

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

'STEALTHY TERROR.'

This story, which is told in the first person, is about a medical man who, after having graduated at Aberdeen, went to Berlin to apply what he had learnt of medical science and therapeutics to the stolid Teuton, so different from the volatile Latin that had been lately under his observation at Salpêtrière.

"Well," he says, "I had been going with more or less regularity to the Café Rozenkrantz, and had got to know by sight most of its frequenters, when quite suddenly one night I slipped into the whirlpool of its dark waters."

He became vaguely aware that there was something afoot. "Over the edge of my paper I caught numerous glances directed my way, that I could not attribute to anything unusual or attractive in my appearance."

When the group of men rose to leave the room our English friend determined to follow them, to find out what they were plotting, and from that moment forward the book is one long thrill of excitement. A street scuffle, a stranger done to death, but ere they had time to rifle the victim's pockets Dr. Abercrombie had put in some well-directed blows on the assailants and had received a small packet from the dying man, whose eyes had made a mute appeal to him, and then "I turned into the dark alley and ran for my life."

It was to regain possession of this packet that the machinery of the Berlin Secret Service was set in motion.

But when Dr. Abercrombie opened it with the greatest secrecy and caution what did he find?

He says: "I must have presented a ludicrous spectacle of amazed disappointment as I looked up from the neatly drawn and crudely coloured figures. They were childish pictures of birds and beasts and toys, and on the paper was inscribed in an unformed hand, 'Drawn by little Eitel for his dear Papa's birthday, August, 1914.'" Quite an innocent little document when it is remembered that the events recorded took place prior to the war.

From this point of view we are not surprised to learn later on in the book that it was the cipher for a diabolically clever plan of the invasion of England from three points.

Dr. Abercrombie would have had small chance of escaping from Berlin alive if it had not been for the assistance of an English girl, who was studying music in the city.

"As I leant against the big door wiping the cold sweat of exhaustion from my face, I heard the footsteps of someone advancing from my side of the square.

I went to meet her. If I had only a hat to raise in salutation!"

"Madam," I cried, "Madam."

* By J. A. Ferguson. John Lane, The Bodley Head.

She looked a little startled, apparently coming back from dreams, and stared at me. As she passed I saw that she was quite young.

"Madam," I cried, turning to her and holding out my hands.

She lifted her music roll threateningly.

"Take care," she said, stamping her foot fiercely.

A perfect spitfire of a girl! She had a pale face, rather Slavonic in outline and dark eyes.

"I am taking care," I answered eagerly. "Madam, you see before you a man whose life is in danger."

In the distance came the sound of running feet.

She turned her head and looked at me doubtfully.

"Come," she cried. "No need to walk or run. I live here."†

He comments to himself that she is a thundering fine girl. And indeed she was.

Of course the flat was attacked and there were gruesome doings.

"They are here," I cried. "They are doing something to the outer door." As I waited I experienced bitter self-reproach at having involved her in such an affair. I made up my mind to tackle whatever might be behind that door. I felt I could crack their heads as cook cracks eggs against a plate. It was a good moment, and I seemed to hear a sort of wild song in my head, and its refrain was "Rejoice, O young man, in thy strength."

We must leave our readers to find out how Dr. Abercrombie and Miss Thompson escaped from the flat. The improvised telephone whereby they pretended to call up the British Legation was a clever ruse and had the intended effect.

It was in the lounge of an hotel in Edinburgh that the two opened the mysterious packet and found little Eitel's present to his dear papa.

Dr. Abercrombie was so far forgetful of his obligation to Margarita Thompson that he almost loathed her because she laughed.

"Perhaps you can imagine the fool I felt—all these alarms and accompanying mysteries, for what?"

"A little boy's drawings for his dear papa's birthday.

"Miss Thompson never once referred to that accursed paper during the journey, nor did I, you may be sure. It was at least some comfort that I had not rushed to Whitehall."

But this stage only takes us about half-way through the book and there are many other thrilling adventures before little Eitel's paper is valued at its true worth.

An amusing account is given of the interview with the officials at Whitehall, where a policeman is finally called in to remove Dr. Abercrombie.

"Do you think I am mad?" I gasped. "Not insane," said the Permanent Secretary, "but in a highly imaginative condition."

As I was led to the door both secretaries watched me with sympathetic eyes.

"Poor young man. Mad as a hatter!"

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)