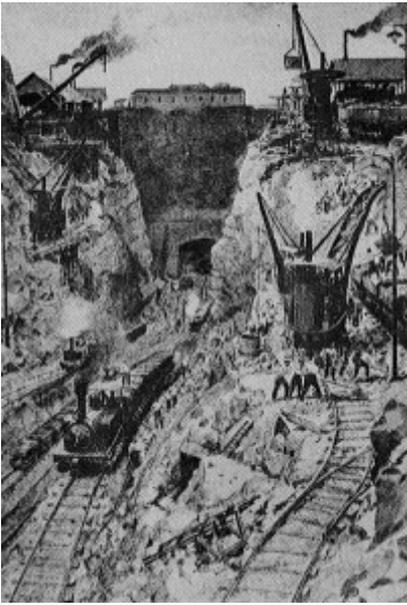


Max Pemberton (1901) Pro Patria – Windsor Magazine June-Nov. 1901



The French plan an invasion of England through a channel tunnel they are constructing.
SYNOPSIS OF EARLY CHAPTERS

This story is related by Captain Alfred Hilliard, a young Englishman of considerable means and social position, who is spending some time on the Continent with his friend, Fordham. At Pau, Hilliard became acquainted with a Colonel Lepeletier and promptly fell in love with his daughter. When the Lepeletiers returned to their home in Calais, Hilliard followed them ; but though he had every reason to believe that Agnes Lepeletier cared for him, his offer was positively declined by her father, no reason being assigned. At their house he met a man whom he had known when a boy, as Robert Jeffery, but who was known as Sadi Martel to the French household. Jeffery, alias Martel, had deteriorated with years, and was now a man given to drink and thoroughly unscrupulous. He invited Hilliard to go with him and inspect some excavations, purporting to be harbour works and coal borings, which were being carried on by the shore, and which he was superintending. Never for a moment suspecting any treachery, Hilliard followed him one afternoon to the scene of operations, which proved to be a tunnel in course of construction beneath the Strait of Dover. Martel then accused Hilliard of being a spy and threatened imprisonment. On his calling Hilliard a liar, the Englishman struck him down senseless in the tunnel, and escaped himself with the greatest difficulty, only to find that an alarm had been raised and a search set on foot for him.

Reviews:

PRO PATRIA. BY MAX PEMBERTON. – This is another of the England invasion stories, written with a sense of conviction that is uncommon in such yarns. The attack was to have been made through a secret Channel tunnel, and one of the pictures shows a lonely house . . . and from a great shaft a silent army emerging” But it was only a dream of the narrator’s, “a simple soldier stumbling blindly upon the heart of the nation’s peril.” [The Academy 30 March 1901]

“Pro Patria.” By Max Pemberton. London : Ward, Lock. 1901. 6s. – The subject of this story, the discovery and frustration of a colossal undertaking for the overrunning of our shores by the troops of France, is one which could not fail to be interesting if well told; and well told it certainly is. The excitement of the anxieties and dangers which beset the hero on both sides of the Channel is kept up with scarcely a pause, and heightened artfully by an emotional depiction, after the Stevensonian manner, of the perilous moments. While the note of patriotism sounded in the title is kept well to the fore, there is no tinge of blatancy or jingoism, and the romantic interest is duly introduced in the person of the foeman’s fair daughter. The story—though told per force from the point of view of the day-after-to-morrow —avoids a fatiguingly retrospective attitude, and the characters if not specially engaging are sufficiently well marked to give the narrative variety and vigour. [The Saturday Review 20 April 1901]

PRO PATRIA.

By MAX PEMBERTON.*

Illustrated by A. Forestier.

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.



AT Abbazia, upon the shores of the Bay of Quarnero, I first heard this story from the lips of the man who wrought that it

might be told. As he wrote it at my solicitation, so for the most part is it written here. No longer a whispered tale for the chief priests of bureaucracy, some knowledge of it at least has passed from the council-chamber to the market-place; and there are many who "would an they could," yet do not for lack of surer ground. One man alone is able to speak; and he has spoken in these pages. That the whole nature of the momentous events he relates will, hereafter, be understood by his fellow countrymen, it would be presumption to hope. The Englishman is slow to admit the graver perils in which circumstances might place his country and his home. The unchanging ramparts of sea and shore are for him a surer fact than all the armies of the nations. From the cliffs of Dover he looks down upon his "goodly heritage"; in the shadow of the "coastwise lights of England" he finds his hope. Should one approach him to say, "The day is at hand when these ramparts shall not avail, when the lights shall shine no more," he would give no hearing to so bold a preacher. The old complacency would remain undisturbed, the unshaken belief in the girdle of the waters which, for a thousand years, has stood sentinel to the homes of England, and will so stand until the end.

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"Three ways I know," said the great Moltke, "of getting into your country, but I have yet to discover a way of getting out."

If Alfred Hilliard's story suggests any thought to us, it may well be this—"Is the truth of the national security the same in our day as it was when the first of the Germans wrote? Is it the dreamer alone who may tell himself that the national creed is built upon a false faith, upon false premises and tacit ignorance? Is it the dreamer alone who, in his dreams, may see the sword at England's gate and the enemy in her homes?"

These questions one man's devotion has helped us to answer. A simple soldier, stumbling blindly upon the heart of the nation's peril, of such I write. The work which he was called upon to do, a thousand hands would do again if England's need should seek them; yet not more courageously could it be done, nor with greater love for fatherland, all sufficient and all sacrificing. He wrought for his country's sake, and of him his friends may say, as the greatest of the Englishmen said for Cominius—

"I do love
My country's good with a respect more tender,
More holy, and profound, than mine own life,
My dear wife's estimate."

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING OF ALFRED HILLIARD'S STORY, AND INCIDENTALLY OF TWO MEN UPON THE ROAD TO CALAIS.

MY story, I am to tell it, you say? The hand is the hand of Damon; but whence comes the counsel? Others, and they are many, have been before me wherever the tongue of the gossip is heard. The momentous events of these later months—events which yet can put a hush upon my life—have been the theme of every tattler to tickle the ears of the credulous and to make strong the boaster. For the pleasure of undoing such as these, I must speak, men tell me. No longer do my superiors forbid; no longer am I, as a soldier, compelled to silence. The reasons are good, but I stand to a better. If I speak it shall be as an

Other posts of possible interest:

[Berney, T. \(1882\) The battle of the channel tunnel and Dover Castle and forts](#)
[Anonymous \(1882\) Submarina: or Green Eyes and Blue Glasses](#)
[Grip \(1882\) How John Bull Lost London](#)
[Wodehouse, P. G. \(1909\), The Swoop! or How Clarence Saved England](#)
[Tracy, L. \(1901\) The Invasion / The Invaders](#)