



UNDER FIRE

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SYNOPSIS.

George Wagstaff, daughter of Sir George, of the British admiralty, hints at a liaison between her governess, Ethel Willoughby, and Henry Streetman, a German spy. Henry Streetman calls on Ethel and while waiting for her talks to himself. 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's 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 withdraw their 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 officer, 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 rebuke him. Charlie says Guy is speaking. Capt. Larry Redmond of the Irish Guards, calls on Ethel. The two had been unrequited lovers. She tells him of her marriage and he tells her Streetman is a German spy with a family in Berlin.

There is no greater tragedy, in the eyes of men, than the betrayal of an innocent girl. It is an incident in human affairs that has inspired literature in all ages, and provoked murder and suicide. With what emotion Ethel accepts the fact of her betrayal and with what determination she sets out to avenge the wrong, if such a thing is possible, is told in this installment.

Ethel discovers, during her talk with Capt. Larry Redmond that she has been betrayed by Henry Streetman, and expresses her grief.

CHAPTER VIII—Continued.

"Oh, it's everything—everything!" she told him with a dry sob.

"I should never have gone away; or having gone, I should never have come back—to make you suffer like this," he said with bitter self-reproach. It hurt him terribly to see her so torn by her emotions. "There, there, my dear! Don't cry!" he said, patting her arm with the tenderness of a woman.

"Oh, let me! Let me!" Ethel cried. "The blessed rent of tears had come to her at last. 'Oh, Larry, why couldn't it have been different?'"

"Faith, I don't know, my dear! But now with you and me it's only a dream of what might have been—and we must forget," he comforted her bravely.

"Forget?" she repeated brokenly.

"Well, we must try to," he said. "We must be friends—the best friends in the world."

"We can't be just—friends," she told him. She knew that their deep love for each other would never let them be merely that.

"We must be!" he persisted with the conviction of a man who would always do right. "We love each other too much to be more—or less—than the best of friends."

From the hall outside, voices came to their ears. And Ethel had scarcely dried her tears before their friends had returned to claim them for the dinner party.

"Great Scott!" Guy Falconer exclaimed as he came upon them. "Still chiding, you two? You never talk to me as long as that!" he told George Wagstaff with mild reproach.

"You're not so interesting as Captain Redmond," she retorted with the cruelty of insolent eighteen.

"Well, admitting that," Guy said, for he never plunged voluntarily into an argument with George, "admitting that, I've sent for the Palace and we've telephoned to Richmond for a table. So let's hurry."

"I don't think I can go, after all," Ethel told them then. She knew that she was in no condition for the bantering give and take of dinner-table conversation.

"Oh, Ethel!" George cried in obvious disappointment. And "Oh, Ethel! Don't spoil the party!" Mrs. Falconer urged.

"Come on, Larry!" said Guy. "By George, you do look good—just the same as I did when George first refused me. Now I've got used to it."

While they were trying to persuade Ethel to join them, Sir George Wagstaff entered the room. He had heard their voices as he was passing through the hall on his return from his hurried visit to the admiralty. And since he had news that he knew would prove

of great interest to them he had stopped on his way to his own quarters.

"By Jove, Redmond! I'm glad to see you!" he cried as soon as he caught sight of the returned wanderer.

"Thank you, Sir George! It's good to be back," Larry replied.

"As a Britisher, you've come home at the right moment," Sir George told him gravely as he shook the captain's hand.

"You mean that there's news of the war—bad news?" Ethel exclaimed, quick to grasp the suggestion of some thing serious in Sir George's words and manner both.

"Germany has declared that a state of war exists between herself and Russia. Our information is that France is mobilizing and will support Russia." Sir George seemed all at once years older under the added cares of the impending conflict.

CHAPTER IX.

For King and Country!

Captain Redmond was the first to break the ensuing silence.

"Good God! Then it's come at last!" he cried in a ringing voice.

"And the fleet! What of the English fleet?" Ethel Willoughby exclaimed, as her quick mind turned inevitably to that most vital factor of Britain's defense. It was pure patriotism that prompted her question. For the moment all thought of Henry Streetman and his constant importuning vanished completely from her reckoning.

Sir George swept the little company with a rapid glance.

"You are all practically members of my family—at least I regard you as such," he said. "Redmond, you are an officer in his majesty's service—what I say is in absolute confidence."

Larry stood stiffly at attention.

"Of course, Sir George!" he answered.

Then Sir George told them what Henry Streetman would have given his soul to know.

"Winston Churchill went to Portsmouth this morning. The British fleet sailed this afternoon under sealed orders and Churchill has offered his resignation as first lord of the admiralty."

At that terse statement Ethel Willoughby sank slowly upon a chair. In their excitement the others did not notice her agitation. Nor could they have interpreted it had they divined it. Something in the manner of an inspiration had come to her—a scheme, plot, a stroke of genius perhaps. At all events, she saw in a flash how she might yet serve her country in a manner that is granted to few women—or even men.

Meanwhile Captain Redmond pondered upon Winston Churchill's peculiar action.

"But why, Sir George—why?" he asked.

"Because he had no authority from parliament to give such orders. If England is not involved in the war, then Churchill alone is responsible for his action and his public career will be ended. If England goes to war, then the English navy has gained at once an early and tremendous advantage."

"But it means that Churchill believes England will fight," Ethel said.

"That England will have to fight," Sir George corrected her.

"Then the fleet—it did not disperse?" she questioned. "Where has it gone?"

Sir George saw no reason for telling them half truths.

"The most powerful fleet the world has ever known has gone to the North Sea to the Kiel canal to bottle up the German navy, and that it will do. I'm certain. With the bulk of the German fleet unable to come out, we'll prove once again that Britannia does rule the waves."

His words thrilled everyone of them.

"And there's really going to be war?" Mrs. Falconer exclaimed in a wondering voice. "I never believed I'd live to see it!"

"And a long, horrible war!" Sir George continued slowly. "We shall suffer very terribly—England, I fear. In particular, because we did not expect it. We've been too sure that it would never happen in our lifetime. Some day—yes! But not now! And we're not ready—not the least ready! We shall need every man."

His remark brought home to Larry Redmond a realization of the way in which the situation applied to himself.

"Then, in some ways, it's good I've come back," he commented. "I must report at once."

Guy Falconer turned to him with unbounded enthusiasm lighting up his young face.

"I'll go with you!" he cried. "It is too late to enlist tonight?"

"I'm afraid so," Larry said.

Guy's words struck his mother with a quick chill of fear. She rose hastily from her seat and going fearfully up to her son, laid a supplicating hand upon his arm.

"But, Guy, you're not going to the war?" she said with a catch in her voice.

"Why, of course I am, mother!"

"Of course, he is!" George Wagstaff repeated after him.

"But, Guy—you said you wouldn't fight!" his mother reminded him tremulously. Her feelings had undergone a sudden change.

"I know," he said, putting his hand upon hers soothingly. "But that was when I didn't believe there would be war. And now that it's come, I couldn't stay home. I couldn't!"

"That's the spirit, my boy!" Sir George told him with a renewed trust in British manhood.

"But, Guy—you mustn't! I couldn't let you go!" she told him brokenly.

He was sorry for her. And yet there was an unwonted sternness in Guy's face as he said:

"Mother, you don't want me to be a coward?"

"But, my boy, you're all I've got in the world! You're the only thing I've left!" And then she took him in her arms and sobbed. To her had come only a little more quickly than to other English mothers the realization that war demands of lowly and high alike.

"Don't cry, mother, please—don't!" Guy said gently. "You know I've got to go. I'll come back all right."

"Of course he will," said George. "And then I'll marry him!" Guy had all at once assumed new proportions in her eyes. She had always been fond of him, from the time they were girl and boy together. But she had never taken him quite seriously. Now, however, she saw that Guy was a man, and that he intended to play a man's part in the approaching struggle. And in that moment George knew that he was more than worthy of her.

A new light shone in Guy's eyes as he turned to the girl.

"Will you really?" he asked. "You hear that, mother? Why, that alone is worth going to the front for—and I'll get a V. C. and be a hero and we'll live happily ever after."

Of such is the rosy optimism of youth.

George Wagstaff placed her hands in his.

"For once, you dear old thing, I can't argue with you," she said. And though she smiled at him, she had difficulty in keeping back her tears.

Guy Falconer stood very erect as he took his mother by the hand. He saw women in a new light now—saw and recognized the sacrifices they had inevitably to make in life's battles, since the beginning of time.

"Come on, mother!" he said gravely. "Take me to the barracks."

"My son, I'm proud of you!" she half whispered, as she looked up at him through her tears.

"So am I!" added George Wagstaff. She had acquired all at once a new sense of proprietorship in Guy. "You'll write me?" she asked him.

"Every day!" he promised eagerly.

"And you—you will be careful, won't you, Guy?" his mother besought him, with her hands upon his shoulders.

"Of course, I'll be careful."

And then they had gone—Mrs. Falconer and George, heading desperately to him who was dearest of the whole world to them.

Sir George Wagstaff turned to the others with an air of unaffected pride.

"There's the true Englishman!" he said.

"And there'll be hundreds—thousands, like him—the flower of our country, who won't come back," Ethel said slowly. "Oh, it's too terrible!" The little tragedy had touched her to the quick. Beside it her own troubles seemed momentarily dwarfed.

"Yes, it is terrible," Sir George agreed. He had no illusions as to what war meant for England.

"I must go at once to the war office," Captain Redmond announced hurriedly. And he shook hands with Miss Willoughby. "Good-by, Ethel!" he said in a tone that was far more sober than was customary for him.

"I must return to the admiralty," Sir George said. "Coming, Redmond?" as he moved toward the door.

Larry had already started to join him when Ethel called him back.

"Larry, before you go, may I have just five minutes with you—alone?"

"Of course!" he assented. "You'll forgive me, Sir George?"

"Surely! See you again, Redmond!" And with that George's father left them—alone.

"Larry, when will you go to the front?" Ethel asked in a tense voice.

He set his cap and stick upon a stool before answering her.

"I don't know," he said. "I'm afraid I shan't be in the thick of the fight."

"You mean they won't send you?"

"I fear not, my dear. They'll want me—they've often said so—for something they call more important than being shot at. They'll use me in the special service—what you'd call a spy. I suppose, though, it's as good as any other way to die for one's country. 'Tis

my duty—though I'd not be too proud of it."

For a brief time she made no reply, as she pondered his words.

"Won't you let me help?" she asked him then.

"You?" He wondered what she could mean.

"I do so want to help!" she continued. "There'll be thousands of women who'll go to the front as nurses—millions to do the things at home. But can't I go to serve England—to be in the special service too?"

A shadow crossed his fine face at the mere mention of the undertaking.

"Oh, my dear, I couldn't let you! The risk for you'd be too great. I couldn't permit it."

But she would not be put down so easily.

"Think of the things a woman could do safely—without suspicion," she argued, "where a man would be useless."

"I know, I know—but I couldn't allow it. And your husband?" he questioned. He hardly thought any right-minded man would be willing to let his wife face such peril.

She turned to him impetuously.

"Larry, I tied to you," she confessed. "I'm miserable, wretched, I'm not happy with my husband, I've made a mess of things. But you—I want to get away. This is the only thing I can do for England—for you! Oh, please let me go—oh, please!"

He saw that she was greatly moved—that she was soul-tortured, half frantic. And he had not the heart to deny her any solace, no matter where she might turn for it.

"I know how you feel," he said, "and you shall do this thing if I can arrange it."

Her heart went out to him in gratitude because he had understood.

"Oh, thank you, Larry! Thank you! Now, tell me—what am I to do? Where shall I be sent? Shall I be with you?" She hoped that it would be so.

"No, my dear—not with me," he explained. "My job will be inside the German lines—perhaps in their very army."

His answer struck a chill of fear into her—for she could feel fear for him.

"But that's impossible!" she exclaimed incredulously. "You would be caught at once."

"Oh, I think not," he reassured her. "The plan is all arranged—every detail—since before I went away. Now 'tis only for me to carry it out. But you can't be with me."

Her disappointment was obvious.

"But what shall I do?" she asked doubtfully.

"That we'll see. But somehow we'll be working together."

"For king and country!" she exclaimed, holding out her hand to him.

"For king and country!" he repeated after her, as he took her slight hand in his own strong one.

CHAPTER X.

Holst by His Own Petard.

"Beg pardon, Miss Willoughby! A gentleman to see you, by appointment!" In his character of Brewster, Sir George's butler, the German spy Roeder made his announcement in faultless fashion.

"Oh, in just a minute!" Ethel Willoughby told him. She knew that it was Henry Streetman who had returned to see her, and to Larry, whose hand she had hastily dropped just as Brewster threw open the double doors, she said, when the pseudo butler had gone. "I may gain some very important information from this man. I can't explain more than that now. Will you wait in that room?" She indicated a door leading into a smaller room adjoining her sitting room.

"Yes, my dear—God keep you!" Captain Redmond answered. And he at once proceeded to carry out her wishes.

Ethel breathed a rapid prayer as she heard Streetman already mounting the stairs.

"Oh, help me to be brave! Help me to be clever—for Larry and for England!" She turned then to meet the man who had betrayed her, and against whose wits she had now undertaken to match her own.

Will this girl be able to deceive the spy regarding her intentions and inveigle him into permitting her to do as she likes?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Spruce for Aeroplanes.

Great Britain and France have spent more than a million dollars for 18,000,000 feet of spruce wood from Washington and Oregon for making aeroplanes, according to Robert B. Allen of the West Coast Lumbermen's association in an address to the students in Journalism at the University of Washington.

Too Much So.

"You know Stockton, don't you, doctor?"

"Yes, indeed. He's a patient of mine."

"Pretty wide-awake man, isn't he?"

"I should say so. I'm treating him for insomnia." — Boston Evening Transcript.

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Hans threw his hands skyward. "Not for me," he said. "I wouldn't give you five cents for him. I'll eight miles out in de country and I'd haf to walk back two miles."—Philadelphia Ledger.

For old sores apply Hanford's Balsam. Adv.

Handed Down.

Peggy was two years younger than Beesie. As is the way with younger sisters Beesie's outgrown clothes became Peggy's humiliating heritage. One day Beesie made an exciting discovery.

"My goodness," she said. "I've got a loose tooth. I think I'll pull it out."

"Oh, don't," Peggy implored. "Mother will make me wear it."—London Saturday Journal.

For foals in cattle use Hanford's Balsam. Adv.

The Double Life.

"This would be a good time for me to take a vacation," remarked the secretary and treasurer of a city concern. "But you returned from one only a week ago," said the president. "Oh, that was my vacation as secretary; I wish to go now as treasurer."—Boston Transcript.

If your skin is scratched by a rusty nail, apply Hanford's Balsam at once. It should prevent blood poison. Adv.

Sticking to One.

Boy—Ma wants another oxtail. Butcher—She liked the one she got yesterday—eh?

Boy—Yes, sir. She wants this one off the same ox, please!—London Answers.

Rub it On and Rub it In.

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