

THE STORY OF A SECRET

William Le Queux

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THE story of the secret was not without its humorous side.

Before entering Paris, after our quick run up from Marseilles after the affair of the jeweller's shop, we had stopped at Melun, beyond Fontainebleau. There, a well-known carriage-builder had been ordered to repaint the car pale blue with a dead white band. Upon the panels, my employer, the impudent Bindo, had ordered a count's coronet, with the cipher "G.B." beneath, all to be done in the best style and regardless of expense. Then, that same evening, we took the express to the Gare de Lyon, and put up, as before, at the Ritz.

For three weeks, without the car, we had a pleasant time. Usually Count Bindo di Ferraris spent his time with his gay friends, lounging in the evening at Maxim's, or giving costly suppers at the Americain. One lady with whom I often saw him walking in the streets, or sitting in cafés, was, I discovered, known as "Valentine of the Beautiful Eyes," for I recognised her one night on the stage of a music-hall in the Boulevard de Clichy, where she was evidently a great favourite. She was young — not more than twenty I think — with wonderful big coal-black eyes, a wealth of dark hair worn with a bandeau, and a face that was perfectly charming.

She seemed known to Blythe, too, for one evening I saw her sitting with him in the Brasserie Universelle, in the Avenue de l'Opéra — that place where one dines so well and cheaply. She was laughing, and had a demi-blonde raised to her lips. So essentially a Parisienne, she was also something of a mystery, for though she often frequented cafés, and went to the Folies Bergères and Olympia, sang at the Marigny, and mixed with a Bohemian crowd of champagne-drinkers, she seemed nevertheless a most decorous little lady. In fact, though I had not spoken to her, she had won my admiration. She was very beautiful, and I — well, I was only a man, and human.

One bright morning, when the car came to Paris, I called for her, at Bindo's orders at her flat in the Avenue Kléber, where she lived, it appeared, with a prim, sharp-nosed old aunt, of angular appearance peculiarly French. She soon appeared, dressed in the very latest motor clothes with her veil properly fixed, in a manner which showed me instantly that she was a motorist. Besides, she would not enter the car, but got up beside me, wrapped a rug about her skirts in a business-like manner, and gave me the order to move.

"Where to, Mademoiselle?" I asked.

"Did not the Count give you instructions?" she asked in her pretty broken English, turning her great dark eyes upon me in surprise. "Why, to Brussels, of course."

"To Brussels!" I ejaculated, for I thought the run was to be only about Paris — to meet Bindo, perhaps.

"Yes. Are you surprised?" she laughed. "It is not far — two hundred kilometres, or so. Surely that is nothing for you?"

"Not at all. Only the Count is at the Ritz. Shall we not call there first?"

"The Count left for Belgium by the seven-fifty train this morning," was her reply. "He has taken our baggage with his, and you will take me by road alone."

I was, of course, nothing loth to spend a few hours with such a charming companion as La Valentine; therefore in the Avenue des Champs Elysées I pulled up, and consulting my road-book, decided to go by way of Arras, Douai, St. Amand, and Ath. Quickly we ran out beyond the fortifications; while, driving in silence I wondered what this latest manœuvre was to be. This sudden flight from Paris was more than mysterious. It caused me considerable apprehension, for when I had seen the Count in his room at midnight he had made no mention of his intention to leave so early.

At last, out upon the straight high road that ran between lines of high bare poplars, I put on speed, and quickly the cloud of white dust rose behind us. The northerly wind that grey day was biting, and threatened snow; therefore my pretty companion very soon began to feel the cold. I saw her turning up the collar of her cloth motor-coat, and guessed that she had no leather beneath. To do a day's journey in comfort in such weather one

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must be wind-proof.

"You are cold, Mademoiselle," I remarked. "Will you not put on my leather jacket? You'll feel the benefit of it, even though it may not appear very smart." And I pulled up.

With a light merry laugh she consented, and I got out the garment in question, helped her into it over her coat, and though a trifle tight across the chest, she at once declared that it was a most excellent idea. She was, indeed, a merry child of Paris, and allowed me to button the coat, smiling the while at my masculine clumsiness.

Then we continued on our way, and a few moments later were going for all we were worth over the dry, well-kept, level road eastward, towards the Belgian frontier. She laughed and chatted as the hours went by. She had been in London last spring, she told me, and had stayed at the Savoy. The English were so droll, and lacked cachet, though the hotel was smart — especially at supper.

"We pass Douai," she remarked presently, after we had run rapidly through many villages and small towns. "I must call for a telegram." And then, somehow, she settled down into thoughtful silence.

At Arras I pulled up, and got her a glass of hot milk. Then on again, for she declared that she was not hungry, and preferred to get to Brussels than to linger on the road. On the broad highway to Douai we went at the greatest speed that I could get out of the fine six-cylinder, the engines beating beautiful time, and the car running as smoothly as a watch. The clouds of whirling dust became very bad, however, and I was compelled to goggle, while the tall-fronted veil adequately protected my sweet-faced travelling companion.

At Douai she descended and entered the post-office herself, returning with a telegram and a letter. The latter she handed to me, and I found it was addressed in my name, and had been sent to the Poste-restante.

Tearing it open in surprise I read the hastily pencilled lines it contained — instructions in the Count's handwriting which were extremely puzzling, not to say disconcerting. The words I read were:—

"After crossing the frontier you will assume the name of Count de Bourbriac, and Valentine will pass as the Countess. A suitable suite of rooms have been taken for you at the Grand Hotel, Brussels, where you will find your luggage on your arrival. Mademoiselle will supply you with funds. I shall be in Brussels, but shall not approach you. — B. di F."

The pretty Valentine who was to be my pseudo-wife crushed the blue telegram into her coat-pocket, mounted into her seat, wrapped her rug around her, and ordered me to proceed.

I glanced at her, but she was to all appearances quite unconscious of the extraordinary contents of the Count's letter.

We had run fully twenty miles in silence when at last, on ascending a steep hill, I turned to her and said:

"The Count has sent me some very extraordinary instructions, Mademoiselle I am, after passing the frontier, to become Count de Bourbriac, and you are to pass as the Countess!"

"Well?" she asked, arching her well-marked eyebrows. "Is that so very difficult, m'sieur? Are you disinclined to allow me to pass as your wife?"

"Not at all," I replied smiling. "Only — well — it is somewhat — er — unconventional, is it not?"

"Rather an amusing adventure than otherwise," she laughed. "I shall call you mon cher Gaston, and you — well, you will call me your petite Liane — Liane de Bourbriac will sound well, will it not?"

"Yes. But why this masquerade?" I inquired. "I confess, Mademoiselle I don't understand it at all."

"Dear Bindo does. Ask him." Then after a brief pause, she added: "This is really a rather novel experience," and she laughed gleefully, as though thoroughly enjoying the adventure.

Without slackening speed I drove on through the short winter afternoon. The faint yellow sunset slowly disappeared behind us, and darkness crept on. With the fading day the cold became intense, and when I stopped to light the head-lamps I got out my cashmere muffler and wrapped it around her throat.

At last we reached the small frontier village, where we pulled up before the Belgian Custom House, paid the deposit upon the car, and obtained the leaden seal. Then, after a liqueur-glass of cognac each at a little café in the vicinity, we set out again upon that long wide road that leads through Ath to Brussels.

A puncture at a place called Leuze caused us a little delay, but the pseudo Countess descended and assisted me, even helping me to blow up the new tube, declaring that the exercise would warm her.

For what reason the pretty Valentine was to pass as my wife was, to me, entirely mysterious. That Bindo was engaged in some fresh scheme of fraud was certain, but what it was I racked my brains in vain to discover.

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Near Enghien we had several other tyre troubles, for the road had been newly metalled for miles. As every motorist knows, misfortunes never come singly, and in consequence it was already seven o'clock next morning before we entered Brussels by the Porte de Hal, and ran along the fine Boulevard d'Anspach, to the Grand Hotel.

The gilt-laced hall-porter, who was evidently awaiting us, rushed out cap in hand, and I, quickly assuming my rôle as Count, helped out the "Countess" and gave the car over to one of the employes of the hotel garage.

By the manager we were ushered into a fine suite of six rooms on the first floor, overlooking the Boulevard, and treated with all the deference due to persons of highest standing.

At that moment Valentine showed her cleverness by remarking that she had not brought Elise, her maid, as she was to follow by train, and that I would employ the services of one of the hotel valets for the time being. Indeed, so cleverly did she assume the part that she might really have been one of the ancient nobility of France.

I spoke in English. On the Continent just now it is considered rather smart to talk English. One often hears two German or Italian women speaking atrocious English together, in order to air their superior knowledge before strangers. Therefore that I spoke English was not remarked by the manager, who explained that our courier had given him all instructions, and had brought the baggage in advance. The courier was, I could only suppose, the audacious Bindo himself.

That day passed quite merrily. We lunched together, took a drive in the pretty Bois de la Cambre, and after dining, went to the Monnaie to see Madame Butterfly. On our return to the hotel I found a note from Bindo, and saying good-night to Valentine I went forth again to keep the appointment he had made in a café in the quiet Chaussée de Charleroi, on the opposite side of the city.

When I entered the little place I found the Count seated at a table with Blythe and Henderson. The two latter were dressed shabbily, while the Count himself was in dark grey, with a soft felt hat — the perfect counterfeit of the foreign courier.

With enthusiasm I was welcomed into the corner.

"Well?" asked Bindo with a laugh, "And how do you like your new wife, Ewart?" and the others smiled.

"Charming," I replied. "But I don't see exactly where the joke comes in."

"I don't suppose you do, just yet."

"It's a risky proceeding, isn't it?" I queried.

"Risky! What risk is there in gulling hotel people?" he asked. "If you don't intend to pay the bill it would be quite another matter."

"But why is the lady to pass as my wife? Why am I the Count de Bourbriac? Why, indeed, are we here at all?"

"That's our business, my dear Ewart. Leave matters to us. All you've got to do is to just play your part well. Appear to be very devoted to La Comtesse, and it'll be several hundreds into your pocket — perhaps a level thou' — who knows?"

"A thou' each — quite," declared Blythe, a cool, audacious international swindler of the most refined and cunning type.

"But what risk is there?" I inquired for my companions seemed to be angling after big fish this time, whoever they were.

"None, as far as you are concerned. Be advised by Valentine. She's as clever a girl as there is in all Europe. She has her eyes and ears open all the time. A lover will come on the scene before long, and you must be jealous — devilish jealous — you understand?"

"A lover? Who? I don't understand."

"You'll see, soon enough. Go back to the hotel — or stay with us to-night, if you prefer it. Only don't worry yourself over risks. We never take any. Only fools do that. Whatever we do is always a dead certainty before we embark upon the job."

"Then I'm to understand that some fellow is making love to Valentine — eh?"

"Exactly. To-morrow night you are both invited to a ball at the Belle Vue, in aid of the Hospital St. Jean. You will go, and there the lover will appear. You will withdraw, and allow the little flirtation to proceed. Valentine herself will give you further instructions as the occasion warrants."

"I confess I don't half like it. I'm working too much in the dark," I protested.

"That's just what we intend. If you knew too much you might betray yourself, for the people we've got to deal with have eyes in the backs of their heads," declared Bindo.

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It was five o'clock next morning before I returned to the Grand, but during the hours we smoked together, at various obscure cafés, the trio told me nothing further, though they chaffed me regarding the beauty of the girl who had consented to act the part of my wife, and who could only suppose, "stood in" with us.

At noon, surely enough, came a special invitation to the "Comte et Comtesse de Bourbriac" for the great ball that evening at the Hotel Belle Vue, and at ten o'clock that night Valentine entered our private salon splendidly dressed in a low-cut gown of smoke-grey chiffon covered with sequins. Her hair had been dressed by a maid of the first order, and as she stood pulling on her long gloves she looked superb.

"How do you find me, my dear M'sieur Ewart? Do I look like a Comtesse?" she asked laughing.

"You look perfectly charming, Mademoiselle."

"Liane, if you please," she said reprovingly, holding up her slim forefinger. "Liane, Comtesse de Bourbriac, Chateau de Bourbriac, Côtes du Nord!" and her pretty lips parted, showing her even pearly teeth.

When, half an hour later, we entered the ball-room we found all smart Brussels assembled around a royal prince and his wife who had given their patronage in the cause of charity. The affair was, I saw at a glance, a distinctly society function, for many men from the Ministries were present, and several of the Ambassadors in uniform, together with their staffs, who, wearing their crosses and ribbons, made a brave show, as they do in every ball-room.

We had not been there ten minutes before a tall good-looking young man in a German cavalry uniform strode up in recognition, and bowing low over Valentine's outstretched hand, said in French:

"My dear Countess! How very delighted we are to have you here with us to-night. You will spare me a dance, will you not? May I be introduced to the Count?"

"My husband — Captain von Stolberg of the German Embassy."

And we shook hands. Was this fellow the lover, I wondered?

"I met the Countess at Vichy last autumn," explained the Captain in very good English. "She spoke very often of you. You were away in Scotland shooting the grouse," he said.

"Yes — yes," I replied for want of something better to say.

We both chatted with the young attaché for a few minutes, and then, as a waltz struck up, he begged a dance of my "wife," and they both whirled down the room. Valentine was a splendid dancer, and as I watched them I wondered what could be the nature of the plot in progress.

I did not come across my pretty fellow-traveller for half-an-hour, and then I found that the captain had half filled her programme. Therefore I "laid low," danced once or twice with uninteresting Belgian matrons, and spent the remainder of the night in the fumoir, until I found my "wife" ready to return to the Grand.

When we were back in the salon at the hotel she asked:

"How do you like the Captain, M'sieur Ewart? Is he not — what you call in English — a duck?"

"An overdressed, swaggering young idiot, I call him," was my prompt reply.

"And there you are right — quite right my dear M'sieur Ewart. But you see we all have an eye to business in this affair. He will call to-morrow, because he is extremely fond of me. Oh! if you had heard all his pretty love phrases! I suppose he has learnt them out of a book. They couldn't be his own. Germans are not romantic — how can they be? But he — ah! he is Adonis in the flesh — with corsets!" And we laughed merrily together.

"He thinks you are fond of him — eh?"

"Why, of course. He made violent love to me at Vichy. But he was not attaché then."

"And how am I to treat him when he calls to-morrow?"

"As your bosom friend. Give him confidence — the most perfect confidence. Don't play the jealous husband yet. That will come afterwards. Bon soir m'sieur," and when I had bowed over her soft little hand she turned, and swept out of the room with a loud frou-frou of her silken train.

That night I sat before the fire smoking for a long time. My companions were evidently playing some deep game upon this young German, a game in which neither trouble nor expense was being spared — a game in which the prize was a level thousand pounds apiece all round. I quite appreciated that I had now become an adventurer, but I had done so out of pure love of adventure.

About four o'clock next afternoon the Captain came to take "fif-o'clock," as he called it. He clicked his heels together as he bowed over Valentine's hand, and she smiled upon him even more sweetly than she had smiled at me when I had helped her into my leather motor-coat. She wore a beautiful toilette, one of the latest of Doeillet's

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she had explained to me, and really presented a delightfully dainty figure as she sat there pouring out tea, and chatting with the infatuated Captain of Cuirassiers.

I saw quickly that I was not wanted; therefore I excused myself, and went for a stroll along to the Café Métropole, afterwards taking a turn up the Montagne de la Cour. All day I had been on the look-out to see either Bindo or his companions, but they were evidently in hiding.

When I returned, just in time to dress for dinner, I asked Valentine what progress her lover was making, but she merely replied:

"Slow — very slow. But in things of this magnitude one must have patience. We are invited to the Embassy ball in honour of the Crown Prince of Saxony to-morrow night. It will be amusing."

Next night she dressed in a gown of pale rose chiffon, and we went to the Embassy, where one of the most brilliant balls of the season was in progress King Leopold himself being present to honour the young Crown Prince. Captain Stolberg soon discovered the woman who held him beneath her spell, and I found myself dancing attendance upon the snub-nosed little daughter of a Burgomaster, with whom I waltzed the greater part of the evening. On our return my "wife" told me with a laugh that matters were progressing well. "Otto," she added, "is such a fool. Men in love will believe any fiction a woman tells them. Isn't it really extraordinary?"

"Perhaps I'm one of those men, Mademoiselle," I said looking straight into her beautiful eyes, for I own she had in a measure fascinated me, even though I knew her to be an adventuress.

She burst out laughing in my face.

"Don't be absurd, M'sieur Ewart," she cried. "Fancy you! But you certainly wouldn't fall in love with me. We are only friends — in the same swim, as I believe you term it in English."

I was a fool. I admit it. But when one is thrown into the society of a pretty woman eve a chauffeur may make speeches he regrets.

So the subject dropped, and with a mock curtsy, and a saucy wave of the hand, she went to her room.

On the following day she went out alone at eleven, not returning until six. She offered no explanation of where she had been, and of course it was not for me to question her. As we sat at dinner in our private *salle-à-manger* an hour later she laughed at me across the table, and declared that I was sitting as soberly as though I really were her dutiful husband. And next day she was absent again the whole day, while I amused myself in visiting the Law Courts, the picture galleries, and the general sights of the little capital of which Messieurs the brave Belgians are so proud. On her return she seemed thoughtful, even triste. She had been on an excursion somewhere with Otto, but she did not enlighten me regarding its details. I wondered that I had had no word from Bindo. Yet he had told me to obey Valentine's instructions, and I was now doing so. At dinner she once clenched her little hand involuntarily, and drew a deep breath, showing me that she was indignant at something.

The following morning, as she mentioned that she should be absent all day, I took a run on the car as far as the quaint little town of Dinant, up the Meuse, getting back to dinner.

In the salon she met me, already in her dinner-gown, and told me that she had invited Otto to dine.

"To-night you must show your jealousy. You must leave us together here, in the salon, after dinner, and then a quarter of an hour later return suddenly. I will compromise him. Then you will quarrel violently, order him to leave the hotel, and thus part bad friends."

I hardly liked to be a party to such a trick, yet the whole plot interested me. I could not see to what material end all this tended.

Well, the gay Captain duly arrived, and we dined together merrily. His eyes were fixed admiringly upon Valentine the whole time and his conversation was mainly reminiscent of the days at Vichy. The meal over, we passed into the salon, and there I left them. But on reentering shortly afterwards I found him standing behind the couch, bending over and kissing her. She had her arms clasped around his neck so tightly that he could not disengage himself.

In pretended fury I dashed across to the pair with my fists clenched in jealous anger. What I said I scarcely remember. All I know is that I let forth a torrent of reproaches and condemnations, and ended by practically kicking the fellow out of the room, while my "wife" sank upon her knees and implored my forgiveness which I flatly refused.

The Captain took his kicking in silence but in his glance was murder, as he turned once and faced me ere he

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left the room.

"Well, Valentine," I asked, when he was safely out of hearing, and when she had raised herself from her knees laughing. "And what now?"

"The whole affair is now plain sailing. To-morrow you will take the car to Liège, and there await me outside the cathedral at midnight on the following night. You will easily find the place. Wait until two o'clock, and if I am not there go on to Cologne, and put up at the Hotel du Nord."

"Without baggage?"

"Without baggage. Don't trouble about anything. Simply go there and wait."

At midday on the following day the pretty Valentine dressed herself carefully, and went out. Then, an hour later, pretending that I was only going for a short run, I mounted into the car and set out for Liège, wondering what was now to happen.

Next day I idled away, and at a quarter to twelve that night, after a run around the town, I pulled up in the shadow before the cathedral and stopped the engines. The old square was quite quiet, for the good Liègois retire early, and the only sound was the musical carillon of the bells.

In impatience I waited. The silent night was clear, bright, and frosty, with a myriad shining stars above. Time after time the great clock above me chimed the quarters, until just before two o'clock there came a dark female figure round the corner, walking quickly. In an instant I recognised Valentine, who was dressed in a long travelling coat with fur collar, and a sealskin toque. She was carrying something beneath her coat.

"Quick!" she said breathlessly. "Let us get away. Get ready. Count Bindo is following me!" And ere I could start the engines, my employer, in a long dark overcoat and felt hat, hurriedly approached us, saying:

"Come, let's be off, Ewart. We've a long journey to-night to Cassel. We must go through Aix, and pick up Blythe, and then on by way of Cologne, Arnsburg, and the Hoppeke-Tal."

Quickly they both put on the extra wraps from the car, entered, and wrapped the rugs about them, while two minutes later, with our big head-lamps shedding a broad white light before us, we turned out upon the wide high road to Verviers.

"It's all right!" cried Bindo, leaning over to me when we had covered about five miles or so. "Everything went off perfectly."

"And M'sieur made a most model 'husband,' I assure you," declared the pretty Valentine, with a musical laugh.

"But what have you done?" I inquired half turning, but afraid to take my eyes from the road.

"Be patient. We'll explain everything when we get to Cassel," responded Valentine. And with that I had to be content.

At the station at Aix we found Blythe awaiting us, and when he had taken the seat beside me we set out by way of Duren to Cologne, and on to Cassel, a long and bitterly cold journey.

It was not until we were dining together late the following night in the comfortable old König von Preussen, at Cassel, that Valentine revealed the truth to me.

"When I met the German at Vichy I was passing as Countess de Bourbriac, and pretending that my husband was in Scotland. At first I avoided him," she said. "But later on I was told, in confidence, that he was a spy in the service of the War Office in Berlin. Then I wrote to Count Bindo, and he advised me to pretend to reciprocate the fellow's affections, and to keep a watchful eye for the main chance. I have done so — that's all."

"But what was this 'main chance'?" I asked.

"Why, don't you see, Ewart," exclaimed the Count, who was standing by, smoking a cigarette. "The fact that he was in the Intelligence Department in Berlin, and that he had been suddenly appointed military attaché at Brussels, made it plain that he was carrying out some important secret-service work in Belgium. On making inquiries I heard that he was constantly travelling in the country, and, speaking French so well, he was passing himself off as a Belgian. Blythe, in the guise of an English tourist, met him in Boxtel two months ago, and satisfied himself as to the character of the task he had undertaken, a risky but most important one. Then we all agreed that, when completed, the secrets he had possessed himself of should become ours, for the Intelligence Department of either France or England would be certain to purchase them for almost any sum we liked to name, so important were they. About two months we waited for the unsuspecting Otto to complete his work, and then suddenly the Countess reappears, accompanied by her husband. And — well, Valentine, you can best tell Ewart the remainder of the story," added the audacious scoundrel, replacing his cigarette in his mouth.

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"As M'sieur Ewart knows, Captain Stolberg was in love with me, and I pretended to be infatuated with him. The other night he kissed me, and my dear 'Gaston' saw it, and in just indignation and jealousy promptly kicked him out. Next day I met him, told him that my husband was a perfect hog, and urged him to take me from him. At first he would not sacrifice his official position as attaché, for he was a poor man. Then we talked money matters, and I suggested that he surely possessed something which he could turn into money sufficient to keep us for a year or two, as I had a small income though not absolutely sufficient for our wants. In fact, I offered, now that he had compromised me in the eyes of my husband, to elope with him. We walked in the Bois de la Cambre for two solid hours that afternoon, until I was footsore, and yet he did not catch on. Then I played another game, declaring that he did not love me sufficiently to make such a sacrifice, and at last taking a dramatic farewell of him. He allowed me to get almost to the gates of the Bois, when he suddenly ran after me, and told me that he had a packet of documents for which he could obtain a large sum abroad. He would take them, and myself, to Berlin by that night's mail, and then we would go on to St. Petersburg, where he could easily dispose of the mysterious papers. So we met at the station at midnight, and by the same train travelled Bindo and M'sieurs Blythe and Henderson. In the carriage he told me where the precious papers were — in a small leathern hand-bag — and this fact I whispered to Blythe when he brushed past me in the corridor. At Pepinster, the junction for Spa, we both descended to obtain some refreshment, and when we returned to our carriage the Captain glanced reassuringly at his bag. Bindo passed along the corridor, and I knew the truth. Then on arrival at Liege I left the Captain smoking, and strolled to the back end of the carriage, waiting for the train to move off. Just as it did so I sprang out upon the platform, and had the satisfaction of seeing, a moment later, the red tail-lights of the Berlin express disappear. I fancy I saw the Captain's head out of the window and heard him shout, but next instant he was lost in the darkness."

"As soon as you had both got out at Pepinster Blythe slipped into the compartment, broke the lock of the bag with a special tool we call 'the snipper,' and had the papers in a moment. These he passed on to me, and travelled past Liège on to Aix."

"Here are the precious plans," remarked the Count, producing a voluminous packet in a big blue envelope, the seal of which had been broken.

And on opening this he displayed to me a quantity of carefully drawn plans of the whole canal system, and secret defences between the Rhine and the Meuse, the waterway, he explained, which one day Germany, in time of war with England, will require to use in order to get her troops through the port of Antwerp, and the Belgian coast — the first complete and reliable plans ever obtained of the chain of formidable defences that Belgium keeps a profound secret.

What sum was paid to the pretty Valentine by the French Intelligence Department for them I am not aware. I only know that she one day sent me a beautiful gold cigarette-case inscribed with the words "From Liane de Bourbriac," and inside it was a draft on the London branch of the Credit Lyonnais for eight hundred and fifty pounds.

Captain Otto Stolberg has, I hear, been transferred as attaché to another European capital. No doubt his first thoughts were of revenge, but on mature consideration he deemed it best to keep his mouth closed, or he would have betrayed himself as a spy. The Count had, no doubt, foreseen that. As for Valentine, she actually declares that, after all, she merely rendered a service to her country!