My Adventures as a German Secret Service Agent

MY ADVENTURES AS A GERMAN SECRET SERVICE AGENT

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FOREWORD

I HAVE not striven to write an autobiography. This book is merely a summary a sort of galloping summary of the last ten years of my existence. As such, I venture to write it because my life has been bound up in enterprises in which the world is interested. It has been my fortune to be a witness and sometimes an actor in that drama of secret diplomacy which has been going on for so long and which in such a large way has been responsible for this World War.

There are many scenes in that drama which have no place in this book many events with which I am familiar that I have not touched upon. My aim has been to describe only those things with which I was personally concerned and which I know to be true. For a full history of the last ten years my readers must go elsewhere; but it is my hope that these adventures of mine will bring them to a better understanding of the forces that have for so long been undermining the peace of the world.

Inevitably there will be some who read this book who will doubt the truth of many of the statements in it. I cannot, unfortunately, prove all that I tell here. Wherever possible I have offered corroborative evidence of the truth of my statements; at other times I have tried to indicate their credibility by citing well recognised facts which have a direct bearing upon my contentions. But for the rest, I can only hope that this book will be accepted as a true record of facts which by their very nature are insusceptible of proof.

So far as my connection with the German Government is concerned, I may refer the curious to the British Parliamentary White Papers, Miscellaneous, Nos. 6 and 13, which contain respectively my confession and a record of the papers found in the possession of Captain von Papen, former Military Attache to the German Embassy at Washington, and seized by the British authorities on January 2 and 8, 1916. There are also, in addition to the documents reproduced in this book, various court records of the trial of Captain Hans Tauscher and others in the spring of the same year. To German activities in the United States, the newspapers bear eloquent testimony. I have been concerned rather with the motives of the German Government than with a statement of what has been done. These motives, I believe, you will not doubt.

But there is one point which I must ask my readers not to overlook. I have told that I became a secret agent through the discovery of a certain letter which contained very serious reflections upon one of the most important personages in the world. I have told, also, how the possession of that letter had an important bearing upon the course of my life how it led me to America, and how in the struggle for its possession I very nearly lost my life. This, I know, will be severely questioned by many. Before rejecting this part of my story, I ask merely that you consider the fate that overtook Koglmeier, the saddler of El Paso, whose only crime was that he had been partially in my confidence. I ask you to recall that another German, Lesser, who had been associated with me at the same time, mysteriously disappeared in 1915, shortly before von Papen left for Europe. No one has been able to prove why these men were treated as they were. And if I did not have in my possession something which the German Government regarded as highly important, why the surprising actions of that Government, actions none the less astonishing because they are well known and authenticated? Consider these things before you doubt.

Finally, let me say that I have taken the liberty of changing or omitting the names of various people who are mentioned in these adventures, merely because I have had no wish to compromise them by disclosing their identity.

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MY ADVENTURES AS A GERMAN SECRET SERVICE AGENT

CHAPTER I

A MOMENTOUS DOCUMENT

I find an old letter containing a strange bit of scandal, and its contents draw me into the service of the Kaiser.

ON March 29, 1916, the steamer Finland was warped into its Hudson River dock and I hurried down the gangway. I was not alone. Agents of the United States Department of Justice had met me at Quarantine; and a man from Scotland Yard was there also a man who had attended me sedulously since, barely two weeks before, I had been released in rather unusual circumstances from Lewes prison in England; the last of four English prisons in which I had spent fifteen months in solitary confinement waiting for the day of my execution.

My friend from Scotland Yard left me very shortly; soon afterwards I was testifying for the United States Government against Capt. Hans Taiischer,-husband of. Mine. Johanna Gadski, the diva. Tauscher, American agent of the Krupps and of the German Government, was charged with complicity in a plot to blow up the Welland Canal in Canada during the first month of the Great War. During the course of the trial it was shown that von Papen and others (including myself) had entered into a conspiracy to violate the neutrality of the United States. I had led the expedition against the Welland Canal, and I was telling everything I knew about it. Doubtless you remember the newspapers of the day.

You will remember how, at that time, the magnitude of the German plot against the neutrality of the United States became finally apparent. You will remember how, in connection with my exposure, came the exposure of von Igel, of Rintelen, of the German Consul-General at San Francisco, Bopp, and many others. With all these men I was familiar. In the activities of some of them I was implicated. It was I, as I have said, who planned the details of the Welland Canal plot. I shall tell the true story of these activities later.

But first let me tell the story of how I came to be concerned in these plots and to do that I must go back over many years; I must tell how I first became a member of the Kaiser’s Secret Diplomatic Force (to give it a name) and incidentally I shall describe for the first time the real workings of that force.

I have been in and out of the Kaiser's web for ten years. I have served him faithfully in many capacities and in many places all over Europe, in Mexico, even in the United States. I served the German Government as long as I believed it to be representing the interests of my countrymen. But from the moment that I became convinced that the men who made up the" Government the Hohenzollerns, the Junkers and the bureaucrats were anxious merely to preserve their own power, even at the expense of .Germany itself, my attitude towards them changed. That is why I write this book and why I shall tell what I know of the aims and ambitions of these men enemies of Germany as well as of the rest of the world.

I was not a spy; nor was I a secret service agent. I was, rather, a secret diplomatic agent. Let me add that there is a nice distinction between the three. A secret diplomatic agent is a man who directs spies, who studies their reports, who pieces together various bits of information, and who, when he has the fabric complete, personally makes his report to the highest authority or carries that particular plan to its desired conclusion. His work and his status are of various sorts. Unlike the spy, he is a user, not a getter, of information. He is a freelance, responsible only to the Foreign Office; a plotter; an unofficial intermediaiy in many negotiations; and frequently he differs from an accredited diplomatic representative only in that his activities and his office are essentially secret. Obviously men of this type must be highly trained and trustworthy; and their constant association with men of authority makes it necessary that they, themselves, should be men of breeding and education. But above all, they must possess the courage that shrinks at no danger, and a devotion, a patriotism that know no scruples.

This, then, was the calling into which I found myself plunged, while still a boy, by one of the strangest chances that ever befell me, whose life has been full of strange happenings.

As I recall my adolescence I realise that I was a normal boy, vigorous,^wilful, fond of sport, of horses, dogs and guns, and I know that but for the chance I speak of, I should have grown up in the traditions of our family Cadet School the University later a lieutenancy in the German Army and to-day, perhaps, death "somewhere in France."

And yet, in that boyhood that I am recalling, I can remember that there were other interests which were far greater than the games that I loved, as did all lads

of my age. Mental adventure, the matching of wits against wits for stakes of reputation and fortune, always exercised an uncanny fascination over my mind. That delight in intrigue was shown by the books I read as a boy. In the library of my father's house there were many novels, books of poems, of biography, travel, philosophy and history; but I passed them by unread. His few volumes of Court gossip and so-called "secret history "I seized with avidity. I used to bear off the memoirs of Marechal Richelieu, the Cardinal's nephew, and read them in my room when the rest of the household was asleep.

I recall, too, that there was another tendency already developed in me. I see it in my dealings with other boys of that day. It was the impulse to make other people my instruments, not by direct command or appeal, but by leading them to do, apparently for themselves, what I needed of them.

Such was I, when my aunt, who had cared for me since the death of my parents some years before, fell ill and later died. I was disconsolate for a time and wandered about through the halls and chambers of the house, seeking amusement. And it was thus that one day I came upon an old chest in the room that had been hers. I remembered that chest. There were letters in it letters that had been written to her by friends made in the old days when she was at Court. Often she had read me passages from them bits of gossip about this or that personage whom she had once known occasionally, even, mention of the Kaiser.

Doubtless, too, I thought, there were passages which she had not seen fit to read to me: some more intimate bits of gossip about those brilliant men and women in Berlin whom I then knew only as names. With the eager curiosity of a boy I sought the key, and in a moment had unlocked the chest.

There they lay, those neat, faded bundles, slightly yellow, addressed in a variety of hands. Idly I selected a packet and glanced over the envelopes it contained, lingering, in anticipation of the revelations that might be in them. I must have read a dozen letters before my eye fell upon the envelope that so completely changed my life.

It lay in a corner of the chest, as if hidden from too curious eyes a yellow square of paper, distinguished from its fellows by the quality of the stationery alone, and by its appearance of greater age. But I knew, before I had read fifty words of it, that I was holding in my hands a document that was more explosive than dynamite!

For this letter, written to my aunt years before, by one of the most exalted personages in all Germany, contained statements which, had they been made by anyone else, would have been treason to utter.

Those of you whose memories go back tc the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, will readily recall the notorious ill-feeling that existed between Wilhelm II. and his mother, Victoria, the Dowager Empress Friedrich. Stories have so often been told of this enmity, culminating in the virtual banishment from Berlin of the Queen Mother, that I need not do more than mention them. But what is not so generally known is the small esteem in which Victoria was held by the entire German people. During the twenty years of her married life as the wife of the then Crown Prince Friedrich, she was treated by Berlin Society with the most thinly veiled hostility. Even Bismarck made no attempt to conceal his dislike for her, and accused her to quote his own words of having “poisoned the fountain of Hohenzollern blood at its source.”

Victoria, for her part, although she seems to have had no animosity towards the German people, certainly possessed little love for her eldest son, and did her best to delay his accession to the Imperial throne as long as she could. When in 1888 Wilhelm I. was dying, she tried her utmost to secure the succession to her husband, who was then lying dangerously ill at San Remo. “Cancer,” the physicians pronounced the trouble, and even the great German specialist, Bergmann, agreed with their diagnosis. There is a law that prevents anyone with an incurable disease, such as cancer, from ascending the Prussian throne; but Victoria knew too well the attitude of her son, Wilhelm, towards herself, not to wish to do everything in her power to prevent him from becoming Emperor so long as she could. In her extremity she appealed to her mother, Queen Victoria of England, who sent Sir Morell Mackenzie, the great English surgeon, to San Remo to report on Friedrich’s condition.

Mackenzie opposed Bergmann and said the disease was not cancer; and the physicians inserted a silver tube in the patient’s throat, and in due course he became Emperor Friedrich III.

But in spite of Mackenzie and the silver tube, Friedrich III. died after a reign of ninety-eight days and he died of cancer.

Now what was the reason for this hostility between mother and son and between Empress and subjects? There have been many answers given Victoria’s love for

England, her colossal lack of tact, her impatient unconventionality. Berlin whispered of a dinner in Holland years before, when Victoria had entertained some English people she met there people she had never seen before and had finished her repast by smoking a cigar. That in the days when the sight of a woman smoking horrified the German soul! And Berlin hinted at worse unconventionalities than this.

As for the animosity of the Kaiser, this was attributed to the fact that he held her responsible for his withered left arm.

Plausible reasons, all of these, and possibly true. But consider, if you will, the rumours that followed Victoria all her life the story of an early attachment to the Count Seckendorf, her husband's associate during the Seven Weeks' War of 1866 the reports, sometimes denied but generally believed, of her marriage to the Count not long before her death. True or not, these stories what does it matter?

But what to do with this letter to which I attached so much importance? Something impelled me not to speak of it to my family. But who else was there?

In my perplexity I did an utterly foolish thing. I put my whole confidence in a man's word. There was, serving at a nearby fortress, a Major-General von Dassel, who was in the habit of coming to our house quite regularly. To him I went, and under pledge of silence I told him my story. Of course, he broke the pledge and left immediately for Berlin. All doubts, if I had any, as to the importance of the document, vanished with him. And if I had any misgivings concerning my own importance they quickly vanished, too. Back from Berlin, with Major-General von Dassel came an agent of the Chancellor. He did not come to our house; instead von Dassel sent for me to go to his headquarters in the fortress. I met there a solemn frockcoated personage who, so he said, had come down from Berlin especially to see me. Imagine my elation! I was in my element; what I had hoped for had at last happened. The pages of Richelieu and of my secret histories were coming true. Another man and I were to lock our wits in a fight to the finish that pleasure I promised myself. He was a worthy opponent, an official, a professional intriguer. As I looked into his serious, bearded face, I built romances about him.

The agent of the Chancellor wanted my document and my pledge to keep silent about its contents. Through sheer love of combat, I refused him on both points. He tried persuasion and reason. I was adamant. He tried cajolery.

“It is plain,” he said, in a voice that was caressingly agreeable, “that you are an extremely clever young man. I have never before met your like—that is, at your age. A great career will be possible to such a young man if only he shows himself eager to serve his Government, eager to meet the wishes of his Chancellor.”

Of course, I was delighted with this flattery, which I felt was entirely deserved. I began to believe that I was a person of importance. I became stubborn which always has been one of my best and worst traits. I saw that the gentleman in the frockcoat was becoming angry; his serious eyes flashed. Apparently much against his will, he tried threats; he suavely pointed out that if I persisted in my resolve not to surrender the document, destruction yawned at my feet. The threats touched off the fuse of my romanticism. I felt I was leading the life of intrigue of which I had read.

“If you will wait here,” I told him, “I shall go home and get the document for you.”

The Chancellor’s representative stroked his beard, deliberated a moment and seemed uncertain.

“Oh, the Junge will come back all right,” put in Major-General von Dassel. But the boy did not come back. My family had always been excessively liberal with money, and I had enough in my own little “war chest” to buy a railway ticket, and a considerable amount besides. So I promptly ran off to Paris; and to this day I don’t know how long the gentleman in the frockcoat waited for me in von Dassel’s office.

The terrors and thrills and delight of that panic-stricken flight still make me smile. No peril I have since been through was half as exciting… . Berlin! … Koln! … Brussels! It was a keen race against arrest. I was happily frightened, much as a colt is when it shies at its own shadow. Although I was in long trousers and looked years older than I was, I had not sense enough to see the affair in its true light —a foolish escapade which was quite certain to have disagreeable consequences. And so I fled from Berlin to Paris.

From Paris I fled too. There, any circumstance struck my fevered imagination as being suspicious. After a day in the French capital, I scurried south to Nice and from Nice to Monte Carlo. Precocious youngster, indeed, for there I had my first

experience with that favoured figure of the novelist, the woman secret agent! No novelist, I venture to say, would ever have picked her out of the Riviera crowd as being what she was. She wore no air of mystery; and though attractive enough in a quiet way, she was very far from the siren type in looks or manners. The friendliness that she, a woman of the mid-thirties, showed a lonely boy was perfectly natural. I should never have guessed her to be an agent of the Wilhelmstrasse had she not chosen to let me know it. Of course, the moment she spoke to me of "my document," I knew she had made my acquaintance with a purpose. If the dear old frockcoated agent of the Chancellor had been asleep, the telegraph wires from Berlin to Paris and Nice and Monte Carlo had been quite awake.

The proof that I was actually watched and waited for thrilled me anew. It also alarmed me when my friend explained how deeply my Government was affronted. Soon the alarm outgrew the thrill and in the end I quite broke down. Then the woman in her, touched with pity, apparently displaced the adventuress. We took counsel together and she showed me a way out.

"Your document," she said, "has a Russian as well as a German importance. Why not try St. Petersburg since Berlin is hostile? For the sake of what you bring, Russia might give shelter and protection."

Remember, I was very young and she was all kindness. Yes, she discovered for me the avenue of escape and she set my foot upon it in the most motherly way. And I unknowingly took my first humble lesson in the great art of intrigue. For, as I learned years afterwards, that woman was not a German agent but a Russian!

But at that time I was all innocent gratitude for her kindness. I was thankful enough to proceed to St. Petersburg by way of Italy, Constantinople and Odessa. Of course, she must have designated a man unknown to me to travel with me, and make sure that I reached the Russian capital. To my hotel in St. Petersburg, just as the woman had predicted, came an officer of the political police, who courteously asked me not to leave the building for twenty-four hours. The next day the man from the Okrana, or Secret Police, came again. This time he had a droshky waiting, with one of those bull-necked, blue corduroy-robed, muscular Russian jehus on the box. We were driven down the Nevsky Prospekt to a palace. Here I soon found myself in the presence of a man I did not then know as Count Witte. He greeted me kindly, merely remarking that he had heard I was in

some difficulties, and offering me aid and advice. My letter was not referred to and the interview ended.

So began the process of drawing me out. A fortnight later the matter of my information was broached openly and the suggestion was made that if I delivered it to the Russian Government, high officials would be friendly and a career assured me in Russia, as I grew up. But by that time Germany had changed her attitude. Her agents also reached me in St. Petersburg. From them I received a new assurance of the importance of the document. If I would release it so the German agent who came to my hotel told me and keep my tongue still, Berlin would pardon my indiscretion and assure me a career at home. Russia or Germany? My decision was quickly made. That very night I was smuggled out of St. Petersburg and whisked across the frontier at Alexandrovna into Germany; and the letter passed out of my hands for the time being.

CHAPTER II

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

I impersonate a Russian Prince and steal a Treaty What the Treaty contained and how Germany made use of the knowledge.

GROSS LICHTERFELDE! As I write, it all comes back to me clearly, in spite of the full years that have passed this, my first home in Berlin. A huge pile of buildings set in a suburb of the city, grim and military in appearance; and in fact, as I soon discovered.

I was to become a cadet, it seems; and where in Germany could one receive better training than in this same Gross Lichterf elde?

At home I had had some small experience with the exactions of the gymnasium; but now I found that this was so much child's play in comparison with the life at Gross Lichterf elde. We were drilled and dragooned from morning till night: mathematics, history, the languages they were not taught us, they were literally pounded into us. And the military training! I am not unfamiliar with the curricula of Sandhurst, of St. Cyr, even of West Point, but I honestly believe that the training we had to undergo was fully as arduous and as technical as at any of those schools. And we were only boys.

Military strategy and tactics; sanitation; engineering; chemistry; in fact, any and every study that could conceivably be of use to the future officers of the German Army; to all of these must we apply ourselves with the utmost diligence. And woe to the student who shirked!

Then there was the endless drilling, that left us with sore muscles and minds so worn with the monotony of it that we turned even to our studies with relief. And the supervision! Our very play was regulated.

Can you wonder that we hated it and likened the Cadet School to a prison? And can you imagine how galling it was to me, who had come to Berlin seeking romance and found drudgery?

But we learned. Oh, yes! The war has shown how well we learned.

There was one relief from the constant study which was highly prized by all the cadets at Gross Lichterfelde. It was the custom to select from our school a number of youths to act as pages at the Imperial Court; and lucky were the ones who were detailed to this service. It meant a vacation, at the very least, to say nothing of a change from the Spartan fare of the school.

I must have been a student for a full three months before my turn came; long enough, at any rate, for me to receive the news of my selection with the utmost delight. But I had not been on service at the Imperial Palace for more than a few days when a State dinner was given in honour of a guest at Court. He was a young prince of a certain grand-ducal house, which by blood was half Russian and half German. I recall the appearance of myself and the other pages, as we were dressed for the function. Ordinarily we wore a simple undress cadet uniform, but that evening a striking costume was provided: nothing less than a replica of the garb of a mediaeval herald tabard and all for Wilhelm II. has a flair for the feudal. From my belt hung a capacious pouch, which, pages of longer standing than I assured me, was the most important part of my equipment; since by custom the ladies were expected to keep these pouches comfortably filled with sweetmeats. Candy for a cadet! No wonder every boy welcomed his turn at page duty, and went back reluctantly to the asceticism of Gross Lichterfelde.

That was my first sight of an Imperial dinner. The great banquet hall that overlooks the square on the Ufer was ablaze with lights. The guests the men in their uniforms even more than the women made a brilliant spectacle to the eyes of a youngster from the provinces; but most brilliant of all was Wilhelm II., resplendent in the full dress uniform of a field-marshal. I can recall him as he sat there, lordly, arrogant, yet friendly, but never seeming to forget the monarch in the host. It seemed to me that he loved to disconcert a guest with his remarks; it delighted him to set the table laughing at someone else’s expense.

By chance, during the banquet, it fell to me to render service to the young Emperor. Once, as I moved behind his chair, a German Princess exclaimed, “Oh, doesn’t the page resemble his Highness?”

The Kaiser looked at me sharply.

“Yes,” he agreed , “they might well be twins.” Then, impulsively lifting up his glass, he flourished it towards the Russo-German prince and drank to him.

That was all there was to the incident then. I returned to Gross Lichterfelde the next morning, and proceeded to think no more of the matter. Nor did it come to my mind when a few weeks later, I was suddenly summoned to Berlin, and driven, with one of my instructors, to a private house in a street I did not know. (It was the Wilhelmstrasse, and the residence stood next to Number 75, the Foreign Office. It was the house Berlin speaks of as Samuel Meyer's Bude in other words, the private offices of the Chancellor and His Imperial Majesty.)

We entered a room, bare save for a desk or two and a portrait of Wilhelm I., where my escort surrendered me to an official, who silently surveyed me, comparing his observations with a paper he held, which apparently contained my personal measurements. Later a photograph was taken of me, and then I was bidden to wait. I waited for several hours, it seemed to me, before a second official appeared a large, roundfaced man, soldierly despite his stoutness who greeted my escort politely and, taking a photograph from his pocket, proceeded to scrutinise me carefully. After a moment he turned to my escort.

"Has he any identifying marks on his body?" he asked.

My escort assured him that there was none.

"Good!" he exclaimed; and a moment later we were driving back towards Gross Lichterfelde I quite at sea about the whole affair, but not daring to ask questions about it. Idle curiosity was not encouraged among cadets.

I was not to remain in ignorance for long, however. A few days later I was ordered to pack my clothing, and with it was transferred to a quiet hotel in the Dorotheenstrasse. The hotel was not far from the War Academy, and there I was placed under the charge of an exasperatingly exacting tutor, who strove to perfect me on but three points. He insisted that my French should be impeccable; he made me study the private and detailed history of a certain Russian house; and he was most particular about the way I walked and ate, about my knowledge of Russian ceremonies and customs in a word, about my deportment in general.

The weeks passed. At last, by dint of much hard work, I became sufficiently expert in my studies to satisfy my tutor. I was taken back to the house in the Wilhelmstrasse, where the roundfaced man again inspected me. He talked with me at length in French, made me walk before him and asked me innumerable questions about the family history of the house I had been studying. Finally he

drew a photograph from his pocket the same, I fancy, which had figured in our previous interview.

“Do you recognise this face?” he inquired, offering me the picture.

I started. It might have been my own likeness. But no! That uniform was never mine. Then in a moment I realised the truth and with the realisation the whole mystery of the last few weeks began to be clear to me. The photograph was a portrait of the young Prince Z, my double, whom I had served at the banquet.

“It is a very remarkable likeness,” said the roundfaced man. “And it will be of good service to the Fatherland.”

He eyed me for a moment impressively before continuing.

“You are to go to Russia,” he told me. “Prince Z has been invited to visit his family in St. Petersburg, and he has accepted the invitation. But unfortunately Prince Z has discovered that he cannot go. You will, therefore, become the Prince for the time being. You will visit your family, note everything that is said to you and report to your tutor, Herr, who will accompany you and give you further instructions.

“This is an important mission,” he added solemnly, “but I have no doubt that you will comport yourself satisfactorily. You have been taught everything that is necessary; and you have already shown yourself a young man of spirit and some discretion. We rely upon both of these qualities.” He bowed in dismissal of us, but as we turned to go he spoke again.

“Remember,” he was saying, “from this day you are no longer a cadet. You are a prince. Act accordingly.”

That was all. We were out of the door and half way to our hotel before I realised to the full the great adventure I had embarked upon. Embarked? Shanghaied would be the better term. I had had no choice whatsoever in the matter. I had not even uttered a word during the interview.

At any rate, that night I left for Petrograd still St. Petersburg at that time accompanied by my tutor and two newly engaged valets, who did not know tht .eal Prince. Of what was ahead I had no idea, but as my tutor had no doubts of the success of our mission, I wasted little time in speculating upon the future.

.What the real prince's motive was in agreeing to the masquerade, and where he spent his time while I was in Russia, I have never been able to discover. From what followed, I surmise that he was strongly pro-German in his sympathies, but distrusted his ability to carry through the task in Land.

In St. Petersburg I discovered that my "relatives" whom I had known to be very exalted personages were inclined to be more than hospitable to this young kinsman whom they had not seen for a long time. I found myself petted and spoiled to a delightful degree; indeed I had a truly princely time. The only drawback was that, as the constant admonitions of my tutor reminded me, I could spend my princely, wealth only; in such ways as my shall I say, prototype? would have done. He, alas, was apparently a graver youth than I.

So two weeks passed, while I was beginning to wish that the masquerade would continue indefinitely, when one day my tutor sent for me.

"So," he said, "we have had play enough, is it not so? Now we shall have work."

In a few words he explained the situation to me. Russia, it seemed, was about to enter into an agreement with England regarding spheres of influence in Persia. Already a certain Baron B (let me call him) was preparing to leave St. Petersburg with instructions to find out in what circumstances the British Government would enter into pourparlers on the subject. Berlin, whose interests in the Near East would be menaced by such an agreement, needed information and delay. I was to secure both. It was the old trick of using a little instrument to clog the mechanism of a great machine.

Let me explain here a feature of the drawing up of international treaties and agreements which, I think, is not generally understood. Most of us who read in the newspapers that such and such a treaty is being arranged between the representatives of two countries, believe that the terms are even then being decided upon. As a matter of fact these terms have long since been determined by other representatives of the two countries concerned, and the present meeting is merely for the formal and public ratification of a treaty already secretly made. The usual stages in the making of a treaty are three: First, an unofficial inquiry by one Government into the willingness or unwillingness of the other Government to enter into a discussion of the question at issue. This is usually done by a man who has no official standing as a diplomat at the moment, but whose relations with officials in the second country have given him an influence

there which will stand his Government in good stead. After a willingness has been expressed by both sides to enter into discussions, official pourparlers are held in which the terms of the agreement are discussed and decided upon. Finally, the treaty is formally ratified by the Foreign Ministers or special envoys of the countries involved. Secrecy in the first two stages is necessitated by the fear of meddling on the part of other Governments, and also by a desire on the part of any country making overtures to avoid a possible rebuff from the other; and it explains why negotiations which are publicly entered into never fail.

But to return to my adventures. My Government had learned of the impending pourparlers between Britain and Russia; it knew that Baron B's instructions would contain the conditions which Russia considered desirable. What was necessary was to secure these instructions.

Now, my tutor had, long before this, seen to it that I should be on friendly terms with various members of the Baron's household; and he had been especially insistent that I should pay a good deal of attention to the young daughter of the house, whom I shall call Nevshka. I had wondered at the time why he should do this; but I obeyed his instructions with alacrity. Nevshka was charming.

Soon I saw the purpose of this carefully fostered friendship.

"The Baron will spend this evening at the club," I was informed. "He will return, according to his habit, promptly at twelve. You will visit his house this evening, paying a call upon Nevshka. You will contrive to set back the clock so that his home-coming will be in the nature of a surprise to her. The hour will be so late that she, knowing her father's strictness, will contrive to get you out of the house without his seeing you. That is your opportunity! You must slip from the salon into the rear hall but do not leave the house. And if, young man, with such an opportunity, you cannot discover where these papers are hidden and secure them, you are unworthy of the trust that your Government has placed in you."

I nodded my comprehension. In other words I was to take advantage of Nevshka's friendship in order to steal from her father I was to perform an act from which no gentleman could help shrinking. And I was going to do it with no more qualms of conscience than, in time of war, I should have felt about stealing from an enemy general the plan of an attack.

For countries are always at war diplomatically. There is always a conflict

between the foreign ambitions of Governments; always an attempt on the part of each country to gain its own ends by fair means or foul. Every man engaged in diplomatic work knows this to be true. And he will serve his Government without scruple, for well he knows that some seemingly dishonourable act of his may be the means of averting that actual warfare which is only the forlorn hope that Governments resort to when diplomatic means of mastery have failed.

So I undertook my mission with no hesitation, rather with a thrill of eagerness. I pretended to be violently interested in Nevshka (no difficult task, that) and time sped by so merrily that even had I not turned back the hands of the clock, I doubt whether the lateness of the hour would have seriously concerned either of us. Oh, yes, my tutor who, as you of course have guessed by now, was no mere tutor had analysed the situation correctly.

As the Baron was heard at the door, I drew out my watch.

“Nevshka, your clock is slow. It is already midnight.”

Nevshka started.

“Come!” she exclaimed. “Father must not see you. He would be furious at your being here at this hour.” In a panic she glanced about the salon. “Go out that way!” And she pointed to a door at the rear, one that opened on a dimly lit hall.

I went. I heard the Baron express his surprise that Nevshka was still awake. I heard her lie beautifully, I assure you. And I remained hidden while the Baron worked in his library for a while; scarcely daring to breathe until I heard him go up the stairs to his bedroom.

He was a careless man, the Baron. Or perhaps he had been reading Poe, and believed that the most obvious place of concealment was the safest. At any rate, there in a drawer of his desk, protected only by the most defenceless of locks, were the papers a neat statement of the terms upon which Russia would discuss this Persian matter with England.

I returned home with my prize, to find my tutor awaiting me. He said no word of commendation when I gave him the papers, but I knew by his expression that he was well pleased with my work. And I went to bed, delighted with myself, and dreaming of the great things that were to come.

Next day we left St. Petersburg. A German resident of the city had telephoned my relatives, warning them that a few cases of cholera had appeared. Would it not, he suggested (Oh, it was mere kind thoughtfulness on his part!), be best to let the young prince return to Germany until the danger was over? His parents would be worried. Indeed, it would be best, my "relatives" agreed. So with regret they bade me good-bye; and in the most natural manner in the world I returned to Berlin.

Wilhelmstrasse 76 again! The roundfaced man again, but this time less military, less unbending, in his manner. I had done well, he told me. My exploit had attracted the favourable attention of a very exalted personage. If I could hold my tongue who knows what might be in store for me?

That was the end of the matter, so far as I was concerned. But in the history of European politics it was only the beginning of the chapter.

It may be well, at this point, to recall the political situation in Europe, as it affected England, Russia and Germany at the time. Even two years before in 1905 it had become evident to all students of international affairs that the next great conflict, whenever it should come, would be between England and Germany; and England, realising this, had already begun to seek alliances which would stand between her and German ambitions of world dominance. The Entente with France had been the first step in the formation of protective friendships; and although this friendship had suffered a strain during the Russo-Japanese War, because of the opposing sympathies of the two countries, the end of the war healed all differences. The defeat of Russia removed all immediate danger of a Slav menace against India. To England, then, the weakened condition of Russia offered an excellent opportunity for an alliance that would draw still more closely the "iron ring round Germany." Immediately she took the first steps towards this alliance.

Now, Russia stood badly in need of two things. War-torn and threatened by revolution, the Government could rehabilitate itself only by a liberal amount of money. But where to get it? France, her ally, and normally her banker, was slow in this instance to lend and it was only through England's intervention that the Tsar secured from a group of Paris and London bankers the money with which to finance his Government and stave off revolution.

But more than money, Russia needed an icefree seaport to take the place of Port

Arthur, which she had lost; and for this there were only two possible choices: Constantinople or a port on the Persian Gulf. In either of these aims she was opposed by Britain, the traditional enemy of a Russian Constantinople, on the one hand, and the possessor of a considerable “sphere of interest “in the Persian Gulf on the other.

So matters stood, when in August, 1907, but a few weeks after my masquerade, an Agreement was signed, providing for the division of Persia into three strips, the northern and southern of which would be respectively Russian and British zones of influence; providing also, in a secret clause, that Russia would give England military aid in the event of a war between Germany and England!

Meantime what was Germany doing?

She had, you may be sure, no intention of allowing England to best her in the game of intrigue. Her interests in the Near East were commercial rather than military; but she could not see them threatened by an Anglo-Russian occupation of Persia. Then, too, she was bound to consider the possible effect on Turkey, in which she was taking an ever-increasing (and none too altruistic) interest.

The details of what followed I can only surmise. I know that in the interval between my trip to Russia and the signing of that Agreement, on August 31, the Kaiser held two conferences: one on August 3, with the Tsar at Swinemiinde; the other on August 14, with Edward VII., at the Castle of Wilhelmshohe. And when, on September 24, the terms were published, they were bitterly attacked by a portion of the English Press, not so much because of the danger to Persia, as because of the fact that Russia got the best of the bargain!*

* You will find an interesting account of the effect of this treaty upon Persia in William Morgan Shuster’s valuable book, “The Strangling Persia.”

Had the Kaiser succeeded in having these terms changed? Who knows? Certainly one can trace the hand of German diplomacy in the events of the next seven years, most of which are a matter of common knowledge. The steady aggressions of Russia in Persia during the troubled years of 1910-1912; the almost open flouting of the terms of the treaty, which expressly guaranteed Persian integrity; the constant growth of German influence, culminating in the Persian extension of the German-owned Bagdad Railway; the founding of a German school and a hospital in Teheran, jointly supported by Germany and

Persia; and finally, the celebrated Potsdam Agreement of 1910, between Russia and Germany, in which Germany agreed to recognise Russia's claim to Northern Persia as its sphere of influence, which provided for a further rapprochement between the two countries in the matter of railway construction and commercial development generally, and which has been generally supposed to contain a guarantee that neither country would join "any combination of Powers that has any aggressive tendency against the other."

And England did not protest, in spite of the fact that the Potsdam Agreement absolutely negatived her own treaty with Russia and made it, in the language of one writer, "a farce and a deception!" Why? Was it because she believed that when war came, as it inevitably must, Russia would forget this new alliance in allegiance to the old?

England was mistaken if she believed so. Russia Imperial Russia was never so much the friend of Germany as when, neglecting the war on her own Western front, she sent her armies into the Caucasus, persuaded the British to undertake the Dardanelles expedition, and, following her own plans of Asiatic expansion, betrayed England!

As I write Kut-el-Amara is creating a great stir in the Allied countries. The Indian Government has been severely blamed for sending General Townshend into Mesopotamia with insufficient material, medical supplies and troops. The official explanation was that the force was employed in order to protect the oil pipes supplying the British Navy in those waters from being destroyed by the enemy. There was no doubt in my mind at the time, in spite of the fact that I was in prison and communication with the outside was very meagre, that this was not the real reason. Subsequent developments have shown and the abandonment of the inquiry instituted by the British Government about this affair only further supports my contention that Russia intended to use England's helpless position to secure for herself an access to the Persian Gulf. The Grand Duke Nicholas himself abandoned the campaign on the Eastern front to go to the Caucasus. The Gallipoli enterprise which turned out to be such a monumental failure was undertaken upon his instigation. Do you think for one second that if Imperial Russia had thought England was able to capture Constantinople, a city which she herself had been wanting for centuries, she would have invited England to do so? The fact is that the Gallipoli enterprise tied up all England's available reserves so that the English could practically do nothing to forestall Russian movements to the Persian Gulf. The Government of India, realising the danger, sent General

Townshend upon the famous Bagdad campaign rather as a demonstration than as a military enterprise. I will quote from my diary which I kept while in prison:

“Just read in the Times: ‘British moving north into Mesopotamia to protect oil pipes and capture Bagdad.’ I don’t need to read Punch any more, the Times being just as funny. My dear friends, you didn’t move up there for that reason. You went up there so as to be able to tell your Russian friends that there was no need to come farther south as you were there already.”

That is the story of my little expedition into Russia and of what it brought about.

As for me, I was sent back to Gross Lichterfelde, where I abruptly ceased to be a young prince, and became once more a humble cadet. But only to outside eyes. Dazzled by the success of my first mission, I regarded myself as a Superman among the cadets. Life loomed romantically before me. I told myself that I was to consort with princes and beautiful noblewomen and to spend money lavishly. The future seemed to promise a career that was the merriest, maddest for which a man could hope.

I laugh sometimes now when I think of the dreams I had in those days. I was soon to learn that the life which Fate had thrust upon me was set with traps and pitfalls which might not easily be escaped. I was to learn many lessons and to know much suffering; and I was to discover that the finding of my “document “was only the beginning of a chain of events that were to control my whole life and that its influence over my career had not ended.

But at that time I was all hopes and rosy dreams of my future, of myself, occasionally of Nevshka.

Nevshka! Is she still as charming as ever?

CHAPTER III

A BOTANIST IN THE ARGONNE

Of what comes of leaving important papers exposed I look and talk indiscreetly, and a man dies.

IN spite of my dreams and extreme self-satisfaction, I found the atmosphere of Gross Lichterfelde as drab and monotonous as ever it had been before my masquerade. Discipline sits lightly upon one who is accustomed to it solely, but to me, fresh from a glorious fortnight of intrigue and festivity, it was doubly galling. Yet there was one avenue of escape open to me that was denied my fellows, for I was required to pay a weekly visit to my tutor in the Wilhelmstrasse, there to continue my studies in the art of diplomatic intrigue.

It is a significant comment upon the life at Gross Lichterfelde that I could regard these visits as a kind of relaxation. Surely no drillmaster was ever so exacting as this tutor of mine. And yet, despite his dryness and the complete lack of cordiality in his manner, there was somewhere the gleam of romance about him. To me he seemed, in a strangely inappropriate way, an incarnation of one of those old masters of intrigue who had been my heroes in former days at home; and my imagination distorted him into a gigantic, shadowy being, mysterious, inflexible and potentially sinister.

,We studied history together that autumn; not the dull record of facts that was forced upon us at Gross Lichterfelde, but rather a history of glorious national achievement, of ambitions attained and enemies scattered a history that had the tone of prophecy. And I would sit there in the soft autumn sunlight viewing the Fatherland with new eyes; as a knight in shining armour, beset by foes, but ever triumphing over 4hem by virtue of his righteousness and strength of arm.

Then I would return to Gross Lichterfelde and its discipline.

Yet even at Gross Lichterfelde we contrived to amuse ourselves, chiefly by violating regulations. That is generally the result of walling any person inside a set of rules; his attention becomes centred on getting outside. American cadets at West Point, so I have been told, have their traditional list of devilries, maintained with admirable persistence in the face of severe penalties. At Gross Lichterfelde