

# The Secret Dispatch

By JAMES GRANT

## CHAPTER XV.

The manner and voice of Basil Mierowitz were singularly soft and winning. Yet he was bold and resolute; and though a young man, he had all the free and easy bearing of a courtly soldier, blended with something of the calm severity of a priest—a manner that was very impressive.

The Polish and Cossack blood that mingled in the veins of Apollo Usakoff gave a freer and bolder, perhaps a wilder, bearing and style of language; his nose was aquiline, and expressed fierceness of disposition; yet his features otherwise were essentially delicate and noble, and his eyes were strangely beautiful in color and variety of expression. He was a grandson of Hetman Mazepa—that Pole whose story is so well known, and who after being bound naked in a wild and maddened horse, was carried by his steed through woods and wastes, and herds of wolves and bears, into the heart of the Ukraine, where he lived to become the prince and leader of those wild Cossacks who dwell upon the banks of the Dnieper.

Sleeping in a cavern, among rough soldiers, on a bed of dried leaves and moss, had not improved either the costume or the appearance of Natalie Mierowina. With pain and sorrow—almost with agony—Charlie Balgonie could perceive how her once rich dress of yellow silk, with its trimmings of narrow ermine, was faded and soiled—even tattered and worn; her laces and her soft hair alike disheveled and uncurled for; and that already had a hunted and haggard expression been imparted to her beautiful eyes and soft, pale, delicate face. Anger and pride alone remained; but both were for a time subdued by the sudden presence of Balgonie and the love she was compelled to repress, outwardly at least, when before so many eyes. Katiuka, the sturdy Polish attendant, who loved Natalie dearly, alone seemed unimpaired by the hardships of a forest life.

"Concerning the secret dispatch of the woman, Catharine Christianowna, to the Governor of Schlusselburg," said Usakoff, resuming the subject of conversation, "you, Carl, are perhaps aware of its contents?"

"Yes," replied Balgonie, and then paused.

"Say on, my friend," said Usakoff. "We can hear anything now."

"They were to the effect that a scheme had been formed to free the Unknown Person in Schlusselburg and that he was not to be permitted to fall alive into the hands of any one who came to seek him."

"Savage orders, which there can be no mistaking."

"Orders which Bernikoff is quite capable of fulfilling," added Mierowitz in a sad, stern voice, while their listening followers burst into low and whispered but fierce imprecations against the Empress.

"Bernikoff is a man without one human sympathy," said Basil.

"And no marvel is it!" exclaimed Usakoff, while the strange light already described gleamed in his dark gray eyes. "His mother, like a true Tartar woman, is said to have anointed her breast daily with blood, as she suckled him, even as Dion tells us the mother of Caligula did, that her child might in manhood be merciless."

"Carl," said Basil, taking the hand of Balgonie, "Natalie has told me all."

"And you forgive me?" said Balgonie earnestly.

"I do—but on this condition—that if you do not join us you will at least not actively oppose our scheme."

"I scarcely know what it is."

"Know this, then," replied the other emphatically, yet softly, "that on its success depends the success of your love, for if it fails, then all our lives are lost!"

"You say that you love my cousin, Natalie?" said young Usakoff in a somewhat loftier tone.

"With all my heart—with all my soul, I do!" replied Balgonie, pressing a hand of Natalie between his own.

"Yet, Carl, if you valued generosity and loved piety—if you loved glory and honor as a soldier should, you would risk the loss even of her—yes, give her up if necessary—and join us!"

"What would either life or glory be after such a sacrifice? Ah, my friend, you never loved as I do!" replied Charlie, with some irritation of manner.

"Perhaps. But I have always thought how gradually terrible a figure was made by Mohammed the Great when, on a stage before his disconcerted army, he struck off the head of a favorite sultana to convince his soldiers that he preferred glory to love."

"Cousin, cousin!" said Natalie, who felt all the peril and delicacy of her lover's position. "You talk thus to-day, when last night you shed tears—yes, bitter tears—for the loss of your sister. We were all taken prisoners together, Carl—my poor father, Mariolizza, and I. Bound with cords—see the marks are on me still," she added, showing her white wrists, while her dark eyes filled with a wistful fire—"we were conveyed in a covered wagon toward St. Petersburg, on the way to which it broke down in a wood near Paulovsk, not far from the outer walls of the imperial gardens. There in the confusion I was enabled to escape by the aid of the gypsy girl Olga, who, hoping some such chance might occur, had followed us afoot from Louga; and through her further knowledge and assistance I was enabled to join my brother Basil here."

"My dear old father—and my soft and

tender Mariolizza—a blow must be rapidly struck if we would save them from greater horrors than they now endure!" exclaimed Basil. "The other die has been cast now, and if I cannot save them and our legitimate Emperor, we can at least all perish together."

"Dangers menace you closely; the roads around the fortress are patroled, and gunboats watch the shores of the lake. A coin of Ivan found in a tea house—"

"'Twas I, Carl, who dropped it there!" exclaimed Basil. "Well, and this coin?"

"Has aroused all the suspicions of Bernikoff, and he knows that you and your cousin have deserted from your posts in Livonia."

"Then," replied Basil Mierowitz, with growing sternness, "we have not an hour to lose. Who informed him?"

"Lieut. Gen. Weymann, by a special messenger, while I was loitering at Louga."

"So, so! We must be prompt in action. I have cruised three round Schlusselburg disguised as a fisherman, and know all the approaches."

"Basil, Usakoff, I implore you by all you hold dear on earth and sacred in heaven to pause while there is yet time—to abandon your wild scheme, and make your peace, if possible, with the Empress."

"You are right to add 'if possible,' my friend," replied the other calmly but bitterly. "Already compromised by desertion, my father and betrothed wife chained in a fortress by the Neva, what terms would Catharine offer us? Carl Ivanovitch," he added, with a lofty smile, "I do not press you to join us, or seek to lure you into the dangers of an enterprise the enthusiasm of which you cannot share. I do not seek even to turn your presence as a trusted staff officer in Schlusselburg to account, though it might further our objects, and be the means, perhaps, by strategy, of saving many a valuable life. Still less do I desire to turn to account your intimacy with the young Emperor Ivan, though I envy you the great privilege. Even in the love I bear my sister, I leave you unquestioned and free."

"I thank you, Basil," said Balgonie, sadly, and with a heightened color, caused by irrepressible annoyance at the last remark of Mierowitz.

"But we have all sworn before the altar to devote our lives to the matter in hand; so retreat is impossible—advice and entreaty alike unavailing. The blow once struck, we shall be joined by the Cossacks of the Ukraine and the Don, among whom we have many impatient adherents, and by all who hold of the Houses of Brunswick-Wolfenbutter, of Holstein-Gottorp, and of all who hate Anhalt-Zerbst; all Russia will soon follow, from the shores of the Black Sea to those of the White—from Revel to the Ural Mountains. We have not forgotten the reign of Elizabeth; how many noses were slit, how many foreheads were branded, how many ears cropped, and tongues shortened, and how many eyes were darkened forever during the time of tyranny; how many backs flayed by the knout; how many nobles banished to Siberia or drowned in prison vaults by the swollen waters of the Neva. Pure nationality is dying now; but we must revive Russia—not as it is ruled by a woman, but Holy Russia of Peter the Great—strong, invincible, and the terror alike of the Eastern and Western world. Let us save our country from those who oppress it, and replace upon its throne the grand duke, the Czar—the Emperor Ivan; for the right given by God and by inheritance can never be destroyed!"

"Without cannon, you can not mean to assault a place so strong as Schlusselburg, fortified as it has been by all the skill of Todleben?" said Balgonie, after a pause.

"Ask me not what we mean to do, Carl; for your own sake, my dear friend, the less you know of us, and of our plans, the better. We shall come upon you when you least expect us, and in that hour take no heed of what you see or hear. Mix yourself up with it as little as you can; if we fail, we perish in our failure; if we triumph, and Ivan is replaced upon his throne, be assured that Basil Mierowitz will not forget the lover of his sister—the comrade of many a brave and happy day with the Regiment of Smolensko. Now adieu—and come hither no more, lest your steps be watched."

Balgonie pressed the hands of his two friends, whom he viewed as fated and foredoomed men; he kissed Natalie with a tenderness that was at once sorrowful and despairing, for he trembled in his heart lest he should never see her more; and, in another moment or so, like one in a bewildering dream, he had descended the rope ladder and was traversing the forest—the Wood of the Honey Tree—forgetful or oblivious of whether he was watched or not.

He foresaw both woe and ruin now; and proceeded slowly back to Schlusselburg, with his mind a prey to doubt, anxiety and dread of what might be the sequel to the impending catastrophe. He felt assured of one thing only—that a deed, bold, reckless and desperate, would be the result of his friends' desertion from Livonia, their political rancor, and personal desire for vengeance on the Empress and her favorites.

In that deed, and its too probable failure, he foresaw the destruction of his love, and he felt bitterly that rather than have known and lost Natalie, it would have been better had fate drowned him

when the Palatinship was burned, or shot him when warring in Silesia!

## CHAPTER XVI.

On returning to Schlusselburg, Balgonie found the governor, Colonel Bernikoff, in a very bad humor indeed. The Grand Chancellor had recently sent him a prisoner, with a note to the effect that he wrote verses, and was otherwise a dangerous fellow—to keep him for a week or two, and then get rid of him. He had thrice sent to the chancellor, to learn under what name the man was to be buried, for the fellow was dead now—so much had the damp atmosphere of the lower vaults disagreed with his poetical temperament, but no answer had been returned, which was very annoying. So Bernikoff, whose patience was never very extensive, was furious; but he strove to soothe his ruffled feelings by several enormous pinches of the sharp snuff of Beresovski, from the box which had been found in the fob of the later Peter III.; and by beating with his cane the Cossack, Jazowski.

"No tidings yet, Carl Ivanovitch, of those traitors?" said Bernikoff; "the Captain Vlashef, and my faithful friend, Tchekin, with forty picked Cossacks, and a clever guide—"

"Nicholas Panovitch, I presume."

"The same," continued Bernikoff, with a fierce grimace on his lips and a cruel leer in his eyes, "the same, sir—and what then?"

"Nothing, excellency. Well, these and the forty Cossacks—"

"Are scouring all the roads between this and St. Petersburg on one flank, and between this and North Ladoga on the other; so the cursed Asiatics cannot escape me."

"Who will betray them to you?" asked Balgonie, making a terrible effort to appear calm and unconcerned, as he played with his sword knot and the tassels of his sash.

"Who?" exclaimed Colonel Bernikoff, grinding his teeth. "Their own friends—their own dear comrades—adherents, which you will. Russia is full of people, yea of many nations. The Empress can reckon her faithful slaves by millions; yet, when a Russian hath his hat on his head, its rim contains the only friend on whom he can rely."

"This is a severe libel on your country, surely, excellency."

"'Tis truth though; so Basil Mierowitz, Usakoff and the rest are all doomed men. No one was ever lost on a straight road; thus the soldier who diverges from the straight line of duty must speedily find himself face to face with degradation and death. Punishment to those traitors will be swift and sure! So, I only fear that the Grand Chancellor will never give me the pleasure of having them under my judicious care at Schlusselburg. We have certain old vaults, built below the tide mark by Ivan the Terrible, for some of those people of Novgorod who league with the King of Poland. They are always full of fog; and I am curious to know how long an able-bodied prisoner might live there, or rather how long he would be in dying."

Charlie gladly sought the solitude afforded by the stockades and outworks of the fortress on the side toward the Lake of Ladoga. There, as elsewhere, was, of course, a chain of sentinels; but they did not interrupt his lonely communing with himself.

By his interest in Natalie, by his deep love for her, and more than all, perhaps, by his recent visit and interview, he already felt himself "art and part" with the rash adherents of Ivan. If one of these deserted the cause in which they had embarked, then would their lurking place be at once discovered, and the story of his recent visit be revealed.

He dreaded lest Bernikoff and others suspected his friendly interest in the family of Mierowitz, and that more might yet be learned of it; thus he would have experienced neither shock nor surprise, had he, at any hour, in that land of treachery and espionage, seen either Captain Vlashef, Lieutenant Tchekin, or any other officer of the fortress, advancing toward him, saber in hand, with an armed party, to demand his sword, to make him a prisoner.

"If I love Natalie," he would say to himself at times, "why should I shrink from sharing all that she suffers now—all she may yet endure? Yet it would be wiser to watch well for her sake, and seek to save, or bear her away; but how—and where to?" was the next bewildering thought.

This was, indeed, a miserable mood of mind in which to pass the nights and days of inactivity—of suspense and anxiety in which none could share in that strong, guarded and somewhat lonely fortress, which was washed on one side by the Neva and on the other by the Lake of Ladoga, the very ripples of whose waves sounded hatefully in the ears of Balgonie.

"Oh," thought he, "to be with Natalie on the side of a green and breezy Scottish mountain—to be with her there in peace and security, far, far from this land of suspicion and ferocious despotism, of state intrigues and savage punishments, where every second man is the spy and the betrayer of his fellow."

Home he might never see more; and now he found himself vaguely speculating on the probable comforts and public sentiment afforded by Siberia, and those growing cities of the sorrowing and the banished—Tobolsk and Irkutsk—on the banks of the Lower Angara.

(To be continued.)

## No Love Lost.

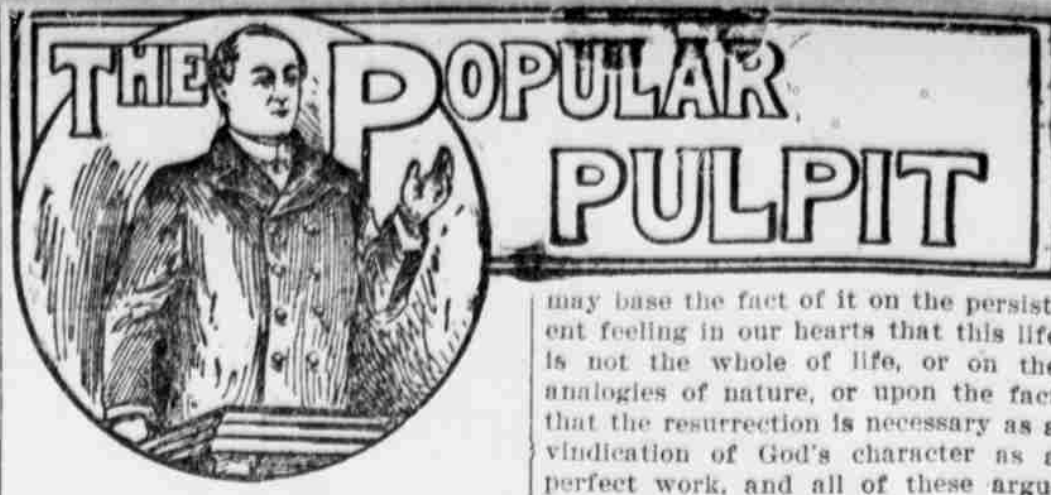
Judge (sternly)—Didn't I tell you last week I never wanted to see you here again?

Prisoner—Oh, yer honor, I hates the sight o' you wusser'n you hates the sight o' me.—Detroit Free Press.

## Taking Time by the Forelock.

"Will you send a telegram to your 'old man' if you fall in your examination to-morrow?"

"Of course; I have it already in my pocket."—Fliegende Blaetter.



## COMFORT FOR RESURRECTION

By Rev. A. Lincoln Moore

"He is not here, but is risen."—Luke xxiv., 6.

The resurrection stands forth in the apostolic theology as the epitome and very label of Christianity itself. In chapter xv. of Corinthians I, the great apostle with his giant mind sets forth by argument and illustration the sublime fact of the resurrection. In this marvelous treatise he not only sweeps away objections, but piles thought upon thought in massive grandeur until he rises ineffably above the philosophes of the day and firmly establishes the glorious certainty of this mighty truth, "He is risen." Arguing with the logic of an Aristotle, he does not permit himself to be content with a more dialectical display, descending with the rhetoric of a Demosthenes, he does not allow himself to conclude with a peroration of more eloquence. He reduces the grand doctrine to a practical conclusion, making it the inspiration to noble living and godly attainment.

Christianity stands or falls with the truth of the resurrection. If Christ be not risen then there is no Christianity. The resurrection involves the whole story of the incarnation. He who has risen must have died, he who has died must have lived and he who has lived must have been born. Thus the empty tomb of Jerusalem proves the holy manger of Bethlehem. So sure is Paul of this truth that he stakes on it the glorious fact of the resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." If Christ be not risen from the dead, then Christianity has been propagating a lie, then the 500,000,000 Christians on the globe who believe that he is alive have been deceived and their faith also is vain. Then there is nothing to console us in the hour of death, and we are of all men the most miserable.

For ages the conflict has been centered around the resurrection. Infidelity and skepticism have wrought to undermine it and yet the resurrection stands—commanding—untouched, impregnable, divine.

The resurrection is a glorious certainty. It is the grandest historical fact. It is substantiated by infallible proofs. The resurrection is the most indubitable of realities. The New Testament writer relied upon the various appearances of Our Lord after His return from the grave. He appeared five times on the day of resurrection; then to the eleven; to seven; to five hundred; to James; to Saul; to all the apostles at Bethany. Paul, twenty-three years after the resurrection, appeals to Peter and James as living, accessible witnesses, and to many of the five hundred.

The existence of the Christian church attests the resurrection of Christ. If He had not risen from the dead, as He said He would, then the church must have fallen hopelessly to pieces on the day of crucifixion. But the church abides. The Christian Sabbath is a mighty witness to the resurrection, for it is not the original Sabbath. God hallowed the seventh day. We observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath. Why this change? Changes do not take place without some adequate cause. During the Jewish Sabbath Jesus lay pale and still in the darkness of Joseph's tomb. But during the early morning of the first day of the week He arose triumphant from the grave, leading captivity captive and by and in the very fact of rising, emblazoned the first day of the week as His own royal supernal day, even time's first true Sabbath.

Thus the sublime fact of the resurrection confirms the truth of the Bible. Christianity is divine and true. Jesus of Nazareth is what He claimed to be, the son of God. Salvation purchased on Calvary is a glorious reality. The ultimate triumph of Christ's kingdom is certain and indisputable. The resurrection makes Christ a present, living and communing Savior. He is now enthroned at the right hand of God. He is the prime minister of divine government, and He does according to His own will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth.

He still is about His Father's business, looking after His chosen people and making all things to work together for their good. Seated on the throne of His grace, He is ever accessible. He bears all our petitions, redresses all our wrongs, supplies all our wants and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. But the crowning comfort is the fact of our own future resurrection. The life beyond is a glorious certainty. We

may base the fact of it on the persistent feeling in our hearts that this life is not the whole of life, or on the analogies of nature, or upon the fact that the resurrection is necessary as a vindication of God's character as a perfect work, and all of these arguments are good ones.

But amid death's overwhelming devastation, the argument which makes certainty certain is the empty tomb of our risen Lord. Because Jesus was death's master, so we shall be. Because Jesus arose from the dead, so shall his saints arise. The grave is not what it once was since He has lain there. He transformed the dark and narrow house into the spacious robing-room of heaven, where this mortal shall put on immortality.

## THE HIGHER VOICES.

By Rev. L. H. Dorchester.

"The people who stood by and heard it said it thundered; others said an angel spake to him."—John xii., 29.

It seems strange that the same voice should sound so differently to those who heard it. Some thought it thundered, while others said an angel spake. But this is not unlike occurrences to-day. What we hear often "depends" upon what we are. In a concert the musical impression received depends as much upon one's knowledge of music as upon the execution of the musicians. A very fine concert once was spoiled for a barber in the audience because right in the range of his vision was a person with badly combed hair. The barber was so distressed by the sight that the finest music had no such charms for him as for the rest of the people. The force of literary or scientific allusions in a discourse depends upon the education of the hearers. How differently the same picture will affect different people, according to their artistic tastes! An exceedingly delicate painting representing John of Arc among the trees, listening to angel voices, evoked most appreciative words from many who studied the picture; but one in the company remarked, "I guess that girl is stealing apples."

In the religious realm the angel voice is unheard or is but noise to some people; talk of "the leadings of the spirit" is Greek to them. The spiritual realm is a blank to them. Why? For the same reason that Greek is blank to them; they are not cultivating this realm; God is not in all their thoughts. Now, the important thing to realize is that our inner states determine here, as in art or music, the different impressions made even by voices from heaven. And these inner states are not primarily due to accents of nature or variations of individuality, but are principally the results of the choices and occupations to which we give ourselves. Whatever absorbs us develops that side of our nature, shutting out other interests; and this development is gradual, in harmony with certain laws of growth.

Now, the serious phase of this subject is the danger of an atrophy of the spiritual sense, man's highest faculty, that side of our nature which holds communion with God and enables us to hear the higher voices and brings us into touch with the priceless realities of the kingdom of heaven.

By disuse or misuse man's religious faculties become stunted and impotent. In childhood they are tolerably active and vigorous; trust, hope, love, prayer and conscience play a considerable part in young lives. But if in maturing years they are neglected because of absorption in something else, they grow weak as truly as do any unexercised physical muscles.

Now, this is a matter which vitally concerns us, for man is a spirit and he has a body. There is an alarming tendency among us to starve ourselves in our engrossment with business, society, dress and pleasure. The atrophy of the spiritual nature is an irreparable loss, for it is a loss of the things that make for salvation and character for God, heaven and immortality. It is a fundamental loss, touching our very structure, the very image of God within us.

If we would hear the higher voices we must believe in them, taking time to be reflective and devout, sacredly holding to our reasons for spiritual culture. Mr. Gladstone is a strong example of a busy man scrupulously caring for his religious nature, for sixty years of manhood keeping his church devotions in the forefront of his daily life showing the world the good old way—indeed, the only way—to grow strong toward God. As his recent biographer says, "Immersed in active responsibilities for momentous secular things, he never lost the breath of what was to him a diviner ether. He was always true to the grandeur of Goethe's words 'In wholeness, goodness, truth, strenuousness to live.'"

Giving happiness is the only secret of getting it.