

# Under Fire

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By Richard Parker

Based on the drama of  
Roi Cooper Megrue

Author of  
"UNDER COVER"

and Co-Author of  
"IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE"

## SYNOPSIS.

George Wagstaff, daughter of Sir George, of the British admiralty, hints at a liaison between her governess, Ethel Willoughby, and Henry Streetman. Ethel denies it. Henry Streetman calls on Ethel and while waiting for her talks to Brewster, Sir George's butler, who is a German spy, about his failure to get at admiralty papers in Sir George's possession. He phones to German secret service headquarters Streetman, the German spy, and Roeder (alias Brewster, the butler) are discussing the possibility of war. When Ethel appears he tries to force her to get from Sir George knowledge of the sailing orders to the British fleet. Though she believes him a French instead of a German spy, she refuses until he threatens her. She begs him to announce their secret marriage, as George is suspicious, but he puts her off. At tea George and her lover, Guy Falconer, tease Sir George, and Streetman makes an awkward attempt to talk politics. Streetman, the German spy, Sir George Wagstaff, British naval official, Ethel Willoughby, secret wife of Streetman, and others are having tea at the Wagstaff home. The party is discussing a play. Charlie Brown, newspaper man of New York, entertains the tea party with his views on the threatened war in Europe. Guy Falconer declares that if war comes he will go to Cuba. His mother and Sir George reprove him. Charlie says Guy is spoofing. Capt. Larry Redmond of the Irish Guards, calls on Ethel. The two had been undeclared lovers.

A queer race of people, the Irish. Romantic, poetic, impulsive, charming, theirs has been a tragic history for centuries. You'll find Irish soldiers of fortune in all the world's wild enterprises and every soldier a potential lover. Says Captain Redmond to Ethel: "That's the tragedy of the Irish! We're always too something—too late or too early—too sentimental or too cynical—too shy or too bold." You will enjoy their interview in this installment.

## CHAPTER VII—Continued.

"Beware of the military, Ethel—especially when he's Irish!" she warned Ethel.

In another moment Miss Willoughby and Captain Redmond were alone, she herself seated upon the wide settee. But the captain, apparently, dared not trust himself nearer her than the stool upon which he perched just where he could not touch her. There had been a time when he and Ethel were undisguisedly fond of each other. But now he was scarcely sure of her sentiments toward him.

"So, Larry, you've actually come back at last," she said.

"I wonder if it can seem as long to you as it does to me," he mused.

"I don't know—perhaps?"

"Do you mind when I saw you last? 'Twas at a dance on the river—"

"At Marlowe!" She had been far from forgetting that pleasant memory.

"Then you do remember!" he cried with delight. "It was my first one-step!" he told her.

"You ruined my slippers," she reminded him, to tease him.

"Did I? Then it was punishment that when I came up the second time wild taxicabs wouldn't drag another dance from you?"

"No, you were too late," Ethel explained. She had no wish to be too hard on him.

"Too late! That's the tragedy of the Irish! We're always too something—too late or too early—too sentimental or too cynical—too shy or too bold. We laugh too much and we're too sad. We're too much in love or not at all. We're way up or we're way down."

"In fact, you're Irish," she interpolated softly.

"You sound as if you liked us—Irish," he rejoined.

She gave him an enigmatic look.

"I love you—Irish," she replied.

"'Tis a lucky race we are!" he told her, with great enthusiasm.

"But tell me—what have you been doing?" Ethel asked.

"Since I spoiled your slippers?" Captain Redmond laughed. He seemed never to remain long in a serious mood.

"Oh, my dear, I've been a long way from Tipperary—the States, India, Berlin, Paris, South America. And ah! my dear, how lonesome I've been!"

"You lonesome?" She could not believe that the mercurial Irishman could ever long be that.

"I've been in crowded places and in empty ones, but always I was alone," he said with just a hint of sadness. In spite of the gaiety that his friends loved in him, there were many times when Captain Redmond had to fight hard to dispel the Celtic melancholy that was his natural heritage. "But there, there—tell me about yourself," he begged.

But Ethel was not ready to do that. She shrank from discussing herself with him.

"So you've become a great globe

trotter—you who'd never been out of England!" she said, hastily.

"Ah! That was different, I was poor then," he reminded her.

"Oh—and now?"

"I'm the idle rich," he informed her humorously. "An uncle in India fell off his horse, hunting—not very romantic, was it? And they cabled me I was the sole heir to his vast estates."

"I didn't know you had an uncle in India," Ethel commented with some surprise.

"No more did I! But—God bless him!" the captain said with mock reverence.

"And why—why have you come back?" she inquired slowly.

"For the same reason that I went away," he said promptly.

"What was that?"

"A woman!"

His soft reply, his serious eyes, thrilled her. But at the same time she knew that she must no longer let him remain in a lover's mood—she who would have given anything to hear that one short month ago.

"You, Larry!" She forced a gay laugh. "How exciting! Tell me, who was she?"

"The woman I loved," was his quiet reply.

She could not mistake his meaning.

"I never thought you were in love with anybody," she rejoined.

"But I was and she was a darling—the loveliest thing in the whole world, watched over by some guardian angel that brought her the best in life."

"And yet she refused you?" Ethel said with a smile. She wished that Larry Redmond had not stayed to talk with her. But the man fascinated her. He always had. And though she knew she had no right to listen to such things as he was telling her, some irresistible force seemed to hold her helpless until he should have told her that he loved her.

"Ah! She hadn't the chance to refuse me," he was saying, "for I never told her—because how could I? I was just a captain in the army; how could I hope to take care of her the way a man should take care of the woman he loves?"

Ethel's heart was heavy with the thought of what might have been.

"How selfish you men are! Perhaps she cared, too?" she suggested.

Captain Redmond shook his head despondently.

"No, I think not," he replied. "I don't think she even guessed how I felt. I don't think she guesses now. You see, she was rich, she was beautiful. There were always a dozen men dancing attendance on her—bully chaps, some of them! And one day when they told me she was engaged to the bulkiest of them all, I went away."

"Without saying good-by?" Even he caught the suspicion of reproach in her voice.

"I couldn't do that," he explained. "I wanted her to be happy; but I couldn't quite bear to see her happiness with my own eyes. And so I've tossed away the last twelve months—no good to anyone!"

"Yet now you've come back," she said sadly, to herself more than to him. She could not help remembering what he had just said about the Irish being too late.

He turned to her eagerly.

"'Twas only the other day in Panama I picked up a copy of an old Times—and I read there a paragraph about her. She was still Miss—Miss—and so I'm here," he said pointedly, though he had mentioned no name to identify the girl of whom he spoke.

"Here?" she asked, as if perplexed.

He went to her then.

"Ethel! Ethel! I want you to marry me!" he besought her. He knelt upon the settee beside her. "Please God, say you will!"

"Oh! Larry! Larry!" She was both happy and sad—happy to know that he really loved her, but desolate when she realized that what he asked could never be.

"Oh, Ethel! I love you—I love you!" "And I never even dreamed it!" The irony of it all swept over her like some engulfing flood.

"You care for me, too, don't you? Oh, say you do!" he begged.

She rose, as if she would shake off the cruel chains that kept her away from him.

"I've always cared," she told him brokenly.

His heart leaped at that. And stepping behind her quickly, he laid his hands gently upon her two arms.

"My love, my love—what a great world it is when you're happy!" he exclaimed. "Just think! I'll get the license in the morning; we'll be married in the afternoon and on our way to Switzerland. I know the darlin' of a

place, right by a rushing river, in the very shadow of the snow! And think how young we are! We've fifty years ahead of us—fifty years of love and happiness! Just you and me, my dear!"

Captain Redmond kissed her hand then.

She had listened to his rapid words as if it were all a dream—some beautiful dream from which she suddenly awoke to the stern reality of life, with its bitterness and its disappointment, its disillusion and its heartaches.

"Larry—I am married," she said slowly.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Doubly a Villain.

Larry Redmond paused, dazed, and dropped her hand, while he looked at Ethel incomprehendingly.

"Married?" he stammered. "No, no, it can't be! You're playing some game! It can't be true."

"I'm secretly married," she confessed.

He looked at her in amazement.

"Secretly? But why—why?"

"I can't explain, even to you, Larry—except that it's for my happiness to keep it secret, now."

Bitter realization came to him then. But he would not press her further. "And you're happy?" His eyes sought hers sadly.

She could not keep back the whole truth from him, no matter how much she wished to. Larry Redmond's honesty was too patent to make dissembling an easy matter in his presence.

"Oh, yes, Larry! I was happy—until you came back just now," she said.

"Then why did you marry him?" he demanded. There was no anger in his voice—only regret and wonder.

"Because when you left I was—desperate," she admitted.

"You?" he exclaimed, more than ever at a loss to understand her.

"Yes!" Ethel said. "I waited—waited for you until a month ago. I'd never heard from you—never heard of you. I thought you were dead. If you'd been alive, I felt that my love, my wanting you so very much would bring you back to me."

"Dear God!" There was no mock reverence in that soul-wrung wail, straight from his Celtic heart.

"And all my money had gone. Oh! it doesn't matter now! And I came here as governess to Sir George's daughter. He's been very helpful.

... And this man—my husband—came along. He seemed very fond of me—," she smiled wistfully—"quite desperately in love. I was wretched, miserable, lonely, and oh! so tired! I wanted someone to take care of me. And so, I married."

"And it's all my fault!" That was like Larry Redmond—to condemn himself instead of her.

She could not bear to hear him upbraid himself.

"Please, aren't we suffering enough now?" she protested.

He made up his mind, then, that for her sake he must put things in a different light. And gazing himself to his duty, he sat down and looked at her wearily.

"But you've got to realize," he began, "you've got to realize that it's best you shouldn't have married a coward—and I was that. Two months ago I nearly finished it all."

"Larry?" Ethel exclaimed in sudden fear. The mere mention of such a thing shocked her inexpressibly.

"Ah, yes! I meant to!" he continued ruthlessly. "And it was another man—almost a stranger—who stopped me."

"When was it?" Anxious as she was, she could not forbear asking him that. It seemed inconceivable that the girl Larry used to know should ever have been near self-destruction.

"Two months ago—," he said. And he stopped abruptly then, as if his thoughts had momentarily taken him far away. "Two months ago, in Berlin," he resumed, pulling himself together by a visible effort. "It was one of those gorgeous, moonlight nights. I was thinking of you, my dear, and thinking how futile it all was. What was the use? . . . It was in one of those little side streets off Unter den Linden. I stood there behind a tree when suddenly this fellow came up from behind and grabbed my revolver."

All at once his recital brought back to Ethel's mind another similar story. In her agitation she could not at first recall exactly where or under what circumstances she had heard it. And then, in a flash, she remembered. Her husband had told her a tale like that only an hour before.

"In Berlin this was—not Paris?" she asked him quickly.

"No—Berlin."

"That's curious," she said. "I heard

just such another story a little while ago."

"Not such as this," he continued unthinkingly. "First I fought with him; and then, to him, almost a stranger, there I stood in the moonlight, quite mad I guess, and poured out my heart. I told him about you. I'd been so lonely it was good to talk to this man—to talk to anybody that night. But at last I promised the chap I'd quit."

"What made you promise?"

He gazed into space, as the scene became vivid in his mind.

"Ah! I suppose 'twas the sentiment—the Irish in me. He appealed to my love of country—to my patriotism. I was an officer in his majesty's service and some day England might need me and I'd not be there. It hit me. And curious 'twas, it should be a German to stop me!"

She had listened to him with increasing wonder. His very words were almost a duplication of Henry Streetman's. There could be no doubt that it was the same episode. The long arm of coincidence could scarcely stretch that far. And now, at his final sentence, Ethel started.

"A German?" she cried in quick surprise.

"Yes! Heinrich Strassman!"

Ethel gasped.

"Heinrich Strassman! Are you sure?" She could not believe that she heard him right.

"Oh, I'd not be likely to forget him," Captain Redmond assured her bitterly.

"Wouldn't that be Henry Streetman in English?" she asked slowly.

"Yes, I suppose so," he rejoined.

"Why?"

Ethel Willoughby rose and moved away from him, to hide her agitation.

"Oh, nothing!" she said.

"It's a queer game," Larry said, ignorant of her agony—"this thing they call life. I, an officer in his majesty's army, to owe mine to a man in the German secret service!"

"A German spy!" Now Ethel knew what her husband was. Now she knew why he was eternally pressing her to gouge official secrets out of Sir George Wagstaff. Her gorge rose within her.

"We mustn't hold that against him," Larry chided her gently. He little knew the agony that she was concealing from him. "'Twas his job—and for a stranger he'd been mighty kind to me—he and his wife."

That last word struck her cold.

"What did you say?" she asked him very slowly.

"Why, that he and his wife had been mighty kind to me."

"You're quite sure he was married?" she inquired in a manner that was strangely deliberate. Aghast as she was at the thought of Henry Streetman's duplicity, at his villainy in subjecting her to a marriage, that seemed no marriage at all, a certain calm satisfaction came over her. In spite of her shame she was glad beyond words that she was not tied to him for life—if what she now tried to believe were only true!

"Married?" Larry repeated. "Oh, I'm quite sure. His wife was a typical moonfaced German hausfrau, with two children—bonny little kiddies. I used to romp 'em."

"Oh, my God! My God!" Ethel cried suddenly.

"My dear—what is it? What is it?" Larry exclaimed. He saw that she was in agony. And he went to her as he might have hurried to any fluttering bird with a broken wing.

There is a hint that Ethel will retaliate—not only against Streetman but also against his nation. In what will she find opportunity?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Cider Long in Use.

Cider is among the very oldest of beverages. In Saxon times it was known as applewin, while some kind of fermented drink from the juice of wild apples seems to have been popular even under the Romans. Mead (or meddygin)—which Pliny declared had all the bad qualities of wine and few of its good ones—appears to have been the only tipple known in Great Britain before the introduction of agriculture. Now that sugar is "going up," we may, perhaps, hear more of this ancient drink, derived originally from rain-water and honey.

Of All Things!

Bill—"What's the idea, Algy, standing there on one foot like that?" Lord Algy—"Really, old chap, I was going some place, but I bally well forgot where I was."

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### Nothing Doing!

Maria was a tender, sentimental little thing, but, to put it mildly, hardly a beauty. She was very, very fond of hubby, but exacted from him rather an undue amount of attention and service.

"Oh, George," she complained one night, "I don't believe you really love me! Tell me, would you feel it, dear, if we were parted?"

"Eh—what's that?" said George, brightening up.

"I mean if someone were to come and offer to take me away, give me a beautiful home and every loving care, and all the best that money could buy, how would you feel?"

"It doesn't arise!" he answered, relapsing into moody silence. "Nobody's likely to offer!"—Tit-Bits.

### His First Performance.

Maid—The young clergyman who performed the ceremony seemed dreadfully flustered.

Ethel—Mercy, yes! Why, he kissed the bridegroom and shook hands with the bride.—Boston Transcript.

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Couldn't Beat Uncle Hl.  
Uncle Hiram from Podunk was taken by his nephew into a downtown hushery for lunch.  
"I guess I'll have some coffee and sinkers," said the nephew.  
"Did you say sinkers?" asked the old man.  
"I sure did, uncle."  
"Well," said Uncle Hiram, as his eye fell on a spaghetti eater, "I reckon I'll have a mess of fishin' lines like that there feller is eatin' out of a bowl!"—Boston Transcript.

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