

A STATE SECRET

Story of a Race to Recover It From an Enterprising Journalist

By ARTHUR PEARSON

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It was my good fortune while a newspaper correspondent at Berlin to come into the possession of a state secret. I shall not make trouble, as I would even at this late date, by giving it to the world or telling how I came by it, except to say that I got it from an American lady who was at that time prominent in Berlin court society and who afterward married a general in the German army.

Nevertheless the imperial government knew that the secret had been divulged and that it was in my possession. How they made the discovery I have never learned. There was a network of diplomats, newspaper men, spies—indeed, all manner of persons, every one watching the other and all working secretly. The moment I became possessed of the information I refer to without waiting for baggage I went to a railway station and started for Paris. I reached the French capital without interruption. On the way I thought out a plan to use my secret in a way that would neither compromise me or the lady from whom I had received it. I resolved to turn it in to a London journal to which I had at times sent items of news. But I remained in Paris getting clear of those whom the chancellor of Germany sent out to head me off.

I was sitting in my hotel on the Rue Rivoli waiting for a train to carry me to Calais when I saw a man enter whom I had once seen in the ante-room of an important official of the German government while we were both waiting for an audience. Fortunately I saw him before he saw me, or, rather, he did not see me at all. It flashed through my mind that he was after me, that his purpose was to



I KNEW HE HAD "FIXED" THE OPERATOR. arrest me on a trumped up charge and take me back to Berlin for trial. He went up to the hotel office, doubtless to inquire for me, and I slipped out through a corridor leading to a back door.

It was now evident that I was followed. But by how many persons? I knew the German chancellor's detectives were numberless and that he would guard every avenue by which I might escape him. He knew that I was a journalist and that the most likely mart for the news I possessed was London. Therefore I was sure to be tracked to the British capital. I must change my plan. I must go to the place I would be least likely to go. Though I am an American, I

would not be expected to go to America, because at least a week would be required for me to get there, and food for newspapers grows cold quickly. Nevertheless I believed that my secret would keep all that time unless some new development in the situation should occur. At any rate, I felt sure that I would not be permitted to carry or send my news to England, and if I were to use it at all I must take time to "shake" my followers.

Departing from my hotel on Rue Rivoli, I turned into the Rue d'Alger, thence into Rue St. Honoré, from which I pursued my way to a boulevard. Within another hour I was on a train steaming for Cherbourg and, having purchased a newspaper, looked through the advertisements till I saw that a ship would sail from there to New York within a few hours after my arrival.

I was standing on deck just as the ship was about to cast off when a cab came lickety split toward the dock. A man got out, threw a coin at the cabman and just succeeded in getting aboard as the vessel left the dock. Something told me that he was from Berlin and that he was after me. Whether he had been sent to watch that particular steamer or had got on my track I don't know.

At that time the wireless telegraph had just begun to be put on ocean liners, and I was delighted to see that there was an apparatus on the steamer on which I sailed. As soon as I had secured a stateroom—there are always staterooms left over on steamers that can be had for an extra consideration—I lounged up to the wireless office and, the door being open, stood looking in at the operator, who was sending a message. I had not been there five minutes before the man who had been the last passenger to get aboard came along. Our eyes met, and I knew, as he knew, that he had spotted his man. Even if his manner had not betrayed him I should have known that he was after me from his coming as soon as possible to the wireless office to head me off from sending my message.

I was greatly disappointed. On land I should have expected to be defused at any telegraph office; at sea I believed I would have no trouble in sending a wireless. There was nothing to prevent my sending my message from the steamer except this man who was following me. I knew he would move heaven and earth to prevent me. It would be a war of wits between him and me.

There were many ways in which he could stop me. He might charge me with being a fugitive from justice; he might make it appear that I had stolen money or some article from him; he might even murder me. What was my life worth compared with the interests of an empire? And would not his sovereign be sufficiently powerful to protect him if he were implicated in my taking off? Suppose I failed to send my message at sea. Would he not wire confederates in New York to arrest me on arrival on any charge he chose to invent?

He went into the wireless office and, telling the operator that he wished to send a private message, shut the door. When he came out I knew by the look on his face that he had "fixed" the operator. Having done so, he went away and left me free to send all the messages the young man would transmit for me.

To test the latter I entered his office and asked him to send a message for me. He made no objection, and I dictated a message to an imaginary person. In my profession I had found occasion to send telegraphic messages myself and had learned the Morse alphabet. I knew at once that the operator was simply clicking his key without sending my message. Nevertheless I pretended not to suspect him and paid his charge.

I hung around that office, studying the working of the instrument and especially the lock on the door. I watched for three days for an opportunity to get a wax impression that would enable me to make a key, but the operator never left his office without locking the door and was never away very long at a time. I often stood on deck at night watching the spark over the office when he was sending a dispatch.

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longing for just five minutes' keyboard myself.

What method the detective had used with the operator I did not know, but it was effective. I became acquainted with Dick—everybody called the operator Dick—and used all my diplomatic skill to find out how I could outbid my rival, but failed signally. I hinted at a way he might make \$500. I could see an amused look on his face. I did not possess the means to bid any higher, and, bidding as I was against the emperor of Germany, money was not a factor of the problem.

We had been five days out, and I had accomplished nothing. I knew that my shadower must have sent a message to New York that would in some way put me in limbo on arrival. My only chance to outwit him was to find some means of leaving the ship before him on the day of arrival.

The stateroom opposite mine was occupied by an old lady who carried with her a traveling clock. I lay awake one night listening to its ticking, and it brought me a possible solution. I must steal that clock. This was not difficult, for the old lady's stateroom door was seldom locked and every day was hooked open. The evening before we reached port I purloined the timepiece. Then I went about looking for a box. Having found one, I put the clock in it, nailed on the lid and put a fictitious address on it. Finding the captain alone in his room, I took the box to him and told him that it had been given to me by a man whose sanity I suspected, to be delivered to the address on it in New York. He had told me that it contained family jewels of great value, but I had recently heard a ticking in it and feared it contained a bomb to blow up the ship. The captain, agitated, proposed at

once to go to the shore, but I suggested that if he did so and destroyed a fortune in jewels he would be held responsible. This staggered him.

"How would it do," I asked, "to put the box in a boat and tow it to the end of a long rope?"

"The very thing!" he exclaimed. It was midnight, and we were off Montauk Point. The captain ordered a boat lowered with the box in it and the rope payed out. He then went to his cabin and to sleep, while I hid myself on deck and when dawn came pulled in the boat—it required all my strength—and just before passing a steamer cast loose. I caught the attention of the steamer and was taken aboard. She was bound for Boston, and the same evening from there I cabled my message to a London newspaper.

The next morning the world was startled at the news that Germany and Russia were making a deal to appropriate a large slice of African territory and divide it. The publication of the news deflected the project, which would surely have caused a European war.

That I had furnished the news was known to only a few prominent journalists, but it made my fortune. I sent back the clock I had borrowed, with a handsome present besides.

SOW A SEED.

The best and highest thing a man can do in a day is to sow a seed, whether it be in the shape of a word, an act or an acre.

Allowed by Law. "How would you define matrimony?" "As a merger that is legal."—New York Sun.

Ways With the Head.

Some of the east African ladies shave their heads with small, sharp, razor-like knives, first softening the hair with goat's milk. Other Africans keep it cut off to about two inches in length and slick down with vegetable oils. Girls of Fiji stiffen their locks with tree gums, and soft fluffy hair is considered a curse. Somehow some of the races that have the stiffest hair try to make it stiffer, and those that have the softest try to make it lie down, and still other races do just the opposite.—New York Press.

Yeggmen's Soup.

Careful yeggmen carry their "soup" (nitroglycerin) in a rubber bottle, but many, in spite of their knowledge of the danger, use only a glass bottle, in which it is likely to be exploded by a sudden jar. Baltimore Blue, a noted yeggman, in alighting from a freight train was blown to pieces by his "soup."

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