

## BOOK VII: THE EMPIRE OF THE AIR

FROM THE REPORT OF CRISTOFEROS, WAR-SCRIBE TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL.

July 7, 1907.

When the Gospodar Rupert and Captain Rooke came within hailing distance of the strange ship, the former hailed her, using one after another the languages of England, Germany, France, Russia, Turkey, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and another which I did not know; I think it must have been American. By this time the whole line of the bulwark was covered by a row of Turkish faces. When, in Turkish, the Gospodar asked for the Captain, the latter came to the gangway, which had been opened, and stood there. His uniform was that of the Turkish navy—of that I am prepared to swear—but he made signs of not understanding what had been said; whereupon the Gospodar spoke again, but in French this time. I append the exact conversation which took place, none other joining in it. I took down in shorthand the words of both as they were spoken:

THE GOSPODAR. "Are you the Captain of this ship?"

THE CAPTAIN. "I am."

GOSPODAR. "To what nationality do you belong?"

CAPTAIN. "It matters not. I am Captain of this ship."

GOSPODAR. "I alluded to your ship. What national flag is she under?"

CAPTAIN (throwing his eye over the top-hamper). "I do not see that any flag is flying."

GOSPODAR. "I take it that, as commander, you can allow me on board with my two companions?"

CAPTAIN. "I can, upon proper request being made!"

GOSPODAR (taking off his cap). "I ask your courtesy, Captain. I am the representative and accredited officer of the National Council of the Land of the Blue Mountains, in whose waters you now are; and on their account I ask for a formal interview on urgent matters."

The Turk, who was, I am bound to say, in manner most courteous as yet, gave some command to his officers, whereupon the companion-ladders and stage were lowered and the gangway manned, as is usual for the reception on a ship of war of an honoured guest.

CAPTAIN. "You are welcome, sir—you and your two companions—as you request."

The Gospodar bowed. Our companion-ladder was rigged on the instant, and a launch lowered. The Gospodar and Captain Rooke—taking me with them—entered, and rowed to the warship, where we were all honourably received. There were an immense number of men on board, soldiers as well as seamen. It looked more like a warlike expedition than a fighting-ship in time of peace. As we stepped on the deck, the seamen and marines, who were all armed as at drill, presented arms. The Gospodar went first towards the Captain, and Captain Rooke and I followed close behind him. The Gospodar spoke:

"I am Rupert Sent Leger, a subject of his Britannic Majesty, presently residing at Vissarion, in the Land of the Blue Mountains. I am at present empowered to act for the National Council in all matters. Here is my credential!" As he spoke he handed to the Captain a letter. It was written in five different languages—Balkan, Turkish, Greek, English, and French. The Captain read it carefully all through, forgetful for the moment that he had seemingly been unable to understand the Gospodar's question spoken in the Turkish tongue. Then he answered:

"I see the document is complete. May I ask on what subject you wish to see me?"

GOSPODAR. "You are here in a ship of war in Blue Mountain waters, yet you fly no flag of any nation. You have sent armed men ashore in your boats, thus committing an act of war. The

National Council of the Land of the Blue Mountains requires to know what nation you serve, and why the obligations of international law are thus broken.”

The Captain seemed to wait for further speech, but the Gospodar remained silent; whereupon the former spoke.

CAPTAIN. “I am responsible to my own—chiefs. I refuse to answer your question.”

The Gospodar spoke at once in reply.

GOSPODAR. “Then, sir, you, as commander of a ship—and especially a ship of war—must know that in thus violating national and maritime laws you, and all on board this ship, are guilty of an act of piracy. This is not even piracy on the high seas. You are not merely within territorial waters, but you have invaded a national port. As you refuse to disclose the nationality of your ship, I accept, as you seem to do, your status as that of a pirate, and shall in due season act accordingly.”

CAPTAIN (with manifest hostility). “I accept the responsibility of my own acts. Without admitting your contention, I tell you now that whatever action you take shall be at your own peril and that of your National Council. Moreover, I have reason to believe that my men who were sent ashore on special service have been beleaguered in a tower which can be seen from the ship. Before dawn this morning firing was heard from that direction, from which I gather that attack was made on them. They, being only a small party, may have been murdered. If such be so, I tell you that you and your miserable little nation, as you call it, shall pay such blood-money as you never thought of. I am responsible for this, and, by Allah! there shall be a great revenge. You have not in all your navy—if navy you have at all—power to cope with even one ship like this, which is but one of many. My guns shall be trained on Ilsin, to which end I have come inshore. You and your companions have free conduct back to port; such is due to the white flag which you fly. Fifteen minutes will bring you back whence you came. Go! And remember that whatever you may do amongst your mountain defiles, at sea you cannot even defend yourselves.”

GOSPODAR (slowly and in a ringing voice). “The Land of the Blue Mountains has its own defences on sea and land. Its people know how to defend themselves.”

CAPTAIN (taking out his watch). “It is now close on five bells. At the first stroke of six bells our guns shall open fire.”

GOSPODAR (calmly). “It is my last duty to warn you, sir—and to warn all on this ship—that much may happen before even the first stroke of six bells. Be warned in time, and give over this piratical attack, the very threat of which may be the cause of much bloodshed.”

CAPTAIN (violently). “Do you dare to threaten me, and, moreover, my ship’s company? We are one, I tell you, in this ship; and the last man shall perish like the first ere this enterprise fail. Go!”

With a bow, the Gospodar turned and went down the ladder, we following him. In a couple of minutes the yacht was on her way to the port.

FROM RUPERT’S JOURNAL. July 10, 1907.

When we turned shoreward after my stormy interview with the pirate Captain—I can call him nothing else at present, Rooke gave orders to a quartermaster on the bridge, and The Lady began to make to a little northward of Ilsin port. Rooke himself went aft to the wheel-house, taking several men with him.

When we were quite near the rocks—the water is so deep here that there is no danger—we slowed down, merely drifting along southwards towards the port. I was myself on the bridge, and could see all over the decks. I could also see preparations going on upon the warship. Ports were opened, and the great guns on the turrets were lowered for action. When we were starboard broadside on to the warship, I saw the port side of the steering-house open, and Rooke's men sliding out what looked like a huge grey crab, which by tackle from within the wheel-house was lowered softly into the sea. The position of the yacht hid the operation from sight of the warship. The doors were shut again, and the yacht's pace began to quicken. We ran into the port. I had a vague idea that Rooke had some desperate project on hand. Not for nothing had he kept the wheel-house locked on that mysterious crab.

All along the frontage was a great crowd of eager men. But they had considerably left the little mole at the southern entrance, whereon was a little tower, on whose round top a signal-gun was placed, free for my own use. When I was landed on this pier I went along to the end, and, climbing the narrow stair within, went out on the sloping roof. I stood up, for I was determined to show the Turks that I was not afraid for myself, as they would understand when the bombardment should begin. It was now but a very few minutes before the fatal hour—six bells. But all the same I was almost in a state of despair. It was terrible to think of all those poor souls in the town who had done nothing wrong, and who were to be wiped out in the coming blood-thirsty, wanton attack. I raised my glasses to see how preparations were going on upon the warship.

As I looked I had a momentary fear that my eyesight was giving way. At one moment I had the deck of the warship focussed with my glasses, and could see every detail as the gunners waited for the word to begin the bombardment with the great guns of the barbetstes. The next I saw nothing but the empty sea. Then in another instant there was the ship as before, but the details were blurred. I steadied myself against the signal-gun, and looked again. Not more than two, or at the most three, seconds had elapsed. The ship was, for the moment, full in view. As I looked, she gave a queer kind of quick shiver, prow and stern, and then sideways. It was for all the world like a rat shaken in the mouth of a skilled terrier. Then she remained still, the one placid thing to be seen, for all around her the sea seemed to shiver in little independent eddies, as when water is broken without a current to guide it.

I continued to look, and when the deck was, or seemed, quite still—for the shivering water round the ship kept catching my eyes through the outer rays of the lenses—I noticed that nothing was stirring. The men who had been at the guns were all lying down; the men in the fighting-tops had leaned forward or backward, and their arms hung down helplessly. Everywhere was desolation—in so far as life was concerned. Even a little brown bear, which had been seated on the cannon which was being put into range position, had jumped or fallen on deck, and lay there stretched out—and still. It was evident that some terrible shock had been given to the mighty war-vessel. Without a doubt or a thought why I did so, I turned my eyes towards where *The Lady* lay, port broadside now to the inside, in the harbour mouth. I had the key now to the mystery of Rooke's proceedings with the great grey crab.

As I looked I saw just outside the harbour a thin line of cleaving water. This became more marked each instant, till a steel disc with glass eyes that shone in the light of the sun rose above the water. It was about the size of a beehive, and was shaped like one. It made a straight line for the aft of the yacht. At the same moment, in obedience to some command, given so quietly that I did not hear it, the men went below—all save some few, who began to open out doors in the port side of the wheel-house. The tackle was run out through an opened gangway on that side, and a

man stood on the great hook at the lower end, balancing himself by hanging on the chain. In a few seconds he came up again. The chain tightened and the great grey crab rose over the edge of the deck, and was drawn into the wheel-house, the doors of which were closed, shutting in a few only of the men.

I waited, quite quiet. After a space of a few minutes, Captain Rooke in his uniform walked out of the wheel-house. He entered a small boat, which had been in the meantime lowered for the purpose, and was rowed to the steps on the mole. Ascending these, he came directly towards the signal-tower. When he had ascended and stood beside me, he saluted.

“Well?” I asked.

“All well, sir,” he answered. “We shan’t have any more trouble with that lot, I think. You warned that pirate—I wish he had been in truth a clean, honest, straightforward pirate, instead of the measly Turkish swab he was—that something might occur before the first stroke of six bells. Well, something has occurred, and for him and all his crew that six bells will never sound. So the Lord fights for the Cross against the Crescent! Bismillah. Amen!” He said this in a manifestly formal way, as though declaiming a ritual. The next instant he went on in the thoroughly practical conventional way which was usual to him:

“May I ask a favour, Mr. Sent Leger?”

“A thousand, my dear Rooke,” I said. “You can’t ask me anything which I shall not freely grant. And I speak within my brief from the National Council. You have saved Ilsin this day, and the Council will thank you for it in due time.”

“Me, sir?” he said, with a look of surprise on his face which seemed quite genuine. “If you think that, I am well out of it. I was afraid, when I woke, that you might court-martial me!”

“Court-martial you! What for?” I asked, surprised in my turn.

“For going to sleep on duty, sir! And the fact is, I was worn out in the attack on the Silent Tower last night, and when you had your interview with the pirate—all good pirates forgive me for the blasphemy! Amen!—and I knew that everything was going smoothly, I went into the wheel-house and took forty winks.” He said all this without moving so much as an eyelid, from which I gathered that he wished absolute silence to be observed on my part. Whilst I was revolving this in my mind he went on:

“Touching that request, sir. When I have left you and the Voivode— and the Voivodin, of course—at Vissarion, together with such others as you may choose to bring there with you, may I bring the yacht back here for a spell? I rather think that there is a good deal of cleaning up to be done, and the crew of The Lady with myself are the men to do it. We shall be back by nightfall at the creek.”

“Do as you think best, Admiral Rooke,” I said.

“Admiral?”

“Yes, Admiral. At present I can only say that tentatively, but by to-morrow I am sure the National Council will have confirmed it. I am afraid, old friend, that your squadron will be only your flagship for the present; but later we may do better.”

“So long as I am Admiral, your honour, I shall have no other flagship than The Lady. I am not a young man, but, young or old, my pennon shall float over no other deck. Now, one other favour, Mr. Sent Leger? It is a corollary of the first, so I do not hesitate to ask. May I appoint Lieutenant Desmond, my present First Officer, to the command of the battleship? Of course, he will at first only command the prize crew; but in such case he will fairly expect the confirmation of his rank later. I had better, perhaps, tell you, sir, that he is a very capable seaman, learned in all the sciences that pertain to a battleship, and bred in the first navy in the world.”

“By all means, Admiral. Your nomination shall, I think I may promise you, be confirmed.”

Not another word we spoke. I returned with him in his boat to The Lady, which was brought to the dock wall, where we were received with tumultuous cheering.

I hurried off to my Wife and the Voivode. Rooke, calling Desmond to him, went on the bridge of The Lady, which turned, and went out at terrific speed to the battleship, which was already drifting up northward on the tide.

FROM THE REPORT OF CRISTOFEROS, SCRIBE OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE LAND OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS.

July 8, 1907.

The meeting of the National Council, July 6, was but a continuation of that held before the rescue of the Voivodin Vissarion, the members of the Council having been during the intervening night housed in the Castle of Vissarion. When, in the early morning, they met, all were jubilant; for late at night the fire-signal had flamed up from Ilsin with the glad news that the Voivode Peter Vissarion was safe, having been rescued with great daring on an aeroplane by his daughter and the Gospodar Rupert, as the people call him—Mister Rupert Sent Leger, as he is in his British name and degree.

Whilst the Council was sitting, word came that a great peril to the town of Ilsin had been averted. A war-vessel acknowledging to no nationality, and therefore to be deemed a pirate, had threatened to bombard the town; but just before the time fixed for the fulfilment of her threat, she was shaken to such an extent by some sub-aqueous means that, though she herself was seemingly uninjured, nothing was left alive on board. Thus the Lord preserves His own! The consideration of this, as well as the other incident, was postponed until the coming Voivode and the Gospodar Rupert, together with who were already on their way hither.

THE SAME (LATER IN THE SAME DAY).

The Council resumed its sitting at four o'clock. The Voivode Peter Vissarion and the Voivodin Teuta had arrived with the “Gospodar Rupert,” as the mountaineers call him (Mr. Rupert Sent Leger) on the armoured yacht he calls The Lady. The National Council showed great pleasure when the Voivode entered the hall in which the Council met. He seemed much gratified by the reception given to him. Mr. Rupert Sent Leger, by the express desire of the Council, was asked to be present at the meeting. He took a seat at the bottom of the hall, and seemed to prefer to remain there, though asked by the President of the Council to sit at the top of the table with himself and the Voivode.

When the formalities of such Councils had been completed, the Voivode handed to the President a memorandum of his report on his secret mission to foreign Courts on behalf of the National Council. He then explained at length, for the benefit of the various members of the Council, the broad results of his mission. The result was, he said, absolutely satisfactory. Everywhere he had been received with distinguished courtesy, and given a sympathetic hearing. Several of the Powers consulted had made delay in giving final answers, but this, he explained, was necessarily due to new considerations arising from the international complications which were universally dealt with throughout the world as “the Balkan Crisis.” In time, however (the Voivode went on), these matters became so far declared as to allow the waiting Powers to form definite judgment—which, of course, they did not declare to him—as to their own ultimate action. The final result—if at this initial stage such tentative setting forth of their own attitude in

each case can be so named—was that he returned full of hope (founded, he might say, upon a justifiable personal belief) that the Great Powers throughout the world—North, South, East, and West—were in thorough sympathy with the Land of the Blue Mountains in its aspirations for the continuance of its freedom. “I also am honoured,” he continued, “to bring to you, the Great Council of the nation, the assurance of protection against unworthy aggression on the part of neighbouring nations of present greater strength.”

Whilst he was speaking, the Gospodar Rupert was writing a few words on a strip of paper, which he sent up to the President. When the Voivode had finished speaking, there was a prolonged silence. The President rose, and in a hush said that the Council would like to hear Mr. Rupert Sent Leger, who had a communication to make regarding certain recent events.

Mr. Rupert Sent Leger rose, and reported how, since he had been entrusted by the Council with the rescue of the Voivode Peter of Vissarion, he had, by aid of the Voivodin, effected the escape of the Voivode from the Silent Tower; also that, following this happy event, the mountaineers, who had made a great cordon round the Tower so soon as it was known that the Voivode had been imprisoned within it, had stormed it in the night. As a determined resistance was offered by the marauders, who had used it as a place of refuge, none of these escaped. He then went on to tell how he sought interview with the Captain of the strange warship, which, without flying any flag, invaded our waters. He asked the President to call on me to read the report of that meeting. This, in obedience to his direction, I did. The acquiescent murmuring of the Council showed how thoroughly they endorsed Mr. Sent Leger’s words and acts.

When I resumed my seat, Mr. Sent Leger described how, just before the time fixed by the “pirate Captain”—so he designated him, as did every speaker thereafter—the warship met with some under-sea accident, which had a destructive effect on all on board her. Then he added certain words, which I give verbatim, as I am sure that others will some time wish to remember them in their exactness:

“By the way, President and Lords of the Council, I trust I may ask you to confirm Captain Rooke, of the armoured yacht *The Lady*, to be Admiral of the Squadron of the Land of the Blue Mountains, and also Captain (tentatively) Desmond, late First-Lieutenant of *The Lady*, to the command of the second warship of our fleet—the as yet unnamed vessel, whose former Captain threatened to bombard Ilsin. My Lords, Admiral Rooke has done great service to the Land of the Blue Mountains, and deserves well at your hands. You will have in him, I am sure, a great official. One who will till his last breath give you good and loyal service.”

He had sat down, the President put to the Council resolutions, which were passed by acclamation. Admiral Rooke was given command of the navy, and Captain Desmond confirmed in his appointment to the captaincy of the new ship, which was, by a further resolution, named *The Gospodar Rupert*.

In thanking the Council for acceding to his request, and for the great honour done him in the naming of the ship, Mr. Sent Leger said:

“May I ask that the armoured yacht *The Lady* be accepted by you, the National Council, on behalf of the nation, as a gift on behalf of the cause of freedom from the Voivodin Teuta?”

In response to the mighty cheer of the Council with which the splendid gift was accepted the Gospodar Rupert—Mr. Sent Leger—bowed, and went quietly out of the room.

As no agenda of the meeting had been prepared, there was for a time, not silence, but much individual conversation. In the midst of it the Voivode rose up, whereupon there was a strict silence. All listened with an intensity of eagerness whilst he spoke.

“President and Lords of the Council, Archbishop, and Vladika, I should but ill show my respect did I hesitate to tell you at this the first opportunity I have had of certain matters personal primarily to myself, but which, in the progress of recent events, have come to impinge on the affairs of the nation. Until I have done so, I shall not feel that I have done a duty, long due to you or your predecessors in office, and which I hope you will allow me to say that I have only kept back for purposes of statecraft. May I ask that you will come back with me in memory to the year 1890, when our struggle against Ottoman aggression, later on so successfully brought to a close, was begun. We were then in a desperate condition. Our finances had run so low that we could not purchase even the bread which we required. Nay, more, we could not procure through the National Exchequer what we wanted more than bread—arms of modern effectiveness; for men may endure hunger and yet fight well, as the glorious past of our country has proved again and again and again. But when our foes are better armed than we are, the penalty is dreadful to a nation small as our own is in number, no matter how brave their hearts. In this strait I myself had to secretly raise a sufficient sum of money to procure the weapons we needed. To this end I sought the assistance of a great merchant-prince, to whom our nation as well as myself was known. He met me in the same generous spirit which he had shown to other struggling nationalities throughout a long and honourable career. When I pledged to him as security my own estates, he wished to tear up the bond, and only under pressure would he meet my wishes in this respect. Lords of the Council, it was his money, thus generously advanced, which procured for us the arms with which we hewed out our freedom.

“Not long ago that noble merchant—and here I trust you will pardon me that I am so moved as to perhaps appear to suffer in want of respect to this great Council—this noble merchant passed to his account—leaving to a near kinsman of his own the royal fortune which he had amassed. Only a few hours ago that worthy kinsman of the benefactor of our nation made it known to me that in his last will he had bequeathed to me, by secret trust, the whole of those estates which long ago I had forfeited by effluxion of time, inasmuch as I had been unable to fulfil the terms of my voluntary bond. It grieves me to think that I have had to keep you so long in ignorance of the good thought and wishes and acts of this great man.

“But it was by his wise counsel, fortified by my own judgment, that I was silent; for, indeed, I feared, as he did, lest in our troublous times some doubting spirit without our boundaries, or even within it, might mistrust the honesty of my purposes for public good, because I was no longer one whose whole fortune was invested within our confines. This prince-merchant, the great English Roger Melton—let his name be for ever graven on the hearts of our people!—kept silent during his own life, and enjoined on others to come after him to keep secret from the men of the Blue Mountains that secret loan made to me on their behalf, lest in their eyes I, who had striven to be their friend and helper, should suffer wrong repute. But, happily, he has left me free to clear myself in your eyes. Moreover, by arranging to have—under certain contingencies, which have come to pass—the estates which were originally my own retransferred to me, I have no longer the honour of having given what I could to the national cause. All such now belongs to him; for it was his money—and his only— which purchased our national armament.

“His worthy kinsman you already know, for he has not only been amongst you for many months, but has already done you good service in his own person. He it was who, as a mighty warrior, answered the summons of the Vladika when misfortune came upon my house in the capture by enemies of my dear daughter, the Voivodin Teuta, whom you hold in your hearts; who, with a chosen band of our brothers, pursued the marauders, and himself, by a deed of daring and prowess, of which poets shall hereafter sing, saved her, when hope itself seemed to be

dead, from their ruthless hands, and brought her back to us; who administered condign punishment to the miscreants who had dared to so wrong her. He it was who later took me, your servant, out of the prison wherein another band of Turkish miscreants held me captive; rescued me, with the help of my dear daughter, whom he had already freed, whilst I had on my person the documents of international secrecy of which I have already advised you—rescued me whilst I had been as yet unsubjected to the indignity of search.

“Beyond this you know now that of which I was in partial ignorance: how he had, through the skill and devotion of your new Admiral, wrought destruction on a hecatomb of our malignant foes. You who have received for the nation the splendid gift of the little warship, which already represents a new era in naval armament, can understand the great-souled generosity of the man who has restored the vast possessions of my House. On our way hither from Ilsin, Rupert Sent Leger made known to me the terms of the trust of his noble uncle, Roger Melton, and—believe me that he did so generously, with a joy that transcended my own—restored to the last male of the Vissarion race the whole inheritance of a noble line.

“And now, my Lords of the Council, I come to another matter, in which I find myself in something of a difficulty, for I am aware that in certain ways you actually know more of it than even I myself do. It is regarding the marriage of my daughter to Rupert Sent Leger. It is known to me that the matter has been brought before you by the Archbishop, who, as guardian of my daughter during my absence on the service of the nation, wished to obtain your sanction, as till my return he held her safety in trust. This was so, not from any merit of mine, but because she, in her own person, had undertaken for the service of our nation a task of almost incredible difficulty. My Lords, were she child of another father, I should extol to the skies her bravery, her self-devotion, her loyalty to the land she loves. Why, then, should I hesitate to speak of her deeds in fitting terms, since it is my duty, my glory, to hold them in higher honour than can any in this land? I shall not shame her—or even myself—by being silent when such a duty urges me to speak, as Voivode, as trusted envoy of our nation, as father. Ages hence loyal men and women of our Land of the Blue Mountains will sing her deeds in song and tell them in story. Her name, Teuta, already sacred in these regions, where it was held by a great Queen, and honoured by all men, will hereafter be held as a symbol and type of woman’s devotion. Oh, my Lords, we pass along the path of life, the best of us but a little time marching in the sunlight between gloom and gloom, and it is during that march that we must be judged for the future. This brave woman has won knightly spurs as well as any Paladin of old. So is it meet that ere she might mate with one worthy of her you, who hold in your hands the safety and honour of the State, should give your approval. To you was it given to sit in judgment on the worth of this gallant Englisher, now my son. You judged him then, before you had seen his valour, his strength, and skill exercised on behalf of a national cause. You judged wisely, oh, my brothers, and out of a grateful heart I thank you one and all for it. Well has he justified your trust by his later acts. When, in obedience to the summons of the Vladika, he put the nation in a blaze and ranged our boundaries with a ring of steel, he did so unknowing that what was dearest to him in the world was at stake. He saved my daughter’s honour and happiness, and won her safety by an act of valour that outvies any told in history. He took my daughter with him to bring me out from the Silent Tower on the wings of the air, when earth had for me no possibility of freedom—I, that had even then in my possession the documents involving other nations which the Soldan would fain have purchased with the half of his empire.

“Henceforth to me, Lords of the Council, this brave man must ever be as a son of my heart, and I trust that in his name grandsons of my own may keep in bright honour the name which in

glorious days of old my fathers made illustrious. Did I know how adequately to thank you for your interest in my child, I would yield up to you my very soul in thanks.”

The speech of the Voivode was received with the honour of the Blue Mountains—the drawing and raising of handjars

FROM RUPERT’S JOURNAL. July 14, 1907.

For nearly a week we waited for some message from Constantinople, fully expecting either a declaration of war, or else some inquiry so couched as to make war an inevitable result. The National Council remained on at Vissarion as the guests of the Voivode, to whom, in accordance with my uncle’s will, I had prepared to re-transfer all his estates. He was, by the way, unwilling at first to accept, and it was only when I showed him Uncle Roger’s letter, and made him read the Deed of Transfer prepared in anticipation by Mr. Trent, that he allowed me to persuade him. Finally he said:

“As you, my good friends, have so arranged, I must accept, be it only in honour to the wishes of the dead. But remember, I only do so but for the present, reserving to myself the freedom to withdraw later if I so desire.”

But Constantinople was silent. The whole nefarious scheme was one of the “put-up jobs” which are part of the dirty work of a certain order of statecraft—to be accepted if successful; to be denied in case of failure.

The matter stood thus: Turkey had thrown the dice—and lost. Her men were dead; her ship was forfeit. It was only some ten days after the warship was left derelict with every living thing—that is, everything that had been living—with its neck broken, as Rooke informed me, when he brought the ship down the creek, and housed it in the dock behind the armoured gates—that we saw an item in *The Roma* copied from *The Constantinople Journal* of July 9:

#### “LOSS OF AN OTTOMAN IRONCLAD WITH ALL HANDS.

“News has been received at Constantinople of the total loss, with all hands, of one of the newest and finest warships in the Turkish fleet—The Mahmoud, Captain Ali Ali—which foundered in a storm on the night of July 5, some distance off Cabrera, in the Balearic Isles. There were no survivors, and no wreckage was discovered by the ships which went in relief—the Pera and the Mustapha—or reported from anywhere along the shores of the islands, of which exhaustive search was made. The Mahmoud was double-manned, as she carried a full extra crew sent on an educational cruise on the most perfectly scientifically equipped warship on service in the Mediterranean waters.”

When the Voivode and I talked over the matter, he said:

“After all, Turkey is a shrewd Power. She certainly seems to know when she is beaten, and does not intend to make a bad thing seem worse in the eyes of the world.”

Well, ’tis a bad wind that blows good to nobody. As The Mahmoud was lost off the Balearics, it cannot have been her that put the marauders on shore and trained her big guns on Ilsin. We take it, therefore, that the latter must have been a pirate, and as we have taken her derelict in our waters, she is now ours in all ways. Anyhow, she is ours, and is the first ship of her class in the navy of the Blue Mountains. I am inclined to think that even if she was—or is still—a Turkish ship, Admiral Rooke would not be inclined to let her go. As for Captain Desmond, I think he would go straight out of his mind if such a thing was to be even suggested to him.

It will be a pity if we have any more trouble, for life here is very happy with us all now. The Voivode is, I think, like a man in a dream. Teuta is ideally happy, and the real affection which sprang up between them when she and Aunt Janet met is a joy to think of. I had posted Teuta about her, so that when they should meet my wife might not, by any inadvertence, receive or cause any pain. But the moment Teuta saw her she ran straight over to her and lifted her in her strong young arms, and, raising her up as one would lift a child, kissed her. Then, when she had put her sitting in the chair from which she had arisen when we entered the room, she knelt down before her, and put her face down in her lap. Aunt Janet's face was a study; I myself could hardly say whether at the first moment surprise or joy predominated. But there could be no doubt about it the instant after. She seemed to beam with happiness. When Teuta knelt to her, she could only say:

"My dear, my dear, I am glad! Rupert's wife, you and I must love each other very much." Seeing that they were laughing and crying in each other's arms, I thought it best to come away and leave them alone. And I didn't feel a bit lonely either when I was out of sight of them. I knew that where those two dear women were there was a place for my own heart.

When I came back, Teuta was sitting on Aunt Janet's knee. It seemed rather stupendous for the old lady, for Teuta is such a splendid creature that even when she sits on my own knee and I catch a glimpse of us in some mirror, I cannot but notice what a nobly-built girl she is.

My wife was jumping up as soon as I was seen, but Aunt Janet held her tight to her, and said:

"Don't stir, dear. It is such happiness to me to have you there. Rupert has always been my 'little boy,' and, in spite of all his being such a giant, he is so still. And so you, that he loves, must be my little girl—in spite of all your beauty and your strength—and sit on my knee, till you can place there a little one that shall be dear to us all, and that shall let me feel my youth again. When first I saw you I was surprised, for, somehow, though I had never seen you nor even heard of you, I seemed to know your face. Sit where you are, dear. It is only Rupert—and we both love him."

Teuta looked at me, flushing rosily; but she sat quiet, and drew the old lady's white head on her young breast.

#### JANET MACKELPIE'S NOTES. July 8, 1907.

I used to think that whenever Rupert should get married or start on the way to it by getting engaged—I would meet his future wife with something of the same affection that I have always had for himself. But I know now that what was really in my mind was jealousy, and that I was really fighting against my own instincts, and pretending to myself that I was not jealous. Had I ever had the faintest idea that she would be anything the least like Teuta, that sort of feeling should never have had even a foothold. No wonder my dear boy is in love with her, for, truth to tell, I am in love with her myself. I don't think I ever met a creature—a woman creature, of course, I mean—with so many splendid qualities. I almost fear to say it, lest it should seem to myself wrong; but I think she is as good as a woman as Rupert is as a man. And what more than that can I say? I thought I loved her and trusted her, and knew her all I could, until this morning.

I was in my own room, as it is still called. For, though Rupert tells me in confidence that under his uncle's will the whole estate of Vissarion, Castle and all, really belongs to the Voivode, and though the Voivode has been persuaded to accept the position, he (the Voivode) will not allow anything to be changed. He will not even hear a word of my going, or changing my room, or

anything. And Rupert backs him up in it, and Teuta too. So what am I to do but let the dears have their way?

Well, this morning, when Rupert was with the Voivode at a meeting of the National Council in the Great Hall, Teuta came to me, and (after closing the door and bolting it, which surprised me a little) came and knelt down beside me, and put her face in my lap. I stroked her beautiful black hair, and said:

“What is it, Teuta darling? Is there any trouble? And why did you bolt the door? Has anything happened to Rupert?” When she looked up I saw that her beautiful black eyes, with the stars in them, were overflowing with tears not yet shed. But she smiled through them, and the tears did not fall. When I saw her smile my heart was eased, and I said without thinking: “Thank God, darling, Rupert is all right.”

“I thank God, too, dear Aunt Janet!” she said softly; and I took her in my arms and laid her head on my breast.

“Go on, dear,” I said; “tell me what it is that troubles you?” This time I saw the tears drop, as she lowered her head and hid her face from me.

“I’m afraid I have deceived you, Aunt Janet, and that you will not—cannot—forgive me.”

“Lord save you, child!” I said, “there’s nothing that you could do that I could not and would not forgive. Not that you would ever do anything base, for that is the only thing that is hard to forgive. Tell me now what troubles you.”

She looked up in my eyes fearlessly, this time with only the signs of tears that had been, and said proudly:

“Nothing base, Aunt Janet. My father’s daughter would not willingly be base. I do not think she could. Moreover, had I ever done anything base I should not be here, for—for—I should never have been Rupert’s wife!”

“Then what is it? Tell your old Aunt Janet, dearie.” She answered me with another question:

“Aunt Janet, do you know who I am, and how I first met Rupert?”

“You are the Voivodin Teuta Vissarion—the daughter of the Voivode— Or, rather, you were; you are now Mrs. Rupert Sent Leger. For he is still an Englishman, and a good subject of our noble King.”

“Yes, Aunt Janet,” she said, “I am that, and proud to be it—prouder than I would be were I my namesake, who was Queen in the old days. But how and where did I see Rupert first?” I did not know, and frankly told her so. So she answered her question herself:

“I saw him first in his own room at night.” I knew in my heart that in whatever she did had been nothing wrong, so I sat silent waiting for her to go on:

“I was in danger, and in deadly fear. I was afraid I might die—not that I fear death—and I wanted help and warmth. I was not dressed as I am now!”

On the instant it came to me how I knew her face, even the first time I had seen it. I wished to help her out of the embarrassing part of her confidence, so I said:

“Dearie, I think I know. Tell me, child, will you put on the frock . . . the dress . . . costume you wore that night, and let me see you in it? It is not mere idle curiosity, my child, but something far, far above such idle folly.”

“Wait for me a minute, Aunt Janet,” she said, as she rose up; “I shall not be long.” Then she left the room.

In a very few minutes she was back. Her appearance might have frightened some people, for she was clad only in a shroud. Her feet were bare, and she walked across the room with the gait of an empress, and stood before me with her eyes modestly cast down. But when presently she

looked up and caught my eyes, a smile rippled over her face. She threw herself once more before me on her knees, and embraced me as she said:

“I was afraid I might frighten you, dear.” I knew I could truthfully reassure her as to that, so I proceeded to do so:

“Do not worry yourself, my dear. I am not by nature timid. I come of a fighting stock which has sent out heroes, and I belong to a family wherein is the gift of Second Sight. Why should we fear? We know! Moreover, I saw you in that dress before. Teuta, I saw you and Rupert married!” This time she herself it was that seemed disconcerted.

“Saw us married! How on earth did you manage to be there?”

“I was not there. My Seeing was long before! Tell me, dear, what day, or rather what night, was it that you first saw Rupert?” She answered sadly:

“I do not know. Alas! I lost count of the days as I lay in the tomb in that dreary Crypt.”

“Was your—your clothing wet that night?” I asked.

“Yes. I had to leave the Crypt, for a great flood was out, and the church was flooded. I had to seek help—warmth—for I feared I might die. Oh, I was not, as I have told you, afraid of death. But I had undertaken a terrible task to which I had pledged myself. It was for my father’s sake, and the sake of the Land, and I felt that it was a part of my duty to live. And so I lived on, when death would have been relief. It was to tell you all about this that I came to your room to-day. But how did you see me—us—married?”

“Ah, my child!” I answered, “that was before the marriage took place. The morn after the night that you came in the wet, when, having been troubled in uncanny dreaming, I came to see if Rupert was a’richt, I lost remembrance o’ my dreaming, for the floor was all wet, and that took off my attention. But later, the morn after Rupert used his fire in his room for the first time, I told him what I had dreamt; for, lassie, my dear, I saw ye as bride at that weddin’ in fine lace o’er yer shroud, and orange-flowers and ithers in yer black hair; an’ I saw the stars in yer bonny een—the een I love. But oh, my dear, when I saw the shroud, and kent what it might mean, I expeckit to see the worms crawl round yer feet. But do ye ask yer man to tell ye what I tell’t him that morn. ‘Twill interest ye to know how the hairt o’ men can learn by dreams. Has he ever tellt ye aught o’ this?”

“No, dear,” she said simply. “I think that perhaps he was afraid that one or other of us, if not both, might be upset by it if he did. You see, he did not tell you anything at all of our meeting, though I am sure that he will be glad when he knows that we both know all about it, and have told each other everything.”

That was very sweet of her, and very thoughtful in all ways, so I said that which I thought would please her best—that is, the truth:

“Ah, lassie, that is what a wife should be—what a wife should do. Rupert is blessed and happy to have his heart in your keeping.”

I knew from the added warmth of her kiss what I had said had pleased her.

Letter from Ernest Roger Halbard Melton, Humcroft, Salop, to Rupert Sent Leger, Vissarion, Land of the Blue Mountains.

July 29, 1907.

MY DEAR COUSIN RUPERT,

We have heard such glowing accounts of Vissarion that I am coming out to see you. As you are yourself now a landowner, you will understand that my coming is not altogether a pleasure. Indeed, it is a duty first. When my father dies I shall be head of the family—the family of which

Uncle Roger, to whom we were related, was a member. It is therefore meet and fitting that I should know something of our family branches and of their Seats. I am not giving you time for much warning, so am coming on immediately—in fact, I shall arrive almost as soon as this letter. But I want to catch you in the middle of your tricks. I hear that the Blue Mountaineer girls are peaches, so don't send them ALL away when you hear I'm coming!

Do send a yacht up to Fiume to meet me. I hear you have all sorts of craft at Vissarion. The MacSkelpie, I hear, said you received her as a Queen; so I hope you will do the decent by one of your own flesh and blood, and the future Head of the House at that. I shan't bring much of a retinue with me. I wasn't made a billionaire by old Roger, so can only take my modest "man Friday"—whose name is Jenkinson, and a Cockney at that. So don't have too much gold lace and diamond-hilted scimitars about, like a good chap, or else he'll want the very worst—his wyges ryzed. That old image Rooke that came over for Miss McS., and whom by chance I saw at the attorney man's, might pilot me down from Fiume. The old gentleman-by-Act-of-Parliament Mr. Bingham Trent (I suppose he has hyphened it by this time) told me that Miss McS. said he "did her proud" when she went over under his charge. I shall be at Fiume on the evening of Wednesday, and shall stay at the Europa, which is, I am told, the least indecent hotel in the place. So you know where to find me, or any of your attendant demons can know, in case I am to suffer "substituted service."

Your affectionate Cousin,

ERNEST ROGER HALBARD MELTON.

Letter from Admiral Rooke to the Gospodar Rupert.

August 1, 1907.

SIR,

In obedience to your explicit direction that I should meet Mr. Ernest R. H. Melton at Fiume, and report to you exactly what occurred, "without keeping anything back,"—as you will remember you said, I beg to report.

I brought the steam-yacht Trent to Fiume, arriving there on the morning of Thursday. At 11.30 p.m. I went to meet the train from St. Peter, due 11.40. It was something late, arriving just as the clock was beginning to strike midnight. Mr. Melton was on board, and with him his valet Jenkinson. I am bound to say that he did not seem very pleased with his journey, and expressed much disappointment at not seeing Your Honour awaiting him. I explained, as you directed, that you had to attend with the Voivode Vissarion and the Vladika the National Council, which met at Plazac, or that otherwise you would have done yourself the pleasure of coming to meet him. I had, of course, reserved rooms (the Prince of Wales's suite), for him at the Re d'Ungheria, and had waiting the carriage which the proprietor had provided for the Prince of Wales when he stayed there. Mr. Melton took his valet with him (on the box-seat), and I followed in a Stadtwagen with the luggage. When I arrived, I found the maitre d'hotel in a stupor of concern. The English nobleman, he said, had found fault with everything, and used to him language to which he was not accustomed. I quieted him, telling him that the stranger was probably unused to foreign ways, and assuring him that Your Honour had every faith in him. He announced himself satisfied and happy at the assurance. But I noticed that he promptly put everything in the hands of the headwaiter, telling him to satisfy the milor at any cost, and then went away to some urgent business in Vienna. Clever man!

I took Mr. Melton's orders for our journey in the morning, and asked if there was anything for which he wished. He simply said to me:

"Everything is rotten. Go to hell, and shut the door after you!" His man, who seems a very decent little fellow, though he is as vain as a peacock, and speaks with a Cockney accent which is simply terrible, came down the passage after me, and explained "on his own," as he expressed it, that his master, "Mr. Ernest," was upset by the long journey, and that I was not to mind. I did not wish to make him uncomfortable, so I explained that I minded nothing except what Your Honour wished; that the steam-yacht would be ready at 7 a.m.; and that I should be waiting in the hotel from that time on till Mr. Melton cared to start, to bring him aboard.

In the morning I waited till the man Jenkinson came and told me that Mr. Ernest would start at ten. I asked if he would breakfast on board; he answered that he would take his cafe-complet at the hotel, but breakfast on board.

We left at ten, and took the electric pinnacle out to the Trent, which lay, with steam up, in the roads. Breakfast was served on board, by his orders, and presently he came up on the bridge, where I was in command. He brought his man Jenkinson with him. Seeing me there, and not (I suppose) understanding that I was in command, he unceremoniously ordered me to go on the deck. Indeed, he named a place much lower. I made a sign of silence to the quartermaster at the wheel, who had released the spokes, and was going, I feared, to make some impertinent remark. Jenkinson joined me presently, and said, as some sort of explanation of his master's discourtesy (of which he was manifestly ashamed), if not as an amende:

"The governor is in a hell of a wax this morning."

When we got in sight of Meleda, Mr. Melton sent for me and asked me where we were to land. I told him that, unless he wished to the contrary, we were to run to Vissarion; but that my instructions were to land at whatever port he wished. Whereupon he told me that he wished to stay the night at some place where he might be able to see some "life." He was pleased to add something, which I presume he thought jocular, about my being able to "coach" him in such matters, as doubtless even "an old has-been like you" had still some sort of an eye for a pretty girl. I told him as respectfully as I could that I had no knowledge whatever on such subjects, which were possibly of some interest to younger men, but of none to me. He said no more; so after waiting for further orders, but without receiving any, I said:

"I suppose, sir, we shall run to Vissarion?"

"Run to the devil, if you like!" was his reply, as he turned away. When we arrived in the creek at Vissarion, he seemed much milder—less aggressive in his manner; but when he heard that you were detained at Plazac, he got rather "fresh"—I use the American term—again. I greatly feared there would be a serious misfortune before we got into the Castle, for on the dock was Julia, the wife of Michael, the Master of the Wine, who is, as you know, very beautiful. Mr. Melton seemed much taken with her; and she, being flattered by the attention of a strange gentleman and Your Honour's kinsman, put aside the stand-offishness of most of the Blue Mountain women. Whereupon Mr. Melton, forgetting himself, took her in his arms and kissed her. Instantly there was a hubbub. The mountaineers present drew their handjars, and almost on the instant sudden death appeared to be amongst us. Happily the men waited as Michael, who had just arrived on the quay-wall as the outrage took place, ran forward, wheeling his handjar round his head, and manifestly intending to decapitate Mr. Melton. On the instant—I am sorry to say it, for it created a terribly bad effect—Mr. Melton dropped on his knees in a state of panic. There was just this good use in it—that there was a pause of a few seconds. During that time the

little Cockney valet, who has the heart of a man in him, literally burst his way forward, and stood in front of his master in boxing attitude, calling out:

“ ‘Ere, come on, the ’ole lot of ye! ‘E ain’t done no ‘arm. He honly kissed the gal, as any man would. If ye want to cut off somebody’s ’ed, cut off mine. I ain’t afride!” There was such genuine pluck in this, and it formed so fine a contrast to the other’s craven attitude (forgive me, Your Honour; but you want the truth!), that I was glad he was an Englishman, too. The mountaineers recognized his spirit, and saluted with their handjars, even Michael amongst the number. Half turning his head, the little man said in a fierce whisper:

“Buck up, guv’nor! Get up, or they’ll slice ye! ’Ere’s Mr. Rooke; ’e’ll see ye through it.”

By this time the men were amenable to reason, and when I reminded them that Mr. Melton was Your Honour’s cousin, they put aside their handjars and went about their work. I asked Mr. Melton to follow, and led the way to the Castle.

When we got close to the great entrance within the walled courtyard, we found a large number of the servants gathered, and with them many of the mountaineers, who have kept an organized guard all round the Castle ever since the abducting of the Voivodin. As both Your Honour and the Voivode were away at Plazac, the guard had for the time been doubled. When the steward came and stood in the doorway, the servants stood off somewhat, and the mountaineers drew back to the farther sides and angles of the courtyard. The Voivodin had, of course, been informed of the guest’s (your cousin) coming, and came to meet him in the old custom of the Blue Mountains. As Your Honour only came to the Blue Mountains recently, and as no occasion has been since then of illustrating the custom since the Voivode was away, and the Voivodin then believed to be dead, perhaps I, who have lived here so long, may explain:

When to an old Blue Mountain house a guest comes whom it is wished to do honour, the Lady, as in the vernacular the mistress of the house is called, comes herself to meet the guest at the door—or, rather, OUTSIDE the door—so that she can herself conduct him within. It is a pretty ceremony, and it is said that of old in kingly days the monarch always set much store by it. The custom is that, when she approaches the honoured guest (he need not be royal), she bends—or more properly kneels—before him and kisses his hand. It has been explained by historians that the symbolism is that the woman, showing obedience to her husband, as the married woman of the Blue Mountains always does, emphasizes that obedience to her husband’s guest. The custom is always observed in its largest formality when a young wife receives for the first time a guest, and especially one whom her husband wishes to honour. The Voivodin was, of course, aware that Mr. Melton was your kinsman, and naturally wished to make the ceremony of honour as marked as possible, so as to show overtly her sense of her husband’s worth.

When we came into the courtyard, I held back, of course, for the honour is entirely individual, and is never extended to any other, no matter how worthy he may be. Naturally Mr. Melton did not know the etiquette of the situation, and so for that is not to be blamed. He took his valet with him when, seeing someone coming to the door, he went forward. I thought he was going to rush to his welcomer. Such, though not in the ritual, would have been natural in a young kinsman wishing to do honour to the bride of his host, and would to anyone have been both understandable and forgivable. It did not occur to me at the time, but I have since thought that perhaps he had not then heard of Your Honour’s marriage, which I trust you will, in justice to the young gentleman, bear in mind when considering the matter. Unhappily, however, he did not show any such eagerness. On the contrary, he seemed to make a point of showing indifference. It seemed to me myself that he, seeing somebody wishing to make much of him, took what he

considered a safe opportunity of restoring to himself his own good opinion, which must have been considerably lowered in the episode of the Wine Master's wife.

The Voivodin, thinking, doubtless, Your Honour, to add a fresh lustre to her welcome, had donned the costume which all her nation has now come to love and to accept as a dress of ceremonial honour. She wore her shroud. It moved the hearts of all of us who looked on to see it, and we appreciated its being worn for such a cause. But Mr. Melton did not seem to care. As he had been approaching she had begun to kneel, and was already on her knees whilst he was several yards away. There he stopped and turned to speak to his valet, put a glass in his eye, and looked all round him and up and down—indeed, everywhere except at the Great Lady, who was on her knees before him, waiting to bid him welcome. I could see in the eyes of such of the mountaineers as were within my range of vision a growing animosity; so, hoping to keep down any such expression, which I knew would cause harm to Your Honour and the Voivodin, I looked all round them straight in their faces with a fixed frown, which, indeed, they seemed to understand, for they regained, and for the time maintained, their usual dignified calm. The Voivodin, may I say, bore the trial wonderfully. No human being could see that she was in any degree pained or even surprised. Mr. Melton stood looking round him so long that I had full time to regain my own attitude of calm. At last he seemed to come back to the knowledge that someone was waiting for him, and sauntered leisurely forward. There was so much insolence—mind you, not insolence that was intended to appear as such—in his movement that the mountaineers began to steal forward. When he was close up to the Voivodin, and she put out her hand to take his, he put forward ONE FINGER! I could hear the intake of the breath of the men, now close around, for I had moved forward, too. I thought it would be as well to be close to your guest, lest something should happen to him. The Voivodin still kept her splendid self-control. Raising the finger put forward by the guest with the same deference as though it had been the hand of a King, she bent her head down and kissed it. Her duty of courtesy now done, she was preparing to rise, when he put his hand into his pocket, and, pulling out a sovereign, offered it to her. His valet moved his hand forward, as if to pull back his arm, but it was too late. I am sure, Your Honour, that no affront was intended. He doubtless thought that he was doing a kindness of the sort usual in England when one “tips” a housekeeper. But all the same, to one in her position, it was an affront, an insult, open and unmistakable. So it was received by the mountaineers, whose handjars flashed out as one. For a second it was so received even by the Voivodin, who, with face flushing scarlet, and the stars in her eyes flaming red, sprang to her feet. But in that second she had regained herself, and to all appearances her righteous anger passed away. Stooping, she took the hand of her guest and raised it—you know how strong she is—and, holding it in hers, led him into the doorway, saying:

“You are welcome, kinsman of my husband, to the house of my father, which is presently my husband's also. Both are grieved that, duty having called them away for the time, they are unable to be here to help me to greet you.”

I tell you, Your Honour, that it was a lesson in self-respect which anyone who saw it can never forget. As to me, it makes my flesh quiver, old as I am, with delight, and my heart leap.

May I, as a faithful servant who has had many years of experience, suggest that Your Honour should seem—for the present, at any rate—not to know any of these things which I have reported, as you wished me to do. Be sure that the Voivodin will tell you her gracious self aught that she would wish you to know. And such reticence on your part must make for her happiness, even if it did not for your own.

So that you may know all, as you desired, and that you may have time to school yourself to whatever attitude you think best to adopt, I send this off to you at once by fleet messenger. Were the aeroplane here, I should take it myself. I leave here shortly to await the arrival of Sir Colin at Otranto.

Your Honour's faithful servant,  
ROOKE.

#### JANET MACKELPIE'S NOTES.

August 9, 1907.

To me it seems very providential that Rupert was not at home when that dreadful young man Ernest Melton arrived, though it is possible that if Rupert had been present he would not have dared to conduct himself so badly. Of course, I heard all about it from the maids; Teuta never opened her lips to me on the subject. It was bad enough and stupid enough for him to try to kiss a decent young woman like Julia, who is really as good as gold and as modest as one of our own Highland lassies; but to think of him insulting Teuta! The little beast! One would think that a champion idiot out of an Equatorial asylum would know better! If Michael, the Wine Master, wanted to kill him, I wonder what my Rupert and hers would have done? I am truly thankful that he was not present. And I am thankful, too, that I was not present either, for I should have made an exhibition of myself, and Rupert would not have liked that. He—the little beast! might have seen from the very dress that the dear girl wore that there was something exceptional about her. But on one account I should have liked to see her. They tell me that she was, in her true dignity, like a Queen, and that her humility in receiving her husband's kinsman was a lesson to every woman in the Land. I must be careful not to let Rupert know that I have heard of the incident. Later on, when it is all blown over and the young man has been got safely away, I shall tell him of it. Mr. Rooke—Lord High Admiral Rooke, I should say—must be a really wonderful man to have so held himself in check; for, from what I have heard of him, he must in his younger days have been worse than Old Morgan of Panama. Mr. Ernest Roger Halbard Melton, of Humcroft, Salop, little knows how near he was to being “cleft to the chine” also.

Fortunately, I had heard of his meeting with Teuta before he came to see me, for I did not get back from my walk till after he had arrived. Teuta's noble example was before me, and I determined that I, too, would show good manners under any circumstances. But I didn't know how mean he is. Think of his saying to me that Rupert's position here must be a great source of pride to me, who had been his nursery governess. He said “nursemaid” first, but then stumbled in his words, seeming to remember something. I did not turn a hair, I am glad to say. It is a mercy Uncle Colin was not here, for I honestly believe that, if he had been, he would have done the “cleaving to the chine” himself. It has been a narrow escape for Master Ernest, for only this morning Rupert had a message, sent on from Gibraltar, saying that he was arriving with his clansmen, and that they would not be far behind his letter. He would call at Otranto in case someone should come across to pilot him to Vissarion. Uncle told me all about that young cad having offered him one finger in Mr. Trent's office, though, of course, he didn't let the cad see that he noticed it. I have no doubt that, when he does arrive, that young man, if he is here still, will find that he will have to behave himself, if it be only on Sir Colin's account alone.

#### THE SAME (LATER).

I had hardly finished writing when the lookout on the tower announced that the Teuta, as Rupert calls his aeroplane, was sighted crossing the mountains from Plazac. I hurried up to see

him arrive, for I had not as yet seen him on his “aero.” Mr. Ernest Melton came up, too. Teuta was, of course, before any of us. She seems to know by instinct when Rupert is coming.

It was certainly a wonderful sight to see the little aeroplane, with outspread wings like a bird in flight, come sailing high over the mountains. There was a head-wind, and they were beating against it; otherwise we should not have had time to get to the tower before the arrival.

When once the “aero” had begun to drop on the near side of the mountains, however, and had got a measure of shelter from them, her pace was extraordinary. We could not tell, of course, what sort of pace she came at from looking at herself. But we gathered some idea from the rate at which the mountains and hills seemed to slide away from under her. When she got over the foothills, which are about ten miles away, she came on at a swift glide that seemed to throw the distance behind her. When quite close, she rose up a little till she was something higher than the Tower, to which she came as straight as an arrow from the bow, and glided to her moorings, stopping dead as Rupert pulled a lever, which seemed to turn a barrier to the wind. The Voivode sat beside Rupert, but I must say that he seemed to hold on to the bar in front of him even more firmly than Rupert held to his steering-gear.

When they had alighted, Rupert greeted his cousin with the utmost kindness, and bade him welcome to Vissarion.

“I see,” he said, “you have met Teuta. Now you may congratulate me, if you wish.”

Mr. Melton made a long rodomontade about her beauty, but presently, stumbling about in his speech, said something regarding it being unlucky to appear in grave-clothes. Rupert laughed, and clapped him on the shoulder as he answered:

“That pattern of frock is likely to become a national dress for loyal women of the Blue Mountains. When you know something of what that dress means to us all at present you will understand. In the meantime, take it that there is not a soul in the nation that does not love it and honour her for wearing it.” To which the cad replied:

“Oh, indeed! I thought it was some preparation for a fancy-dress ball.” Rupert’s comment on this ill-natured speech was (for him) quite grumpily given:

“I should not advise you to think such things whilst you are in this part of the world, Ernest. They bury men here for much less.”

The cad seemed struck with something—either what Rupert had said or his manner of saying it—for he was silent for several seconds before he spoke.

“I’m very tired with that long journey, Rupert. Would you and Mrs. Sent Leger mind if I go to my own room and turn in? My man can ask for a cup of tea and a sandwich for me.”

#### RUPERT’S JOURNAL. August 10, 1907.

When Ernest said he wished to retire it was about the wisest thing he could have said or done, and it suited Teuta and me down to the ground. I could see that the dear girl was agitated about something, so thought it would be best for her to be quiet, and not worried with being civil to the Bounder. Though he is my cousin, I can’t think of him as anything else. The Voivode and I had certain matters to attend to arising out of the meeting of the Council, and when we were through the night was closing in. When I saw Teuta in our own rooms she said at once:

“Do you mind, dear, if I stay with Aunt Janet to-night? She is very upset and nervous, and when I offered to come to her she clung to me and cried with relief.”

So when I had had some supper, which I took with the Voivode, I came down to my old quarters in the Garden Room, and turned in early.

I was awakened a little before dawn by the coming of the fighting monk Theophrastos, a notable runner, who had an urgent message for me. This was the letter to me given to him by Rooke. He had been cautioned to give it into no other hand, but to find me wherever I might be, and convey it personally. When he had arrived at Plazac I had left on the aeroplane, so he had turned back to Vissarion.

When I read Rooke's report of Ernest Melton's abominable conduct I was more angry with him than I can say. Indeed, I did not think before that that I could be angry with him, for I have always despised him. But this was too much. However, I realized the wisdom of Rooke's advice, and went away by myself to get over my anger and reacquire my self-mastery. The aeroplane Teuta was still housed on the tower, so I went up alone and took it out.

When I had had a spin of about a hundred miles I felt better. The bracing of the wind and the quick, exhilarating motion restored me to myself, and I felt able to cope with Master Ernest, or whatever else chagrining might come along, without giving myself away. As Teuta had thought it better to keep silence as to Ernest's affront, I felt I must not acknowledge it; but, all the same, I determined to get rid of him before the day was much older.

When I had had my breakfast I sent word to him by a servant that I was coming to his rooms, and followed not long behind the messenger.

He was in a suit of silk pyjamas, such as not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed in. I closed the door behind me before I began to speak. He listened, at first amazed, then disconcerted, then angry, and then cowering down like a whipped hound. I felt that it was a case for speaking out. A bumptious ass like him, who deliberately insulted everyone he came across—for if all or any of his efforts in that way were due to mere elemental ignorance he was not fit to live, but should be silenced on sight as a modern Caliban—deserved neither pity nor mercy. To extend to him fine feeling, tolerance, and such-like gentlenesses would be to deprive the world of them without benefit to any. So well as I can remember, what I said was something like this:

“Ernest, as you say, you've got to go, and to go quick, you understand. I dare say you look on this as a land of barbarians, and think that any of your high-toned refinements are thrown away on people here. Well, perhaps it is so. Undoubtedly, the structure of the country is rough; the mountains may only represent the glacial epoch; but so far as I can gather from some of your exploits—for I have only learned a small part as yet—you represent a period a good deal farther back. You seem to have given our folk here an exhibition of the playfulness of the hooligan of the Saurian stage of development; but the Blue Mountains, rough as they are, have come up out of the primeval slime, and even now the people aim at better manners. They may be rough, primitive, barbarian, elemental, if you will, but they are not low down enough to tolerate either your ethics or your taste. My dear cousin, your life is not safe here! I am told that yesterday, only for the restraint exercised by certain offended mountaineers on other grounds than your own worth, you would have been abbreviated by the head. Another day of your fascinating presence would do away with this restraint, and then we should have a scandal. I am a new-comer here myself—too new a comer to be able to afford a scandal of that kind—and so I shall not delay your going. Believe me, my dear cousin, Ernest Roger Halbard Melton, of Humcroft, Salop, that I am inconsolable about your resolution of immediate departure, but I cannot shut my eyes to its wisdom. At present the matter is altogether amongst ourselves, and when you have gone—if it be immediately—silence will be observed on all hands for the sake of the house wherein you are a guest; but if there be time for scandal to spread, you will be made, whether you be alive or dead, a European laughing-stock. Accordingly, I have anticipated your wishes, and have ordered a fast

steam yacht to take you to Ancona, or to whatever other port you may desire. The yacht will be under the command of Captain Desmond, of one of our battleships—a most determined officer, who will carry out any directions which may be given to him. This will insure your safety so far as Italian territory. Some of his officials will arrange a special carriage for you up to Flushing, and a cabin on the steamer to Queenboro'. A man of mine will travel on the train and steamer with you, and will see that whatever you may wish in the way of food or comfort will be provided. Of course, you understand, my dear cousin, that you are my guest until you arrive in London. I have not asked Rooke to accompany you, as when he went to meet you, it was a mistake. Indeed, there might have been a danger to you which I never contemplated—a quite unnecessary danger, I assure you. But happily Admiral Rooke, though a man of strong passions, has wonderful self-control."

"Admiral Rooke?" he queried. "Admiral?"

"Admiral, certainly," I replied, "but not an ordinary Admiral—one of many. He is THE Admiral—the Lord High Admiral of the Land of the Blue Mountains, with sole control of its expanding navy. When such a man is treated as a valet, there may be . . . But why go into this? It is all over. I only mention it lest anything of a similar kind should occur with Captain Desmond, who is a younger man, and therefore with probably less self-repression."

I saw that he had learned his lesson, and so said no more on the subject.

There was another reason for his going which I did not speak of. Sir Colin MacKelpie was coming with his clansmen, and I knew he did not like Ernest Melton. I well remembered that episode of his offering one finger to the old gentleman in Mr. Trent's office, and, moreover, I had my suspicions that Aunt Janet's being upset was probably in some measure due to some rudeness of his that she did not wish to speak about. He is really an impossible young man, and is far better out of this country than in it. If he remained here, there would be some sort of a tragedy for certain.

I must say that it was with a feeling of considerable relief that I saw the yacht steam out of the creek, with Captain Desmond on the bridge and my cousin beside him.

Quite other were my feelings when, an hour after, The Lady came flying into the creek with the Lord High Admiral on the bridge, and beside him, more splendid and soldier-like than ever, Sir Colin MacKelpie. Mr. Bingham Trent was also on the bridge.

The General was full of enthusiasm regarding his regiment, for in all, those he brought with him and those finishing their training at home, the force is near the number of a full regiment. When we were alone he explained to me that all was arranged regarding the non-commissioned officers, but that he had held over the question of officers until we should have had a suitable opportunity of talking the matter over together. He explained to me his reasons, which were certainly simple and cogent. Officers, according to him, are a different class, and accustomed to a different standard altogether of life and living, of duties and pleasures. They are harder to deal with and more difficult to obtain. "There was no use," he said, "in getting a lot of failures, with old-crusted ways of their own importance. We must have young men for our purpose—that is, men not old, but with some experience—men, of course, who know how to behave themselves, or else, from what little I have seen of the Blue Mountaineers, they wouldn't last long here if they went on as some of them do elsewhere. I shall start things here as you wish me to, for I am here, my dear boy, to stay with you and Janet, and we shall, if it be given to us by the Almighty, help to build up together a new 'nation'—an ally of Britain, who will stand at least as an outpost of our own nation, and a guardian of our eastern road. When things are organized here on the military side, and are going strong, I shall, if you can spare me, run back to London for a few

weeks. Whilst I am there I shall pick up a lot of the sort of officers we want. I know that there are loads of them to be had. I shall go slowly, however, and carefully, too, and every man I bring back will be recommended to me by some old soldier whom I know, and who knows the man he recommends, and has seen him work. We shall have, I dare say, an army for its size second to none in the world, and the day may come when your old country will be proud of your new one. Now I'm off to see that all is ready for my people—your people now.”

I had had arrangements made for the comfort of the clansmen and the women, but I knew that the good old soldier would see for himself that his men were to be comfortable. It was not for nothing that he was—is—looked on as perhaps the General most beloved by his men in the whole British Army.

When he had gone, and I was alone, Mr. Trent, who had evidently been waiting for the opportunity, came to me. When we had spoken of my marriage and of Teuta, who seems to have made an immense impression on him, he said suddenly:

“I suppose we are quite alone, and that we shall not be interrupted?” I summoned the man outside—there is always a sentry on guard outside my door or near me, wherever I may be—and gave orders that I was not to be disturbed until I gave fresh orders. “If,” I said, “there be anything pressing or important, let the Voivodin or Miss MacKelpie know. If either of them brings anyone to me, it will be all right.”

When we were quite alone Mr. Trent took a slip of paper and some documents from the bag which was beside him. He then read out items from the slip, placing as he did so the documents so checked over before him.

1. New Will made on marriage, to be signed presently.
2. Copy of the Re-conveyance of Vissarion estates to Peter Vissarion, as directed by Will of Roger Melton.
3. Report of Correspondence with Privy Council, and proceedings following.

Taking up the last named, he untied the red tape, and, holding the bundle in his hand, went on:

“As you may, later on, wish to examine the details of the Proceedings, I have copied out the various letters, the originals of which are put safely away in my strong-room where, of course, they are always available in case you may want them. For your present information I shall give you a rough synopsis of the Proceedings, referring where advisable to this paper.

“On receipt of your letter of instructions regarding the Consent of the Privy Council to your changing your nationality in accordance with the terms of Roger Melton’s Will, I put myself in communication with the Clerk of the Privy Council, informing him of your wish to be naturalized in due time to the Land of the Blue Mountains. After some letters between us, I got a summons to attend a meeting of the Council.

“I attended, as required, taking with me all necessary documents, and such as I conceived might be advisable to produce, if wanted.

“The Lord President informed me that the present meeting of the Council was specially summoned in obedience to the suggestion of the King, who had been consulted as to his personal wishes on the subject—should he have any. The President then proceeded to inform me officially that all Proceedings of the Privy Council were altogether confidential, and were not to be made public under any circumstances. He was gracious enough to add:

“The circumstances of this case, however, are unique; and as you act for another, we have thought it advisable to enlarge your permission in the matter, so as to allow you to communicate

freely with your principal. As that gentleman is settling himself in a part of the world which has been in the past, and may be again, united to this nation by some common interest, His Majesty wishes Mr. Sent Leger to feel assured of the good-will of Great Britain to the Land of the Blue Mountains, and even of his own personal satisfaction that a gentleman of so distinguished a lineage and such approved personal character is about to be—within his own scope—a connecting-link between the nations. To which end he has graciously announced that, should the Privy Council acquiesce in the request of Denaturalization, he will himself sign the Patent therefor.

“The Privy Council has therefore held private session, at which the matter has been discussed in its many bearings; and it is content that the change can do no harm, but may be of some service to the two nations. We have, therefore, agreed to grant the prayer of the Applicant; and the officials of the Council have the matter of the form of Grant in hand. So you, sir, may rest satisfied that as soon as the formalities—which will, of course, require the formal signing of certain documents by the Applicant—can be complied with, the Grant and Patent will obtain.’ ”

Having made this statement in formal style, my old friend went on in more familiar way:

“And so, my dear Rupert, all is in hand; and before very long you will have the freedom required under the Will, and will be at liberty to take whatever steps may be necessary to be naturalized in your new country.

“I may tell you, by the way, that several members of the Council made very complimentary remarks regarding you. I am forbidden to give names, but I may tell you facts. One old Field-Marshal, whose name is familiar to the whole world, said that he had served in many places with your father, who was a very valiant soldier, and that he was glad that Great Britain was to have in the future the benefit of your father’s son in a friendly land now beyond the outposts of our Empire, but which had been one with her in the past, and might be again.

“So much for the Privy Council. We can do no more at present until you sign and have attested the documents which I have brought with me.

“We can now formally complete the settlement of the Vissarion estates, which must be done whilst you are a British citizen. So, too, with the Will, the more formal and complete document, which is to take the place of that short one which you forwarded to me the day after your marriage. It may be, perhaps, necessary or advisable that, later on, when you are naturalized here, you shall make a new Will in strictest accordance with local law.”

#### TEUTA SENT LEGER’S DIARY. August 19, 1907.

We had a journey to-day that was simply glorious. We had been waiting to take it for more than a week. Rupert not only wanted the weather suitable, but he had to wait till the new aeroplane came home. It is more than twice as big as our biggest up to now. None of the others could take all the party which Rupert wanted to go. When he heard that the aero was coming from Whitby, where it was sent from Leeds, he directed by cable that it should be unshipped at Otranto, whence he took it here all by himself. I wanted to come with him, but he thought it better not. He says that Brindisi is too busy a place to keep anything quiet—if not secret—and he wants to be very dark indeed about this, as it is worked by the new radium engine. Ever since they found radium in our own hills he has been obsessed by the idea of an aerial navy for our protection. And after to-day’s experiences I think he is right. As he wanted to survey the whole country at a glimpse, so that the general scheme of defence might be put in hand, we had to have an aero big enough to take the party as well as fast enough to do it rapidly, and all at once. We had, in

addition to Rupert, my father, and myself, Sir Colin and Lord High Admiral Rooke (I do like to give that splendid old fellow his full title!). The military and naval experts had with them scientific apparatus of various kinds, also cameras and range-finders, so that they could mark their maps as they required. Rupert, of course, drove, and I acted as his assistant. Father, who has not yet become accustomed to aerial travel, took a seat in the centre (which Rupert had thoughtfully prepared for him), where there is very little motion. I must say I was amazed to see the way that splendid old soldier Sir Colin bore himself. He had never been on an aeroplane before, but, all the same, he was as calm as if he was on a rock. Height or motion did not trouble him. Indeed, he seemed to ENJOY himself all the time. The Admiral is himself almost an expert, but in any case I am sure he would have been unconcerned, just as he was in the Crab as Rupert has told me.

We left just after daylight, and ran down south. When we got to the east of Ilsin, we kept slightly within the border-line, and went north or east as it ran, making occasional loops inland over the mountains and back again. When we got up to our farthest point north, we began to go much slower. Sir Colin explained that for the rest all would be comparatively plain-sailing in the way of defence; but that as any foreign Power other than the Turk must attack from seaward, he would like to examine the seaboard very carefully in conjunction with the Admiral, whose advice as to sea defence would be invaluable.

Rupert was fine. No one could help admiring him as he sat working his lever and making the great machine obey every touch. He was wrapped up in his work. I don't believe that whilst he was working he ever thought of even me. He IS splendid!

We got back just as the sun was dropping down over the Calabrian Mountains. It is quite wonderful how the horizon changes when you are sailing away up high on an aeroplane. Rupert is going to teach me how to manage one all by myself, and when I am fit he will give me one, which he is to have specially built for me.

I think I, too, have done some good work—at least, I have got some good ideas—from our journey to-day. Mine are not of war, but of peace, and I think I see a way by which we shall be able to develop our country in a wonderful way. I shall talk the idea over with Rupert to-night, when we are alone. In the meantime Sir Colin and Admiral Rooke will think their plans over individually, and to-morrow morning together. Then the next day they, too, are to go over their idea with Rupert and my father, and something may be decided then.

#### RUPERT'S JOURNAL—Continued. August 21, 1907.

Our meeting on the subject of National Defence, held this afternoon, went off well. We were five in all, for with permission of the Voivode and the two fighting-men, naval and military, I brought Teuta with me. She sat beside me quite quietly, and never made a remark of any kind till the Defence business had been gone through. Both Sir Colin and Admiral Rooke were in perfect agreement as to the immediate steps to be taken for defence. In the first instance, the seaboard was to be properly fortified in the necessary places, and the navy largely strengthened. When we had got thus far I asked Rooke to tell of the navy increase already in hand. Whereupon he explained that, as we had found the small battleship *The Lady* of an excellent type for coast defence, acting only in home waters, and of a size to take cover where necessary at many places on our own shores, we had ordered nine others of the same pattern. Of these the first four were already in hand, and were proceeding with the greatest expedition. The General then supplemented this by saying that big guns could be used from points judiciously chosen on the

seaboard, which was in all so short a length that no very great quantity of armament would be required.

“We can have,” he said, “the biggest guns of the most perfect kind yet accomplished, and use them from land batteries of the most up-to-date pattern. The one serious proposition we have to deal with is the defence of the harbour—as yet quite undeveloped—which is known as the ‘Blue Mouth.’ Since our aerial journey I have been to it by sea with Admiral Rooke in *The Lady*, and then on land with the *Vladika*, who was born on its shores, and who knows every inch of it.

“It is worth fortifying—and fortifying well, for as a port it is peerless in Mediterranean seas. The navies of the world might ride in it, land-locked, and even hidden from view seawards. The mountains which enclose it are in themselves absolute protection. In addition, these can only be assailed from our own territory. Of course, Voivode, you understand when I say ‘our’ I mean the Land of the Blue Mountains, for whose safety and well-being I am alone concerned. Any ship anchoring in the roads of the Blue Mouth would have only one need—sufficient length of cable for its magnificent depth.

“When proper guns are properly placed on the steep cliffs to north and south of the entrance, and when the rock islet between has been armoured and armed as will be necessary, the Mouth will be impregnable. But we should not depend on the aiming of the entrance alone. At certain salient points—which I have marked upon this map—armour-plated sunken forts within earthworks should be established. There should be covering forts on the hillsides, and, of course, the final summits protected. Thus we could resist attack on any side or all sides—from sea or land. That port will yet mean the wealth as well as the strength of this nation, so it will be well to have it properly protected. This should be done soon, and the utmost secrecy observed in the doing of it, lest the so doing should become a matter of international concern.”

Here Rooke smote the table hard.

“By God, that is true! It has been the dream of my own life for this many a year.”

In the silence which followed the sweet, gentle voice of Teuta came clear as a bell:

“May I say a word? I am emboldened to, as Sir Colin has spoken so splendidly, and as the Lord High Admiral has not hesitated to mention his dreaming. I, too, have had a dream—a day-dream—which came in a flash, but no less a dream, for all that. It was when we hung on the aeroplane over the Blue Mouth. It seemed to me in an instant that I saw that beautiful spot as it will some time be—typical, as Sir Colin said, of the wealth as well as the strength of this nation; a mart for the world whence will come for barter some of the great wealth of the Blue Mountains. That wealth is as yet undeveloped. But the day is at hand when we may begin to use it, and through that very port. Our mountains and their valleys are clad with trees of splendid growth, virgin forests of priceless worth; hard woods of all kinds, which have no superior throughout the world. In the rocks, though hidden as yet, is vast mineral wealth of many kinds. I have been looking through the reports of the geological exports of the Commission of Investigation which my husband organized soon after he came to live here, and, according to them, our whole mountain ranges simply teem with vast quantities of minerals, almost more precious for industry than gold and silver are for commerce—though, indeed, gold is not altogether lacking as a mineral. When once our work on the harbour is done, and the place has been made secure against any attempt at foreign aggression, we must try to find a way to bring this wealth of woods and ores down to the sea.

“And then, perhaps, may begin the great prosperity of our Land, of which we have all dreamt.”

She stopped, all vibrating, almost choked with emotion. We were all moved. For myself, I was thrilled to the core. Her enthusiasm was all-sweeping, and under its influence I found my own imagination expanding. Out of its experiences I spoke:

“And there is a way. I can see it. Whilst our dear Voivodin was speaking, the way seemed to clear. I saw at the back of the Blue Mouth, where it goes deepest into the heart of the cliffs, the opening of a great tunnel, which ran upward over a steep slope till it debouched on the first plateau beyond the range of the encompassing cliffs.

Thither came by various rails of steep gradient, by timber-shoots and cable-rails, by aerial cables and precipitating tubes, wealth from over ground and under it; for as our Land is all mountains, and as these tower up to the clouds, transport to the sea shall be easy and of little cost when once the machinery is established. As everything of much weight goes downward, the cars of the main tunnel of the port shall return upward without cost. We can have from the mountains a head of water under good control, which will allow of endless hydraulic power, so that the whole port and the mechanism of the town to which it will grow can be worked by it.

“This work can be put in hand at once. So soon as the place shall be perfectly surveyed and the engineering plans got ready, we can start on the main tunnel, working from the sea-level up, so that the cost of the transport of material will be almost nil. This work can go on whilst the forts are building; no time need be lost.

“Moreover, may I add a word on National Defence? We are, though old in honour, a young nation as to our place amongst Great Powers. And so we must show the courage and energy of a young nation. The Empire of the Air is not yet won. Why should not we make a bid for it? As our mountains are lofty, so shall we have initial power of attack or defence. We can have, in chosen spots amongst the clouds, depots of war aeroplanes, with which we can descend and smite our enemies quickly on land or sea. We shall hope to live for Peace; but woe to those who drive us to War!”

There is no doubt that the Vissarions are a warlike race. As I spoke, Teuta took one of my hands and held it hard. The old Voivode, his eyes blazing, rose and stood beside me and took the other. The two old fighting-men of the land and the sea stood up and saluted.

This was the beginning of what ultimately became “The National Committee of Defence and Development.”

I had other, and perhaps greater, plans for the future in my mind; but the time had not come for their utterance.

To me it seems not only advisable, but necessary, that the utmost discretion be observed by all our little group, at all events for the present. There seems to be some new uneasiness in the Blue Mountains. There are constant meetings of members of the Council, but no formal meeting of the Council, as such, since the last one at which I was present. There is constant coming and going amongst the mountaineers, always in groups, small or large. Teuta and I, who have been about very much on the aeroplane, have both noticed it. But somehow we—that is, the Voivode and myself—are left out of everything; but we have not said as yet a word on the subject to any of the others. The Voivode notices, but he says nothing; so I am silent, and Teuta does whatever I ask. Sir Colin does not notice anything except the work he is engaged on—the planning the defences of the Blue Mouth. His old scientific training as an engineer, and his enormous experience of wars and sieges—for he was for nearly fifty years sent as military representative to all the great wars—seem to have become directed on that point. He is certainly planning it all out in a wonderful way. He consults Rooke almost hourly on the maritime side of the question. The Lord High Admiral has been a watcher all his life, and very few important points have ever

escaped him, so that he can add greatly to the wisdom of the defensive construction. He notices, I think, that something is going on outside ourselves; but he keeps a resolute silence.

What the movement going on is I cannot guess. It is not like the uneasiness that went before the abduction of Teuta and the Voivode, but it is even more pronounced. That was an uneasiness founded on some suspicion. This is a positive thing, and has definite meaning— of some sort. We shall, I suppose, know all about it in good time. In the meantime we go on with our work. Happily the whole Blue Mouth and the mountains round it are on my own property, the portion acquired long ago by Uncle Roger, exclusive of the Vissarion estate. I asked the Voivode to allow me to transfer it to him, but he sternly refused and forbade me, quite peremptorily, to ever open the subject to him again. “You have done enough already,” he said. “Were I to allow you to go further, I should feel mean. And I do not think you would like your wife’s father to suffer that feeling after a long life, which he has tried to live in honour.”

I bowed, and said no more. So there the matter rests, and I have to take my own course. I have had a survey made, and on the head of it the Tunnel to the harbour is begun.