

# The Czar's Spy

## The Mystery of a Silent Love

By Chevalier WILLIAM LE QUEUX Author of "The Closed Book," etc.

CHAPTER I.

His Britannic Majesty's Service.

"There was a mysterious affair last night, signore."

"Oh!" exclaimed. "Anything that interests me?"

"Yes, signore," replied the tall, thin Italian consular clerk, speaking with a strong accent. "An English steam yacht ran aground on the Melosia about ten miles off, and was discovered by a fishing boat that brought the news to harbor. The admiral sent out two torpedo boats, which managed after a lot of difficulty to bring in the yacht safely, but the admiral of the port has a suspicion that the crew were trying to make away with the vessel."

"To lose her, you mean?"

"Sounds curious," I remarked. "Since the consul went away on leave things seem to have been humming—two stable hands, eight drunken seamen locked up, a mutiny on a tramp steamer, and now a yacht being cast away—a fairly decent list! And yet some stay-at-home people complain that British consuls are only paid to be ornamental. They should spend a week here, at Leghorn, and they'd soon alter their opinion."

"Yes, they would, signore," responded the thin-plippled old fellow with a grin, as he twisted his finger through the buttons of his waistcoat. "I know a character in Leghorn. An honest, good-hearted, easy-going fellow, who for twenty years had occupied the same position under half a dozen different consuls."

"My old friend, Frank Hutchesson, his Britannic Majesty's vice-consul at the port of Leghorn, was away on leave in England, his duties being relegated to young Bertrand Cavendish, the consul. The latter, however, had gone down with a bad touch of malaria, and I, the only other Englishman in Leghorn, had been asked by the consul-general in Florence to act as pro-consul until Hutchesson's return."

"It was mid-July, and the weather was blazing in the glaring sun-blanching Mediterranean town. If you know Leghorn you probably know the consular large handsome suite of huge, airy offices facing the cathedral. The legend painted upon the door, 'Office hours, 10 to 3,' gives me the idea of an easy appointment, but such is certainly not the case, for a consul's life at a port of discharge must necessarily be a very active one."

"Carducci had left me to the correspondence for a half an hour or so, when he returned, saying:

"There is an English signore waiting to see you."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know him. He will give no name, but wants to see the signore console."

"All right, show him in," I said lazily, and a few moments later a tall, smartly-dressed, middle-aged Englishman entered, and having inquired whether I was the British consul.

When he had seated himself I explained my position, whereupon he said: "I couldn't make much out of your clerk. He speaks so brokenly, and I don't know what he means. But perhaps I ought to first introduce myself. My name is Philip Horby, and he handed me a card bearing the name with the address 'Woodcroft Park, Somerset, Brook's.' Then he added: 'I am cruising on board my yacht, the Lola, and last night we unfortunately went aground on the Melosia. Very fortunate for us, as a fishing-boat saw our plight and gave the alarm at port. The admiral sent out two torpedo-boats and a tug, and after about three hours they managed to get us off.'"

"And you are now in harbor?"

"Yes. But the reason I've called in to ask you to do me a favor and write me a letter of thanks in Italian to the admiral, and one to the captain of the port-police, letting them know the truth of the matter. You know the kind of thing."

"Certainly," I replied, the more interested in him on account of the curious suspicion that the port authorities seemed to entertain. He was evidently a gentleman, and after I had been with him ten minutes I scouted the idea that he had endeavored to cast away the Lola.

"Fortunately, I left my wife in England, or she would have been terribly frightened," he remarked presently. "There was a wicker bed being put up last night, and the foot of a captain seemed to add to our portly by every order he gave."

"I examined him critically as he sat facing me. He was about forty years of age, with a merry, round, good-natured face, red with the southern sun, blue eyes, and a short, fair beard. His speech was refined and cultivated, and as he chatted he gave me the impression that as an enthusiastic lover of the sea he had cruised the Mediterranean many times from Gibraltar up to Smyrna. He had, however, never before been put into Leghorn."

"After he had arranged that his captain should come to me in the afternoon and make a formal report of the

accident, we went out together across the white sunny piazzas to Naselli's. "We shall be here quite a week, I suppose," he said as we were talking over our remarks. "We're on our way down to the Greek Islands as my friend Chater wants to see them. The engineer says there's something strange about what we must get mended. But by the way," he added, "why don't you dine with us on board tonight? Do we can give you a few English things that may be a change to you."

This invitation I gladly accepted for two reasons. One was because the suspicions of the captain of the port was because I had, honestly speaking, taken a great fancy to Horby. The captain of the Lola, a short, thick-set Scotsman from Dundee, who barely looked across his left cheek, called at the consulate at two o'clock and made his report, which appeared to me to be a very lame one. He struck me as being untruthful, but his manner was so evasive that I refrained from any further inquiry. The owner and his friend Chater were in their berth asleep, when suddenly he discovered that they had, in fact, run upon the dangerous shoal without being aware of it. A strong sea was running with a stiff breeze, and although so close to the shoal, he was capable enough to recognize at once that they were in a very perilous position.

"Very fortunate it wasn't more serious, sir," he added, after telling me his story, which I wrote up in a few lines for the ultimate benefit of the board of trade.

"Didn't you send up signals of distress?" I inquired.

"No, sir—never thought of it."

"And yet you knew that you might be lost?" I remarked with recurring suspicion.

The canvas coat, whose name was Mackintosh, slanted a few moments, then answered: "Well, sir, you see the fishing-boat had sighted us, and I was saw her turning back to port to fetch help."

"How long have you been in Mr. Horby's service?" I inquired.

"Six months, sir," was the man's reply. "Before he engaged me, I was with the Wilsons of Hull, running up the Baltic. I've had my master's key, and since these fifteen years, sir, I was with the Bibbys before the Wilsons, and before that with the General Steam. I did eight years in the Mediterranean with them, when I was chief mate."

"And you've never been into Leghorn before?"

"Never, sir."

"I dismissed the captain with a distinct impression that he had not told me the whole truth. Was it possible that an attempt had actually been made to cast away the yacht, and that had been frustrated by the mercy of the sea, which had sighted the vessel aground? How, I wondered, had the captain received that very ugly wound across the cheek? I was halfinclined to inquire of him.

"That evening when the fiery sun was, sinking in its crimson glory I took a cab along the old sea-road to the port where, within the inner harbor, I found the most magnificent private vessels I had ever seen. Her dimensions surprised me. She was painted dead white, with shining brass everywhere, and the stern hung the British flag, the masthead the ensign of the Royal Yacht Squadron.

On stepping on deck Horby came forward to greet me and to take me along to the stern where, lying in a long wicker deck-chair beneath the awning, was a tall, dark-eyed, clean-shaven man of about forty. His keen face gave one the impression that he was my friend, Hynton Chater—Mr. Gordon Gregg, he said, introducing us, and the clean-shaven man exclaimed, smiling pleasantly, "How do you do, my acquaintance, Mr. Gregg? You are not a stranger by any means to Horby or myself. Indeed, we've got a couple of your books on board. But don't let me waste your time."

"At Ardente," I said. "Three miles off the sea-shore. Tomorrow I hope you'll both come and chat with me."

"Delighted, I'm sure," declared Horby, and then he handed to me a letter, telling me how he had copied the two letters of thanks in Italian and sent them to their respective addresses.

"Well, you certainly did the right thing to thank the admiral," I said. "It's very unusual for him to send out torpedo-boats to help in such a case."

"That is generally left to the harbor tug."

"Yes, I feel that it was most kind of him. That's why I took such trouble to write them, not understanding the part of the previous night, Horby telling me how he had copied the two letters of thanks in Italian and sent them to their respective addresses."

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"But you have Italians on board?" I remarked.

"No, sir—out there are Genoese from their rowing and their oars. Horby and Chater exchanged glances—glances of distinct uneasiness, I thought.

Then the owner of the Lola said: "Yes, they are useful for making arrangements and buying things in Italian ports. We have a Spaniard, a Greek, and a Syrian, all of whom act as interpreters in different places."

"And make a handsome thing in the way of secret commissions, I suppose?" I laughed.

"Of course. But to cruise in comfort one must pay and be pleasant," declared Horby.

"Did you have any trouble with the customs here?" I inquired.

"No, sir," he said with a smile, and at the same time he rubbed his thumb and finger together, the action of feeling paper money.

"This increased my surprise, for I expected to know that the Leghorn customs officers were not at all given to the acceptance of bribes. They were too well watched by their superiors. If the yacht had really set upon a useful thing. Besides, what motive could Horby have in eluding the customs here? They would, of course, say up his wares and liquors, but even if that did, they would leave him out sufficient for the consumption of himself and his friends."

No, Philip Horby had some strong motive in paying a heavy bribe to the captain of the gógonia. He readily had paid, he must have paid very heavily; of that I was convinced.

"Was it possible that some mystery was hidden on board that splendidly appointed craft?"

Presently the gong sounded, and we went below into the elegantly fitted saloon, where was spread a table that sparkled with glass and silver. It was apparent that none but an extremely wealthy man could afford such a magnificent craft.

Horby took the head of the table, and we ate one of the choicest and best cooked dinners I have ever seen my lot to taste. Chater and I drank wine of a brand which only a millionaire could keep in his cellar, while our host, apparently a most abstemious man, took only a glass of ice-clinician water.

From his remarks I discerned that contrary to my first impression, Hynton Chater was an experienced yachtsman. He owned a craft called the *Alcedo*, and was a member of the *Cork Club*. He lived in London, and gave me no information as to his profession. It might be the law, as I had surmised.

"You've seen our arm of a captain, Mr. Gregg?" he remarked presently.

"What do you think of him?"

"Well," I said rather hesitatingly, "to tell the truth, I don't think very

much of his seamanship—not will be much of the trade when his report reaches them."

"Ah!" exclaimed Horby. "From the very first I mistrusted him, only my wife somehow took a fancy to the fellow, and as you know, if you want peace and in this case, however, her choice of most cost me the vessel, and perhaps our lives into the bargain."

"The captain seems to have had a nasty cut across the cheek," I remarked, whereupon my two companions again exchanged quick, apprehensive glances.

"Yes, I feel that the other day," explained Chater, with a rather sickly smile, I thought. "His face caught the edge of an iron stair in the engine room and caused a nasty gash."

"I smiled within myself, for I knew too well that the ugly wound in the captain's face had never been inflicted by falling on the edge of a stair. But I remained silent, being certain that they should endeavor to mislead me.

It was an Army, Crammed With Rifles and Ammunition.

"The safe!" I cried, dashing into Hutchesson's private office.

Many are the myths to which people have clung through the centuries.

How many people believe that gold wedding rings rubbed on the eye will cure cataracts? That green apples cause colic? That earrings improve sight? That a copper wire round the waist prevents rheumatism? That only nasty medicines cure? That whisky is good for pretty nearly any ailment? That the moon affects lunatics? That tuberculosis is hereditary? That measles is contagious? That scabies, taken from dead weeds or fish in drinking water? That red flannel (must be red) is good for sore throats? That sewer gas is poison? That smaltop can be telephoned from one person to another? That mosquitoes come from decomposing leaves? That malaria is due to night air? That robust people do have smallpox? That scabies, taken from one person to another? That raw beefsteak is good for a black eye? That drinking cow's blood fresh and warm cures consumption? That the smell from a horse's arse cures consumption? That if medicine is good for sick people, it must be still better for well ones? That eating turpentine makes one brave? That onions cure or prevent smallpox? That dead bodies necessary by breed a pestilence? That rusty nails produce tetanus (lockjaw)? These and many more like myths make up the fragmentary creeds of the health that we have inherited.

"The safe!" I cried, dashing into Hutchesson's private room, and finding to my dismay the safe closed, where the seals, papers and other confidential documents were kept, standing open, and the contents in disorder, as though a hasty search had been made among them.

"Was it possible that the thieves had been after the admiralty and foreign office papers, copies of which the chancelleries of certain European powers were endeavoring to obtain? I smiled within myself when I realized how bitterly disappointed the burglars must have been, for a British consul when he goes on leave to England always takes his papers with him, and deposits them at the foreign office for safekeeping. Hutchesson had, of course, taken his, according to the regulations."

Curiously enough, however, the door of the consulate and the safe had been opened with the keys which my friend had left in my charge. Indeed, the small bunch still remained in the safe.

"In an instant the recollection flashed across my mind that I had left the keys in my pocket while at dinner on board the Lola. Had I lost them on my homeward drive, or had my pocket been picked?"

While we were engaged in putting the scattered papers in order the door bell rang, and the clerk went to attend to the caller.

In a few moments he returned, saying: "The English yacht left suddenly last night, signore, and the captain always takes his papers with him, and deposits them at the foreign office for safekeeping. Hutchesson had, of course, taken his, according to the regulations."

"A quarter of an hour later I was sitting in the private office of the shrewd, gray-haired functionary who had sent this messenger to me.

"Do you know, signore commenda-tore," he said, "some mysterious sur-

rounds that vessel. She is not the Lola, for yesterday we telegraphed to Lloyd's, in London, and this morning I received a cable which said that such a vessel appears on their register, and that the name is unknown. The police have also telegraphed to your English police inquiring about the owner, Signor...

It had not been intended that I should see that interior, and the reason why the customs officers had been bribed was now apparent.

I passed on without remark, making believe that I had not discerned anything unusual, and we entered the boulevard, Chater having gone back to the room to obtain cigars.

The dainty little chamber bore everywhere the trace of having been arranged by a woman's hand, although no lady passenger was on board. Just as we had entered, and I was admiring the dainty nest of luxury, Chater shouted to his host asking for the keys of the cigar cupboard, and Horby turned back along the passage to hand them to his friend, leaving me alone for a few moments.

I stood glancing around, and as I did so my eyes fell upon a quantity of photographs, framed and unframed, that were scattered about—evidently portraits of Horby's friends. Upon a small side table, however, stood a heavy old-fashioned silver frame, but empty, which lay on the floor beneath a couch was the photograph it had contained, which had apparently been taken hastily out, torn first in half and then in half again, and cast away.

Curiously prompted me to stoop, pick up the four pieces and place them together, when I found them to form the cabinet portrait of a sweet-looking and extremely pretty English girl of eighteen or nineteen, with a bright, smiling expression, and wearing a fresh morning blouse of white plique.

About the expression of the picture's face was something which I cannot describe—a curious look in the eyes which was at the same time both attractive and mysterious. In that brief moment the girl's features were indelibly stamped upon my memory.

I looked at the back of the torn photograph, and saw that it had been taken by a well-known and fashionable firm in New Bond Street.

"I saw her, however," hearing Horby's guttural footsteps. I fung the fragments hastily beneath the couch where I had discovered them.

"Why, I wondered, had the picture been destroyed—and by whom? The photograph on the desk I purposely led the conversation to Horby's family, and learned from him that he had no children.

"You'll get at the register to your English consul, Orlando's, I suppose?" I remarked, naming the great ship-building firm of Leghorn.

"Yes, I have already given the order. They are to be ready to be fitted out by next Thursday, and then we shall be off to Zante and Cbio."

"For what reason, I wondered, recollecting that formidable army on board. Although I had seen quite sufficient to convince me that the Lola, although outwardly a pleasure yacht, was built of steel, armed in its most vulnerable parts, and capable of resisting a very sharp fire."

"It was past midnight when, having had the strange pair adieu, I was put ashore by the two sailors who had rowed me out and drove home along the sea-front, pursued and harassed by a breed a pestilence? That rusty nails produce tetanus (lockjaw)? These and many more like myths make up the fragmentary creeds of the health that we have inherited."

"There have been thieves here in the night, signore! The signore console's safe has been opened!"

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## EXCELLENT FARMING CONDITIONS IN CANADA

Letters from Settlers Indicating Growing Prosperity.

The present year will add another proof that farming in Western Canada, when carried on with the same energy and system devoted to other lines of business, will bring about results fully as satisfactory.

Mixed farming as a toehold has been sounder for a number of years, and today it is being adopted pretty generally throughout the Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. There are those who have made no greater success of it than they did when they pursued grain growing alone, but where one has failed to accomplish what he had hoped to do, does not mean that he has failed.

From Sedgewick, Alberta, we hear of E. L. Deputy, for past twelve years manager for Frye & Sons, packers, Seattle, who during 1914 were the largest supplier of hog on Alberta markets. He is taking up active work on his 1,200-acre farm near Sedgewick. Although he was one of the highest paid salaried officials on the Pacific coast, his frequent visits and personal knowledge of farming conditions in Western Canada convinced him there are greater opportunities in farming Alberta land than in commerce. He has a greater assurance of ultimate independence and prospects of home-making under the most desirable conditions.

Thomas McKay, a farmer near Herd, Alberta, has this to say about the country:

"I came to Hardisty from Osage City, Kansas, nine years ago and took up a homestead here. This is a good district for the farmer who wishes to raise grain exclusively, and as a mixed farming country it cannot be beaten anywhere in the world to my knowledge."

"I had had cattle, which ranged outside all winter, and this spring they were fat enough for the market, this without being fed but one night during the entire winter; they were fat as fat cattle and looked beautiful; I raised some winter wheat here which weighed sixty-seven and a half pounds to the bushel, government weight, and which I shipped to Calgary. The miller who bought it said that it was the best wheat that had ever gone into Calgary. Wheat in this district yields as high as forty bushels to the acre, and costs average sixty bushels. Alfalfa does well here."

"All in all I think the farmers are very well satisfied with the country, and the farmer who farms his land intelligently is sure to make a success. The climate here is the best I have ever lived in, the summers are delightful and the winters are mild. There has never been a blizzard during the nine years I have lived here, nor any cyclones or wild storms."

A settler in the neighborhood of Gleichen, Alberta, spent \$5,000 in improving his quarter section, has 125 acres ready for crop, keeps 70 head of stock, believes in mixed farming, keeps two hired men, one all year, the other in summer only. He milks 22 to 18 cows, and receives an average monthly cream cheque of \$110. Last in November two more carloads, besides supplying his own requirements, and is not only making money, but building up a good home amid desirable surroundings. This is an example of the possibilities open to the industrious in the Gleichen district.

It is stated in the past three months \$35,000,000 of Canadian capital has been invested in Canada, showing that United States financial men are satisfied of the solidity of Canadian investments. Western Canada has been a busy borrower and Western Canada's great resource is agriculture. U. S. financiers must be convinced that agriculture in Western Canada is sure to yield a profit of many millions in the country.—Advertisement.

We and the British Have Sweet Teeth. Britons have the sweetest tooth in America come next, if the statistics for consumption of sugar mean anything. An Englishman eats annually 92.4 pounds, an American consumes 72.4 pounds. In Denmark the average consumption is 72.6 pounds per capita; in Switzerland it is 55 pounds; in Germany, Holland, Sweden and Norway it is from 45 to 55 pounds; in France 55 pounds; in Belgium 52; in Austria, 51.2; in Russia, 19.3; in Portugal, 15.4; in Spain and Turkey, 11; in Italy, Bulgaria, Roumania and Serbia, from 8 to 7 pounds.

The principal reason for these variations is found in the relative richness or lowness of the customs duties on sugar and on the things with which it is commonly associated—coffee, tea, etc.

How It Happened. "I can't do a footling thing with that dern camel," growled Noah, as he came into the cabin for supper.

"What is the matter with him?" asked Mrs. Noah.

"Why, I don't like the quarters I gave him, and he got his back up about it, and he can't get it down again," replied Noah.

Beat Wood for Furniture. The latest use for locust wood is in the manufacture of fine furniture and interior fittings of the residence. The wood has a grain and color not found in any other timber.

"Have you been operating in the stock market of late?"

"No. I've been operated upon."—Judge.