

# The Prime Minister's Coup.

The autumn morning was gray and misty in Parliament Street.

Big Ben, looming up against the leaden sky, had chimed nine o'clock, business men were hurrying toward Charing Cross, eager to commence the day's work, the police about Whitehall were going off duty and hastening to warm themselves, and the sentinels at the Horse Guard were changing guard. The great blocks of Government Offices were not yet open, even fourth division clerks were not due for another hour and their principals not for a couple of hours more, yet the Most Noble the Marquis of Macclesfield, her Majesty's Prime Minister and Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was in his private room overlooking the great quadrangle in Downing Street, busy with the affairs of the British empire.

He had entered that room soon after midnight, taken the room ribbon of the Garter from across his shirt-front—for he had been attending a reception at the German Embassy—placed it carefully in a drawer, turned up his shirt-cuffs as was his habit, and sat down to write. Heedless of time, he had written on, the silence broken only by the scratching of his quill, rising only once to drink a glass of water and to pace the room two or three times about in deep thought. Then, he had returned to his work, penning a dispatch with his own hand and reducing it to cipher of figures by aid of the small leather-bound book open at his elbow.

A grave, gray-bearded, scanty-haired man, he possessed keen dark eyes which had not lost their brilliancy although he was nearly seventy. Something of a misanthrope in private life; a retiring man who hated popularity, who never spoke in public unless absolutely compelled from political motives, he was nevertheless acknowledged from end to end of Europe as the greatest living diplomatist and the most successful Foreign Minister England had ever possessed. To preserve the old tradition of his ancient and noble family, and serve his sovereign, were his only aims, and to that end it was no unusual thing for him to work through the silent hours while London slept, and then drive in aansom to his great dismal old house in Grosvenor Square, where he lived a lonely and essentially simple life. Twenty years ago his wife had died, and beyond the servants, his nephew, who acted as his private secretary, was the only other resident in that severely furnished barrack. A prodigious worker, he would frequently be busy for twenty hours out of the twenty-four, examining and mastering the dispatches which came to him daily from her Majesty's Ambassadors abroad, sealed in those well-worn boxes of red morocco, making notes, deciding the most difficult points of an intricate diplomacy, and giving advice to one and all of her representatives, at the various courts of Europe. Five thousand pounds per year was certainly an inadequate remuneration for his onerous office. No man in all England had such grave responsibility, for often upon those words he wrote depended the integrity and prosperity of the great empire.

As Big Ben boomed forth, he glanced at his watch. Then, having written another line, he appended his well-known sprawly signature, collected the written sheets of blue dispatch-paper with its wide margin and its word, "Confidential," printed in the corner, and having taken from a drawer an envelope upon which was a large, broad cross in scarlet, he sealed it with the old-fashioned cut amethyst attached to his watch-chain and bearing his arms.

Then he sighed heavily, rested his wearied brow upon his hands, and afterward rose, drew up the blind and stood at the window, gazing gravely out upon the silent quadrangle of the Foreign Office where the pigeons were strutting in the gray morning.

"It must be done—must," he murmured. "It is a sacrifice—a great sacrifice—but it is imperative. At this moment we are within twenty-four hours of war, and the honor of England is in my hands."

He took from his pocket a telegram which he had received over the private wire on the previous night, and reread it. The words in cipher for his eyes alone were from his Sovereign Lady the Queen.

Thrice he paced the room from end to end, his chin upon his breast, his thin, nervous fingers twitching in agitation, murmuring:

"I wonder how it will all end? Ah! I wonder!"

And he halted, drawing a long breath. There was upon his ashen face a look of profound alarm.

A sharp tap upon the door caused him to start, and there entered a tall, smart-looking man of about forty, wearing a heavy travelling-ulster, whose gait showed him to be an officer and whose easy bearing made it plain that he was on intimate terms with the Premier of England. His friendly feeling toward the personnel of the Foreign Office was one of the secrets of the Marquis of Macclesfield's success. He was a man of few words, even to the Permanent Under-Secretaries, but he was accessible to all, of whatever grade.

The man who had entered was a well-set-up, fair-mustached, good-looking fellow, who had come in response to an order of his chief which had reached him late at night. He was Capt. Lionel Macdonald, one of "the Greyhounds of Europe," or to be more explicit, one of her Majesty's Foreign Service Messengers, a man to whom a journey from London to St. Petersburg was about as fatiguing as a journey around the Inner Circle of the Metropolitan District Railway. He

spent his life on railways, and had the times of departure and arrival on the European trunk-lines committed to memory so that he had no use for a Continental Bradshaw.

"Ah! Macdonald," his lordship exclaimed as the man entered, "I'm glad it's your turn to carry dispatches. I want you to go to Rome without delay. When shall you arrive?"

"If I leave Charing Cross in half an hour's time," said the Queen's messenger, glancing at his watch, "I shall be in Rome at seven o'clock in the morning of the day after to-morrow."

"Good," grunted the Minister for Foreign Affairs, handing him the sealed dispatch. "Give this into Sir Charles Durant's hands at the earliest possible moment—and," he added, "your duties I admit are extremely important. If its contents were known, all our diplomacy would be thwarted—you understand."

"Exactly," replied the captain, taking the document. "I trust however, that my previous services have shown my trustworthiness."

"Of course, of course," the chief said, quickly. "In you, Captain Macdonald, the Queen has a faithful servant, important at this crisis," the Minister added. "You are carrying backward and forward across Europe secrets which might land us in war, or estrange us from every possible alliance. With unscrupulous spies about you, as you have on every hand, it behooves you to keep your eyes always open."

Macdonald smiled. "We are too clever for those interesting persons," he laughed. "The spy is more successful in France, or in Italy, for there he can bribe. The cleverest spy has never touched a crossed dispatch of your lordship's."

"And that is a credit to you corps. In no other messenger service in Europe could that be said. It is true, as Bismarck once remarked to me, only the English are honest. But you're losing time," added his lordship, hastily. "Go. And good luck to you on your journey."

The captain, with the dispatch in his pocket, strode out, closing the door, and the great Minister was once more alone.

At half-past eight that same evening Macdonald sat in the small, buffet at the Gare de Lyon in Paris, where he was well known, calmly eating his dinner. He dined there, perhaps, on an average once a week throughout the year, and Jean, the head-waiter, always advised him as to his dishes. That night he had eaten exceedingly well, and now idled over coffee, a green chartreuse and a good cigar, awaiting the departure of the Rome express. He had wired from Charing Cross securing his berth in the wagon-lit, and as he made it a rule never to join a train until it was on the point of departure he took matters very easily, chatting and joking with the manager of the buffet.

At last the clock struck nine, the bustle and excitement on the platform where the Italian mail was being put in increased, and a ticket-collector began calling passengers for Laroche, Macon, Dijon, Aix-les-Bains and Modane to take their places, whereupon the Queen's messenger paid his bill tardily and strolled in a leisurely manner to the sleeping-car.

The conductor touched his hat respectfully as he entered, and said, "I have given monsieur the center saloon, as usual."

"Number Six?"

"Yes, monsieur."

The conductor, Bonnaud, had been known to him for years. He had traveled hundreds of journeys with him and the Nord, the Orient and the Nice expresses, and this official of the International Sleeping Car Company knew all his likes and dislikes. The car that night was pretty full, for a party of Americans was going through to Rome. Ere he had placed his bag in his berth, however, the horn was blown, and the train moved off on its long journey to the south of Europe.

For an hour, as was his habit, the captain sat in the corridor of the car, smoking, sipping the whisky and soda which Bonnaud brought him, chatting with one or two of his fellow-travelers, and making himself just as much at ease as though he were in his own chambers in St. James's Street. Indeed, spending nearly half his life in those cars, he was absolutely at home in them.

He was the last to turn in, and when the train ran onto Amberieu at a quarter past five next morning, although it was still dark, descended and obtained two long glasses of cafe-au-lait, one for the captain and one for himself. He took one to the door of Berth Number Six and knocked. He heard a response inside, and announced, "Cafe, monsieur!" Then, setting the glass on the floor before the door, he was compelled to descend again to the platform to speak with the controller of the train. The instant, however, Bonnaud had left the car, the door of the compartment next Macdonald's opened noiselessly, and a man's hand reached round and dropped a tiny white tablet into the steaming coffee.

A second later the door closed, and the only sound was the captain stirring. Next moment he unbolted his door and took in the glass.

The scene in the adjoining compartment was meanwhile, a somewhat curious one. The little chamber, like Macdonald's, contained two berths, and was separated from his by a closed door, so arranged that the two compartments could be thrown into one at will. Its occupants were a tall, dark-bearded, gentlemanly man, and a good-looking woman, attired quietly in a dark-green traveling-dress with a little satchel at her waist in that manner affected by Frenchwomen

when traveling. In the corridor on the previous night Macdonald had spoken with them, and found that they were Parisians, husband and wife, and a very pleasant pair.

It was plain, however, that neither had slept. They conversed only in low whispers, and the man, whom she addressed as Grezat, stood with his eye to a small gimlet-hole in the paneling.

"Good!" he whispered at last in French. "He's drunk the lot, and he hasn't relocked the door. The thing is quite easy now." Then, lifting the blind, he looked out. "How infernally dark it is. We ought to wait, I suppose, for the light."

"But delay may upset everything," observed his companion.

"I've given him sufficient," the man said, grimly. "He won't trouble us. Only I wish it would get light soon."

"I hope you haven't given him an overdose," the woman said, apprehensively. "If anything happened, there might be some very awkward inquiries."

"Bah!" the man laughed, as the train, increasing its speed, roared on, the wheels grinding louder beneath them until conversation in whispers became almost impossible. "I'm not a bungler. Leave it to me, if you're afraid to help."

"Afraid?" the woman echoed, with a curl of the lip. "Was I afraid when we put that German hog out of the way at Perpignan? Did I not assist you when we traveled from Paris to Salzburg, and next day the newspapers were full of a mystery? Mysteries I don't like. We want no mystery this time. Recollect the narrow escape we've already had."

"Enough," cried the man, impatiently, his eye again at the tiny hole. "Stop your chatter. He's going to sleep."

The woman remained silent, sitting on the edge of the sleeping-berth. Her hat was off, her dark hair disheveled, for she had reclined wide awake during the long night, and she looked pale and tired in the flickering lamp-light.

For fully half an hour the man Grezat kept watch at the hole until, satisfied that the Englishman slept, he opened his door carefully and looked down the corridor. Bonnaud was again asleep. Then he crept to Macdonald's door, opened it noiselessly, and reaching across drew back the bolt which secured the door in the partition between the two compartments, leaving next instant, and returning to his companion.

"It's all right," he said. Then, the Prime Minister's Coup glancing at his watch, he saw that it wanted a quarter to six. "In another quarter of an hour we must act, daylight or no daylight." The minutes slowly went by, and he still kept a silent, patient watch through the gimlet-hole, until at the half-hour he turned to the woman, telling her to prepare all the things, adding:

"He's as sound asleep as though he were in his coffin; and," he added grimly, with a strange glitter in his small eyes, "he'll go there, if he moves."

To be Continued

## OF THE WOLF THE BROTHERS

My position was indeed desperate. I had heard sufficient of their inhuman treatment of those who refused to pay ransom, to know that I, having failed to outwit them, might now be murdered without the slightest compunction. By that ill-advised note I had foolishly shown myself their enemy.

"You have seen that open grave beyond," the notorious outlaw said in a hard voice. "It is prepared for you! You will pay, or you will not leave this place alive!"

"Enough!" I cried, springing suddenly upon him. "Take that!" and drawing my revolver, which still remained in my pocket, apparently overlooked by them when I was unconscious, I fired point-blank in his face. "And that!"

He sprang back with a startled cry, evidently amazed that I had a weapon. A third shot I directed at his companion; and ere the flash had died away I had dashed through the door and up a short flight of broken steps into the light of day.

I emerged amid the ruins of the great old castle; but, running to the rampart, I sprang over it, and found myself outside the village, with the path by which I had ascended deep down before me.

Away I dashed for life. Behind me sounded wild shouts and vehement curses; and as I ran rifles cracked behind me, and several bullets whistled unpleasantly about my ears. The hasty footsteps of my pursuers gradually gained upon me, and I knew that it would be useless to make any stand against them. Therefore, heedless of where I went, and urged to take terrible leaps by a courage begotten of a strong desire for life, I sped on; down, down the mountain-side, until I reached the broken bridge and the highroad, where I found that, having successfully leaped several places where my pursuers feared to follow, I had once more gained considerably upon them. Those wild leaps saved me.

Again my pursuers fired at me, but their bullets went wide.

The Ave Maria was ringing when, having joined my anxious driver, who was waiting for me at the hamlet, I drove into Ponte e Serraglio; and it was past midnight when our wheels rattled over the uneven pebbles of gray old Lucca.

Next morning I told my story to the Questore, or chief of police, and then went my way, full of vivid recol-

lections of my exciting adventure.

Since then, during the past year, the daring robberies and outrages committed by the Brothers of the Wolf have been innumerable. A paragraph which I, however, read some six weeks ago in the Tribuna caused me considerable satisfaction. The cutting, now before me as I write, translated, states that a strong force of Carabinieri secretly ascended to the village of Monte Lupo by night, and succeeded in surprising the outlaws. A fierce encounter ensued, during which the guards succeeded in shooting the ringleader Conti and four of his companions. Some twenty prisoners were taken, all of whom were recognized as desperate thieves, including the Syndic, who was alleged to have profited considerably by the depredations of the villagers, and to have given them his countenance and protection. The Minister of the Interior had, on hearing of this, issued an order that the village should be destroyed by explosives, and this had been done after the household effects of the whole place had been heaped up and burned.

"The Carabinieri discovered a large quantity of stolen property hidden in the ancient fortress," the paragraph continues; "but what was strangest of all was a chamber wherein was an open grave. In this horrible place, one of the ancient dungeons of the castle, was a coffin containing the body of a victim apparently awaiting burial in quicklime. At first the guards were horrified; but their horror was turned to laughter when they found that the supposed body was in reality only a wax-faced dummy, and that the whole scene was cunningly arranged to terrify the victims from whom the thieves endeavored to extort money."

The explanation of the open grave was humorous enough; but there is at this moment when I write a terrible picture posted on the notice-board of the Communal Palace of Lucca; it is a gruesome picture of the notorious brigand Conti and his four companions whose bodies were, after death, stuck up against a wall and photographed, by order of the Italian Government, so that the public should know that the scoundrels were really dead, and likewise to warn all other outlaws of the fate awaiting them. As for my affable friend the Syndic, he is at present on the island of Elba, serving a sentence of ten years' imprisonment.

I revisited Monte Lupo, with some English friends a few days ago. The dynamite of the corps of Engineers has done its work well, for there is scarcely one stone standing upon another,

### HOW TO BE POPULAR.

Do not manifest impatience, nor engage in argument.

Do not interrupt another when speaking, nor find fault, etc., though you may gently criticize.

Do not talk of your private, personal and family matters; it shows bad taste.

Do not appear to notice inaccuracies of speech in others.

Do not always commence a conversation by an allusion to the weather.

Do not, when narrating an incident, continually say, "you see," "you know," etc.

Do not intrude professional or other topics that the company generally cannot take an interest in.

Do not talk very loud. A firm, clear yet mild, gentle and musical voice can be distinctly heard.

Do not speak disrespectfully of certain personal appearances or physical infirmities when any one present may have the same defect.

Do not be absent-minded, requiring the speaker to repeat his remarks. Give all your attention to anyone talking to you.

Do not try to force yourself into the confidence of others; if they give their confidence never betray it.

Do not intersperse your conversation with foreign words and high-sounding terms. It shows affectation and bad taste.

Do not carry on a conversation with another in general company about matters known only to you two. It is almost as impolite as to whisper.

Do not use slang phrases, vulgar terms, words of double meaning or language that will bring a blush to any cheek.

If, when you are paying an afternoon call, another lady arrives, the hostess should chat with you both, the first arrival should be the first to leave. A bow to the other caller and a few words to your hostess are all that it is necessary to say on parting.

A Boer farm and homestead is, it is said, to be one of the features of the Paris Exhibition. In this farm will be exhibited the chief wild animals of the Transvaal. The means of transportation in the country are also to be illustrated.

Lord Wolseley, Lord Roberts, and Sir Evelyn Wood have all written considerable for the press. Sir Redvers Buller has never written anything but despatches to the War Office, and shows his aversion to any other channels of publicity.

The most famous mule episode in history is probably the celebrated charge of the mules after the battle of Missionary Ridge, in the American Civil War, when the mules, finding themselves no longer under the lash of a master, started on a wild run, and, soon breaking loose from the wagons, stampeded directly toward the enemy. In the darkness the Southern soldiers took the onslaught for a cavalry charge, and in turn stampeded, leaving the mule victors in the possession of the field.

## Only a Woman's Story.

BUT IT WILL BRING HOPE TO MANY SILENT SUFFERERS.

Nervous Prostration—Heart Weakness—Agonizing Pains and Misery Such as Women Alone Endure Made the Life of Mrs. Thos. Sears a Burden.

Just a woman's story. Not strange because it happens every day; not romantic or thrilling, but just a story of misery and suffering such as, unfortunately, too many women endure in silence.

For several years Mrs. Thomas Sears, of St. Catharines, felt her illness gradually but surely gaining a firmer hold upon her system, and ultimately she almost despaired of recovery. To a reporter who called upon her, Mrs. Sears said:—

"What I have suffered is almost beyond description. My illness has been gradually growing upon me, and eighteen months ago I found myself almost helpless. My nerves were shattered, my heart weak and my entire system seemingly broken down. I had no rest night or day; the little sleep I did get did not refresh me. I was in constant agony, and only a woman can understand what I endured as I tried to do my household work. Any sudden noise would frighten me and leave me in a condition bordering on collapse. At times I experienced attacks of vertigo, and these seemed for a time to affect my memory. The least exertion would leave me almost breathless, and my heart would palpitate violently. I had no desire for food of any kind, and yet I had to force myself to eat to maintain life. I treated with three different doctors and spent much money in this way, but without avail, and I was in a condition bordering on despair. I was urged to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and in December, 1898, I consented to do so. I first got four boxes and noticed a change for the better after I had finished the second box. When the four boxes were finished there was a great change for the better, and I then procured another half dozen boxes. Before these were all used I was again enjoying the blessing of good health. There can be no doubt of my cure because months have passed since I discontinued taking Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and during that time I have never felt the slightest symptom of the trouble, and I cheerfully and strongly urge other women who are suffering to use this wonderful medicine, feeling sure that it will cure them, as it did me."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are a specific for all forms of weakness. The blood is vitalized, the nervous system is re-organized, irregularities are corrected, strength returns and disease disappears. So remarkable have been the cures performed by these little pills that their fame has spread to the far ends of civilization. Wherever you go you will find the most important article in every drug store to be Dr. Williams' Pink Pills.

### WOMEN IN PERSIA.

Life is sad in Persia, especially the woman's life. The law of Islam allows each man to have four wives. His wives he may divorce at will. Our word "bosh" is the Turkish word by which a Moslem divorces his wife. It doesn't count if he says it only once or twice but if said the third time, the woman must go, and there is no recourse. There are no words for wife and home in Persia. There are no homes and wives. It is curious to hear a handsome woman say: "I have told my husband if he marries another wife I shall poison him, and I intend to do it." Or to ask a woman about her home life, and get the answer, "Love my husband! Oh yes, I love him. I love him as much as a sieve holds water."

In the cities the Moslem women—and all but about 60,000 or so of the 4,000,000 women of the land are Moslems—never appear in public save dressed in black and heavily veiled, the eyes looking out through a small meshed space of the veil. Custom, fear of men, and not modesty, impose this dress. The poorer women or the women in the villages wear no veils, or throw the veils back and leave their faces uncovered, unless now and then in a coquettish way they draw a fold of the dress across the mouth.

The Fire Worshipers, or Guebras, are but few in Persia now, though it is the land of their origin, but their women can be picked out at once in Teheran, or in the few cities where they are found, by their dress. Outside of Teheran is the Tower of Silence, where believing neither in cremation nor in burial, the Fire Worshipers expose their dead. From the hillside it looks out in solemn stillness over the broad, dead plain, even as the dead of this dying people look up in solemn stillness from their ghastly burial place to the unanswering sky.

Any additional act of bravery which would have won the Victoria Cross for its holder had he not already possessed it, is signified by a bar or clasp being added to the ribbon just above the bar from which the Cross is suspended. The Cross carries with it a pension of \$50 a year, and an additional \$25 is given for each bar.

In killing game the Boers use a bullet of which the lead point is exposed so that it "mushrooms" when it strikes. On entering the bullet expands and tears an ugly hole. If it strikes sideways the effect is horrible.