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BY WYMOND CAREY.
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

There was a real "No. 101." Unpublished M.S. despatches now in the Record Office of the British Museum reveal the interesting fact that on more than one occasion the British Government obtained important French state secrets through an agent known to the British Ministers as "No. 101." Who this mysterious agent was, whether it was a man or a woman, why and how he or she so successfully played the part of a traitor, have not so far as is known to the present writer, been discovered by historians or archivists. The references in the confidential correspondence supply no answer to such questions. If the British Ministers knew all the truth they kept it to themselves and it perished with them. Doubtless there were good reasons for strict secrecy. But it is more than possible that they themselves did not know that throughout they simply dealt with a cipher, whose secret they never penetrated. It is, however, clear that "No. 101" was in a position to discover some of the most intricate designs in the policy of the French Government, through agents, was satisfied of the genuineness of the secrets for which it paid handsomely.—W. C.]

CHAPTER I.

One evening in the January of 1745, the critical year of Fontenoy and of the great Jacobite rising, a middle-aged gentleman, the private secretary of a Secretary of State, was working as usual in the room of a house in Cleveland Row. The table at which he sat was littered with papers, but at this precise moment he had leaned back in his chair with a puzzled expression and his left hand in perplexity pushed his wig away.

"Extraordinary," he muttered, "most extraordinary." The remark was apparently caused by an official letter in his other hand—a letter marked "Most Private," which came from The Hague, and the passage which he had just read ran:

"I have the honor to submit to you the following important communication in cipher, received, through our agent at Paris, from 'No. 101,' etc."

On the table lay the cipher communication together with a decoded version which the secretary now studied for the third time. In explicit language the despatch supplied detailed information as to certain recent highly confidential negotiations between the Jacobite party in Paris and the French King, Louis XV., a revelation in short of the most weighty state secrets of the French Government.

"No. 101," the secretary murmured, scratching his head, "always 'No. 101' it is marvellous, incredible. How the devil can it be done?"

But there was no answer to this question, save the fact which provoked it—that closely ciphered paper, with its disquieting information so curiously and mysteriously obtained.

"Ah," he jumped up and hurriedly straightened his wig. "Good evening to you."

The new-comer was a man of about three-and-thirty, tall, finely built, and of a muscular physique, with a face of considerable power. Most noticeable, perhaps, in his appearance was his intense, penetrating gaze, which seemed to pierce into the very soul of his strong mouth and chin, but all most belied by the glow in his large, dark eyes, which looked you through and through with a strangely watchful innocence.

"There is work to be done, sir," he asked as he took the chair offered.

"Exactly. To-day we have received most gratifying and surprising information from our friend 'No. 101'—and we have the promise of more."

"Yes." The brief monosyllable was spoken almost softly, but the dark eyes gleamed, as they roamed over the room.

"The communications from 'No. 101' have begun again," the secretary pursued, "that in fact is interesting. The Secretary of State therefore desired me to send at once for you, the most trustworthy secret agent we have. In a very few minutes Captain Statham of the First Foot Guards will be here."

"Sent, I think, from the Low Countries at the request of our agents at The Hague?"

"Ah, I see you are as well informed as usual. You are quite right. Are you," he laughed, "ever wrong?"

The new-comer stared at the sign, entranced.

"A soldier," Onslow remarked with his slow smile, "can always distinguish blood from red ink—is it not so?" Statham nodded. "Remember, then, those crossed daggers with the figures in blood are the only genuine mark. All others are forgeries—reject them unhesitatingly. Let me show it to you again." He produced from his pocket-book a paper with the design in the corner, which, when compared with the one on the table, corresponded exactly.

"I warn you," Onslow added, "because the existence of this 'No. 101' is becoming known to the French—they suspect treachery—their Secret Service is clever and they may attempt to deceive you. As they do not know the countersign, though they may have guessed at the treachery of 'No. 101' they cannot really hoodwink you. Cipher papers which come in the name

of 'No. 101' without that remarkable signature are simply a non de guerre, or, at points, of love, or anything you like, but they are either a forgery or a trap; so put them in the fire."

Statham sat pondering, his eyes riveted on the crossed daggers. "You, sir," he began, "have had dealings with this mysterious person. Is it a man or a woman?"

"Ah!" Onslow laughed gently. "Every one asks that, every man at least. I cannot answer; no one, indeed, can. My opinion? Well, I change it every month. But these are the facts: It is absolutely certain that the traitor is a high, very high, very absolutely certain that he or she has access to the very best society in Paris and at the Court, and is at home in the most confidential circles of the King and his ministers. We have even had documents from the private cabinet of Louis XV. Furthermore, the traitor can converse with the King in such a way as to baffle detection. If it is a woman she is a very remarkable one; if it be a man he is one who controls important women. Perhaps it is both. Such knowledge, so peculiar, so accurate, so extensive, such skill and such ingenuity scarcely seem to be within the powers of any individual man or woman."

"Every word you say sharpens my surprise and my curiosity."

"Yes, and every transaction you will have with the cipher will sharpen it more and more. I have been fifteen years in the Secret Service, but this business is today as much a puzzle to me as it ever was. 'No. 101' has taught me a very important secret, one unknown even to the French King's ministers, which, so jealously guarded as it is, may never be discovered in the King's lifetime or at all. Can you really believe that Louis, while professing to act through his ministers, has stealthily built up a little secret service of his own whose work is to spy on those ministers, on his ambassadors, generals, and their agents, to receive privately instructions wholly different from what the King has officially sanctioned, and frequently directly to thwart, check, annul, and defeat by intrigue and diplomacy the official policy of their sovereign?"

"Is it possible?"

"It is a fact," Onslow said emphatically. "But the King, 'No. 101,' you and I and one or two others alone know it. Let me give you a proof. To-day officially Louis through his ministers has disavowed the Jacobites. The ministers believe their master is sincere; many of them regret it, but their instructions are explicit. In truth, through those private agents I spoke of, the King is encouraging the Jacobites in every way and is actually thwarting the steps and the policy which he has officially and publicly commanded."

"And the ministers are ignorant of this?"

"Absolutely. But mark you, unless the King is very careful, some day there will come an awkward crisis. His Majesty will be threatened with the disclosure of this secret, policy which gives him his royal authority, but which gives the lie to his public policy, equally authentic. And unless he can suppress the first he must be shown to be doubly a royal liar—not to dwell on the consequences to France."

"What a curious king!" Statham ejaculated.

"Curious!" Onslow laughed softly; "more than curious, because no one knows the real Louis. The world says he is an ignorant, superstitious, indolent, extravagant, heartless dulleard in a crown who has only two passions—smiling and women. It is true; he is the prince of hunters and the emperor of rakes. But he is also a worker, cunning, impetuous, obstinate, remorseless."

"But why does he play such a dangerous game?"

"God knows. The real Louis no man has discovered, or woman either; he is known to the Almighty or the devil. But you observe what chances this double life gives to our friend 'No. 101.'"

Onslow took the chair he had vacated and for a quarter of an hour Captain Statham and he chatted earnestly on the position of affairs in the Low Countries, and the war then raging from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, on the vast efforts being made by the French for a great campaign in the coming spring, the military genius of the famous Marshal de Saxe, the Austrian and Dutch allies of Great Britain, and the new English royal commander-in-chief who was shortly to leave to take over the work of saving Flanders from the arms of Louis XV.

Onslow then briefly explained what the Secret Service agents of the Duke of Cumberland were to expect and why.

"Communications," he wound up, "from this mysterious spy and traitor, 'No. 101,' invariably come like bolts from the blue. They are, of course, always in cipher and they will reach you by the most innocent hands—a peasant, a lackey, a tavern wench—somebody you will simply find them, say, under your pillow, or in your boots. No one can tell how they get there. But never neglect them, however strange or unusual their contents may be, for they are never wrong—never! The genuine ones you will recognize by this mark—the golden cross, the crossed paper and put his fingers on a sign—a two crossed daggers and the figures 101 written in blood—you see—so."

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Statham began to pace up and down. "What are the traitor's motives?" he demanded, abruptly.

"Ah, there you beat me," Onslow rose and confronted him. "My dear sir, a traitor's motives may be gold, or madness, ambition, love, jealousy, revenge, singly or together, but above all love and revenge."

Statham made an impatient gesture. "I would give my commission," he exclaimed "to know the meaning of this mystery."

A sympathetic gleam lingered in Onslow's eyes as he calmly scrutinized the young officer. "Ah," he said, almost pityingly, "you begin to feel the spell of this mystery wrapped in a number, the spell of 'No. 101,' the fatal spell."

"Fatal!" Statham took him up sharply.

"Yes, I must warn you. Every single person who has dealings with this cipher has got near to the heart of the truth has so far met with a violent end. It is not pleasant, but it is a fact. And the explanation is easy. Those who might betray the truth are removed by accident or design, some by this method, some by that. They pass into the silent life of the grave, perhaps just when they could have revealed what they had discovered." He paused, for Statham was visibly impressed. "Really there is no danger," he added; "but I say as earnestly as I can, because you are young, and life is sweet for the young, for God's sake stifle your curiosity, resist the spell of this fatal spell. Take the information as it comes, and ask no questions, push no inquiries, however tempting and easy the path to success seems, or, as sure as I stand here, His Majesty King George the Second will lose a promising and gallant officer."

Statham walked away and resumed his seat. "And you, Mr. Onslow," he demanded, looking up with the profoundest interest.

"Do I practice what I preach? Well, I am a spy by profession; to some men such a life is everything—it is, in fact, at least, to me. But I do not conceal from myself that if my curiosity overpowers me my hour for silence, too, will come—the silence of the unknown grave in an unknown land."

"Then is no one ever to know?" Statham muttered with childish petulance.

"Probably not. A hundred years hence the secret that baffles you and me will be well known to the world. Statham's heels tapped on the floor.

"Perhaps," he pronounced, slowly, "perhaps the truth is well worth the price that is paid for it—death and the silence of the grave."

Onslow stared at him. His eyes gleamed intensely as if they were fixed on visions known only to the inner mind. "Perhaps," he repeated gravely, "but really," he added, with a sudden lightness, "there is no one to persuade us it is so. Come, Captain Statham, you have not forgotten supper, I hope, and I propose to I propose to I propose to tonight to the most seductive enchantress in London?"

"No, indeed. All day I have been hungering for that supper. In the Low Countries we do not get suppers provided over by ladies as you have described to me."

"In the French army they have both the ladies and the suppers," said Onslow, laughing. "And my dear Captain, to the victors of the spring will fall the spoils. To-night shall be a foretaste, and if my enchantress does not make you forget 'No. 101,' I despair of the gallantry of British officers."

He looked up the papers, chatting all the time, and then the two gentlemen went out together.

CHAPTER II.

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Verdict for Dr. Pierce

AGAINST THE

Ladies' Home Journal.

Sending truth after a lie. It is an old maxim that "a lie will travel seven leagues while truth is getting its boots on," and no doubt hundreds of thousands of good people read the unwarranted and malicious attack upon Dr. R. V. Pierce and his Favorite Prescription published in the May (1906) number of the Ladies' Home Journal, with its great black display headings, who never saw the humble, groveling retraction, with its inconspicuous heading, published two months later. It was boldly charged in the slanderous and libelous article that Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, for the cure of woman's weaknesses and ailments, contained alcohol and other harmful ingredients. Dr. Pierce promptly brought suit against the publishers of the Ladies' Home Journal, for \$200,000.00 damages.

Dr. Pierce alleged that Mr. Bok, the editor, maliciously published the article containing such false and defamatory matter with the intent of injuring his business; furthermore, that no alcohol, or other injurious, or habit-forming, drugs are, or ever were, contained in his "Favorite Prescription"; that said medicine is made from native medicinal roots and contains no harmful ingredients whatsoever; and that Mr. Bok's malicious statements were wholly and absolutely false.

In the retraction printed by said Journal they were forced to acknowledge that they had obtained a supply of "Favorite Prescription" from eminent chemists, all of whom certified that it did not contain alcohol, and that it was a purely medicinal preparation.

The action in the Supreme Court. But the publication of the libelous article with its great display headings, while hundreds of thousands who read the wickedly defamatory article never saw the humble groveling retraction, set in small type and made as inconspicuous as possible, was a gross and deliberate wrong brought before a jury in the Supreme Court of New York State which promptly rendered a verdict in the Doctor's favor. Thus his traducers came to grief and their base slanders were refuted.

"Welcome, Vicomte," she said, so swiftly recovering herself that Statham alone noticed her surprise, if it was surprise. "And may I ask how a Capitaine-Lieutenant of the Chevaliers de la Garde de la Maison du Roi happens to be in England when his country is at war?"

"You know me, Madame!" the Vicomte stammered looking at her in a confusion he could not conceal.

The lady laughed. "Every one who has been in Paris," she retorted, "knows the Chevaliers de la Garde, and the most famous of their officers is Monsieur le Vicomte de Nerac, famous, I would have these gentlemen be aware, for his swordsmanship, for his gallantry—and for his military exploits, which won him the Croix de St. Louis."

"You do me too much honor, Madame," the Vicomte replied.

"As a woman I fear you, as a lover of gallant deeds and as a fencer myself I adore you, as do all the ladies whether at Versailles or in Les Halles," she laughed again. "But you have not answered my question. Why are you in England, Monsieur le Vicomte?"

"Nine months ago I had the misfortune to be taken prisoner, Madame, but in three weeks I return to my duty as a soldier and a noble of France."

He bowed to the company with that incomparable air of self-confidence and by the dulcet courtesy which was the pride of Versailles and the despair of the rest of the world.

"And here," the lady answered, "is another gentleman who also shortly returns to his duty. Captain Statham of the First Foot Guards, Monsieur le Vicomte de Nerac of the Chevaliers de la Garde. Perhaps before long you will meet again, and this time not in a woman's salon."

"When Captain Statham is taken prisoner," the Vicomte remarked, smiling, "I can assure him Paris is not less pleasant than London, but till then he and I must agree to cross swords in a friendly manner for the favors of yourself, Princess."

"And you think you will win, Vicomte?"

"It is impossible we can lose," the Vicomte replied. "Not even the gallantry of the First Foot Guards can save the allies from the genius of Monsieur le Marechal de Saxe."

"We will see," Statham responded gruffly.

"Without a doubt, sir," the Vicomte bowed.