

The Kaiser's Hairdresser

NARRATIVE OF CAPTAIN ADAMS
"Detective-Diplomat"

By H. M. EGBERT

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I HAD not seen his majesty since he had appointed me to be one of his couriers. I had been given to understand, however, by the foreign secretary, Lord Lansdowne, that the king was highly pleased with the successful result of my mission to South America, which had saved the American squadron from destruction. I had the self-depreciation to acknowledge that this event was purely the result of chance, and not due to any ability of mine; but Lord Lansdowne waved aside my explanations.

"My dear Adams," he said, "please remember from now on that a king's courier is judged by the success or failure of his mission—not by his deserts. Results are all that are desired, and it makes no particle of difference how you obtain them."

I had begun to think that my position was to be more or less a sinecure, when one morning my servant Talbot ushered a little page boy, a youthful scion of one of our noblest families, into my lodgings at Half Moon street, Piccadilly.

"Are you Captain Adams, sir?" he inquired, with the blasé expression of 12 or 13 summers.

"At your service," I replied, bowing.

"With majesty deareth your presence immediately at the T. M. Jameth palath," said the page, clicking his heels and retiring with a military salute.

I wasted no time, but hurriedly changing into my frock coat, I ran down the stairs, polishing my silk hat upon my sleeve as I went. I reached the front door in time to see the page riding off in his automobile. I hailed a taxicab and drove to the palace. My arrival was expected, and I was immediately shown into a small room, where I saw an elderly gentleman, dressed in the conventional attire of a London clubman, bending over a file of newspapers. It was his majesty.

He turned round the moment that I entered, came up, and shook hands with me cordially, at the same time motioning me to be seated. Then, drawing up his own chair close to mine, he began speaking with evident anxiety.

"Captain Adams," he said, "I was the first to regret the unfortunate termination of your career in the diplomatic service, and was also the first to suggest to Lord Lansdowne that your abilities should be employed in the less legitimate but unquestionably more useful field. I have not forgotten your deeds of courage in the Afghan campaign of 1897, and, with your diplomatic training, you should be one of my most useful aides. But now to come to the point.

"As you know, the Kaiser has just returned to Germany after a trip to Morocco, and after making a hellish speech there which has astonished Europe. All the nations are ranged up for a diplomatic conflict, namely, whether or not the Kaiser shall be compelled to submit his claims against France to an international tribunal.

"Unfortunately, I have information that the Kaiser considers that, with Russia weak and exhausted after her war with Japan, and unable to help France effectively, the moment has arrived to crush his old enemy, humble the republic so that she will never rise again, exact a tremendous indemnity, and annex the northern provinces. I need hardly tell you that Great Britain cannot see France conquered by Germany, for this would mean that the Kaiser would be the dominant figure in the world's politics.

"I have positive information that it is his intention to make a public and theatrical declaration of war against France from the balcony of his palace at Potsdam, within three or four days. Arranging himself in the uniform of Frederick the Great, brandishing his sword and wearing the eagle helmet, he will, by this theatrical appeal, sweep the whole nation with him. At all costs this must be prevented.

"You will proceed to Potsdam, then, without delay, and demand an immediate interview with the Kaiser. In my name you will insist that he abandon this project. But, if he refuse, as he probably will, then you will hand him this private communication which I now place in your hands, stating that any such action against the French will result in immediate war with England.

"His majesty rose, indicating that the interview was at an end, and with a few appreciative words, and instructions that I should not delay, dismissed me. I went out of the palace a victim of conflicting emotions. Pride was dominant, pride at having been selected for so important a duty—one no less than that of preserving the peace of Europe. But with it was mingled, almost as strongly, the fear of responsibility, the dread that I had been given a task harder than I could perform. For my success virtually hung upon the Kaiser's whim. And two years at the Berlin embassy had taught me that this was the X factor in German diplomacy.

That evening I caught the Hamburg boat, and, traveling all the following day, I reached Potsdam with the Kaiser's momentous speech still in the future. It was evident, however, that rumors of impending war had gone abroad, for there was a curious tenseness in the atmosphere, an attitude of waiting and expecting, to be discovered everywhere, and not only among the officials. More than that, since morning, a crowd had gathered in front of the palace, and this had gradually increased, without the police making any effort to break it up, until all the nearby streets and avenues

iently out of the room, and we could hear him pacing the corridor.

Prince Buelow, in the meantime, had opened the letter and read its contents. My attention had been attracted by the sound of the Kaiser's movements. I thought I heard him groan as he passed out of the door. He was evidently in great pain. When I turned round I was amazed at the change in the Chancellor's expression. His face had taken on a greenish tinge and his breath came in short gasps. He placed his hand over his heart, as if to still its pulsations.

"If I had known," he said, "I would have flung the letter under his face and shouted it in his ears." He began to pace the room distractedly. "A foreign war," he murmured. "On sea, and our battleships—wiped out prematurely." He turned to me suddenly.

"You know the contents of this letter?" he asked abruptly.

"I signified my assent.

"Then I can talk plainly with you. You know that all Germany is awaiting the Kaiser's declaration of war against France tomorrow morning. It must be stopped. At present Germany cannot afford to go to war with France and England in alliance."

"Why not go to the Kaiser and insist upon an audience?" I demanded. The master of ceremonies smiled.

"You do not know the Kaiser," he returned.

"Moreover," said Prince Buelow, "even if I were able to do this thing the Kaiser's obstinacy would be aroused. His pride and obstinacy are his dominant characteristics. No, frankly, I see little hope that this can be accomplished. Nothing can turn him from his purpose."

"Perhaps I might," I hazarded, "without an audience. Gentlemen, since neither England nor Germany desires this war, shall we allow one man to plunge two nations into misery?"

"They looked at one another aghast; plain speaking of that nature was the exception at the Kaiser's court."

"Tell me," I continued, "when will his majesty make his speech from the balcony?"

"At ten tomorrow—if the court-tailor has finished his uniform," said the master of ceremonies with a slight sneer.

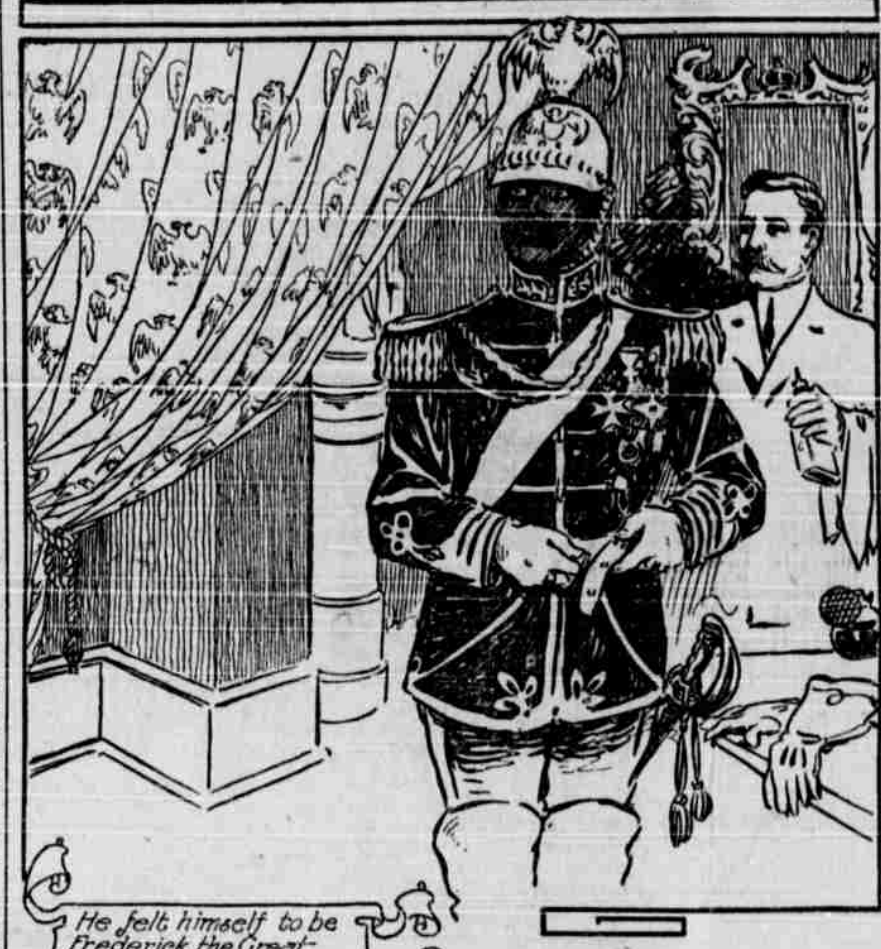
"Would you save France if I gave you the opportunity? It would mean that you would have to leave Germany immediately and sacrifice all your interests here. Still, if I gave you 5,000 livres into the bargain—would you save France?"

"Then, as I made him my proposition, I saw his mouth open and his eyes grow wider and wider with the audacity of it; finally his Gallic spirit caught the contagion of the thing, and he broke down and chuckled and roared and hugged his sides, and gasped for breath, while his face grew red until I was afraid that he would choke himself to death. But finally he recovered and the details were arranged."

Shortly before nine o'clock on the following morning M. Perraquet was to bring me into the presence of the Kaiser, explaining that, since his own health had failed to alleviate the neuragic pains, he desired his majesty to try the services of a noted masseur, who had just entered his employment and was reputed to possess the power of healing. Thereupon, the Kaiser having been shaved by the Frenchman, I was to massage his face thoroughly for half an hour, while M. Perraquet would slip out by a side entrance and proceed directly to the railway station, from which a train would convey him over the border. I myself would await whatever fate came to me; I knew that, an unofficial but still accredited envoy of his Britannic majesty, I would not be likely to be molested.

I gave Perraquet a draft for 5,000 livres, which he accepted readily, my former official position vouching for its genuineness in his eyes. Then, with a few parting instructions, I left him.

Next morning, soon after eight, when I passed through the streets, I saw the square in front of the palace densely packed with a surging throng. The word had gone forth that the Kaiser's declaration was to be made that morning, and all Potsdam was agog with patriotic enthusiasm. I found Perraquet waiting for me, and we hurried to the palace. I was admitted, in the barber's company, without question, and we were led to the royal apartment, where we discovered the sovereign of Germany lying in a darkened room, strikingly clad in the



He felt himself to be Frederick the Great, reincarnated.

famous uniform of his ancestor, his sword beside him, and his helmet with the eagle brooding over it, upon a chair.

"I am in agony, Perraquet," he muttered. Then he saw me. "Who is this?" he demanded.

"An assistant of mine, sire," returned the barber, bending low. "He possesses extraordinary skill as a masseur, and will, I am confident, be able to relieve your majesty."

"Well, come, shave me quickly," said Wilhelm, crossing the room and taking his seat in a barber's chair in front of a mirror. But it was not my purpose that he should watch my manipulations, while Perraquet was shaving the emperor, and, when he came to my turn to massage him, finding no more suitable excuse, boldly wheeled the chair, containing his imperial occupant, into another part of the room, from which he could not watch my movements.

I think the audacity of this action saved me. For an instant the Kaiser sat up, the blood flaming in his cheeks, then, apparently concluding that one who would be so daring must possess unusual qualifications, he resigned himself to my manipulations, lying back, as I directed him, with closed eyes.

You may be sure that I massaged him very thoroughly. From the juncture of the hair with the forehead down to the chin, and to the throat, there was no place on which I did not leave the imprint of my fingers.

"Why are you massaging my throat?" asked the Kaiser, once. "The pain is here!"—indicating the superorbital region.

"Sire—the nerves connect," I stammered. Then, regaining courage, I proceeded. The inflammation is in the actual nerve trunks, which pass through the throat near the surface of the skin, though, by a sympathetic extension, the pain is felt in the branches around the ears and over the eyes.

"Where's Perraquet?" he demanded again, having spoken to him and received no answer.

"I do not permit the presence of a third party when I perform my cures," I answered valiantly, and with apparent unconcern. The Kaiser laughed.

"Well, you seem to know your business," he replied. "But hasten, for in five minutes I have an engagement."



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