

A MAKER OF HISTORY

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM,

Author of "The Master Mummer," "A Prince of Sinners," "Mysterious Mr. Sabin," "Anna the Adventuress," Etc.

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[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER XXVI.

GUY moved uneasily upon his chair. The color mounted almost to his forehead. It was a humiliation, this, upon which he had not counted. M. Grisson was sitting within a few feet of him. A serviette was tucked carefully underneath his collar, and his face was a little flushed with the exercise of eating. His eyes, however, were undimmed, and his manners, although a little brusque, had certainly not merited the epithet of bourgeois!

"It isn't much of a story," Guy began, making a desperate effort. "It was my first visit to Paris, and I lost my head a bit. I drank too much wine and quarreled with a fellow who certainly insulted me. They all told me that I must fight him, so—"

"Stop, M. Poynton!"

Guy raised his head in surprise. The exclamation had come from the Duc de Bergillac. M. Grisson was looking toward him as though for an explanation.

"My dear young friend," the duke remarked, with a smile, "it is my stupidity which is to blame. I had forgotten the little matter to which you are alluding, and—between ourselves—it is one which is very much better not related to M. Grisson. I was alluding to your other adventure—up in the Pozen forest."

Guy for a moment was too astonished for words. Then he recovered himself with a little laugh and raised his head. There was nothing terrible in the other affair.

"I will tell M. Grisson about that with pleasure," he said, "if it is likely to interest him. I was in the north of Germany on a walking tour, and I had rather a stupid fancy to go as far as the Russian frontier and then return by Vienna to Paris. I was quite alone and had no one's plans but my own to consult, so I started off from Steritz, I think the place was called. Well, we were within about forty miles of a place called Rezan when our train was stopped and shunted. We were told that some specials were to go by. I should think we must have waited there for an hour or more. Anyhow I got sick of it and passed through the cars on to the rear plat-



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form and down on to the line. I spoke to the guard, and I understood him to say that we should not be starting for at least twenty minutes. I strolled along the line a little way and stopped to light a pipe. Suddenly I heard a whistle, and when I turned round the rear light of the train was moving away. I shouted and ran as hard as I could, but it was no use. In less than two minutes the train was out of sight, and I was left alone."

The duke pushed a small atlas across the table.

"I wonder," he said, "if you could put your finger on about the spot where you were? Here, you see, is the railway line."

Guy studied it for a few moments carefully and looked at the scale. Then he pointed to a certain spot.

"As near as I could say," he declared, "about there."

The duke and M. Grisson exchanged quick glances. Guy was beginning to feel a little mystified.

"Proceed, if you please," the duke said courteously. "I am sure that M. Grisson finds your story most interesting. Permit me."

Guy sipped the fin champagne from the glass which the duke had carefully filled and took a cigarette from the box at his elbow.

"I found myself," he continued, "in the middle of a dense pine forest, with just sufficient clearing for two lines of rails and no more. There seemed to be nothing for me to do but to walk ahead in the direction which the train had taken. I lit a pipe and started out all right, but I very soon got tired. The sleepers were a long way apart, and the track between frightfully rough. I walked for hours without seeing the slightest sign of a station or a break in the woods, and finally I sat down dead beat. My feet were all blisters, and I felt that I couldn't walk another yard. Fortunately it was a warm night, and I made up my mind to crawl under the bracken just inside the wood and go to sleep. I found a comfortable place, and I'd just gone off when a noise close at hand woke me. I sat up and looked around."

"Within a few feet of me an engine and a single carriage had pulled up. At intervals along the line as far as I could see soldiers were stationed like sentries. I could see that they were looking sharply up and down and even a little way into the wood. From the train three or four men in long cloaks had already descended. They were standing in the track talking together."

For the first time M. Grisson interrupted. He took his cigar from his mouth and leaned over toward the young Englishman.

"You were lost yourself. You did not accept them? Ask them the way anywhere?"

"It seems odd, I suppose, that I didn't," Guy answered, "but do you know there was an air of secrecy about the whole thing which rather frightened me. And those soldiers had exactly the air of looking for somebody to shoot. Anyhow, while I was hesitating what to do there was a whistle and another train came from the opposite direction. Then, of course, I waited to see what was going to happen."

"And you saw?" the duke began.

"I saw another single carriage arrive, more men in long cloaks and more soldiers. There was a brief but hearty greeting between two men who seemed to be the principals in this little pantomime. Then they both got into the train which had arrived first, and I could see them sitting at a table talking, and a third man, who seemed to be a sort of secretary, was writing all

the time. In about half an hour they both stepped back on to the line, and every one commenced shaking hands and saying goodbye. Then the whole thing seemed to melt away. The trains went on, the soldiers climbed into a truck attached to one of them, and everything was just as quiet as before."

"And afterward?"

"I waited until it was clear daylight, and then I resumed my walk along the line. I found the next station about five miles off, and I was thankful to see that the guard of the train which had left me behind had had the sense to put my luggage out there. I went to the hotel and had some breakfast, and afterward I chucked my idea of going so far as the frontier and left for Vienna. A week later I was in Paris."

The duke nodded.

"I have asked you this question before," he said, "but M. Grisson is anxious to hear it from your own lips. To how many people did you tell this little adventure of yours before you reached Paris?"

"To not a soul!" Guy answered. "I was very dull in Vienna. I found no one who could speak English, and my few words of German did me no good at all. I came on to Paris within a week."

The duke nodded.

"And in Paris for the first time," he remarked, "you mentioned the affair?"

"Yes! I took up an illustrated paper at a cafe on the night of my arrival while waiting for supper and saw pictures of two men there who reminded me very much of the two whom I had seen on the railway near Pozen. I think I made some remark out loud which attracted the attention of a woman who was sitting at the next table, and later on I told her the whole story."

"And since then?"

"Since then I have told it to no one."

"Was there any one in the cafe you have spoken of who seemed to take any particular interest in you?"

Guy considered for a moment.

"There was a young lady from Vi-

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