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## FOILED.

A Historical Story of  
Diplomacy.

By F. A. MITCHEL.

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In looking over some papers, yellow with age, I came upon the following, written by my grandfather, who in his younger days was a newspaper correspondent of considerable celebrity:

During the civil war I was sent to France as correspondent for the Washington—. The duties of a European correspondent are very different from one in America. There it is the duty of the enterprising journalist to secure an entrée to the society of those who are making the history of their times, from whom alone he can get the news.

There was one man in France to whom the Emperor Napoleon III. was more indebted for bolstering him on his throne than any of his imperial majesty's official counselors. One evening at a ball at the Tuileries this man, whom I shall call Count de V., approached me and entered into a conversation with me about my journalistic work. I was rather surprised that he should take any interest in such a matter, for no American correspondent was a part of the European system, being usually employed to gather the news as it was published and transmit it to American newspapers.

Among other things Count de V. asked me if I corresponded with any other than American papers. I replied that I had a commission to send news to an English paper whenever I had anything special to send, whereupon he asked me to breakfast with him the next morning, promising that he would give me an item.

When I met the count the next morning at breakfast I was not only amazed at the item he gave me, but at his giving it. He told me that the emperor had been striving to secure another power to join him in interfering to stop the war in America; that he had been working secretly and persistently upon the English government, the people of England being almost wholly on the side of the south owing largely to their dependence on getting cotton from that section. "The emperor," he added, "is about to succeed, and within sixty days a combined French and English fleet will be on the American Atlantic coast to break the blockade."

Patriotic American that I was, my blood chilled at this information; but, immediately remembering that if the news were true a man so close to the emperor would be guilty of betraying a trust to give it to me, I said, "It would be impossible for me to secure the publication of this news in any English paper without documentary proof."

"I can give you the proof," replied the count, "provided that proof remains with you and dies with you—that it is kept a secret till we are all dead."

"I am quite sure, count," I replied, "that if I can say that I am convinced the paper will act upon my assurance that I have been convinced."

Count de V. arose, went to a cabinet, unlocked a drawer with a key he took from his vest pocket and brought out a package of papers, which he laid before me. I perused them with ever growing wonder and long before I had finished was convinced not only of the truth of his statement, but that within sixty days the independence of the Confederate states would be acknowledged by France and England. I kept rereading the papers in order to gain time to think. I was perusing documents of which President Lincoln was ignorant and which constituted the death warrant of the Union cause. What should I do—what could I do—to arrest such a blow? Finally I looked at the count and said:

"Count, you are either the greatest knave or the greatest fool on earth or you have some special purpose which will result beneficently to the emperor."

"I am no knave. How much of a fool I am depends upon your sense of honor. That I have a purpose I will not deny."

"You have gone so far that you must go further. Tell me all."

The count deliberated for some time, and before he spoke his manner indicated that he had resolved to tell the whole story.

"Very well," he said. "Listen. The throne is tottering. There are too many factions striving to possess the government to permit the emperor to remain in peace upon it. He realizes this and desires to concentrate the minds of the people on some foreign achievement for the benefit of France. He purposes to take possession of the government of Mexico, which has been offered him by a few malcontents there. Before doing this he desires to break the United States into two parts, gaining at the same time the good will of one. By bringing about this intervention he will establish the Confederacy and gain the eternal gratitude of the southern people. His Mexican scheme will then be on a far stronger basis."

The count paused, and I noticed that a pained expression passed over his face.

"And your opinion, count, of the wisdom of all this?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "It means the end of the empire. No more crazy scheme was ever devised. I believe that there are underlying principles in this American struggle of yours which in the end, however remote, will give the free north the victory over the slave south—that even the south, once free, will not tolerate a foreign government set up so close to her. And now we come to the object of this revelation. I have begged and pleaded with the emperor to have nothing to do with America or the struggle now going on in America. He declares that it is his only hope to save his throne. He will not listen to me. I would save him from himself. By securing a premature publication of the plan I may thwart it, and my master will be saved from its disastrous consequences."

In my enthusiasm I grasped the count's hand and held it as in a vise.

"Count," I exclaimed, "I am no less struck with wonder at your disinterested wisdom than I was at first at your seeming dishonor. Those men about the emperor are idiots. You are a statesman in the very highest degree."

Though I was burning to act in the matter, I left the count to spend twenty-four hours in thought upon it before doing so. The fate of my countrymen was in my hands. By an error I might turn the clock of human liberty back half a century. By a well aimed stroke I might change the fate of the American republic. I slept not a wink that night and when the morning came had formed a new plan. At 10 o'clock I was again with the Count de V.

"Count," I said, "I have not sufficient standing with any English paper to feel sure I can put your scheme to practice. American journals would pay millions for the news, but they are too far away to serve the purpose. I have a proposition to make. Trust me to reveal this conspiracy to some ruler who has the power in himself to thwart it."

The count thought a few moments, then with a sudden impulse turned to his desk, seized pen and paper and wrote. "There," he said when he had finished, "is a note of introduction to a man very near the person of the emperor of Russia. I have told him to introduce you to his master and say that I have proof in my possession of all you may tell him. Go to St. Petersburg, reveal the plot to the czar, but remember that my honor, my life, depend upon your ability to play this difficult role."

"I will do my best, count, not only for my country, but for you."

"Goodbye," he said. "And may you save the empire of France as well as the cause of liberty in America. If you do either and I am sacrificed I shall not go down in vain."

That night I took a train for St. Petersburg. Fast as we traveled we seemed to me to be going at a snail's pace. My mind was ever on my work of blocking the most rascally political game that was ever played by civilized governments. But, while I thought much of the main issue, I thought more of devices by which I could get the benefit of De V.'s information without bringing him into the matter.

Arrived at St. Petersburg, as soon as I had made a toilet I drove to the house of Alexinef Vronsky, to whom I bore the letter of introduction. I found a middle aged gentleman, untitled, but for some reason possessing great influence with the czar. He listened to what I had to say, then told me that he would go at once with a view to making an appointment for me at the palace. The same afternoon he wrote me a note saying that he would go with me and present me to the emperor the next morning at 11 o'clock.

On the way to the palace Vronsky said to me:

"There is great hope for you in this. The emperor is not fearful or jealous of the French, but he is watching the efforts put forth by England to control the sea and thereby the trade of the world. I tell you this that you may know your best card and know how and when to play it."

When I stood in presence of the autocrat of all the Russias I felt that I bore on my shoulders the cause of freedom for the world. He listened to what I had to say intently and with evident interest. But, seeing me hesitate, he said:

"You may trust me as you have been trusted."

That was a help to me, and I got on much better as soon as I had been thus assured. I laid bare the whole scheme and showed a knowledge of facts which fitted in with much that he knew himself about the schemes not only of Napoleon III., but the prime minister of England. Before I had finished I knew I had at heart won the czar's confidence.

"I can only say to you now," said his majesty, "that the scheme will not be carried out."

I withdrew at once perfectly satisfied with the result of my mission. After thanking Vronsky again and again for this introduction I took the train at once for Paris, knowing that De V. would be eager to hear what I might have to say. I called on him on my arrival before going to my home and after assuring him that his part in the matter would never be known gave him an account of my interview ending with the czar's assurance.

In a few weeks, hearing nothing more of the matter and becoming uneasy, I sailed for America to report the affair to the president. In sailing up New-York bay I found it filled with a Russian war fleet.

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