

Count, with a troubled look on his dark face, handed the letter over to Andrews.

"Oh, but we must head her off, instantly!" exclaimed Andrews, who now was growing day by day more impatient. "If she comes to Paris, she'll come down here. And if she comes down here, she'll find out that we've been getting three machines and packing them all off in different directions. And if a lady's husband is mixed up with the Austrian Secret Service, it's just as well that a lady should not know too much."

"He might get things out of her without her suspecting that it was going to do us any harm," agreed Count Sergius. "What had we better do?"

Such indecision was so unlike his prompt and positive friend that Andrews laughed outright.

"Do? Why, wire her at once, to-night, that we'll meet her day after to-morrow in Vienna. That will fix things for the moment. She'll wait. Then, old chap, you can deal with the situation more exhaustively when you see her."

"Yes, we will tell her we've got a Voisin at M'latza, and will give her lessons down there," said the Count.

But in this hope they were to be disappointed. Madame de L'Orme, for reasons that did not seem to them very clear, was unable to await them in Vienna, and for some weeks they heard no more of her.

CHAPTER VIII.

TSCHERNAGORA.

SPRING comes late to the Balkans for a land of the same favoured latitude as Rome and Barcelona. But it had come and established its kingdom before Andrews arrived with his charge at the camp on a tributary of the Drina, where Count Sergius, Carver and Gregory Nicolaievich had been awaiting him for more than three weeks.

The outlaw—he was no outlaw in Montenegro, but a highly honoured citizen—was one of those rare men who could induce his valorous but most industrious compatriots to work. He had accomplished marvels by letting his workmen suspect that there was a military purpose behind their toil—which toil forthwith became worthy in their proud eyes.

In accordance with the plans and minute directions forwarded to him by Count Sergius from France, he had got two spacious hangars ready to receive the machines, as well as a rough but sufficing workshop to accommodate the tools, materials and spare parts which the American had brought with him. The site Gregory had chosen for the camp was a good twenty miles from Niksich, near a hamlet buried in the mountains.

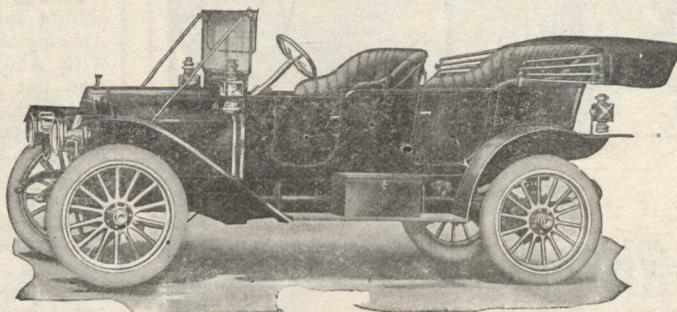
While waiting for Andrews to arrive, there was infinite occupation for Count Sergius and Carver. First, the outlaw had to be made free of the air. From his first sight of the white-winged monoplane soaring up and down the valley and butting into the squalls like a sea-eagle, he was a slave to the game. For a few days he was like one possessed, and could neither sleep nor eat till he had flown. It did not content him in the least to be carried aloft by the Count or by Carver. He must do it himself. Very cautiously and gradually they taught him. He proved an apt pupil, but quite too recklessly daring. And as soon as he had learned, they would let him fly no more.

"We must not risk this precious machine in your wild hands, my Gregory," decreed Plamenac. "We must think of but one thing, till that one thing shall be accomplished. Then—why you shall have this very machine, all to yourself, and may soar up to play with the eagles of the Tschernagora* to your heart's content."

At Vienna Count Sergius had collected a series of large-scale topographical maps, which covered not only the whole of Southern Hungary, Slavonia and Bosnia, but Serbia and Montenegro and the Sanjak of Novi Bazar as well. It was evident that

*Montenegro.

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