Germany with a man who undoubtedly would express only the most optimistic views. "I'm getting impatient, I can't stand it to be idle. I want something to do."

"What do you want to do?" asked "the baron."

"Whatever I'm best fitted for. I hoped I'd been successful enough in the venture just completed to warrant your keeping me in something of the same

line."

"Do you want to go back to Canada?"

"I'd thought some of that, but it doesn't seem practicable," Irving replied. "You see, I'm an enlisted soldier now and would be sent back to the front if I returned. But it seems to me that I might do some good work in the United States."

"Yes, that's true, you might," "the baron" admitted, meditatively. "I'll think that over."

"Meanwhile," Irving continued, "I'd like to get rid of this uniform. It causes me no end of inconvenience. I'm constantly expecting to be stopped on the street and questioned."

"Have you been stopped yet?"

"No, but I've been followed. I'd have gone out and walked around some last evening, but was followed all the way from here to the hotel. The same man followed me from the hotel here this morning."

"The baron" appeared to be genuinely surprised at this statement.

"I don't understand that," he said. "What kind of looking man was it that followed you?"

"He was middle-aged and dressed in civilian clothes."

"I'll find out about this," "the baron" announced, pressing a button on his desk.

An office messenger between 60 and 70 years old entered.

"Is Schoensiegel or Blau out there?" inquired "the baron."

"Blau is," replied the messenger.

"Send him in."

The messenger went out and a minute later an individual who might have passed for an ordinary plain-clothes man of the police force entered.

"Blau," said the intelligence official, "this is Mr. Hessenburg, one of our friends from America–Canada. He was with the Canadian army at the front and broke away to bring us some important information. He's been here only a couple of days, but has been followed on the street by someone, not under orders from this office. I want you to go outside and wait until he leaves, and then find out who it is that's following him and why he's doing it. Maybe some other department or the police are laboring under a misapprehension as to our friend's identity."

"Gans gewiss, Herr Hauptmann," said Blau, bowing himself out of the room and indicating acceptance of his commission. The conversation was resumed between the spy and "the baron."

"I'll provide you with a uniform and make you an attache of this office for the present," the latter announced. "Later I'll take up your suggestion for keeping

you in this branch of the service and see what I can do. The skill and daring of your achievements thus far deserves recognition, I can say that much at least."

Irving was reassured and encouraged by these words. He was convinced that "the baron" entertained no doubt regarding the genuineness of his representations.

"Why not give me employment that will enable me to advance my efficiency for further spy work?" the boy suggested.

"That's a good idea," declared the intelligence official with a look of professional animation in his eyes. "I think I'll do that. As soon as you get your uniform, report at this office and I'll have you assigned to your new duties. Meanwhile I'll put you on the payroll and give you an order for a month's salary in advance. Your bill at the hotel has been taken care of, but from now on you'll pay that yourself. Lieut. Vollmer was guilty of an inexcusable oversight when he left you without money for your meals and other incidentals. I thought that was being taken care of."

Irving thanked "the baron" for the interest shown in his welfare. Then he took up the subject on which he had expected to make his strongest play with the intelligence official.

"I want to speak to you now," he said, "about a matter that perhaps I should have brought to your attention sooner. It's about the message on my arm. I don't know what's in that message, but it may be that Canadian officials have taken steps to render worthless the information I brought to you. Would it be possible for them to render it of no value to you if they knew the contents of the message I brought?"

The keen interest that "the baron" manifested instantly in these suggestions indicated to Irving that he could hardly have broached a subject that would command closer attention.

CHAPTER XXIX
ORDERS FOR MONEY AND CLOTHES

"It would not only be possible for the Canadian officials to nullify the value to us of the message you brought, but that is exactly what they would do if they found out the contents of that message."

This is the reply "the baron" gave to the question put to him by Irving at the

close of the preceding chapter. The spy put the question in accord with a suggestion made by Col. Evans in the course of his instructions behind the Canadian lines. The intent of this move was to obviate suspicion that he had delivered a fake message when discovery was made that the information it contained did not answer its professed purpose.

"Have you any reason to believe that they discovered the nature of the information you brought in that message?" asked the high Prussian official after he had answered the spy's question.

"I'm afraid I have," the latter replied. "Why didn't they arrest you?"

"Because they didn't know where to find me. I was lost somewhere in the Canadian army. They probably had no way of identifying me. However, they must have made a search for me when they learned what had been going on–maybe they're searching yet."

"Do you know what they learned that a message of this kind was being brought over here?"

"I know enough to feel that there is grave danger that they made such a discovery."

"How did you find that out?"

"This way: One of the boys in the company to which I belonged received a letter from his cousin in Canada that told almost the whole story, and I read the letter. That cousin told a long story about his going to Toronto to visit some friends and getting sick while there. He was taken to a hospital–*our* hospital, by the way–and while he was convalescing, he strolled out in the hall and saw the tattooing operation on my arm. The two men who were doing the work saw him standing there and gazing through the glass door, and they rushed out, collared him, and dragged him into the laboratory. But he satisfied them that he was merely a curious onlooker and they let him go.

"However, they had him watched, and after he left the hospital he was followed everywhere he went. He communicated with government officials and a week or two later the hospital was raided. This is all the information the letter contained, but it is possible that they compelled somebody to reveal the contents of the message that was tattooed on my arm."

"Very possible," agreed "the baron," leaning forward with a look of hard and harsh concern in his eyes. "And where were you in the meantime?"

"On my way on a transport for England. The spy in the hospital, I suppose, did not observe me very closely. Fortunately I had my coat off and perhaps he did not identify me as a soldier. At any rate, I was not interfered with, and I am here."

"No doubt of that," returned the intelligence official rather absently; "and you brought the message. Well, all we can do is remember the circumstances you

have just related and take them into consideration if developments don't prove satisfactory. I'm glad you told me about this, for it may prevent a lot of confusion. It wouldn't be well for you to venture back into Canada with that picture on your arm. You'd be picked up as a deserter, and the intelligence officers wouldn't be very slow finding out that you were the fellow they've been hunting for ever since the raid on that Toronto hospital. As a matter of fact, I doubt if you can be of much use to us in any of the countries of our allied enemies with that thing on your arm."

"I have an idea to remedy that," said Irving with a smile that suggested something of a novelty in his mind.

"What is that?" asked "the baron."

"Peel this picture off and graft some new skin in its place."

The intelligence official laughed, but he was interested as well as amused.

"That isn't a bad idea at all," he said. "On the whole I am inclined to take you seriously. You seem to have a scientific turn of mind, and that always appeals to an intelligent German. I'm going to put you to work under the direction of a man who will give you a thorough tryout, and we'll find out what you're good for. You seem to be ambitious and intelligent and have a good record behind you. Go ahead now and show us what you're worth."

This announcement and the accompanying instruction delighted the spy beyond measure. If his recent experiences had not schooled him in the very wise habit of self-restraint, his first joyful impulse might have got him into trouble.

"Just wait a minute and I'll fix you up with an order for some money and some clothes," said "the baron" after a few moments of silence.

He picked up a pen and busied himself filling out a form and writing a note on a letterhead of the department. These he folded and placed hi separate envelopes. The envelopes he addressed and handed to the spy.

"There, that's all today, I think," he said. "Whatever you need hereafter will be taken care of by Mr. Herrmann. Inquire outside and you'll be directed where to go to have this order cashed."

Irving thanked him and left the office. Ten minutes later he was outside the building with a comfortable roll of bank-bills in his pocket. As he started up the street with directions in his mind for reaching the quartermaster's office, he saw Blau on the opposite sidewalk and was reminded of the instruction given that

intelligence operative to shadow the young spy's shadower.

CHAPTER XXX
BEFORE BREAKFAST

Irving dismissed from his mind for the time being the mystery concerning the middle-aged man in civilian clothes who had followed him through the streets on two occasions. His fears regarding the incident were dispelled, for he felt that Blau, the intelligence operative on the opposite side of the street, would take care of that matter very efficiently. Everything was coming his way now, and he in his mission than he had felt at any other time walked alone; with greater confidence of success since landing with his parachute.

It was a ten minute walk to the quartermaster's headquarters. At the entrance of the building, his curiosity concerning the game of "shadow chase shadow" which he presumed to be going on behind him was aroused by a sudden reverting of his mind to the subject, and he turned and looked down the street by which he had come. There was Blau, half a square away, but the "middle-aged man in civilian clothes" was not in sight.

"I wonder if he got onto the fact that somebody was directed to watch him," Irving mused. "But that ought not to have stopped him. He had nothing to fear from an agent of another department if he was engaged in legitimate government business."

The spy delivered his requisition for a soldier's uniform and was given in turn an order on the supply house and directions how to reach it. Then he left the building and took a car for the place where he was to get his suit.

Blau took the same car, but the "shadow" he had been ordered to "shadow" was not there unless he had disguised himself so successfully that Irving was unable to recognize him. The operative appeared to be somewhat puzzled, too, but he made no sign of recognition to the soldier in enemy uniform, and the latter maintained a like pretense of unacquaintance.

An hour later the spy was clad in a first lieutenant's uniform and on his way back to the hotel. Blau kept within hailing distance of him, but his shadowing seemed to be futile, for the "middle-aged man in civilian clothes" had not appeared in any recognizable guise or disguise. Indeed, Irving was certain that nobody except the operative had followed him since he came out of the quarter-

master's office and started for the store-rooms.

The applicant for an army uniform was required to enlist for service in the army before it could be supplied. Irving was not surprised at this, but he was very much surprised by the kind of uniform given him. It bore the insignia of a first lieutenant's rank.

"That's certainly generous on the baron's part," he said to himself. "I don't understand it. I didn't read his note to the quartermaster, nor the quartermaster's order. Maybe they would have afforded some explanation. Maybe I shall have to earn my rank and meanwhile will go about like an automobile for which a license has not been issued but bears a tag 'license applied for.' Maybe that's my case here–first lieutenant's commission applied for. It looks kind of irregular, but I suppose 'the baron' knows his business. Anyway, mine is a special case all around, however one looks at it."

When he filled out his enlistment papers, of course Irving signed the name of Adolph Hessenburg, late of Toronto, Canada, and on the "history sheet" that he had to fill out he entered data given him by the boy of the original tattooed cubist-art message. Then he was granted the use of a room where he discarded his Canadian uniform and put on his new Prussian military disguise.

He felt that he was disguised now as he at no time had hoped to be since planning his spy expedition into the heart of the kaiser's kingdom. He surely must have the full confidence of the Prussian officials with whom he had come into contact, or he would not have been elevated to the military rank and position of trust that now were virtually his.

Irving was particularly pleased with the ease he had experienced in picking up the idioms of the German language. He had an excellent memory and scarcely a word or a phrase that was taught to him at school or behind the Canadian lines, or that he had heard since landing with a parachute on territory held by the Prussian armies, had failed to make a lasting impression on his mind. Moreover, he was very quick to put ideas together and in that way get their associated significance; so that he skillfully "figured out" the meaning of not a few words that he had never heard before they were used in conversation with him by "the baron" and other persons with whom he came in contact. And he was almost as quick and skillful in his use of those same words for the expression of his own ideas.

After leaving the quartermaster's supply depot, Irving visited a haberdashery and bought several suits of underwear, shirts, collars, and socks, and then returned to the hotel. As he entered his room and deposited his bundles on the bed a funny thing happened.

He stopped short–true, he could not have gone much farther without falling over the bed, but nevertheless there was a decided "shortness" to his "stop."

”My goodness!” he exclaimed, clapping his hand to his appetite region. ”I haven’t had any breakfast yet.”

Which being a sufficiently thrilling climax for the closing of a chapter, we will carry the reader over in suspense to the next.

CHAPTER XXXI
AT WORK IN THE SPY OFFICE

Irving laughed and felt hungrier than ever. The humorous relaxation afforded him great relief from the nervousness of his morning’s activities, which had been associated enough with doubt and apprehension to make a coward run and a brave man extremely cautious.

”Well, that’s a good one,” the young pseudo-boche lieutenant continued in soliloquy. ”Here it’s nearly 2 o’clock and I haven’t eaten my breakfast, and meanwhile I’d forgotten all about it. And I’m as hungry as a bear. I wonder if the British blockade has left enough food in the kaiser’s kingdom, to fill up the vacuum inside of me. I think I’ll go and find out. That’ll be worth-while information to carry back to the Canadian commanders.”

So out he went to a restaurant two squares away, where he had small difficulty in getting all he wanted to eat, the only qualification being that he had to pay prices so out of proportion to his income that he instinctively began to figure out the financial problem of how to make his salary carry him through to the end of the month.

”I’m starting out too swell,” he concluded after several minutes’ reckoning. ”I’ll have to eat at cheaper restaurants and get a cheaper room. That makes me think I don’t know how much my room at the hotel is going to cost me; but it’s bound to be pretty steep. Anyway, I don’t care, so long as I can pull through on my salary. I don’t want to carry any of this money with me when I go back to the other side of No-Man’s Land.”

Irving did not ask how much the hotel was charging for his room. He merely announced that he would check out that evening after engaging quarters in a comfortable rooming house in a semi-residence district near the Tiergarten. Economy was not the only motive that caused him to make this move. Being now in German uniform, he reasoned that he might be able to throw off of his trail the ”middle-aged man in civilian clothes” who had been shadowing him, if

he changed his living address also. As a further precaution he made this change late in the evening.

Next morning he reported for duty at the office of "Mr. Herrmann" as he had been instructed by "the baron" to do. Mr. Herrmann proved to be in charge of a suite of offices in the intelligence building in which were employed more than a hundred persons, most of them men, varying in ages from 20 to 70. Irving, for want of detailed information regarding their duties, classed them all as clerks, stenographers and typists at first glance, and this in general was a very good classification, although many of them performed special work that entitled them to ranking positions of greater dignity. And he had not been employed there more than two or three days when he learned that half of them held such ranking positions together with salaries proportionate to the grades of work they did.

"Can you operate a typewriter?" asked Mr. Herrmann after conducting the new employe through one large and several smaller work-rooms under his superintendence.

"With two fingers," Irving replied with a smile.

"Learned it at home, eh? Well, you won't need a lot of speed. I understand your education in German is not very far advanced."

"Not very far," the spy replied.

"Can you read the script?"

"Yes, I can work it out. I know the letters, but they come to me rather slowly."

"You'll make it all right after a few days' practice. I'm going to set you at work first copying some translated cipher messages." (The boy's heart began to thump eagerly, but the thumping became a weaker reflex pattering as the superintendent continued.) "They don't amount to much. We get masses of indifferent material from numerous sources, but we keep it all carefully cataloged, indexed, and cross-indexed several times. Any little insignificant item of information may be worth a good deal to us at any time. That's one secret of the great value of the German spy system. Now I'll leave you with this budget of communications and let you work it out with your own intelligence. That's one way we have of finding out what a man is worth."

Irving longed to ask him how he protected such an intricate system of concentrated information from leaks that might be of value to the enemy, but wisely refrained.

"I'll find that out by keeping my eyes and ears open," he told himself. "I mustn't ask any questions except such as bear directly on my duties and are calculated to promote my efficiency."

He sat down at the desk assigned to him and was soon diligently, eagerly

at work. His eagerness, however, was a well-camouflaged secret.

CHAPTER XXXII
A STARTLING RECOGNITION

For two weeks Irving continued his work in the record offices of the great German espionage system. His experiences there during this time were without special incident, except that they evolved before his mind a continuous motion picture of scientific detail far more intricate, comprehensive, and deep-reaching than he could ever have imagined.

There could be no doubt that ”the baron,” Mr. Herrmann, and the staff of experts, clerks, stenographers, and typists looked upon the ”parachute hero” as a bona fide fatherland loyalist. The story of his ”camouflaged escape” by parachute from an enemy aeroplane to deliver a cryptic-code message that he carried all the way from America had circulated among them, and the glee with which they commented on his skill and success indicated the intense feeling with which they, one and all, regarded the cause for which the Teutonic race was fighting–the supremacy of the empire founded by Prince Bismarck. Irving discovered also another important human factor in this relation, namely, that the initiated members of the great spy organization of the central powers could discuss among themselves the secrets of their system without becoming in the least gossipy; hence, the danger of their inadvertently dropping hints of important state matters never intended for ”outside ears” was small indeed.

A more secretive group of employes it would be difficult to imagine. Moreover, their secrets seemed to be grouped in sections and degrees. And the most peculiar feature of the whole system, perhaps, was the fact that few instructions were given, defining these sections and degrees. Irving received none himself, and in all the time he was connected with the bureau he learned of nobody else who had been told what, or what not, to do or say in this regard.

”Here seems to be another instance of the requirement of instinctive understanding,” he told himself a good many times. ”They seem to give me credit of being an extremely intelligent fellow. Well, I hope I exceed their estimate of me. If I do, they may find it necessary co revise their system somewhat.”

The degrees of secrecy Irving learned in the course of a week or more were of a graduated character. For instance, he soon discovered that he might talk

about his own work to any and all other members of the force, but all of them outside of his class would not discuss their work with him. After he was advanced to the next higher grade of work he found, as he had already had reason to suspect, that there were two degrees of the great spy system within the "circumscribed freedom" of his intelligence. This "freedom" was circumscribed by a prohibition, forbidding him to discuss any spy subject to anybody outside the office except on special direction from superior authority.

Irving progressed rapidly in his work. He exhibited such ready comprehension of details and purposes that he was soon marked by the entire office force as a "coming man" in the government secret service. Undoubtedly his spectacular method of transit from the Canadian to the German lines helped materially to boost along his growing reputation, but it would also be unfair to put too much emphasis on this feat of daring and skill. Irving really deserved much credit for innate ability.

In his efforts to create a general feeling of satisfaction and confidence in order to ward off any suspicions which might arise regarding his purpose and motives, the young spy did a good many things that almost caused in him a rebellious boiling over of patriotic sentiment. He did much to perfect a filing system that had been neglected because of illness of the man previously in charge, and offered a number of suggestions for certain other efficiency improvements which brought forth complimentary notice from Superintendent Herrmann. But all the time, while doing these things, Irving kept in mind the big purpose of his mission which outmeasured so greatly in importance his services to the enemy that his feelings of self-reproach for the aid he was incidentally giving the kaiser's spy machine were short-lived.

Evidently it was the purpose of Mr. Herrmann to advance his spy pupil as rapidly as possible. Undoubtedly he was under orders to do this from "the baron." Although the reason for this method of procedure had not been stated in so many words, the understanding seemed to be clear enough that it was the purpose of the department to send him back to America equipped for very important work at an early date.

Three weeks after he entered the office he began to accumulate the information for which he had been sent. He then was given access to the card-index system of the great world-spy organization. It was like a city-library catalog, with references to files of interminable data buried away in metal boxes in a large vault.

In his work with this catalog and files he was associated with a man whose countenance was strangely familiar to him from the first. He tried to assume that there was merely a resemblance in the face of this man to that of some other man he had known on the Canadian front or at home, but such assumption failed

to satisfy him. He could not drive away the feeling that he had met this fellow somewhere since he dropped from the sky with a parachute behind the German battle lines, but although he studied over the matter for hours while busy with his work he was unable by such efforts to solve the mystery.

The solution came during a period of relaxation, as the solution of many mysteries come. On the third day since his last advancement in the service, while making entries on certain catalog cards, there recurred to him a mental picture of his experiences with the unidentified man who had shadowed him through the streets while he was still in Canadian uniform. Two weeks before he had dismissed this incident from his mind, being convinced that the man had given up his quest, whatever it was.

But the returned picture did not rest long peacefully in his mind. It was followed closely by a thrill that almost made him drop the card that he held in his hand. He looked quickly, almost involuntarily, at his associate worker, who was bent over a task at his desk.

Irving knew at once that he was not mistaken. Before him was the "middle-aged man in civilian clothes" who had shadowed him more than three weeks before from the intelligence building to the hotel where he was living and to other places in the city.

CHAPTER XXXIII
A SURPRISING OFFER

Emil Strauss was the name of Irving's coworker in the card index room. One could hardly say that he was either an agreeable or a disagreeable fellow. He had little to say. It was generally understood that he was very efficient in his work and ranked as one of the leading, if not the leading, experts in the department.

Strauss was not a typical Teuton in appearance. Irving thought he looked as much like an Irishman as a German, that he might have passed for either or a Swede. He was of medium height, somewhat slender of build, and had a smooth, round face, out of which shone two piercing black eyes–that is, they shone and pierced when the camouflage of heavy eyelashes and eyebrows was lifted. Otherwise one would have noticed almost everything else about him first.

There was no doubt in Irving's mind as to his identification, but he caught not even a surreptitious glance of recognition from the fellow at any time. He

attended strictly and diligently to his own business, and the spy did likewise from the moment of his recognition of the man. He was determined his new associate should see no evidences of uneasiness in him as a result of this development.

Three days elapsed after Irving's last advancement to the card-catalog division, and still the conversations between him and his working companion were of the "yea, yea, nay, nay" character. Finally, however, the boy decided to attempt to draw Strauss into conversation. He did this by reference to humorous incidents in the war as brought out in cartoons and pointed paragraphs in Berlin newspaper and magazines.

He was somewhat surprised, and pleased also, to note that the "middle-aged man in civilian clothes" did not meet his advances with coldness or indifference. The fellow proved, indeed, to be much more polite than it had at first seemed possible. He appeared to enjoy Irving's palaver, for the youth was something of a wit, but preferred to listen rather than talk himself. Finally, however, he grew more communicative and manifested something of interest in his associate's personal affairs.

"They're telling some great stories about you around here," he said one day as they were preparing to go out for lunch. It was the first time they had quit work for the noon hour at the same time. Usually Irving went first and his companion went out after he returned, although Strauss was virtually "his own boss" and came and went as he chose.

"Yes, they're a bunch of gossips around here," Irving replied with a deprecating smile. "And you know what magnified stories gossips turn out when their tongues get busy."

Strauss smiled mysteriously and said:

"Oh, for that matter we are all gossips, even the quietest of us sometimes. All you have to do is to get us off on the subjects that we are well informed about and you'll soon find out how our tongues can wag at both ends."

"It's pretty hard for me to imagine your tongue wagging at both ends," Irving returned with more meaning in his mind than he expressed in his tone of voice.

"Why?"

"Because you seem to enjoy listening more than talking."

"I am engaged in a secret business," Strauss explained, lifting his shaggy brows slightly and darting a sharp glance at the other.

"Yes, so am I," Irving returned quickly. "But I like to talk."

"So I observe," said Strauss with veiled significance, which the boy did not try to penetrate.

"Just to be sociable," the spy added by way of explanation and to prevent the conversation from lagging.

But Strauss did not appear to be so talkatively eager. They were in the locker and wash room during most of this exchange of words, and nothing further was said between them until they were outside the building. The catalog expert then spoke first.

"Where do you eat?" he asked.

"Oh, any place," Irving replied. "I've been in two or three restaurants around here. There's a good one down in the next block."

"That suits me," said Strauss.

They walked along in silence half a square, and then the boy's mysterious companion put to him the most inquisitive query that the spy had listened to from this man since he became acquainted with him:

"When do you expect to go back to America?"

"Good!" Irving said to himself. "Sounds as if he's going to open up. Maybe I'll get something out of him after all."

He little dreamed how much that something was going to be.

"I don't know," he answered aloud. "I haven't received any orders yet."

"You'd better begin to find out then," was the expert's advice uttered in tones of startling sharpness. "I suppose you know it's up to you to decide that matter yourself."

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," Irving replied with a matter-of-factness of manner, which was anything but expressive of what was going on in his mind. The fact is, he was a little disturbed by the last remark of his companion.

"I'll have to undergo a surgical operation before I start back," he added.

"What's that?" inquired Strauss. "Were you wounded?"

"No," Irving replied. "But I must get rid of a mark of identification and go back as another person."

Strauss nodded a stoical sign of interest. They were now at the entrance of the restaurant for which they were headed, and the conversation ceased until they were seated at a table in one corner of the room and well removed from other lunchers. After they had been served they resumed their discussion of Irving's proposed operation in subdued tones.

"It must be a curious growth on your body that you should have to remove it in order to avoid identification," Strauss remarked as he spread a "knife-end" of war-time "butter" on a piece of black bread.

"No, it isn't a growth," Irving replied. "It's that cubist art picture on my arm."

"Oh, I see," Strauss grunted. "But," he added, "I don't just see how an operation there is going to do you much good. What are you going to have done–have your arm cut off?"

"No–have the skin peeled off."

”Ach,” grunted the card-catalog expert. ”That will leave a scar.”

”Not if I have some other skin grafted in its place.”

”Quite an idea. Where do you expect to get the other skin to graft there?”

”From some part of my body,” Irving replied.

”Ja wo-ohl,” said the other slowly, with a suggestion of doubt in his voice not contained in the phrase. ”But that would leave a scar on your body, and if some sharp fellow tried to identify you as the person who brought that tattooed message ever here the scar might help him to explain the disappearance of the picture on your arm.”

”Yes, that’s true,” Irving agreed. ”But the chance of anything of that sort is small. Anyway, I’d have to find somebody who would give me a section of his skin four inches by two.”

”There are thousands of patriotic Germans who are willing to give their lives for their country,” reasoned the expert. ”It ought not to be hard to find somebody who would give a few inches of skin.”

”You are very logical,” the spy observed. ”Perhaps there’s somebody in our office who would make such a sacrifice for his country.”

”I’ll do it myself,” declared Strauss quickly.

In view of the fact that the latter appeared a few weeks previously to have regarded him with very grave suspicion, Irving had to admit to himself after this offer that the spy-cataloger was more of a mystery than ever.

CHAPTER XXXIV
SKIN GRAFTING

”Your offer is very kind,” Irving said with emphasis intended to express warmth of feeling.

”No–patriotic,” Strauss declared.

”No doubt of that,” the spy admitted; ”but a man can be patriotic and kind at the same time, can he not?”

”Yes, but this is all patriotism.”

”Very well, I’ll accept your offer,” Irving announced. ”But I doubt if Mr. Herrmann will allow it. You are a very valuable man in the office, and the operation would surely make it necessary for you to lay off a few days. He’ll probably insist that an office boy or clerk or stenographer make the patriotic sacrifice in

your stead."

"That'll suit me–just so there is no delay in finding someone who's willing," Strauss replied.

Irving proved to be correct in his prophecy of the probable attitude of the superintendent toward the proposition. Mr. Herrmann objected strenuously for the reason suggested by the spy and he took it on himself to find a person who would supply the skin to be grafted. Two days later he reported success and preparations for the operation were begun.

But everybody connected with these preliminaries had an important lesson to learn regarding the proper method for a layman to approach a matter of science. None of them, of course, knew anything, except in a very general way, about skin grafting. Irving had assumed that it was a simple process, and, as a matter of fact, it is, if we accept the principle of the simplicity of all things. But what startled him most was the simplicity of the error he had fallen into.

Mr. Herrmann gave Irving a note to the superintendent of one of the city hospitals and directed him to go there and make arrangements for the operation. He was authorized to state that a young soldier who had lost one of his legs in the first battle of the Marne had promised to furnish the needed four-by-two inches of skin to replace the tattooed integument on his arm.

The spy did as instructed and was turned over to a member of the surgical staff. The latter listened to the boy's story and his suggestions and then inquired:

"At what college of physicians and surgeons did you get your degree?"

Irving no doubt flushed like a schoolboy. He realized that the member of the hospital staff was laughing at him, and this confused him more than a veiled suspicion that he was a Canadian spy would have done.

"The college I graduated from was that of mother's home remedies," he replied.

"I thought so," nodded the surgeon with a smile. "Let me see–you are in the intelligence department, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Doing important work, aren't you?'

"I believe so."

"Work that requires sharp wit?"

"Supposedly."

"Well, sharp wits never assume anything without some information to back them up. Your ideas of skin grafting are a good deal like a child's. In the first place we shan't need anybody to supply any skin. Sorry to disappoint the young patriot with really commendable spirit of loyalty."

Irving looked his surprise.

"You'll supply all the skin we need," the surgeon continued.

”But it is important that there be no scars,” Irving insisted.

”There won’t be any, or so slight that they’ll be hardly noticeable,” was the surgeon’s reassuring reply. ”Let me explain the process to an unscientific keen wit of the government’s intelligence department.”

The surgeon lifted the spy’s bared arm with his left hand and began his explanation, indicating with one finger now and then the various moves necessary as he described the process.

”With a razor,” he said, ”we will cut an outline around this hideous art of yours. Then we’ll peel off the atrocity and cremate it over an alcohol flame. Next we’ll peel a strip of the same length and three-fourths of an inch wide just below here, leaving the upper end of the strip attached and twisting it around so that it will lie midway between the edges of the raw space where the tattooing was. Then we’ll cut under the skin along both sides to loosen it an inch or more back and draw the loosened skin to the piece in the center and make a hair suture. The reason we must run a strip of skin over the middle of the raw area is because this area will be too wide for stretching the skin at the sides over it. Skin that is stretched too tight will die. The narrow raw place produced by the peeling of the strip down over the wrist can be covered by pulling together the edges of the skin on both sides after running the razor back under it a short distance. Quite different from the process you imagined, isn’t it?”

”Yes, it is,” Irving admitted.

”I bet you thought all that was necessary was to peel off a piece of skin and lay it on the raw place after this cubist art picture had been removed. Isn’t that true?”

”Maybe–something of the kind. I hadn’t thought it out in detail,” Irving replied.

”Of course, you hadn’t. You’d have been too scientific for a secret service operative, wouldn’t you?”

”Can’t secret service people be scientific?” Irving inquired.

”What do you think about it?” asked the surgeon. ”You ought to know more about it than I do. But I’ll tell you what my frank and unscientific opinion in the matter is.”

”What is it?”

”That government secret service is 1 per cent information and 99 per cent bluff.”

”That’s a little strong on the side of the bluff,” said the spy, smiling.

”But there’s something to it?”

”Yes.”

”Now you need this much science to prevent your bluff from getting you into trouble. When you attempt to bluff a scientific man be sure not to bluff along

the line of his knowledge and the line of your ignorance. By the way, when do you want that operation performed?

"The sooner the better," Irving replied.

"How about now?"

This almost took the boy's breath away, but after a few minutes he answered:

"That's all right, I suppose, but I'd better call up my office first and tell the boss what's doing."

"Very well; here's a telephone. Call him up."

Irving did so and in a few minutes had authority to "go ahead and have it over as soon as possible."

CHAPTER XXXV
THE TAPPING ON THE WINDOW

Irving slept under an anæsthetic during the operation. He objected at first to the administration of ether, but the surgeon insisted.

"I don't want you to make any trouble," he insisted. "Remember you're not a scientific youth and might do something ridiculous. If I'm going to perform this operation you must take orders and obey them."

That settled it; Irving acquiesced. When he recovered consciousness he found himself in a hospital bed with his left arm bandaged and feeling a good deal like a limb of a tree, or anything else with a like degree of life. He remained in bed until the next morning, when his arm was put in a sling and he was permitted to move about as he pleased, although directed to remain in the hospital. Two days later he was allowed to leave the institution, but was instructed to return daily for examination and redressing of the graft.

He returned at once to the intelligence office and reported the success of the operation. The chief surgeon had informed him that his arm might be taken out of the sling in about a week.

During this period Irving was in the office much of the time, although he was able to be of little service with the use of only one arm. Still, he found it possible to add a good deal to his knowledge of the system of which the government was planning to make him an important agent, and this was, on the whole, quite satisfactory to him.

The youthful spy's plans for carrying out his mission for the British government had been developing rapidly since he became a member of the staff in the German intelligence office. And not a little of this development had been quite unforeseen by him. His original plans, therefore, underwent considerable change as time and experience advanced.

For instance, he decided not to attempt to make a list of names of leading enemy agents in the United States and Canada to take back with him. This had been his original purpose. He now regarded it as unwise, unsafe. He would depend on his memory to retain a store of information of this kind. So he watched and examined and probed and memorized, going over the information he had accumulated many times in his leisure hours in order to keep it fixed and unmistakable in his mind.

"I think I could go back to school and memorize history dates as I never did before," he told himself one evening about a week after the skin-grafting operation. "Gee! I never realized I had such a memory. I can run off a string of dope as long as the tune the old cow died on, just like saying the ABC's."

Irving had forgotten the "tune the old cow died on," but the expression stuck in his mind as a relic of nursery days.

One of the divisions of service in the intelligence department that interested the spy particularly was the telegraphic division. It came as an intermediate grade in his course of instruction, and he was required to learn to read the ticking of the telegraph instrument. Fortunately, a few years before, he had learned the alphabet while amusing himself with an amateur wireless outfit, and it now required comparatively little time for him to develop a fair degree of proficiency as a key-listener.

"You can never tell when it'll be greatly to your advantage to be able to read the telegraph instrument," Mr. Herrmann explained. "In fact, that may be one of your most important occupations in America–tapping wires, for instance."

Indeed, the spy caught a number of messages of incalculable importance while pursuing his studies in this division and made careful note of them in his mental repository.

About a week later he had a novel "telegraphic" experience, which, in turn, was to have an important bearing on his fortunes as a spy in the enemy's country. The affair took place in the rooming house where he was living. While he endeavored to get out in the evening, as a rule, and mingle with citizens of all sorts and descriptions, in order to absorb as much general information as possible, still he retired almost every night in good season, and not infrequently went early to his room to study, rehearse, memorize and plan. In this manner he endeavored to improve every opportunity to make his excursion a success.

He had just finished one of these solitary sessions in which several leading

newspapers and magazines played an important part, and was about to lay them aside and prepare for bed, when his attention was attracted by a faint tapping sound. At first he gave little heed to it, presuming, in a semi-conscious way, that it was occasioned by a continuous breath of air and a tiny, loose pendant of some sort in the exterior construction work of the house. But it continued in a strangely familiar way and seemed to grow a little louder very gradually.

Suddenly, Irving sat up straight and listened rigidly. Anyone observing him in this attitude could not have failed to be impressed with the feeling that an alarm of some character was thrilling his every nerve center.

"My goodness!" was the exclamation that smothered itself within him. "What in the world can that mean? Yes, no, yes–somebody is trying to communicate with me. He's using the telegraphic signal. He's asking me to answer, to indicate in some way that I am getting his message. He says he's a friend. He knows I'm a British spy. But maybe it's a trap to catch me. What shall I do? If he's a friend he surely ought to know better than to expect me to make such an admission. But he says he has important information. What–what in the world shall I do? I may be in very great danger. Here is certainly the test of my life."

CHAPTER XXXVI
A REVELATION

"I have an important message for you. I am a French spy. I must get this message to you. Answer me in some way. Heave a big yawn or clear your throat and I'll know you hear me and get what I'm saying. I merely want to make sure you are what I think you are. I don't dare reveal myself to you for fear that I may be mistaken and you'd turn me over to the government."

These words were tapped off, alphabetically, with a small instrument, probably a pencil, on the window overlooking a court inclosed by the building on three sides. After a pause of half a minute, following the appeal just recorded, the dot-and-dash tapping continued thus:

"I am looking through the shade of your window and can see that you are listening attentively; so you need not reply. Just continue to listen, and I shall know everything is all right.

"When you leave for America you will be supplied with a message in cipher, prepared by me, for a certain agent of the kaiser. That message will bear the

appearance of having been written by a friend of yours to you, but it will contain information in invisible ink for your benefit as a loyal agent of the Allies. This information will be of great value to the Allies, supplying them with material for undermining the Teutonic spy system in England, France, and America, which recently declared war.

"This is all. I merely wished to advise you of what you will find written with invisible ink on the paper that will be placed in your possession when you set out on your return to America."

The tapping ceased. Irving remained like a statue in his chair for several minutes. Then he arose, went to the window and pulled the shade aside. The court was dark, save for a solitary dim light out at the entrance. He could just faintly discern the steel structure of the fire escape near the window.

"That's the way he got up," he half muttered. "He stood there on that landing while he tapped his message. I wonder who he is and how he spotted me. He must be a very clever fellow. I really believe he's what he represented himself to be; and yet, it may possibly be a trap to catch me. However, I don't see what I can do except await developments."

He went to bed and slept better than might have been expected under the circumstances. But he had become so used to critical situations by this time that he felt almost capable of sleeping peacefully on the "edge of the earth" with a torpedo for a pillow.

Next day the mystery of the window-telegraph spy bothered him a good deal, even more than it did immediately after the fellow had "dotted and dashed" his message on the pane of glass.

"I wonder who he was?" he repeated many times. "I wonder if he's somebody I'm in close touch with every day?"

The suggestion caused him to watch narrowly every person in the office with whom he did business for the German government. But the more he watched, the more unsatisfactory the situation became. He continued his furtive outlook several days, but finally admitted to himself that the prospect of his efforts solving the mystery was anything but bright.

Meanwhile the spy's preparations for a new excursion out into a broad field of international espionage were rapidly drawing to a close. The surgeon at the hospital who had performed the skin-grafting operation on his arm pronounced it sufficiently well healed, first, to warrant taking the limb out of the sling, and then, a week later, for the removal of the bandage. There were a few slightly rough places here and there. around the edges of the patch, and one small scar at the lower end of the middle strip of skin where it had been twisted to cause it to lie "right side out" through the middle of the larger patch and make the latter complete by meeting the outer edges that had been undercut and drawn to it.

All things considered, Irving was well pleased with the course of events during his sojourn in the German capital. Although a number of situations had developed with rather dangerous aspect, he had pulled through all of them with apparent success. While he was still reporting daily at the hospital for the dressing of his arm his lieutenancy commission was acted upon in the war office and was delivered to him through Mr. Herrmann.

At last the day arrived for a windup of the young spy's affairs in the intelligence offices, and he was summoned into the presence of "the baron" and Superintendent Herrmann. A third man also was present to receive the young espionage student. He wore a navy uniform and was introduced as Capt. Bartholf of the submarine service.

"You will go with Capt. Bartholf on board his boat," "the baron" announced, addressing "Lieut. Hessenburg." "He will land you on the coast of Spain and from there you will go to a German consul and devise a method for getting you to Mexico and from there into the United States.

"By the way," the high intelligence official remarked, suddenly interrupting himself and addressing Superintendent Herrmann; "how about that letter that was being prepared for Lieut. Hessenburg to take along?"

"I'll see," replied Herrmann, as he started for the door.

"Bring Strauss in with you," "the baron" called after him. "I may want to ask him some questions."

"Strauss!"

The name echoed in Irving's brain with a succession of significant thrills. What did Strauss have to do with the preparation of the letter he was to take with him? Was it possible–?

He did not finish the sentence in words, but the idea was there and remained uppermost in his mind during the remainder of the session in "the baron's" office. Presently Herrmann returned, accompanied by the card-catalog expert, who carried an envelope of ordinary business-correspondence size in one hand. This envelope he laid on the desk in front of the intelligence chief.

The latter picked it up, looked keenly at Strauss and asked with like sharpness of voice:

"This paper was prepared entirely by you, was it?"

"Yes," the cataloger answered.

"And it has been in no other person's hands at any time since you began work on it?"

"No."

"And you vouch for the accuracy and thoroughness of its preparation?"

"Yes."

"That's all. You may retire."

Strauss left the room. ”The baron” turned to Irving, handed him the letter, and said:

”This innocent looking missive is of vast importance. It is addressed in cipher to a very important person in America who is high in the confidence of the United States government. You have learned how to read this cipher and will work it out for yourself. That is all. Good-by. I wish you a continuation of the success that has been yours in a remarkable degree heretofore.”

Irving took ”the baron’s” offered hand and then left the office accompanied by Capt. Bartholf. As he went the name of Strauss continued to ring in his head, together with this startling conviction:

The catalog expert was the French spy who had tapped the ”telegraph message” on his window at the rooming house!

CHAPTER XXXVII
THE SUBMARINES

Lieut. Ellis of the Canadian army, alias Lieut. Hessenburg of the German army, had quite enough to think about as he left the office of ”the baron” in company with the submarine commander. Out in the reception room the latter took leave of him, saying, ”Meet me at the Kaiserhof at 9 o’clock tomorrow morning”; then the youthful spy, with a counter-spying commission from the enemy, went to his desk and began to make arrangements for his departure.

Mr. Herrmann selected from the office force a former soldier who had lost one arm, and to him Irving made a brief statement of the work he had been doing so that his successor might continue where he had left off. For a short time he debated in his mind whether to go to those of his fellow workmen with whom he had been more intimately associated and bid them farewell, but he decided that this would not be in harmony with the ”community conduct” of the officials and employes of the bureau. In fact, he had observed little in the association of the office that had suggested real community life. Everybody connected with the intelligence bureau seemed either to have been born with a cold furtiveness of manner or to have developed an espionage attitude of this sort in the atmosphere of the greatest spy system the world had ever known.

However, he disliked very much to leave the place for the last time without passing at least an ”aufwiedersehen” to the one person there who he felt certain

was a friend of the great cause of human liberty for which the allied nations were fighting. But Strauss seemed disposed to ignore him if possible. He passed several times near the expert's desk, but the latter pored more diligently than ever over his work. Once Irving caught his eye and attempted to pass him a look of intelligent meaning, but Strauss turned away quickly, and Irving left the building without saying good-by to one of the occupants.

"A very cold-blooded business," he told himself. "My! I'm glad to be out of there. I'm afraid I'm not built along cold enough lines for a spy even in behalf of a great and meritorious cause. That fellow Strauss is an ideal spy. He must be the best any nation ever produced. He certainly has worked himself into a powerful position of confidence with the enemy. But that was some chance he took when he tapped that message on my window. I wonder if he expected me to discover who he was after he told me he was the fellow that prepared the letter that was to be given to me. And when he assured the baron that nobody else had had the letter in his possession, nobody else remained for me to suspect. Well, he must know now that I spotted him; but he surely exhibited extremely wise caution when he refused to recognize even a significant look from me. Good-by, Mr. Strauss, or whatever your name is. You were too shrewd to let me shake your hand, and cold judgment tells me you were right. I hope after the war is over I may take a trip to Europe and look you up. But, judging from the way you looked at me, or avoided looking at me, I'm afraid you'd take advantage of the opportunity to give me a calling down such as few people have ever received. I'd probably feel the knives of your sarcasm making ridiculous mince meat out of me."

Next morning, promptly at the appointed hour, Irving was at the information desk of the Kaiserhof, asking for Capt. Bartholf. The latter was in his room waiting for the young intelligence officer. Two hours later, arrangements having been made for the transfer of baggage, the captain and the lieutenant were on board a train and headed for one of the principal submarine ports of the German coast.

The trip was uneventful, except that it afforded Irving an opportunity to make a study of the character of an official representative of the policy of ruthlessness of the military government of Germany. Capt. Bartholf was a fit exponent of this policy and exceedingly efficient because of the intelligence with which he could disguise the barbarous nature of his ideas. Hours before they reached the port of their destination, the spy was convinced that an enemy who fell into the clutches of this sub-sea commander might as well toss hope to the fishes.

"I don't believe he'd take a prisoner if he could help it," Irving mused as a climax to his conclusions. "I'd never surrender to a man like him if I knew in

advance what kind of fellow he was. It'd be a finish fight even though there were no hope in it for me."

They arrived at the seaport in the evening and took rooms at a hotel. Two days they remained in this city. The captain explained the delay by saying that he was awaiting orders to start on a raiding cruise. Finally the orders arrived, and he announced that they would go on board at once.

Half an hour later they were at the docks, where a dozen U-boats were lined up, some of them taking in provisions and oil, or undergoing inspection and minor repairs. Irving's eyes were busy with new objects of interest at this submarine harbor, for he had never before seen an undersea craft. Eagerly he took in the scene, regarding the various objects with more than the calculating interest of an international spy; and while in the act of boarding the vessel in which he was about to take his first submarine trip, he almost forgot, as the romantic thrill of the experience went through him, that he was surrounded by enemies in whose hands his life would be worth only a volley of rifle balls if his real identity were revealed to them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"KAMERAD!" AGAIN

"Shut off the power."

Irving was in the conning tower with Capt. Bartholf and Lieut. Voltz of U-31 when the latter, who was at the periscope, gave the foregoing order through the speaking tube.

They had been out all night and half the preceding day, running much of the time on the surface of the ocean in order to make the best possible speed. Irving had not a clear idea where they were, but presumed that they must have passed a considerable distance beyond the western end of the English channel.

Lieut. Voltz gazed again into the glass of the periscope after giving his order to the engineer. He had had his hand on the lever at his right and with this had turned the periscope tube so that his eye could sweep the horizon. Now, however, he had discovered something, and he no longer moved the lever except occasionally little more than a hair's breadth in order to keep the object of interest in view. After a few moments of further careful examination and reference to the telemeter attachment to determine the distance away of the discovered object,

he called again into the speaking tube.

”Go down four fathoms.”

Then turning to Capt. Bartholf, he said:

”There are two vessels about five knots a little south of west from here. One is probably a convoy.”

”Run about three knots closer and take another peep,” the captain ordered. ”Did 17 and the 23 sight them also?”

”I think so. Seventeen just went under.”

Irving understood this question and answer to refer to two other U-boats that accompanied No. 31 on this trip. Meanwhile the latter submerged to the depth ordered by Lieut. Voltz.

Twenty minutes later the periscope was again a few feet out of the water with the lieutenant’s eye glued to the glass and his right hand working the lever.

”Let me have a look,” said the commander.

He gazed a minute into the glass and then said:

”I’m going to try to get that convoy first and then the other, which appears to be a hospital ship.”

Irving shuddered.

The order was again given to submerge. The lieutenant seemed to be doing all the work of lookout, pilot and operating master, for he was busy at the steering wheel, periscope, and speaking tube almost simultaneously much of the time. All these were within easy reach from one position. The ”sub” arose several times near enough to the surface to enable the lieutenant or the captain to take a peep at the prospective prey, and then down again it would go. At last, under direction from the captain, the lieutenant gave this order through the speaking tube:

”Have the men slide a torpedo into one of the forward tubes.”

Eager to witness this operation, Irving sprang to the stairway and was soon down on the lower deck. There he saw several members of the crew remove the safety attachment from the nose of a sixteen-foot phosphor-bronze torpedo, which was seventeen or eighteen inches in diameter, and slide it into a tunnel-like hole in the midst of a maze of operating machinery. A minute or two later the order was given to ”shoot,” and out it went, under initial propulsion from a compressed air engine.

Then the order to submerge was given again, and away they went southward at full speed under three fathoms of water. Ten minutes afterward the periscope peeped up over the surface of the sea once more, and Capt. Bartholf had his eye glued eagerly to the glass.

A moment later he gave a yelp of delight, and Irving knew that a hit had been scored.

”We’ve hit ’em both fine!” the commanding officer exclaimed. ”One of the

other boats must have fired a torpedo about the same time we did. Both of those ships are going down."

It was not regarded safe to show the hulks of the submarines above the water yet, however, for fear lest the convoy hit one or more of them with a shell as a last living act of revenge. But they did not have to wait long, however, for the doomed vessels sank rapidly.

Then all three submarines showed themselves on the surface and Irving was delighted to observe that apparently all of the sailors, soldiers and nurses that had been on the hospital ship and the convoy were now in lifeboats, which were being rowed with frantic desperation away from the U-boat-infested spot.

"Follow them up and let's see what they look like," Capt. Bartholf ordered, with a kind of gloating glee.

All three captains seemed to be of like mind, for all three U-boats took the same course and ran up close to the crowded lifeboats. Several officers and members of the crew of each of the submarines appeared on the outer deck to view the results of their uncontested victory.

Suddenly there came from one of the boats a call that thrilled and chilled Irving with a sense of awed familiarity.

"Kamerad!"

Where had he heard that cry in that tone of voice before? He could not decide on the moment, and yet he was apprehensive of an unpleasant discovery.

The captain of U-31 determined to investigate and ordered the lifeboat from which the hail proceeded to come alongside. The occupants could do nothing more sensible than obey. As it approached a young man with an empty left sleeve arose and repeated his appealing cry, and Irving almost dropped in his tracks.

The one-armed fellow was Adolph Hessenburg, alias Tourtelle, the former Canadian lieutenant of the tattooed cubist art cryptogram. Undoubtedly he was being sent to England to be held there for a determination of his fate after information had been received regarding the success or failure of his substitute spy's mission within the German lines.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN"

If anybody had observed the precipitation with which Irving dived down the

hatchway of U-31 a moment or two after he recognized the ”cubist art spy,” there is no doubt that the observer would have been impressed with the mystery of the proceeding. As it was, all of his boche companions on the outer deck were too much interested in seeking an explanation of the ”kamerad” cry from the midst of a boatload of enemy soldiers and sailors to give attention to anything less than the explosion of a bomb on their own vessel.

Irving meanwhile picked up a sou’wester that he found on the lower deck, put it over his head so that it partly covered, shaded, and hence considerably disguised his face, and then returned to the outer deck. True, the weather was not stormy, but the air was chilly and the ”cloudburst hood” added considerably to his comfort.

The real Hessenburg had been assisted on board and was being questioned by Captain Bartholf. Irving heard the latter ask him his name, and then suddenly something happened which the trembling spy has ever since declared undoubtedly saved his life and some very important information for the Allies.

What caused the sudden lurch of the submarine was not subsequently disclosed. Possibly one of the men below, accidentally or thoughtlessly moved a lever or wheel that resulted in a momentary spasm of mechanical action. At any rate, all on the outer deck were dancing around for several seconds to preserve their balance, and one of them was not as successful as the others. That was Hessenburg, who was thrown violently against the low railing so that he struck his head on one of the iron standards or posts.

Evidently he was seriously injured, for he did not attempt to rise. The pallor of his face and the glassy look in his eyes indicated that he had fainted. He was carried below and restoratives were administered to him, but these did not bring back more than barely enough life to reassure his caretakers that the concussion on his head was probably not fatal.

* * * * *

The run from the scene of the sinking of the British hospital ship and convoy to the Spanish coast was made in about eighteen hours, and before noon of the day following, Irving was landed on a bleak and desolate spot on the Bay of Biscay. Meanwhile, he had thankfully observed the slowness with which the former ”cubist art spy” recovered. Although he found it necessary several times to be at the bedside of the patient, the latter showed no signs of recognition; indeed, he at no time before Irving was put ashore indicated that he had fully recovered from the stupor which followed the shock of his fall.

The story of how Irving found his way to a Spanish settlement and subsequently got in touch with a British consulate and thence again with the Canadian

army is of little interest compared with the thrilling events heretofore narrated. Suffice it to say that in due time success met his efforts to get back with the Canadians, who retained unshakable possession of Vimy Ridge, and that the information he was able to turn over to his superior officers brought him recognition and honors from very high sources.

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