

# **A DIPLOMAT'S DIARY**

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A Diplomat's Diary by Julien Gordon

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**JULIEN GORDON**

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# DIPLOMAT'S DIARY

BY

JULIEN GORDON

PHILADELPHIA

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1891

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A

## DIPLOMAT'S DIARY

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*December 30.*—Would God I had never seen the Princesse Flavie, or Madame Harnay, that miserable sycophant, as cruel and wicked a counsellor to her royal mistress as she has been a false friend to me and others! Was ever a rat caught in such a hole! What! I am in bad odor at court, and with the Empress; must decamp for the nonce because a silly woman and a base one have . . .

Well, they fancied, did they, that they could so dispose of me, so encompass and trap me? Did they think that because I am a bluff, honest, outspoken sort of fellow, and loyal to my sovereign, I could be taken in such a broken net? There were too many holes in it, mesdames, and



you forgot that a grizzled diplomat who has learned the arts of dissembling and of strategy soon recognizes and fathoms such jejune manoeuvres.

*Gott in Himmel!* here I am sent off on this fool's errand in the depth of what promises to be a Siberian winter, so that a broken heart shall have time to mend itself and a ripple of idle gossip to subside. It is too absolutely absurd! What a twinkle there was in the old man's eyes, to be sure, when he bade me farewell! "This mission is a delicate one," he said, "but a man who can extricate himself from the hands of his enemies as you did at S. can beard the Czar in his den, Narishkine et Cie! Only to you would I intrust this secret trust." Beloved old man! He pressed my hand warmly.

"*Va, tu es un brave garçon!*" he said.

"Brave?" Yes, brave, as the world goes here! Brave to prefer my own name and my own laurels, my own modest fortune and self-won honors, to the slavery of a hateful union the titles won by a low compact and the ill-

starred gains of a wealth wrung from the foolish affection of an hysteric girl.

Bah! And to say I did hesitate one moment! There is the blemish on my 'scutcheon! The one weakness I blush for to-night under my cap, in the stuffy wagon of this dirty train, which is puffing me away towards the haven where I would not be.

Yes, I was tired. I, strong, self-nurtured, self-reliant I, hesitated a moment. What was it for? The girl? The illustrious connection? The hunting-grounds in the Hartz Mountains? Leisure and indolence? The . . . booty? No! Ten thousand times no!

What was it, then, that made me chicken-hearted for an hour? Tired, old man, tired! I remember that an ancient sage said, "Go not thou to meet thy fate; it is seeking thee," or words to that effect (I was never an apt quoter), and I told myself this was the shibboleth, and that the Princess Flavie was my fate, and Madame Harnay its messenger. Not an angel one, surely!

*Bon!* Here we stop; the Russian opposite

snorts as loudly as the engine, and, waking up, asks me to give him a light for his cigarette. I light my own, and I look out through the dim smoke on the little wayside station. People are getting out hurriedly to take a train for Breslau. A splendid couple are walking up and down, both hugely tall and wrapped in furs. The lady has weary blue eyes, which are effective. They are followed by "smart" servants, as the English say. I think they must be themselves English or perhaps Russian. They are unknown to me. The lady is *chic* in a big, grand way; not like a Parisian. The man looks like an officer.

There! they have vanished into the waiting-room, and I shall see them no more forever. My neighbor, the Russian, wishes to talk. My thoughts not being agreeable, I am not averse to listening. He tells me his name is Paul Pantchoulitzew. He gives me his card, and I find he is a *gentilhomme de la chambre de S. M. l'Empereur de Russie*, a title somewhat vague, and which, I believe, is conferred on nobody in particular for no particular motive.