

# A MAKER OF HISTORY

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[CONTINUED.]

with me," he announced. "He pledges himself not to keep me more than five minutes. I had better receive him. Excuse me, gentlemen."

The two men were left alone. The elder and stouter of the two busied himself with an inch rule and an atlas. He seemed to be making calculations as to the distance between Cherbourg and a certain spot in the North sea.

"What is the chief's own mind?" his companion asked. "Does any one know?"

The other shook his head.

"Who can say? Our ties of friendship with England are too recent to make this a matter of sentiment. I believe that without proof he fears to accept this statement. And yet above all things he fears Germany. There was some talk of a missing page of the actual treaty between Russia and Germany. If this could be found I believe that he would sign the draft treaty."

"I myself," the other said, "do not believe that England would be so easily overpowered."

"It is the suddenness and treachery of the attack which counts so greatly in its favor," his companion said. "It might be all over in two days before she could assemble a fifth part of her forces. If our information is correct Germany has men enough mobilized to run huge risks. Besides, you know how Lafarge's report ran and what he said. The German army is beginning to suffer from a sort of dry rot, as must all institutions which fulfill a different purpose than that for which they exist. The emperor knows it. If war does not come Germany will have to face severe military troubles."

"I myself am for the alliance."

"And I," the other replied, "if proof of this Germano-Russian understanding could be produced."

M. Grisson returned. He carefully closed and locked the door behind him. "Gentlemen," he said, "the German ambassador has just left me. His mission in every way confirms our secret information. He has been instructed to inquire as to our attitude in the event of any British interference with the Baltic fleet while in home waters."

The two men looked up expectantly. M. Grisson continued.

"I replied that it was a contingency which we scarcely thought it worth while to consider. I expressed my firm belief that England would observe all the conventions written and understood of international law."

"And he?"

"He was not satisfied, of course. He declared that he had certain information that England was making definite plans with a view to insure the delay of the fleet. He went on to say that Germany was determined not to tolerate any such thing, and he concludes that we, as Russia's ally, would at any rate remain neutral should Germany think it her duty to interfere."

"And your reply?"

"I answered that in the event of untoward happenings France would act as her honor dictated, remaining always mindful of the obligations of her alliance. He was quite satisfied."

"He had no suspicion of this?" the young man asked, touching the treaty with his forefinger.

"None. It is believed in Germany that the young Englishman was really found drowned in the Seine after a short career of dissipation. Our friends served us well here. Now, gentlemen, the English ambassador will be here in twenty minutes. What am I to say to him? Do we sign this draft agreement or do we not?"

There was a silence which lasted nearly a minute. Then the younger of the two men spoke.

"Sir," he said respectfully, "without some proof of Russia's falsity I cannot see how in honor we can depart from our treaty obligations with her to the extent of signing an agreement with her putative enemy. England must fight her own battle, and God help her!"

"And you?" M. Grisson asked, turning to the third man.

"I agree," was the regretful answer. "If this treacherous scheme is carried out I believe that France will be face to face with the greatest crisis she has known in history. Even then I dare not suggest that we court dishonor by breaking an alliance with a friend in distress."

"You are right, gentlemen," M. Grisson said, with a sigh. "We must tell Lord Fothergill that our relations with his country must remain unfettered. I—"

Again the telephone bell rang. M. Grisson listened and replied with a

sudden return to his old briskness of manner.

"It is young De Bergillac," he announced. "He has been to England in search of that missing page of the treaty. I have told them to show him in."

The vicomte entered, paler than ever from recent travel and deeply humiliated from the fact that there was a smut upon his collar which he had no time to remove. He presented a paper to M. Grisson and bowed. The premier spread it out upon the table, and the faces of the three men as they read became a study. M. Grisson rang the bell.

"M. le Duc de Bergillac and a young English gentleman," he told the attendant, "are in my private retiring room. Desire their presence."

The servant withdrew. The three men looked at one another.

"If this is genuine!" the younger murmured.

"It is the Russian official paper," his vis-a-vis declared, holding it up to the light.

Then the Duc de Bergillac and Guy Poynton were ushered in. M. Grisson rose to his feet.

"M. Poynton," he said, "we have all three heard your story as to what you witnessed in the forests of Posen."

It is part of your allegation that a page of writing from the private car which you were watching was blown to your feet and that you picked it up and brought it to Paris with you. Look at this sheet of paper carefully. Tell me if it is the one."

Guy glanced at it for a moment and handed it back.

"It is certainly the one," he answered. "If you look at the back you will see my initials there and the date."

M. Grisson turned it over quickly. The two other men looked over his shoulder, and one of them gave a little exclamation. The initials and date were there.

Then M. Grisson turned once more to Guy. He was not a tall man, but he had dignity, and his presence was impressive. He spoke very slowly.

"M. Guy Poynton," he said, "it is not often that so great an issue—that the very destinies of two great countries must rest upon the simple and uncorroborated story of one man. Yet that is the position in which we stand today. Do not think that you are being treated with distrust. I speak to you not on behalf of myself, but for the millions of human beings whose welfare is my care and for those other millions of your own countrymen whose interests must be yours. I ask you solemnly, is this story of yours word for word a true one?"

Guy looked him in the face resolutely and answered without hesitation.

"On my honor as an Englishman," he declared, "it is true!"

M. Grisson held out his hand.

"Thank you!" he said.

The three men were again alone.

The man who controlled the destinies of France dipped his pen in the ink.

"Gentlemen," he said, "do you agree with me that I shall sign this draft?"

"We do!" they both answered.

The president signed his name. Then he turned the handle of the telephone.

"You can show Lord Fothergill in!" he ordered.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

IT was perhaps as well for Andrew Pelham that he could not see Phyllis' look as she entered the room. An English gentleman, she had been told, was waiting to see her, and she had thought of no one but Duncombe. It was true that she had sent him away, but only an hour ago the marquis had told her that her emancipation was close at hand. He, too, might have had a hint. The little smile, however, died away from her lips as she saw who it was who waited for her with such manifest impatience.

"You, Andrew!" she exclaimed in amazement. "Why, however did you find me out?"

He took both her hands in his. The look upon his face was transfiguring.

"At last! At last!" he exclaimed. "Never mind how I found you out! Tell me, what does it all mean? Are you here of your own free will?"

"Absolutely!" she answered.

"It was you at Runton?"

"Yes."

"Under a false name—with a man who committed robbery!"

She shrugged her shoulders a little wearily.

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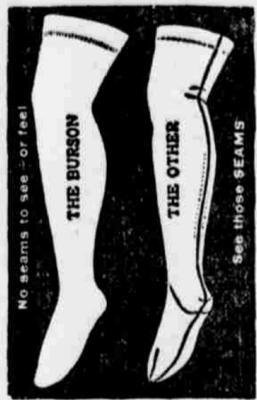
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" " " " Vests at.....  
" " " " Pants, gauze, at.....

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