

The Secret Dispatch

By JAMES GRANT

CHAPTER VI.—(Continued.)
"Certainly the last place where, for her own sake, I would place a dispatch of the widow of Peter III," responded the other haughtily; but Balgonie felt his heart beat quicker as she spoke. Her voice was sweet and low and had a wonderful chord in it.

Balgonie did not see much of his host, who was generally occupied among his people, to whom he was alternately a source of reverence and of terror. It is not surprising that Charlie Balgonie preferred the society of two beautiful young girls to that of a teary old man. To enhance their natural attractions and winning manners, they were always dressed in the most fashionable French mode, and wore the rich stuffs which come from Moscow and even from China. One of those cousins were remarkable for their beauty—one blonde, the other dark—he had never for a moment wavered between them; for he had been, from the first moment he beheld her, irresistibly attracted by the brilliant and black-eyed Natalie. Besides, he knew well that Mariolizza was betrothed to his friend and brother officer, Basil Mierowits.

It was scarcely possible that the result of his visit could be otherwise than it had proved; for Natalie was no commonplace beauty, but one who had subdued the hearts of many more men than Charlie Balgonie—men who, now at Moscow and St. Petersburg, were counting the days of her exile from the Court of Catharine.

He blessed the exile and choice of circumstances, all so sudden and unforeseen, which had cast him in her path. He loved her with all the passionate adoration so beautiful and winning a woman could inspire in a young and ardent heart; nor was it long before Natalie became aware of this, and was affected by the same emotion.

The declaration of his love, and Natalie's acceptance of it, came about just as others have done; and for three days after Balgonie forgot all about the troublesome empress, her pressing dispatch and the terrors of Lieutenant General Weyman.

At last he began to wake from his dream, to find the stern necessity of departing; and, indeed, the snub-nosed Podatchkine, who was always hovering about, seemed as a perpetual reminder of the duty he was neglecting. The lovers were solemnly betrothed in secret—Mariolizza was their only confidant—and at present they could but arrange to wait until they could mutually confide in Basil Mierowits, whom Natalie, ere long, expected to see. To write to each other, save by special messenger, was deemed at present unwise; but Balgonie would visit her as he returned again to Norgord.

So the last evening they were to spend together came; and they were seated, wreathed in each other's arms, with Natalie's cheek resting on Balgonie's shoulder, in an embowered rustic seat, not far from the very place where he had so boldly crossed the swollen river on that eventful night.

Charlie's heart was full of sadness and bewilderment; he could but mutter and whisper of his love and their hopes, and again and again kiss Natalie on the cheeks and on the lips, while her tears flowed fast; for she had all the cooling tenderness of a ring-dove now, and could only murmur from time to time:

"Oh, Carl, Carl—my own Carl!" and, like other young ladies similarly circumstanced on the eve of separation, believed herself to be the most miserable being in the world. But, amid all this, she suddenly started and grew pale, on seeing a figure approach.

"See, Carl, see!" she exclaimed; "that horrible woman must be ominous of evil at such a time. Why has she been permitted to approach?"

Balgonie saw, at a little distance, only a Russian gypsy girl, possessed evidently of considerable personal attractions. She stood timidly, and irresolute whether to advance or retire; and bowed her head with great humility, while crossing her fine but dusky hands and arms upon her breast.

"Oh!" resumed Natalie, with something of a shudder, "tis Olga Paulowna; don't let her speak to us in our parking hour, Carl, lest we be compelled to hear her sing, and that may perhaps bode evil. The steward, I understand, has thrice by dog and whip driven away this gypsy girl, who has come to the house again and again, ostensibly to seek alms, but doubtless only to steal or work mischief by her cunning; for though our Russian gypsies are not allowed to pitch their tents on any land without the express consent of the owner, this girl's brother, Nicholas Paulovitch, a half-blood, has permanently settled on our estate, somewhere in the forests; though he is despised and loathed by the peasant, whom, doubtless, he loathes and hates most cordially in turn. I do wish she would go away without being ordered to do so."

Little did Natalie know that those ill-regarded wretches of the poor gypsy girl had direct reference to the life and safety of him whose hands clasped hers so tenderly and confidingly.

"Ah!" said Natalie, with increasing annoyance; "she is about to sing, but her voice will soon summon the steward."

Olga now began to sing with great sweetness a Russian song, the last lines of which ended in a shriek, with which a cry from Natalie mingled; for the cruel steward had been stealing through the thicket unperceived, and now bestowed a heavy lash across the tender shoulders of the cowering and shrieking girl; but ere he could repeat it, Balgonie sprang forward, arrested the descending whip, and then placing in the hand of the singer a few coins, bade her hasten away, on which she departed, with tears of pain and gratitude, after pressing his fingers to her lips; and, in her fervor and confusion, she said, in a hoarse and broken voice, "I have fortunately one bottle of Rhine cordial," said the woodman, with a rapid and furtive glance at his comrades; "his excellency will doubtless honor us by taking it with his supper, at

least with such fare as the forest produces, as stewed rabbit or so."

"I thank you, good fellow. Where is this cottage situated?"

"Situating," replied Nicholas, with a quick and uneasy glance at the corporal, fearing there might be some discrepancy in their information.

"Yes, in what part of the country?" said Podatchkine, "for we naturally wish to know."

"Near Velie."

"Then I am somewhere about twenty miles from the Louga?"

"Yes, excellency, precisely," replied the rascal.

"Hence, if my horse is fresh, I may reach Schlüsselburg to-morrow?"

"Scarcely, as it lies fully fifty miles beyond Velie," said Nicholas.

"Is the distance so great?" exclaimed Balgonie, little knowing that it was even more, and all unsuspecting of how these wretches were deluding him.

"But, excellency, we may prove more able guides than Fichal Podatchkine," said the Gypsy woodman; "for we—that is the Stepanik and I—must proceed to St. Petersburg to-morrow, on a little piece of business we shall have to perform to-day."

"Poor idiots!" thought Podatchkine, "if you take his body to St. Petersburg, you will both be accused of murder and knouted, as sure as my name is Michael; so I shall save my fifty silver roubles."

A sound, as of footsteps, and of something like a drinking vessel falling on the floor of an upper apartment, made the woodman start up with astonishment and alarm. He hurriedly applied a ladder to the trap which gave admission to this place, and ascended into it; but returned almost immediately to say, "there was no one there." The evident surprise and alarm of the three men at this trivial occurrence was the first cause of exciting Balgonie's suspicion.

He and Podatchkine were both armed, and even were these men outlaws, they would scarcely, he believed, dare to assault an officer on military duty; besides, the very name of Schlüsselburg, whither he was proceeding, carried a wholesome terror with it; so dismissing his casual suspicions, Charlie unbuckled his sword, and seated himself at the table, on which a cold supper of stewed rabbits and coarse rye bread was laid for the four who were present.

A platter was placed for a fifth person whom Nicholas remarked to Podatchkine in a growling tone was still abroad in the forest, or had not returned from some place which was named in a whisper.

With an affection of extreme respect and courtesy, one of the three worthies would seat themselves at the table until Balgonie specially invited and urged them in succession to do so.

The bottle of Rhine cordial was produced from the apartment above and opened. Two horns, one of which had a handsome silver rim, were placed for the captain and corporal. The former was rather surprised to find such a drinking vessel as this silver mounted cup in a place so squalid, and he was about to lift and examine it when Nicholas Paulovitch, with almost nervous haste, filled it, and also that of the corporal.

To the surprise of Balgonie, the latter exhibited some undisguised alarm on seeing it placed before him; it was an attention under all the circumstances he neither wished nor expected; and so he declined to drink.

"Nay, fear not, friend Michal," said the woodman, "tis the best of cordial. The cup with the silver mountings is, of course, for his excellency the Hospodan," he added, with a quiet but grim significance which the wily Cossack quite understood, so he drained the horn without further objection. Soon after Balgonie expressed a desire for repose, as he wished to depart by daybreak.

"This way, excellency," said Nicholas, with alacrity, lifting the pine torch and ushering him up the stair, a mere common ladder, and through the trap door into the little apartment above, where his couch, composed merely of skins of the bear and sheep, awaited him, and where he could see the dark forest and the occasional stars through a small window that gave light and air to the place, which was so limited in size that it somewhat resembled a little cabin in a ship.

Left in the miserable den to his own reflections and to darkness, Charlie Balgonie placed his sword conveniently at hand, and cast himself upon the pile of skins that were to form his bed, and thought he had often fared worse in the bivouacs of Silesia and Bavaria.

(To be continued.)

POLITEST OF WARRIORS.

Gen. Plumer, who carries Drawing-Room Manners to the Field.

Maj. Gen. Plumer, who led a battalion of mounted riflemen in the Matabeleland campaign in 1896, has a reputation rivaling that of "the mildest mannered man that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat." In the thick of the fight he is the politest of warriors. As an example of his unvarying "drawing-room manners," as a brother officer once styled them, a story is told of him that during the Matabele campaign his small force found itself in a very hot corner, and the men were falling rapidly in all directions. Plumer had two machine guns with him, and these, he considered, were not doing as well as they might. He called up an orderly, therefore, and said to him: "Will you kindly go to Capt. Blank (who commanded the guns) and tell him that I think he might do better if he would please move his guns a little further to the right? Thank you." And then he calmly went on with his direction of the fight in the same quiet, easy manner. Again he was rather badly hit while in command of a column during the recent South African war, and sent a message to his second in command to the effect "that he was rather badly scratched, and he would be greatly obliged if Col. Blank would take over the command of the force pending further orders."

Works the Other Way.

She—Don't you believe that "a soft answer turneth away wrath?"

He—Oh, yes, Otseher, however, wrath frightens away a soft answer.

—Kansas City Journal.

Somehow we never have much faith in the business ability of a man who has pink cheeks and yellow hair.

CHAPTER VIII.

Balgonie was rather weary after his long and desultory ride by rough and unfrequented roads, chiefly deservous forest paths; he felt thirsty, and looked at a pitcher which stood on the table.

"Will his excellency drink?" asked Nicholas Paulovitch, in his hoarse and husky voice. "I have fortunately one bottle of Rhine cordial," said the woodman, with a rapid and furtive glance at his comrades; "his excellency will doubtless honor us by taking it with his supper, at

least with such fare as the forest produces, as stewed rabbit or so."

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FARMS AND FARMERS

cow-footed 907,000, vernal grass 924,000, crested dog's tail 1,127,000, alsike clover 707,000, sainfoin 22,500, red clover 278,000, white clover 740,000, common kidney vetch 154,000, alfalfa or lucern 269,500, trefoil 328,000, bird's foot trefoil 375,000, official goat's rue 62,000.

Helps for Butchering Time.
There is more or less work in the killing of small animals during the winter on many farms, and always the annual butchering; although it is getting to be quite the fashion in the more thickly settled portions of the country to sell the hogs in the fall and buy the meat back from the town butcher at double price during the winter. Where there is more or less butchering to be done one should have

Cheap Poultry House.
The illustration will show that even piano boxes may be utilized for a poultry house where only a limited number of fowls or chicks are to be accommodated; or with a number of houses thus built, it may be possible to furnish comfortable quarters for the usual number of birds kept on an average farm. U. R. Finkel of Indiana tells Poultry News of his twenty colony house constructed of piano boxes. He says:

"We take two upright piano boxes and four pieces of timber 2x4 and 10 feet long; we take the piano boxes apart—keeping the fronts, backs, ends and bottoms all together. We place three of the 2x4s on the ground and lay on these 2x4s, nailing them solid, making the bottom of the house (some will have to be sawed off of the 2x4s). The four ends of the two boxes will make the entire back of the house, while the fronts will make each end of the house and the remaining lumber will be used in the front of the house. The three remaining pieces of 2x4 are used as rafters to nail roofing to. New ship lap lumber will have to be bought for the roof, after which the same is covered with Neponset Red Rope roofing paper. Two pairs of 5-inch roof hinges, one hsp and a piece of 1-inch netting to cover opening of door above window and one pane of 8x10 light sash completes your building, making a poultry house 8x10

feet, all complete, for the low price of \$7. If you can do the carpenter work yourself the house will not cost you over \$9." This house will accommodate fifty growing chicks, or fifteen to twenty capons, and the claim is made that no bird kept in it and properly taken care of, ever had its comb frozen in the coldest weather. One great advantage of such a small house is that it can be placed on runners or on a mud sleigh and moved wherever it may be wanted on the farm. It is useful as a general purpose fowl house, for hens with chicks, etc.



A CHEAP POULTRY HOUSE.

Value of Dual Purpose Cow.
If a man has no use for the calf, or has use for the calf and none for the milk he has no use for the dual purpose cow. In the former case he needs the Jersey or Ayrshire, in the latter the Friesian or Hereford. Here we need the calves to condense feed and thus help get it to market by condensing the freight on it. A dual purpose cow is one that with a paying quantity of milk and a calf that will about top the market when fed out. It is not possible to get the best dairying qualities and best beef qualities in the same hide, but it is possible to get more money out of a dual purpose cow than can be done with a special purpose cow, i. e., milk or beef.

There is no breed of dual purpose cattle, but there is a type of dual purpose cows common to all breeds. The Herefords and Polled Angus breeds have a few dual purpose cows, but the Short Horns have a larger number than any other breed. Whenever beefed cows have been milked for some time they are on dual purpose qualities. The Short Horns, originally a beef breed, have been used as milkers for years, and this is why there are more dual purpose cows in this breed than other breeds. If starting a herd of dual purpose dairy cows, I would buy yearling heifers and use a bull from dual purpose stock. When these heifers have their first calves they would feed strong, and would then get rid of those that fattened and keep those that increased in flow of milk, but must not forget that to produce milk, a cow should be fed a balanced ration.

Turkeys in Cold Storage 12 Years.
Poultry and eggs as old as eight to ten years are being sold for consumption by the packers of Chicago. The statement is made by Alderman Wendling, who for years was a butcher in the stock yards, "I have known," he says, "of turkeys being kept in cold storage for twelve years and chickens for eight or ten years. Chickens and turkeys hatched the year of the World's Fair are yet in cold storage at the yards. Eggs of the vintage of 1896 and 1897 are also there."

How Many Seed to a Pound?
Number of farm seeds in a pound varies greatly with even the leading farm crops. Red top 603,000, reed canary grass 600,000, smooth-stalked meadow grass 2,400,000, rough-stalked meadow grass 3,000,000, sheep's fescue, 680,000, various-leaved fescue 400,000, creeping fescue 600,000, awnless bromo grass 137,000, perennial rye grass 335,900, Italian rye grass 295,000, orchard grass 579,500, meadow fescue 318,200, meadow oat grass 150,000, yellow oat grass 2,045,000, velvet grass 1,304,000, timothy, 1,170,500.

COLORS IN EGGS OF BIRDS.

Use of Natural Colors Over Which Scientific Men Still Debate.

"If you are interested in nature problems," said a man who likes to pore over the cases in the Museum of Natural History, "here's a very simple one, but you can find in it all the food for speculation and theory you want, as scores of very eminent thinkers have done already. What is nature's reason for the color and marking of birds' eggs and in the process of evolution how has it worked out? There must be a reason for their infinite diversity and it can hardly be an esthetic one.

"That looks simple enough, yet the most advanced naturalists haven't been able to puzzle it out. All they can say with any confidence is that the all-pervading instinct of distrust and need for protection is exhibited in egg shells as in more important things and the main idea of their color scheme has been to secure safety in harmony with their surroundings. But even that has exceptions.

"Take the doves. Their eggs are white and are plainly visible in the limy nest, though the nest is built in a tree, and the eggs should be of a darker tint, to follow the general rule. Now, that, I believe, has been reached out in this way. The original doves were rock doves and they laid white eggs in conformity with the natural law, which ordains that color for most species of birds nesting in the dark, so that the female might readily see them when she comes into the gloom.

"You find traces of this early instinct in the fact that wherever there is a deserted rabbit warren you will find doves taking advantage of it to build their nests in the abandoned burrows. But whether in holes or trees the nests still contain white eggs, which nature ordained for their rock-dwelling ancestors.

"Doves lay pale eggs for the same reason. They breed in the dark. On the other hand, the ducks, which, so far as anybody knows, have always frequented the most open places, also lay pale eggs without markings. But with them you will find a greater tendency to revert to olive browns or sandy tints, the very color of the sand and shingles on which the eggs are laid.

"The egg shell of the plover, and similar beach breeders are exactly ground color, just as the partridge and pheasant eggs are the color of fallen leaves. And grouse, quail and moor fowl have eggs matching exactly in color with the brown stems of heather and the pine tree scales among which they lie. But there are blue and white spotted eggs you can't explain. At least I can't satisfactorily. Anybody may start his own theories on the subject and find the problem endless. Solve it correctly and I think you will solve at the same time half a dozen other mysteries which have puzzled great scientists on this queer, problem-filled planet."—New York Sun.

HOME-MADE CANDY POPULAR.

Young Women Torment Confectioners for Recipes.

In the public libraries of New York there is a constant call for books telling how to make homemade candies. The demand is chiefly by young women, who, according to their brief conversations with an observant librarian, have attended cooking classes and have learned to make everything but candy.

"The explanation of this is very simple," explained a manufacturer of candy the other day. "When a woman who loves cooking (and what woman does not, to some extent) buys anything good to eat in a store, she wants to know how to make it. Candy manufacturers are no exception to the rule. Ask any of the leading New York bakers how much his saleswomen are bothered by requests for recipes.

"In my opinion the cheapness of candies in stores has not affected the longing that women have for homemade candies. Young women who are among my best patrons come in here once in a while with a specimen of old-fashioned molasses taffy, almond chocolates, or something else of simple make, and say to me triumphantly: "There, now; isn't that just as good as yours?"

"Quite as good," I reply. "But when did you make it, and how much did it cost you?"

"I haven't any idea how much it cost," is the usual answer. "We had a candy party at our house last night, and I wanted to show you that I could make it just as good as you do." "There you have it. Vanity; also an opportunity among young persons for a little social recreation and a good time. The best recipes for home-made candies are in books written by confectioners. I am the author of one myself."—New York Times.

Had No Time to Lose.

Boarder—Why in creation did you ring the breakfast bell at 4 o'clock this morning?

Cook—The missus heard it thundering and told me to hurry up and serve breakfast before the milk soured.—New York Weekly.

Unions Among Laborers.

There are to-day 5,000,000 day laborers in this country. One and one-fourth millions belong to national trades unions, another million to trades unions not yet national in their scope and the remainder comprise the army of unorganized labor.

Many Colors in Chrysanthemas.

The Japanese cultivate chrysanthemas in 200 varieties of colors. Of these eighty-seven are white, sixty-three yellow, thirty-two purple, thirty-pink, thirty red, twelve russet and fourteen mixed hues.



FOR THE FARM BUTCHER.

For ready use a large boiler of some kind so that a quantity of water may be heated at one time; tools such as knives, saws and other things used should be kept in proper shape and everything be in readiness so that the hard and disagreeable work may be over with as soon as possible.

The illustration shows a rack for hanging the carcass of an animal, which should be on every farm where butchering is done. It needs not little description. A post eight or ten inches through and five or six feet high is set firmly in the ground, and cross-pieces, two inches or more thick and eight feet long spiked to the pole, in the positions shown, so that they will project three feet on either side. They are notched near the ends as shown and braced underneath. These racks will save one much strength, for when the hogs are hung on them they are easily cut.

Homemade Tread Power.

A light tread power for churning, turning grindstone, etc., is made by mounting a disk wheel nearly horizontally, the axle being inclined so one portion will be higher than the other. The dog, sheep or calf used for motive power is tied at one side, headed toward the higher part. As the animal walks, the wheel turns because of the animal's weight, and communicates motion to the pulley or small friction wheel beneath. There are no belts, no cogs. The weight of the animal bears the part of the large inclined wheel upon the smaller wheel beneath and causes it to revolve.

A discarded wagon wheel might be used as the framework of the large wheel, nailing boards on the upper surface for the animal to walk on, or



TREAD POWER AND CHURNS.

a frame is easily made, and if somewhat larger than a wagon wheel—say 6 feet or 7 feet in diameter—the circle will be larger and the animal will find the walking more direct. The under wheel may be 6 or 8 inches in diameter. The power is increased by giving the large wheel more pitch, and diminished by setting it more nearly level. —E. C. Bennett, in St. Louis Republic.

Don't Be a Kicker.

Some men would rather kick against some treatment they are having or find fault with the administration than to talk about their business and how to make it more of a success. Most people talk over their business at any and all opportunities, but I have seen farmers in a crowd that would talk about everything else. Finding fault with the weather, the railroads, or wreaking vengeance on the road supervisor or some such thing does not assist one particle in making a better farmer out of a man. The successful man advertises his business and has interest enough in it to talk about it to his neighbors and others with whom he comes in contact.—Cor. Iowa Home Stead.

Horse Notes to Remember.

Teams that have been partially idle for some time should come into work again gradually, and their shoulders should be washed and bathed in salt and water.

Never buy a horse with a narrow or shallow chest, or whose forelegs are very close together. He has not sufficient room for a set of strong lungs, and will not be long winded.

In the treatment of distemper an English veterinary advises the beneficial effect of biniodide of mercury as an antiseptic. Its good effects are due more to its absorption than to its blistering action, as it is the most powerful of all antiseptics (microbe killers). It was used successfully in scores of cases as a blister applied to the swelling under the jaws. Distemper is an infectious disease which usually confers subsequent immunity on the patient.