GODFREY HOLLIS

THE MAN WHO ENDED WAR

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CHAPTER I

The Secretary of War ended his statement. “That is all there is to tell, gentlemen, concerning the building of the new transports.”

I had closed my notebook and was rising, as Ordway, the private secretary, entered.

“May I give the correspondents that freak letter that came this morning?” he asked. His chief nodded indulgently and left the room. I opened my notebook expectantly.

“This is a very serious matter, and a great piece of news,” Ordway remarked in a mock grandiose manner. “It is a declaration of war against the civilized world in the interests of peace.” He threw himself into an oratorical posture and began:

> “To the United States of America and to all other nations – Greeting!”
>
> “Whereas war has too long devastated the earth and the time has now come for peace, I, the man destined to stop all war, hereby declare unto you that you shall, each and all, disarm; that your troops shall be disbanded, your navies sunk or turned to peaceful ends, your fortifications

> dismantled. One year from this date will I allow for disarmament and no more. At the end of that time, if no heed has been paid to my injunction, I will destroy, in rapid succession, every battleship in the world. By the happenings of the next two months you shall know that my words are the words of truth.
>
> "Given under my hand and seal this first of June, 19 —
>
> "Signed —
>
> *"The man who will stop all war."*

Ordway ceased and a laughing clamor rose.

"The biggest crank yet." "Where was it mailed?" "I thought you said you had something really good this time." "Do you suppose he sent it to any other country than the United States?"

Ordway raised his hand for a hearing and replied to the last question. "The letter was mailed from London, and was sent to other countries. I read the missive to one of the English attachés when it came, and he looked the matter up. This notice has been sent to all the foreign chancelleries, as well as the departments of war and of the navy. It has been done in such a wholesale fashion that I thought you could use it for a column anyway."

"But is it such a fool idea?" asked Reid, one of the older correspondents. "Couldn't a man build a submarine in which he could run amuck and destroy battleship after battleship, something as old Jules Verne's Captain Nemo did?"

"Not to-day," said Ordway emphatically. "The new armor of the last years, with its permanent torpedo nets, has stopped all that. The only way you can destroy a modern battleship is by

ramming, or by another battleship. The day of the torpedo boat and of the submarine ended almost as it began."

"Well," said Reid argumentatively, "why couldn't a man have a battleship? Any one of five hundred men living to-day could afford it."

"No battleship could be built by a private citizen without some nation knowing it and stopping it," said Ordway seriously. "It takes months, reaching into years, to build one. It takes skilled naval constructors, hundreds of workmen and thousands of tons of material that must be bought in the markets of the world."

"Let's see the paper it's written on," I said.

As I held the message, Reid looked over my shoulder and read for a moment. Then, turning, he cried, "Come over here, boys, and look at this a little more closely. That's old parchment, just like that of some of those papal bulls in the glass cases over in the library."

As he spoke a sudden remembrance flashed across me. "Anybody got a microscope around here?" I asked quickly.

"There's a reading glass," said Ordway, and opening a drawer he handed one to me. I took the paper to the sunlit window, and began examining it closely with the lens. The rest watched me curiously. At last I shook my head. "No use," I exclaimed. "I thought I had a clue, but it didn't pan out. There's a good story though, without anything more. Here, Ordway," and I handed back the letter.

The other correspondents moved away, seeking fresh fields

for copy, but I lingered a moment as John King, my classmate at Columbia and my good friend, stepped forward to bid Ordway good-bye. As I watched his deeply lined, melancholy face and his emaciated form, I wondered if wealth had not come to him too late.

"Good-bye, Ordway," said John. "This is the last you'll see of me. I'm through with the daily grind at six o'clock to-night."

"I'm sorry to hear that in one way, King," said Ordway gravely. "I felt last year when you went abroad that you were running down hill and I expected, when I heard you had come into your uncle's money, that you would pull out. What are you going to do?"

"Oh! I shall travel again for a bit," replied John. "There are some things I want to do before I get through with this old earth, if I am to get through."

"You'll be all right," answered Ordway. "I only wish I had your chance. There's my bell now. You see how it is – tied like a slave to the wheels of the chariot, etc. But good luck, anyway, and good-bye."

He gave John a friendly grasp, and as he turned away, threw the massive folded sheet, which he still held, into the waste basket. "I guess we won't file that with the state documents," he said laughing. "Good-bye, and good luck once more."

We parted and John and I started down the corridor. We had gone but a few steps when exclaiming, "There, I've left my stick," I turned swiftly back, recovered the letter from its place in the

waste basket, and emerged with my cane. Silently we walked down the broad avenue until, just before we reached my office, I turned sharply.

"Come in here," I said, dragging John into a café. We sat down at one of the small tables. "You used to do the Smithsonian and scientific stories for your paper, didn't you?" I asked.

John was sitting staring into vacancy. He paid no attention to my question and I repeated it twice before he turned nervously with a shake of the head and asked sharply, "What is it?"

I repeated the question once more.

"Yes," he said abstractedly.

"Well, who do you know that owns any radium?"

He thought for a moment and said slowly, "Why, the Smithsonian people have a little, of course, and there's some in half a dozen places in the city."

"But from whom could we get some most easily?" I inquired.

"Oh! I know," he answered. "Dorothy Haldane has some. She's here in Washington working with part of her brother's radium, and she's with her cousin Mrs. Hartnell."

"Who's Dorothy Haldane? Any relation to Tom Haldane who was just ahead of us, the chap who went into the Physical Laboratory at Columbia and who's doing private research now?"

"His sister. She is Barnard A. M., and his research assistant."

"Regular bluestocking," I remarked with some dislike, for the learned research woman never appealed to me.

"Oh, no," said John. "Not at all. She is one of the prettiest,

nicest girls I ever knew."

"Any feeling about your remarks, John?" I said hopefully.

"Of course not," he answered with some irritation. "There'll never be any more feeling. Since Anna's death there can't be. I know you'll like Dorothy, though. What do you want her radium for?"

"There's just a chance that I may have a scoop, and if you'll take me up there to-night I'll let you in."

"I'll take you up there," said John, "but you can have your scoop to yourself. For the last word of copy I ever write will be in print before we call."

That afternoon came an unexpected Cabinet change. For hours I interviewed, and wrote, telephoned and telegraphed, reaching my room at half after eight, to find John just ready to leave without me. He had written the story of the man who was to stop all war, only to see it killed by more important news. His experience had been that of every man in the secretary's office, a common fate in the crowding rush of newspaper life. I had never seen John more distrait than that night, and we walked up to the Hartnells' in utter silence.

I so completely expected, despite John's assurances, to find a stooping, bespectacled student type inside the Hartnells' door, that the girl who rose as I entered gave me a sudden shock of amazement and delight. She was the sunniest, daintiest type of American girl you could meet the country through. Her mobile face was lit with glowing life and interest in the world around.

Her fine firm form showed no trace of scholastic life. Her laugh was like rippling water. Her eyes held the fine deep beauty of a summer's night. With her was a dark and clear-cut Southerner who was introduced to me as Richard Regnier. The talk went hither and thither until John broached my search for radium.

"What is your need of radium, Mr. Orrington?" said Miss Haldane.

I hesitated for a moment and John broke in. "Don't be afraid of Regnier, Jim. He's no newspaper man. He's a reformer like myself. We're co-members of the Tuberculosis League and the Civic League and the Peace Society. Now what's up? You haven't told me yet."

So urged, I told the story of the morning and brought forth the heavy parchment which I had retrieved from the waste basket. Regnier sat immobile during the whole tale, though Dorothy broke into it with pointed questions a dozen times.

"That's what I want the radium for," I said in ending.

"But what has radium to do with that letter?" asked John.

"Just this," I replied. "As you may have seen, I held that letter to the light under a reading glass, which acted as a burning glass, for some minutes. I was looking for invisible ink, which could be brought out by heating. I didn't find any, but as I turned away, the paper came for a moment into the shadow and I saw a slight gleam like the glimmer of phosphorescence on water. Now last year I met an old scientist, Von Meyren, who happened to mention that he had found that certain inks which had been used

for parchments in olden times held a substance which becomes phosphorescent when exposed to radium. He got a second letter in that way once, from beneath a message one of the Popes sent to a king of France. You see parchment was and is expensive, and hard to get. They used the same piece over and over again, removing the old inks by scraping or dissolving. Somehow the radium brought out the stuff that had been apparently removed. When Reid said 'Papal Bulls' it gave me an idea. It is barely possible that the man who wrote the letter might have written something on that piece of parchment before and then erased it. I thought I'd try radium on the chance. There may be nothing in it, but it will do no harm, will it, Miss Haldane?"

"Oh, no," said Miss Haldane. "I have some of my brother's radium right here. I'll bring it down and we'll expose the letter to it."

A moment later she returned, this time with her cousin Mrs. Hartnell. "Now we will darken the room," she said, holding out a small lead case with hinged cover, "and try this wonder worker. But you must not move from your places. If you get in the way of the rays, you are likely to be badly burned."

We were grouped in a semi-circle before a bared table whereon was placed the open letter in a holder, confronted with the leaden casket. I was given the place of honor, directly in front, and Miss Haldane put her chair beside mine. Carefully she opened the hinged door in the front of the radium holder, stepped to the switch, threw off the electric light, and came to sit beside

me.

We waited in perfect silence, our eyes bent on the blackness before us. I could hear her regular breathing, I could feel the brush of her skirt as she leaned forward, and I forgot all else, – the noise of the city without, the audience within, both disappeared from my consciousness. There was but a vast rolling ocean of blackness, and she and I, bound by a swiftly tightening chain, were being dragged closer and closer together. Old Von Meyren's pet saying, "Love! Pah! What is it but an excess of positive electrons in a certain man, urging him towards the negative electrons in a certain woman?" kept ringing in my ears, the while I indignantly refuted it. Again and again it persisted, and with it came the thought that the waves from the radium were the chain which bound us.

I had forgotten the letter utterly when suddenly I heard a slight catch in the regular breathing beside me, and a soft warm hand, raised swiftly, brushed mine for a moment as it was raised. The sharp thrill shook me into consciousness. I looked before me, and there, glimmering into light, a single curve came from the darkness, then a straight line, then appeared a large U. One by one letters filled out, whole words appeared, – "United States" first, "July" second, and a single capital "I" next. Word after word appeared. Half lines filled into sentences. I could hear behind me a quick, almost sobbing breath that half penetrated my mind, but leaning forward close beside was Miss Haldane. At last in a clear low voice she began to read, "I, the man who will stop

all war, hereby declare that I will destroy one battleship of the United States during the first week of July, 19 – , one battleship of England during the second week of July, 19 – , one battleship of France during the third week of July, 19 – , one battleship of Germany during the fourth week of July, 19 – . I shall follow that destruction by sinking, in regular order, one battleship of each of the other great powers. May the Lord have mercy on the souls of them who suffer for the cause of peace!"

She stopped and we waited, watching the glowing signal for what seemed hours, for what was minutes. No more appeared, though the brightness of the words of the second message did not dim. At last Miss Haldane rose and with a quick movement turned on the lights and shut the cover. The letter returned to its former appearance. I sat blinking. Regnier still sat immobile. John held his face in his hands. Mrs. Hartnell sat with closed eyes.

"Do you believe it?" I asked Miss Haldane quickly.

She nodded gravely. "It's what he means to do," she said. "He wrote it that way first, and then erased it and made it general afterwards."

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Hartnell, sharply. "It's impossible."

"It certainly doesn't seem probable," said John, at last raising his face. Regnier alone did not speak.

For a moment we were silent, each busy with the thoughts the message had roused within him. At last I rose with an effort. "Good-night, Miss Haldane," I said, "I thank you for your help."

“I am very glad you brought the letter to me,” she said simply, “I am going back to New York to-morrow so I cannot ask you to call upon me here, but if you are in New York won’t you come and see me and give me any news you may have of this threatening peril?”

“I shall be only too glad to do so,” I responded, my heart bounding. I had reached the door when Miss Haldane called after me. “Oh, Mr. Orrington, would you be willing to let me have the letter? I should like to show it to my brother. I’ll send it to you any time you wish.”

“Certainly you may have it,” I replied, and I handed her the parchment.

Regnier left the house with John and me. We walked in silence to the corner where Regnier turned off. As we parted, he hesitated for a moment.

“You were strangely right in your surmise, Mr. Orrington,” he said slowly. “I am very glad to have been present at so curious an event.”

“Queer chap Regnier,” said John musingly, as we watched the retreating form. “Clever scientist and good fellow, but queer. I hope he’ll never get Dorothy Haldane. She wouldn’t be happy with him.”

My heart sank like lead. “Do you think there’s much chance that he will?” I queried anxiously.

“To tell the truth,” answered John slowly, “I don’t know.” We had come by this time to the door of John’s hotel. “I’m not going

to ask you up to-night, Jim," he said, "I'm utterly fagged out and exhausted. Besides, I must get off early in the morning. So good-night and good-bye both."

He paused and I could see the muscles of his face twitching and his hands nervously clasping. He went on with a rush, "Don't forget me while I'm gone, old man, will you? Remember our commencement night when we walked up Riverside, and talked of the great future lying before us? Of all I cared for then, not one remains except yourself. Of all the health and vigor I had then, only a shred is left. I shall not see you for two years anyway. There's nobody left to write to me. Don't forget me. Drop me a line occasionally, care Barings, will you?"

With such an intensity of pleading came the last words that I was shaken despite myself. "Write you? I guess I will," I cried. "Don't you worry about that." We grasped hands and parted.

CHAPTER II

"It's no use, Orrington, there's nothing in it," said the managing editor decisively. "We can't publish a fairy story like that. We've got to stick to probabilities, at least. What did the Secretary of War say when you told him?"

"Oh, he said it was simply the insane freak of a crazy man," I answered glumly enough, for I had set my whole heart on this scoop, and felt more and more convinced that it was true, the more I was rebuffed. I went on with a gleam of hope. "I'd like to have you see radium bring out the second letter, that was underneath the first."

"My dear chap," said the chief, a little impatiently, "I'll take your word for that, and you could use that story very well in another way, but it isn't news. Whole fleets can't be sunk by a single man. It's nonsense." He placed his glasses on his nose with a vigorous gesture, and picked up a fresh bunch of copy.

Without a word, I passed out into the big office where, sitting down at an empty desk by the window, I lighted my pipe and lost myself in thought. Not very pleasant thoughts they were, for I had been rebuffed for my enthusiasm on every side, since I took up the quixotic task of persuading the United States that one of her battleships was in danger. My own chief, the Washington correspondent, the War Department, the President, and now the managing editor of the New York office whither I had been

suddenly called – all laughed at my tale. Dorothy Haldane alone had believed. Together we had seen the message grow from the darkness. We were convinced of its truth. From that one meeting had come the feeling that, when Dorothy agreed, the opinion of the rest of the world faded to minor account. Over and over again her name threaded the shuttle of my thoughts. Dorothy was my last thought as I lay down at night. Dorothy was my first thought with the dawn.

I had an hour to wait before I could reach a man whom I had been told to interview, and I sat back waiting and dreaming. It was Tuesday of the fatal week, the first week in July. Suddenly the door of the chief's office opened, and I heard my name. "Orrington! Orrington!" I jumped to my feet and hurried in. The chief was sitting with the receiver to his ear. "Close that door!" he ordered. "Here's Orrington now. Tell him what you told me."

I took the 'phone at his gesture and listened.

"Orrington?"

"Yes." (The man on the other end was the head of our Washington office.)

"There may be something in that story of yours. The War Department has just called me up. The Alaska has disappeared somewhere between Newport News and Bar Harbor. They talked with her by wireless yesterday morning, and have been unable to get into communication with her since. She has two sets of wireless on board, and has not been out of close communication for three years. They have sent four revenue cutters out searching

the coast, but nothing has been seen. Finally the secretary thought of you and the message from the man who intended to stop all war. Have you found out anything?"

"No."

"Well, take your orders from New York now. They've asked for you for this. I don't think the other papers have it yet."

I straightened up with a throb of joy and turned to the chief. He looked at me keenly. "Better not write anything till you have something more. The assignment is yours. Go out and find the Alaska or what happened to her. I give you carte blanche."

Hardly were the last words out of his mouth before I had jumped for my hat and was hurrying down the stairs with a generous order for expense money in my hand. A moment's stop at the cashier's, and I was out on the street. Up and down I looked for cab or automobile. I was bound for the water front. For once, there was not even a street car going my way. I started hurriedly on, half running in my speed. As I rushed along, I heard my name, "Mr. Orrington!" The voice would have called me miles. It was Dorothy Haldane, seated in a big blue motor. Her chauffeur drew up beside me, and she threw open the door.

"Let me take you wherever you are going, and tell me if you have heard more from that letter."

I needed no second invitation, gave the wharf address to the chauffeur, and turned to answer Dorothy. As I told her the news, she leaned forward to the chauffeur.

"Go back to where we left Mr. Haldane's launch," she said,

and turned to me. "I've just left Tom at his launch, which was to take him out to the Black Arrow. They were waiting for some provisions at the wharf, and may be there yet. He'll be delighted to take you, and the Black Arrow is one of the swiftest motor yachts in the bay. Will you make your search on her? If you will, I'll go with you. I only stayed ashore to-day to do some shopping that can wait."

When the gods befriend a man, who is he to say nay? Through the hot and dirty markets we sped and reached the wharf, just as the Black Arrow's launch was leaving the shore. A clear call and a wave of Dorothy's parasol brought it back, while a bewildered smile passed over Tom Haldane's face as he saw us awaiting him. "Why, Jim!" he began.

"Don't stop to talk now," said Dorothy. "Take us to the Black Arrow as fast as you can."

In a moment we had cleared the wharves and were passing from the dirt and smells of the city on to the clear waters of the bay. As we went, Dorothy explained the situation to Tom, who fell in with the plan joyously. Once on the slim rakish yacht, he spoke.

"Now, Jim, you're in command. Where are we going?"

"Right down the coast," I said, "and we'll megaphone every fisherman and yacht. It's the men on the coasters who will know, if any one does."

Swift as her name, the Black Arrow ploughed her way through the summer sea. Pleasantest of all assignments to sit on her deck

and watch Dorothy Haldane as she talked and speculated on the problem before us. Could one man have sunk so mighty a battleship? Was there any possibility that a single man could make war on the world? Tom came up to us in the midst of the discussion, and stood listening.

"Queer this should come up now," he said. "It was only last winter that some one was talking about something like this up at our house, one Sunday night. Who was it, Dorothy?"

A sudden look of alarm flashed across her face. She started to speak and then broke off. "Oh! I hardly remember."

Tom persisted. "Let's see, there was a crowd of the fellows there, and, queer thing too, John King and Dick Regnier. The same pair that were with you the other night."

"Regnier!" That name shot across me like a bullet. The short, quick, troubled breathing of some one behind me on the night we read the letter! "Can it be!" I burst forth.

Dorothy made no pretence of misunderstanding me. "No," she said firmly. "Dick was up to see me last night. It couldn't have been he."

The coast had been rushing by us rapidly as we talked, and now the summer cottages and bathing beaches were giving way to longer stretches of bare sand and wooded inlets. I rose and looked forward.

"We may as well commence here," I said, and we began systematic inquiry. Catboat and sloop tacking out on pleasure bent, tramp steamer ploughing heavily up the coast, – one after

another, we came alongside and asked the same questions. "Have you seen a battleship to-day or yesterday? Have you seen or heard anything unusual?"

The answers came back in every vein. Brusque denials – ironical inquiries – would-be humorous sallies – courteous rejoinders – one and all had the same word. No battleship seen. Nothing unusual seen or heard. The morning had become noon, ere we were fairly on our quest. The afternoon wore on towards night, as it progressed. As the hours passed, I protested against my hosts giving up their yacht to my service, but quite in vain. They were as firmly resolved to pursue the quest to the end as I was myself.

About five o'clock, when we were some six or seven miles off the coast, came the first success. We hailed a schooner whose lookout replied negatively to our questions. As we passed slowly, we heard a sudden hail, as a gaunt man, the skipper, rushed to the side.

"Lookin' for anything unusual, be ye?" he shouted. "I've seen one thing, – a catboat takin' on a crazy man out of a knockabout."

"Whereabouts?" I shouted.

"'Bout ten miles back, I reckon," came the answer.

He knew no more than that, and the interchange over, I turned to Dorothy.

"Shall we run that clue down?" I asked.

She nodded decisively. "By all means," she said. "It's the only one we have. Send the Arrow inshore, will you, Tom, on a long

slant?"

Once more the engine took up its racing speed, as the boat bore down on the shore. As we went in, we changed the questions, and asked the few boats we met if they had picked up a man. At last we saw a catboat just sailing out of a little bay, and bore down on it. A man and a boy sat in the stern. As I shouted my question once more, the man jumped up.

"Yes, we picked one up."

"Where is he?" I shouted.

"At my house, but he's crazy," replied the man.

"Can we get in there with the yacht?"

"No, but I can take you in," he answered, and it was but a moment's work to lower a boat from the davits. As I stepped to the side, Tom and Dorothy hurried up.

"We're going, too," Tom cried.

The launch bore us rapidly across to the catboat, and as we approached, I studied the faces of the man and the boy. They were simple folk, of evidently limited intelligence. Hardly had we come alongside, when I began my questions, and a strange story came in reply. Stripped of its vernacular and repetitions, this was the tale finally dragged from the man and boy, as we sailed towards the shore.

They had started out in the early morning and had fished with some success. In the afternoon, they had seen a knockabout running free before the wind, with all sorts of strange action. The sail widespread, she turned and reared, started and checked,

swung and circled. There was no sign of life on board that they could ascertain, and they made up their minds that the boat had either lost its occupants or had been driven offshore with its sail hoisted. On boarding, much to their surprise, they found a man, apparently a solitary fisherman, lying unconscious in the stern sheets. Throwing water over him roused him. He sat up and looked around, but with unseeing eyes. His lips quivered, and in a low whisper he began to speak. “Disappeared, disappeared, disappeared. Nothing real, nothing real.” Rising, he started to walk straight ahead, but struck the side and fell. His murmur now changed to a loud moan. “Disappeared, disappeared, disappeared. Nothing real, nothing real.” Again he tried to walk, but this time they caught him, bound him, and carried him to shore, to their house, where he went quietly enough to bed, with the unceasing moan. “Disappeared, disappeared, disappeared. Nothing real, nothing real,” rising and falling like the waves on the shore.

The story had taken all the way in, and as we rowed towards shore, leaving the catboat and launch at the mooring where the knockabout lay, the night was swiftly shutting in. A light glimmered in a low house on the bluff.

“That’s my house,” said the man, as we hastened towards it. A woman with a kindly face met us at the door.

“Wife, these are some folks that are looking for the crazy man,” said our friend.

“He’s fast asleep,” was the answer, “but you can go in and see

him, if you want to."

My heart rose. The second step of my quest was in sight.

"Tom," I said quietly, "come along with me. Miss Haldane, will you remain here?"

Dorothy nodded. Tom and I followed the woman as she passed down a narrow passage. Opening a rude door, she entered. In front of the bed, she stopped short and threw up her hands. "For the land's sake," she cried. "He's gone!"

Gone! The word echoed dismally in my brain.

"Wait till I get a lamp," said the woman, and she pattered nervously out.

By the fading light, we could see the disordered bed, the open window, and an overturned chair. A glimmer of light came down the passage, and the woman hurried back, followed by Dorothy. No more information could be gleaned. Evidently the lost man had risen, dressed completely, and left by the low open window. The woman of the house was in great distress, weeping and rocking. "The poor crazy man, lost in these woods. He was as harmless as anything. I thought he was all right."

Dorothy sat down beside her, and, soothing her, began a series of quiet questions. "How long did you leave him?"

"An hour or more." She had been doing the supper dishes. Dorothy turned to the husband.

"What roads are there from here?"

"Only one for a mile. That goes from the front of the house."

The woman broke in. "If he'd taken that, I'd have seen him.

He'd have gone by my window. He must have gone to the shore or the woods."

"There's no use waiting. He's only getting farther away from us," cried Tom. "Let's look around the house."

Our fisher friend had two lanterns and a kerosene light. With these, we began the search. The sand and rock around the house gave no sign of footprints, and we passed out in widening circles, meeting and calling without avail. A half hour's exploration left us just where we started. We had found nothing. Turning back, we met Dorothy at the door.

"I was afraid you would find nothing," she said. "I've just found out that he said one thing beside the sentence which he continually repeated. Once he said, 'The sea, the sea, the awful sea.' I believe he has gone to the shore."

Together, we went in that direction. Tom and the fisherman took one way, Dorothy and I the other. As we hastened on, the light of the lantern threw circles of hazy light on the black water and on the shore. Dorothy, in the depths of thought, walked on a little in advance, and, despite myself, my thoughts turned from the man I sought and the errand for which I sought him, and I gazed wholly at the round cheek shaded by a flying tress that escaped from the close veil, and at the erect figure, now stooping to look ahead, now rising and passing on in deep thought. The same thrill which had held me the first night came again, that binding call, that tightening chain. I lost myself in a dreamy exhilaration.

Suddenly, Dorothy stopped. “It’s no use to go farther.”

Obediently I turned, and we retraced our steps. Just below the house, we met Tom and the fisherman, returned from an equally unavailing search. We all four stood gazing out to sea where the Black Arrow lay, her lights the sole gemmed relief of the dark waters, save where her search-light blazed a widening path of changing silver before her. All at once I saw Dorothy raise her head with a quick breath.

“If he’s on the shore, I know how we can find him, no matter what start he has.”

CHAPTER III

We waited anxiously for her next words.

"The search-light of the Arrow will do it. We can run the launch along the coast twice as fast as a man can walk or run, and play the search-light of the yacht on the shore as we go."

Though simplicity itself, it was the only plan that promised success, and it took but little time to put it into operation. The fisherman volunteered as pilot, and while Tom went back in the launch to give instructions to the captain, we waited in the darkness of the little bay, holding our lights as beacons. The night, without a single star, but darkly showed the lapping waves and sighing pines which made the background of our tiny, rocky amphitheatre. Tom had not covered half the distance to the yacht, when we heard his hail, and the search-light swung at right angles, limning the launch speeding from the shore in a lane of light. We watched them till they reached the shadow of the side. There was a brief interval before we saw the launch returning down the silvery way, but, as she neared us, to our surprise we saw Tom was not there. In his stead came the first officer, who touched his cap, and said, "Mr. Haldane will stay on the yacht and run the search-light, and has asked me to run the launch."

It was but the work of a moment to embark, and the boat headed out of the cove towards the north, the side agreed upon with Tom. Up in the prow stood the officer at the wheel, the

fisherman pilot beside him. The engineer bent over his small engine in the centre, and in the stern sat Dorothy and I, peering into the space of light on the shore, where played the search-light. Bravely the little launch found her way forward, with the slight chug-chug of her engine the only sound. I could not rid myself of a feeling of unreality. Constantly we moved in light, while all else was in shadow. Before us was the shore, lighted as by a ghostly radiance, on either side was darkness, such darkness that we could barely distinguish the sky line of bluff and tree against the sky. We neither spoke nor moved, and the sailors forward scarce broke by a movement the silence, with its single sound rising above the monotony of the waves. Dark green of pine and cedar, lighter green of scrub oak, yellow gray of sand dune, soft brown warmth of massive boulder, curling white where splashing waves broke on the glistening pebbles of the shore, ragged stump and lofty maple – all were etherealized by the silver, shifting light. It was a night of enchantment, wherein I, taken up by a genie from my dusty tasks, had been placed beside a fairy queen to behold the wonders of Eastern magic. Mile after mile rolled by with no result. Once we flashed our light on a startled fisherman lifting his lobster pots from his boat. Now and again we cast it on veranda of summer cottage, or on kitchen steps of farmhouse. Where we found men, we inquired for the object of our search, but it was all in vain, and at last I looked questioningly at Dorothy.

"He could not have come so far as this."

She shook her head. "No," she said regretfully. "We may as

well turn. But we'll find him on the other shore. I feel certain he went to the sea." She gave a low order to the officer at the wheel. He raised a lantern thrice, and the search-light paused and reversed its way.

Back over the ground we passed, more swiftly this time than on our way up. Back to the cove where we started, we went, and from there we took our course southward along the shore. We had gone perhaps three miles, when the fisherman turned suddenly. "There's some one ahead there on the bluff."

On swept the search-light, and outlined on a little knoll scarcely fifty yards from us stood a man, his hands stretched to heaven, and an expression of awful doubt and agony on his face. His lips moved, and a moaning cry came from them. Quickly the engineer threw the lever, and the sound of the engine ceased. Out of the stillness, made yet more manifest by the stopping of the single accustomed sound, came the moan. "Disappeared, disappeared, disappeared. Nothing real, nothing real!" The man paid no attention to the light or to our boat. He looked beyond us, at the ocean, with an unseeing gaze.

"Hold the search-light there!" I called, in a low tone.

The officer raised his lantern twice, and the search-light stopped with the man in the centre of its field.

"Go on," I said, and the launch passed slowly on into the darkness. In hurried tones, I told Dorothy my plans. The fisherman and I would go ashore at the first point possible, come up from behind, and take him. It was quickly and easily done.

The launch was brought close in shore, where the fisherman and I could wade in, and, as we stole quietly up behind the man, we could see that he had not moved. His hands were still raised on high. His lips still uttered the same moan. To my surprise, he offered no resistance, and came quietly and peaceably on board the launch and the yacht, where they put him to bed. Through the whole he never ceased his plaint. We looked for sign or letter that might show his identity, but there was nothing. However, we had won the second step. Next came the question, "Did he know anything of the Alaska?" That was the last thing we discussed before turning in, but it was not the last thing in my thoughts as I fell asleep.

I woke up next morning among the familiar sounds of New York harbor, and came on deck to find Tom and Dorothy already there. Our visitor was safe. He was still in a heavy sleep.

The newspapers had come on board, and we found that the disappearance of the battleship was now known, but that there was as yet no news. In the excitement, the story of the message from the man had been wholly forgotten. Every newspaper was searching, but none had any clue. The Navy Department could give no information, though besieged by hundreds of the relatives and friends of the men on board. There was no clue as to the identity of the insane man. No paper reported any man as lost. I thought the matter over as we breakfasted. Finally Tom spoke.

"What's the next move, Jim?"

"To open the mouth of this man here," I answered. "I believe

that he knows something; that a sudden shock drove him crazy, and our next move is to get him sane again.”

“How will you do that?” queried Dorothy.

“I don’t quite know,” I answered hesitatingly. “But I think I had better try some physician. I want a bright, resourceful specialist.”

“I know just the man,” said Tom. “Forrester; he’s making a name fast. You know him, Dorothy?”

Dorothy nodded. “I don’t think you can get a better man,” she said, and so the next move was decided.

Our man awoke with no change from the night before, and with the same cry ever issuing from his lips. Tom went ashore, ’phoned Dr. Forrester, and arranged for attendants to remove the unfortunate to a private hospital. We preceded the carriage which was sent for him, in Tom’s motor car.

We had waited perhaps five minutes in Dr. Forrester’s office, when he entered. Clear-cut, with clean shaven mouth and searching eyes, he seemed the very man to solve our problem, if it could be solved. Briefly I told him the condition. Here was an unknown man, with absolutely no clue to his identity, who, we believed, possessed certain information which we needed, information of the utmost public importance. Our desire was to bring him back to a normal sanity and to learn his story. My tale done, Forrester looked questioningly at Tom.

“It’s all right, Doctor, every bit of it,” said Tom decisively. “I’m right behind this thing, and it’s all perfectly straight. My sister and I were with Mr. Orrington when he found the man.”

Forrester rose as Tom spoke the last words. "That's all that is necessary. I shall be very glad to do what I can. If you'll excuse me now, I think that the patient has arrived. If you care to wait, I'll make a preliminary examination and let you know something of the result immediately."

For half an hour we waited anxiously for the verdict. Could Dr. Forrester find the missing spring which would roll the curtain from that brain, and enable it to give forth the information which might mean so much to me? Finally the door opened and he entered. We sprang up. He shook his head.

"A most trying and puzzling case. There seems to have been absolutely no injury to the brain, that can be recognized. None of the ordinary causes seem to have any share in the causation of this. I can do nothing for you to-day. I will try every means known to us in succession, and report to you day by day."

I felt baffled and seriously puzzled. It was most essential that I should get the story the moment the man recovered, if he did recover. It was equally essential that I should be free to hunt for new clues. Dorothy saw my anxiety.

"What is it, Mr. Orrington?" she questioned.

"Simply wondering how I could be in two places at the same time – here waiting and on the coast searching," I answered.

"I can settle that," said she. "I am going to take a week of observing in Tom's research laboratory, and I'll be right in reach of a telephone every minute."

I objected in vain. Dorothy settled matters as she had settled

them before. Tom and I were to go down the coast in the Black Arrow, returning every night to New York. She was to remain in the city.

I reported my findings to the paper, and still the chief said, “Wait! Don’t write anything till you have more. Keep at it till you have something.”

Morning after morning we telephoned the hospital and found no change. Day after day we spent in the Black Arrow, searching the coast, or in the motor car, skirting the shores. Evening after evening we spent in the library at the Haldanes’, in endless discussion and consultation. The country was daily growing more and more alarmed. Rumors of war, of foreign fleets coming to attack our shores, filled the papers. Stories that the Alaska had been sent to the Pacific and had been seen in South American ports, that she had been seen in European waters, that she had struck a derelict and, badly disabled, was coming slowly in, were current. Every story run to earth proved a fake, and every day had a new story. The Government knew no more than any one else, and had been driven to a sphinx-like silence in self-defence. They had employed, as had the newspapers, every known means of getting some news of the battleship, but all in vain.

The Alaska had disappeared on Monday or Tuesday of the first week in July. On Tuesday, we had found the man who was still gazing with unseeing eyes at the bare wall of the hospital room, still moaning the same cry. In six days he had never varied it but twice, and both those times he repeated his words in the

cottage, “The sea, the awful sea.”

Experiment after experiment had been tried without avail. Two consultations with the best alienists of the city had given Dr. Forrester no more light. Six days of searching the coast gave us not a single clue. On Monday night we reached the wharf about six, to find Dorothy waiting for us in the automobile. As we rode up town she rapidly explained the plan for the evening.

“They tried a high frequency current on the patient to-day,” said Dorothy, “and it seemed to have the first effect. He stopped his plaint, went off to sleep, and woke silent for the first time. He did not drop back into his old condition until three hours later. They are going to try it again, as soon as we get there.”

In one of Dr. Forrester’s offices stood the high frequency apparatus. Before it sat the man, his eyes staring before him, his lips moving with his moaning cry. The doctor moved the cup-shaped terminal above his head, adjusted the negatives, then nodded to the nurse at the switch. Slowly increasing in sound and speed went the motor. Hissing low and sibilantly shot the vibrant discharge. Five minutes passed as we gazed intently on the man in the chair, five more, and yet five more. His words came slowly, drowsily now. The harsh, clashing syllables became a low hum. He dropped off into sleep, breathing regularly, and the nurse threw off the switch.

“That regular sleep is a great gain,” said Forrester. “He’ll probably wake soon.”

Silently we sat waiting. The clock ticked loudly. I fell at once

to my constant occupation, watching Dorothy. She sat beside Tom, her eager face bent intently on the man, so intently that it would seem as if she must obtain the secret from his sleeping form. I had watched her expressive face for perhaps half an hour, Forrester had been out and returned, when the man stirred drowsily, put up his hand to his eyes, rubbed them, yawned and looked up.

"Where – where am I?" he said stumblingly. "Where's the boat?" he went on.

Forrester soothed him. "You're all right," he said. "You had an accident, but you're all right again."

The man sank back resignedly. "Well – " he began, and then a wave of remembrance flashed across his face, a look of horror. We bent forward instinctively, hanging on his words.

"Where's the ship?" he cried. "What's happened to the Alaska? I saw her disappear. For God's sake tell me I didn't – " The red flush in his face grew deeper, his breath grew labored, and the watching physician, stepping beside his bared arm, brought something concealed in his hand against it once, twice. "Oh!" said the man shrinking. "What – " and then without another word he became unconscious.

I jumped up in excitement. "Couldn't you have, – " I began, but Forrester stopped me.

"I let him say all that was safe. Wait three hours, and he will probably be all right." He smiled somewhat exultantly. "The high frequency did it. Somehow it seems to rearrange the disordered

parts by the electric flow."

"Why do you think the high frequency current did the work when all other methods failed?" asked Tom, as we descended the stairs.

Forrester pulled at his chin with an air of abstraction. "I don't really know," he answered frankly. "The action is almost as if some electrical matter in the patient had been jarred by an electrical shock, and when the high frequency got control, it put things back into shape. Readjusted the parts, as it were. I don't believe at all that the shock of seeing the battleship go down did the whole mischief. There was something else, something decidedly out of the common, mixed up in the case."

As we waited, I telephoned the office, and found the chief still there.

"Victory is in sight," I said. "Save as many columns as you can."

"You can have all you want," came back over the wire.

I asked for a desk, and began to write. I sketched the scene in the War Department, quoted the entire message from the man who was trying to stop all war, reviewed briefly what was known of the ship and of her disappearance, and told of our search down the coast, and of the finding of the man upstairs. Hour after hour went by as I wrote, and no call came. Dorothy and Tom sat reading. At last I brought my story down to the point where I wished to introduce the story of the man. There I stopped, and with idle pen sat and watched the beautiful head below the shaded

light. If a man could only sit and see that "Picture of a woman reading" every night! I found myself figuring costs of living more zealously than ever before. A knock broke in on my thoughts.

"The patient has roused," said the nurse, "and the doctor would like to have you come."

Silently we passed through the bare corridors and up the wide stairs. As we entered, the doctor sat beside the man on the narrow iron bed. I looked with eager inquiry at the face. It shone with normal intelligence. We had conquered again.

"I have just been telling Mr. Joslinn of your finding him, and of his being here," said Forrester. "Now he is ready to talk."

Dorothy greeted him and began the talk, while I wrote feverishly as Joslinn spoke in a low steady tone. Yes, he had gone out fishing. He had left a little shooting box, whither he had run down alone on Monday, and taken the knockabout out. The reason no one had known of his disappearance was that there was no one to care. He had no family and had retired from business, made little trips now and then, so his landlady and friends simply thought of him as away. I chafed at the time that he took in coming to the point. If he only reached it, his long description of his acts was all a part of the story. Then came the crisis:

"I was out ten or twelve miles from shore, just about sunset," said Joslinn, "when I saw a battleship coming up the coast. She was the only ship in sight, and she passed within a short distance of me, so near that I felt the last of her wake. I never saw a finer spectacle than that boat as she swept on." He paused.

“Go on, go on,” I said anxiously.

“I knew it was the Alaska,” he resumed, “because I had seen her lying for weeks below my apartment house in Riverside Drive. I watched her as she went on triumphant. It was the time of evening colors. Out across the water came the bugle call, which I had heard so often as I hung over the parapet of the Drive at nightfall. The marine guard and the crew stood mustered and facing aft. The flag fell a fluttering inch, and at the moment of its fall the band crashed into the full strain of the Star Spangled Banner. I stood with bared head, and my eyes filled as the great ship bore proudly on. Just as the last note of ‘Oh long may it wave’ came to me, like a bursting soap bubble, like a light cloud scattered by the wind, she disappeared without a sound! Not so much as the splash of a pebble in the water could I hear.”

“Do you mean to say,” cried Tom, in utter amazement, “that all those thousands of tons of armored steel, those great guns in their huge turrets, that terrific mass of metal, disappeared without a sound?”

“Absolutely without a sound,” answered Joslinn gravely. “The Alaska disappeared with less commotion than a ring of tobacco smoke in the air. It utterly destroyed one’s belief in the reality of anything in this world!”

Bewilderment, complete bewilderment, is the only word which can express the appearance of our little group, as we stood in the bare room. Even Forrester temporarily forgot his professional attitude in the absorbing interest of the tale. But a

sigh from Joslinn recalled him.

"That's quite enough, Mr. Joslinn," he said hurriedly, and, at his nod of dismissal, we turned and went down the stairs.

"Nothing real, with a vengeance," remarked Tom, as we descended. "I can't imagine a more unearthly spectacle than that noiseless fading away. I'd have said mirage, if he hadn't heard the music, and if the ship hadn't actually disappeared. Hold on – if this is the work of man, is it possible that he has discovered some new substance which, placed in armored steel, causes it to disintegrate? If he got hold of such stuff, he might get it into armored steel, while it was making, and then after a certain time the whole thing might crumble away."

Tom had finished speaking as he stood in the door of the doctor's pleasant library.

Dorothy nodded as he closed. "That's not a bad idea, Tom. If anything could be found that would make steel crumble into dust, as a puff ball crumbles, it might of course be timed. But the whole thing dazes me. I want plenty of time to think it over."

"And I must get to work on my story," I said, trying to shake myself back into the world of reality again, and I rushed back to my desk.

Word for word I wrote the story, drew Joslinn's life history briefly, ran rapidly through the whole, and as Dorothy entered, "I know how I'll end," I exclaimed. "I'll prophesy the sinking of a British battleship this week."

She clapped her hands. "Good! good!" she cried. "You

couldn't do better."

The last words of my story were the prophecy, and I hurried to the telephone. It was 1 a. m., but the chief himself answered. "I'll be there with the whole story in half an hour," I cried exultantly.

"Did he see her go down?" asked the chief eagerly.

"He did," I answered, and a long whistle came over the wires.

Through dark streets and light, through the roar of upper Broadway and the sombre silence of lower Broadway the motor ran, and I tried to calm my hurrying brain. The excitement which had possessed me every day of the week was still over me. The awful wonder of Joslinn's tale possessed me, until my longed-for beat seemed but a minor accident in the great happenings of the world. Up the elevator and through the door at a bound I passed, to the chief's office. He reached eagerly from his chair for my copy. Page by page he read silently, as I sat handing them to him, and passing them from his hands to the boys running back and forth to the tubes. I could hear the crash of the presses, and I thought, strangely enough, of Pendennis and Warrington standing in Fleet Street and talking of the mightiest engine in the world, – the press. And after all, it was my story that was enlightening the world through those great presses below. I had solved the mystery that filled the newspapers from the Atlantic to the Pacific, nay more, that was discussed in the clubs of London and of Tokio, and my story would go through them all. I had won. Twice only I stopped in giving the copy to the chief, once to light my pipe, and once to look up Joslinn. I found him easily

in the directory and in Bradstreet's. He was evidently a man of complete reliability.

The last page had gone down the tube, and the chief leaned back and meditatively took up his pipe.

"That's the best stuff for some years, Orrington," he said. "I guess you'd better take this as a permanent assignment. The prophecy was a long chance, but I guess we'll take it. Now go to bed."

I slept till ten, but once up, I read my story with huge approval in my early paper, and saw everybody else reading it, as I went down town. My ears were filled with excited comment, and I examined with much glee the pained comments or total silence of our contemporaries. Especially did they condemn my prophecy. Reaching the office, I stopped on the first floor to get a late edition, among a general stare which I endeavored to bear modestly. At the elevator door, I paused. "Should I walk or ride? Walk it is," I decided. I wanted to stop in the hall outside the big office to look over my story again. As I sat in the hall window, I looked down. I could see a multitude before our bulletin board. None of the other papers had any crowd at all. As I looked, the throng went wild. A great roar rose, and the mass seethed and swayed as they gazed at the bulletin below me, but out of my sight. "Something's up," I said to myself, and bolted for the office. The reporters and editors were all clustered in one corner. As they saw me, a shout went up.

"Orrington, the British battleship Dreadnought, Number 8,

has disappeared!”

CHAPTER IV

The disappearance of His Britannic Majesty's battleship Dreadnought Number 8 sent the world wild. Two great nations had suffered severe blows, and lay in quivering expectation of the future. The chief of my paper smiled at me more amicably than ever before, as I entered the office the third day after the British battleship disappeared utterly in the channel.

"You'd better run that prophecy of yours about the French battleship to-day," he said, "and then keep out of the office. I don't want you to be in evidence. We've got too good a thing to take any chances. Work as hard as you want to on the assignment, but don't appear publicly."

I nodded acquiescence.

"By the way," he went on, "just how many people outside our own staff know of the second letter?"

"Seven," I answered. "The President, the Secretary of War, the two Haldanes and their cousin Mrs. Hartnell, Richard Regnier and John King. The former Secretary of the Navy did know, but he's dead. They are all pledged to secrecy, and all have kept the story wholly to themselves."

"That's all," said the chief, and I left.

That night I sent in a prediction that a French battleship would sink within a week, and then spent the next few days going over the naval registers of the nations, and in correlating the mass

of data concerning the navies of the world, which had been collected at the office by my request. I wanted to get all the information concerning the subject in hand that I could possibly obtain.

Immersed in masses of data, struggling with theory after theory that arose only to be rejected, I passed the week. Weary from my labors, one afternoon I left my work to go to the Haldanes to report progress. Tom and Dorothy were both immersed in a research Tom was carrying on, but they always had time to discuss the great question.

"I had a letter from Dick Regnier yesterday," said Dorothy, the first words over. "He says he is doing some work he has long wanted to do. He speaks of seeing John King at Cowes. John had his new yacht down there."

I followed every word intently. "Nothing at all about the loss of the Alaska or the Dreadnought Number 8?" I asked significantly.

"No," answered Dorothy.

"When was the letter mailed?" I asked.

"Two days after the British ship went down," she answered. "But – " She stopped as Tom came in. I continued the conversation no farther.

As I left, Tom called after me. "I've been fooling with some phosphorescent paint," he said, "and I've run down a few interesting results. Don't you want to come up to the laboratory to-morrow morning about three o'clock? We're going to run some tests between twelve midnight, and five in the morning, so

as to have the least current and vibration that the city can give."

"I'll be glad to come," I answered instantly. No chance to be near Dorothy was ever to be refused.

The last revellers were just passing from the great white way, as I rode up town in a late surface car, which held, beside myself, only a few dull and sleepy workers. I was ahead of time and, as I came up near Riverside Drive, I jumped off the car and walked down towards the Drive and up by the river. Below me, in the full moonlight, lay an American fleet. The white sides and lofty turrets of the ships stood sharply outlined against the other bank. They seemed to personify the might of the nation resting there in huge impassive stolidity, fearful of nothing, ready for all. Yet as I remembered Joslinn's words, "vanished like a breaking soap bubble," spoken of the Alaska, I shuddered at the helplessness of those floating forts, massive as they were. I looked at my watch in the moonlight. Quarter of three. I turned and made my way to the gray stone building on the height, which held the research laboratory.

I found Tom and Dorothy bending over a series of instruments under a big incandescent light. I watched them for a moment silently, then, as they rose from their task, I greeted them. Never had Dorothy looked more charming than in this setting of bare walls and severe tables, hooded instruments and wires, glass cases and shelves. Most girls whom I had seen at three o'clock in the morning, as they left a ballroom, were sorry spectacles, worn and dishevelled. Dorothy, in her trim working clothes, was

as fresh as a summer's morn. Her first greeting over, she turned to her work again, adjusting a micrometer levelling screw.

"What are you doing?" I asked idly.

"Adjusting a reflectoscope to detect the presence of radio-active waves. Tom is just going to have his assistant test the radium he is to use to-night, and has half a dozen reflectoscopes here," and she waved her hand at the bench before her, where half a dozen similar instruments were placed.

"They are a good deal like the old electroscopes, only infinitely more sensitive. You see that gold leaf," she pointed to two tiny ribbons of gold that hung limply together, "when a wave from a radio-active source, such as radium, comes along, those ribbons fly apart. All our reflectoscopes are discharged now, but they'll be charged later."

As we spoke, Tom joined us. "I've sent Jones down-stairs for the radium in the safe, Dorothy," he said, and we three stood looking silently at the instruments before us. Through the open windows a fresh breeze fluttered in, and the soft night gave back but the slightest hum, a minimum of that sound that never ceases in the quietest hours of the great city. A church tower rang out – One, Two, Three, Four. Tom glanced at the chronometer. "Just right," he said, and looked back. A strange hush filled the air. Again a terrific force seemed to be pulling me towards Dorothy, but my eyes never turned from the reflectoscopes. Suddenly, as I gazed, the golden ribbons sprang to life, parted and stood stiffly separate.

"Good heavens!" cried Tom. "What did that? They were perfectly insulated. What did that, Dorothy? It must be Jones bringing the radium."

Dorothy's eyes glowed with excited interest. "I don't think it was Jones," she said eagerly. "I believe I know what it was, but anyway, let's go first and see where Jones is. There's absolutely nothing else in the laboratory that could have charged them, insulated as they were."

Down the stairs, flight after flight, four in all, we trooped, and found Jones in an office on the first floor, seated in a chair before the safe, and looking disconsolately at its closed door. At Tom's voice, he rose.

"Professor, I've forgotten the combination again. I was sitting here trying to bring it to mind."

"Then you haven't taken the radium from the safe at all?" shouted Tom, in wild excitement.

"No," answered Jones, staring in amazement.

"Then how in blazes did those reflectoscopes get charged?"

Jones showed a sudden interest, "Have they got charged again?"

"Yes, have they been charged before?"

"Twice before, and I meant to speak to you about it, but it slipped my mind."

"When did it happen?" Dorothy broke in.

"I've got full particulars noted down, up-stairs," said Jones. "But how about the combination?"

"Never mind that," cried Tom. "Let me see your data."

Rapidly we ascended, the slower Jones following some way behind. In the laboratory the assistant turned to a littered desk and fumbled among a mass of papers. I could see that Dorothy was burning with impatience which I could not understand. Jones fumbled on, picking up paper after paper, peering at them blindly through his black-rimmed spectacles. Tom seized my arm and walked me down the room impatiently.

"That man will drive me mad some day," he exclaimed. "He's the most accurate investigator and observer we ever had, but he keeps his desk in an unspeakable mess. He's got that data somewhere, and when he finds it, it will be correct, but he'll take perhaps an hour to find it. There, thank the Lord!" he remarked, as we turned back, "Dorothy's taking a hand."

Then came order from chaos, regularity from irregularity. Paper by paper was read, rejected and placed in its appropriate place, while Jones looked on, by no means displeased. Scarcely five minutes had passed, and the desk had assumed an order foreign to its nature. Ten minutes passed, and Dorothy turned. "It isn't here, Mr. Jones. Now think, where did you put it?"

Jones seized the knotty problem, bent his mind to it, struggled with it, emerged victorious. "I know," he said. "It's in the middle of that black, leather note-book in the third right-hand drawer."

Before he had finished, the note-book was in Dorothy's hand, was open, and a paper fluttered out into her lap. She picked it up and read, "July 3d, 19 – . Reflectoscopes charged without

apparent cause at 3.45-30 P. M.; July 11th, 19 – . Reflectoscopes charged without apparent cause between 9.35 and 10.10 P. M."

"I thought so, I thought so," said Dorothy, jumping from her chair. "Tom, it's as straight as a die. Oh, Jim, it's a big step."

Tom looked as bewildered as poor Jones had seemed before the safe, or as he did now. I was thoroughly puzzled. The only thing that struck me forcibly was that Dorothy had called me by my first name. That was a big step surely, but evidently it was not the step she meant. Dorothy saw our bewilderment, and went on emphatically.

"You are stupid. I'd like to know how far you men would get in this world without women to find things out for you. What happened on July 3d in the afternoon, and what occurred sometime in the evening, our time, on July 11th?"

Tom and I stood still, looking at each other in bewilderment. Suddenly I saw a great light.

"Why, those were the times the Alaska and the Dreadnought Number 8 disappeared!" I shouted, in wildest excitement, "and just now."

"A French battleship went down," said Dorothy gravely. "And, – " she broke her sentence with a brief sob, "the poor wives and children."

We had turned instinctively to watch the golden ribbons that told of the sinking of the proud battleship, and of the death of hundreds, and I bowed my head as when the death angel comes close beside us in his flight. A moment's silence, and Tom turned

to Jones.

“If you don’t mind, Jones, I wish you would say nothing of this, no matter what you see or hear. We shall do no more to-night; you may go home.”

With Jones’ departure, we began another council. Tom drew out his pipe. “Dorothy, I know Jim and I need to smoke over this, do you mind?” and at her word we filled our pipes and invoked the help of that great aid to philosophers, tobacco. Dorothy was at the desk, her brow knotted in deep thought. Tom and I sat on a side bench against the wall, facing her. The dawn was coming in through the wide windows, and the city stirred as we talked.

“Your theory about the disintegrating steel of the battleships was evidently wrong, Tom,” said Dorothy. “The wave that charged the reflectoscopes was a wave definitely projected from some definite place.”

“Yes,” said Tom musingly. “I was wrong. The man who is trying to stop all war must have some radio-active generator, some means of wave disturbance greater than anything we have yet attained. As a man starts a dynamo, and uses the electricity it furnishes to do work, so this man starts this unknown engine of destruction, and its waves destroy the ship.”

“But how could he possibly cause a ship to vanish without a sound?” I asked.

“Of course, I’m not perfectly sure,” answered Dorothy. “But the moment the reflectoscopes were charged, I thought of a possible theory. His force, so powerful that it affects our

reflectoscopes thousands of miles away, may be able to resolve the metal which makes up a battleship into its electrons, which would disappear as intangible gas."

"What are electrons?" I persisted. "I've heard of them, of course, but I'm not quite sure what they are."

"They're the very smallest division of matter, the infinitely small particles that make up the atom. If a man could find a way to break matter down to them, it's entirely possible that they would then go off as a gas. The waves the man sends out must be terrifically strong, anyway. One thing I don't see, though, is how he could break down organic matter. He could break down everything metallic, perhaps, but I don't see how he could break down wood – or human beings," she ended, with a shudder.

"Part of that's easy," said Tom, with a long whiff at his pipe. "Absolutely no wood for the last two years on any battleship. All nations have taken out what wood they had on their new ships and put in metal of some sort. I don't know about the action on man; it's not essential to settle that now."

The excitement of the moment had been so great, standing in the midst of history making had been so poignant, that for the nonce my newspaper instinct had been lost in the stronger thrill. Now it suddenly awoke.

"Great Scott!" I cried. "I must get this to the paper instantly. Where's the telephone?"

Without a word, Tom pointed to the desk 'phone on his own desk, and I rushed over to it. Again and again I rang, with no

response. “I can’t get Central,” I said.

Tom looked at the clock. “It’s a branch exchange, but there’s usually some one on our exchange board by now. I’ll try.”

Five more precious minutes were lost in his attempt to gain the board. At last he looked up. “No use, Jim.”

I waited for no more, but grabbed my hat and ran down the long flights. Out across the square I sped and down the street. A blue bell showed on the corner in a small store. I ran to it – locked. Another block, and I had the same experience. At the third, a corner drug store, I met success. A yawning boy, sweeping out the store, gazed with open mouth as, hot and perspiring from my run, I hurried in and rushed to the booth. In a moment I had the office and the night editor’s desk, had told him who I was, and began to dictate. “At one minute past four by our time (see what time Paris time is for that, and put it in) a French battleship was sunk by the man who is to stop all war. Probably no one on board escaped.” That last was a guess based on the experience of the past. The night editor’s voice came back.

“Feel sure of this, Orrington?”

“Very sure,” I said.

“I hate to run a thing like this on a chance.”

“The chief said to run anything I sent, didn’t he?”

“Yes,” said the night editor.

“Well, rush it in then, before word comes.”

“All right, if you insist,” came back, and I hung up the ’phone, paid my fee, and departed.

I slept like a log until eleven, then rose to gather in the file of morning papers outside my door. My statement was in big headlines in my own paper. No other morning paper had a single word of it. I paused at the news-stand, as I went down to breakfast. Staring from every paper was the headline, “La Patrie Number 3 disappeared. French battleship follows the Alaska and the Dreadnought Number 8.”

They had the news from France five hours after we had published it. Leisurely I ate my breakfast, the while I read the late news of my rivals, turning with especial interest to an editorial of my own paper, commenting on my work and reviewing the situation. “This should mean another big jump in circulation,” I thought to myself, “and another jump in salary, too.” My salary was really getting up to a point where marriage was the only sensible thing for a man to do. I was to meet the Haldanes at three. I wondered how long an acquaintance should last before one could propose.

As I sipped my last cup of coffee, I saw two men in the dining-room door speaking to a waiter, who nodded, and led them my way. They were not the type of men who usually breakfasted in the restaurant. Just before me they stopped.

“Mr. Orrington?” said one inquiringly.

“I am James Orrington,” I answered. The waiter had gone back to the kitchen. We were left alone in the rear of the dining-room. The man who had spoken opened his coat and showed a silver shield.

“We are secret service officials. You are under arrest.”

CHAPTER V

"This is an outrage," I exclaimed indignantly. "Why should I be put under arrest?"

"On complaint of the French government as being concerned in the sinking of the French battleship La Patrie Number 3 off Brest this morning," replied the officer coolly. "As it is an international complaint, it came under the Federal courts, and we were empowered to make the arrest."

As he spoke, the whole thing flashed across me. My predictions of the destruction of the Dreadnought Number 8 and of La Patrie Number 3 had come true. I had told of the sinking at the very moment it occurred. My story had been spread over the world by cable and by wireless, and my arrest as an accomplice in the act was the result. I immediately felt more cheerful.

"The charge is too absurd to stand for a moment," I said. "I am entirely ready to go with you."

Back up-stairs with my two companions I went for my hat, and then I accompanied them to the Federal building. The inquiry was sharp and searching. I admitted unhesitatingly that I had written the original account of the sinking of the Alaska and had prophesied the loss of the Dreadnought Number 8 and of La Patrie Number 3, also that I had given information of the sinking of the ship an hour or two before it had been known in France. On being questioned as to the source of my knowledge, I gave

the account already published of the discovery of the man who saw the Alaska disappear, and spoke of the original letter sent by the man who intended to stop all war. Of the two essential factors, the discovery of the hidden letter and the charging of the reflectoscopes, I did not speak. These were valuable assets to me, as long as they were not made public. I could not throw them away. They meant higher salary, greater reputation, and these things meant a third, far more essential than either.

My story done, the judge sat for some moments without moving. Finally he spoke. "Frankly, Mr. Orrington, I cannot see that you have explained that inside information which enabled you to make your predictions, or tell of the loss of the La Patrie Number 3. You are the only person who seems to know anything of this. You offer no explanation of your knowledge. I do not see that I can do otherwise than commit you without bail."

Commit me without bail, keep me from following out my assignment, keep me from seeing Dorothy! I thought rapidly. Of course there was a solution. I addressed the judge.

"Your honor, I gave this information in advance to the President and to the Secretary of War. If you will get either one of them on the telephone, they will corroborate my words."

The judge's attitude changed. "If that proves correct, I shall have no reason to detain you," he said, and, turning to a court officer, he ordered him to call up Washington, state the case to the President's private secretary, and ask the President for a statement.

"If you cannot get the President, get the Secretary of War," I broke in, and the judge said, "Very well."

I did not want to bring the office into this at all if I could help it. I was out playing a lone hand, with the whole responsibility resting on me, and I did not wish to ask for aid if I could possibly avoid it. I thought of the Haldanes, but decided to save them for a last resort. I could not bear to think of Dorothy in the courtroom. For a long half hour I waited, reading the morning papers, till the return of the messenger. He entered and walked before the bench.

"Your honor, the President has gone shooting in Virginia. He will not return for three days, and can only be seen on urgent official business. The Secretary of War is dangerously ill and cannot be disturbed."

I remembered with a shock that I had seen the second fact in the newspapers. Of the first I had no knowledge. As he heard the news, the judge again shook his head. "I cannot release you on that mere statement, Mr. Orrington. Is there anything else you would like to have done?"

I gave way with an inward sigh. "Yes, telephone, if you will, to Professor Thomas Haldane at his laboratory, saying that I am under arrest here, and ask him to come and bring a lawyer."

Another weary period of waiting in the stifling heat passed before the door opened and Tom entered, accompanied by another man.

"Hello, old man. This is a shame," ejaculated Tom, as he came

towards me. As his lawyer went up to the bench for an interview with the judge, he went on in a lower tone. “It is a shame, Jim, but I expected it.”

“What?” I said in amazement.

“I expected it,” repeated Tom. “It was the only logical outcome of your prophecies. You had too much inside information. People couldn’t help suspecting you knew more than you had told. You were the only person on whom they could lay their hands. It’s really not surprising at all that you are here. The only thing is, we’ve got to get you out of this right off.”

He turned to the lawyer. “Can’t you get the judge to take my word that I know all the circumstances, and can swear to Mr. Orrington’s innocence?”

The lawyer went up to the bench and had a brief conversation with the judge. In a few moments he returned. “I hope I’ve solved the difficulty,” said he. “The judge will accept your statement and Mr. Orrington’s together. If you will explain the whole thing to him, he will see that it goes to no one save the Attorney General.”

“You’d better do it,” said Tom briefly.

“I suppose I’ll have to,” I replied. We adjourned to the judge’s private office and told the whole story.

“I can understand,” said the judge, as I finished, “that the story of the disappearance of the French battleship might be a lucky guess, once given the letter of which you speak, but the narrative as told by you seems almost too incredible to be admitted as

evidence. Is this letter containing the second message still in your possession?"

"No," I said, and hesitated.

Tom broke in. "It's in my sister's hands, judge. She has had it ever since that first night. If you will wait I will get some radium from my laboratory and show the hidden message to you."

"It could not, then, disappear in the time which has elapsed?" queried the judge.

"No," answered Tom, decisively. "I have been experimenting with inks of that kind since I knew of this, and I should say unhesitatingly that it would still be there, although I've never happened to see it myself. I'll bring the things back at once. My motor is at the door."

By that time I had exhausted the news possibilities of the newspapers and was left to the real estate columns. "Which was better for a young couple, a small apartment in the city or a suburban home?" That was a question which made even the flamboyant advertisements of farthest Suburbia a matter of deep and abiding interest to me. I was half through the columns when, to my joy and surprise, the door opened, and Dorothy entered, followed by Tom and the lawyer. At her coming, the nodding court officer roused and became a model of soldierly deportment, the secret service men straightened in their chairs, the judge felt of his tie and rose hastily to offer a seat beside him with a courtly bow. Gracious and stately, Dorothy bowed to him, but she came to me.

“Oh, Jim,” she said, in a low voice, “what a shame. I am so glad I was here to help.”

I passed the gap from Miss Haldane to Dorothy at a bound. “Dorothy,” I answered, “I’m so glad you were.”

After that how little mattered the long weary afternoon. It took but a few minutes to arrange a closet off the judge’s room for the exhibition of the evidence. As Dorothy brought forth the letter which had been the forerunner of three mighty tragedies, the judge asked to see it, and read it curiously.

“And there is a second letter below this, Miss Haldane?” he queried.

“Yes,” answered Dorothy, “I have seen it.”

“Have you had this in your possession ever since the night’s meeting of which your brother and Mr. Orrington spoke?” he asked again.

“It has been in my personal possession, or in a locked drawer of my own, in a locked safe in my own house,” replied Dorothy. “I asked Mr. Orrington for it, as I intended to make some tests with my brother on the ink. We have, however, not used it as yet.”

“You are ready to swear that this is the original letter?”

“I am,” said Dorothy calmly.

“Very well, then, let us go on with the test.”

The letter was placed open as before, with the radium in its leaden case before it. Tom threw back the cover, as we sat in front of the table, and turned off the lights. I waited as before, beside Dorothy. If I had felt a tightening bond before, I felt one

a thousand times stronger now. I had seen the dear girl beside me day in and day out since our first meeting, and never had she failed to show the same fire of brilliant imagination, the same power of achievement. She had blazed my path to success in the weeks past. She had come to help me in my distress to-day. To gain her had become the whole end of my life. I looked into the darkness towards the letter, expecting each moment to see the curves and lines springing out luminous. Minute after minute passed. I could hear the ticking of the great clock, two rooms away, and the stifled roar of the summer afternoon in the great city, but the darkness held no light. No line appeared. Finally Tom spoke.

"How long an exposure did you give it last time, Dorothy?"

"Two or three minutes," said she. He rose, turned on the lights and looked at his watch.

"Twelve minutes and no results. It's the same lot of radium, too. Look this over with me, will you, Dorothy?"

They examined the apparatus carefully, turned off the light and tried again. No result. Tom went back into the other room and brought another sample of radium and used that. Still no result. At last he turned on the lights and spoke. "I can't understand, judge, but I cannot bring out the second letter."

The judge rose blinking. "According to your own statements," he said, "the letter has not been out of Miss Haldane's possession at all, and the message once on there could not disappear. I fear I shall have to hold Mr. Orrington after all, till we can hear from

the President."

My heart sank. Tom turned to me.

"Never you mind, Jim, we'll find the President for you, and have you out inside two days."

I smiled somewhat wearily. "You mustn't leave your work to do that, Tom."

Dorothy broke in. "We can't work alone. It needs all three of us to get anywhere, doesn't it, Tom?"

"Sure thing," said Tom sturdily, and they left me, but not before Dorothy had given me a word of comfort that was a stay in time of trouble.

I had often watched the gloomy walls of the prison as I passed, and wondered at the sensations of the prisoners when the gates closed behind them. My sensations as I drove into the courtyard and passed up the stairs, into the cell whose iron gate clanged shut behind me, were all poignant enough, but I could not be wholly downhearted. The whole thing seemed utterly absurd, yet as night came on, a deep gloom gradually settled over me. I could not see my way out. "Suppose the President and Secretary of War should both die, as had the last Secretary of the Navy!" I had no proof but the letter and the witnesses who saw the second message shine forth, and with that thought of witnesses came back the puzzling question, "Why did not the second message appear?" It had been there. I had seen it with my own eyes. Dorothy, Mrs. Hartnell, John King, Regnier, – each and all had seen it and read it. Tom had declared it impossible for the writing

to disappear. What could be the explanation? One thought kept coming, returning to my mind again and again, as I sat on the edge of my narrow cot, watching the barred moonlight streaming through the great window opposite my tier. The letter must have been changed. The letter which we examined in the judge's room could not be the same as that which had shown us the second message. Somewhere, somehow, an exchange must have been effected. It could have been no easy matter, either. Parchment of the kind used in all the letters was no easy thing to come by. It could by no means be bought in every stationer's store, nor could so complete a copy of the message be produced without much trouble and labor. Only one man would be likely to have such a copy ready at hand, without the second message, the man who was trying to stop all war. He might have an extra copy. But how could he know the letter was in Dorothy's hands? How could he get a chance to change the papers? Hour after hour, the long night through, I struggled with the question, and with the morning some crystallization came from the dull haze of my thoughts. There was one time and place where a man might easily make an exchange. At Mrs. Hartnell's house in Washington, in the time which elapsed between the closing of the radium case and the turning on of the lights. It might be improbable, but it was the only solution I could find. Towards early morning I dropped off into a troubled sleep, and dreamed I was in court, where Regnier, as judge, was trying me, with John King as prosecuting attorney. I had just been condemned to disappear as had the

Alaska, when Dorothy sailed through the courtroom in the Black Arrow's launch, with Tom at the wheel. She reached out her hand to me. I leaped in and escaped.

The late morning brought me a weary and exhausted waking. I had breakfast brought in from outside, sent word to the office that I would not be in for a few days, a by no means uncommon thing for me to do since I went on this assignment, and then I settled down to wait. I got enough waiting before eight o'clock that evening to last me the rest of my natural life, but at that hour came a warder with a short request to follow him to the office. There was Tom, good fellow, rushing towards me as I entered.

"You're a free man, Jim; I have the order for your release," he cried. "The President came to your rescue, like the trump he is. Hurry up now, and come to our house for a late dinner."

The clang of the gates behind me was as much music to my ears as it had been discord on my entrance. I had endured all the prison life that I wanted. I was willing to leave any writing up of such experiences to the yellow newspaper reporter.

Fifth Avenue never seemed so gay. New York never seemed so full of the wine of life as on that drive. It needed only Dorothy to make it complete, and I was speeding towards her as rapidly as the speed regulations would allow. As we went on, Tom told me the story of his search for the President. How he had found him off shooting in Virginia and how gladly he had given the word for my release.

Once in the hall of the Haldanes' house, Dorothy appeared at

the head of the stairs. "Oh, Jim!" she cried. Thank Heaven she had forgotten all about Mr. Orrington now. "Oh, Jim, I'm so glad. It's all right now, isn't it?"

"It is," I said emphatically.

She hurried down, waving a blue foreign-looking sheet. "Oh, boys, I've got the best thing yet. We can tell just where 'the man' is now. I've just found out the way."

CHAPTER VI

“What’s the new find, Dorothy?” asked Tom, smiling at her eagerness.

“A letter from Carl Denckel,” she replied.

“Impossible!” cried Tom. “The dear old boy died nine months ago.”

“But this was written nearly a year ago,” she rejoined. “Look at this envelope.”

The big blue square inscribed in crabbed German script was filled with addresses. “See,” said Dorothy. “He thought you were still at Columbia, so he addressed it to Columbia, America, forgetting New York. His ‘u’ was so much like an ‘o’ that they sent it to Colombia, South America. It travelled half over South America, and then they sent it up here. It went to three or four Columbias and Columbus’s in different States. Finally some bright man sent it to the University, and they sent it over to you. It’s for you all right.”

“Read it, Dorothy. What does he say?”

“An Herrn Doktor Thomas Haldane.

“Lieber Professor: – Es geht mir an den tod – ” She had gone thus far in the German, when she glanced up and saw my uncomprehending face. “The German too much for you?” she asked. “I’ll translate.” She went on rapidly in English.

> "To Doctor Thomas Haldane.
>
> "Dear Professor:
>
> "I am about to die. My physician tells me that I have less than a month left to work. I have just completed the apparatus which had engaged my attention exclusively for the last six years, – my wave-measuring machine. By means of this machine, any wave of a given intensity may be registered as regards its velocity and power."

"If you don't mind, I'd like to break in right there," I interrupted.

"Go on," said Tom.

"What kind of waves is he talking about? Is this some sort of a machine for measuring the tides down on the beach, or what is it?"

Tom laughed. "Not exactly," he said. "Denckel's machine is to measure waves like those of electrical energy. You know, don't you, that we believe wireless messages go from one station to another by means of ether waves, as they call them?"

I nodded.

"Well, Denckel means to measure waves of that kind, and waves that would come from an arc lamp or a dynamo or a piece of radium or anything like that. It's to measure the same sort of wave that charged the reflectoscopes, in short – See?"

"I do," I answered. "But – "

"Hold on till we finish the letter, Jim, and we'll go over it." I subsided and Dorothy went on.

> "More than that, the distance from the point of generation of the wave, and the exact direction from which it comes, can be ascertained. It is, as you may see, the unique discovery of the past five years. In computing and making it, I have used some discoveries made by my late colleague, Professor Mingern. At his death, six years ago, he passed his work on to me. Now that my death approaches, I pass my work on to you. I have had many pupils in my long life, but none so worthy, none so able to carry on the work, as you, my dear friend and pupil. Farewell.
>
> *"Carl Denckel."*

"He was as fine an old chap as ever I knew," said Tom, with deep feeling. "To think of his sending that to me. But what can have happened to it?"

Dorothy stood with a second sheet in her hand. "Here's something about it," she said. "Manuscripts sent under cover to same address, apparatus sent to New York via Hamburg-American line."

"Then the first thing to do is to find the apparatus," said Tom. "We can send a trailer after the manuscript, but we can't bank on getting it. I'll go down to the custom-house to-morrow morning. What a blow to science, if the whole thing were lost." "But," he went on suddenly, "isn't it extraordinary that this should come along just now? It helps us a whole lot."

"That is so," remarked Dorothy reflectively. "We ought to be able to tell just where 'the man' is every time."

"Once more I humbly confess my ignorance," I remarked, "but

will you kindly enlighten me as to the way in which this is to help us in the search for the man?"

"Certainly," said Dorothy smiling. "We know that the reflectoscopes were charged by a wave which 'the man' sent out from some definite spot. Theoretically, that place might be anywhere in the world. Practically, it's probably somewhere not many miles from the ship he is destroying. But it is somewhere. His waves start from some definite point. There is some single point of generation. Now, with this machine, I ought to be able to find out just where the place is from which the wave starts, and not only within a hundred miles, but within a very brief space. Say, for instance, we had the machine in London, I could tell that 'the man' started his waves from Sandy Hook, and not from Hell Gate. That power of fixing the exact position of 'the man' gives us a tremendous step."

"Absolutely tremendous," I cried, and Tom chimed in, his eyes blazing with enthusiasm. "Here's to the successful working out of the new clue."

The announcement of dinner made rather an anti-climax to our discovery.

Tom laughed – "Well, we've got to eat, anyway. Come on."

No feast could equal a dinner with Dorothy as hostess. Never did her sweet face look more charming than when she presided at her own board. The talk soon became confined to technicalities, as Dorothy and Tom discussed the possibilities of the new apparatus, and I sat watching Dorothy's expressive face, as she

talked of velocities and lengths, methods of generation and of control. But her absorption in her subject lasted but a brief time. Dinner over she turned to the piano. Then for two hours her music wafted me through many a lofty old Iberian turret.

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