

JENNIE BAXTER, JOURNALIST.*

BY COTTREL HOE.

Illustrated by ADOLF THIEDE.

NUMBER VIII.—THE ROBBERY IN THE SLEEPING CAR.



JENNIE had promised Professor Seigfried not to communicate with the Director of Police, and she now wondered whether she would be breaking her word, or not, if she let that official know the result of her investigation, when it could make no difference, one way or the other, to the Professor. If Professor Seigfried could have foreseen his own sudden death, would he not, she asked herself, have preferred her to make public all she knew of him? for had he not constantly reiterated that fame, and the consequent transmission of his name to posterity, was what he worked for? Then there was this consideration: if the Chief of Police was not told how the explosion had been caused, his fruitless search would go futilely on, and, doubtless, in the course of police inquiry, many innocent persons would be arrested, put to inconvenience and expense, and there was even a chance that one or more, who had absolutely nothing to do with the affair, might be imprisoned for life. She resolved, therefore, to tell the Director of the Police all she knew, which she would not have done had Professor Seigfried been alive. She accordingly sent a messenger for the great official, and just as she had begun to relate to the impatient Princess what had happened, he was announced. The three of them held convention in Jennie's drawing-room with locked doors.

"I am in a position," began Jennie, "to tell you how the explosion in the Treasury was caused and who caused it; but before doing so you must promise to grant me two favours, each of which is in your power to bestow without inconvenience."

"What are they?" asked the Director of Police cautiously.

"To tell what they are is to tell part of my story. You must first promise blindly,

and afterwards keep your promise faithfully."

"Those are rather unusual terms, Miss Baxter," said the Chief; "but I accede to them, the more willingly as we have found that all the gold is still in the Treasury, as you said it was."

"Very well, then, the first favour is that I shall not be called to give testimony when an inquest is held on the body of Professor Carl Seigfried."

"You amaze me!" cried the Director; "how did you know he was dead? I had news of it only a moment before I left my office."

"I was with him when he died," said Jennie simply, which statement drew forth an exclamation of surprise from both the Princess and the Director. "My next request is that you destroy utterly a machine which stands on a table near the centre of the Professor's room. Perhaps the instrument is already disabled—I believe it is—but, nevertheless, I shall not rest content until you have seen that every vestige of it is made away with, because the study of what is left of it may enable some other scientist to put it in working order again. I entreat you to attend to this matter yourself. I will go with you, if you wish me to, and point out the instrument in case it has been moved from its position."

"The room is sealed up," said the Director, "and nothing will be touched until I arrive there. What is the nature of this instrument?"

"It is of a nature so deadly and destructive that, if it got into the hands of an anarchist, he could, alone, lay the city of Vienna in ruins."

"Good heavens!" cried the horrified official, whose bane was the anarchists, and Jennie, in mentioning this particular type of criminal, had builded better than she knew. If she had told him that the Professor's invention might enable Austria to conquer all the surrounding nations, there

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is every chance that the machine would have been carefully preserved.

"The explosion in the Treasury vaults," continued Jennie, "was accidentally caused by that instrument, although the machine at the moment was in a garret half a mile away. You saw the terrible effect of that explosion; imagine, then, the destruction it would cause in the hands of one of those anarchists."

"I shall destroy the instrument with my own hands," asserted the Director fervently, mopping his pallid brow.

Jennie then went on, to the increasing astonishment of the Princess and the Director, and related every detail of her interview with the late Professor Carl Seigfried.

"I shall go at once and annihilate that machine," said the Director, rising when the recital had been finished. "I shall see to that myself. Then, after the inquest, I shall give an order that everything in the attic is to be destroyed. I wish that all the scientists on the face of the earth could be safely placed behind prison bars."

"I am afraid that wouldn't do much good," said Jennie, "unless you could prevent chemicals being smuggled in. The scientists would probably reduce your prison to powder and walk calmly out through the dust."

Mr. Hardwick had told Jennie that if she solved the Vienna mystery she would make a European reputation for the *Daily Bugle*. Jennie did more than was expected of her, yet the European reputation which the *Bugle* established was not one to be envied. It is true that the account printed of the cause of the explosion, dramatically finished off with the Professor's tragical sudden death, caused a great sensation in London. The comic papers of the week were full of illustrations showing the uses to which the Professor's instrument might be put. To say that any sane man in England believed a word of the article would be to cast an undeserved slight upon the intelligence of the British public. No one paused to think that if a newspaper had published an account of what could be done by the Röntgen rays, without being able to demonstrate practically the truth of the assertions made, the article would have been laughed at. If some years ago a newspaper had stated that a man in York listened to the voice of a friend at that moment standing in London, and was not only able to hear what his friend said, but could actually recognise the voice speaking in an ordinary tone, and then if the paper had

added that, unfortunately, the instrument which accomplished this had been destroyed, people would have spoken of the sensational nature of modern journalism.

Letters poured in upon the editor, saying that while, as a general thing, the writers were willing to stand the ordinary lie of commerce daily printed in the sheet, there was a limit to their credulity, and that they objected to be taken for drivelling imbeciles. To complete the discomfiture of the *Daily Bugle*, the Government of Austria published an official statement, which Reuter and the special correspondents scattered broadcast over the earth. The statement was written in that calm, serious, and consistent tone which diplomatists use when uttering a falsehood of more than ordinary dimensions.

Irresponsible rumours had been floating about (the official proclamation began) to the effect that there had been an explosion in the Treasury at Vienna. It had been stated that a large quantity of gold had been stolen, and that a disaster of some kind had occurred in the Treasury vaults. Then a ridiculous story had been printed which asserted that Professor Seigfried, one of Austria's honoured dead, had in some manner that savoured of the Black Art encompassed this wholesale destruction. The Government then begged to make the following declarations: First, not a penny had been stolen out of the Treasury; second, the war-chest was intact; third, the two hundred million florins reposed securely within its bolted doors; fourth, the coins were not, as had been alleged, those belonging to various countries, which was a covert intimation that Austria had hostile intent against one or the other of those friendly nations. The whole coinage in this so called war-chest, which was not a war-chest at all, but merely the receptacle of a reserve fund which Austria possessed, was entirely in Austrian coinage; fifth, in order that these sensational and disquieting scandals should be set at rest, the Government announced that it intended to weigh this gold upon a certain date, and it invited representatives of the Press, from Russia, Germany, France, and England, to witness this weighing.

The day after this troy-weight function had taken place in Vienna, long telegraphic accounts of it appeared in the English Press, and several solemn leading articles were put forward in the editorial columns, which, without mentioning the name of the *Daily Bugle*, deplored the voracity of the sensational editor, who respected neither the amity

which should exist between friendly nations, nor the good name of the honoured and respected dead, in his wolfish hunt for the daily scandal. Nothing was too high-spiced or improbable for him to print. He traded on the supposed gullibility of a fickle public. But, fortunately, in the long run, these staid sheets asserted, such actions recoiled upon the head of him who promulgated them. Sensational journals merited and received the scathing contempt of all honest men. Later on, one of the reviews had an article entitled, "Some Aspects of Modern Journalism," which struck the head of the *Daily Bugle* with a sledge hammer, and in one of the quarterlies a professor at Cambridge showed the absurdity of the alleged invention from a scientific point of view.

"I swear," cried Mr. Hardwick, as he paced up and down his room, "that I shall be more careful after this in the handling of the truth; it is a dangerous thing to meddle with. If you tell the truth about a man, you are mulcted in a libel suit, and if you tell the truth about a nation, the united Press of the country is down upon you. Ah, well, it makes the battle of life all the more interesting, and we are baffled to fight better, as Browning says."

The editor had sent for Miss Baxter, and she now sat by his desk while he paced up and down the floor. The doors were closed and locked so that they might not be interrupted, and she knew by the editor's manner that something important was on hand. Jennie had returned to London after a

month's stay in Vienna, and had been occupied for a week at her old routine work in the office.

"Now, Miss Baxter," said the editor, when he had proclaimed his fear of the truth as a workable material in journalism, "I have a plan to set before you, and when you know what it is, I am quite prepared to hear you refuse to have anything to do with it. And, remember, if you do undertake it, there is but one chance in a million of your succeeding. It is on that one chance that I propose now to send you to St. Petersburg——"

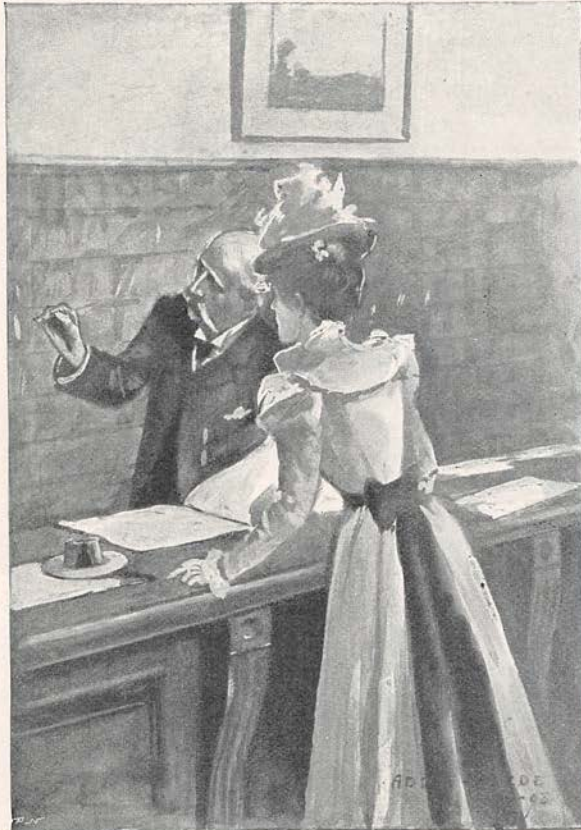
"To St. Petersburg!" echoed the girl in dismay.

"Yes," said the editor, mistaking the purport of her ejaculation, "it is a very long journey, but you can travel in great comfort, and I want you to spare no expense in obtaining for yourself any luxury that travel can afford during your journey to St. Petersburg and back."

"And what am I to go to St. Petersburg for?" murmured Jennie faintly.

"Merely for a letter. Here is what has happen-

ed, and what is happening. I shall mention no names, but at present a high and mighty personage in Russia, who is friendly to Great Britain, has written a private letter, making some proposals to a certain high and mighty personage in England, who is friendly to Russia. This communication is entirely unofficial; neither Government is supposed to know anything at all about it. As a matter of fact, the Russian Government have a suspicion, and the British Government have a certainty, that such a document will



"When no name is marked down, that means the Russian police."

shortly be in transit. Nothing may come of it, or great things may come of it. Now, on the night of the 21st, on one of the sleeping cars leaving St. Petersburg by the Nord Express for Berlin, there will travel a special messenger having this letter in his possession. I want you to take passage by that same train and secure a compartment near the messenger, if possible. This messenger will be a man in whom the respective parties to the negotiation have implicit confidence. I wish I knew his name, but I don't; still, the chances are that he is leaving London for St. Petersburg about this time, and so you might keep your eyes open even on the journey there, for, if you discovered him to be your fellow-passenger, it might perhaps make the business that comes after easier. You see this envelope," said the editor, taking from a drawer in his desk a large envelope, the flap of which was secured by a great piece of stamped sealing-wax. "This envelope contains a humble ordinary copy of to-day's issue of the *Daily Bugle*, but in outside appearance it might be taken for a duplicate of the letter which is to leave St. Petersburg on the 21st. Now, what I would like you to do is to take this envelope in your hand-bag, and if on the journey back to London you have an opportunity of securing the real letter, and leaving this in its place, you will have accomplished the greatest service you have yet done for the paper."

"Oh!" cried Jennie, rising, "I couldn't do that, Mr. Hardwick—I couldn't *think* of doing it. It is nothing short of highway robbery!"

"I know it looks like that," pleaded Mr. Hardwick; "but listen to me. If I were going to open the letter and use its contents, then you might charge me with instigating theft. The fact is, the letter will not be delayed; it will reach the hands of the high and mighty personage in England quite intact. The only difference is that you will be its bearer instead of the messenger they send for it."

"You expect to open the letter, then, in some surreptitious way—some way that will not be noticed afterwards? Oh, I couldn't do it, Mr. Hardwick."

"My dear girl, you are jumping at conclusions. I shall amaze you when I tell you that I know already practically what the contents of that letter are."

"Then what is the use of going to all this expense and trouble trying to steal it?"

"Don't say 'steal it,' Miss Baxter. I'll

tell you what my motive is. There is an official in England who has gone out of his way to throw obstacles in mine. This is needless and irritating, for generally I manage to get the news I am in quest of; but in several instances, owing to his opposition, I have not only not got the news, but other papers have. Now, since the general raking we have had over this Austrian business, quite aside from the fact that we published the exact truth, this stupid old official duffer has taken it upon himself to be exceedingly sneering and obnoxious to me, and I confess I want to take him down a peg. He hasn't any idea that I know as much about this business as I do—in fact, he thinks it is an absolute secret; yet, if I liked, I could to-morrow nullify all the arrangements by simply publishing what is already in my possession, which action on my part would create a *furor* in this country, and no less a *furor* in Russia. For the sake of amity between nations, which I am accused of disregarding, I hold my hand.

"Now, if you get possession of that envelope, I want you to telegraph to me while you are *en route* to London, and I will meet you at the terminus; then I shall take the document direct to this official, even before the regular messenger has time to reach him. I shall say to the official, 'There is the document from the high personage in Russia to the high personage in England. If you want the document, I will give it to you, but it must be understood that you are to be a little less friendly to certain newspapers, and a little more friendly to mine, in future.'"

"And suppose he refuses your terms?"

"He won't refuse them; but if he does I shall hand him the envelope just the same."

"Well, honestly, Mr. Hardwick, I don't think your scheme worth the amount of money it will cost, and, besides, the chance of my getting hold of the document, which will doubtless be locked safely within a despatch-box, and constantly under the eye of the messenger, is most remote."

"I am more than willing to risk all that if you will undertake the journey. You speak lightly of my scheme, but that is merely because you do not understand the situation. Everything you have heretofore done has been of temporary advantage to the paper; but if you carry this off, I expect the benefit to the *Bugle* will be lasting. It will give me a standing with certain officials that I have never before succeeded in getting.

In the first place, it will make them afraid of me, and that of itself is a powerful lever when we are trying to get information which they are anxious to give to some other paper."

"Very well, Mr. Hardwick, I will try; but I warn you to expect nothing but failure. In everything else I have endeavoured to do, I have felt confident of success from the beginning. In this instance I am as sure I shall fail."

"As I told you, Miss Baxter, the project is so difficult that your failure, if you *do* fail, will merely prove it to have been impossible, because I am sure that if anyone on earth could carry it out, you are that person; and, furthermore, I am very much obliged



"Strode up to the conductor and spoke earnestly with him."

to you for consenting to attempt such a mission."

And thus it was that Jennie Baxter found herself in due time in the great capital of the north, with a room in the Hotel de l'Europe overlooking the Nevski Prospect. In ordinary circumstances she would have enjoyed a visit to St. Petersburg; but she was afraid to venture out, being under the apprehension that at any moment she might meet Lord Donal Stirling face to face, and that he would recognise her; therefore she remained discreetly in her room, watching the strange street scenes from her window. She found herself scrutinising everyone who had the appearance of being an Englishman, and she had to confess to a little qualm of disappointment when the person in question turned out not to be

Lord Donal; in fact, during her short stay at St. Petersburg she saw nothing of the young man.

Jennie went, on the evening of her arrival, to the offices of the Sleeping Car Company, so as to secure a place in one of the carriages that left at six o'clock on the evening of the 21st. Her initial difficulty met her when she learned there were several sleeping cars on that train, and she was puzzled to know which to select. She stood there, hesitating, with the plans of the carriages on the table before her.

"You have ample choice," said the clerk; "seats are not usually booked so long in advance, and only two places have been taken in the train, so far."

"I should like to be in a carriage containing some English people," said the girl, not knowing what excuse to give for her hesitation.

"Then let me recommend this car, for one berth has been taken by the British Embassy—Room C., near the centre, marked with a cross."

"Ah, well, I will take this compartment next to it—Room D, isn't it?" said Jennie.

"Oh, I am sorry to say that also has been taken. Those are the two compartments which are bespoke. I will see under what name it has been booked. Probably its occupant is English also. But I can give you Room B, on the other side of the one reserved by the Embassy. It is a two-berth room, Nos. 5 and 6."

"That will do quite as well," said Jennie.

The clerk looked up the order book, and then said—

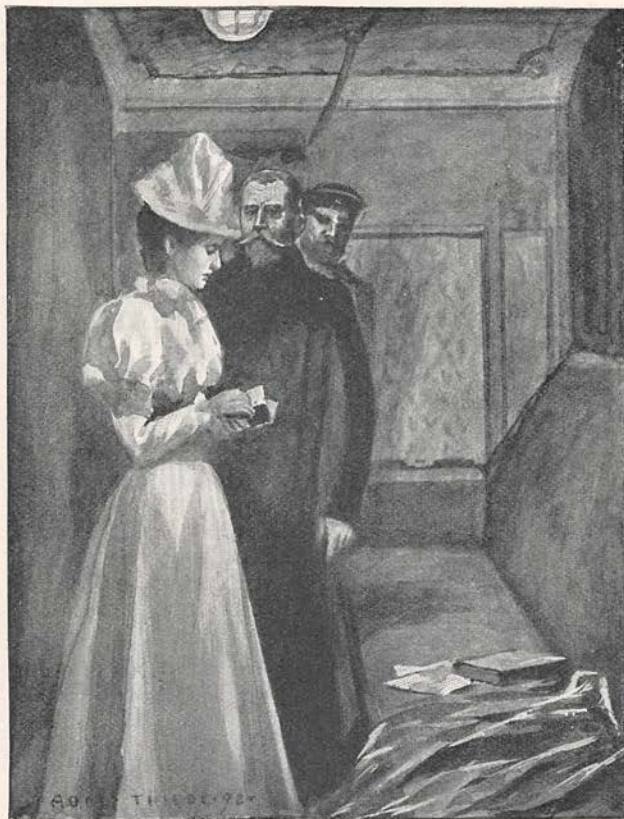
"It is not recorded here by whom Room D was booked. As a usual thing," he continued, lowering his voice almost to a whisper and looking furtively over his shoulder, "when no name is marked down, that means the Russian police. So, you see, by taking the third room you will not only be under the shadow of the British Embassy, but also under the protection of Russia. Do you wish one berth only, or the whole room? It is a two-berth compartment."

"I desire the whole room, if you please."

She paid the price and departed, wondering if the other room had really been taken by the police, and whether the authorities were so anxious for the safety of the special messenger that they considered it necessary to protect him to the frontier. If, in addition to the natural precautions of the messenger, there was added the watchfulness of one or two suspicious Russian policemen,

then would her mission become indeed impossible. On the other hand, the ill-paid policemen might be amenable to the influence of money, and as she was well supplied with the coin of the realm, their presence might be a help rather than a hindrance. All in all, she had little liking for the task she had undertaken, and the more she thought of it, the less it commended itself to her. Nevertheless, having pledged her word to the editor, if failure came it would be through no fault of hers.

Jennie went early to the station on the night of the 21st and entered the sleeping car as soon as she was allowed to do so. The conductor seemed somewhat flustered at her anxiety to get to her room, and he examined her ticket with great care; then, telling her to follow him, brought her to Room B, in which were situated berths 5 and 6, upper and lower. The berths were not made up, and the room showed one seat, made to accommodate



“Jennie fumbled in her purse for her tickets.”

two persons. The conductor went out on the platform again, and Jennie, finding herself alone in the carriage, walked up and down the narrow passage-way at the side, to get a better idea of her surroundings.

Room C, next to her own, was the one taken by the British Embassy. Room D, still further on, was the one that appeared to have been retained by the police. She stood for a few moments by the broad plate-glass window that lined the passage and looked out at the crowded platform. For a time she watched the conductor, who seemed

to be gazing anxiously towards the direction from which passengers streamed, as if looking for someone in particular. Presently a big man, a huge overcoat belted round him, with a stern, bearded face—looking, the girl thought, typically Russian—strode up to the conductor and spoke earnestly with him. Then the two turned to the steps of the car, and Jennie fled to her narrow little room, closing the door all but about an inch. An instant later the two men came in, speaking

together in French. The larger man had a gruff voice and spoke the language in a way that showed it was not native to him.

“When did you learn that he had changed his room?” asked the man with the gruff voice.

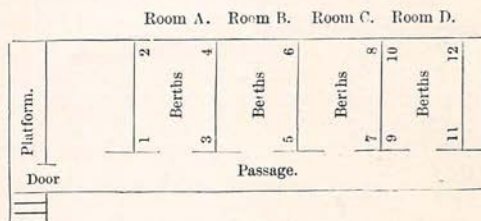
“Only this afternoon,” replied the conductor.

“Did you bore holes between that and the adjoining compartment?”

“Yes, your Excellency; but Azof did not tell me whether you wanted the holes at the top or the bottom.”

“At the bottom,” replied

the Russian. “Any fool might have known that. The gas must rise, not fall; then when he feels its effect and tumbles down, he will



PLAN OF SLEEPING CAR.

be in a denser layer of it, whereas, if we put it in at the top, and he fell down, he would come into pure air, and so might make his escape. You did not bore the hole over the top berth, I hope?"

"Yes, Excellency, but I bored one at the bottom also."

"Oh, very well, we can easily stop the one at the top. Have you fastened the window?"



"Placing her eye at the hole, peered through."

for the first thing these English do is to open a window."

"The window is securely fastened, your Excellency, unless he breaks the glass."

"Oh, he will not think of doing that until it is too late. The English are a law-abiding people. How many other passengers are there in the car?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Excellency, that Room B has been taken by an English lady, who is there now."

"Ten thousand devils!" cried the Russian

in a hoarse whisper. "Why did you not say that before?"

The voices now fell to so low a murmur that Jennie could not distinguish the words spoken. A moment later there was a rap at her door, and she had presence of mind enough to get in the further corner, and say in a sleepy voice—

"Come in!"

The conductor opened the door.

"*Votre billet, s'il vous plait, madame.*"

"Can't you speak English?" asked Jennie.

The conductor merely repeated his question, and as Jennie was shaking her head the big Russian looked over the conductor's shoulder and said in passable English—

"He is asking for your ticket, madam. Do you not speak French?"

In answer to the direct question Jennie, fumbling in her purse for her tickets, replied—

"I speak English, and I have already shown him my ticket."

She handed her broad-sheet sleeping-car ticket to the Russian, who had pushed the conductor aside and now stood within the compartment.

"There has been a mistake," he said. "Room C is the one that has been reserved for you."

"I am sure there isn't any mistake," said Jennie. "I booked berths 5 and 6. See, there are the numbers," pointing to the metallic plates by the door, "and here are the same numbers on the ticket."

The Russian shook his head.

"The mistake has been made at the office of the Sleeping Car Company. I am a director of the Company."

"Oh, are you?" asked Jennie innocently. "Is Room C as comfortable as this one?"

"It is a duplicate of this one, madam, and is more comfortable, because it is nearer the centre of the car."

"Well, there is no mistake about my reserving the two berths, is there?"

"Oh, no, madam, the room is entirely at your disposal."

"Oh, well, then, in that case," said Jennie, "I have no objection to making a change."

She knew that she would be compelled to change, no matter what her ticket recorded, so she thought it best to play the simple maiden abroad, and make as little fuss as possible about the transfer. She had to rearrange the car in her mind. She was now in Room C, which had been first reserved by the British Embassy. It was evident that at the last moment the messenger had

decided to take Room A, a four-berth room at the end of the car. The police then would occupy Room B, which she had first engaged, and, from the bit of conversation she had overheard, Jennie was convinced that they intended to kill or render insensible the messenger who bore the important letter. The police were there not to protect but to attack. This amazing complication in the plot concentrated all the girl's sympathies on the unfortunate man who was messenger between two great personages, even though he travelled apparently under the protection of the British Embassy at St. Petersburg. The fact, to put it baldly, that she had intended to rob him herself, if opportunity occurred, rose before her like an accusing ghost. "I shall never undertake anything like this again," she cried to herself, "never, never," and now she resolved to make reparation to the man she had intended to injure. She would watch for him until he came down the passage, and then warn him by relating what she had heard. She had taken off her hat when she entered the room; now she put it on hurriedly, thrusting a long pin through it. As she stood up, there was a jolt of the train that caused her to sit down again somewhat hurriedly. Passing her window she saw the lights of the station; the train was in motion. "Thank Heaven!" she cried fervently, "he is too late. Those plotting villains will have all their trouble for nothing."

She glanced upwards towards the ceiling and noticed a hole about an inch in diameter bored in the thin wooden partition between her compartment and the next. Turning to the wall behind her she saw that another hole had been bored in a similar position through to room B. The car had been pretty thoroughly prepared for the work in hand, and Jennie laughed softly to herself as she pictured the discomfiture of the conspirators. The train was now rushing through the suburbs of St. Petersburg, and Jennie was startled by hearing another voice say in French—

"Conductor, I have Room A; which end of the car is that?"

"This way, Excellency," said the conductor. Everyone seemed to be "Excellency" with him.

A moment later, Jennie, who had again risen to her feet, horrified to know that, after all, the messenger had come, heard the door of his room click. Everything was silent save the purring murmur of the swiftly moving train. She stood there for

a few moments tense with excitement, then bethought herself of the hole between her present compartment and the one she had recently left. She sprang up on the seat, and placing her eye with some caution at the hole, peered through. First she thought the compartment was empty, then noticed there had been placed at the end by the window a huge cylinder that reached nearly to the ceiling of the room. The lamp above was burning brightly, and she could see every detail of the compartment, except towards the floor. As she gazed a man's back slowly rose; he appeared to have been kneeling on the floor, and he held in his hand the loop of a rubber tube. Peering downwards, she saw that it was connected with the cylinder, and that it was undoubtedly pouring whatever gas the cylinder contained through the hole into Room A. For a moment she had difficulty in repressing a shriek; but realising how perfectly helpless she was, even if she gave the alarm, she repressed all exclamation. She saw that the man who was regulating the escape of gas was not the one who had spoken to the conductor. Then, fearing that he might turn his head and see her eye at the small aperture, she reached up and covered her lamp, leaving her own room in complete darkness. The double covering, which closed over the semi-globular lamp like an eyelid, kept every ray of light from penetrating into the compartment.

As Jennie turned to her espionage again, she heard a blow given to the door in Room A that made it chatter, then there was a sound of a heavy fall on the floor. The door of Room B was flung open, the head of the first Russian was thrust in, and he spoke in his own language a single gruff word. His assistant then turned the cock and shut off the gas from the cylinder. The door of Room B was instantly shut again, and Jennie heard the rattle of the key as Room A was being unlocked.

Jennie jumped down from her perch, threw off her hat, and with as little noise as she could slid her door back an inch or two. The conductor had unlocked the door of Room A, the tall Russian standing beside him saying in a whisper—

"Never mind the man, he'll come to the moment you open the door and window; get the box. Hold your nose with your fingers and keep your mouth shut. There it is, that black box in the corner."

The conductor made a dive into the room, and came out with an ordinary black despatch box. The policeman seemed well provided

with the materials for his burglarious purpose. He selected a key from a jingling bunch, tried it; selected another; then a third, and the lid of the despatch-box was thrown back. He took out a letter so exactly the duplicate of the one Jennie had that she clutched her own document to see if it were

So intent were the two men on their work that neither saw her. The tall man gave the box back to the conductor, then took the letter from between his knees, holding it in his right hand, when Jennie, as if swayed by the car, lurched against him, and, with a sleight of hand that would have made her

reputation on a necromantic stage, she jerked the letter from the amazed and frightened man, at the same moment allowing the bogus document to drop on the floor of the car from her other hand. The conductor had just emerged from Room A, holding his nose and looking comical enough as he stood there in that position, amazed at the sudden apparition of the lady. The Russian struck down the conductor's fingers with his right hand, and by a swift motion of the left closed the door of Compartment A, all of which happened in a tenth of the time taken to tell it.

"Oh, pardon me!" cried Jennie, "I'm afraid a lurch of the car threw me against you."

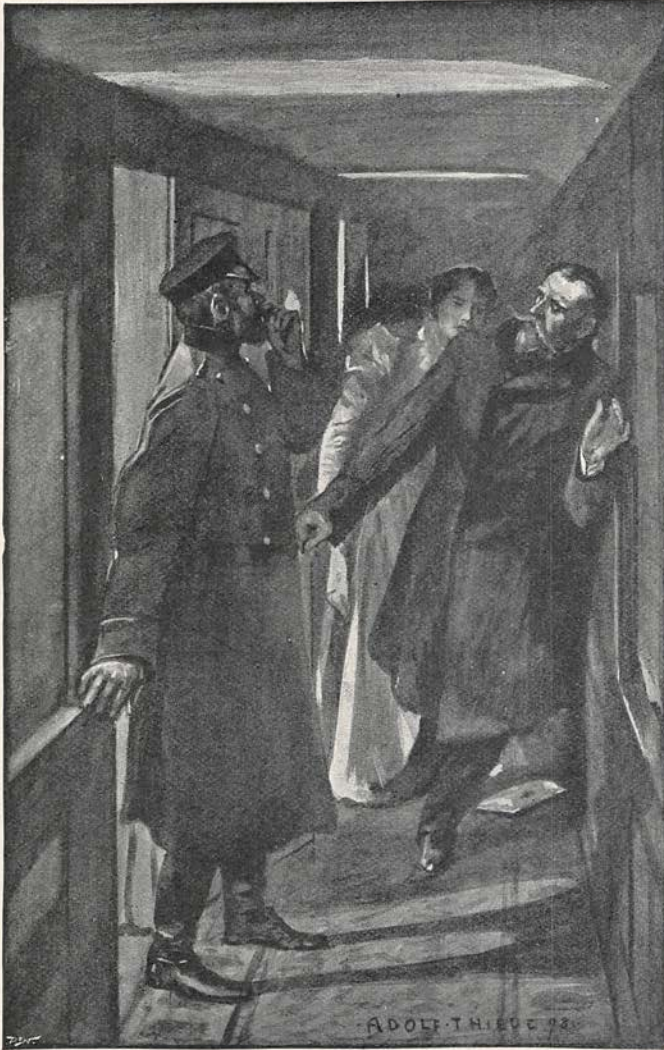
The Russian, before answering, cast a look at the floor and saw the large envelope lying there with its seal uppermost. He quietly placed his huge foot upon it, and then said, with an effort at politeness—

"It is no matter, madam. I am afraid that I am so bulky I have taken up most of the passage."

"It is very good of you to excuse me," said Jennie; "I merely came out to ask the conductor if he would make up my berth. Would you be good enough to translate that to him?"

The Russian surlily told the conductor to attend to the wants of the lady. The conductor muttered a reply, and that reply the Russian translated.

"He will be at your service in a few moments, madam. He must first make up the berth of the gentleman in Room A."



"Jennie lurched against him and jerked the letter from the amazed and frightened man."

in its place. The Russian put the envelope between his knees and proceeded to lock the box. His imagination had not gone to any such refinement as the placing of a dummy copy where the original had been. Quick as thought Jennie acted. She slid open the door quietly and stepped out into the passage.

"Oh, thank you very much," returned Jennie. "I am in no hurry; any time within the hour will do."

With that she retired again into her compartment, the real letter concealed in the folds of her dress, the bogus one on the floor under the Russian's foot. She closed the door tightly, then, taking care that she was not observed through either of the holes the conductor had bored in the partition, she swiftly placed the important document in a deep inside pocket of her jacket. As a general rule, women have inside pockets in their capes, and outside pockets in their jackets; but Jennie, dealing as she did with many documents in the course of her profession, had had this jacket especially made, with its deep and roomy inside pocket. She sat in a corner of her sofa, wondering what was to be the fate of the unfortunate messenger, for, in spite of the sudden shutting of the door by the Russian, she caught a glimpse of the man lying face downwards on the floor of his stifling room. She also had received a whiff of the sweet, heavy gas which had been used, that seemed now to be tincturing the whole atmosphere of the car, especially in the long, narrow passage. It was not likely they intended to kill the man, for his death would cause an awkward investigation, while his statement that he had been rendered insensible might easily be denied. As she sat there, the silence disturbed only by the low, soothing rumble of the train, she heard the ring of the metal cylinder against the woodwork of the next compartment. The men were evidently removing their apparatus. A little later the train slowed, finally coming to a standstill, and looking out of the window into the darkness, she found they were stopping at an ill-lighted country station. Covering the light in the ceiling again, the better to see outside, herself unobserved, she noted the conductor and another man place the bulky cylinder on the platform, without the slightest effort at concealment. The tall Russian stood by and gave curt orders. An instant later the train moved on again, and when well under way there was a rap at her door. When she opened it, the conductor said that he would make up her berth now, if it so pleased her. She stood out in the corridor while this was deftly and swiftly

done. She could not restrain her curiosity regarding the mysterious occupant of Room A, and to satisfy it she walked slowly up and down the corridor, her hands behind her, passing and repassing the open door of her own room, and noticing that ever and anon the conductor cast a suspicious eye in her direction.

The door of Room A was partly open, but the shaded lamp in the ceiling left the interior in darkness. There was now no trace of the intoxicating gas in the corridor, and as she passed Room A she noticed that a fresh breeze was blowing through the half-open doorway, therefore the window must be up. Once as she passed her own door she saw the conductor engaged in a task which would keep him from looking into the corridor for at least a minute, and in



"The man lay with his face towards the wall."

that interval she set her doubts at rest by putting her head swiftly into Room A, and as swiftly withdrawing it. The man had been lifted on to his sofa, and lay with his face towards the wall, his head on a pillow. The despatch-box rested on a corner of the sofa, where, doubtless, he had left it. He was breathing heavily like a man in a drunken sleep; but the air of the room was sweet and fresh, and he would doubtless recover. Jennie still paced up and down, thinking deeply over what had happened. At first, when she had secured the important document, she had made up her mind to return it to the messenger; but further pondering induced her to change her mind. The messenger had been robbed by the Russian police; he would tell his superiors exactly what had happened, and yet the letter would reach its destination as speedily

as if he had brought it himself—as if he had never been robbed. Knowing the purpose which Mr. Hardwick had in his mind, Jennie saw that the letter now was of tenfold more value to him than it would have been had she taken it from the messenger. It was evident that the British Embassy, or the messenger himself, had suspicions that an attempt was to be made to obtain the document, otherwise Room C of the sleeping car would not have been changed for Room A at the very last moment. If, then, the editor could say to the official, “The Russian police robbed your messenger in spite of all the precautions that could be taken, and my emissary cozened the Russians. So, you see, I have accomplished what the whole power of the British Government was powerless to effect; therefore it will be wisdom on your part to come to terms with me.”

Jennie made up her mind to relate to Hardwick exactly how she came into possession of the document, and she knew his alert nature well enough to be sure he would make the most of the trump card dealt to him.

“Your room is ready for you,” said the conductor, in French.

She had presence of mind enough not to comprehend his phrase until, with a motion of his hand, he explained his meaning. She entered her compartment and closed the door.

Having decided what disposal to make of the important document, there now arose in her mind the disquieting problem whether or not it would be allowed to remain with her. She cogitated over the situation and tried to work out the mental arithmetic of it. Trains were infrequent on the Russian railways, and she had no means of estimating when the burly ruffian who had planned and executed the robbery would get back to St. Petersburg. There was no doubt that he had not the right to open the letter and read its contents; that privilege rested with some higher official in St. Petersburg. The two men had got off at the first stopping place. It was quite possible that they would not reach the capital until next morning, when the Berlin express would be well on its way to the frontier. Once over the frontier she would be safe; but the moment it was found that the envelope merely contained a copy of an English newspaper, what might not happen? Would the Russian authorities dare telegraph to the frontier to have her searched, or would the big official who had

planned the robbery suspect that she, by legerdemain, had become possessed of the letter so much sought for? Even if he did suspect her, he would certainly have craft enough not to admit it. His game would rather be to maintain that this was the veritable document found in the Englishman's despatch-box; and it was more than likely, taking into consideration the change of room at the last moment, which would show the officials the existence of suspicion in the messenger's mind, or in the minds of those who sent him, that the natural surmise would be that another messenger had gone with the real document, and that the robbed man was merely a blind to delude the Russian police. In any case, Jennie concluded, there was absolutely nothing to do but to remain awake all night and guard the treasure which good luck had bestowed upon her. She stood up on her bed, about to stuff her handkerchief into the hole bored in the partition, but suddenly paused and came down to the floor again. No, discomfiting as it was to remain in a room under possible espionage, she dared not stop the openings, as that would show she had cognisance of them, and arouse the conductor's suspicion that, after all, she had understood what had been said; whereas, if she left them as they were, the fact of her doing so would be strong confirmation of her ignorance.

In spite of the danger of her situation she had the utmost difficulty in keeping awake. The rumble of the train had a very somnolent effect, and once or twice she started up, fearing that she had been slumbering. A moment later, as it seemed to her, she was startled by a rap at her door, and the voice of the conductor said—

“Breakfast at Luga, madam, in three-quarters of an hour.”

“Very good,” she replied in English, her voice trembling with fear. She shivered notwithstanding her effort at self-control, for she knew she had slept through the night and far into the morning. In agitation she unbuttoned her jacket. Yes, there was the letter, just where she had placed it. She dared not take it out and examine it, fearing still that she might be watched from some unseen quarter, but “Thank God,” she said to herself fervently, “this horrible night is ended! Once over the frontier I am safe.” She smoothed and brushed down her dress as well as she was able, and was greatly refreshed by her wash in cold water, which is one of the luxuries on a sleeping car.