

## CHAPTER XXIV AFTER THE CRISIS

Mrs. Charleworth drove Josie, who was sobbing nervously and quite bereft of her usual self-command, to Colonel Hathaway's residence. The woman was unnerved, too, and had little to say on the journey.

The old colonel had retired, but Mary Louise was still up, reading a book, and she was shocked when Josie came running in and threw herself into her friend's arms, crying and laughing by turns, hysterically.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked Mary Louise in an anxious voice.

"I've b-b-bungled that whole miserable G-Ger-man spy plot!" wailed Josie.

"Wasn't there any plot, then?"

"Of course; but I g-grabbed the wrong end of it. Oh, I'm so glad Daddy wasn't here to see my humiliation! I'm a dub, Mary Louise--a miserable, ignorant, fozzle-brained dub!"

"Never mind, dear," said Mary Louise consolingly. "No one can know everything, Josie, even at our age. Now sit down and wipe that wet off your face and tell me all about it."

Josie complied. She snivelled a little as she began her story, but soon became more calm. Indeed, in her relation she tried to place the facts in such order that she might herself find excuse for her erroneous theories, as well as prove to Mary Louise that her suspicions of Abe Kauffman and Mrs. Charleworth were well founded.

"No girl is supposed to know the difference between a bomb and a cannon-ball--or projectile--or whatever it is," was her friend's comment, when Josie had reached the scene in the manager's office, "and any man who is a German and acts queerly is surely open to suspicion. Go on, Josie; what happened next?"

Even Mary Louise was startled and horrified at the terrible retribution that had overtaken Professor Dyer, although Josie's story had aroused her indignation toward him and prepared her for the man's final infamous attempt to wreck the steel plant.

"And what about Tom Linnet?" she asked.

"Chief Farnum is to arrest him to-night," said Josie. "He will confess everything, of course, and then the whole plot will be made public."

"Poor Mrs. Dyer!" sighed Mary Louise.

But fate decreed a different ending to the night's tragedy. When the police tried to arrest Tom Linnet the young man was not to be found. He had not bought the cigar store, but with what funds remained to him, he had absconded to parts unknown.

Chief Farnum wired his description to all parts of the country. Meantime, on the morning after the affair at the steel works, an earnest conference was held between Mr. Colton, Colonel Hathaway, Josie O'Gorman, Mrs. Charleworth, the Chief of Police and the two secret service agents. At this conference it was deemed inadvisable to acquaint the public with the truth about John Dyer's villainy. The government would be fully informed, of course, but it seemed best not to tell the people of Dorfield that a supposedly respectable citizen had been in the pay of the Kaiser's agents. It would be likely to make them suspicious of one another and have a bad influence generally. The criminal had paid the penalty of his crimes. The murders he had committed and attempted to commit were avenged.

So it was announced that the school superintendent had been killed by an accidental explosion at the munition works, and the newspapers stated that Mrs. Dyer did not desire a public funeral. Indeed, she was too overwhelmed by the tragedy to express any desire regarding the funeral but left it all to Colonel Hathaway and Mr. Colton, who volunteered to attend to the arrangements. The burial was very unostentatious and the widow received much sympathy and did not suffer in the esteem of the community. Mrs. Dyer, in fact, was never told of her husband's dishonor and so mourned him sincerely.

Immediately following the conference referred to, Josie brought the Chief of Police and the secret service men to her room and in their presence dragged the old pedestal-desk from her closet. Mary Louise, who had been admitted, exclaimed in surprise:

"Why, Josie! I thought you sent the desk to Washington."

"No," answered Josie, "I merely shipped an empty box. I knew very well that Dyer would try to get back the desk, hoping I had not discovered its secret, so I deceived him and gained time by proving that I had sent a box home by freight."

"That explains his decision to take the projectile to Washington," commented Detective Crissey, "he believed he could kill two birds with one stone--get back his papers and earn a big fee from Mrs. Charleworth."

"Also," added Josie, "he would be able to give the German Master Spy full information concerning the projectile, and so reap another reward. But all his diabolical schemes were frustrated by Joe Langley's bullet."

"Well, here's the desk," said Chief Farnum, "but where are those important papers, Miss O'Gorman?"

"And what do they prove?" added Crissey.

Josie slid back the panel in the square pedestal, disclosing the two compartments filled with papers. These she allowed the police and the detectives to read, and they not only proved that John Dyer was in the pay of an organized band of German spies having agents in Washington, New York and Chicago, but Crissey was confident the notes, contracts and agreements would furnish clues leading to the discovery and apprehension of the entire band. So the papers were placed in his charge to take to Washington, and their importance was a further argument for secrecy concerning John Dyer's death.

"So far as I am concerned," Josie said afterward to Colonel Hathaway and Mary Louise, "the spy case is ended. When they arrest Tom Linnet they will be able to prove, from the scraps of paper I found in the printing room of the hotel, that Linnet printed the circulars from copy furnished by Dyer, and that Dyer and Linnet together directed the envelopes, probably in the still hours of the morning at the hotel desk, where they were not likely to be disturbed. The circulars may not be considered legally treasonable, but the fact that Linnet personally placed the bomb that destroyed the airplane works will surely send him to the scaffold."

"I suppose you will be called as a witness," suggested Mary Louise, "because you are the only one who overheard his verbal confession of the crime."

"It won't take much to make Linnet confess," predicted Josie. "He is yellow all through, or he wouldn't have undertaken such dastardly work for the sake of money. His refusal to undertake the second job was mere cowardice, not repentance. I understand that sort of criminal pretty well, and I assure you he will confess as soon as he is captured."

But, somewhat to the astonishment of the officers, Tom Linnet managed to evade capture. They found his trail once or twice, and lost it again. After a time they discovered he had escaped into Mexico; afterward they heard of a young man of his description in Argentine; finally he disappeared altogether.

The arms of the law are long and strong, far-reaching and mercilessly persistent. They may embrace Tom Linnet yet, but until now he has miraculously avoided them.