

CHAPTER VIII

OURS was a sad little camp next morning when we tried to parade. Lieutenant L's dysentery was very much worse and he could hardly stand. Two of our men were equally weak.

The sun beating through my handkerchief had given me a mild attack of sunstroke, besides which, I was alternately shivering with cold and unable to keep my teeth from chattering, and running a high temperature, the usual distressing symptoms of malaria.

The Brigade Veterinary Officer had condemned my charger to be shot. And so by eventide four out of six of us were being jogged down in an ambulance to Salonica and our little outfit, which had been organized as an independent observation unit on the enemy's movements in the Struma valley, was broken up.

Those weeks had been one of the happiest times I lived through during the war. The hardships, the torture of the flies, the pitiless blazing sun, the long hours in the saddle and the dizziness caused by my eyes trying to penetrate through the mirage, have not been forgotten but toned down in my memory. The things that stand out are the quiet cool nights spent under a starlit heaven, the black walls of the mountains that surrounded the valley with their snow-clad tops lit by a silver moon, the excitement

of gathering information under the very nose of the enemy; the good-fellowship that prevailed in our small outfit. The joy of eating a lamb roasted over a charcoal fire, and the occasional praise received from headquarters. These are the things that make me look back on that summer with regret. It was a time which can never come again.

I was in hospital for a fortnight and on being discharged was attached to the Intelligence Headquarters at Salonica. This meant office work, and while it was interesting to start with, I soon got tired of the monotony of the work and longed for something more active.

I felt that with my experience of intelligence work I could be of greater use if I learned to fly, and luckily was able to bring my chief round to the same view; and in due course I became a fully fledged pilot in the R.F.C.

One of my reasons for joining the R.F.C. was to be able to drop our spies into enemy territory.

Nico Kotzov was one of my first passengers. He was a Serbian patriot who had been in the enemy's country nine or ten times and always brought back very accurate and valuable information. He was a big-boned, tall man with a long grey beard, and had a very grand manner. He wore native dress, a sheepskin cap and a heavy brown homespun cape, and always carried a shepherd's staff.

We wanted information from an inaccessible part of the country, and as this information was urgently needed it was decided to drop him by aeroplane. I took him up for a couple of trial flights, and although he did not enjoy the experience very much he was quite determined to go. He knew the country

where we were going to land, and I explained to him that I wanted the landing-ground to be as much like our aerodrome as possible.

During the trial flights I asked him to point out to me, when we were flying low, grounds that he thought were suitable, and while occasionally his judgment was very much at fault, on the whole I thought that he had grasped the general requirements necessary for a landing-ground.

With luck, providing you are not attacked by enemy fighting planes, there is no difficulty in flying over strange country, but the art of dropping a spy consists in doing so unobserved. It is necessary to land your man and get away unseen, so the operation is conducted as a rule just before sunrise, after sunset, or on a very brilliant moonlit night.

The Hague regulations respecting the customs of war were drawn up before man learnt to fly, and in consequence there was no rule under the general spies clauses of these regulations regarding an airman who dropped spies in enemy's territory. But the Germans and Bulgarians had intimated that they would treat the actual pilots of aeroplanes landing spies as spies and shoot them.

This added to the risk of dropping a spy over the line, for if one made a bad landing and crashed one was for it.

General aviation had not then been developed to the perfection it has reached to-day, and there were no aeroplanes fitted with air brakes to make a low-speed landing possible.

Early one morning I collected Nico from the hut he had slept in and took him across to the hangars

where my machine had already been wheeled out and was waiting.

Despite a large mug of hot coffee I felt very cold and shivery.

Once again I pulled out the map and worked out the course with Nico, who told me where I would find a suitable landing-field; we were to arrive a little before daybreak, when there would be just sufficient light to land.

As we climbed into the machine the sergeant in charge of the pigeons brought along a little cage with six of our best carrier pigeons in it, and at the last minute a felt cover was slipped over them to keep them warm at the altitude we should reach during our journey.

I ran the engine up. Everything was all right.

I signalled to the sergeant to pull away the chocks and we taxied out into the dark aerodrome. I opened the engine full out and we were away.

I had to do a stiff climb in the air in order to be able to cross a mountain range, and the higher I got the less I liked the job before me. The flight was uneventful. I picked up the various objectives that were serving me—together with a compass—as a guide, and got over the country that we were to land upon in the scheduled time.

It was getting light and I throttled back my engine, so that it was just ticking over, in order to land.

We lost height rapidly and I could faintly make out the ground below me, which seemed fairly suitable. As a precautionary measure I made up my mind to circle it just once more. Suddenly I noticed that the whole of the field selected by Nico for our

landing was dotted by giant boulders. To land on that field would be suicide. I climbed into the air again, and when I had got sufficiently high, switched off my engine so as to be able to make Nico hear me and told him that his selection was no good as a landing-ground. He said simply that I had told him nothing about boulders, and that he imagined we would hop over them. We were in a B.E.2.E. bus and the only way to start the propeller going was to dive vertically. The force of the air drove round the propeller and if all went well one's engine started again. So I dived. The propeller started and we climbed once more into the air.

All hope of landing that morning had to be given up, but as it was rapidly getting light I hoped to be able to pick out a suitable landing-ground for the next day, and through my glasses located a dry river bed which promised to be the best place for landing, and back we went to the aerodrome.

Nico was most crestfallen at his mistake, and thought that I had been so angry with him that I had dived purposely to punish him, and it took a couple of hours of hard talk and a thorough exposition of aero engines before I could convince him that I simply had to dive to start my engine going.

Next morning we made the trip again and I safely landed my passenger. Within ten days he had dispatched all six pigeons and on the return home of the last one I took over a further cage of pigeons and dropped them from a parachute over the spot where I had landed Nico. These also returned home safely. In all I dropped Nico three times over the line.

But not all my passengers were as good as Nico. On one occasion it was essential to drop a spy over

the lines before we had even had time to give him a trial flight. The passenger was a Greek. He was looking forward to his flight and was a boastful creature.

It was a dirty morning with bad visibility and gusts of strong ground wind swept the aerodrome. My attention was fully occupied in taking off and gaining altitude. I had to climb through four layers of cloud, and in those days once one got into a cloud one was completely blinded. Now there are special instruments to make cloud-flying simple. We had been in the air half an hour before I had a moment to turn round to see how my passenger was getting on.

He was petrified with terror. His eyes were starting out of his head, and he was being violently sick. I smiled and tried to cheer him, but it was no good. I did not think it was possible for any man to be as sick so long and so regularly. I picked out the landing-ground, planed down and made a beautiful landing, but on turning round found that my passenger had gone into a dead faint and was huddled up in the cockpit. It was no good landing him in that condition and so back I went to the aerodrome. My passenger was still unconscious, and nothing ever induced him after he had recovered to go into the air again.

One of my other passengers was a man called Petrov who loved flying, and even when not being dropped over the lines would come down to the aerodrome to cadge a joy ride.

One evening, just about sundown, he climbed into his seat behind me and was given a basket with four pigeons and off we went.

He was a joyous passenger and would sing Serbian songs at the top of his voice, and even the roar of the engine could not drown the bass sounds coming from his lungs.

Those flights over the Balkans were wonderful. The mountains beneath looked like the great waves one sees in the Atlantic.

The sun had just slipped behind a mountain, and the valley in which we were to land was plunged in shadow. I spiralled down in order to lose height rapidly and circled round our landing-ground. Everything seemed clear and there was not a soul about—the conditions appeared ideal.

How often ideal conditions are a snare and a delusion! On landing we struck a furrow which jarred the bus badly, and worse still, stopped the propeller.

The only way in those days to land a spy and to take off successfully after having done so was to throttle back one's engine so that the propeller just kept turning round. As soon as the spy had landed one revved up the engine and took off again. When I first did this work it had always been a nightmare to me that my propeller might stop, for even under good conditions propeller swinging was a tricky operation and required a great deal of knack.

When learning to fly one was instructed in the art of propeller swinging, and before qualifying one was given practical tests. I was never very good at this business, principally because of my build.

I am not tall and have very short arms, I have always been rather round, and it was all I could do to reach the propeller, let alone swing it and swing myself clear in so doing. Failure to swing clear

means nine times out of ten that the propeller will hit the swinger, and many a man has been knocked out at this job.

And here we were in the enemy's country with a propeller that had stopped. Petrov hopped out of the bus, and at once volunteered to swing the propeller, and I showed him how to do it.

The process in theory is quite a simple one. The pilot calls out to the swinger "switch off," and the swinger then turns the propeller in order to suck sufficient petrol vapour into the cylinders. When this has been done the pilot switches on the ignition and the swinger calls out "contact," which is the signal for the propeller to be given a sharp, quick swing and for the person doing it to step aside.

Should the engine for some reason or other not start, the man swinging the propeller calls out "switch off," and the process is started all over again.

For ten minutes our voices could be heard calling "switch off—contact—switch off."

But nothing happened, the engine simply would not fire.

Petrov was running with perspiration due to his exertion. I was bathed in the sweat of fear.

We rested for a moment, then I climbed out of my seat and went over the petrol leads and magneto points. Everything seemed in order. Then to our horror in the rapidly deepening twilight we saw a cavalry patrol approaching.

Petrov said that he would have one more swing, but before doing so we decided to release the carrier pigeons.

We had instructions in the event of likely capture immediately to get rid of the pigeons, so that the

enemy could not use them to send information calculated to mislead our intelligence department. Off flew the four pigeons. And then like a demon possessed, Petrov started swinging the propeller. Still nothing happened.

The cavalry patrol had spotted us. I think at first they thought it was one of their own machines. Then they must have got suspicious, for they started trotting over towards us. Suddenly the engine fired. Petrov raced round to the fuselage and leapt into his seat. The cavalry patrol broke into a gallop and called upon us to stop. I opened up the throttle and we were away, but before we had left the ground the patrol had opened fire. Their shooting was good, for we found when we got back to our aerodrome half a dozen bullet holes in the fuselage.

Rapid as was the communication by the means of aeroplane, pigeons and spies, there was a system used by the monks of Mount Athos which seemed to be quicker for the transmission of startling news than any system devised by the intelligence sections. Occasionally it was unbelievable how rapidly important news reached them, and I spent some time at the monastery at St. Panteleimon, the retreat of the Russian monks, and from its friendly close tried to study the inmates at the Chiliandri monastery which was inhabited by Serbian and Bulgarian monks, among whom, owing to the war, there was considerable political friction.

But I never learnt how the speedy regular communication was kept up between Athos and the enemy's country.

Athos has a unique group of twenty monastic communities clustered round the village of Kayes;

except for the two monasteries mentioned, they were made up of Greek monks. All the monks belong to the order of St. Basil, and the brethren on the whole are friendly to male visitors, but no woman is allowed to land on the isthmus. The entire population is male. So strict are the monks that they will not even tolerate a cow or a female goat upon their domain; such things as milk, butter and eggs are brought to them from outside.

The monasteries are all fortified in an old-fashioned ramshackle way, and as a rule consist of large quadrangles enclosing churches, houses, stores, and they look wonderful from the sea. Within these quadrangles there are precious Byzantine art treasures and some of the world's rarest manuscripts. But nothing in them compares with the beauty of Mount Athos itself. The peak rises like a pyramid with a steep summit of white marble to a height of over six thousand feet above the sea. At sunset it can be seen from the plain of Troy on the east and the slopes of Mount Olympus on the west.

But even this beautiful, peaceful, ascetic retreat was affected by the repercussions of war. Many an intelligence officer spent a long week-end there, outwardly resting, sight-seeing, but in reality watching men and events.

Writing of Athos reminds me of yet another religious retreat I used to visit at Salonica. It was the house of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, where Sister Augustine had been working for over fifty years.

Sister Augustine was an English lady who had lived through wars and revolutions, and under the rule of both Turks and Greeks. Nothing in the

world could surprise or shock her; she was loved by rich and poor alike. She was known as "The Wise Woman of Salonica." She was undoubtedly one of the best-informed persons in the Near East, and a marvellous linguist. She was over eighty when I knew her, but she was never too tired or too busy to advise and help me when I wanted local knowledge.

Meanwhile what was left of the Serbian Army had been shipped from Corfu, reorganized in Salonica and was now fighting with the Allies on the Macedonian front. Within a few weeks Monastir had been recaptured, and once again the Serbians were on home soil and with a dogged persistence set about clearing the Bulgars out of Serbia. I was temporarily working with the Serbian counter-espionage staff.

Monastir had only been captured two or three days when two Bulgarian spies were caught. There was a drum-head court martial. The evidence was overwhelming against the two spies, who had been directing the fire of Bulgarian batteries on certain of the cross-roads which intersect Monastir. The Bulgarians had left a field telephone hidden in a cellar, and while one of the spies observed the traffic on the roads the other waited for signals from his colleague and then would tell the Bulgarian batteries when and where to open fire. Some deadly work on the cross roads had been done before these spies were caught.

They were both sentenced to death.

Although I should have very much preferred to miss the ordeal, it was necessary for me to be present at the execution.

In front of a whitewashed wall two stakes had been hastily driven into the ground. A battalion

had been formed into three parts of a square in front of the stakes.

The late mayor of the town and about four hundred citizens had been ordered to attend and were paraded in front of the troops.

The two spies were marched into the square by the field gendarmes. A firing-party of twenty men was drawn up in front of the stakes. The promulgation of the sentence was read over to the two prisoners and they were asked if they had anything to say, and both of them just shook their heads. Then a Serbian officer read out the names of, and the charges against, the two spies to the civil population.

The firing-party was called to attention. The two spies were marched up to the posts and tied up to them. Two white handkerchiefs were produced. One prisoner allowed his eyes to be bound, the other man refused the bandage.

There was a horrible stillness in the air, and one could hear the deep breathing of all those who were standing around. I saw two or three people cross themselves. The officer in charge of the firing-party gave the order to present arms. This order struck the still air like the crack of a whip.

"Long live Bulgaria!" said the spy who had refused to have his eyes bound, in almost a conversational tone.

The officer in charge of the firing-party held up a handkerchief and then dropped it, and before it had reached the ground twenty rifles had belched out flashes of flame which were followed, after what seemed a long time, by the crack of rifles.

The two spies crumpled up and sank down as far as the cords would let them go, and blood poured

down over them and their clothing. The wall behind, white a moment before, was scarred by bullet marks and bespattered with blood, just as if a paint-brush had been dipped into a pot of red paint and flicked on the wall.

The firing-party was marched off. A Red Cross van drove up to the posts to take away the bodies. I hurried off to find a spot where I could be sick without disgracing myself.

The execution had brought my theoretical education of spying and its conclusions to an end, and in the abstract there was not a thing that I did not know about the business.

The taking of human life can never be right, but in time of war I have no hesitation from my own personal experience as a spy in advocating that the death sentence should be carried out on those who are caught spying.

CHAPTER IX

I FIRST met Venizelos in Salonica. He had spent the winter and spring in endeavouring to compel King Constantine to change his policy of benevolent neutrality for full participation in the war with the Allies. But he had not succeeded. It is not my purpose here to go into the rights and wrongs of the policies supported by Venizelos on the one side and King Constantine on the other.

Despite everything that had been happening in Athens I was pro-Constantine and anti-Venizelos, and therefore my early meetings with the Cretan were somewhat of an ordeal.

Eleutherios Venizelos had been an obscure lawyer in Greece. He was of dark complexion, his hair already turning grey, and his face was somewhat disfigured by a number of rather noticeable warts. He drove about Salonica in a limousine, and wore an outrageous silk hat and a very queer frock-coat. But for all his eccentricity he had very intelligent eyes, a persuasive sympathetic voice, and a mind as sharp as a needle.

Early in October, 1916, he broke off negotiations with his Sovereign, founded at Salonica a Provisional Government which a few weeks later was recognized by England and France, and issued a proclamation calling to the colours all the Greeks outside the domain of the Royalist forces. These Greek divisions were meanwhile being formed and equipped by the Allies.

As a reprisal to his activities the Royalists persuaded the Archbishop of Athens to pronounce a solemn anathema against him, and he was excommunicated with all the pomp and ceremony of the Greek Orthodox Church.

I do not think this ever worried Venizelos. His reply was to form the *Corps de la Sûreté* for the protection of himself and the Provisional Government. This corps in time became extremely powerful, and after King Constantine's abdication played a part very similar to that of the old Russian Ochrana and the Bolshevik Cheka.

Politicians seem to have a habit of forming these institutions in good faith, but sooner or later the arm which they create for their protection is the means of their own overthrow. I think that Venizelos owed his downfall to the tyrannical activities of the *Corps de la Sûreté* during his absence at the Paris Peace Conference.

Fate decreed that we should stay at the same hotel in Paris during the Peace Conference; we had adjoining rooms, and it was then that I really came to appreciate his brilliance and grasp of international affairs. One day I asked him what his feelings were when he heard that he had been excommunicated. Venizelos smiled. "Within a year," he said, "at the same cathedral a Te Deum was sung as a thanksgiving for our formal entry into the war on the side of the Allies."

In time I was ordered to Egypt and embarked in a war-time sloop which was ultimately bound for Alexandria, but on the way called at various islands in the Ægean, and also dropped anchor at Piræus, where Compton Mackenzie, the Military Control

Officer, was running a brilliant secret intelligence department against the Germans. By correspondence I had known of his activities for a long time, and I admired the masterly way in which he organized his section. But it was not for his military achievements that I thrilled to meet him, but as the author of "Sinister Street."

At Alexandria I waited for fresh orders and whiled away the time by roller-skating in the afternoon at the local rink. On my second afternoon a trim figure came on the floor, who skated with wonderful grace and charm. As she came round I recognized her as one Minnie Klein, a German lady who belonged to the oldest profession in the world, and was one of Germany's more important spies in the Levant.

We had with great difficulty expelled her from Salonica. I say difficulty for, despite her German nationality, she had an irreproachable Greek passport, and we had only succeeded in getting her banished as far as Athens. She had been clever enough never to get technically caught, but she was rightly suspected, and had a marvellous way of getting information out of officers, old and young alike.

I did not know how she had got into Egypt, but I knew she had no business there. I took care to keep out of her way for fear she should recognize me and take fright, but I never let her out of my sight while I sent a messenger to the Provost Marshal, who sent an officer with a polite invitation for Minnie Klein to visit his office.

Minnie was most indignant. Her defence was almost convincing. But alas, though she had changed her name and her passport, she had failed to change her face. Fate was against her, for there was a

photographic record in the possession of the counter-espionage section at Salonica. When this arrived at Alexandria and her identity was definitely established she was shipped off to Malta and interned for the duration of the war.

Cairo and Alexandria were hot-beds of intrigue and international espionage. I was associated with a man called Theorides who was a spy in the service of the Greek government. He controlled a band of cut-throats who hovered round the bazaars and were used for all sorts of illegal work. It was Theorides who first told me of the marvellous work that was being done by an Englishman who was disguised and lived as an Arab, Colonel Lawrence of Arabia.

I met Lawrence once while in Cairo. He was a quiet, reserved man, and it was only from his colleagues on the staff and from my ruffian friend Theorides that I learned of his work. Subsequently, when in Russia a year later, I tried to employ some of the tactics against the Germans that Colonel Lawrence had used against the Turks.

Another man with whom I spent many hours in Egypt was Linkevitch, a Russian revolutionary who had been exiled from Russia and picked up his living in devious ways. He was a queer fanatic but was very well informed and knew everything that was happening in Cairo. He also had certain secret sources of information, and he told me of the abdication of the Tsar of Russia and the establishment of a revolutionary government in Petrograd within a few hours of its happening. This was two days before any official telegrams had reached the staff or the press in Egypt. But I never discovered how he obtained his information.

CHAPTER X

WHILE on leave in July, 1917, I was suddenly ordered to join the R.F.C. mission in Russia, and it was with a joyful heart that I left King's Cross by the midnight train for Aberdeen to find out the real situation in a new strange Russia. Early next morning the train crossed the Forth Bridge. Below us the Grand Fleet was spread out, while in the air above hung observation balloons from which a ceaseless look-out was kept in case a German submarine somehow or other should manage to slip into the Forth. The bridge was strongly guarded, and I wondered how much a German spy would give for the privilege of spending an hour upon it.

A terrific storm was raging over the North Sea, and Aberdeen was being shaken by the gale when I arrived. Obviously we were doomed to a dirty crossing. Really bad weather makes submarine work difficult and I was glad to find the risk of being torpedoed reduced to a minimum. Of course, there was always a risk from floating mines—horrible things to meet in a rough sea—but since the *Hampshire* disaster of over a year before, when Lord Kitchener and all but half a dozen of the ship's personnel perished on the way to Russia, very special precautions were taken.

I think I crossed in the *Jupiter*, but I am not sure. In any case, she was a yacht-like ferry-boat with a very low line, and was reputed to be very fast. She

looked to me to be far too small to face the storm which was raging outside the harbour.

There was a queer collection of passengers on board, among them a number of Russian and Jewish politicians who had been living in exile in the United States, and were now, owing to the fall of Tsardom, going back to Russia. With the exception of the ship's company everyone was in mufti. There were also several British and Allied officers on board, but as we were going through neutral countries to Russia we could not wear uniform.

My military uniform, sword, revolver and kit were nailed up in crates and labelled for Haparanda-Torneo, the Swedish-Russian frontier posts. To send one's military kit in this manner did not constitute a violation of the neutrality of the Scandinavian countries.

We steamed slowly out towards the breakwater straight into the teeth of the gale, and then dashed across the North Sea to Bergen. It was one of the very worst of the many bad sea crossings I have experienced. A pretty girl with whom I had become acquainted in the train on the way to Aberdeen was now a poor little wreck hanging on to one of the settees and moaning to the stewardesses, "Oh, please; oh, please, let me be dropped overboard." What a relief it was to steam into Bergen and to be in the shelter of the fiord! I took the night train to Christiania and was lucky enough to secure one of the few sleeping-berths. From Christiania I hurried on to Stockholm, where I was to stay a week.

The economic situation in Sweden was very strained. As good merchants the Swedes had sold, during the second year of the war, most of their food supplies to Germany at a very good price, but

now, although money was plentiful and the merchants' coffers were full, they found that they could not buy food for themselves owing to the Allied blockade. If Sweden chose to sell her food supplies to Germany it was her affair, but the Allies could not afford to let her replenish her stocks from abroad at their expense. In consequence of the blockade Englishmen were not very popular in Stockholm.

The Swedes were not instinctively pro-British like the Norwegians. Before the war they had the closest economic relations with Germany. For centuries Sweden had been anti-Russian and the bad feeling which existed between the two countries was not improved by the intrigues of German diplomats and agents.

Germany had one of her principal secret service organizations in Stockholm and the town was full of spies watching the railway stations, the hotels, the restaurants and the night clubs. Of course the Allies also had their secret service sections watching the Germans; using Stockholm as a base from which to survey the German coast and to test that the efficacy of the blockade was as watertight as possible. The principal agents of all these secret service organizations had to carry out their work without violating Swedish neutrality or sensibility, and were for ever trying to placate the Swedish authorities.

Neutrals coming out of Germany could reveal the conditions of the day before in that country. Hamburg, Cologne and Berlin newspapers arrived in the city in less than twenty-four hours after they were printed and were scanned by the various intelligence organizations. More than once the German secret service had made use of this fact and printed a special

edition of one of the principal newspapers, by which they passed out information calculated to mislead and misinform the Allied staffs. I stayed at the Grand, one of the most luxurious hotels in Europe, and its winter gardens were thronged with people throughout the twenty-four hours. No one ever seemed to go to bed in those days.

As soon as I had registered at the hotel and produced my passport to establish my identity I was watched by German agents. The first time I left my room someone managed to slip in and examine my luggage and papers. Of course the hotel authorities were not aware of these irregular proceedings, which otherwise they would have stopped at once. But the smaller secret service agents have to take these risks and to develop the skill of a professional burglar in getting in and out of rooms without detection.

I had been warned that my things would be examined, and had taken precautions to leave nothing which could be of the slightest importance. The consciousness of being watched breeds a very uncomfortable feeling, and is a nerve-racking experience. After a very short time one knows the watchers and gets to hate them. Time and again you feel that you have shaken them off and then suddenly when you least expect it one of them will turn up again. Important public men who are watched by detectives for their own safety and protection grow to loathe their protectors, and often cheerfully take the risk of assassination for the relief of being for a few hours unwatched.

One afternoon, when I came into the lounge I spotted the brigand who had been watching me.

He was talking to a man with his back turned to me who, when he turned round, I recognized as Hans Hartvig, a Russian subject of German origin whom I had known years before as a boy at school.

The lounge was full of people, but I managed to get a small table and ordered my afternoon coffee. A minute or two later one of the senior waiters, whom I knew to be a German agent, very politely asked me if I would allow another gentleman to share my table. I gave my willing consent, and chuckled to see Hans Hartvig led up to me.

Would he recognize me, I wondered. But he did not. He had taken a new name. It was not Hans Hartvig, nor in fact was it Teutonic at all. He had also learnt to speak perfect English and had come to my table deliberately to get into conversation with me. Of course he claimed to be a Swede and very pro-British.

He was very clever at his work, but it was a case of Greek meeting Greek with the advantages slightly in my favour, as I had recognized him and was on my guard. For two or three days he took every opportunity of talking to me, and we even lunched together.

I had been to the British Consulate and had also paid my respects to the British Legation. Owing to some trouble on the Russian frontier during the Kornilov affair it was necessary for me to go to the Russian Consulate and to the house of the Russian military attaché before I left for Petrograd. To all these places I had been shadowed by my pet aversion, the brigand. Hans Hartvig also decided that I was worth cultivating, and invited me to dine with him one evening: "Just a little dinner party for four

of us. It will give me great pleasure if you will make the fourth," he said. The morrow was to be my last evening in Stockholm before I went north, and I gladly accepted. Of course Hans did not know that I was leaving. The following evening, as arranged, I asked for his table and found that it was secluded in one of the alcoves of the huge restaurant. As he rose to meet me he was full of regrets that the other lady had been prevented at the last moment from joining us that evening, and he, too, would have to leave quite early, but would I be so kind after he had left as to entertain the lady he was about to introduce?

The idea, of course, was to leave me alone with a lady in the hope that she would be able to abstract from me information which Hans did not feel he could manage to get himself. This is one of the oldest secret service dodges employed. He introduced me to Miss Irma Johansen, a very beautiful woman exquisitely dressed.

But the fact is that, though Hans believed Miss Johansen to be one of his very best agents, he was sadly mistaken. In reality she was one of our star agents of the British Intelligence section, and was working in our counter-espionage organization.

Hans had ordered an elaborate dinner. We had lobster, spring chicken, and pineapple melba with which we drank a most excellent icy cold vintage Liebfraumilch. When the mocha coffee had been served Hans begged to be excused. He certainly had been a charming host and had thought of everything. He had given orders to the *maitre d'hôtel* that we were to be served with liqueurs, fruit and a bottle of Mumm in order to keep us happy for the evening,

and he begged me to order at his expense anything else we wanted, then off he went.

Irma Johansen knew who I was, and I knew who Irma was, and we had a very merry evening at Hans's expense. Irma told me how Hans had primed her and the questions she was to ask me. We made up the replies that I was supposed to have made to these questions, and I suppose that Hans got Irma's report next morning about the time that I was speeding north for Lapland.

Russia was cut off from the rest of Europe except for this route through the very northern Scandinavian and Swedish Lapland. The passport formalities on the Swedish side were very strict. In the customs shed I found my military luggage which had been sent on in advance, and had some difficulty in getting it, for every kind of formality and difficulty seemed to be put in my way. From the customs shed I could see the River Tornea, and on the other bank was Finland, then part of the Russian Empire.

Finally, all the passengers were ready and we proceeded into Russia. The luggage was loaded up into trucks and, escorted by Swedish gendarmes, we were solemnly marched over the wooden bridge, half of which belonged to Sweden and half to Russia, both countries having their frontier guards at their respective ends.

Tornea is a more miserable and squalid village than Haparanda, and whereas the station at Haparanda was neat and scrupulously clean as all Swedish stations are, the big waiting-room at Tornea was dirty and terribly dilapidated. The revolution had already put its stamp on the northern frontier town. There was no discipline among the soldiers, the

gendarmes had been done away with and everything was lackadaisical.

No one knew when the train for Petrograd would leave. They hoped to collect sufficient railway carriages to make up one that evening, but it was rumoured that there was some difficulty with the engine, there being only one in a fit condition to take a train south.

There was, however, a delightful British R.N.V.R. passport control officer at Tornea who looked after British interests and British travellers coming in and going out of Russia, and he took me along to his room and made me comfortable until such time as a train had been made up. I had my case opened and changed into uniform in his room.

After two or three false alarms the made-up train ambled into the station, pulled by a disreputable looking engine burning wood and shooting sparks with great energy from its cone-shaped funnel.

No one knew when we would arrive in Petrograd, but I did not care, now that I was back in Russia.

CHAPTER XI

THREE days later, at eventide, we pulled out of Terioki—the last town in the province of Finland—and made for Beloostrov, where the Russians had built a frontier station within their own kingdom. Despite all that M. Sazonov, the famous Russian statesman and Minister of Foreign Affairs, may have held, Russia was always Russia and Finland always Finland, and the two had never been really one. Little did I think as we came into Beloostrov that in less than a year I would be crossing the frontier again into Russia, not by means of a train and the railway bridge, but by wading in ice-cold water and swimming across the stream which forms the barrier.

About one o'clock in the morning we arrived at the Finland station in Petrograd. With his usual kindness General Poole had sent down Sir Victor Warrender, who was on his staff, to meet me and to tell me that rooms had been reserved for me at the Hotel de France. Nothing could have pleased me more, for in the old days I had always stayed at the France, and knew its proprietor very well.

To me, as I drove through the silent streets, St. Petersburg—that city of distances—did not seem to have changed very much since I had seen it last. The still waters of the Neva flowed past the famous grey-and-pink granite embankments as silently as ever. The spire of the Peter and Paul fortress gleamed in the moonlight as of yore, while the coachman pulled

off his hat and crossed himself at every shrine we passed. Had the revolution really come, I asked myself? Had Petrograd really changed in anything but name? The night was kind, and hid much from my eyes. It was not until next day that I began to realize how very much not only St. Petersburg but the people of Russia had changed, under the stress of war and the destructive forces of revolution.

There was not much prospect of flying activities on the Russian front. Hostilities had practically ceased after Kerensky's ill-fated offensive in July. The British R.F.C. unit had withdrawn to Moscow pending the arrival of new machines and within a couple of days I set off to join it. Outwardly Moscow seemed to have been less affected by the war than Petrograd. It was hundreds of miles away from the front, and while there were certain restrictions, and bread and other staple foods could only be obtained on ration cards, there was a noticeable absence of that tension which prevailed in other European towns.

It did not take me long to look up my old friends and to begin to enjoy the city life. At the opera Chaliapin, Sobenov and Nezdanova appeared on the same evening, while on the ballet nights Karsavina, Mordkin, Hessler and others of the famous Moscow school of ballet made one feel that one was living in a beautiful world of colour and movement, and not in the gory war-stained reality of Europe. The social world was considerably enlivened by the presence of some of the younger Grand Dukes. Relieved of their appointments through no fault of their own, they had to find some outlet for their energies, and with some of them I spent wild nights at the Gypsies.

After a short time however, I was ordered to

attend a special conference at Mohileff. It was in this town that the C.-in-C. and the Russian General Staff had their quarters, and accordingly it was known at the time as Stavka, which is the name applied always to the seat of the Headquarters Staff of the Russian Army.

I found Mohileff to be a provincial town on the Dnieper, a mean and dirty little place, inhabited mostly by Jews and Catholics who were for ever at loggerheads with each other, and, since the arrival of the Commander-in-Chief, a very hotbed of intrigue.

The situation on the front was critical. The Russian Army as a fighting machine was slowly but surely crumbling to pieces. Much of this was due to the natural war weariness which was affecting most of Europe at that time and to the terrific sacrifices which had been demanded of the Russian armies in the first three years of hostilities. Some of it was due to the general backwardness and the economic situation of the country. The revolution had had a disastrous effect on the moral of the army, which had been further smashed by the well-meant but fatal No. 1 order issued by the Provisional Government, an order which virtually abolished any discipline in the army. But that military operations were conducted in a manner fantastic and frivolous was chiefly due to Kerensky, with his naïve belief that the armies' spirit could be resuscitated by melodramatic speeches from the War Minister and his idealist associates.

I met Kerensky and Savinkov on the same day at Stavka, two big men to meet together—Kerensky, then virtually Dictator of Russia; Savinkov, the great Nihilist who was Kerensky's Minister of War.

Savinkov I will describe later in my narrative, for I subsequently had many dealings with him. Kerensky I met only once again before he was overthrown by the Bolsheviks. He was about thirty-six or seven at the time, a short slim man, with dark hair and a very pale face. He was wearing khaki uniform, and a military cap which he carried very much at the back of his head. He had a nervous manner and in conversation with him I gained the impression that everything he said was simple pose, that he was everlastingly playing for effect. I must confess that I took an instant aversion to him. To say that he was a nonentity would be absurd. But his great forte was stump-oratory, and he had the power of winning over in an amazingly short space of time mobs of hostile and infuriated soldiery. It is an unkind thing to say, but I always feel that Kerensky "meant well." Unfortunately for him, although he had the power of raising a fierce enthusiasm for any cause in his listeners, as soon as his presence was removed the enthusiasm evaporated with startling rapidity.

On the occasion of this visit of his to Stavka he was engaged in some bickering quarrel with General Dukhonin, the Commander-in-Chief, a fact which he did not disguise from the Inter-Allied representatives at Stavka.

The Inter-Allied officers all messed together at the Bristol Hotel. It was a queer assembly of representatives—British, French, Americans, Serbians, Japanese, Belgians, Italians, Rumanians. At the head of each delegation was a general who had a staff of three or four officers of his own nationality attached to him. General Bazoroff, with a staff of Russian officers, acted as host. Each of these missions was there to

represent the views of its own particular country, and there was naturally a good deal of difference of opinion among various representatives, who in their turn were split up into divers factions.

These delegates acted as liaison, and also as official, observers of the Russian armies' activities, and quite naturally the German secret service had an organization at Mohileff to watch the Allied representatives.

I had my first encounter with the German secret service organization at Madame B's house. She was in the Russian counter-espionage service, and made it her business to collect any pro-German Russians at her house. At this stage of the war there were quite a number of genuine Russian patriots who were pro-German, and to this number were added many more Russians who were frankly traitors. On one of my visits to Madame B's house I purposely gave tongue and was extremely indiscreet in what I said about the pro-German factor in Russia. A day or two afterwards Madame B warned me that my remarks had been noted and that I had better be on my guard. I was therefore not surprised when I had only gone a little way from her house to find that I was followed. Unfortunately my way took me into an ill-lit street and here it was that my followers started to put on speed, and I suddenly realized that two thugs were after me. Just as they were about to close with me I swung round and flourished my walking-stick. As I expected, one of my assailants seized hold of it. It was a sword-stick, which had been specially designed by Messrs. Wilkinson, the sword makers of Pall Mall, and the moment my attacker had the scabbard in his fist I drew back the rapier-like blade with a jerk and with a forward lunge

ran it through the gentleman's side. He gave a scream and collapsed on the pavement. His comrade, seeing that I had put up a fight and was not unarmed, took to his heels while I withdrew, and fumbled for my revolver. Meanwhile the man I had run through staggered off, leaving my scabbard on the pavement, and I went back and recovered it. That sword-stick thereafter had a value in my eyes. By the irony of fate I lost it some years later at a lecture in which Sir Paul Dukes described his own experiences in Russia.

Arrived at the Bristol, I went straight up to my room, examining the blade on the stairs, anxious to know what it looked like after its adventure. I had never run a man through before. It was not a gory sight. There was only a slight film of blood half-way up the blade and a dark stain at the tip, but I was so occupied in the inspection of these phenomena that I did not notice a man in the uniform of a British officer waiting at the top of the stairs until I had blundered into him.

The stranger was a powerfully built, square man with a rugged countenance, blue eyes and a great mane of iron-grey hair, and he seemed highly amused at the examination I was making of my blade. It was my first meeting with Colonel Joe (better known in some parts of the world as "Klondyke") Boyle.

Colonel Boyle was an Irish-Canadian who as a boy had run away to sea and worked his way up until he had taken a mate's certificate. He had been a fireman in the Chicago fire brigade. He had been amateur heavy-weight boxing champion of the United States, and had fought many a battle at the National Sporting Club in London. He had been manager of

the great Frank Slavin, heavy-weight champion of the world.

In 1898 he took part in the Klondyke gold rush and staked out valuable claims for himself, ending by founding a Canadian gold-mining company. By the outbreak of the war he was a millionaire, and at his own expense equipped a machine-gun detachment on certain theories he had of how such a unit should be organized and equipped. This detachment he sent direct to England, where it was disbanded by the authorities as being unsuitable and its personnel drafted into the Canadian overseas contingent. By the irony of fate and as a result of bitter and practical experience a British machine-gun corps was formed three years later on lines almost identical with those worked out by Colonel Boyle.

Colonel Boyle had been sent to Russia and Rumania to assist in the co-ordination of transport and to organize the auxiliary Decauville Railways, which were being constructed from the main lines to form a network of communication along the Russian and Rumanian fronts.

He was a born fighter, a great talker and blessed with an exceptional amount of common sense. He was independent to a revolutionary extent. Etiquette and procedure meant nothing to him, especially if a job had to be done. He was in Russia to get on with the war, to harry the Germans and to help the Allies, and in doing so he cared not over whom he rode roughshod.

Such was Colonel Boyle, a man whose equal I have encountered neither before nor since, and to have enjoyed his friendship and to have worked under and with him will always remain one of the proudest memories of my life.

He was a joyous passenger and would sing Serbian songs at the top of his voice, and even the roar of the engine could not drown the bass sounds coming from his lungs.

Those flights over the Balkans were wonderful. The mountains beneath looked like the great waves one sees in the Atlantic.

The sun had just slipped behind a mountain, and the valley in which we were to land was plunged in shadow. I spiralled down in order to lose height rapidly and circled round our landing-ground. Everything seemed clear and there was not a soul about—the conditions appeared ideal.

How often ideal conditions are a snare and a delusion! On landing we struck a furrow which jarred the bus badly, and worse still, stopped the propeller.

The only way in those days to land a spy and to take off successfully after having done so was to throttle back one's engine so that the propeller just kept turning round. As soon as the spy had landed one revved up the engine and took off again. When I first did this work it had always been a nightmare to me that my propeller might stop, for even under good conditions propeller swinging was a tricky operation and required a great deal of knack.

When learning to fly one was instructed in the art of propeller swinging, and before qualifying one was given practical tests. I was never very good at this business, principally because of my build.

I am not tall and have very short arms, I have always been rather round, and it was all I could do to reach the propeller, let alone swing it and swing myself clear in so doing. Failure to swing clear

means nine times out of ten that the propeller will hit the swinger, and many a man has been knocked out at this job.

And here we were in the enemy's country with a propeller that had stopped. Petrov hopped out of the bus, and at once volunteered to swing the propeller, and I showed him how to do it.

The process in theory is quite a simple one. The pilot calls out to the swinger "switch off," and the swinger then turns the propeller in order to suck sufficient petrol vapour into the cylinders. When this has been done the pilot switches on the ignition and the swinger calls out "contact," which is the signal for the propeller to be given a sharp, quick swing and for the person doing it to step aside.

Should the engine for some reason or other not start, the man swinging the propeller calls out "switch off," and the process is started all over again.

For ten minutes our voices could be heard calling "switch off—contact—switch off."

But nothing happened, the engine simply would not fire.

Petrov was running with perspiration due to his exertion. I was bathed in the sweat of fear.

We rested for a moment, then I climbed out of my seat and went over the petrol leads and magneto points. Everything seemed in order. Then to our horror in the rapidly deepening twilight we saw a cavalry patrol approaching.

Petrov said that he would have one more swing, but before doing so we decided to release the carrier pigeons.

We had instructions in the event of likely capture immediately to get rid of the pigeons, so that the