

The CASTLE ON WHEELS

BY ARTHUR HENRY VESSEY
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CHAPTER XXVI.

Incriminating Dispatches.

She had been arranging the papers getting in some sort of order.

"You read French, I think?" the letter of Ferdinand is in the language; Sir Mortimer's notes and answers are, of course, in English.

"I drew toward me the first of the papers she indicated, and found that you are nothing if not modern in your methods." I scoffed, glancing down the page. "Your safes and typewriters bring back to me the associations of my banking business. And banker, let me warn you, scans the signature of a draft carefully before he cashes it."

"The typewriter is an amusing little instrument," she remarked, and I am proud of my success in mastering it. As for the safe, if you have been a banker, you know that the combination is carefully guarded, Mr. Coward."

"It gave her such a look of waiting. During the next half hour she insulted me so at least half a dozen times. I bent my attention on the paper before me. I translate roughly Ferdinand's letter:

"(Strictly confidential.)

"Hotel de Rha.

"Place Vendome, Paris.

"May 22.

"My Dear Sir Mortimer:

"I expect to start for Sofia via Vienna and Budapest in about a week; I trust I shall see you at the Palace shortly after my arrival. Meanwhile let me urge on you once more that you exert without further delay your great influence with your Foreign Office, that your ministers may be convinced that the crisis has come—the opportunity we have so long waited. Now or never I must lead my army to the succor of the distressed people of Macedonia. I think that the profound knowledge you have always shown of affairs in the Balkan Peninsula must make you realize the truth of this statement. It is useless for me to repeat my arguments. For what you have done to think you. But it is not to the diplomatist I am now speaking, but to the man. I have written this letter with my own hand, for reasons that you will understand.

"Believe me, my dear Sir Mortimer, faithfully yours,

"Ferdinand."

"I see nothing incriminating in this letter," I said, "nor anything out of the usual run of letters.

"You will notice on the back of the letter this brief statement: 'Answered, June 2d, M. T. M. to the answer of the letter it is equally innocent. It is simply the guarded reply of a diplomatist dealing with a delicate topic. In these typewritten copies this letter and its answer are marked as such. The originals are simply useful to prove the authenticity of Sir Mortimer's handwriting.'"

"I scanned the answer. It was not an exact copy, but the substance of Sir Mortimer's letter, set down to refresh his memory:

"I replied in substance as follows: It was useless to bring up the matter again; my personal wishes would not be sufficient to change the programme of the Foreign Office; at present I did not see my way clear to advocate as a diplomatist England's policy in this case; I would not like to lay the matter before the Foreign Office; more than that, when events justified the act, I would see such influence as I possessed was exerted in the name of Prince Ferdinand, but at present I could offer no encouragement."

(Note concerning the above, also in Sir Mortimer's handwriting.)

"This reply will put an end, I think, to further correspondence in that quarter. Certainly, the hopes of the nation seem so radically divergent from those of the ruler that I can favor one only at the expense of the other. Naturally, I prefer to favor the party that promises the most for my own interests."

"I told you that the originals are particularly marked to identify the handwriting and signature of Sir Mortimer. But observe, monsieur, the expression: 'Naturally, I prefer to favor the party that promises the most for my own interests.' That sentence is to be remembered when you read the other letters. It has its significance.

Again she stretched out her hand to receive the papers I had read. I did not relinquish them, however. I handed them carelessly on my knee as if to refer to them later.

"That remains to be proved," I said grimly. "The expression seems to me simply to mean that if Sir Mortimer's interests were identical with the interests of England."

"She shall see," she returned with confidence. "The first of the second envelope, which I have called Documents B, are all in English. The writer was evidently an educated Bulgarian of the official class; many of these are trained at the College, and speak and write English fluently."

"Sofia, Headquarters of the Society of Freedom.

To His Excellency, Sir Mortimer Brett, Minister Plenipotentiary and Counsel General to His Britannic Majesty at the Court of Sofia:

"Sir: We of the Society of Freedom wait patiently and anxiously for your Excellency's answer to our humble petition. We trust your Excellency does not ignore this petition because the signatures of the petitioners are not added thereto. Surely your Excellency understands that the dictates of prudence make it inevitable that it is sent to you anonymously.

"Your Excellency must be familiar with our grievances. Our present ruler cannot and will not be longer tolerated by his subjects. We feel the British Foreign Office, however, does not realize the extent of Prince Ferdinand's unpopularity. Even if your ministers care nothing for that, do they feel no concern that he is the tool of Russia?"

"He has asked Russia repeatedly that he be recognized a King, and that he receive that title. His vanity is such that he would sacrifice the freedom of his people to be on equal terms with the sovereigns of Serbia and Roumania.

"Once more, perhaps for the last time, we petition your Excellency to exert the extraordinary influence your Excellency possesses, that the English Minister be advised in time. The gov-

"If Dr. Starva has proved to be a traitor in the case he will receive his punishment. The handwriting of Sir Mortimer's reply to the letter you have just read is pinned on the back of the sheet. Read it," she commanded harshly.

"It is a perplexing dilemma that has confronted me. To keep my honor as a minister intact, and yet not to sacrifice my own personal hopes. I think this is the first temptation of my diplomatic career. I have fulfilled my diplomatic duties hitherto as a machine, that neither thinks nor feels. Now I find that I am a man; that I am a man, with a man's weakness; that I am a man, with a man's ambition. I say I am tempted. I believe that lofty principles actuate Bulgaria. That I say to myself, in my excuse. But lofty principles are not sufficient. I digested my true feelings in answering this letter by vague objections. I confessed my self in sympathy with Bulgaria's cause; but I protested that more potent arguments must be used to convince me. The interests of England are my own; but if it could be done without too great a risk, I believe, God help me, I would further my own ambitions at her expense. I say I am tempted.

"I say I am tempted; 'if it could be done without too great a risk, I believe, God help me, I would further my own ambitions at her expense.' Such expressions were hideously significant. But I met calmly the malevolent triumph of Madame de Varner.

"When you read the next letter," she said, watching me closely, you will understand the meaning of the expression. There are other means of rewarding friendship besides empty words of gratitude. Even so staunch an advocate of Sir Mortimer's honor as yourself must realize that in the words you have just read, he was endeavoring to discover just what that vague promise meant.

"I received the next letter in silence. 'To His Excellency, etc.'"

"Our answer to your Excellency's kind letter wishes to make this fact clear: The people of Bulgaria pledge their word, through this committee,

had begged to his breast. I had hoped against hope. But if they were true, I could no longer doubt that Sir Mortimer had stooped to the taking of bribes.

"And these documents are words for words in the safe?" I demanded gloomily.

"I swear it by every oath I hold sacred!" she replied without hesitation, and kissed the jeweled cross that hung from her neck.

She stretched out her hand for the papers. I tore them to atoms before her eyes.

"I am tempted she struggled to rescue these from my grasp. When she saw that it was too late, she laughed bitterly—a laughter that showed at once contempt, defiance and triumph.

"Bravo!" she clapped her hands derisively. "You take your precautions. You are desperate. Protest as you will, you are convinced of Sir Mortimer's guilt."

"You are mistaken," I replied coolly. "But even if these papers are true copies of genuine documents, it is an act of yours to have the copies destroyed. If they were further in your hands to prove to me they are not, they are dangerous toys, and so better destroyed."

"As for the copy in my hand, I have the combination of a safe, Mr. Coward."

"You are never weary of insulting me," I said indifferently. "But be sure of it, you will find I am not cowardly enough to yield weakly to your schemes of blackmail."

"No; you are so brave that you leave a helpless girl to bear the disgrace of her brother's name when by word you might save her the suffering. Your pretended honor is so precious to you that you scorn to aid the woman whom you love."

"Silence, woman!" I cried passionately. "Do you think I am convinced of Sir Mortimer's guilt because of these slim typewritten copies? You must let me see the papers in the safe."

"If you are desperate enough to destroy a copy, I should scarcely trust you with the original. For the last time, I make this warning to you: If you refuse to let me see the original, I will publish your diary. I am in your power; perhaps you hope that I shall be coerced into opening the safe. Or are you about to compel me?"

"I should have rather returned from California, has not yet submitted its report to the interstate commerce commission, but Tuesday evening he authorized the following statement bearing upon his investigation:

"What the inquiry disclosed.

"I found in the Southern Pacific Office a list of preferred shippers who had a proportion of the published rate upon their shipments. This list included many of the largest and most important manufacturing firms. We also found 20 books, which had accumulated since the fire of last year, showing special rebates. There were several thousand entries in all, most of them for very small amounts. These rebates in all amounted to about half a million dollars during the past year."

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," I quoted flippantly; but I began to think it inevitable that Helena Brett be summoned to appear. I will call Sir Mortimer's sister here. She shall see the papers—decide for herself and for you whether they are genuine. You see, I am strong enough to prevent a woman from destroying the originals as you have destroyed the copies."

"And when she has seen those papers?" I asked surprisedly. "Say that which she herself believes them genuine? What then?"

"It will be for her to decide. Perhaps she will refuse to ask you to do what I wish. Perhaps she will offer to you happiness if you consent. She shall be the one to decide. You profess to believe that Sir Mortimer is innocent. More than that, you think her so good a white that she will refuse, even if she believes her brother guilty, to rescue his memory from dishonor with dishonor."

"She had put into words my own thoughts. Perhaps she will offer to you happiness if you consent. She shall be the one to decide. You profess to believe that Sir Mortimer is innocent. More than that, you think her so good a white that she will refuse, even if she believes her brother guilty, to rescue his memory from dishonor with dishonor."

"We will let her decide," I said quietly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Two Women.

"And am I again to about my commands to my servant through the closed door," asked Madame de Varner.

"I unlocked the door of the staircase in silence, taking the precaution, however, of not admitting Alphonse.

"Has Miss Brett come?" I asked the chestnut as I entered the chamber. "Bring her here."

"I shall do as madam wishes. But this American, this man we called his Excellency surprised me. Just now has he intruded on madam or—"

"He came here to keep an appointment with me," Madame de Varner replied composedly, cutting short his astonished words.

"Ah, that is well."

Alphonse sighed his relief, and departed on his errand.

"What indignation can you have offered that the title of such product is not a violation of the anti-cigarette law."

REBATES STILL PAID

VIOLATION BY SOUTHERN PACIFIC DISCLOSED AT PHISCO.

Nearly All the Rebates, However, Are on Intrastate Shipments—'Inside Rates' for the Future.

Washington, May 22.—That rebates on charges for shipments of freight have been paid by at least one great railroad system since the enactment of the Hepburn rate act, was ascertained definitely by Commissioner Franklin K. Lane of the Interstate Commerce Commission, on his recent trip to the Pacific coast.

The offending line is the Southern Pacific, controlled and practically owned by Edward H. Harriman.

The evidence of this violation of the law was adduced at a hearing before Commissioner Lane, acting for the commission, in San Francisco. It was developed that the rebates had been paid on interstate shipments of freight, but that the bulk of them were paid on intrastate shipments. It was admitted by officers of the company on the witness stand that the Southern Pacific had a regularly organized rebating system, covering state business from one end of California to the other.

Preceded by Company's Books.

Although the company's counsel requested Commissioner Lane's character and extent of the rebating, they finally were produced. The disclosures from them settled the matter definitely. The evidence showed that the refund of money in rebates during the past year aggregated about \$500,000. Many of the items on which the rebates were paid were interstate shipments. It was disclosed, too, that the company had what is known as "inside rates," that is, rates which are lower than the rates published rates intended for the use of the general public. These "inside rates" were given by the Southern Pacific to favored shippers.

Commissioner Lane, who returned from California, has not yet submitted its report to the interstate commerce commission, but Tuesday evening he authorized the following statement bearing upon his investigation:

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"I found in the Southern Pacific Office a list of preferred shippers who had a proportion of the published rate upon their shipments. This list included many of the largest and most important manufacturing firms. We also found 20 books, which had accumulated since the fire of last year, showing special rebates. There were several thousand entries in all, most of them for very small amounts. These rebates in all amounted to about half a million dollars during the past year."

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Freight Handlers Demand Increase.

Toledo, O., May 22.—The railroad enter-prise in Toledo were served with notice Tuesday from freight handlers that ten days will be given the roads to increase the wages of the handlers.

CUBS ARE WORLD CHAMPIONS

WIN PENNANT BY BEATING THE DETROIT FOUR TIMES.

Final Game Captured by Score 3 to 2—Meredith Brown's Great Pitching—Division of Receipts.

Detroit, Mich.—Chicago's Champions are world champions as well as twice champions, and for the first time in baseball history the big pennant, symbols of everything that is best in the nation's greatest sport, will rest over Chicago's National league ball park next season.

For Chance's warriors made themselves world beaters beyond all possibility of mischance Saturday by winning their fourth straight victory over Detroit's America league champions. The score was 3 to 2, and that put four knots in the Tiger's tail.

From start to finish the final struggle was fast, furious and furious. Jennings' men never slipped hitting the ball with their usual might, trying to wipe out the small margin of two runs which the Cubs established early in the day, once more entirely because of their greater speed. But Brown was terrifically in the pinches, and was given unbeatable and absolutely perfect support by every man on the team.

"With a total aggregate of 78,058 for this season's gross receipts amounted to over \$10,000, as compared to gross receipts of over \$10,000 for six games in Chicago last year. The players' share of the receipts amounts to \$5,913.28, which in round numbers exceeds last year's pool by \$21,000. The Sox and Cubs sharing in only four games last fall with small aggregations of about \$100,000. Many of the items on which the rebates were paid were interstate shipments. It was disclosed, too, that the company had what is known as "inside rates," that is, rates which are lower than the rates published rates intended for the use of the general public. These "inside rates" were given by the Southern Pacific to favored shippers.

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I Tore Them to Atoms Before Her Eyes.

erment of Prince Ferdinand must fall. We do not desire Woodhead. There shall be none, we swear it, if England will support the insurgent party. But in any case Bulgaria must be free.

"We do not ask for the active aid of England. We beg that England shall not interfere with the ambitions of the people.

"Your Excellency shall have no reason to regret being our friend. And there are other means of rewarding friendship besides empty words of gratitude. Let your Excellency once assure us of your intention to support our cause, and we shall make this more clear.

"Your Excellency knows the manner in which your answer may be conveyed to this society.

"With profound expressions of respect, we submit ourselves.

"The Committee of the Society of Freedom."

"I placed this letter on my knee with the others I had read.

"This Society of Freedom, is it concerned with the trick of the death-mark stamp?"

"I fear so," she answered in a low voice.

"Then has the fact no significance for you that Dr. Starva received a letter with one of these stamps on the envelope last night? These stamps are proscribed. They could be sent through the mail only because certain of the postal authorities were in sympathy with the revolutionaries. Let us infer, would be sent only to those who are equally in sympathy. Dr. Starva must be favorable to this party, if he is not actually one of the committee. I crushed the paper in my hand, sick at heart. I shuddered at the hypocritical comfort this guilty man

that if England gives to the insurgent party is support in overthrowing the rule of Ferdinand, the relation of England to Bulgaria shall be the same that which exists between Egypt and England.

"The Society of Freedom is fully aware that your Excellency's incoherence and labor must be recompensed. The sum of \$20,000 is already placed in the Ottoman bank, payable to your Excellency on demand.

(Note by Sir Mortimer planned to the above letter.)

"To this I replied that the sum mentioned was too ludicrously small to be considered. Only the most substantial guarantee could justify me in taking the risk involved."

(Third letter to Sir Mortimer from the society.)

"To His Excellency, Etc.:

"The sum of \$20,000 has been placed in the Ottoman bank to your Excellency's account. The society trusts that this sum will be sufficient to justify the risks. Will your Excellency give his answer without delay?"

(Note by Sir Mortimer planned to the above letter.)

"I have taken the step. It is too late to ask myself now whether I have been indiscreet. If I have committed my own wishes, if I have furthered my own plans, I feel that I am justified morally. I am helping an oppressed people gain their liberty. My own recompense is in my conscience. If the Foreign Office should probe the matter, and discover the extent of my indiscretion, my diplomatic career will be ended. But I am content to do a little evil that good may come."

I crushed the paper in my hand, sick at heart. I shuddered at the hypocritical comfort this guilty man