

The Day of Wrath

BY LOUIS TRACY
AUTHOR OF "The Wings of the Morning"

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 list of names, which he compared with a list. "These tickets are for Herr von 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. 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 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.

"There was no other way out of the difficulty. Incidentally he could not help noticing that the lady was well supplied with gold and notes."

As they were fellow travelers by force of circumstance, Dalroy took a card from his pocketbook, in which he was securing a 100-mark note.

"I have a long journey before us and may as well get to know each other by name."

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



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, Kithester 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.

"I believe 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 in 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."

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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! Under arrest!"

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

"So that Bavarian lout had listened to the Prussian officer's taunt, and made a story of his discovery to prove his allegiance."

"We are not spies, nor have we done anything to warrant suspicion," said Dalroy calmly. "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 doubt that the 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 belovewed. "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 officer who had effected the arrest. "Place the lady in another waiting room, and lock her in. I'll see that she is not molested. As for this English schvender, 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 attitude to his. He was determined. The Guardsman had 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, *gnädiges Fräulein*. 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, 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.

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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, belovewed an order 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 uniform of the Imperial Guard, and the face of the terrified woman who had addressed him. He saw that she was young, an Englishwoman, and undoubtedly a lady by her speech and garb.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"Get me into a train for the Belgian frontier. I have plenty of money, but these idiots will not even allow me to enter the station."

He had to decide in an instant. He had every reason to believe that a woman, friendless and alone, especially a young and good-looking one, would be a safe bet in Berlin—where some thousands of Britons and Americans had been caught in the lava-wave of red war now flowing unrestrained from the Danube to the North Sea—than 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 quickly!" he muttered.

"You're my cousin, Evelyn Fane," she said. "With a self-control that is highly creditable, 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 guessed 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 sufficed. "Beautifully contrived, my friend—ah, there she is!" he pointed to the ticket inspector—"let 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 beautiful 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 a 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

Continued
in Monday's
Evening Ledger

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