

# The Secret Dispatch

By JAMES GRANT

## CHAPTER XI.

Twenty-four miles eastward of the city the small town and fortress of Schlüsselburg stands at a point where the Neva issues from the Lake of Ladoga and on the left bank of the river.

On an island, where the river joins the lake and moats it round, is built the fort, which is about four hundred yards square; its walls are of stone, massive, and fifty feet in height, terminating in battlements and turrets of antique form. The passage to this island is by a long drawbridge.

The guard which kept this formidable state prison, where many a hopeless sigh was wafted through the rusty bars of its prison grilles across the waters of Ladoga, was composed entirely of a body of dismounted Cossacks, selected for the purpose, as the task of keeping or secluding the dethroned Emperor Ivan was one of no small responsibility and importance.

A guard of these men received Balgonie at the gate and drawbridge with a profound military salute; and a picturesque aspect they presented, as their arms flashed in the murky light of the great oil lantern that swung in the dark, weird and deep-mouthed archway.

The great masses of the fortress, ghostly and shrouded, with faint red lights gleaming out here and there; the enormous strength of the gates, together with the difficulties he experienced in procuring admission, all served to impress unpleasantly on the mind of Charlie Balgonie a state of extreme watchfulness, of suspicion, and mistrust; and also a sense of vast responsibility of the charge confided by Catherine to Colonel Bernikoff.

That gallant officer and estimable personage had retired long since, and Lieutenant Tschekin informed Balgonie, would be quite invisible till breakfast time to-morrow, when the dispatch would be delivered to him; and a sigh of real annoyance escaped Charlie when he found that this odious paper was to be yet some eight hours or more in his secret pocket.

He repaired to the officers' guardroom at the barrier gate, and there, wrapped in his cloak, lay down to sleep, and if possible to dream of Natalie; but he had undergone too much toil for such gentle phantasms, so he slept like a dormouse till the sun was high in heaven, unawakened even by the deep boom of the morning gun, as it pealed across the Lake of Ladoga; but ultimately he was roused by Tschekin and Captain Vlasief, a very handsome young man, but cruel and heartless, whom ultimately he detested. These, after shaking hands heartily, announced that Colonel Bernikoff awaited him at breakfast and was not in a mood to brook much delay.

His hasty toilet was soon complete, and he was speedily ushered into a plain, almost naked whitewashed apartment arched with stone. Here, at a table of plain Menzel timber, destitute of cloth, but on which massive silver vessels with rudely formed wooden bowls and platters were oddly intermingled, was seated the Governor.

"Hail to you—I wish you health," said Bernikoff, courteously enough, in the old Russian fashion, and presenting his hand to Charlie, who took it, shuddering, as he remembered the fate of Peter III.; "welcome to Schlüsselburg, Captain Ivanovitch Balgonie."

Bernikoff, who wore a dark green undress uniform faced with scarlet, was a man well up in years; he had fierce and shining black eyes that made soldier and serf alike quail beneath their gaze; yet they were small, cunning and twinkling eyes, the lashes of which were half closed—the eyes of one who could act the cruel tyrant on one hand and the cringing slave on the other.

"Seat yourself, captain, and proceed to breakfast, while I read your dispatch," said the governor. "It is from Catharine Christianowna herself! The Czarina is great, but heaven is higher!" he added, placing the paper on his forehead, as he bowed over it; and then taking an enormous pinch of snuff he proceeded to peruse that document which had proved of such trouble to the bearer.

The eyes of Balgonie, Tschekin and Vlasief, who alike were present, were fixed inquiringly upon him, and they could see that the contents disturbed him greatly; he grew pale and flushed by turns; his brows contracted to a terrible frown; a red spark of light glittered in his eyes, and his lips were compressed. "Ah, the Asiatics! the accursed Asiatics!" he muttered. This is a most opprobrious epithet in Russia, and excited some surprise in his hearers.

He carefully folded the dispatch, and turning sternly to Charlie, who was keeping his eyes on him, and drinking his coffee the while, he said:

"Ivanovitch Balgonie, there is a feather in the seal—the usual sign of haste among us here in Russia; yet you have not troubled yourself with much speed, for this dispatch is dated Novgorod more than a month back!"

"Permit me to explain, excellency," said Balgonie, eagerly, and anxiously, too.

"I shall be glad if you can explain it," said Bernikoff, with increasing sternness. "I have known a general, a leader in ten battles, degraded, knouted, and sent to hunt the ermine with a cannon ball at his heels for a smaller dereliction of duty than this."

Balgonie's heart beat very fast while he related his story—of his being misled by a traitor twice; of the passage of the Louga at such terrible hazard; of his

subsequent illness, and the episode at that log hut.

"That you were in the guidance of a traitor I knew before your arrival; and I am extremely glad that he fell into his own snare," replied Bernikoff, a little more calmly; "but this matter is extremely awkward for you, and becomes more complicated every hour."

After glancing again at the dispatch and bending his keen, ratlike eyes on Balgonie, he asked:

"Were Basil Mierowitz or Usakoff, the grandson of Mazeppa, at the Castle of Louga any time during your sojourn there?"

"No, excellency, neither of them were."

"Spies say differently—but can you swear it?"

"On my honor do I swear it! But why?"

"I have had bad news from the headquarters of your regiment, and from Lieutenant General Weymarn, since you left Novgorod."

"And these tidings, excellency?"

"Are to the effect that your friends, the two subalterns, have both deserted, with several soldiers, all of whom are natives of the Ukraine, and are nowhere to be found, though pursued by a whole company of Cossacks."

"Deserted!" cried Balgonie with real concern.

"Yes—the cursed Asiatics!" replied Bernikoff.

For some moments intense anxiety and alarm bewildered Balgonie, and he felt himself grow pale at a time when six searching eyes were bent with a doubtful expression upon him. He remembered the hostility, the threatening and mysterious words of Natalie, and grew almost sick with apprehension of he knew not what, as he muttered inaudibly:

"Basil deserted—and his cousin, too! The whole family will be incriminated and degraded. Oh, Natalie, my hapless love! Did General Weymarn state this in his dispatch?" he asked aloud.

"He did, and at its end referred to you."

"To me, excellency?"

"Yes; here is the document, and it concludes thus: 'As I and the regiment of Smolensko will shortly march into St. Petersburg, Captain Carl Ivanovitch Balgonie need not return to Novgorod; but, until then, shall attach himself to your staff, and remain in Schlüsselburg, where, ere long, you may require all the good service he can render you—Weymarn.'"

Great were the mortification and disgust of Balgonie on learning that he was to remain for an indefinite period in a place so revolting and uncomfortable, and with no other society than that of three military jailers—cruel, hard-hearted and avaricious Muscovites of the worst kind; and with these orders died his hopes of revisiting, as he intended, Louga, on his return, and of seeing Natalie again.

Under the ban, as all the household of Mierowitz would be now, should he ever see her more? Every way fate and the tide of events seemed to be against him and her, already in the very dawn of their love.

"And now, gentlemen," said the Governor, lowering his voice, "the Empress' dispatch contains only two lines, thus: 'A scheme is formed to free Prince Ivan. Let him not fall alive into the hands of those who come to seek for him!' Nor shall he!" exclaimed Bernikoff, with ferocious enthusiasm. "Long life to her imperial majesty Catharine Christianowna—hurrah!"

"Hurrah, hurrah!" added Vlasief and the lieutenant.

Balgonie, also, as in duty bound, essayed to "hurrah," but the sound died away on his lips.

## CHAPTER XII.

Full of anxious thoughts, Balgonie passed more than half of the succeeding day on the ramparts of the castled prison alone, avoiding Colonel Bernikoff, Captain Vlasief and their subaltern, Tschekin, none of whom were consonant to his taste, for all were deep gamblers.

On three sides, far around this island prison, stretched the waters of Ladoga—the largest lake in Europe.

From the somewhat dreary view of this small inland sea, he turned to survey the fortress, with all its strength of gloomy walls, grated windows, and frowning cannon, till suddenly his eye was arrested by a very remarkable face, which was observing him from the somber depth of a strongly barred and arched window of the great tower.

It was a pale face, but singularly handsome—grave, and even sad in expression—a young man's face with the slightest indication of a mustache, but for which, in its paleness and extreme delicacy of feature and tint, it might have passed for that of a twin brother of Natalie Mierowna!

Suddenly it was detected by a Cossack sentinel, who shouted shrilly and slapped the butt-end of his loaded musketoon; on this the face instantly disappeared.

This was he concerning whom Balgonie had brought that terrible dispatch—Ivan, the deposed Emperor—the prisoner of Schlüsselburg!

"Twenty-three years!" thought Balgonie with a shudder; "twenty-three years in that tower—since his very babyhood—oh, it is terrible!"

Other ears had heard the shout of the sentinel; for now a man, who in a boat had been fishing near the fortress, suddenly shipped a pair of sculls and pulled away toward the town with an air of alarm that seemed equalled only by his dexterity. This fisher had been hover-

ing about the fortress all day. "Can he be the gypsy—the if-breed?" thought Charlie; "ah! the dispatch is out of my hands now."

Fortunately for Balgonie, there was a chaplain of the Russian Greek Church, attached to the fortress; and his society, at times, tended to alleviate what he endured from having to associate with such a human bear as Colonel Bernikoff—an annoyance from which he would only be relieved by the longed-for return of General Feymarn and the Regiment of Smolensko to St. Petersburg.

Through the good offices of the chaplain, with the permission of the governor, which was yielded very unwillingly, Balgonie was presented one evening to the deposed Emperor Ivan, and the particulars and incidents of that interview made a deep and sad impression upon him.

Confinement had rendered Ivan's features unattractively pale and delicate; and, by years of systematic constraint and oppression, his fine, clear and very beautiful dark eyes had a soft, subdued and chastened expression that was singularly touching and winning. The tone of his voice was also gentle and alluring.

"Hospodeen," said he, presenting his hand to Balgonie, "I rejoice to meet you, if one who leads a life so strange as mine can be said to rejoice; but you are one to whom I may talk a little without danger—oh, Father Chrysostom? And he has told me, Hospodeen, that you are not a Russian, but a native of some island that is far away in the sea. What are you? A Tartar—a Teherkesse? Oh, no, you cannot be either. I know them; for they guard me," he added, with a little shudder.

"I am your friend, believe me, Ivan Antonovitch," replied Balgonie.

As they were retiring the prince said:

"Hospodeen, you have dropped something."

It was the locket with Natalie's hair.

"What is in this?" asked Ivan, with childlike interest.

"A lock of hair, your highness. It is the gift, the souvenir of a lady I love, and who loves me; a countrywoman of your own."

"A woman?" said Ivan, ponderingly.

"Yes, excellency."

"I have never looked upon a woman's face, and know not what it is like; though the Empress visited me when a child, as I have been told. I have heard that they are not bearded like men. I shall never see one, it is forbidden; yet—yet—as I often tell Father Chrysostom, I have dreams by day—dreams of something else than wild swans and bearded Cossacks—of something to cling to, some one to love and be loved by. It must be this kind of love you speak of—oh, yes, it must!" said Ivan, as he gazed with stupid but reverent wonder at the lock of hair ere he returned it to Balgonie.

"Poor young prince!" exclaimed the latter, as the chaplain hurried him away and the portcullis clanged behind them in its grooves of stone.

The priest now urged upon Balgonie, that if his visits were to be continued, the affairs of the outer world must in no way be referred to, or the result might be most disastrous for all concerned.

"The seclusion in which the prisoner is kept has, I fear, impaired his understanding," said Balgonie.

"Hah! do you think so?" granted Colonel Bernikoff, who overheard the remark, as they issued from the tower of Ivan. "You must know, that your genuine Russian is like a tiger, as some writer has it—a tiger who licks the hand of his keeper, so long as he is chained; but who tears him asunder when loose. The Empress quite understands this!"

"How is it that you trust me so freely to visit your prisoner?" asked Charlie, who began to fear that Bernikoff might be laying some snare for him by according this hitherto unwonted permission.

"Because you are the safest man in Russia to have this liberty."

"How?"

"As a soldier of fortune—a stranger among us—you can have no sympathy with anything but the strict and steady execution of your duty; and the line of that," added Bernikoff, darting a keen glance at the Scot, "as with us all, lies in fidelity to the Empress."

"True," replied Balgonie, with something of sadness in his tone, and very little of enthusiasm.

"Thus, were I to order you to blow Ivan Antonovitch from the mouth of a cannon, I should expect you to obey!"

"I trust that no such test of my obedience will ever be necessary," replied Balgonie, with a hauteur which Bernikoff was somewhat unused to see among his subordinates.

"We shall have some other and more troublesome prisoners in Schlüsselburg ere long," said the Governor, with knitted brows.

"Whom do you mean?"

"Old Mierowitz and his family. Warrants have been issued by the chancellor to arrest them all."

"Ah!" said Balgonie, in a faint voice.

"Yes, women as well as men; an escort of the Regiment of Smolensko arrived at St. Petersburg yesterday with Mierowitz and the Hospozn Mariolizza. His daughter, who seems to be deeply involved in some plot, has for the time effected her escape. But they will soon be all before the Secret Chancery, and then the knout and the wheel will be at work with a vengeance!"

The reader may judge how these and similar remarks affected poor Charlie; while the governor, as if pleased that he could thus inflict pain, walked away with a malicious smile on his somber visage.

(To be continued.)

## Born in China.

Mme. Eames, the prima donna, spent the first five years of her life at Shanghai, where her father was in practice as a lawyer.

What has become of the old-fashioned schoolgirl who wrote an essay on "The Horrors of War?"

## FLEET AGAIN HARD HIT

### RUSSIA SUFFERING UNDER ANOTHER CRUSHING BLOW.

Forty-five Officers and Men Perish on Destroyed Vessel—Day of Mourning for Russians at St. Petersburg.

ST. PETERSBURG.—It was officially announced today that the torpedo destroyer Bezstrashai was cut off from the rest of the Russian fleet at Port Arthur and sunk by the Japanese, and that her crew was lost; that the battleship Pobieda accidentally struck a mine while maneuvering, but was able to return to the harbor without loss of life.

Rear Admiral Prince Ouktomsky wires from Port Arthur today that the Bezstrashai, one of the Russian torpedo boats sent out during the night to reconnoiter, became separated from the rest of the fleet owing to the bad weather prevailing, was surrounded by Japanese torpedo boat destroyers and was sunk in the fight. Five men were saved.

Admiral Ouktomsky adds: "I have taken command provisionally of the fleet since the disaster to the Petropavlovsk."

"During some maneuvering of the battleship squadron the Pobieda struck against a mine amidships on the starboard side. She was able to regain port by herself. No one on board of her was killed or wounded."

The Pobieda is a battleship of 12,674 tons displacement and of 1,400 horse power. She is 401½ feet long, has 71½ feet beam and draws 26 feet of water and is heavily armored with steel. She was complete in 1901, has complement of 732 men and estimated speed is 18 knots. The steel armor of the battleship varies in thickness from 4 to 9½ inches along her belt. The armament of the Pobieda consists of four 10-inch guns, eleven 6-inch guns and sixteen 14-inch guns. She has six torpedo tubes.

ST. PETERSBURG.—Forty-five officers and men perished on board ship whose destruction was announced today.

The official bulletin this afternoon conveying the intelligence of the loss of another torpedo boat destroyer and the accidental crippling of another battleship was almost as severe a blow as the loss of the Petropavlovsk yesterday and plunged the whole town anew into grief.

The Russian word in the text of the official dispatch describing the accident to the Pobieda means either "mine" or "torpedo" but the qualifying verb indicates something moving towards the ship. This dispatch puts an end to the idea prevailing here that there had been an engagement following the disaster to the Petropavlovsk.

It is considered remarkable here that the Japanese did not take advantage of these terrible accidents to attack Port Arthur.

The Novoe Vreyma today reproduced a lecture delivered by Admiral Makaroff in 1894 on the subject of the Victoria and Camperdown catastrophe, in which he pointed out the inherent weakness of battleships and their liability to turn turtle even when their water tight compartments are closed, because their armor guns make them top heavy.

Senator Detrick Exonerated.

WASHINGTON.—A report has been made by the Dietrich investigation committee of the senate which completely exonerates the senator, who is declared to be not guilty of any violation of the statutes of the United States or of any corrupt or unworthy conduct relating either to the appointment of Jacob Fisher as postmaster at Hastings, Neb., or the leasing of the building in that city to the United States for a post-office. The committee which investigated the charges against Senator Dietrich was composed of Senators Hoar, Platt of Connecticut, Spooner, Cockrel and Pettus. Three members of the committee are republicans and two democrats. The report is unanimous.

Goes After the Adjutant.

OURAY, Col.—Sheriff Corbett left for Telluride, presumably to serve writs of attachments upon Adjutant General Sherman Bell and Captain Buckley Wells, whom Judge Stevens recently declared to be in contempt of court.

## CANAL BILL PASSED

### SENATE DISPOSES OF IT WITH LITTLE DEBATE

## BAILEY FOR SPOIL SYSTEM

### TEXAN NOT A FRIEND OF CIVIL SERVICE LAW

Declares the Offices Belong to Victorious Party, and Would Go to the Limit Had He the Opportunity

WASHINGTON.—After a day devoted to quiet, routine proceedings the senate was treated to a spirited speech by Mr. Bailey just before adjournment on the question of civil service. The subject came up in connection with a paragraph in the sundry civil appropriation bill. Mr. Bailey announced in plain terms that he had no sympathy with the "iridescent dream" of civil service. He declared that each party should control the patronage while in power, and avowed himself a spoilsman.

Mr. Hale was in accord with much that Mr. Bailey said, but held congress could not be induced to change the law, even though convinced that it should be changed.

The Panama canal bill occupied the major portion of the day and was passed without division. Mr. Spooner made a vigorous speech in support of the bill and was replied to by Mr. Morgan.

The civil service appropriation bill was taken up and when the senate adjourned about half of it had been read.

The senate today passed a joint resolution ordering the printing of 10,000 copies of the report of the anthracite coal strike commission.

The joint resolution authorizing Maj. T. W. Symon of the corps of engineers to act as consulting engineer in connection with the navigable canals of New York was adopted without debate.

The postoffice appropriation bill was referred to a conference committee.

A bill extending to the outlying possessions of the United States the law prohibiting the transmission by express of obscene literature from one state to another was passed.

The Panama canal bill was taken up and its reading continued. When the last section of the bill, that providing for a government depository in the canal zone was reached, Mr. Aldrich moved that it be stricken out, saying that the committee on finance was of the opinion that it should not be retained, naming the recommendation of the secretary of the treasury.

## Hangman's Day at Chicago

CHICAGO.—Lewis Pesant, one of eight murderers who are to jail here under sentence of death, was hanged today. Next Friday is the day that has been set for the hanging of Neidermeir, Van Dine and Marx, the car barn bandits, and shortly following four more men will meet a similar fate on the scaffold.

Pesant's crime was the murder of Mrs. Mary Spilka during a robbery. He entered the woman's home while she was alone and struck her on the head with a club. Then he carried her into the garret, where he kicked and pounded her to death and secured the money he knew she had concealed in the house.

## Official Commits Suicide

AKRON, O.—H. T. Wilson chairman of the board of public safety and a prominent attorney of this city committed suicide today by shooting. Mr. Wilson was a stockholder in the Akron Savings bank, which recently failed and it is supposed that financial troubles caused him to take his life.

## Shut in Four Months

LEWISTON, Mont.—The first freight train into Lewiston in four months arrived here today. Never, perhaps in the history of railroading has a city been shut in so long. A passenger train got through two weeks ago, but the snow plows could not get freight trains through the drifts at that time.