

"When Meyer makes up his mind to take on a thoroughly disagreeable task," he said, "there is no force outside sheer physical compulsion that will stop him."

There was a knock at the door, and Fritz's man-servant appeared.

"His Excellency Herr Saunders' motor-sleigh is waiting for him," he announced.

"Come," said Saunders hastily. "Every moment is valuable." But Meyer followed the hurrying Englishman with a gait wherein there was no speed. To von Bilderbaum and Fritz, who scarcely comprehended the sensation of fear, there was something absolutely contemptible in the visible effort that impelled the unwilling feet. To Saunders, chafing though he was under delay, the effort appeared frankly heroic.

CHAPTER XX.

The "Evil Way."

WITH a succession of abrupt snorts, quickening till they merged into a low purring hum, the motor-sleigh started with a jerk from the portal of Fritz's house in the Gerade-strasse. The cog-wheel bit crisply into the freshly-fallen snow, and Adolf, wrenching at the wheel, turned the runners in the direction of the Karlstrasse. Down the long straight thoroughfare they sped at a great pace, past the snowy desolation of the Horatius-platz, past the Frauen-Kirche and the Festus-Kirche, under the old sandstone barbican called the "Red Gate," through a straggling crop of pink-washed villas into the unflecked white of the open country. The snow had ceased to fall and the pale patches of blue had grown to a vast dome of deepest azure. The road mounted gradually, heading for a gap in the mountains which wall in the eastern end of the valley of the Niederkessel. As yet the incline was gradual and the pace therefore unchecked. The ice-cold wind pushed at their faces and drew moisture from their eyes; it pinched their ears and numbed their finger-tips, and made their cheek-bones tender to the touch. Saunders scarcely felt these things. General Meyer, on the other hand, was acutely conscious of them. The quick rush and excitement of the chase were potent things to combat cold, but if you have a constitutional horror of personal danger, physical discomforts are apt to be intensified. "She's travelling well," said Saunders.

"If the road to Wolfsnaden was all as level as this," Meyer rejoined, "we should catch them in an hour. Unfortunately it is not."

"That's true enough. We have the heels of them on the flat and still more so on the down gradient. Uphill we're at a disadvantage, so we must push along as hard as we can before the track steepens."

"And when we overtake them?" said Meyer, questioningly.

"I don't know what then; I never plan details. I prefer to scheme the scenario of my campaign, and trust to circumstances to suggest the right line of action."

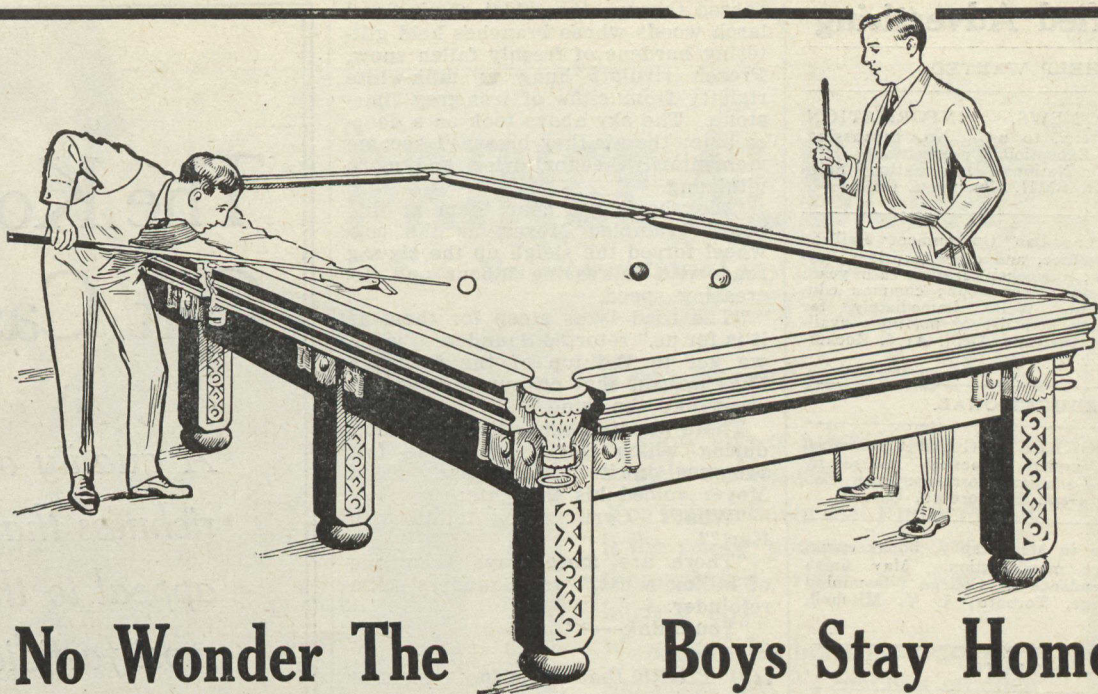
"I hope circumstances will suggest a bullet through the Arch-ducal cranium," said Meyer. "I am not blood-thirsty, but I have an idea it would give Cyril a great deal of pleasure to pot me in a vital part. That is a proceeding I should like you to forestall if possible."

"Then shoot him yourself," Saunders suggested.

Meyer put his fur gloves over his aching ears, and hunched his shoulders pathetically. "I have not the nerve," he complained. "I should either fire too soon and hit Karl or the ex-Queen, or I should hold my fire too long, and be potted myself in a vital part."

Saunders laughed. "I don't want any firing at all, if we can help it," he said. "It's too risky both ways."

They relapsed into silence, and soon the road began to mount steadily, and the pace of the sleigh to decrease in corresponding ratio. They had left the valley, and plunged into a fold of the hills. The farther they went the steeper grew the road and the more fairy-like the scene. They



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