

# The Day of Wrath

BY LOUIS TRACY  
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## A STORY OF 1914

little piqu-plous—a slang term for the French infantry—will run along before they see the whites of our eyes.

"I haven't met any French regiments since I was a youngster; but I believe France is far better organized now than in 1870," was the noncommittal reply.

**Germany's Plans**

Von Halwig threw out his right arm in a wide sweep. "We shall brush them aside—so," he cried. "The German army was strong in those days; now it is irresistible. You are a soldier. You know. Tonight's papers say England is wavering between peace and war. But I have no doubt she will be wise. She has a great asset, a great safeguard, eh?"

Again Dalroy changed the subject. "If it is a fair question, when do you start for the front?"

"Tomorrow, at six in the morning."

"How very kind of you to spare such valuable time now?"

"Not at all. Everything is ready. Germany is always ready. The Emperor says 'Mobilize' and, behold, we cross the frontier within the hour!"

"War is a rotten business," commented Dalroy thoughtfully. "I've seen something of it in India, where, when all is said and done, a scrap in the hills brings the fighting men alone into line. But I'm sorry for the unfortunate peasants and townsmen who will suffer. What of Belgium, for instance?"

"Ha! Les braves Belges!" laughed the other. "They will do as we tell them. What else is possible? To adapt one of your own proverbs: 'Needs must when the German drives!'"

Dalroy understood quite well that Von Halwig's bumptious tone was not assumed. The Prussian soldier could hardly think otherwise. But the glances cast by the guardsman at the silent figure seated near the window showed that some part of his vaunting was meant to impress the feminine listener.

A gallant figure he cut, too, as he stood there, caressing his Kaiser-fashioned mustaches with one hand while the other rested on the hip of his sword. He was tall, fully six feet, and, according to Dalroy's standard of physical fitness, at least a stone too heavy. The personification of Nietzsche's "Superman," the "big blonde brute" who is the German military ideal, Dalroy classed him, in the expressive phrase of the regimental mess, as "a good bit of a boulder." Yet he was a patrician by birth, or he could not hold a commission in the Imperial Guard, and he had been most helpful and painstaking that night, so perforce one must be civil to him.

Dalroy himself, nearly as tall, was lean and lithe, hard as nails, yet intellectual, a cavalry officer who had passed through the Oxford mint.

By the time four other occupants of the compartment were in evidence, and a ticket examiner came along, Dalroy produced a number of vouchers. The girl, who obviously spoke German, leaned out, purse in hand, and wished to explain that the crush in the looking hall had prevented her from obtaining a ticket.

But Dalroy intervened. "I have your ticket," he said, announcing a singular fact in the most casual manner he could command.

"Thank you," she said instantly, trying to conceal her own surprise. But her eyes met Von Halwig's bold stare, and Dalroy not only a ready appraisal of her good looks but a perplexed half-recognition.

The railwayman raised a question. Contrary to the general rule, he held with him a ticket which he compared with a list. "These tickets are for Herren Fane and Dalroy, and I find a lady here," he said suspiciously.

"Faulen Evelyn Fane, my cousin," explained Dalroy. "A mistake of the issuing office."

"Ach, was!" broke in Von Halwig impatiently. "You hear. Some fool has blundered. It is sufficient."

At any rate, his word sufficed. Dalroy smiled at the ticket inspector, and the door was closed and locked.

"Never say I haven't done you a good turn," grinned the Prussian. "A pleasant journey should be yours, my dear lady. Don't be surprised if I am in Aachen before you."

**Aix-la-Chapelle?**

Then he colored. He had said too much. One of the men in the compartment gave him a sharp glance. Aachen, better known to traveling Britons as Aix-la-Chapelle, lay on the road to Belgium, not to France.

"Well, to our next meeting!" he went on boisterously. "Run across to Paris during the occupation."

"Good-by! And accept my very grateful thanks," said Dalroy, and the train started.

"I cannot tell you how much obliged I am," said a sweet voice as he settled down into his seat. "Please, may I pay you my debt for the ticket which you supplied so miraculously?"

"No miracle, but a piece of rare good luck," he said. "One of the attaches of our embassy arranged to travel to England to-night or I would never have got away, even with the support of the State counselor, who requested Lieutenant von Halwig to befriend me. Then, at the last moment, Fane couldn't come. I meant asking Von Halwig to send a messenger to the embassy with the spare ticket."

"So you will forward the money to Mr. Fane with my compliments," said the girl, opening her purse.



Dalroy put a good deal of science and no small leaven of brute force into a straight punch.

The girl smiled acquiescence. She read, "Captain Arthur Dalroy, Second Bengal Lancers, Junior United Service Club."

"I haven't a card in my bag," she said simply, "but my name is Beresford—Irene Beresford—Miss Beresford," and she colored prettily. "I have made an effort of the explanation," she went on, "but I think it is stupid of women not to let people know at once whether they are married or single."

"I'll be equally candid," he replied. "I'm not married, nor likely to be."

"Is that defiance, or merely self-defense?" "Neither. A bald fact. I hold with you, Kitchener that a soldier should devote himself exclusively to his profession."

"It would certainly be well for many a heart-broken woman in Europe today, if all soldiers shared your opinion," was the answer; and Dalroy knew that his vis-a-vis had deftly guided their chatter on to a more sedate plane.

The train halted an unconscionable time at a suburban station and again at Charlottenburg. The four Germans in the compartment, all Prussian officers, commented on the delay, and one of them made a joke of it.

"The signals must be against us at Liege," he laughed.

"England has sent a regiment of Territorials across by the Ostend boat," chimed in another. Then he turned to Dalroy and said, "You are English. Your country will not be mad as to join this adventure, will she?"

"This is a war of diplomats," said Dalroy, resolved to keep a guard on his tongue. "I am quite sure that no one in England wants war."

"But will England fight if Germany invades Belgium?"

"Surely Germany will do no such thing. The integrity of Belgium is guaranteed by treaty."

"Your friend the lieutenant, then, did not tell you that our army crossed the frontier to-day?"

"Is that possible?"

"Yes. It is no secret now. Didn't you realize what he meant when he said his regiment was going to Aachen? But what does it matter? Belgium cannot resist. She must give free passage to our troops. She will protest, of course, just to save her face."

"I must meet my sister in Brussels," said the girl. "She is younger than I, and at school there. I am not afraid—now. They will not interfere with me in the train, especially a woman. But how about you? You have the unmistakable look of a British officer."

Why I am going through I suppose."

Neither could guess the immense significance of those few words. There was a reasonable chance of escape through Holland during the next day. By remaining in the Belgium-bound train they were, all troops, entering the crater of a volcano.

The ten hours' run to Cologne was drawn out to twenty. Time and again they were shunted into sidings to make way for troop trains and supplies. At a wayside station a bright moon enabled Dalroy to take stock of two monster howitzers mounted on specially constructed bogie trucks. He estimated their bore at sixteen or seventeen inches; the fittings and accessories of each gun filled nine or ten trucks. How prepared Germany was! How thorough her organization! Yet the hurrying forward of these giant siege guns was premature, to put it mildly! Or were the German generals really convinced that they would sweep every obstacle from their path, and hammer England from the east?

After a night of fitful sleep down found the travelers not yet half-way. The four Germans were furious. They held staff appointments, and had been assured in Berlin that the clockwork regularity of mobilization arrangements would permit this particular train to cover the journey according to schedule. Menials were irregular and scanty. At one small town, in the early morning, Dalroy secured a quantity of rolls and fruit, and all benefited later by his foresight.

Newspapers bought on route contained dark forebodings of England's growing hostility. A special edition of a Hanover journal spoke of an ultimatum, a word which evoked harsh denunciations of "British treachery" from the Germans. The comparative friendliness induced by Dalroy's prevision as a caterer vanished at once.

When the train rolled wearily across the Rhine into Cologne, ten hours late, both Dalroy and the girl were fully aware that their fellow passengers regarded them as potential enemies.

It was then about 6 o'clock on the Tuesday evening, and loud-voiced official announced that the train would not proceed to Aix-la-Chapelle until 8. The German officers went out, no doubt to seek a meal; but took the precaution of asking an officer in charge of some Bavarian troops on the platform to station a sentry at the carriage door. Probably they had no other intent, and merely wished to safeguard their places; but Dalroy realized now the impudence of talking English, and signed to the girl that she was to come with him into the corridor on the opposite side of the carriage.

There they held counsel. Miss Beresford was firmly resolved to return to Brussels, and she was not to be deterred by a German. It must be remembered that war was not formally declared between Great Britain and Germany until that evening. Indeed, the tremendous decision was made while the pair were so curiously allied by fate were discussing their program. Had they even quitted the train at Cologne they had a fair prospect of reaching neutral territory by boat or by

crook. They knew nothing of Liege and the imperishable laurels which that gallant city was about to gather. They elected to go on.

A station employe brought them some unpalatable food, which they made a pretense of eating. Irene Beresford's Hanoverian German was perfect, so Dalroy did not air his less accurate accent, and the presence of the sentry was helpful at this crisis.

Though sharp-eyed and rabbit-eared, the man was quite civil.

At last the Prussian officers returned. He who had been chatty overnight was now brusque, even overbearing. "You have no right here," he vociferated at Dalroy. "Why should a damned Englishman travel with us? You are a spy! This is a serious matter. How do I know that you are not a spy?"

"Spies are not vouchered for by Councilors of State," was the calm reply. "I have in my pocket a letter from his Excellency, Staatsrath von Auschenbaum authorizing my journey, and you yourself must perceive that I am escorting a lady to her home."

The other snorted, but subsided into his seat. Not yet had Teutonic hatred of all things British burst its barriers. But the pressure was increasing. Soon it would leap forth like the pent-up flood of some mighty reservoir whose retaining wall had crumbled into ruin.

"Is there any news?" went on Dalroy civilly. At any hazard, he was determined, for the sake of the girl, to maintain the semblance of good fellowship. She, he saw, was cool and collected. Evidently, she had complete trust in him. The American call "bluff" for a little while no one answered. Ultimately, the officer who regarded Liege as a joke said shortly, "Your Sir Grey has made some impudent suggestions. I suppose it is what the Americans call 'bluff'; but bluffing Germany is a dangerous game." "Newspapers exaggerate such matters," said Dalroy.

"It may be so. Still you'll be lucky if you get beyond Aachen," was the uncomplimentary retort. The speaker refused to give the town its French name.

An hour passed. The third in Cologne, before the train rumbled away into the darkness. The girl pretended to sleep, indeed, she may have dozed fitfully. Dalroy did not attempt to engage her in talk. The Germans gossiped in low tones. They knew that their nation had spied on the whole world. Naturally, they held every foreigner in their midst as tainted in the same vile way.

away, Belgium a little farther. The goal was near. Dalroy felt that by calmness and quiet determination he and his charming protegee might win through. He was very much taken by Irene Beresford. He had never met any girl who attracted him so strongly. He found himself wondering whether he might contrive to cultivate this strangely formed friendship when they reached England. In a word, the self-deceiving ordinance popularly attributed to Lord Kitchener was weakening in Captain Arthur Dalroy.

Then his sky dropped, dropped with a bang. "The train had not quite halted when the door was torn open and a bespectacled, red-faced officer glared in."

"It is reported from Cologne that there are English in this carriage," he shouted. "Corr it, my friend. There they are!" said the man who had snarled at Dalroy earlier.

"You must descend," commanded the newcomer. "You! You! You!"

"On what charge?" inquired Dalroy, bitterly conscious of a gap of terror which came involuntarily from the girl's lips.

"You are acting in error," he belovely explained. "I have letters—"

"No talk. Out you come!" and he was dragged forth by a bloated fellow whom he could have broken with his hands. It was only by a miracle that he managed to keep on his feet, whereas the fat bully meant to trip him ignominiously on to the platform.

**Arrested as Spies**

"Now you!" was the order to Irene, and she followed. Half a dozen soldiers closed around. There could be no doubting that preparations had been made for their reception.

"May I have my portmanteau?" said Dalroy. "You are acting in error. I shall prove when given an opportunity."

"Shut your mouth, you damned Englishman!" that was a favorite phrase on German lips apparently—"and you dare to argue with me? Here, one of you take his bag. Has the woman any baggage?"

"Then march them to the—"

A tall young lieutenant in the uniform of the Prussian Imperial Guard, dashed up breathlessly.

"Ah, I was told the train had arrived!" he cried. "Yes, I am in search of those two—"

"Thank goodness you are here, Von Halwig!" began Dalroy.

The Guardsman turned on him a face aflame with fury. "Silence!" he belovely bellowed. "I'll soon settle your affair. Take his watch and money, and put him in the waiting room till I return," he added, speaking to the Prussian officers. "Place the lady in another waiting room, and lock her in. I'll see that she is not molested. As for this English schweinhund, shoot him at the least sign of resistance."

"But, Herr Lieutenant," began the other, whose heavy paunch was a measure of his self-importance. "I have orders—"

"Ah, I know! This Englishman is not an ordinary spy. He is a cavalry captain, and speaks your language fluently. Do as I tell you. I shall come back in half an hour. Prussian, are in your hands. You, I fancy, will be well treated."

Dalroy said not a word. He saw at once that some virus had changed Von Halwig's character to that of a brute. The Guardsman would not have been drinking, but that fact alone would not account for such an amazing volte-face. Could it be that Britain had thrown in her lot with France? In his heart of hearts he hoped passionately that the rumor was true. And he blazed, too, into a fierce if silent resentment of the Prussian's satyr-like smile at Irene Beresford. But what could he do? Protest was worse than useless. He felt that he would be shot or bayoneted on the slightest pretext.

Von Halwig evidently resented the presence of a crowd of gaping onlookers.

"No more talk!" he ordered sharply. "Do as I bid you, Herr Lieutenant of Reserves!"

"Captain Dalroy!" cried the girl in a voice of utter dismay. "Don't let them part us!"

Von Halwig pointed to a door. "In there with him!" he growled, and Dalroy was hustled away. Irene screamed, and tried to avoid the Prussian's outstretched hand. He grasped her determinedly.

**The Threat**

"Don't be a fool!" he hissed in English. "I can save you. He is done with. A firing party or a rope will account for him at daybreak. Ah! calm yourself, *gnadies* Proutzka. There are consolations, even in war."

Dalroy contrived, out of the tail of his eye, to see that the distraught girl was led toward a ladies' waiting room, two doors from the apartment into which he was thrust. There he was searched by the lieutenant of reserves, not skillfully, because the man missed nearly the whole of his money, which he carried in a pocket in the lining of his waistcoat. All else was taken—tickets, papers, loose cash, even a cigarette case and favorite pipe.

The instructions to the sentry were emphatic: "Don't close the door! Admit no one without sending for me! Shoot or stab the prisoner if he moves!"

And the fat man hustled away. The station was swarming with military big-wigs. He must remain in evidence.

During five long minutes Dalroy reviewed the situation, probably he would be executed as a spy. At best, he could not avoid

internment in a fortress till the end of the war. He preferred to die in a struggle for life and liberty. Men had escaped in conditions quite as desperate. Why not he? The surge of impotent anger subsided in his veins, and he took thought.

Outside the open door stood the sentry, holding his rifle, with fixed bayonet, in the attitude of a sportsman who expects a covey of partridges to rise from the stubble. A window of plain glass gave on to the platform. Seemingly, it had not been opened since the station was built.

Three windows of frosted glass in the opposite wall were, to all appearances, practicable. Judging by the sounds, the station square lay without. Was there a lock and key on the door? Or a bolt? He could not tell from his present position. The sentry had orders to kill him if he moved. Perhaps the man would not interpret the command literally. At any rate, that was a risk he must take. With head sunk, and his back, obviously, in a state of deep dejection, he began to stroll to and fro. Well, he had a fighting chance. He was not shot forthwith.

A slight commotion on the platform caught his eye, the sentry's as well. A tall young officer, wearing a silver helmet and accompanied by a glittering staff, clanked past; with him the lieutenant of reserves, gesticulating. Dalroy recognized one of the Emperor's sons; but the sentry had probably never seen the princeling before, and was averse. And there was not only a key but a bolt!

With three noiseless strides, Dalroy was at the door and had slammed it. The key turned easily, and the door shot home. Then he faced to the middle window, unfastened the hasp, and raised the lower sash. He counted on the thick-headed sentry wasting some precious seconds in trying to force the door, and he was right. As it happened, before the man thought of looking through the platform window Dalroy had not only lowered the other window behind him, but dropped from the sill to the pavement between the wall and a covered way which stood there.

**Free Again**

Now he was free—free as any Briton could be deemed free in Aix-la-Chapelle at that hour, save among three army corps, an unarmed Englishman among a bitterly hostile population which recked naught of France or Belgium or Russia, but hated England already with an almost maniacal mania.

And Irene Beresford, that sweet-voiced, sweet-faced English girl, was a prisoner at the mercy of a "big blonde brute," a half-drunk, who was among three army corps, an unarmed Englishman among a bitterly hostile population which recked naught of France or Belgium or Russia, but hated England already with an almost maniacal mania.

CHAPTER II  
**In the Vortex**

THE way, one among a score of similar vehicles, was backed against the curb of a raised path. At the instant Dalroy quitted the window ledge a railway employe appeared from behind another van on the left, and, without the least warning, using a well-dressed man springing from such an unusual and precarious perch.

The newcomer, a big, burly fellow, who wore a heavy coat, a wide-brimmed hat, baggy breeches and sabots, and carried a light handlamp, looked what, in fact, he was—an engine cleaner. In all likelihood he guessed that any one choosing such a curious exit from a waiting room was avoiding official scrutiny. He hurried forward at once, holding the lamp above his head, because it was dark behind the row of cars.

"Hil, there!" he cried. "A word with you, Feilher!" The title, of course, was a bit of German humor. Obviously, he was bent on investigating matters, but he was a curious exit from a waiting room was avoiding official scrutiny. He hurried forward at once, holding the lamp above his head, because it was dark behind the row of cars.

The engine cleaner was not a quick-witted person. He scowled, but allowed Dalroy to come near—to near.

"I believe you're a verdammt Engl—" he began.

But the popular German description of a Briton died on his lips, because Dalroy put a good deal of science and no small leaven of brute force into a straight punch, which reached that cluster of nerves known to pugilism as "the point." The German fell as though he had been pole-axed, and his thick skull rattled on the pavement.

Dalroy grabbed the lamp before the oil could gush out, placed it upright on the ground, and divested the man of blouse, baggy breeches and sabots. Luckily, since every second was precious he found that he was able to wedge his boots into the sabots, which he could not have kept on his feet otherwise. His training as a soldier had taught him the exceeding value of a Fifth Henry's advice to the British army gathered before Harfleur:

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man as modesty and humility; but what he wears in our ears. Then imitate the action of the lily.

The warring tiger does not move slowly. Half a minute after his would-be captor had crashed headlong to the hard cobble of Aix-la-Chapelle, Dalroy was creeping between two wagons, completing a hasty toilet by tearing off collar and tie, and arranging his face and hands with oil and grease, that lamp and cap. Even as he went he heard a window of the waiting room being flung open, and the excited cries which announced the discovery of a half-naked body lying beneath in the gloom.

**PREFACE**

This story demands no explanatory word. But I do wish to assure the reader that every incident in it is cast upon the actual records of Belgium as founded on actual records published by the Governments of Great Britain, France and Belgium.

Yours very sincerely  
**Louis Tracy**

**CHAPTER I**  
**The Lava Stream**

FOR God's sake, if you are an Englishman, help me!"

That cry of despair, so subdued yet piercing in its intensity, reached Arthur Dalroy as he pressed close on the heels of an all-powerful escort in Lieutenant Karl von Halwig, of the Prussian Imperial Guard, at the ticket-barrier of the Friedrich Strasse Station on the night of Monday, 23 August, 1914.

An officer's uniform is a passe-partout in Germany; the showy uniform of the Imperial Guard adds awe to authority. It may well be doubted if any other insignia of rank could have passed a companion in civilian attire so easily through the official cordon which barred the chief railway station at Berlin that night to all unauthorized persons.

Von Halwig was in front, impartially cursing and shoving aside the crowd of police and railway men. A gigantic ticket-inspector, catching sight of the guardsman, belovely ordered to "clear the way"; but a general officer created a momentary diversion by choosing that forbidden exit. Von Halwig's heels clicked, and his right hand was raised in a salute, so Dalroy was given a few seconds to scrutinize the man in the train which would start for Belgium within half an hour. But the fearful indignation in the girl's voice—even her folly in describing as "idiots" the hectoring Jacks-in-office, and the fact that she had understood her—led impulse to triumph over sane judgment.

"Come along, quick!" he muttered. "You're my cousin, Evelyn Fane. So, articles in the young lady thrust a hand through his arm. In the other hand she carried a reticule. The action surprised Dalroy, though feminine intuition had only dimly understood common sense.

"Have you any luggage?" he said.

"Nothing beyond this tiny bag. It was hopeless to think of—"

Von Halwig turned at the barrier to insure his English friend's safe passage.

"Hallo!" he cried. Evidently he was taken aback by the unexpected addition to the party.

A fellow-countrywoman in distress, smiled Dalroy, speaking in German. Then he added, in English, "It's all right. As it happens, two places are reserved."

Von Halwig laughed in a way which the Englishman would have resented at any other moment.

"Excellent!" he guffawed. "Beautifully contrived, my friend—eh, there, shoo! That porter with the portmanteau pass!"

**Passage Assured**

Thus did Captain Arthur Dalroy find himself inside the Friedrich Strasse station on the night when Germany was already at war with Russia and France. With him was the stout leather bag into which he had thrown hurriedly such few articles as were indispensable to him, and a distinction when viewed in the light of subsequent events; with him, too, was a charming and trustful and utterly unknown traveling companion.

Von Halwig was not only vastly amused but intensely curious; his endeavors to scrutinize the face of a girl whom the Englishman had apparently conjured up out of the mist of his imagination were almost rude. They failed, however, at the outset. Every woman knows exactly how to attract or repel a man's admiration; this young lady was evidently determined that only the faintest hint of her features should be vouchsafed to the guardsman. A fairly large hat and a veil, assisted by the angle at which she held her head, defeated his intent. She still clung to Dalroy's arm, and relinquished it only when a perspiring platform inspector, armed with a list, brought the party to a first-class carriage. There were no sleeping cars on the train. Every swagman in Berlin had been commanded by the staff.

"I have had a not-to-be-described-in-words difficulty in retaining these corner berths," he said, whereupon Dalroy gave him a five-mark piece, and the girl was installed in the seat facing the engine.

The platform inspector had not exaggerated his services. The train was literally besieged. Scores of unimportant officials were storming at railway employes because accommodation could not be found. Dalroy, wishing at first that Von Halwig would take himself off instead of standing near the open door and peering at the girl, soon changed his mind. There could not be the slightest doubt that were it not for the presence of an officer of the Imperial Guard and his "cousin" would have been unceremoniously bundled out on to the platform to make room for some many-syllabled functionary who "simply must go to the front." As for the lady, she was the sole representative of her sex traveling west that night.

Meanwhile the two young men chatted amicably, using German and English with equal ease.

"I think you are making a mistake in going by this route," said Von Halwig. "The frontier line will be horribly congested during the next few days. You see, we have to be in Paris in three weeks. So we must hurry."

"You are very confident," said the Englishman pleasantly.

He purposely avoided any discussion of his reasons for choosing the Cologne-Brussels-Ostend line. As an officer of the British army, he was particularly anxious to evade the vaunted German mobilities of its railroads.

"Confident! Why not? Those wretched



"Get me into a train for the Belgian frontier."



"No more talk! Do as I bid you," roared Halwig.

Continued in Monday's Evening Ledger