

The Kingdom of The Blind

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

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SYNOPSIS:

The story, written in 1916, begins with Lady Anselman's luncheon-party at the Ritz Hotel, London. Among the guests are Lord Romsey, a Cabinet Minister; Surgeon-Major Thomson, Chief Inspector of Field Hospitals; his fiancée, Geraldine Conyers; her brother, a naval lieutenant, and his fiancée Olive McCreton; Captain Ronald Granet, nephew of the hostess, home with a wounded arm. Lieut. Conyers receives commission on a "mystery" ship and Major Thomson decodes a secret message from the battlefield. Lord Romsey receives a visitor; and the conversation reveals the Cabinet Minister's secret dealings with Germany. Thomson calls at Granet's apartments to discover whether he knows anything about Lord Romsey's visitor. Granet denies any knowledge of the so-called American chaplain. Geraldine evades Thomson's plea for an immediate marriage. He expostulates with Conyers for disclosing Admiralty plans to the two girls and Granet. After a walk in the park with Geraldine, Granet returns to his room to find a bottle missing from a cupboard. He warns his servant that a new hand has entered the game. War Office refuses to allow him to rejoin his regiment. Thomson goes to the front to interview Granet's General and has his suspicions confirmed. Granet motored the two girls to Portsmouth to visit Conyers on the "Scorpion," and tried to discover the ship's secret device. That evening, because Thomson warns her that Granet is suspect, Geraldine breaks their engagement. The following day Granet calls upon Monsieur Guillot at the Milan Hotel.

CHAPTER XIII.—(Cont'd.)

"You have, too, Granet continued, "a great following throughout France. You are the man for the task I bring to you. You, if you choose, shall save your country and earn the reward she will surely bestow upon you."

Monsieur Guillot's cheeks were flushed a little. With long, nervous fingers he rolled a cigarette and lit it. "Monsieur," he said, "I listen to you eagerly, and yet I am puzzled. You wear the uniform of an English officer, but you come to me, is it not so, as an emissary of Germany?"

"In bald words that may be true," Granet confessed, "yet I would remind you of two things. First, that the more dominant part of the personality which I have inherited comes to me from Alsatian ancestors; and secondly, that this peace for which I am striving may in the end mean salvation for England, too."

"I hear you with relief," Monsieur Guillot admitted. "In this transaction it is my great desire to deal with a man of honor. As such I now perceive that I can recognize you, monsieur."

Granet bowed gravely and without any shadow of embarrassment.

"That assuredly, Monsieur Guillot," he said. "Shall I proceed?"

"By all means."

Granet drew a thin packet from the breast pocket of his coat. He laid it out on the table between them.

engaged to Major Thomson. Good-bye!"

A rush of words trembled upon his lips but she was gone. He watched her slim, graceful figure as she passed swiftly along the vestibule and joined her friends. He even heard her little laugh as she greeted one of the men who had waited for her.

"Decidedly," Granet said to himself triumphantly as he turned towards the door, "this is my day!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Monsieur Guillot was a man of emotional temperament. For more than an hour after Granet had left him, he paced up and down his little room, stood before the high windows which overlooked the Thames, raised his hands above his head and gazed with flashing eyes into the future—such a future! All his life he had been a schemer, his eyes turned towards the big things, yet with himself always occupying the one glorified place in the centre of the arena. He was, in one sense of the word, a patriot, but it was the meanest and smallest sense. There was no great France for him in which his was not the commanding figure. In every dream of that wonderful future, of a more splendid and triumphant France, he saw himself on the pinnacle of fame, himself acclaimed by millions the strong, great man, the liberator. France outside himself lived only as a phantasm. And now at last his chance had come. The minutes passed unnoticed as he built his way up into the future. He was shrewd and calculating, he took note of the pitfalls he must avoid. One by one he decided upon the men whom gradually and cautiously he would draw into his confidence. Finally he saw the whole scheme complete, the bomb-shell thrown, France hysterically casting laurels upon the man who had brought her unexpected peace.

The door-bell rang. He answered it a little impatiently. A slim, fashionably dressed young Frenchman stood there, whose face was vaguely familiar to him.

"Monsieur Guillot?" the newcomer inquired politely.

Guillot bowed. The young man handed him a card.

"I am the Baron D'Evignon," he announced, "second secretary at the Embassy here."

Monsieur Guillot held the card and looked at his visitor. He was very puzzled. Some dim sense of foreboding was beginning to steal in upon him.

"Be so kind as to come in, Monsieur le Baron," he invited. "Will you not be seated and explain to me to what I am indebted for this honor? You do not, by any chance, mistake me for another? I am Monsieur Guillot, lately, alas! of Lille."

The Baron smiled ever so slightly as he waved away the chair.

"There is no mistake, Monsieur Guillot," he said. "I come to you with a message from my Chief. He would be greatly honored if you would accompany me to the Embassy. He wishes a few minutes' conversation with you."

"With me?" Monsieur Guillot echoed incredulously. "But there is some mistake."

"No mistake, I assure you," the young man insisted.

Monsieur Guillot drew a little back into the room.

"But what have I to do with the Ambassador, or with diplomatic matters of any sort?" he protested. "I am here on business, to see what can be saved from the wreck of my affairs. Monsieur the Ambassador is mistaking me for another."

The Baron shook his head.

"There is no mistake, my dear sir," he insisted. "We all recognize," he added, with a bow, "the necessities which force the most famous of us to live sometimes in the shadow of anonymity. If the Chief could find little to say to Monsieur Guillot of Lille, he will, I am sure, be very interested in a short conversation with Monsieur Henri Pailleton."

There was a brief, tense silence. The man who had called himself Guillot was transformed. The dreams which had uplifted him a few minutes ago, had passed. He was living very much in the present—an ugly and foreboding present. The veins stood out upon his forehead and upon the back of his hands, his teeth gleamed underneath his coarse, white moustache. Then he recovered himself.

"There is some mistake," he said, "but I will come."

In silence they left the hotel and drove to the Embassy, in silence the young man ushered his charge into the large, pleasant apartment on the ground floor of the Embassy, where the ambassador was giving instructions to two of his secretaries. He dismissed them with a little wave of his hand and bowed politely to his visitor. There was no longer any pretext on the part of Monsieur Guillot. He recognized its complete futility.

"Monsieur Pailleton," the ambassador began, "will you take a seat? It is very kind of you to obey so quickly my summons."

"I had no idea," the latter remarked, "that my presence in England was known. I am here on private business."

The ambassador bowed suavely.

"Precisely, my friend! You see, I use the epithet 'my friend' because at a time like this all Frenchmen must forget their differences and work together for the good and the honor of their country. Is it not so, monsieur?"

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"That is indeed true, Monsieur," Pailleton admitted slowly. "We may work in different ways but we work towards the same end."

"No one has ever doubted your patriotism, Monsieur Pailleton," the ambassador continued. "It is my privilege now to put it to the test. There is a little misunderstanding in Brazil, every particular concerning which, and the views of our Government, is contained in the little parcel of documents which you see upon this table. Put them in your pocket, Monsieur Pailleton. I am going to ask you to serve your country by leaving for Liverpool this afternoon and for Brazil to-morrow on the steamship 'Hermes.'"

Monsieur Pailleton had been a little taken aback by the visit of the Baron. He sat now like a man temporarily stupefied. He was too amazed to find any sinister significance in this mission. He could only gasp. The ambassador's voice, as he continued talking smoothly, seemed to reach him from a long way off.

(To be continued.)

Harvest of the Sea.

North Sea fishermen handle ten thousand million fishes of all sorts and sizes, from the giant ray to the tiny whiting, every year. The twin ports of Yarmouth and Lowestoft have alone received nine hundred million herrings in one season.

One acre of the North Sea or the English Channel is capable of yielding as great a weight of food as a hundred acres of the best grass land in Sussex.

There has been quite a run on fowl farms lately, but when we consider that the cod produces eight million eggs, the domestic fowl has to take a back seat. It is estimated, however, that only one egg in ten millions lives to "grow up."

Salmon produce a thousand eggs for every pound of their weight, and though the canning factories of Western Canada and the United States are working hard all the time to supply the world's demands, the fish still run up the rivers in hundreds of thousands.

Milk as Glue.

Fancy using milk as glue.

The milk does not come from the cow, but from a wonderful tree called the cow-tree. But, for all that, it is quite as pleasant to drink as the milk we get from the dairy.

The tree is one of the largest to be found in the dense forests of Brazil. Its bark is deeply scored, reddish, and ragged.

Cuts are made in the trunk to allow the milk to flow, but a supply can be obtained equally well from one which has been cut down for some time.

A traveller had some of the milk drawn from dry logs which had been standing many days in the hot sun. He found it pleasant with coffee. It soon thickened to a glue, and often he saw the natives use it to cement broken crockery.

Doctor's Car Has Emergency Wireless Receiving Set.

Physicians and others who find it essential to keep in close contact with their homes when out on short motor-car trips, will be interested in the latest development of wireless telegraphy. In its application to the motor car, the tall antennae are dispensed with and taking their place is a series of four wires which run entirely around the top of the car, resembling a small wire banister. The receiving apparatus is located on top of the back-rest cushion of the rear seat. The outfit has a range of five miles and makes a very useful and modern accessory to the motor car.

Fountain Brush Has Safety Fuse.

A feature of a fountain brush having a reservoir containing inflammable liquids, such as gasoline, benzine, and turpentine, for cleaning purposes, is the fusible cap which melts in case of fire, and said to prevent explosion and spread of flaming fluid. A valve plunger pressed down by the forefinger admits the liquid to the bristles. The reservoir serves also as a handle. The brush is for the purpose of cleaning a variety of objects—type forms, half-tones, and utensils found in the rubber-tire and electrotyping industries.

Popular Keyhole.

Peter was no different from other boys. Sometimes when his sister's friend would call he would entertain him in the drawing-room until Dolly came downstairs.

One night the young man asked the youngster if he ever peered through the keyhole while he and the boy's sister were in the drawing-room.

With a sudden burst of candor, Peter answered: "Oh, rather—when mother isn't there!"

Most Protestant Country.

Sweden is said to be the most Protestant country in the world. Of the population of 6,000,000 there are only 2,000 Roman Catholics, the remainder of the population belonging almost entirely to the Lutheran church.

NURSES

The Toronto Hospital for Incurables, in affiliation with Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, New York City, offers a three years' course of training to young women, having the required education, and desirous of becoming nurses. This Hospital has adopted the eight-hour system. The pupils receive uniforms of the School, a monthly allowance and travelling expenses to and from New York. For further information apply to the Superintendent.

Noses As Chest Protectors.

How many people know that the nose is a natural filter?

Its passages are furnished with numbers of minute hairs against which air must brush as it is breathed in. These hairs catch the tiny particles of dust and dirt which all air contains, preventing them from being carried into the delicate tissues of the throat and lungs.

When a quantity of small particles has been filtered by the nose, they set up an irritation, which causes you to sneeze and get rid of them.

The nose has another important function: it serves to warm cold air before it reaches the lungs. The air, as it is taken in through the nostrils, passes along narrow passages which are often the same temperature as the body, and as it goes its chill is taken off. The nose, then, is also a very effective chest protector.

That is why people who breathe through the nose are less liable to diseases of the chest and throat than those who breathe through the mouth. The latter take dirty, unfiltered air straight into the lungs, where its particles of dust, soot, or grit set up irritation, which paves the way for the microbes of disease. On cold days they pass quantities of unwarmed air direct to the lungs.

Meteors Blamed for Extreme Heat.

The extraordinary warm weather of the present summer is caused by an unusual downpour of meteors on the sun, increasing its radiation and effective surface temperature, in the belief of Prof. T. J. See, U.S. Government astronomer at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California.

Citing the fact that unusually warm summers occur every ten or eleven years, he said that "now, for the first time, by profound researches, astronomers are able to throw some light" upon this great mystery.

"Since a mass of meteoric matter greater than our moon is falling into the sun every century," he said, "it is very improbable that the downpour proceeds at a uniform rate. If it comes down in gusts under the actions of the chief planets, Jupiter and Saturn, which are now near conjunction and are seen together in our evening sky, then we should have sudden increases of the sun's radiation just such as we now witness all over the world. This is a sufficient explanation of the unprecedentedly hot summer."

The Blow That Told.

One didn't have to be told that he was a cheery man with a happy disposition, an optimist from the jolly two hairs on his head to his dancing size eleven feet. His name was Nathaniel Smudge.

The proprietress of the boarding-house was showing him round.

"I think this room will do very well indeed, Mrs. Grabb; but there is just one thing," said Mr. Smudge. "What sort of a neighborhood is it?"—he crossed to the window—"For instance, what is that large building across the street?"

"Oh, that is an orphanage; but the children only play outdoors in the afternoon—they are fairly quiet," explained Mrs. Grabb.

"Very well. Now, the institution over there. What is that?"

"Oh, that is a prison; but we seldom see the convicts, only when they are at work or playing ricket."

"I don't mind that either. Now, what is that structure up the street?"

"Why, that is a lunatic asylum; but the lunatics are quite harmless. The violent ones only occasionally escape."

"Ahem! That is, I suppose, to be expected. Even so, I will take the room." And he smiled good-humoredly as he paid the first week's rent in advance.

"Thank you!" said Mrs. Grabb, anxious to please. "We try to make things pleasant. My little girl plays the piano, and—"

Without a word, Mr. Smudge snatched back the rent money and dashed from the house.

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