The Kingdom of The Blind

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

(Copyrighted)

CHAPTER XXXIV.—(Cont'd.)

Thomson bowed.

"Perhaps I may be able to indulge you presently," he observed. "Since you have failed to persuade Miss Conyers to leave London, Captain Granet," he went on, turning towards the latter, "may I ask what your own movements are likely to be?"

"You may not," was the passionate reply. "They are no concern of yours."

"They are, unfortunately," Thomson retorted, "my very intimate concern. This, you will remember, is your ninth day of grace. It is not my desire that you should suffer unduly for your humane visit here, but I might remind you that under the circumstances it is a little compromising. No, don't interrupt me! We understand one another, I am quite sure."

Granet had taken a step backwards. His face for a moment was blanched, his lips opened but closed again without speech. Thomson was watching him closely.

"Precisely," he went on. "You have guessed the truth, I can see. We have been able, within the last few hours, to decode that very interesting message which reached your uncle some little time ago."

Geraldine's bewilderment increased. Granet's almost stupefied silence seemed to amaze her.

"Hugh, what does it all mean?" she cried. "Is Captain Granet in trouble because he has come here to warn me of something? He has not said a word except to beg me to do down into the country to-night."

"And he has begged you to do that," Thomson said, "because he is one of those privileged few who have been warned that to-night or to-morrow morning is the time selected for the Zeppelin raid on London of which we have heard so much. Oh! he knows all about it, and his uncle, and a great many of the guests they have gathered together. They'll all be safe enough at Reigate! Come, Captain Granet, what have you to say about it?"

Granet drew himself up. He looked every inch a soldier, and, curiously enough, he seemed in his bearing and attitude to be respecting the higher rank by virtue of which Thomson had spoken.

"To-morrow, as you have reminded me, is my tenth day, sir," he said. "I shall report myself at your office at nine o'clock. Good-bye, Miss Conyers! I hope that even though I have failed, Major Thomson may persuade you to change your mind."

He left the room. Geraldine was so amazed that she made no movement towards ringing the bell. She turned instead towards Thomson.

"What does it mean? You must tell me!" she insisted. "I am not a child."

"It means that what I have told you all along is the truth," Thomson replied earnestly. "You thought, Geraldine, that I was narrow and suspicious. I had powers and an office and responsibilities, too, which you knew nothing of. That young man who has just left the room is in the pay of Germany. So is his uncle."

"What, Sir Alfred Anselman?" she exclaimed. "Are you mad, Hugh?"

"Not in the least," he assured her. "These are bald facts."

"But Sir Alfred Anselman! He has done such wonderful things for the country. They all say that he ought to have been in the Cabinet. Hugh, you can't be serious!"

"I am so far serious," Thomson declared grimly, "that an hour ago we succeeded in decoding a message from Holland to Sir Alfred Anselman, advising him to leave London to-day. We are guessing what that means. We may be right and we may be wrong. We shall see. I come to beg you to leave the city for twenty-four hours. I find Granet on the same errand."

"But they may have warned him—some personal friend may have done it," she persisted. "He is a man with world-wide friends and world-wide connections."

"Then why didn't he bring the warning straight to the Admiralty?" Thomson argued. "If he were a patriotic Englishman, do you think that any other course was open to him? It won't do, Geraldine. I know more about Captain Granet than I am going to tell you at this moment. Shall we leave that subject? Can't we do something to persuade your mother to take you a little way from town? You ought to take Olive, for instance. We don't want a panic, but there is no reason why you shouldn't tell any of your friends quietly."

The door was suddenly opened. The Admiral put his head in.

"Sorry!" he apologized. "I thought I heard that young Granet was here."

"He has been and gone, father," Geraldine told him. "You'd better see what you can do with father," she added, turning to Thomson.

"What's wrong, eh? What's wrong? What's wrong?" the Admiral demanded.

"The fact is, Sir Seymour," Thomson explained, "we've had notice—not exactly notice, but we've decoded a secret dispatch which gives us reason to believe that a Zeppelin raid will be attempted on London during the next twenty-four hours. I came round to try and induce Geraldine to have you all move away until the thing's over."

"I'll be damned if I do!" the Admiral grunted. "What, sneak off and leave five or six million others who haven't had the tip, to see all the fun? Not I! If what you say is true, Thomson,—and I am going straight back to the Admiralty,—I shall find my way on to one of the air stations myself, and the women can stay at home and get ready to be useful."

Geraldine passed her hand through her father's arm.

"That's the sort of people we are," she laughed, turning to Thomson. "All the same, Hugh, it was very nice of you to come," she added. "I couldn't see us scuttling away into the country, you know. I shall go round and persuade Olive to stay with me. I am expecting to return to Boulogne almost at once, to the hospital there, to bring some more wounded back. I may get a little practice here."

Thomson picked up his hat.

"Well," he said quietly, "I cannot complain of your decision. After all, it is exactly what I expected."

He made his adieux and departed. The Admiral sniffed as he glanced after him.

"Very good chap, Thomson," he remarked, "but he doesn't quite understand. I bet you that fine young fellow Granet would never have suggested our running away like frightened sheep! Come along, my dear, we'll go and dine."

CHAPTER XXXV.

About three o'clock the next morning Thomson was awakened by a light touch upon his shoulder. He sprang up from the couch upon which he had thrown himself. Ambrose was standing over him. He was still in his room at the War Office, and fully dressed.

"Mr. Gordon Jones has rung up from Downing Street, sir," he announced. "He is with the Prime Minister. They want to know if you could step across."

"I'll go at once," Thomson agreed,—"just sponge my eyes and have a brush up. Nothing else fresh, Ambrose?"

"Nothing at all, sir," the young man replied. "All the newspapers in London have rung up but of course we have not answered any of them. You'll be careful outside, please? There isn't a single light anywhere, and the streets are like pitch. A man tried to use an electric torch on the other side of the way just now, and they shot him. There's a double line of sentries all round from Whitehall corner."

"No flares this time, eh?" Thomson muttered. "All right, Ambrose, I think I can feel my way there."

He descended into the street but for a few moments he found himself hopelessly at sea. So far as he could see there was no light nor any glimmer of one. He reached the corner of the street like a blind man, by tapping the kerbstone with his cane. Arrived here, he stood for a moment in the middle of the road, bareheaded. There was not a breath of wind anywhere. He made his way carefully down towards Downing Street, meeting few people, and still obliged to grope rather than walk. Along Downing Street he made his way by the railings and rang the bell at last at the Premier's house. He was shown at once into the council room. The four or five men who were seated around a table, and who looked up at his entrance, bore every one of them, household names. The Premier held out his hand.

"Good evening, Major Thomson," he began. "Please sit down and join us for a moment."

Thomson was a little surprised at the gathering.

"You'll forgive my suggesting that this is likely to be a marked spot to-night," he said.

The Premier smiled.

"Well, you could scarcely expect us to hide, could you, Major Thomson?" he remarked. "In any case, there is not one of us who is not prepared to share what the other citizens of London have to face. The country for the women and children, if you please. We gather, sir, that it is chiefly through you that we are in the fortunate position of being prepared to-night."

"It was through my action in a matter which I understand has been subjected to a great deal of criticism," Thomson replied.

"I admit it frankly," the statesman acknowledged. "That particular matter, the matter of your censorship of a certain letter, has been the subject of a grave and earnest conference here between us all. We decided to send for you. We telephoned first of all to the Chief but he told us that you were entirely head of your department and responsible to no one, that you had been—forgive me—a brilliant success, and that it was his intention to interfere in no possible way with any course you chose to take. I may say that he intimated as much to me when I went to him, simply furious because you had removed a certain person from the list of those whose correspondence is free from censorship."

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" Thomson asked.

"Listen to us while we put a matter to you from a common-sense point of view," Mr. Gordon Jones begged. "You see who we are. We are those upon whose shoulders rests chiefly the task of ruling this country. I want to tell you that we have come to an unanimous decision. We say nothing about the moral or the actual guilt of Sir Alfred Anselman. How far he may have been concerned in plotting with our country's enemies is a matter which we may know in the future, but for the present—well, let's make a simple matter of it—we want him left alone."

"You wish him to continue in his present high position?" Thomson said slowly,—"a man who is convicted of having treasonable correspondence with our enemy?"

"We wish him left alone," Mr. Gordon Jones continued earnestly, "not for his own sake but for ours. When the time comes, later on, it may be possible for us to deal with him. Today, no words of mine could explain to you his exact utility. He has a finger upon the money-markets of the world. He has wealth, great wealth, and commands great wealth in every city. Frankly, this man as an open enemy to-day could bring more harm upon us than if any neutral Power you could name were to join the Triple Alliance. Remember, too, Major Thomson, that there may be advantages to us in this waiting attitude. Since your warning, his letters can be admitted to censorship. You have the control of a great staff of military detectives; the resources of Scotland Yard, too, are at your service. Have him watched day and night, his letters opened, his every movement followed, but don't provoke him to open enmity. We don't want him in the Tower. The scandal and shock of it would do us enormous harm, apart from the terrible financial panic which would ensue. We will see to it that he does no further mischief than he may already have done. We make an appeal to you, all of us here to-night. Be guided entirely by us in this matter. You have rendered the country great service by your discovery. Render it a greater one, Major Thomson, by keeping that discovery secret."

"I will not make conditions with you," Thomson replied gravely. "I will say at once that I am perfectly willing to yield to your judgment in this matter. In return I ask something. I have more serious charges still to bring against Sir Alfred's nephew. Will you leave the matter of dealing with this young man in my hands?"

"With pleasure," the Premier agreed. "I think, gentleman," he added, looking around the table, "that we need not detain Major Thomson any longer? We others have still a little business to finish."

(To be continued.)

Goat-Raising in British Columbia

Goats in the Province of British Columbia now number approximately 5,000, according to a statement issued by the Provincial Department of Agriculture. Practically all of these animals are of the Toggenburg, Saanen and Nubian breeds. When first introduced into British Columbia it was predicted that goats were but a passing fad, but such has not been the case and to-day goat-raising occupies a recognized position in the livestock industry of the province. While no other province in the Dominion has entered into this industry so extensively, the demand for these animals in British Columbia still continues unabated.

The original foundation-stock, numbering some 200 head, entered Canada in 1917 from the United States, when they were examined by Federal authorities and each animal tagged with a little metal plate stating that it was officially recognized by the Government as foundation stock. In order to avoid confusion and to limit the registration of pedigrees, all efforts have been concentrated on the three main breeds, Toggenburg, Saanen, Nubian, which are noted for their milk-producing qualities. The amount of milk produced by many of these goats is truly remarkable. Official records have been made of over 2,000 pounds per annum, and one animal is credited with a production of 2,941 pounds.

No laborious work is entailed by an owner in caring for a herd of goats. A snug and comfortable house, free from draughts and rain-proof, is all that is required for shelter. A good-sized yard is necessary for the animals to browse in. In feeding, leaves of all kinds, broom, wild berries, and practically all kinds of trush are relished by them, as well as grass and most weeds, they will also eat the young roots of bracken and of coniferous trees, and in winter will eat freely of the latter, and bark the young branches as well.

The chief source of income from a goat is derived in the form of milk, which is the equal of cow's milk in nutrition. Practically all of the goats now in the province are owned by householders, who keep one or two in the backyard or on a nearby vacant piece of land. They are milked twice a day at regular hours, and thrice if the goat is a heavy milker. The income from milk alone in the province last year amounted to $45,300, representing 75,450 gallons. In addition, butter and cheese can be made from the milk, but experiments have proven that the quality of these products is not up to the standard of that made from cow's milk, and as a result there is no market.

A goat breeder's society was formed in British Columbia in 1917 with a membership of 176, which has increased annually until at the present time the number is well over 400. Another society, known as the Canadian Goat Society, has also been formed for the purpose of registering pedigrees of goats.

There is a continual demand for goats in British Columbia, where the climatic conditions and abundance of natural feed make the province an ideal one for the raising of these animals. In time it is probable that the other provinces, inspired by the success which has attended the efforts of breeders in British Columbia, will also take up this form of livestock, and in the meantime no efforts are being spared to make the Pacific province the leading goat-raising territory on the continent.

Sad is the day for any man when he becomes absolutely satisfied with the life that he is living, the thoughts that he is thinking and the deeds that he is doing; when there ceases to be forever beating at the doors of his soul a desire to do something larger which he feels and knows he was meant and intended to do.
—Phillips Brooks.

Forestry and the Flying Man.

It is only fair that the flying machine should prove a valuable aid to forest protection, because it is scarcely too much to say that were it not for the forest there could be no flying machine. The framework of the airplane must not weigh a pound more than is absolutely necessary to ensure the requisite strength. Not only does the life of the airman depend upon the steel stays and the linen wings but, mainly, it depends upon the strength and toughness of the wooden scantlings and rods that are the backbone, the ribs, and the wing-bones of the machine. The wood used is practically all Sitka spruce, a species which, as its name indicates, is found on the north Pacific coast of North America, and chiefly in British Columbia. The airplane designer wants to know just how light he can make these rods without endangering the safety of his machine. To find this out and also to ascertain the other qualities of Sitka spruce was the object of an investigation involving several thousand tests made by the Forest Products Laboratories of Canada. The conclusions which also indicate the other uses to which this wood can be put are published in the illustrated Bulletin No. 71 "Canadian Sitka Spruce: Its Mechanical and Physical Properties." Copies of this bulletin may be had free upon application to the Director of Forestry, Ottawa.

Platinum Once Worthless.

Platinum, which is now worth much more than gold, was once thrown aside as a worthless by-product.

Women have practiced medicine for many years, an important book on the subject having been produced in England during the Middle Ages by St. Hildegarde, a woman.

A caterpillar in the course of a month will devour 6 000 times its own weight in food. It will take a man three months before he eats a quantity of food equal to his own weight.

Jap School Children.

Japanese children are not allowed to attend school until after six years of age, as the Japanese believe that school education before six is physiologically and mentally detrimental.