

THE CAR OF DESTINY

By C. N. and A. M. WILLIAMSON

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters at End of This Instalment

CHAPTER VIII.

Over the Border

HERE I was in Spain, my Spain—thanks to Ropes; and, again thanks to him, probably out of danger from Carmona's suspicions for sometime to come, barring accidents.

He would make inquiries at Irun when he arrived there, and, learning that the obnoxious person had been detained according to information received from him, would pass on triumphant. Even when fate brought his car and ours together, as I hoped it often would, a sight of the two remaining travelers, the American automobilist and his hideously goggled chauffeur, would cause him amusement rather than uneasiness.

He would say to himself that, so far as he was concerned, no harm had been done, even if no good had been accomplished; for if the banished passenger was indeed Casa Triana, he had done well to get rid of him. If, after all, his quick suspicion had been too far fetched, and he had caused the arrest of an innocent tourist, that tourist would never know to whom he owed his adventure, and would be powerless to trouble the Duke of Carmona. As for Ropes, when the photograph taken of me years ago by the police in Barcelona should reach the police in Irun, it would be seen that two young men who are twenty-seven, tall, slim, and have dark mustaches, do not necessarily resemble each other in other details. Mr. George Smith would be generously pardoned for having occupied the attention of the police in place of the Marqués de Casa Triana, and would be free to rejoin his fellow travelers.

During the three or four minutes of discussion we had had before making the quick change which transformed master into man, we had arranged to communicate with Ropes by means of advertisements in "La Independencia." We would forward money in advance to that journal, enough to pay for several advertisements, and could then telegraph our whereabouts at the last minute, whenever the movements of Carmona's car gave us our cue.

In spite of compunction on Ropes's account, I was happy—desperately happy. I was free to watch over the girl I loved, and who loved me; and I was drinking in the air of the fatherland. It did actually seem sweeter and more life giving than in any other part of the world. Dick laughed when I mentioned this impression, and said I ought to try the climate of America before I judged; but he admitted the extraordinary, yet almost indefinable, individuality of the landscape, as well as the architecture, which struck the eye instantly on crossing the frontier.

"It's painted glass window country," I said—"old glass, painted by some famous artist who died in the fourteenth century, and a little faded—no, subdued—by time."

"You've hit it," said Dick. "There is an old-glass-window-in-a-dim-cathedral look about the sky. It gives one a religious kind of feeling, or anyway as if you'd be thrown out of the picture if you were too frivolous."

"I feel far from frivolous," said I; "but I am excited. Look here! We'll be in San Sebastian and out of San Sebastian soon, if we keep on. But we must not keep on; for if we do we may miss the other car, and then I should be as badly off as if in Ropes's place at Irun."

"We know they are going to Seville," said Dick. "It's a long jump to Seville. And Carmona may mean to travel by way of Madrid, through Vittoria and Burgos, or he may mean to take a road which Levavasseur in Biarritz told me was better, steering for Seville by way of Santander and Salamanca. It depends on whether he wants to stop at the capital, I suppose. Anyhow, as he is unconsciously making our arrangements as well as his own, there is nothing

for it but we must halt until he passes and gives us our lead."

"It's all the same to me whether we halt or scorch," said Dick. "I have more time than anything else. This is your circus; I'm only the prisoner's best friend, as they say in a court martial. But if we should go to Burgos, I have an errand to do, if you don't mind."

"Why should I mind?" I asked. "It's to call on a young lady."

"You never mentioned having friends there." "She is Angèle de la Mole's friend. All I know is that she is Irish, name O'Donnell; that she has a harmless, necessary father, and a brother in whom my prophetic soul tells me Angèle is interested; that papa and daughter are visiting brother, who is in the Spanish army for some unexplained reason, and stationed in Burgos. I promised to take a package with a present from Angèle to Miss O'Donnell if we stopped long enough at Burgos, or, if we didn't go there, to post it. I also have a letter introducing us to papa. Angèle said it was possible he might have known your father; so probably he has lived a good deal in Spain at one time or another, or the idea wouldn't have occurred to her. She thought, if we went to see the O'Donnells, papa might be useful in case you told him who you really were; but I wasn't to bother you about going out of your way for their sakes; which is the reason I didn't mention them until now, when you spoke of Burgos."

"If Carmona goes in that direction, he is almost certain to spend the night there," said I. "In that case, we shall spend the night too, and there will be time for you to call on your O'Donnells; but as for me, I don't know that it would be wise to take outsiders into my confidence. But here is San Sebastian, and here is a café close to where Carmona must pass; so let's stop and lie in wait."

CHAPTER IX.

A Stern Chase

WE were on the outskirts of San Sebastian, and to reach the café we turned off the main road and ran the car into a side street. There, without being conspicuous, we could see

big gray automobile charged past the end of our street. Not a head in the car turned in our direction; and, laying a couple of pesetas on the table, we sprang to the manning of our own road ship.

Now our progress developed into a stern chase. By a wrong turn in a street we lost the car ahead for a few moments; but beyond the town, where mud, fresh after a recent shower, lay an inch thick in the road, we came upon the track of the flying foe, and we followed, relieved of doubt.

On—on we went toward the south and the mountains of Navarre, and my mind was free enough from strain at last to exult in each new glimpse of the land for which I longed.

Ever since I was old enough to read, I had steeped myself in the history and legend of my own country. I knew all its wars, and where they were fought; I knew the names of the towns and villages, insignificant in themselves, perhaps, made famous by great victories or defeats; and there was time to think of them now, as we passed along the way the heroes of the Peninsular War had taken; but there was no time to linger over landmarks. Rain fell in swift, fierce downpourings, but left us dry under the cover of our car; and, as we sped on, sudden gleams of sunlight shining on the wet stone pavements of small brown villages turned the streets to glittering silver. Thus we ran up the winding road by the river Urumea. As we ascended, the roads did what they could to deserve their evil reputation. The rain of a few days ago had been snow in the mountains. The surface of the road became like glue, and despite nonskidding bands, and Waring's careful steering, the car declared a sporting tendency to waltz. Presently the glue liquefied. We were speeding through sheets of yellow soup, which spouted from our tires in two great curving waves, splattering from head to foot the few wayfarers we met. Down the front glass coursed a cataract of mud, and Waring could steer only by looking out sidewise. Thrown up by the steering wheels, the yellow torrent thudded on the roof, so that we were driving under a flying arch of liquid Spanish earth.

With the approach to a town, however, the way improved. The place was Tolosa, and at the sound of our motor in the distance, a cry of "Automobile, automobile!" came shrilly from a score of childish throats. Even the grown-ups rushed out, and were far more excited than we should have expected in this motor frequented part of Spain between Biarritz and Madrid. In a French town of the same size scarcely a head would be turned if an automobile passed; here people were as pleased as if we had been a circus, though only a few moments before they must have had the joy of seeing Carmona's car go by.

"If it's like this in the north, what must it be south of Madrid?" said I. "Here they are all wonderfully good natured,—delighted with us in towns and villages,—I believe they'd pay to see us if they had to,—the road menders give military salutes, and even the men whose mules and donkeys are frightened grin as they cover up the silly beasts' faces with their shawls."

"That's because we behave like decent human beings instead of marble hearted scorpions," said Dick, with an originality of simile which he cultivates. "When we see that we are frightening anything we slow down, and glide so stealthily by that the creature gets no excuse for hysterics. I used to think before you taught me to drive, and I had the experience and responsibility myself, that you wasted time groveling to animal prejudices; but I've changed my mind."

"If you hadn't come to feel that, I couldn't have made over my car to you," said I. "Road brutality would be peculiarly brutal in Spain, where motoring is a new sport, and the peasants must be made accustomed to it. Every motorist who slows down for frightened animals, or gets out to help, is paving the way for future motorists."

"Somehow I don't believe Carmona will lay much pavement for us," said Dick, chuckling. "Monica won't stand it, if he doesn't, the beggar!" said I. "It's his *métier* to please her."

We had lost the trail; but as the country changed



"Ask Whether He Knows Them by Sight." Dick Commanded.

all that passed along the road beyond. We had some vermouth, sitting at a little iron table outside the café door, to excuse our presence. Every moment we expected to see the Duke's car shoot by; but time went on, and it did not come. We finished our first edition of vermouth, and had a second, with which we toyed and did not drink, by way of keeping our place.

Dick and I were beginning to get restive, and question each other with raised eyebrows, when the