

"TO BE TREATED AS A SPY"

BY RICHARD HARDING DAVIS



THIS story is a personal experience, but is told in spite of that fact, and because it illustrates a side of war that is unfamiliar. It is unfamiliar for the reason that it is seamy and uninviting. With bayonet-charges, bugle-calls, and aviators it has nothing in common.

Espionage is that kind of warfare of which even when it succeeds no country boasts. It is military service an officer may not refuse but which few seek. Its reward is prompt promotion, and its punishment, in war-time, is swift and without honor. This story is intended to show how an army in the field must be on its guard against even a supposed spy and how it treats him.

The war offices of France and Russia would not permit an American correspondent to accompany their armies; the English granted that privilege to but one correspondent, and that gentleman already had been chosen. So I was without credentials. To oblige Mr. Brand Whitlock, our minister to Belgium, the government there was willing to give me credentials, but on the day I was to receive them the government moved to Antwerp. Then the Germans entered Brussels, and as no one could foresee that Belgium would heroically continue fighting, on the chance the Germans would besiege Paris, I planned to go to that city. To be bombarded you do not need credentials.

For three days a steel-gray column of Germans had been sweeping through Brussels, and to meet them, from the direction of Vincennes and Lille, the English and French had crossed the border. It was falsely reported that already the English had reached Hal, a town only eleven miles from Brussels, that the night before there had been a fight at Hal, and that close behind the English were the French.

With Gerald Morgan, of the *London Daily Telegraph*, with whom I had been in other wars, I planned to drive to Hal and

from there on foot continue, if possible, into the arms of the French or English. We both were without credentials, but once with the Allies we believed we would not need them. It was the Germans we doubted. To satisfy them we had only a passport and a *laissez passer* issued by General von Jarotsky, the new German military governor of Brussels, and his chief of staff, Lieutenant Geyer. Mine stated that I represented the Wheeler Syndicate of American newspapers, the *London Daily Chronicle*, and this magazine, and that I could pass German military lines in Brussels and her environs. Morgan had a pass of the same sort. The question to be determined was what were "environs" and how far do they extend? How far in safety would the word carry us forward? On August 23 we set forth from Brussels in a taxi-cab to find out. At Hal, where we intended to abandon the cab and continue on foot, we found out. We were arrested by a smart and most intelligent-looking officer, who rode up to the side of the taxi and pointed an automatic at us. We were innocently seated in a public cab, in a street crowded with civilians and the passing column of soldiers, and why any one should think he needed a gun only the German mind can explain. Later, I found that all German officers introduced themselves and made requests gun in hand. Whether it was because from every one they believed themselves in danger or because they simply did not know any better, I still am unable to decide. With no other army have I seen an officer threaten with a pistol an unarmed civilian. Were an American or English officer to act in such a fashion he might escape looking like a fool, he certainly would feel like one.

The four soldiers the officer told off to guard us climbed with alacrity into our cab and drove with us until the street grew too narrow both for their regiment and our taxi, when they chose the regiment and disappeared. We paid off the

cabman and followed them. To reach the front there was no other way, and the very openness with which we trailed along beside their army, very much like small boys following a circus procession, seemed to us to show how innocent was our intent. The column stretched for fifty miles. Where it was going we did not know, but we argued if it kept on going and we kept on with it, eventually we must stumble upon a battle. The story that at Hal there had been a fight was evidently untrue; and the manner in which the column was advancing showed it was not expecting one. At noon it halted at Brierges, and Morgan decided Brierges was out of bounds, and that the limits of our "environs" had been reached.

"If we go any farther," he argued, "the next officer who reads our papers will order us back to Brussels under arrest, and we will lose our *laissez passer*. Along this road there is no chance of seeing anything. I prefer to keep my pass and use it in 'environs' where there is fighting." So he returned to Brussels. I thought he was most wise, and I wanted to return with him. But I did not want to go back only because I knew it was the right thing to do, but to be ordered back so that I could explain to my newspapers that I returned because Colonel This or General That sent me back. It was a form of vanity for which I was properly punished.

That Morgan was right was demonstrated as soon as he left me. I was seated against a tree by the side of the road eating a sandwich, an occupation which seems almost idyllic in its innocence but which could not deceive the Germans. In me they saw the hated *Spion*, and from behind me, across a ploughed field, four of them, each with an automatic, made me prisoner. One of them, who was an enthusiast, pushed his gun deep into my stomach. With the sandwich still in my hand, I held up my arms high and asked who spoke English. It turned out that the enthusiast spoke that language, and I suggested he did not need so many guns and that he could find my papers in my inside pocket. With four automatics rubbing against my ribs, I would not have lowered my arms for all the papers in the Bank of England. They took me to a café, where their colonel had just finished lunch and was in a most

genial humor. First he gave the enthusiast a drink as a reward for arresting me, and then, impartially, gave me one for being arrested. He wrote on my passport that I could go to Enghien, which was two miles distant. That pass enabled me to proceed unmolested for nearly two hundred yards. I was then again arrested and taken before another group of officers. This time they searched my knapsack and wanted to requisition my maps, but one of them pointed out they were only automobile maps and, as compared to their own, of no value. They permitted me to proceed to Enghien. I went to Enghien, intending to spend the night and on the morning continue. I could not see why I might not be able to go on indefinitely. As yet no one who had held me up had suggested I should turn back, and as long as I was willing to be arrested it seemed as though I might accompany the German army even to the gates of Paris. But my reception in Enghien should have warned me to get back to Brussels. The Germans, thinking I was an English spy, scowled at me; and the Belgians, thinking the same thing, winked at me; and the landlord of the only hotel said I was "suspect" and would not give me a bed. But I sought out the burgomaster, a most charming man named Delano, and he wrote out a pass permitting me to sleep one night in Enghien.

"You really do not need this," he said; "as an American you are free to stay here as long as you wish." Then he, too, winked.

"But I *am* an American," I protested.

"But certainly," he said gravely, and again he winked. It was then I should have started back to Brussels. Instead, I sat on a moss-covered, arched stone bridge that binds the town together, and until night fell watched the gray tidal waves rush up and across it, stamping, tripping, stumbling, beating the broad, clean stones with thousands of iron heels, steel hoofs, steel chains, and steel-rimmed wheels. You hated it, and yet could not keep away. The Belgians of Enghien hated it, and *they* could not keep away. Like a great river in flood, bearing with it destruction and death, you feared and loathed it, and yet it fascinated you and pulled you to the brink. All through the

night, as already for three nights and three days at Brussels, I had heard it; it rumbled and growled, rushing forward without pause or breath, with inhuman, pitiless persistence. At daybreak I sat on the edge of the bed and wondered whether to go on or turn back. I still wanted some one in authority, higher than myself, to order me back. So, at six, riding for a fall, to find that one, I went, as I thought, along the road to Soignes. The gray tidal wave was still roaring past. It was pressing forward with greater speed, but in nothing else did it differ from the tidal wave that had swept through Brussels.

There was a group of officers seated by the road, and as I passed I wished them good-morning and they said good-morning in return. I had gone a hundred feet when one of them galloped after me and asked to look at my papers. With relief I gave them to him. I was sure now I would be told to return to Brussels. I calculated if at Hal I had luck in finding a taxi-cab, by lunch-time I would be in the Palace Hotel.

"I think," said the officer, "you had better see our general. He is ahead of us."

I thought he meant a few hundred yards ahead, and to be ordered back by a general seemed more convincing than to be returned by a mere captain. So I started to walk on beside the mounted officers. This, as it seemed to presume equality with them, scandalized them greatly, and I was ordered into the ranks. But the one who had arrested me thought I was entitled to a higher rating and placed me with the color-guard, who objected to my presence so violently that a long discussion followed, which ended with my being ranked below a second lieutenant and above a sergeant. Between one of each of these I was definitely placed and for five hours I remained definitely placed. We advanced with a rush that showed me I had surprised a surprise movement. The fact was of interest not because I had discovered one of their secrets, but because to keep up with the column I was forced for five hours to move at what was a steady trot. It was not so fast as the running step of the Italian *bersagliere*, but as fast as our "double-quick." The men did

not bend the knees, but, keeping the legs straight, shot them forward with a quick, sliding movement, like men skating or skiing. The toe of one boot seemed always tripping on the heel of the other. As the road was paved with roughly hewn blocks of Belgian granite this kind of going was very strenuous, and had I not been in good shape I could not have kept up. As it was, at the end of the five hours I had lost fifteen pounds, which did not help me, as during the same time the knapsack had taken on a hundred. For two days the men in the ranks had been rushed forward at this unnatural gait and were moving like automatons. Many of them fell by the wayside, but they were not permitted to lie there. Instead of summoning the ambulance, they were lifted to their feet and flung back into the ranks. Many of them were moving in their sleep, in that partly comatose state in which you have seen men during the last hours of a six days' walking match. Their rules, so the sergeant said, were to halt every hour and then for ten minutes' rest. But that rule is probably only for route marching. On account of the speed with which the surprise movement was made our halts were more frequent, and so exhausted were the men that when these "thank you, ma'ams" arrived, instead of standing at ease and adjusting their accoutrements, as though they had been struck with a club they dropped to the stones. Some in an instant were asleep. I do not mean that some sat down; I mean that the whole column lay flat in the road. The officers also, those that were not mounted, would tumble on the grass or into the wheat-field and lie on their backs, their arms flung out like dead men. To the fact that they were lying on their field-glasses, holsters, swords, and water-bottles they appeared indifferent. At the rate the column moved it would have covered thirty miles each day. It was these forced marches that later brought Von Kluck's army to the right wing of the Allies before the army of the crown prince was prepared to attack, and which at Sezanne led to his repulse and to the failure of his advance upon Paris.

While we were pushing forward we passed a wrecked British air-ship, around which were gathered a group of staff-

officers. My papers were given to one of them, but our column did not halt and I was not allowed to speak. A few minutes later they passed in their automobiles on their way to the front; and my papers went with them. Already I was miles beyond the environs, and with each step away from Brussels my pass was becoming less of a safeguard than a menace. For it showed what restrictions General Jarotsky had placed on my movements, and my presence so far out of bounds proved I had disregarded them. But still I did not suppose that in returning to Brussels there would be any difficulty. I was chiefly concerned with the thought that the length of the return march was rapidly increasing and with the fact that one of my shoes, a faithful friend in other campaigns, had turned traitor and was cutting my foot in half. I had started with the column at seven o'clock, and at noon an automobile, with flags flying and the black eagle of the staff enamelled on the door, came speeding back from the front. In it was a very blond and distinguished-looking officer of high rank and many decorations. He used a single eye-glass, and his politeness and his English were faultless. He invited me to accompany him to the general staff.

That was the first intimation I had that I was in danger. I saw they were giving me far too much attention. I began instantly to work to set myself free, and there was not a minute for the next twenty-four hours that I was not working. Before I stepped into the car I had decided upon my line of defence. I would pretend to be entirely unconscious that I had in any way laid myself open to suspicion; that I had erred through pure stupidity and that I was where I was solely because I was a damn fool. I began to act like a damn fool. Effusively I expressed my regret at putting the general staff to inconvenience.

"It was really too stupid of me," I said. "I cannot forgive myself. I should not have come so far without asking Jarotsky for proper papers. I am extremely sorry I have given you this trouble. I would like to see the general and assure him I will return at once to Brussels." Ignored the fact that I was being taken to the general at the rate of sixty miles an hour.

The blond officer smiled uneasily and with his single glass studied the sky. When we reached the staff he escaped from me with the alacrity of one released from a disagreeable and humiliating duty. The staff were at luncheon, seated in their luxurious motor-cars, or on the grass by the side of the road. On the other side of the road the column of dust-covered gray ghosts were being rushed past us. The staff in dress uniforms, flowing cloaks, and gloves belonged to a different race. They knew that. Among themselves they were like priests breathing incense. Whenever one of them spoke to another they saluted, their heels clicked, their bodies bent at the belt line.

One of them came to where, in the middle of the road, I was stranded and trying not to feel as lonely as I looked. He was much younger than myself and dark and handsome. His face was smooth-shaven, his figure tall, lithe, and alert. He wore a uniform of light blue and silver that clung to him and high boots of patent leather. His waist was like a girl's, and, as though to show how supple he was, he kept continually bowing and shrugging his shoulders and in elegant protest gesticulating with his gloved hands. He should have been a moving-picture actor. He reminded me of Anthony Hope's fascinating but wicked Rupert of Hentzau. He certainly was wicked, and I got to hate him as I never imagined it possible to hate anybody. He had been told off to dispose of my case, and he delighted in it. He enjoyed it as a cat enjoys playing with a mouse. As actors say, he saw himself in the part. He "ate" it.

"You are an English officer out of uniform," he began. "You have been taken inside our lines." He pointed his forefinger at my stomach and wiggled his thumb. "And you know what *that* means!"

I saw playing the damn fool with him would be waste of time.

"I followed your army," I told him, "because it's my business to follow armies and because yours is the best-looking army I ever saw." He made me one of his mocking bows.

"We thank you," he said, grinning. "But you have seen too much."

"I haven't seen anything," I said,

"that everybody in Brussels hasn't seen for three days."

He shook his head reproachfully and with a gesture signified the group of officers.

"You have seen enough in this road," he said, "to justify us in shooting you now."

The sense of drama told him it was a good exit line, and he returned to the group of officers. I now saw what had happened. At Enghien I had taken the wrong road. I remembered that, to confuse the Germans, the names on the signpost at the edge of the town had been painted out, and that instead of taking the road to Soignes I was on the road to Ath. What I had seen, therefore, was an army corps making a turning movement intended to catch the English on their right and double them up upon their centre. The success of this manoeuvre depended upon the speed with which it was executed and upon its being a complete surprise. As later in the day I learned, the Germans thought I was an English officer who had followed them from Brussels and who was trying to slip past them and warn his countrymen. What Rupert of Hentzau meant by what I had seen in the road was that, having seen the Count de Schwerin, who commanded the Seventh Division in the road to Ath, I must necessarily know that the army corps to which he was attached had separated from the main army of Von Kluck, and that, in going so far south at such speed, it was bent upon an attack on the English flank. All of which at the time I did not know and did not *want* to know. All I wanted was to prove I was not an English officer, but an American correspondent who by accident had stumbled upon their secret. To convince them of that, strangely enough, was difficult.

When Rupert of Hentzau returned, the other officers were with him, and, fortunately for me, they spoke or understood English. For the rest of the day what followed was like a legal argument. It was as cold-blooded as a game of bridge. Rupert of Hentzau wanted an English spy shot for his supper; just as he might have desired a grilled bone. He showed no personal animus, and, I must say for him, that he conducted the case for the prosecution without heat or anger. He

mocked me, grilled and taunted me, but he was always charmingly polite.

As Whitman said, "I want Becker," so Rupert said, "Fe, fo, fi, fum, I want the blood of an Englishman." He was determined to get it. I was even more interested that he should not. The points he made against me were that my German pass was signed neither by General Jarotsky nor by Lieutenant Geyer, but only stamped, and that any rubber stamp could be forged; that my American passport had not been issued at Washington, but in London, where an Englishman might have imposed upon our embassy; and that in the photograph pasted on the passport I was wearing the uniform of a British officer. I explained that the photograph was taken eight years ago, and that the uniform was one I had seen on the west coast of Africa worn by the West African Field Force. Because it was unlike any known military uniform, and as cool and comfortable as a golf-jacket, I had had it copied. But since that time it had been adopted by the English Brigade of Guards and the Territorials. I knew it sounded like fiction; but it was quite true.

Rupert of Hentzau smiled delightedly.

"Do you expect us to believe that?" he protested.

"Listen," I said. "If you could invent an explanation for that uniform as quickly as I told you that one, standing in a road with eight officers trying to shoot you, you would be the greatest general in Germany."

That made the others laugh; and Rupert retorted: "Very well, then, we will concede that the entire British army has changed its uniform to suit your photograph. But if you are *not* an officer, why, in the photograph, are you wearing war ribbons?"

I said the war ribbons were in my favor, and I pointed out that no officer of any one country could have been in the different campaigns for which the ribbons were issued.

"They prove," I argued, "that I *am* a correspondent, for only a correspondent could have been in wars in which his own country was not engaged."

I thought I had scored; but Rupert instantly turned my own witness against me.

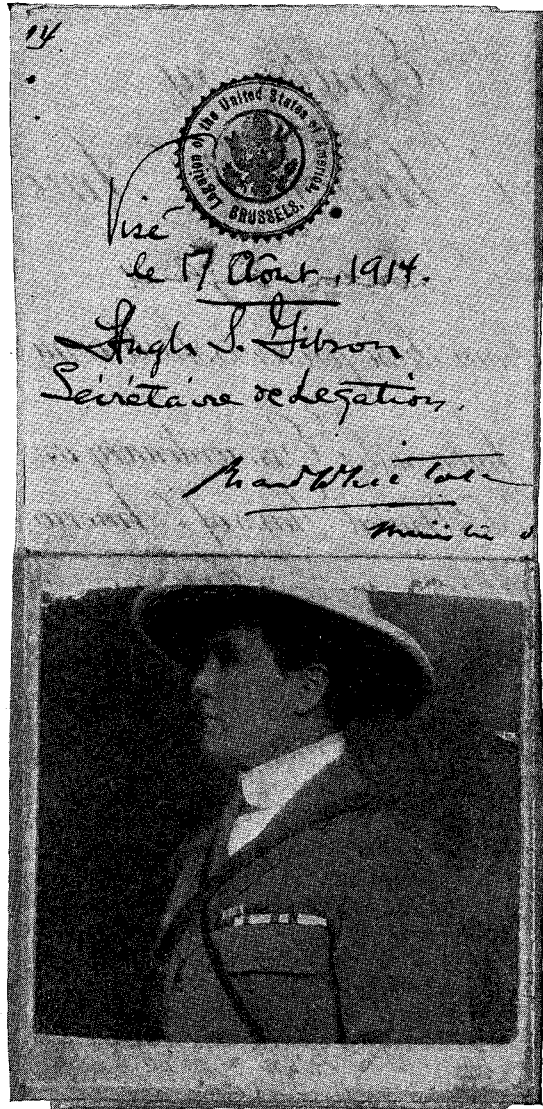
"Or a military attaché," he said. At that they all smiled and nodded knowingly.

He followed this up by saying, accusingly, that the hat and clothes I was then wearing were English. The clothes were English, but I knew he did not know that, and was only guessing; and there were no marks on them. About my hat I was not certain. It was a felt Alpine hat, and whether I had bought it in London or New York I could not remember. Whether it was evidence for or against I could not be sure. So I took it off and began to fan myself with it, hoping to get a look at the name of the maker. But with the eyes of the young prosecuting attorney fixed upon me, I did not dare take a chance. Then, to aid me, a German aeroplane passed overhead and those who were giving me the third degree looked up. I stopped fanning myself and cast a swift glance inside the hat. To my intense satisfaction I read, stamped on the leather lining: "Knox, New York."

I put the hat back on my head and a few minutes later pulled it off and said: "Now, for instance, my hat. If I were an Englishman, would I cross the ocean to New York to buy a hat?"

It was all like that. They would move away and whisper together, and I would try to guess what questions they were preparing. I had to arrange my defence without knowing in what way they would try to trip me, and I had to think faster than I ever have thought before. I had no more time to be scared, or to regret my past sins, than has a man in a quicksand. So far as I could make out, they were divided in opinion concerning me. Rupert of Hentzau, who was the adjutant or the chief of staff, had only one simple thought, which was to shoot me. Others considered me a damn fool; I could hear them laughing and saying: "Er ist ein dummes Mensch." And others thought that

whether I was a fool or not, or an American or an Englishman, was not the question; I had seen too much and should be put away. I felt if, instead of having



The passport and photograph which, though indorsed by Mr. Whitlock and Mr. Gibson, led to the arrest of Mr. Davis.

Rupert act as my interpreter, I could personally speak to the general I might talk my way out of it, but Rupert assured me that to set me free the Count de Schwerin lacked authority, and that my papers, which were all against me, must be sub-

mitted to the general of the army corps, and we would not reach him until midnight.

"And *then!*—" he would exclaim, and he would repeat his pantomime of pointing his forefinger at my stomach and wiggling his thumb. He was very popular with me.

Meanwhile they were taking me farther away from Brussels and the "environs."

"When you picked me up," I said, "I was inside the environs, but by the time I reach 'the' general he will see only that I am fifty miles beyond where I am permitted to be. And who is going to tell him it was *you* brought me there? *You* won't!"

Rupert of Hentzau only smiled like the cat that has just swallowed the canary.

He put me in another automobile and they whisked me off, always going farther from Brussels, to Ath and then to Ligne, a little town five miles south. Here they stopped at a house the staff occupied, and, leading me to the second floor, put me in an empty room that seemed built for their purpose. It had a stone floor and white-washed walls and a window so high that even when standing you could see only the roof of another house and a weather-vane. They threw two bundles of wheat on the floor and put a sentry at the door with orders to keep it open. He was a wild man, and thought I was, and every time I moved his automatic moved with me. It was as though he were following me with a spot-light. My foot was badly cut across the instep and I was altogether forlorn and disreputable. So, in order to look less like a tramp when I met the general, I bound up the foot, and, always with one eye on the sentry, and moving very slowly, shaved and put on dry things. From the interest the sentry showed it seemed evident he never had taken a bath himself, nor had seen any one else take one, and he was not quite easy in his mind that he ought to allow it. He seemed to consider it a kind of suicide. I kept on thinking out plans, and when an officer appeared I had one to submit. I offered to give the money I had with me to any one who would motor back to Brussels and take a note to the American minister, Brand Whitlock. My proposition was that if in five hours, or by seven o'clock, he did not arrive in his automobile and assure

them that what I said about myself was true, they need not wait until midnight, but could shoot me then.

"If I am willing to take such a chance," I pointed out, "I must be a friend of Mr. Whitlock. If he repudiates me, it will be evident I have deceived you, and you will be perfectly justified in carrying out your plan." I had a note to Whitlock already written. It was composed entirely with the idea that they would read it, and it was much more intimate than my very brief acquaintance with that gentleman justified. But from what I have seen and heard of the ex-mayor of Toledo I felt he would stand for it.

The note read:

"DEAR BRAND:

"I am detained in a house with a garden where the railroad passes through the village of Ligne. Please come quick, or send some one in the legation automobile."
"RICHARD."

The officer to whom I gave this was Major Alfred Wurth, a reservist from Bernburg, on the Saale River. I liked him from the first because after we had exchanged a few words he exclaimed incredulously: "What nonsense! Any one could tell by your accent that you are an American." He explained that when at the university, in the same pension with him were three Americans.

"The staff are making a mistake," he said earnestly. "They will regret it."

I told him that I not only did not want them to regret it, but I did not want them to make it, and I begged him to assure the staff that I was an American. I suggested also that he tell them if anything happened to me there were other Americans who would at once declare war on Germany. The number of these other Americans I overestimated by about ninety millions, but it was no time to consider details.

He asked if the staff might read the letter to the American minister, and, though I hated to deceive him, I pretended to consider this.

"I don't remember just what I wrote," I said, and, to make sure they *would* read it, I tore open the envelope and pretended to reread the letter.

"I will see what I can do," said Major Wurth; "meanwhile, do not be discouraged. Maybe it will come out all right for you."

After he left me the Belgian gentleman who owned the house and his cook brought me some food. She was the only member of his household who had not deserted him, and together they were serving the staff-officers, he acting as butler, waiter, and valet. The cook was an old peasant woman with a ruffled white cap, and when she left, in spite of the sentry, she patted me encouragingly on the shoulder. The owner of the house was more discreet, and contented himself with winking at me and whispering: "Ça va mal pour vous en bas!" As they both knew what was being said of me down-stairs, their visit did not especially enliven me. Major Wurth returned and said the staff could not spare any one to go to Brussels, but that my note had been forwarded to "the" general. That was as much as I had hoped for. It was intended only as a "stay of proceedings." But the manner of the major was not reassuring. He kept telling me that he thought they would set me free, but even as he spoke tears would come to his eyes and roll slowly down his cheeks. It was most disconcerting. After a while it grew dark and he brought me a candle and left me, taking with him, much to my relief, the sentry and his automatic. This gave me since my arrest my first moment alone, and to find anything that might further incriminate or help me, I used it in going rapidly through my knapsack and pockets. My note-book was entirely favorable. In it there was no word that any German could censor. My only other paper was a letter, of which all day I had been conscious. It was one of introduction from Colonel Theodore Roosevelt to President Poincaré, and whether the Germans would consider it a clean bill of health or a death-warrant I could not make up my mind. Half a dozen times I had been on the point of saying: "Here is a letter from the man your Kaiser delighted to honor, the only civilian who ever reviewed the German army, a former President of the United States."

But I could hear Rupert of Hentzau replying: "Yes, and it is recommending you to our enemy, the President of France!"

I knew that Colonel Roosevelt would have written a letter to the German Emperor as impartially as to M. Poincaré, but I knew also that Rupert of Hentzau would not believe that. So I decided to keep the letter back until the last moment. If it was going to help me, it still would be effective; if it went against me, I would be just as dead. I began to think out other plans. Plans of escape were foolish. I could have crawled out of the window to the rain gutter, but before I had reached the roof-tree I would have been shot. And bribing the sentry, even were he willing to be insulted, would not have taken me farther than the stairs, where there were other sentries. I was more safe inside the house than out. They still had my passport and *laissez passer*, and without a pass one could not walk a hundred yards. As the staff had but one plan, and no time in which to think of a better one, the obligation to invent a substitute plan lay upon me. The plan I thought out and which later I outlined to Major Wurth was this. Instead of putting me away at midnight, they would give me a pass back to Brussels. The pass would state that I was a suspected spy and that if before midnight of the 26th of August I were found off the direct road to Brussels, or if by that hour I had not reported to the military governor of Brussels, any one could shoot me on sight. As I have stated, without showing a pass no one could move a hundred yards, and every time I showed my pass to a German it would tell him I was a suspected spy, and if I were not making my way in the right direction he had his orders. With such a pass I was as much a prisoner as in the room at Ligne, and if I tried to evade its conditions I was as good as dead. The advantages of my plan, as I urged them upon Major Wurth, were that it prevented the general staff from shooting an innocent man, which would have greatly distressed them, and were he not innocent would still enable them, after a reprieve of two days, to shoot him. The distance to Brussels was about fifty miles, which, as it was impossible for a civilian to hire a bicycle, motor-car, or cart, I must cover on foot, making twenty-five miles a day. Major Wurth heartily approved of my substitute plan, and added that he thought

if any motor-trucks or ambulances were returning empty to Brussels, I should be permitted to ride in one of them. He left me, and I never saw him again. It was then about eight o'clock, and as the time passed and he did not return and midnight grew nearer, I began to feel very lonely. Except for the Roosevelt letter, I had played my last card.

As it grew later I persuaded myself they did not mean to act until morning, and I stretched out on the straw and tried to sleep. At midnight I was startled by the light of an electric torch. It was strapped to the chest of an officer, who ordered me to get up and come with him. He spoke only German, and he seemed very angry. The owner of the house and the old cook had shown him to my room, but they stood in the shadow without speaking. Nor, fearing I might compromise them—for I could not see why, except for one purpose, they were taking me out into the night—did I speak to them. We got into another motor-car and in silence drove north from Ligne down a country road to a great château that stood in a magnificent park. Something had gone wrong with the lights of the château, and its hall was lit only by candles that showed soldiers sleeping like dead men on bundles of wheat and others leaping up and down the marble stairs. They put me in a huge armchair of silk and gilt, with two of the gray ghosts to guard me, and from the hall, when the doors of the drawing-room opened, I could see a long table on which were candles in silver candlesticks or set on plates, and many maps and half-empty bottles of champagne. Around the table, standing or seated, and leaning across the maps, were staff-officers in brilliant uniforms. They were much older men and of higher rank than any I had yet seen. They were eating, drinking, gesticulating. In spite of the tumult, some in utter weariness were asleep. It was like a picture of 1870 by Detaille or De Neuville. Apparently, at last I had reached the headquarters of the mysterious general. I had arrived at what, for a suspected spy, was an inopportune moment. The Germans themselves had been surprised, or somewhere south of us had met with a reverse, and the air was vibrating with excitement and something very like panic. Outside, at great speed and with sirens shrieking,

automobiles were arriving, and I could hear the officers shouting, "Die Engländer kommen!"

To make their reports they flung themselves up the steps, the electric torches, like bull's-eye lanterns, burning holes in the night. Seeing a civilian under guard, they would stare and ask questions. Even when they came close, owing to the light in my eyes, I could not see them. Sometimes, in a half-circle, there would be six or eight of the electric torches blinding me, and from behind them voices barking at me with strange, guttural noises. Much they said I could not understand, much I did not want to understand, but they made it quite clear it was no fit place for an Englishman.

When the door from the drawing-room opened and Rupert of Hentzau appeared, I was almost glad to see him.

Whenever he spoke to me he always began or ended his sentence with "*Mr. Davis.*" He gave it an emphasis and meaning which was intended to show that he knew it was *not* my name. I would not have thought it possible to put so much insolence into two innocent words. It was as though he said, "*Mr. Davis, alias Jimmy Valentine.*" He certainly would have made a great actor.

"*Mr. Davis,*" he said, "you are free."

He did not look as disappointed as I knew he would feel if I were free, so I waited for what was to follow.

"You are free," he said, "under certain conditions." The conditions seemed to cheer him. He recited the conditions. They were those I had outlined to Major Wurth. But I am sure Rupert of Hentzau did not guess that. Apparently, he believed Major Wurth had thought of them, and I did not undeceive him. For the substitute plan I was not inclined to rob that officer of any credit. I felt then, and I feel now, that but for him and his interceding for me I would have been left in the road. Rupert of Hentzau gave me the pass. It said I must return to Brussels by way of Ath, Enghien, Hal, and that I must report to the military governor on the 26th or "be treated as a spy"—"*so wird er als Spion behandelt.*"

The pass, literally translated, reads:

"The American reporter Davis must at once return to Brussels via Ath, Enghien,

Hal, and report to the government at the latest on August 26th. If he is met on any other road before the 26th of August, he will be handled as a spy. Automobiles returning to Brussels, if they can unite it with their duty, can carry him.

"CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF.

"VON GREGOR, *Lieutenant-Colonel.*"

Fearing my military education was not sufficient to enable me to appreciate this, for the last time Rupert stuck his forefinger in my stomach and repeated cheerfully: "And you know what *that* means. And you will start," he added, with a most charming smile, "in three hours."

He was determined to have his grilled bone.

"At three in the morning!" I cried. "You might as well take me out and shoot me now!"

"You will start in three hours," he repeated.

"A man wandering around at that hour," I protested, "wouldn't live five minutes. It can't be done. *You* couldn't do it." He continued to grin. I knew perfectly well the general had given no such order, and that it was a cat-and-mouse act of Rupert's own invention, and he knew I knew it. But he repeated: "You will start in three hours, *Mr. Davis.*"

I said: "I am going to write about this, and I would like you to read what I write. What is your name?"

He said: "I am the Baron von" — it sounded like "Hossfer"—and, in any case, to that name, care of General de Schwerin of the Seventh Division, I shall mail this magazine. I hope the Allies do not kill Rupert of Hentzau before he reads it! After that! He would have made a great actor.

They put me in the automobile and drove me back to Ligne and the impromptu cell. But now it did not seem like a cell. Since I had last occupied it my chances had so improved that returning to the candle on the floor and the bundles of wheat was like coming home. Though I did not believe Rupert had any authority to order me into the night at the darkest hour of the twenty-four, I was taking no chances. My nerve was not in a sufficiently robust state for me to disobey any German. So, lest I should over-

sleep, until three o'clock I paced the cell, and then, with all the terrors of a burglar, tiptoed down the stairs. There was no light, and the house was wrapped in silence. Earlier there had been everywhere sentries, and, not daring to breathe, I waited for one of them to challenge, but, except for the creaking of the stairs and of my ankle-bones, which seemed to explode like firecrackers, there was not a sound. I was afraid, and wished myself safely back in my cell, but I was more afraid of Rupert, and I kept on feeling my way until I had reached the garden. There some one spoke to me in French, and I found my host.

"The animals have gone," he said; "all of them. I will give you a bed now, and when it is light you shall have breakfast." I told him my orders were to leave his house at three.

"But it is murder!" he said. With these cheering words in my ears, I thanked him, and he bid me *bon chance*.

In my left hand I placed the pass, folded so that the red seal of the general staff would show, and a match-box. In the other hand I held ready a couple of matches. Each time a sentry challenged I struck the matches on the box and held them in front of the red seal. The instant the matches flashed it was a hundred to one that the man would shoot, but I could not speak German, and there was no other way to make him understand. They were either too surprised or too sleepy to fire, for each of them let me pass. But after I had made a mark of myself three times I lost my nerve and sought cover behind a haystack. I lay there until there was light enough to distinguish trees and telegraph poles, and then walked on to Ath. After that, when they stopped me, if they could not read, the red seal satisfied them; if they were officers and could read, they cursed me with strange, unclean oaths, and ordered me, in the German equivalent, to beat it. It was a delightful walk. I had had no sleep the night before and had eaten nothing, and, though I had cut away most of my shoe, I could hardly touch my foot to the road. Whenever in the villages I tried to bribe any one to carry my knapsack or to give me food, the peasants ran from me. They thought I was a German and talked

Abfender:	in Mbg.	Ort	Dat.	Zeit
General Lorenz	Abgegangen	Ath	24/8/14	
Ath	Angelommen			

Im anerkennungsreichen Kampf
Davis
hat sich vorzüglich nach Brüssel
zurück begeben in dem dort
gen. Generalen freistehend am
26./8 zu neuen Flug. Ath-
England - Hal. Hierwarden
seinem anderen Flug vor nach dem
26. 8 angelassen, so wird als
von England. Nach Brüssel
zurück begeben. Auch freistehend
falls

Mr. Davis's ticket of leave.

The pencil writing is the German "ticket of leave," requiring Mr. Davis to report in forty-eight hours or "be as a spy treated."

Flemish, not French. I was more afraid of them and their shotguns than of the Germans, and I never entered a village unless German soldiers were entering or leaving it. And the Germans gave me no reason to feel free from care. Every time they read my pass they were inclined to try me all over again, and twice searched my knapsack. After that happened the second time I guessed my

letter to the President of France might prove a menace, and, tearing it into little pieces, dropped it over a bridge, and with regret watched that historical document from the ex-President of one republic to the President of another float down the Sambre toward the sea. By noon I decided I would not be able to make the distance. For twenty-four hours I had been without sleep or food, and I had

of what I was saying except that I had orders from the general staff to proceed at once to Brussels. I made a mystery of the pass, saying it was very confidential, but the red seal satisfied him. He bade me courteously to take the seat at his side, and with intense satisfaction I heard him command his orderly to get down and fetch my knapsack. The general was going, he said, only so far as Hal, but that far he would carry me. Hal was the last town named in my pass, and from Brussels only eleven miles distant. According to the schedule I had laid out for myself, I had not hoped to reach it by walking until the next day, but at the rate the car had approached I saw I would be there within two hours. My feelings when I sank back upon the cushions of that car and stretched out my weary legs and the wind whistled around us are too sacred for cold print. It was a situation I would not have used in fiction. I was a condemned spy, with the hand of every German properly against me, and yet under the protection of a German general, and in luxurious ease, I was escaping from them at forty miles an hour. I had but one regret. I wanted Rupert of Hentzau to see me. At Hal my luck still held. The steps of the Hôtel de Ville were crowded with generals. I thought never in the world could there be so many generals, so many flowing cloaks and spiked helmets. I was afraid of them. I was afraid that when my general abandoned me the others might not prove so slow-witted or so kind. My general also seemed to regard them with disfavor. He exclaimed impatiently. Apparently, to force his way through them, to cool his heels in an anteroom, did not appeal. It was long past his luncheon hour and the restaurant of the Palace Hotel called him. He gave a sharp order to the chauffeur.

"I go on to Brussels," he said. "Desire you to accompany me?" I did not know how to ask him in French not to make me laugh. I saw the great Palace of Justice that towers above the city with the same emotions that one beholds the Statue of Liberty, but not until we had reached the inner boulevards did I feel safe. There I bade my friend a grateful but hasty adieu, and in a taxi-cab, unwashed and unbrushed, I drove straight to the American legation. To Mr. Whitlock I told this story, and with one hand that gentleman reached for his hat and with the other for his stick. In the automobile of the legation we raced to the Hôtel de Ville. There Mr. Whitlock, as the moving-picture people say, "registered" indignation. Mr. Davis was present, he made it understood, not as a ticket-of-leave man, and because he had been ordered to report, but in spite of that fact. He was there as the friend of the American minister, and the word "Spion" must be removed from his papers.

And so, on the pass that Rupert gave me, below where he had written that I was to be treated as a spy, they wrote I was "not at all," "gar nicht," to be treated as a spy, and that I was well known to the American minister, and to that they affixed the official seal.* That ended it, leaving me with one valuable possession. It is this: should any one suggest that I *am* a spy, or that I am *not* a friend of Brand Whitlock, I have the testimony of the Imperial German Government to the contrary.

*Literal translation of visé on the pass:

BRUSSELS, August 25, 1914.

Herr Davis was on the 25th of August at the headquarters of the German Government accompanied by the American minister and is not at all to be treated as a spy. He is highly recommended by the American minister and is well known in America.

ALBERT BOVEY,

Translator to Major-General Jarotsky.



A PLAIN GIRL*

By H. C. Bunner

ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. ALLAN GILBERT



MOST of the novelists—at least, most of those novelists who deal in lustrous-eyed heroines, and in heroes running from “a little over the middle stature” to “six feet of manhood”—try to create the impression that the period of matrimonial engagement is a pleasant one. It isn't. It never was—at least, not to any properly constituted human beings. And why on earth should it be pleasant and to whom should it be pleasant? Let us take the case of the engagement of John Smith and Mary Jones. Their wedding-day is fixed. It is six months off, let us say. Now, do you expect John Smith to be happy? It is true that he has the promise of his heart's desire, but a promise is one thing and a certainty is another. The only certainty he has is that it will be six months sure and certain before he gets his heart's desire; and during those six months he has got to see his heart's desire every day, and to curse each day that comes along before the wedding-day. Also he has got to put in six months of solid reflection upon his own capabilities for supporting a wife, and possibly three or four younger persons.

And as for Mary Jones, her situation is even more uncomfortable. By all the laws of affection she is John's ownest own; and yet in reality she isn't anybody's own—not even her own self's own. Her parents have relinquished their claim to her just enough to enable them to go about looking as though she had deserted them in a snow-storm to run away with a disbeliever in revealed religion; and they keep enough authority over her to be as mean as conscientious parents can be whenever they get an opportunity. And few people can be meaner than a truly conscientious parent.

Here are presented a few of the facts

*An unpublished story recently found among the papers of H. C. Bunner. It was written for the series afterward collected as “More Short Sixes,” and is dated August 24, 1894.

which make the period of marital engagement anything but a happy time for the contracting parties. Any married couple who tell you that they had a good time when they were engaged either tell a sinful fib or prove that they are idiots of an extremely low organization; or else they are so old that they have forgotten all about it.

A young man—I do not vouch for the tale—who committed matrimony suddenly and without warning, showed that he had encountered a lady of experience by the excuse which he gave for his unconventional haste. “She said ‘yes,’” he explained, “if I'd get a parson inside of one hour. ‘Engagements,’ she says, ‘is mean.’”

But, if all engagements are mean, an engagement that is exceptionally and peculiarly mean among engagements must be a very mean thing indeed—and that is just what Tom Littleburgh thought of *his* engagement.

Perhaps an outsider might have thought Tom's engagement even meaner than Tom thought it; for an outsider might not have seen the charm that Tom saw in the young lady who was to be Mrs. Tom. Mary Leyden was undeniably a plain girl. She was not ugly in the least; in point of fact, she had no feature that was open to criticism; but as a friend of hers once remarked, summing up her case critically and æsthetically, as a good-looker Mary simply didn't get there. She was not by any means an unlovable girl; she was good and true and kind and intelligent and sensible; but in face and ways and manners she was just as plain as her plain Dutch name, and perhaps it was the Dutch blood in her that won Tom's heart, for it is a peculiar thing about the women of Holland that their attractiveness does not in the least depend upon their possession of handsome features. They have a wholesome, frank, amiable homeliness that is almost better than beauty, in a way, for