

**THE ROMANCE OF
A STATE SECRET**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649360604

The romance of a state secret by Winefride Trafford-Taunton

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

WINEFRIDE TRAFFORD-TAUNTON

**THE ROMANCE OF
A STATE SECRET**

THE ROMANCE OF A STATE SECRET

BY

WINEFRIDE TRAFFORD-TAUNTON

AUTHOR OF "SILENT DOMINION"
"THE THRESHOLD" "IGDRASIL"

BOSTON

DANA ESTES AND COMPANY

All rights reserved

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE DOVER ROAD	1
II. THE STUDENT FROM ST. OMER'S	7
III. THE COCKPIT	13
IV. THE MINIATURE	23
V. HOWS AND WHYS	30
VI. LOUISE	39
VII. IN GREAT QUEEN STREET	48
VIII. SOMERSET HOUSE	62
IX. ORIENTATIONS	76
X. A RENCONTRE AND A SCHEME	86
XI. THE SCHEME AND THE QUEEN	91
XII. THE SCHEME IN OPERATION	98
XIII. THE SCHEME AND ITS CONSEQUENCES	110
XIV. IN THE HOUSEKEEPER'S ROOM	117
XV. THE ACTS OF SAINT JAMES	124
XVI. AT SIGN OF THE CRONY'S TRYST	134
XVII. GOODY CELLIER	150
XVIII. WHITEHALL	160
	vii

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX. BIRDS OF A FEATHER	172
XX. THE ACTS OF SAINT WILMOT	178
XXI. THE FURTHER ACTS OF SAINT WILMOT	187
XXII. EXETER HOUSE	194
XXIII. DIPLOMACY	205
XXIV. THE SKID	215
XXV. "LOOK! THE JADE'S TO AUCTION"	221
XXVI. IN PORTUGAL ROW	231
XXVII. THE COURT OF HALLOWS E'EN	244

I

THE DOVER ROAD

It wanted a quarter to seven on the evening of the day on which fell the 12th of September in the year 1670. Along the white, winding road leading from Canterbury to Dover two horsemen trotted briskly. They sat their steeds like cavaliers and gentlemen, and the foremost twitched the curb occasionally in an absent way like a man whose thoughts are further afield than boot and saddle. He was a dark-faced man, but not so swarthy as his companion, who had no touch of English blood in his colouring and no spice of English manner in his mien. He was pleasant-looking, this first rider, and his bird-like eye roamed over the prospect with a lively interest in men and things, and his brow-pucker, together with that tug of the rein, denoted a rooted dislike to responsibility and trouble.

His companion was slight, almost angular, and none too well favoured for British taste, for his nose was long and hooked, his eyes were small, black, and inscrutable, his hair was thin, and his moustache had a fierce up-turn

2 ROMANCE OF A STATE SECRET

which did not suit his facial contour, albeit fell into the fashion of the time. They both wore heavy riding-cloaks and thick beavers, and surely the season wanted it, for it was chilly.

"Can yonder dark point be the castle, Chevalier?" asked the second horseman in guttural French—evidently not his mother tongue.

"My faith, I hope so, for I am weary with this monotonous road," replied the Chevalier, with the glib speech-turn of the Gallic native.

"Yet we have not lacked excitement," observed the other.

The Chevalier shrugged.

"What? Not since we left Banbury? And what is the dropping of one highwayman on a trot of so many miles? Sacristi, Señor, in your sister country the morning's sortie made much better fun."

"England is not enlivening," observed the Portuguese.

"No. Methinks 'tis deadly stupid at times. So far I have found but one 'good spirit' in it—not of my own land. Peste!"

A bullet whistled through the hedge and struck his saddle-pommel. He wheeled his horse round, aimed at the spot whence the shot came and fired. Four masked horsemen immediately sprang from various points of the road and galloped quickly towards the pair.

The Portuguese was not much of a fighter.

The Frenchman fought for six. One of the horsemen quieted the Señor in cowardly fashion with a blow on the head from a pistol-butt. The Chevalier stood his ground alone, gradually backing so that he should be silhouetted against the setting sun, and its beams could dazzle the eyes of his assailants.

This was wise, and proved effective; so, too, did the narrow road, for he stood cross-ways, and the immobility of his horse—a charger which had come through the Franco-Spanish wars—resisted all attempts of the rogues to steal a side-march on him. Two went down at his gun-shot, and one was daring enough to grapple, but the Chevalier was quick and unscrupulous, and a stream of blood presently burst from the fellow's throat and flowed over his jerkin, for though he sought to hamper the Frenchman's right pistol-hand the Gaul was prepared, and throwing aside the exploded firearm which he gripped in his left, caught like lightning at his dagger.

When the man had dropped from his horse and lay in the road the Chevalier looked for the other, and descried him speeding across the fields at his horse's length.

"C'est fini!" observed the Frenchman, replacing his pistols in their holsters.

The condition of his friend now became his care. He dismounted and carefully examined him.