



The Conflict

FROM NOITS AND OBSERVATIONS
Compiled by Wm. R. Mackrill.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

James Adams, American business man and graduate of West Point, is in Paris at the opening of the great war between France and Germany. He engages in a balloon reconnaissance for the French; narrowly escapes capture by German troops; and is wrecked in the grounds of the Chateau Lagunay, in France. He is nursed by Aimee, the Count's daughter, with whom he falls in love. The Germans advance and take the Chateau for headquarters. Griesman, a German Colonel, afterwards in charge of the Chateau, insults Aimee and is attacked by Adams, the fight being stopped by the Kaiser, with whom Adams is personally acquainted. Adams joins the German Hussars, under Col. Losenberg, an old friend, and becomes acquainted with Fleischmann, a gigantic serjeant, who later proves to be a friend in need. The army moves west to meet the French. Adams, Losenberg and Fleischmann lead an ambush, defeating a French column. Returning to camp, Adams is informed that Aimee has assisted in the escape of a French spy, Latour, taking him away in her carriage. Griesman and cavalry are in pursuit. With Fleischmann, Adams impresses a German war automobile and rushes to Aimee's aid.

CHAPTER V.

I was not familiar with the road over which we were traveling, and could not afford to be reckless with its many turns. Better that I arrive a few minutes late than not at all. Yet the pace the giant automobile made seemed faster to Fleischmann, for presently I heard his heavy voice in my ear: "Got it and Himmler! It is too fast." "There is no danger," I shouted back. "I know the machine as you know your horse." Presently he spoke again: "We shall be arrested at the chateau. They will telephone from headquarters." It was a disagreeable thought. Should a suspicion arise at camp as to my intention, the rear guard at the chateau would be ordered by wire to arrest us. But Fleischmann rose to the occasion, as he did so often in times of trouble. Once more I heard his voice at my ear: "Slack up and I will break the wire." I glanced upward where, at the side of the road, two strands of wire were supported on iron poles, or on convenient trees. I had seen the signal corps at work and knew the system. The upper wire, of heavy copper, was the through line, extending back across the Meuse, into Lorraine, and thence, by established lines, south into the Vosges Mountains, where it connected with the army of the Crown Prince, operating on the southeastern border. The other wire, or iron, was a "local," running only from the chateau to the headquarters on the Alene River. It was a daring act—deliberately to sever this line of communication. Yet we were well into the affair now and must see it through. I slackened speed and Fleischmann sprang from the car. The wires were fastened to a tall poplar. He "shinned" up the tree, and, taking hold of the "local" with both hands, swung out upon it. The slender strand broke clean at the insulator and Fleischmann

wore the uniform of a Prussian private of cavalry—dark blue with red facings, and a small, close-fitting shako with red pompon. But what struck me was his attitude of terrified surprise, the whiteness of his face, the stare of his small eyes. He thrust into his inner pocket a packet of papers that were in his hand; his features relaxed in a faint, sickly smile, and he saluted. "Monsieur startled me," he said, in bourgeois French. "I am arranging these papers which have been left behind." Disguised as he was, and with that guilty look, I still knew that somewhere, and recently, I had seen him in utterly different surroundings. But there was no time for thought. "Where is your Colonel—Griesman?" I asked. "He is not here. He has gone—where, since daylight, after the spy." I turned back and met Fleischmann. "Mademoiselle is not here," he said, "nor is Griesman. We must follow them."

At the outer door I spoke to a guard who sat on a stone bench sunning himself. "Who is the man within?" "He is Colonel Griesman's interpreter," he replied. "His name?" "Jacques Grevoir." "A Frenchman?" "No, a Belgian." I hurried down the steps. Fleischmann was already in the car. "To the north," he said, as I took my seat. And to the north we went on the wing. Grevoir—Jacques Grevoir. The name, the face, haunted me. Then I remembered Jacques, the servile gargon, at the club! Why I had seen him only the night before I left Paris. And what did he do? Griesman's interpreter, eh?

Before, could pursue the peculiar situation further we reached a fork of the road and stopped in a quarry. Fleischmann left the car to examine for tracks. There was no dearth of these, but they covered either road, showing that horsemen had gone in both directions. Fleischmann hastened to a small farm house near by, and returned leading a sorry-looking plough horse. "This no great affair compared with your iron steed," he said, with a grim smile; "but I will manage. You keep ahead and I will turn to the left. The roads run parallel for some miles. If you do not find her, cut across and join me. If I do not, I will join you." He swung to the saddle and rode off at a smart gallop. At a small village I obtained information that a party, in three carriages, had passed at sunrise, followed a few hours later by a small body of cavalry. So I pushed on, growing reckless in my chase and running many risks on the narrow, winding road. At last I came upon them at the little village of Vartoux. Eight horses were picketed near a well. Close by six troopers were lounging on the grass beneath a great tree, for the afternoon was warm in spite of the lateness of the season. Beyond them stood a carriage, recognized the vehicle as Aimee's, and hardly waiting for the machine to stop, rushed toward it. There was no one inside. I turned to the soldiers. "Where is your Colonel?" "She is your Colonel!" One of them saluted, with scant respect, and pointed to a low, stone inn, twenty rods up the road. Thither I hastened, my heart beating fast with anger and hope and fear. The room was long with low ceilings and somewhat dim. On one side stretched a row of small tables, at one

this thrust. I was gritting my teeth, hardly able to keep myself within bounds. Yet I would hear him to the end.

"I will tell you briefly, that you may report the facts to His Majesty. As you know, Latour was to be met at sunrise yesterday morning. We decided to wait a day, hoping to extract from him valuable information. Mademoiselle and her party, in three carriages, left yesterday morning before dawn. Latour, who was confined in one of the cellars, must have been helped by the servants, and somehow slipped past the guard and entered the forward carriage, where he hid beneath a bundle of rugs. The guard discovered at breakfast time that Latour was gone, but, in fear of punishment, omitted to report until this morning, giving the spy twenty-four hours in which to get away. Unfortunately for your friends, mademoiselle decided to stop en route for a visit with an acquaintance, and we had no difficulty in overtaking them. Of course, the spy is gone; but we drew a confession from the servants, and had the extreme pleasure of shooting them instead of Latour. Those are the facts, and you will pardon my suggestion that she return immediately and communicate them to the Emperor."

"I return at my own pleasure," I replied. "My orders do not come from you. I request you to show me to Mademoiselle Lagunay." "I really believe that Griesman underrated me as a fighter. How should he have known my training?" "So, without fear, and as a cat dandles with a mouse, thinking to give me another playful bite, he ascended to the last degree of insult."

"I have told you that mademoiselle is my prisoner. As such she may not see you. She is also my companion, and as such she does not wish to see you. Why, monsieur, it was but an hour ago that she sat upon my lap, all smiles and blushes and—"

I sprang at him with an oath. My sword came from its scabbard with an angry hiss. Had I followed my first impulse his craven skull had been split that instant. But I merely slashed his face with the flat of the blade. "Say it again, if you dare. You lie, dog." Both men jumped to their feet. The Colonel had his sabre in the air when his orderly rushed between us. "The Emperor's orders," he cried. "You will lose your commission. Let him go. He is helpless." But Griesman, traitor though he proved to be, was no coward. Thoroughly enraged by my challenge he threw the man aside and came at me with all his two hundred pounds weight. I stepped back a little to get room, and caught his blade on my guard. He swore beneath his breath and struck again with terrific force. Again I stepped back, and more skill, baby," I said, derisively. "You will be wearied." We carried the regulation German cavalry sabre, rather heavy and slightly curved. It was built on the American model, and as I met his savage lunges I began to feel at home. I fell naturally into the old position of defense. The muscles of wrist and arm came into play. In memory I saw the gleam of the Emperor's sword, the circle of the academy where we had our daily drills. I was again in the ring, defending my title of the best swordsman of the class. And so, without tremor or apprehension, I stood there and fought, until it grew dark and for my own life, parrying his mighty strokes with little difficulty, though the shock as I caught his heavy blade told on my arm, so long unused to sword play. I made no effort to strike. So swift was his attack and so vicious that I preferred the defensive, well knowing that eventually he would tire. At intervals I taunted him, using all the German terms of scorn and contumely that I could call to mind. His anger was terrible. Great beads of sweat formed on his brow and rolled down his cheeks. His eyes protruded, his mouth opened, his breath came faster. We moved around the room, advancing, retreating, sidestepping, neither obtaining any advantage, though I was certain that my play was superior to his. The innkeeper fled in terror at the first clash, and we had the big room to ourselves. The orderly stood to one side, encouraging his Colonel. Now and then we rested momentarily,

The orderly rushed to the door shouting for help. Wary and trembling though I was, I knelt by Griesman's side, and, thrusting my hand into the inner pocket of his coat, drew out a flat pocketbook and a bundle of letters. As I rose to my feet the six troopers burst into the room with drawn sabres. I was not ready for a fight at such odds, but I appeared to be in for it. At the back of the room a narrow, enclosed hallway led to the upper story. A heavy door barred the entrance, the lower step jutting into the room. It was the only place for a stand, and I made for it on the run, the troopers after me.

Bracing my back against the door I waited their rush. The first I split down through the skull, and his brains splattered over the men behind, where at they retreated, staring sullenly at their dead comrade. They were heavily built, and powerful, with smooth-shaven, determined faces. I knew that I could not hold out against them. But that they might not even suspect my fear I shouted at them in derision: "Come on, come on, cowards!"

Another made at me, sparring cautiously. I caught the point of his sabre with my own and sent it whirling over his head. But my arm was tired. My sabre turned in my grip and I could not smash him in the face with the flat of my blade. He fell back upon the others with a shriek of pain. I was weak from my tremendous exertions. A great weariness came over me, and for a moment my head awoke. How could I hope to continue the unending struggle? The troopers whispered among themselves and then advanced slowly, spreading out to disconcert me. I gripped my sword and set my teeth for a final effort. Aimee's name was on my lips. I felt that it was the end. At that instant the front door was smashed in, and I be thanked! Fleischmann's great bulk loomed up before us. I shouted to him and he rushed forward, bellowing like an angry bull.

That he was unarmed made no difference to this stout-hearted giant. That I was in peril was the main thought. The troopers turned with uplifted sabres toward this unexpected menace. I groaned at thought of what might be, and gathered myself to help in the attack. But Fleischmann seized one of the heavy oaken chairs, whirled it above his head, and with a great oath, let it fly into their midst. There was a confused mixture of legs and arms and sabres. They went down like nine pins, and as they scrambled to their feet, cursing in rage and pain, he came in like a whirlwind, and with his huge fists, beat them to the floor. One arose with ready sabre, a challenge on his lips. But it was his last word. Fleischmann caught him by the neck, shook him as he would a rat, and sent him whirling against the stone wall. He struck it head-on with a crack like that of a pistol shot, and fell limp, with a broken neck. The others lay where they had fallen, unconscious.

I descended from my narrow refuge and took my brave friend by the hand. "You have saved my life," I said. "I shall not forget." Outside there was a clatter of hoofs. Through the open door we saw the terrified orderly gallop past, bound south. I knew that he would spread the alarm and that we must get away as soon as possible. I found Aimee in an upper room, with her hands as I had expected. I called to her and she came to me with a sob. "Oh, my Jaime, my lion-hearted, take me away from that beast," she cried, and fell fainting in my arms. A few minutes later we climbed into our big car. Aimee, weak and pale, but inexpressibly happy, was curled up in one of the rear seats, wrapped in rugs and blankets. Fleischmann and I were by no means comfortable in mind, for there waited the Kaiser's terrible anger to be faced the next day. Yet I felt that with the documents in my pockets I could turn the tables; and, since mademoiselle was innocent of offense, things were not so bad after all. So we swept on through the moonlight toward Bethel. We did not know that even then the Emperor had learned, by telephone from the orderly, of Griesman's death; and that a detail had been sent to arrest me and, upon resistance, to shoot me on the spot. (To be continued next week.)

A WOMAN OPPOSING EXTENSION OF SUFFRAGE TO WOMEN.

Mrs. Caroline F. Corbin of Chicago, has served notice on Chairman Lesing Rosenthal of the city's new charter convention committee on municipal elections, that there are women who are opposed to the extension of the franchise to women. Mrs. Corbin is president of the Illinois Association opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to women. She has published many books, most of them upon social questions, and is a contributor to many



MRS. CAROLINE F. CORBIN.

magazines. Her first important work as a leader of her sex, was, in the foundation of the Association for the Advancement of Women. The most recent book which she has brought out is "A Women's Philosophy of Love," published in 1892. Mrs. Corbin opposes woman's suffrage, on grounds that it threatens home life and is an adjunct to Socialism.

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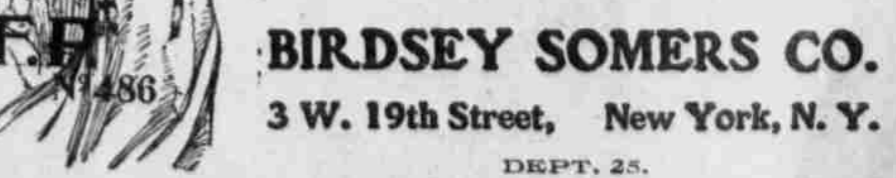
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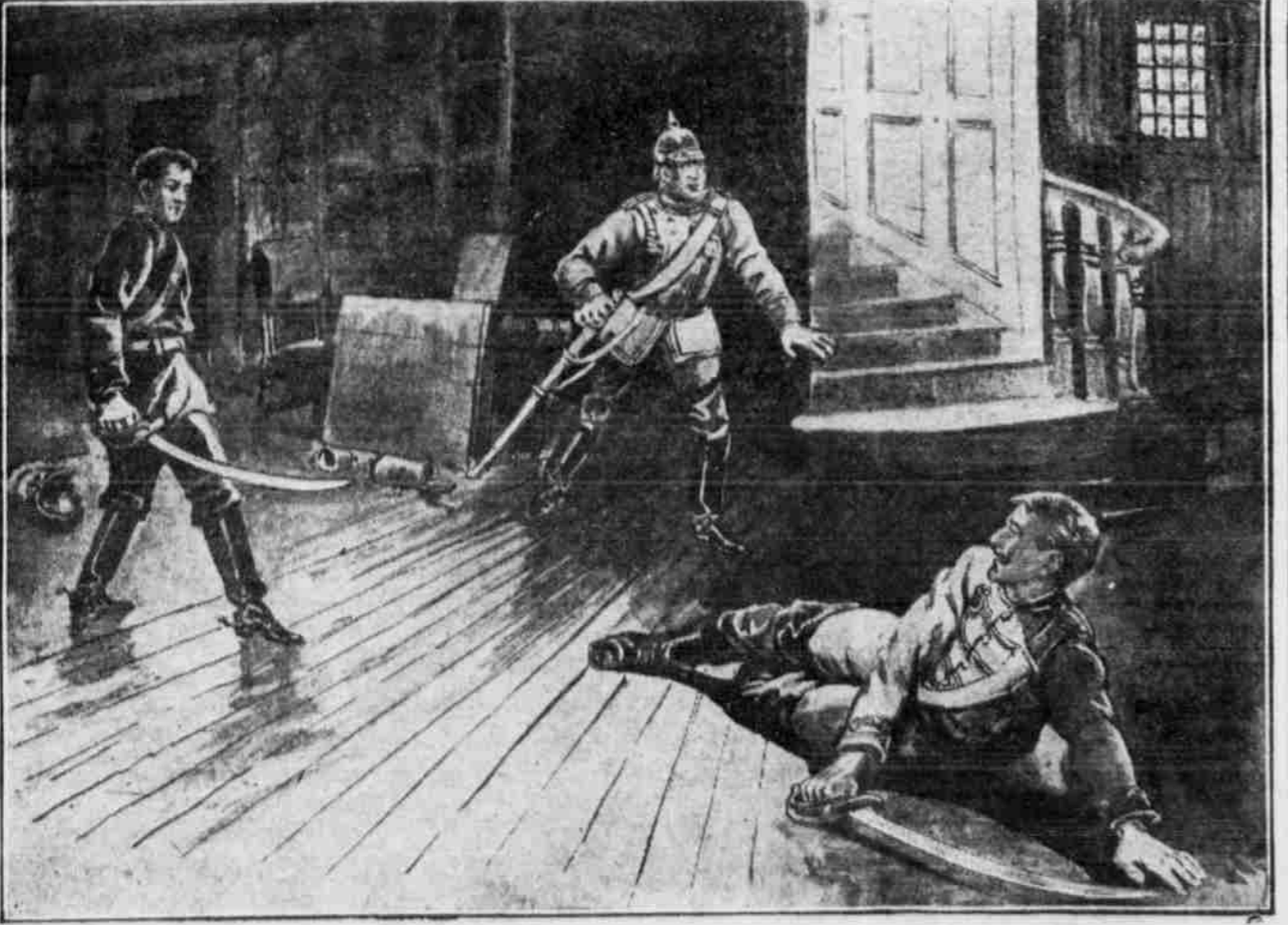
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"HE STAGGERED BACK AND FELL."

came down on hands and feet, like a cat. A moment later we were off again, at full speed. But forty minutes had passed when I saw, far away to the southeast, a flutter of white high in the trees. It was the balloon case—the remnants of La Jaune—and I knew we were near the end of our run. The infantry guard at the gate recognized my uniform and saluted as we swept through the gates. At the portico where I set the brake, leaped from the car and rushed into the chateau, my sword clanking ominously behind me. There was no change in the appearance of the rooms, save that they were deserted. The tables were still littered with papers. Blankets lay upon the chairs just as they had been thrown back when the sleepers awoke. It seemed a dead place; yet with a great hope in my heart that I might find Aimee there I passed quietly through the carpeted parlors and on to the small family dining-room beyond, which had been reserved for the Emperor's private apartment. I threw back the heavy curtain at the doorway. A man stood within. He had risen suddenly to his feet from a chair by a small table on which lay papers and maps left by the Emperor. He

of which sat Griesman and his orderly, busily talking. The innkeeper came forward with a smile of welcome. I waved him aside and turned to Griesman, who looked up with a sneer. "Ah, Herr Adams, so you have come for the lady?" "I have come for Mademoiselle Lagunay," I replied. "I wish to see her at once." He broke out into a mocking laugh, in which the others joined. "Well, you shall, so you shall see her, presently, perhaps. But you must first release her." Griesman took the time deliberately to draw from his pocket a cigar and to light it before he spoke. He knew that I was burning with impatience and anger. Leaning back and speaking through a cloud of smoke he made my heart leap with delight. "There is nothing in the charge so far as it relates to mademoiselle, but what I am glad, since my regard for her is very tender, I may say."

watching each other like hawks; then up and at it again, back and forth, cut and slash, thrust and parry, until it came to me that all my life long I had been doing this thing, and that I should continue until the end of time. At that my anger rose again. I leveled his sword to one side and caught him by the arm. "That is the end of it," I cried. "I shall press less hard the next time. Put down your sword and deliver the lady to me or I shall die, traitor." His sword struck home. For answer he struck me, and came in with a great sweeping stroke that would have cut me in two had it reached its mark. But I caught his blade near my hip and with a strong upward lift and thrust put him off his guard. And, though I was unwise, considering my present status with the Emperor, I was so far gone with hate and with desperation to recede. My sword came down with a heavy, drawing stroke. It grazed the side of his head, slicing off a lock of hair, but deep into the muscles of his neck, it cut deep. It struck the artery, shattered it, and turned inward. And as he staggered back and fell upon a table and chair, his hands clutched to the low ceiling and I knew that my work was well done.