

"The Twelfth is in the trenches. The Fifteenth relieved us at night-fall. I should have gone back with them."

The general interposed, frowning fiercely.

"If you were asleep on sentry duty there can be only one penalty," he snarled. "But if you are a spy you may save your life by acknowledging all and giving us information of value as to the movements of the Germans. Come now, are you a German?"

"I am an American of the Foreign Legion," said Scovell, with a gesture signifying that the whole process was useless. He thought of a girl in Boston, whom he had left after a quarrel. He had not seen her before he sailed. Perhaps they would let him write a letter.

"Prove that you are not a spy!" the general persisted angrily. "What is the last village at which you halted, where your headquarters are now?"

"La Fere."

"Your trenches—have they many bomb-throwers? Come, I know the exact number."

"We have four bomb-throwers in our division."

"Are the trenches cemented?"

"Concreted. But what is the use of all this? I have confessed —"

"Be silent. Who commands the Ninth? Answer now, for your life depends—"

A blazing star shell suddenly disclosed the scene to Scovell's eyes as if it had been etched in white. He saw the eager group about him, the attentive faces. Something was hotting high overhead—

Crash!

Night fell. A thousand tons of earth seemed to rise up and strike him. Scovell gasped for breath. He fought with fury to worm his way through the overwhelming mass. He was aware of fragments of debris that had once been flesh and blood about him. He found the free air,

drew in a breath, struggled out of the immense crater made by the shell.

In the center of the hole lay the mutilated and mangled bodies of the officers who had comprised the court-martial.

And suddenly Scovell realized that he was free. None but the party knew that he had slept. They had placed nobody on guard in his stead. He had not been absent more than a quarter of an hour. If he hurried he could be back in time for his relief.

He was about to hurry down the empty trench when he saw a piece of paper fluttering on the ground beside the body of the general. He picked it up. The sky was faintly illumined by the light of distant star shells. Somewhere in the distance the artillery was booming. Scovell could just make out the meaning of the paper.

It was in German and contained a number of rough diagrams which he believed to be plans of the German trenches.

He must deliver the document as soon as he was relieved to his headquarters.

He waited no longer, but started off as fast as he could go. As he ran he remembered that the officer who had disarmed him had thrown his rifle down beside him.

Five minutes later Scovell, breathless and overjoyed, resumed his solitary post among the trees. The sweat streamed down his face as he thought of his escape. What an escape!

But then—the document! He must in duty deliver that at headquarters. No doubt it was of the utmost consequence. The death of the general and the destruction of his aids by the German shell occurring, as it had done, in a lonely spot, could not be known. Though it meant death to tell the truth Scovell must tell it.

For the sake of France, to whom he had sworn fealty, whom he had so nearly betrayed, he must confess. He fingered the document in his tunic pocket and shuddered with horror as he realized the meaning of his duty,