The CZAR'S SPY

The Mystery of a Silent Love

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CHAPTER XV—Continued.

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"Quite likely," he answered. "But our first object must be to rediscover Muriel. Would it not be best to send an urgent wire to the address where I always write? She would then reply here, no doubt. I've told you practically everything, my dear old fellow. The facts of the affair can be made known only by Muriel. I tell you, we must find her."

"Yes, we must—at all hazards," I said. "Let's go across to the telegraph office opposite Charing Cross. It's open always." And we rose and walked out along the Strand, now nearly deserted, and dispatched an urgent message to Muriel at an address in Hurlingham road, Fulham.

Afterwards we stood outside on the curb, still talking, loath to part from him, when there passed by in the shadow two men in dark overcoats, who crossed the road behind us to the front of Charing Cross station, and then continued on towards Trafalgar square.

As the light of the street lamp fell upon them I thought I recognized the face of one as that of a person I had seen before, yet I was not at all certain, and my failure to remember whom the passer-by resembled prevented me from saying anything further to Jack than

"A fellow I know has just gone by, I think."

"We seem to be meeting hosts of friends tonight," he laughed. "After all, old chap, it does one good to come back to our dear, dirty old town again. We abuse it when we are here, and talk of the life in Paris and Vienna and Brussels, but when we are away there is no place on earth so dear to us, for it is 'home.' But there!" he laughed, "I'm actually growing romantic. Ah! if we could only find Muriel! But we must tomorrow. Ta-ta! I shall go around to the club and sleep, for I haven't fixed on any diggings yet. Come in at ten tomorrow, and we will decide upon some plan. One thing is plainly certain. Elma must at once be got out of Russia. She's certainly in deadly peril of her life there."

"Yes," I said. "And you will help me?"

"With all my heart, old fellow," answered my friend, warmly grasping my hand, and then we parted, he strolling along towards the National Gallery on his way back to the 'Junior,' while I returned to the Cecil alone.

* * * * * * * *

"Captain Durnford?" I inquired of the hall porter of the club next morning.

"Not here, sir."

"But he slept here last night," I remarked. "I have an appointment with him."

The man consulted the big book before him, and answered:

"Captain Durnford went out at [illegible] last night, sir, but has not returned."

Strange, I thought, but although I waited in the club nearly an hour, he did not put in an appearance.

About four o'clock, as I was passing through the big hall of the hotel, I heard a voice behind me utter a greeting in Italian, and, turning in surprise, found Olinto, dressed in his best suit of black, standing hat in hand.

In an instant I recollected what Jack had told me, and regarded him with some suspicion.

"Signor Commendatore," he said in a low voice, as though fearing to be overheard, "may I be permitted to speak in private with you?"

"Certainly," I said, and I took him in a lift up to my room.

"I have come to warn you, signore," he said, when I had given him a seat. "Your enemies mean harm to you."

"Look here, Olinto!" I exclaimed determinedly. "I've had enough of this confounded mystery. Tell me the truth regarding the assassination of your poor wife up in Scotland."

"Ah, signore!" he answered sadly in a changed voice, "I do not know. It was a plot. Someone represented me—but he was killed also. They believed they had struck me down," he added, with a bitter laugh. "Poor Armida's body was found concealed behind a rock on the opposite side of the wood. I saw it—ah!" he cried shuddering.

The police had, it seemed, succeeded in discovering the unfortunate woman after all, and had found that she was his wife.

"You know a man named Leithcourt?" I asked a few minutes later. "Now, tell the truth. In this affair, Olinto, our interests are mutual, are they not?"

He nodded, after a moment's hesitation.

"And you know also a man named Archer—who is sometimes known as Hornby, or Woodroffe—as well as a friend of his called Chater."

"Sì, signore," he said. "I have met them all—to my regret."

"And have you ever met a Russian—a certain Baron Oberg—and his niece, Elma Heath?"

"His niece? She isn't his niece."

"Then who is she?" I demanded.

"How do I know? I have seen her once or twice. But she's dead, isn't she? She knew the secret of those men, and they intended to kill her. I tried to prevent them taking her away on the yacht, and I would have gone to the police—only I dare not because my own hands were not quite clean. I knew they intended to silence her, but I was powerless to save her, poor young lady. They took her on board Leithcourt's yacht, the Iris, and they sailed for the Mediterranean, I believe."

"And what was your connection with them?"

"Well, I was Leithcourt's servant," was his reply. "I was steward on the Iris for a year, until I suppose they thought that I began to see too much, and then I was placed in a position ashore."

"And what did you see?"

"More than I care to tell, signore. If they were arrested I should be arrested too, you see."

"But I mean to solve the mystery, Olinto," I said fiercely, for I was in no trifling mood. "I'll fathom it if it costs me my life!"

"If the signor solves it, then I can not be charged with revealing the truth," was the man's diplomatic reply. "But I fear they are far too wary."

"Armida has lost her life. Surely that is sufficient incentive for you to bring them all to justice?"

"Of course. But if the law falls upon them, it will also fall upon me."

I explained the terrible affliction to which poor Jack had been subjected by [illegible], whereupon he [illegible]. "Then she is not dead! She can tell us everything!"

"But can't you tell us?"

"But what is the use, if we have no clear proof?" was his evasive reply. I could see plainly that he feared being implicated in some extraordinary plot, the exact nature of which he so steadfastly refused to reveal to me.

We talked on for half an hour and from his conversation I gathered that he was well acquainted with Elma.

"Ah, signore, she was such a pleasant and kindhearted young lady. I always felt very sorry for her. She was in deadly fear of them."

"But why did they induce you to entice me to that house in Lambeth? Why did they so evidently desire that I should be killed?"

"By accident," he interrupted, correcting me. "Always by accident," and he smiled grimly.

"Surely you know their secret motive?" I remarked.

"At the time I did not," he declared. "I acted on their instructions, being compelled to, for they hold my future in their hands. Therefore I could not refuse. You know too much, therefore you were marked down for death—just as you are now."

"And who is it who is now seeking my life?" I inquired gravely. "I only returned from Russia yesterday."

"Your movements are well known," answered the young Italian. "You cannot be too careful. Woodroffe has been in Russia with you, has he not? And Chater is in London."

"And the Leithcourts?"

He shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of ignorance, adding, "The Signorina Muriel returned to London from Eastbourne this morning."

"Where can I find her?" I inquired eagerly. "It is of the utmost importance that I should see her."

"She is with a relation, a cousin, I think, at Bassett road, Notting Hill. The house is called 'Holmwood.'"

Then, after a pause, he added, with a strange, earnest look in his dark eyes, "Pardon me, Signor Commendatore, if I presume to suggest something, will you not?"

"Certainly. What do you suggest?"

"That you should remain here, in this hotel, and not venture out."

"For fear of something unfortunate happening to me?" I laughed. "I'm really not afraid, Olinto," I added. "You know I carry this," and I drew out my revolver from my hip pocket.

"But, signore, have a care for yourself," cried the Italian, laying his hand upon my arm. "You are a marked man. Ah! do I not know," he exclaimed breathlessly. "If you go out you may run right into—well, the fatal accident."

"Never fear, Olinto," I replied reassuringly. "I shall keep my eyes wide open. Here, in London, one's life is safer than anywhere else in the world, perhaps—certainly safer than in some places I could name in your own country, eh?" at which he grinned.

The next moment he grew serious again, and said:

"I only warn the signore that if he goes out it is at his own peril."

"Then let it be so," I laughed, feeling self-confident that no one could lead me into a trap. I was neither a foreigner nor a country cousin. I knew London too well. He was silent and shook his head, then, after telling me that he was still at the same restaurant in Westbourne Grove, he took his departure, warning me once more not to go forth.

Half an hour later, disregarding his words, I strode out into the Strand, and again walked round to the "Junior." The short, wintry day had ended, the gas lamps were lit and the darkness of night was gradually creeping on.

Jack had not been to the club, and I began now to grow thoroughly uneasy. He had parted from me at the corner of the Strand with only a five minutes' walk before him, and yet he had apparently disappeared. My first impulse was to drive to Notting Hill to inquire of Muriel if she had news of him, but somehow the Italian's warning words made me wonder if he had met with foul play.

I suddenly recollected those two men who had passed by as we had talked, and how that the features of one had seemed strangely familiar. Therefore I took a cab to the police station down at Whitehall and made inquiry of the inspector on duty in the big, bare office with its flaring gas jets in wire globes. He heard me to the end, then turning back the book of "occurrences" before him, glanced through the ruled entries.

"I should think this is the gentleman, sir," he said. And he read to me the entry as follows:

P. C. [illegible] reports that at [illegible] a. m., while on duty outside the National Gallery, he heard a revolver shot, followed by a man's cry. He ran to the corner of Suffolk street, where he found a gentleman lying upon the pavement suffering from a serious [illegible] in the chest and quite unconscious. He obtained the assistance of P. C.'s [illegible] and [illegible], and the gentleman, who was not identified, was taken to the Charing Cross hospital, where [illegible]. Neither P. C. [illegible]

JOHN PERCIVAL, Inspector.

I waited for no more, but rushed round to the hospital in the cab, and was, five minutes later, taken along the ward, where I identified poor Jack lying in bed, white-faced and unconscious.

"The doctor was here a quarter of an hour ago," whispered the sister. "And he fears he is sinking."

"He has uttered no words?" I asked anxiously. "Made no statement?"

"None. He has never regained consciousness, and I fear, sir, he never will. It is a case of deliberate murder, the police told me early this morning."

I clenched my fists and swore a fierce revenge for that dastardly act. And as I stood beside the narrow bed, I realized that what Olinto had said regarding my own peril was the actual truth. I was a marked man. Was I never to penetrate that inscrutable and ever-increasing mystery?

CHAPTER XVI.

The Truth About the Lola.

Through all the long night I called many times at the hospital, but the reply was always the same. Jack had not regained consciousness, and the doctor regarded his case as hopeless.

In the morning I drove in hot haste to Bassett road, Notting Hill, and at the address Olinto had given me found Muriel. When she entered the room with folding doors into which I had been shown, I saw that she was pale and apprehensive, for we had not met since that fight, and she was, no doubt, at a loss for an explanation. But I did not press her for one. I merely told her that the Italian Santini had given me her address and that I came as bearer of unfortunate news.

"What is it?" she gasped quickly.

"It concerns Captain Durnford," I replied. "He has been injured in the street, and is in Charing Cross hospital."

"Ah!" she cried. "I see. You do not explain the truth. By your face I can tell there is something more. He's dead! Tell me the worst."

"No, Miss Leithcourt," I said gravely, "not dead, but the doctors fear that he may not recover. His wound is dangerous. He has been shot by some unknown person."

"Shot!" she echoed, bursting into tears. "Then they have followed him, after all! They have deceived me, and now, as they intend to take him from me, I will myself protect him. You, Mr. Gregg, have been in peril of your life, that I know, but Jack's enemies are yours, and they shall not go unpunished. May I see him?"

"I fear not, but we will ask at the hospital." And after the exchange of some further explanations we took a hansom back to Charing Cross.

At first the sister refused to allow Muriel to see the patient, but she implored so earnestly that at last she consented, and the distressed girl in the black coat and hat crept on tiptoe to the bedside.

"He was conscious for a quarter of an hour or so," whispered the nurse who sat there. "He asked after some lady named Muriel."

The girl at my side burst into low sobbing.

"Tell him," she said, "that Muriel is here—that she has seen him, and is waiting for him to recover."

Day succeeded day, and although I was not allowed to visit my friend, I was told that he was very slowly progressing. I idled at the Hotel Cecil, longing daily for news of Elma. Only once did a letter come from her, a brief, well-written note, from which it appeared that she was quite well and happy, although she longed to be able to go out. The princess was very kind indeed to her, and, she added, was making secret arrangements for her escape across the Russian frontier into Germany.

I saw Muriel many times, but never once did she refer to Rannoch or their sudden departure. Her only thought was of the man she loved.

One afternoon, ten days after the attempt upon Jack, I was allowed to sit by his bedside and question him.

"Ah, Gordon, old fellow!" he said faintly, "I've had a narrow escape—by Jove! After I left you I walked quickly on towards the club, when, all of a sudden, two scoundrels sprang out of Suffolk street, and one of them fired a revolver full at me. Then I knew no more."

"But who were the men? Did you recognize them?"

"No, not at all. That's the worst of it."

"But Muriel knows who they were!" I said.

"Ah, yes! Bring her here, won't you?" the poor fellow implored. "I'm dying to see her once again."

Then I told him how she had looked upon him while unconscious, and how I had taken the daily bulletin to her. For an hour I talked with him, urging him to get well soon, so that we could unite in probing the mystery, and bringing to justice those responsible for the dastardly act.

"Muriel knows, and if she loves you she will no doubt assist us," I said.

"Oh, she does love me, Gordon, I know that," said the prostrate man, smiling contentedly, and when I left I promised to bring her there on the morrow.

This I did, but having conducted her to the bed at the end of the ward I discreetly withdrew. What she said to him I am not, of course, aware. All I know is that an hour later when I returned I found them the happiest pair possible to conceive, and I clearly saw that Jack's trust in her was not ill-placed.

But of Elma? No further word had come from her, and I began to grow uneasy. The days went on. I wrote twice, but no reply was forthcoming. At last I could bear the suspense no longer, and began to contemplate returning to Russia.

December came, and we still remained on at the hotel. Once Olinto had written me repeating his warning, but I did not heed it. I somehow distrusted the fellow.

"Ah, Gordon, Old Fellow, We Had a Narrow Escape."

Jack, now thoroughly recovered, called almost daily at Bassett road, and would often bring Muriel to the Cecil to tea or to luncheon. Often I inquired the whereabouts of her father and of Hylton Chater, but she declared herself in entire ignorance, and believed they were abroad.

One afternoon, shortly before Christmas, as we were idling in the American bar of the hotel, my friend told me that Muriel had invited us to tea at her cousin's that afternoon, and accordingly we went there in company.

As we sat together Muriel, a smart figure in pale blue gown, poured tea for us and chatted more merrily, I thought, than ever before. She seemed quick and nervous and yet full of happiness, as she should indeed have been, for Jack Durnford was one of the best fellows in the world, and his restoration to health little short of miraculous.

"Gordon," he said to me with a sudden seriousness when tea had ended and we had placed down our cups, "I want to tell you something—something I've been longing always to tell you, and now I have got dear Muriel's consent. I want to tell you about her father and his friends."

"And about Elma, too?" I said in quick eagerness. "Yes, tell me everything."

"No, not everything, for I don't know it myself. But what I know I will explain as briefly as I can, and leave you to form your own conclusions. It is," he went one, "a strange—most amazing story. When I myself became first cognizant of the mystery I was on board the flagship the Renown, under Admiral Sir John Fisher. We were lying in Malta when there arrived the English yacht Iris, owned by Mr. Philip Leithcourt, and among those on board cruising for pleasure were Mr. Martin Woodroffe, Mr. Hylton Chater, and the owner's wife and daughter Muriel.

"Muriel and I met first at a tennis party, and afterwards frequently at various houses in Malta, for anyone who goes there and entertains is soon entertained in return. A mutual attachment sprang up between Muriel and myself," he said, placing his hand tenderly upon her and smiling, "and we often met in secret and took long walks, until quite suddenly Leithcourt said that it was necessary to sail for Smyrna to pick up some friends who had been traveling in Palestine. The night they sailed a great consternation was caused on the island by the news that the safe in the admiral superintendent's office had been opened by expert safe-breakers, and certain most important secret documents stolen."

"Well?" I asked, much interested.

"Again, two months later, when the villa of the prince of Montevachi, at Palmero, was broken into and the whole of the famous jewels of the princess stolen, it was a very strange fact that the Iris was at the moment in that port. But it was not until the third occasion, when the yacht was at Villefranche, and our squadron being at Toulon I got four days' leave to go along the Riviera, that my suspicions were aroused, for at the very hour when I was dining at the London house at Nice with Muriel and a schoolfellow of hers, Elma Heath—who was spending the winter there with a lady who was Baron Oberg's cousin—that a great robbery was committed in one of the big hotels up at Cimiez, the wife of an American millionaire losing jewels valued at thirty thousand pounds. Then the robberies, coincident with the visit of the yacht, aroused my strong suspicion. I remarked the nature of those documents stolen from Malta, and recognized that they could only be of service to a foreign government. Then came the Leghorn incident of which you told me. The yacht's name had been changed to the Lola, and she had been repainted. I made searching inquiry, and found that on the evening she was purposely run aground in order to strike up a friendship at the consulate, a Russian gunboat was lying in the vicinity. The consul's safe was rifled, and the scheme certainly was to transfer anything obtained from it to the Russian gunboat."

"But what was in the safe?" I asked.

"Fortunately nothing. But you see they knew that our squadron was due in Leghorn, and that some extremely important dispatches were on the way to the admiral—secret orders based upon the decision of the British cabinet as to the vexed question of Russian ships passing the Dardanelles—they expected that they would be lodged in the safe until the arrival of the squadron, as they always are. They were, however, bitterly disappointed because the dispatches had not arrived."

"And then?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

AIDS THE DIGESTIVE ORGANS

Importance of Thorough Mastication of Food Is Hardly Properly Understood.

"Chew your food well," is a motto which should be written large on the walls of dining rooms, restaurants, and every other place where human beings eat. The reason is that in order to digest food in the shortest possible time, and with the least possible effort, it must first be dissolved, and this can be accomplished only by adequate chewing.

Just how much thorough chewing lessens the strain on the digestive apparatus can be seen by a very simple experiment.

Take a one-inch cube of hard, solid, non-porous sugar candy and drop it into a pint of water. It will take at least half an hour and perhaps much longer to dissolve, because a cube of this size has only six square inches of surface exposed to the solvent action of the water.

If, however, a similar cube of candy is broken into 100 smaller pieces before being placed in the water it will dissolve 10,000 times as quickly, because there is now 10,000 times as much surface area exposed.

In digestion we have to deal not merely with simple solution but with the chemical conversion of insoluble into soluble substances—a much more difficult process. For this reason a one-inch cube of solid food would take much more than 10,000 times as long to digest as the same quantity which has been reduced to fine bits by the action of the teeth and the saliva glands.

Science now believes that much modern dyspepsia arises from our having lost the habit of living on hard, dry foods. When all our food was so hard that it had to be well chewed before we could swallow it our salivary glands were kept more active and our teeth cleaner.

When Mind Meets Mind.

The crash of onyx upon porphyry, the dull thumping of empty cocoanuts, the shrill whistle of windmills in a gale, the yowling of tom-cats, the explosion of redhot bladders, the bleating of sheep on lonely moors, the clash of tin swords, the rattling of dumb-waiters, the braying of jackasses, the snorting of hippopotamuses, the squeaking of hautboys and bagpipes, the gurgle of cut jugulars, the cracking of sclerotic knees, the blowing up and busting of logic, the torture and death of the English language . . . a meeting of the house of representatives of the United States.—H. L. Mencken in the Smart Set.

Yawn for Your Health.

Doctor Naegeli, professor of medicine at Liege university, commends the practice of yawning as a physical reviver. A good yawn, the professor maintains, is excellent for the lungs, and for all the breathing organs as well. But there is an art in yawning, he says, just as there is an art in breathing. Every yawn should be as deep as possible, so as to bring all the muscles of the throat and chest into action, and also to fill the lungs with a current of fresh air.

Doctor Naegeli has known of many cases in which a sore throat has been alleviated by persistent yawning, says the London Chronicle.

DAIRY

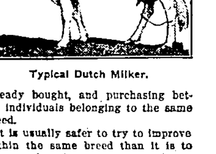
MISTAKE TO CHANGE BREEDS

Start With the Kind Liked Best and Stick to It—Cull Poor Specimens and Buy Better Ones.

To change breeds every now and then is poor practice. One should be very careful before the particular breed is chosen. To use a Holstein sire one year in order to obtain a large flow of milk, a Guernsey sire another year to secure richness of milk, and a Shorthorn sire the next time, is the wrong principle to employ in the breeding and raising of good cows.

Undoubtedly some good cows will be obtained in the herd from such methods of procedure, but there will be no uniformity of size, form, appearance and production, and the owner has no assurance of what he is going to get in the future. It is a case of too many in the mixture, and it is guesswork as to which one will come to the top.

First, select the breed with great care, then stick to it. If a mistake is made the first time in obtaining poor specimens and poor producers, then rectify the mistake as soon as possible by selecting the right kind of a sire belonging to the same breed to head the herd, or by selling the animals already bought, and purchasing better individuals belonging to the same breed.



Typical Dutch Milker.

It is usually safer to try to improve within the same breed than it is to improve by changing to a different breed. There are good individuals and good strains within any of the breeds intended for a particular purpose.

INFLUENCE COLOR OF BUTTER

Markets Demand Yellow Tint Which Is Supplied by Use of Dyes or Character of Cow's Feed.

Although it is a fact that some dairy breeds give yellower milk than others, even though it may be no richer in fat, the thing of greatest influence in color is the kind of feed the cows are getting. Market demands call for a yellow butter, which is supplied in the creamery by the use of certain harmless vegetable dyes, the use of which dairy laws rightly permit.

The color also can be fed into the milk and make the use of dyes unnecessary. Carrots, for example, color milk and cream quickly. One of the natural coloring materials in milk and butter is called carotin, from carrots, and this material is found in many food materials. It is plentiful in fresh green grass, hence the milk colors up well in early spring. Alfalfa hay, cured to have a bright green color, contains good suplies of carotin, which appears in the cream as a result.

Hay which has lost this green color, dry corn fodder, silage, straw, yellow corn and white, wheat, wheat bran, cottonseed meal and other milled feeds contain practically none, and cream from cows so fed will produce a light colored butter unless artificial coloring is supplied. The color adds nothing to the value or digestibility of butter, save in one's mind, but the market demands a yellow butter all the year round and the color must either be supplied in the feed or in the creamery.

SEPARATION OF SOUR MILK

Pour From One Pan to Another, Breaking Up Curd as Fine as Possible—Prevents Clogging.

Milk that has curdled will separate with difficulty. Such milk should be thoroughly mixed previous to separating, by pouring from one can into another. In this way the curd is broken up as finely as possible, so that it will not clog the machine. The separation of curdled milk finally clogs the skim-milk tubes, with the result that more skim milk passes through the cream outlet, making a thinner cream.

On the other hand, when sour milk which has not curdled is separated, the cream produced will be thicker. This is due to the fact that cream from sour milk has a high viscosity, or is less fluid, and a smaller proportion of cream is delivered, containing a higher per cent of fat.

Ordinary Cow Stalls.

The ordinary cow stalls should be five feet long from the stanchion back to the gutter. This is the standard distance and does for all except abnormally large or small stock. The width of the stall varies somewhat with the breed and size of the cows, from three feet four inches to four feet. Three feet eight inches is a good average.