

The Affair of the North Sea

NARRATIVE OF
CAPTAIN ADAMS
"Detective-Diplomat"

By H. M. EGBERT

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WING to the recent death of the admiral who played the most prominent part in the affair, I am at last free to narrate the true meaning of a series of astonishing events which happened a few years ago and perplexed all Europe. That something lay at the back of the apparently tangled and meaningless maneuvers was obvious even to the uninitiated. But what it was remained a mystery. In particular, why did not the British government declare war upon Russia when the squadron of Rojestevsky ran amuck among the British trawling fleet and shelled the fishermen? I hope that I may here supply the answer.

It was the most critical period in English history for, perhaps, 50 years—that is to say, since the period of the Crimean war. Russia was struggling in the far east against the power of Japan. The war had gone badly with her, and it had been decided, as a last resource, to send the fleet from the Baltic round the coast of Africa and into Asiatic waters. We all know the result which attended on this ill-fated venture.

The activities of Russian cruisers in British waters and the arbitrary holding up of British vessels had strained relations between the two countries to the breaking point. This ill-feeling was increased by the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Finally, it was decided after a cabinet council that the Russian fleet must not be permitted to leave European waters. In other words, Mr. Balfour, who was then premier, resolved to declare war upon the Muscovites.

I, with all those who were acquainted with the inner workings of politics, was, of course, acquainted with the situation. I had been warned to hold myself prepared for service at a moment's notice. I knew that the cabinet council had been in session, I more than suspected the result of its deliberations. There was an electrical feeling in London that night, as though the minds of all were telepathically acquainted with what was impending. Even the theater crowds discussed the probability of war as they straggled homeward. I had taken a stroll along Piccadilly—not far, for I dared not leave my lodgings in Half Moon street for more than a few minutes at a time. As I turned I saw Talbot, my soldier servant, hurrying after me among the crowds that jostled under the arc lights. He held a telegram in his hands. It was the expected summons.

Instinctively I took my grip, I hailed a hansom and was driven post haste to Downing street, where my presence was requested. When Mr. Balfour's butler opened the door of No. 10 to me I almost burst into the chamber where the council were seated. I knew that the urgency of the affair would brook no considerations of etiquette.

Mr. Balfour was seated at the head of the table. At his side was Lord Lansdowne, the foreign minister. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, though he had resigned in order to carry on his propaganda for protection, was present, as also were, most significantly, among the rest of the cabinet, Admiral "Jacky" Fisher and Lord Roberts, representing respectively the navy and army.

No sooner had I entered than Mr. Balfour vacated his chair, insisted that I should seat myself, and drew up another for himself. Then he explained the nature of my mission.

"Captain Adams," he said, "this afternoon the cabinet met and resolved to advise his majesty to declare war upon the government of Russia. Such a declaration was to have been made to the Russian ambassador tomorrow morning. By some occult method—nobody knows how these things happen—the ambassador learned of this. He called the news to his government at 12 o'clock. Four hours later the Russian fleet sailed on a mission of destruction toward the shores of England.

"That in itself matters little. Our fleet is prepared, and there is little doubt that we could blow the Russians out of the water before they could harm us. But there is more—much more—behind. At two o'clock this afternoon his majesty's government received authoritative notification from Berlin that, at the moment that the English and Russian fleets engage in hostilities a German squadron will sail from Kiel to land a hundred thousand men upon our southern shores. Simultaneously an army corps will cross the Russian boundary. In other words, Germany believes that her time for aggrandizement at our expense and Russia's is now come.

"The Russian ambassador has been informed of this plot. Needless to say, the decision has been reversed. England and Russia, instead of meditating war, are now on more friendly terms than they have been for a decade. But—Admiral Rojestevsky has left port and, ignorant of this change, is on his way to England with hostile intent. You must stop him and notify him.

"Here are despatches countersigned by his majesty and the Russian ambassador," he concluded. "Try to intercept him when he takes his fleet through the Sound. And beware of the German agents, who will, doubtless, soon be upon your trail. The Kaiser's representative is none other than the notorious Staphaus."

With this he took me by the hand and, after a cordial Goodspeed, fairly showed me down the steps and into Downing street. I was overcome with amazement for a few moments, which was not lessened by the recollection of the enemy I had to face. For Staphaus, convicted forger and blackmail-er, had been the most adroit of all Germany's representatives before his downfall, and we had crossed swords when I was at Berlin, not wholly to my advantage.

Half an hour later I was at home, saying adieu to Talbot.

"Won't you take me with you, sir?" he pleaded. "They're tough devils, I hear, them Rojestevskians."

I wavered for a moment. But I always like to take my fences alone. Reluctantly I felt that I must play a lone hand in these strange and peculiar circumstances. I ordered Talbot to sew the despatches inside my coat, at the same time mentioning that I expected to encounter danger from Staphaus, whose duty it was at any cost to prevent me from delivering my despatches to the Russian admiral.

Five minutes later Talbot handed me my coat. Putting it on, I felt the crinkly paper of the despatches inside the lining. Then, again refusing his urgent and repeated requests that I permit him to accompany me, I jumped into a cab, grip in hand, and started upon my journey to Copenhagen.

With the details of the journey as far as the Danish frontier I need not trouble you. I may state, however, that from the moment when I left the house I perceived that I was under surveillance. In the street, in the train, upon the boat, I was followed by relays of spies. However, I was armed, and gave no opportunity to my enemies. The real struggle, I knew, would come later.

I had calculated that I should be able to reach Copenhagen about five hours before the passage of the fleet through the Sound, which would afford me ample time to communicate with Admiral Rojestevsky. But an unexpected incident effectually changed my plans. We had just crossed the Danish frontier when suddenly a violent impact shook me from my seat. The coach appeared to sway and rock; it hung indecisively upon one side for an appreciable interval, then slowly righted itself. I was upon my feet in a moment and, finding myself uninjured, went to the door and opened it. Then I discovered that the train had left the metals and hung perilously over a steep embankment, from a descent into which we had been saved almost by a miracle.

Happily no lives were lost in the disaster, but by the time that help arrived I knew I was too late to intercept Rojestevsky. On arriving at the Danish capital, however, to my great joy I learned that the vessels of the fleet had passed through only a few hours previously, and were credited with an intention of halting just outside the three-mile limit to await the arrival of the torpedo boats which had left Russia a couple of days later. Then I might yet be in time to intercept the admiral and turn him from his mission of bloodshed with its disastrous sequels.

But how was I to reach the vessels of the fleet? I learned at the British embassy that no vessels of any sort had been permitted within gunshot of the Russians; that Rojestevsky had actually fired upon a small boat that had attempted to enter into communication with him. Clearly his orders had been explicit. The watchers from the town had seen his squadron pass in the offing, at a distance of some two miles, in perfect formation. It was a formidable array, they said. Furthermore, the city was wild with rumors of an impending attack upon the English shores. But nobody, least of all the British officials, seemed to know what events were likely to transpire.

My plan was soon made up. The only way to reach the admiral would be to hire a fishing schooner—one of those numerous vessels that put out daily during the season in quest of herring and cod, off the Banks of the North sea. With the use of this I might approach Rojestevsky boldly when he was anchored on the high seas, and safe from any imminence of danger. I did not doubt but that, under these circumstances, he would accord me an interview. And at the worst, if he should sink me, I could but do my duty and go down to the depths of the ocean, carrying my precious despatches with me.

Since my arrival in Copenhagen I had been free, so far as I could determine, from espionage. I had not doubted that the wrecking of the express was the result of Staphaus's machinations, and believed that he considered that he had effectually prevented me from carrying out my intention of intercepting Rojestevsky at Copenhagen, and had therefore abandoned his enterprise. On making inquiries as to the chartering of a vessel I was informed that a certain Captain Olafsen, who had spent many of his years as a fisherman off the Maine coast, had a fine schooner, carrying four men. I determined to inspect it. I discovered that she was admirably suited to my purpose, being lightly built and evidently capable of making a high rate of speed. She also carried, in addition to her crew, an antiquated small muzzle-loader for protection against pirates who often plundered fishing schooners that became separated from the fleet.

Captain Olafsen was a fine specimen of his race; a man of some 60 years, with much natural dignity and almost perfect English. I thought it best not to declare my purpose, but merely stated that I would pay him a thousand pounds for his services, and those of his crew, during the next few days, the vessel to be completely under my command. I calculated that, by heading toward the Banks, we could reach the anchorage of the Russian squadron the second morning.

ing in all probability, they would be lying just outside the shoal water.

The captain looked at me quizzically. Then he burst forth into a roar of pure and nervous English. "By God, I'm with you every time," he shouted, slapping his thigh. "When it comes to England or America against the Rojestevskians, I'm an Anglo-Saxon every time. Give me the thousand first, though," he added cautiously.

I handed him ten bank notes for a hundred pounds apiece, which I had carried with me for just such a need. He pocketed them.

"When do you want to start, sir?" he asked.

"In two hours," I replied.

"Right," he answered. "The Yankee Girl will be ready, and so will her crew. And the gun loaded up to the muzzle," he added proudly, "ready to defy the whole Rooshian navy. There isn't a fishing vessel on the wharves could overhaul this one or capture her," he concluded, "except the Lena over there, and she's got three guns and carries a crew of fifteen. But she's used as the flagship of the fishing squadron, when she's in commission."

We put out from port promptly to the minute. A strong breeze was blowing and we sailed gaily over the dancing waters of the harbor, which were alive with all manner of craft. As we passed abreast of a certain anchorage the captain uttered an exclamation.

"By thunder, the Lena's put off for the Banks," he said. "I thought Bjornsen was going to lay her up for the season."

By nightfall we were on the high seas, well out of sight of land. I slept but little, for the wind freshened and we tossed in the trough of the combers. The next day the sky was overcast and the glass fell rapidly. Through the vast rolling expanse of waters we could discern a few sailing vessels passing us, scurrying toward the land before the breaking of the storm. We were well on our course by now, and, storm or no storm, expected to reach our destination by the following daybreak. About two in the afternoon, as the captain surveyed the horizon with his binoculars, he uttered an oath.

"Thunder and spitter!" he shouted. "If there isn't the Lena!" And he indicated a distant speck upon the waters—yet not so very distant, since the heaving billows considerably shortened the horizon.

"And crowding on sail," he muttered. "What the devil's she here

horror-struck features of the sailor Petersen, starting into me. Then something heavy took me in the chest, squeezing the breath out of me, and I went sliding seaward through three feet of turbid sea water across a sloping, shuddering deck. Cries rang in my ears. Sulphurous fumes were stifling me; a deadly lethargy overcame me. Then, after an appreciable interval, I opened my eyes.

I was lying in a reclining posture against the deck house. At my feet lay the dead sailor, Smid, fearfully mangled; the bodies of his companions lay near by, awash in the water that flowed from side to side of the deck at every motion of the fast scurrying ship. At the wheel the captain stood, but he made no attempt to steer. There was a bloody handkerchief round his head and one arm hung helplessly at his side. And close upon our heels came on the Lena, now within hailing distance. I saw her spin before the breeze; she glided alongside, and a sailor sprang lightly from her deck to mine, carrying a rope with him, by means of which we were made fast to her. A moment later we were in the hands of the enemy. I saw a mob, armed with cutlasses, surround Olafsen; saw him raise his sound arm and fire, point-blank, into their faces; saw his form totter beneath a rain of blows that beat him down until he lay lifeless at their feet; saw his corpse tossed into the sea. Then I must have fainted again.

When I opened my eyes I was in the center of a group, and a man wearing a short, pointed beard was bending over me. There was a taste of brandy in my mouth. The first thing that I noticed was that he held the envelope containing my despatches to Rojestevsky. He had robbed me while I lay helpless.

"Welcome, my dear Adams," he said with a mock bow. "You do not remember me?"

"Staphaus!" I muttered weakly. He grinned. "Sorry to have you to so much inconvenience, captain," he said; "but it was necessary that Admiral Rojestevsky should not obtain those papers. You see, war will now break out between your country and Russia."

"You were always a thief, Staphaus," I retorted. "None but a thief would steal papers from an unconscious man's pockets. Let me see, was it pecking pockets or forgery that you were dismissed the service for?"

His face grew dark.

"Bah! You always were a hypocrite, Adams," he retorted. "I don't

Lena was within sight, except that the steady scurrying of the waves against the vessel on which I stood told me that I was still being towed along. The night wore on; I was shivering in the cold. It was growing rougher, too, and flying spray drenched me. Pain from my wound and weakness at length produced a semi-comatose condition, from which I was awakened suddenly to find that the Yankee Girl was no longer being towed through the water, but drifted helplessly at the mercy of the waves. The Lena had gone.

Suddenly a long beam of light fell upon the waters on the port side, played there, and disappeared across the surface of the ocean. Now, following it to its source, I perceived a single eye of light at a great distance; and behind it another; then another. Instantly I knew the solution of this mystery. It was the Russian squadron, feeling its way cautiously toward the coast of England.

Then from the depths beneath me I heard a cry.

"Ship ahoy!" it came. And suddenly a rocket flew into the air, not 50 yards away, and descended in a shower of sparks.

It was a rocket fired by the fishing fleet, in warning of danger, or to keep the vessels together. Undoubtedly the Lena had towed me into the middle of the fishing squadron and left me there, with no lights showing, to their imminent danger.

Suddenly the finger of light from the Russian vessel pointed full at me, illumining every inch of the ship. In it I saw the little fishing boats tossing like cockleshells, here and there, on every side of me. And suddenly I heard a roar as of an express train in the air above. My ears had been schooled to that cry the previous afternoon. But whereas the Lena's were toy shells, these were from the heavy guns of battleships.

It was the Russians, shelling the fishing fleet. I pass over the scene that followed. In the dark, save where those fiery fingers picked them up, the fishermen were helpless. Again and again the giant shells hurtled through the air, plunging all round me, bringing death and destruction in their wake. Cries and curses came to me as the fishermen frantically endeavored to escape from the destruction, only to be tracked down. I expected my own destruction momentarily.

Suddenly I saw a figure scramble over the side of the Yankee Girl. He rushed toward me, a knife in his hand. I closed my eyes, too weak to care. Death would be welcome, now that I had failed in my mission. Then I heard a voice that was sweeter than any music I ever listened to.

It was Talbot's.

"Old 'ard, old man," he shouted. "Where's them ropes? I couldn't make you before, so 'elp me," he continued, as he cut my bonds. "It's all right, old man. The Lena's ten sea knots away, and they've stopped firing. See, it's growing light."

And he half carried and half led me into the cabin below. He poured me out brandy and wrapped me in blankets.

"Now, old man," he said, "you've got half an hour to rest up before it's light enough to make for Rojestevsky's flagship."

I smiled bitterly at this.

"They've got the papers," I answered.

Talbot burst into a shout of laughter. He tossed an oil skin package into my hand.

"Look inside that," he cried, wringing my hand hard.

The explanation was a simple one. Talbot, knowing that Staphaus had outwitted me once before, had been desperately anxious to accompany me upon my mission. When I refused to take him he secretly opened the envelope containing the official document, removed the contents, and substituted a sheet of wrapping paper, the same which Staphaus had stolen and flung into the sea. Having the real document in his possession, he had disguised himself and followed me. He had been one of the spies, at least, whom I had noted as following me; he had been aboard the train; he had not been 20 yards away when the Yankee Girl departed from Copenhagen, and, in despair of losing me, had managed to obtain a post on board the Lena, learning by accident that Staphaus had engaged her. He had actually been one of the crew that stood round me after the capture; and when the Lena cut me adrift off the Banks, he had lowered one of her boats in the darkness and pulled around for an hour before he located me.

Two hours later I stood upon the deck of Rojestevsky's flagship and delivered to him the despatches from the British government. I learned that he had fired the fishing vessels thinking that they were, in fact, sailing torpedo boats, and that war had been declared. An excuse was hastily invented and promptly accepted by the British government as sincere; and thus a war which might have shaken Europe to its foundations was happily averted.

Perfect Birds Live Longest.

The more perfect a bird is racially, that is, the further it has advanced along the lines of evolution of the bird group, the longer lived it will be. That is the opinion of Director Mitchell of the London Zoological gardens. Typical birds, therefore, must be the raven, which has been known to live 69 years; the eagle owl, 68; the mute swan, 70; the domestic goose, 80; the gray parrot, 93; the sulphur crested cockatoo, 81; the Amazon, 102; the golden eagle, 104; the Egyptian vulture, 118. Of course, these are not the average ages of these species.

Keen Business Woman.

Mrs. Ellen Rose of Buena Vista, Pennsylvania, is carrying on a unique business for a woman—pumping sand and coal from the bottom of the Susquehanna river. Although Mrs. Rose has passed her seventieth year she directs her force of fifteen workmen personally, going out with them every morning and visiting them several times a day to see that everything is going right.



Mr. William A. Radford will answer questions and give advice FREE OF COST on all subjects pertaining to the subject of building, for the readers of this paper. On account of his wide experience as Editor, Author and Manufacturer, he is, without doubt, the highest authority on all these subjects. Address all inquiries to William A. Radford, No. 18 West Jackson boulevard, Chicago, Ill., and only enclose two-cent stamp for reply.

An eight-room house, somewhat on the bungalow order, is given in this plan. A bungalow, properly speaking, has only one floor; but this plan provides for three bedrooms above, and a kitchen is added at the back, with a lower roof.

The bungalow developed in this country on the Pacific coast. The idea, probably, was originally brought from India, although a great many architects claim that the modern bungalow really is the outgrowth of the log cabins and the sod adobe houses of the early inhabitants of the United States. Probably bungalow architectural ideas could be traced back to all these sources. The result is that we have a very comfortable low cost house called a bungalow, which is being extensively built in different parts of the country, and its popularity is constantly increasing.

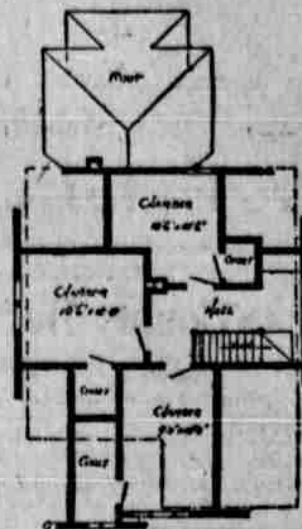
Within easy reach of large cities, bungalows are going up by the hundreds and the idea is a good one. People are tired of being crowded into small, unhealthy quarters, and are taking this means of providing themselves with good, sensible homes at a reasonable outlay.

The original bungalow roof was low and broad; but in order to get more sleeping accommodation, the ridge was raised just enough at first to get one room. Builders, however, have repeatedly pushed it up higher, until we see a good many houses built very much after this plan, with about three bedrooms in the roof.

It costs but little more to build a seven or eight room house in this way, than to build a five room house with the rooms all on the level. The rafters, of course, are longer, and it

right place; but what suits one does not suit another, either in plan, in appearance, or in cost; and the bungalow has added a chapter to house building which meets the view of a large and increasing number of persons.

This house plan gives an opportunity for young people to start in with a home of their own without a great outlay in cash. As designed, the house is built without a cellar; but a cellar may be added at any time.



Second Floor Plan.

While the children are small, it is not absolutely necessary to finish the bedrooms on the second floor. The house is complete downstairs. I know men with families of five or six children to build a house like this, occupy it for a year or two, then add a cellar, sleeping rooms in the attic, a porch at the back or side, and many other attractive features as they felt they could afford the expense. And very often the money saved in rent has paid for these improvements.

I particularly like to see thrift of this kind, and I am optimistic enough to believe that similar sentiments are increasing as the country becomes



takes more shingles; but the work on the roof is not much different, and, as far as the inside is concerned, you simply add the finishing up of three extra rooms. The foundation is no larger; and the only addition on the first floor is the stairway, which, in this case, is built in and closed with a door at the bottom.

You seldom see an open stairway in a bungalow house. It seems to be out of keeping with the general layout. Even in larger houses, people's ideas regarding stairways have undergone some modification. The question has often come up: Why should we build a fancy open stair directly opposite the main entrance door as

more thickly populated. I see evidences of economy that I never noticed before except in isolated cases. Economy is one of the greatest virtues. Economy and ignorance seldom go together. It requires a person of more than average intelligence to practice economy sensibly. Economy is not stinginess; there is a wide distinction.

A house after this plan can be built for \$1,000 or \$1,500, according to the location, cost of materials, and the price of skilled labor.

Useful.

A breezy western lumber salesman stopped at the Waiton for a few days, returning from a trip abroad. In the course of his second evening he had made friends with half a dozen men from other cities.

"Yes, boys," he said, insisting that they take wine, "I can well afford to pay for the bubbles. Why, when I was in Europe I pulled off a little deal that'll net me more than the cost of a thousand trips over the pond."

"You see, I trade principally in white woods free from knots. Oak, course, pine knots are waste; only for firewood. But I just made a deal with a Swiss factory, and I'll send all the knots and knot holes!"

"What do they use 'em for?" asked the inquisitive one.

"Ear holes for wooden horses," came back the answer.—Philadelphia Times.

Names Not Uncommon.

A London newspaper has apologized for a statement that such surnames as Egg and Beer did not exist in England and that the assertion that they did exist was an American invention. Readers of the newspaper have been furnishing it with evidence that it was all wrong. There are two pictures by Augustus L. Egg in the Tate Gallery in London. Pickles, it seems, is not uncommon in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Beer is an old Devonshire name. There is a Beer's brewery at Canterbury. One correspondent says he knows people of the name of Egg, Beer and Ginn.

Engraving With Dynamite.

In the course of experiments to determine the strength of high explosives a curious effect was produced by placing freshly placed powder leaves between two plates of steel and then exploding dynamite cartridges on the upper plate. The recoil drove the upper plate downward with such force as to catch exact impressions of the leaves before their delicate ribs had time to give way to the violence of the blow.



"Let her have it now!" The little Yankee Girl roared with the recoil.

for? This isn't the shortest cut to the Banks!"

Our query was soon answered. From the peak of the Lena a tiny flag fluttered. The captain nearly dropped his binoculars. Then he turned to me grimly.

"Had you any—enemies that wanted you particularly?" he asked. But he did not wait for a reply, for he saw the answer in my face. A moment later the crew were at work among the rigging. A jib topsail was spread to the winds, and the acceleration of our pace immediately became evident. We rolled heavily in the trough of the seas, the white foam scudding level with our deck. But behind us the speck had grown into a tiny ship, about as large, to my view, as those toy boats that children sail on ponds, perfect in all details. Momentarily it grew larger. The captain broke into curses.

"She'll get us," he yelled. "No hope to make the fishing grounds unless the wind aids us."

Suddenly, as I watched, I saw a tiny puff of smoke emerge from the Lena's side and spread fanwise over her. Simultaneously something kicked up a splash of water astern of us, and the echoes of the shot went undulating along the waters.

"What's that?" I cried.

"Shell," replied Captain Olafsen, inconspicuously. "Not even a blank shot first." He turned on me. "I don't know who you are or why they want you, but, by thunder, we'll beat them, Smid! Petersen! Get to the gun. So! Let her have it now!"

The little Yankee Girl roared with the recoil. Looking toward the pursuing vessel I saw a splash of water apparently leap up and overwhelm her. "A hit, by heavens!" I cried. But a moment afterward I perceived her sailing steadily onward as before. And she had decreased the interval to little more than a thousand yards. An instant later I heard a shell shriek through the air and plunge into the sea beside us. Afterward, but so soon that it seemed to synchronize, came the sound of the discharge.

"Let her have it, boys," cried the captain again. The Yankee Girl roared again with the recoil, and then heaven seemed to be alive with the reverberations that followed. All three of our pursuer's guns had gone off together. A mountain of water appeared to leap up at me. I saw the