

# The Secret Dispatch

By JAMES GRANT

## CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

He feared to look much, or often, toward the distant wood of the Honey Tree lest watchful eyes might be upon him to gather hints therefrom; still more did he fear to visit Natalie again, lest, by doing so, he might lead to the discovery and arrest of all. So the days and nights of dread, of longing and suspense, passed slowly after each other now.

The barriers of rank and wealth had all been removed now and Natalie was reduced to a level lower even than her lover's; yet he cursed the mad schemes that had brought about such a revolution and tossed feverishly and sleeplessly on his bed when he thought of Natalie Mierowina—his own loving and beloved Natalie—so delicate and so tender, with her white soft skin and silky hair, her earnest and beautiful eyes, lurking among stern and outlawed soldiers in yonder damp cavern of the rocks, upon her bed of leaves and moss. The whole affair reminded him of some of the old Scottish raids, or Jacobite plots, of years long passed away; and it was fated to resemble the former more strongly in some of its features, as the dark sequel will show.

The guards and sentinels at Schlüsselburg were doubled; the patrols were incessant by land, while on the lake the gunboats of Admiral Mackenzie cruised near the walls; the cannons were loaded; the watchwords changed sometimes twice within four-and-twenty hours; and the general state of preparation for a sudden attack was unremitting. But time passed on quietly until the night of the 15th of September, when the crowning catastrophe came.

## CHAPTER XVII.

The past day had been unusually gloomy for the season. The sun had set in fiery clouds beyond the spires of St. Petersburg. The night was without a moon and a strong east wind rolled the waters of the Ladoga in billows of inky hue against the massive walls of the fortress in foam and fury on one side; while on the other the waters of the Neva, swollen by recent rains, gurgled and chafed round the moldy and moss-grown piers of the drawbridge.

Since morning roll-call, Jagonski, the knouted, beaten and ill-used Cossack, had been missing; he had quitted the fortress on some trivial pretense and had not since returned; patrols had seen nothing of him. Then Colonel Bernikoff was more than ever on the alert; but Balgonie, who now deemed anything better than the torture of suspense, had gone weary and feverishly to bed, to court for a time the happiness of oblivion, after having spent nearly the entire day upon the lake with an armed boat's crew, patrolling by water.

From sleep, however, a sudden sound aroused him; he looked at his watch, and saw that the hands indicated 12 o'clock, midnight. In another moment the sound came again—the drums were beating to arms! He heard the clamor of hoarse Muscovite voices in court and corridor; the clanging of the castle bell; and he saw the gleam of torches reddening the old black walls and towers, and flaring on the grated windows as they were borne to and fro.

His heart was beating with wild anxiety as he threw on his staff uniform, belted his saber about him, placed his pistols in his girdle, and hurried forth to meet—it might be cross blades—with the only friends he had in Russia!

As he crossed the castle yard by torch-light, he could perceive that the Cossacks were falling into their ranks with musketoon and saber; and that the gunners were standing by their cannon with port fires lighted; the latter casting a pale, ghastly, and unearthly glare upon the yawning embrasures, the walls of the fortress and on their own stolid visages, which were pale and cadaverous, as those of people usually who are hastily summoned from sleep in the night.

The portcullis was up; and Balgonie could see its row of lower bars, like a line of black fangs in an open jaw, between him and the outline of the lighted archway.

"What is the matter, Colonel Bernikoff?" he asked; "what is the cause of all this alarm?"

"Matter enough! We have had an alarm—the place seems to be invested by troops—infantry of the line—the head of a column—look for yourself, Balgonie!" exclaimed Bernikoff.

To omit the Christian name of a person addressed, and that of his father, also, is a direct insult in Russia; but Balgonie heeded it not then. He hurried to the curtain wall which faced the land side, the outer gate, and drawbridge, and then, by the light of a torch, he could see that which certainly seemed to be the head of a column—a front rank of nearly fifty men, clad in the hideous uniform then worn by the Russian army. Their coats were green, lined and faced with red, very tight in the body, with preposterously long skirts, tight breeches and boots to the knees, with cocked hats, having long flannel flaps to cover the ears in winter.

By the light of the same torch Balgonie could see the bayonets fixed; and that two officers, with their sabers drawn, and a drummer, were in front of their little line. Having possession of the parole and countersign, which, no doubt, was betrayed to them by the absent Jagonski, the whole party had contrived to elude the sub-lieutenant in charge of the outer guard, and were now past the first barrier, and had actually taken pos-

session of the drawbridge, which they had lowered across the Neva. The gate and guns of the second barrier were yet to be forced or passed; and thus these midnight visitors were in a species of trap.

Too well could Balgonie recognize in the two officers Basil Mierowitz, wearing the familiar uniform of the Regiment of Smolensko; and Usakoff, in the gay trappings of the Grenadiers of Valikolntz, and now, for the second time, their drummer beat a summons for a parley, but as yet there was no response.

Balgonie hastened after Bernikoff and the other officers. They had now ascended to the chamber of the unfortunate Ivan, from whose presence they had somewhat roughly expelled the chaplain, Father Chrysostom. On entering, he found that the royal recluse had sprung from bed—inspired by natural alarm, on finding his chamber suddenly entered at midnight, and full of armed men; but Ivan manifested no indignation—he was too gentle, too subdued, and completely broken in spirit for that.

His singularly beautiful face was very pale; there was a strange calmness in his manner; and whatever he thought or anticipated, there was more of calm inquiry than of fear in his tone and in the expression of his fine, soft eyes. Over his night dress he had thrown a robe de chambre of fine scarlet cloth edged with white ermine; and in his attire, with his long hair and delicate features, so chastened in expression by long solitude and complete seclusion from the outer world, he seemed more like a tall handsome woman than a young man of three-and-twenty years.

"What is this you tell me, Colonel Bernikoff," he was asking, as Balgonie entered; "my unhappy life threatened, say you?"

"Even so," said Bernikoff hoarsely, while averting his stealthy eyes from the young man's open and earnest face; "even so, Ivan Antonovitch; but your death will not be of our seeking."

"Whose, then?"

"Your friends."

"And wherefor?"

"There are those without the gates who seek you, and you must not fall alive into their hands," said Captain Vlasief sternly, as he felt the point of his saber with a finger.

"Alas! I do not understand who can come to seek me!" replied the poor prince, shuddering now, while an expression of horror began to spread over his fine face—a horror gathered from the fierce and relentless aspect he read in the visages of those around him—and he withdrew a pace or so toward his bed, saying in a touching voice:

"Ah, do not leave me, good Colonel Bernikoff, or at least give me a sword—a sword—"

"Fool—child—dolt! thou with a sword, and for what purpose?" thundered Bernikoff, as he sought to lash himself into the requisite pitch of fury; "for what purpose, I say?"

"That I may defend myself."

"'Tis needless," said Tschekin, with a cold smile; "we shall take care of you."

"Oh, Carl Ivanovitch Balgonie, my friend, my good friend; you I can trust—you I can command—come hither, and remain by my side," said the prince, in an imploring accent, as a solemn foreboding came upon him when he saw the sabers stealthily drawn from their scabbards on every side; and even the terrible Nicholas Paulovitch drawing near, dagger in hand, with his long lock of hair, his scowling front, and a cruel expression, the very lust of blood in his deep-set, stony eyes. "Carl, Carl," cried Ivan; "your hand!"

"Captain Balgonie—be here!" roared Bernikoff, with one of his terrible maledictions.

"Oh, excellency!" implored Balgonie, scarcely knowing what he should ask or urge.

"Begone, sir, to the barrier gate, and keep the guard there to their duty—begone, sir, I command you, on your allegiance to the Empress!"

To refuse or linger were alike impossible, though a wild cry of entreaty escaped the lips of the young prince, who sprang forward, but was thrust roughly back toward his couch by many hands and many leveled weapons.

The sword of Damocles, which had hung over his unhappy head so long, was about to descend at last!

Balgonie, his heart swollen almost to bursting with shame, rage and grief, rushed down the stair of the keep; but at the foot, and just as he passed where the old chaplain Chrysostom was saying devoutly on his knees the prayers for the dying, he heard a shrill and protracted cry of agony ring through the vaulted tower—a cry that made his blood run cold!

Humanity, generosity, and all his own good impulses would have drawn him back to the side, and, if possible, to the aid, of Ivan; but the force of discipline, and a knowledge of his own utter powerlessness, made him pause, for he was but one man—a foreigner, too—opposed to a whole garrison of ferocious and unscrupulous soldiers.

When, from the inner barrier gate, he looked up to the window of Ivan's room, he saw that the lights had been extinguished and all was darkness now.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

When Bernikoff appeared with his group of officers, Charlie Balgonie perceived that there were spots of blood upon his long, white leather gauntlets,

that his saber blade was broken off with in six inches of the hilt, and that a terrible expression of ferocity clouded his features and those of all around him.

At that moment the drummer of the summoners beat a call for the third time, and Bernikoff, advancing to the wicket, in the palisades of the second inner gate, opened it, and, with a great sternness of manner, demanded what they required.

"The release of His Imperial Majesty Ivan IV.," replied Basil Mierowitz, in a firm voice, while courteously saluting Bernikoff in recognition of his superior rank.

"If I refuse—"

"You do so at your own peril," replied Basil, as sternly and as proudly as if, instead of a few discontented deserters and enthusiasts, the whole armies of Russia were at his back.

"You cannot be mad enough, Basil Mierowitz, to think of assaulting us?"

"That may or not be, excellency, according to circumstances," was the reply.

"What troops are those under your orders?"

"A guard of honor for the Emperor, if you peacefully comply—the first portion of an investing force if you refuse," replied Mierowitz; but a sinister gleam of triumph flashed in the malicious eyes of Bernikoff, who gathered more of his real weakness from this evasive reply than the rash young noble intended.

"Listen, Colonel Bernikoff," he continued, while drawing from his breast a long paper of official aspect, to which several green and scarlet seals were attached. "Her Majesty Catharine II., having come to the conclusion of resigning the imperial crown and of replacing it on the head of the Emperor Ivan, whom she now feels herself compelled to acknowledge as her lawful sovereign, though basely deposed in infancy by her predecessors, the Empress Elizabeth, and the Emperor Peter III.; therefore she hereby commands you, Colonel Bernikoff, Governor of her Castle of Schlüsselburg, to set the prince at liberty, with all speed and honor."

For a document and summons of this artful and remarkable nature, Bernikoff was altogether unprepared. For a moment he grew deadly pale, but for a moment only, and glanced at the startled faces of those around him. Had he been too precipitate in bloodshed?

"Where is Her Majesty just now?" he asked.

"In the palace of the Czars, at Novgorod."

"Was Novgorod so empty of all the great nobles and officers of Russia that a document of such a nature was intrusted to a mere lieutenant of infantry—a deserter from Livonia!" said Bernikoff, with a sudden rage. "Tis an imposture—a forgery; there is but one monarch on earth, the Empress Catharine; and you, Mierowitz, and all who league with you, are but base dogs and traitors!"

"Forward!" cried Basil, brandishing his saber; "storm the gate—bayonet all who oppose us!"

"Long live Ivan Antonovitch—long live the Emperor!" exclaimed his soldiers, rushing forward. But the wicket in the palisades was at once closed, and secured against them by an enormous transverse beam of wood; and though a confused volley of musketry was exchanged between them and the main guard, no one was struck, save Bernikoff, who staggered back into the arms of Vlasief, having been bayoneted in the breast by the deserter Jagonski, who drove his weapon between the palisades, nearly finishing what Basil had begun by the blow of a musket, but which crushed the colonel's hat and nearly fractured his skull.

"Ah! dogs and Asiatics, you have struck me!" shouted Bernikoff, whose voice was hoarse with rage and pain. "Dost know the penalty of wounding an officer—of striking a soldier who wears a decoration?"

"Accursed Tartar, I neither know nor care. I revenge my brother's death at Zorndorf, my own wrongs, and the murder of Peter III!" replied the exulting Cossack, with a bitter laugh.

"May my right hand wither, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, when most I need them both, if I have not a terrible vengeance for all this work!" cried Bernikoff. "Vlasief, Tschekin, show them their prince!"

While the undaunted Basil and his friend Usakoff, with their soldiers, proceeded to wheel round a cannon of the outworks, a thirty-two pounder, for the purpose of blowing open the wicket inner barrier; and while Balgonie, a silent but excited and sick-headed spectator of the whole affair, lingered close by, heedless whether the round-shot and grape, with which they were charging the gun, came his way or not—a window in the first story of the keep was dashed open, and while every torch and every eye were uplifted to the place, a terrible spectacle, which flushed all into momentary silence, was exhibited.

It was the dead body of the young and handsome Ivan, suspended by the neck, at the end of a rope, stripped even of his night dress, cold and white as the marble of Paros, and gashed with ten gaping wounds.

(To be continued.)

## She Found Out.

"Do I love George?" mused Clara, softly, "or is it simply a sister's affection that I feel for—"

Just then Bobby burst noisily into the room and interrupted her meditations.

"Get out of here, you little wretch!" she shouted, and, seizing him by the arm, she shot him through the door.

"Ah, no," she sighed, as she resumed her interrupted train of thought, "my love for George is not a sister's love. It is something sweeter, purer, higher and holier."—Tit-Bits.

Some day when we see a girl on the streets nervously feeling if her skirt is all right in the back, we intend to step up and assure her that everything is in perfect order.

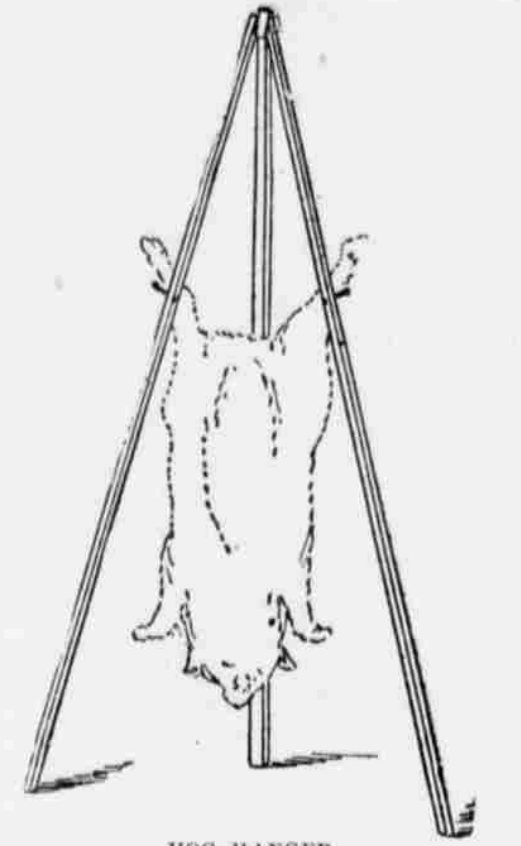
# FARMS AND FARMERS



Don't try to hatch duck and hen eggs in the same incubator. Don't leave the large ends of the eggs pointing in different directions; have them all pointing one way.

## A Simple Hog Hanger.

Here's a sketch of a hog hanger, which is a good one for the farmer. Take three 9-foot poles, 2½ inches diameter. Put a ½-inch bolt through the top and two 3-8-inch bolts in the outside poles, as in the cut, 18 inches from top, so that they stick out 3 inches. Lay the hog on its back, slip the little bolt under the cord, and raise



HOG HANGER.

it up. One-half of the hog can be taken down and the other half left hanging.

## Stock Raising by Electricity.

According to a recent issue of the Chicago Tribune, an electrical system of stock-raising has been developed on a moderate scale at the University of Michigan. Small animals, such as rabbits, have already been forced into matured size and plumpness in two-thirds of the period required by nature, showing the possibility of reducing the tedious development of larger stock, especially sheep or cows, by many months. In several rooms of the electro-therapeutic laboratory, cheap wooden pens, circular in form, have been wound to the height of two feet with electric wires. A moderate current of one-half horse power circles these electric pens. From its influence the air inside the pens is made electro-magnetic, becoming a strong magnetic field, with sixty-two lines of force to the square inch. In these pens rabbits have grown to maturity in two-thirds of the time that rabbits near them have developed in non-electrical pens. These electrically nurtured animals did not become larger than normal rabbits; they merely arrived at normal size quicker. Furthermore, as is the case with hothouse flowers, they were found less hardy than their slower brothers. But, for the live-stock market, the forced animals had an unexcelled tenderness and plumpness.

## Farmer's Dress.

Since rural people are isolated the tendency is for them to become careless in dress. I am sure that I became careless and that I was a frightful object to look upon when I was striving for a foothold upon the farm under adverse circumstances. It is well for the farmer, his wife, daughters and sons to slick up in the matter of dress after the day's work is done so they may appear at the supper table and during the evening in clothes suitable for receiving any one who may happen to call. Very likely no one may call, but for the sake of the family it will pay to give this attention to dress.

## Magazines on the Table.

When you visit a farmer's home and find creditable papers and magazines upon his sitting-room table you are favorably impressed with that farmer's intelligence. Shiftless farmers are not inclined to pay out money for reading matter. Ignorant farmers consider money spent for reading matter wasted. There is no better sign of prosperity than to see upon his table farm papers, church papers, magazines, etc.

## Aged Dwarf Trees.

Surprising results have been produced in the line of dwarf trees by Japanese growers. It is said there are pine trees that started to grow in the seventeenth century which are still not too large to be carried in one hand. The gardeners nip off the tree's roots, pinch back the branches and starve the tree in poor soil, keeping it barely alive and checking the growth almost entirely. As time goes on, the tree gains the appearance of extreme age, but is no larger than a seedling a few months old.

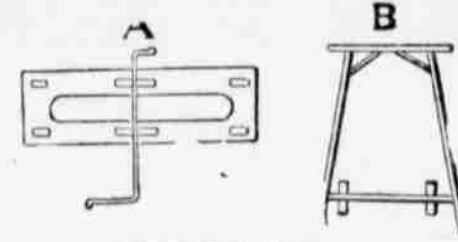
## The Darkened Stable.

Where animals are kept in the stable during the summer months, as, for example, work horses, or, in some instances, the breeding stock, nothing contributes so much to their comfort as that of protecting them from flies. Animals that are kept busy fighting flies require more food to keep them in condition, and, indeed, it is impossible with an unlimited supply of food to keep them in proper condition.

Advantage should be taken of the fact that flies constantly tend to seek the light places. A stable need not be absolutely dark in order to prevent annoyance from flies, and, in fact, we do not believe in keeping stables too dark, on account of the fact that animals are liable, if kept in such quarters for any considerable length of time, to go wrong in their eyes. Gummy sack nailed over the windows of the stable will greatly reduce the number of flies that will pester the animals. These should not be nailed down absolutely tight at the bottom, or air will be excluded and the stable will become warm and unhealthful. If the sacks are partly loose at the bottom they will still shade the stable satisfactorily and at the same time admit air. Horses placed in the stable for an hour at noon will eat better, rest better, and we cannot help but think they will work better afterward, if they are afforded some protection during the time they are in the stall. In some of our better class of stables regular window blinds are used, these being pulled down during the day and run up at night, thus freely admitting the air when no protection from flies is necessary. It is claimed by those who use such blinds that their cost is more than offset many times during a single season in the saving of feed that is effected by the protection which they afford.

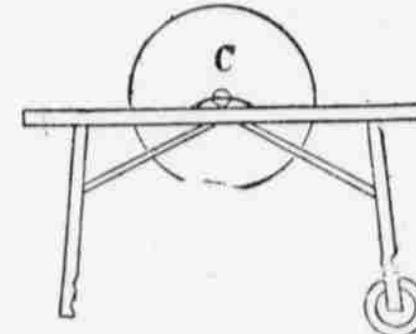
## Grindstone Frame.

My grindstone frame is made of two-inch plank with hole cut through for the stone, and wide enough to fasten on the bearings. The legs are made of pieces of 1x4 mortised in. They are



SECTIONAL VIEW.

long enough so the man who does the grinding can stand upright. An axle 1½ inches in diameter passes through two of the legs, and there are two wheels made of inch hardwood board about eight inches in diameter. These wheels run on the axle so the other end of the frame can be picked up and the grindstone rolled around easily wherever it is needed. The legs should be braced as required. The same idea will hold good in making a bench to stand on to drive fence posts.



GRINDSTONE IN FRAME.

only the wheels should be larger, so it will run over uneven ground easier. A hole through the top of the bench will take in the handle of the post driver, a hook and staple on one side would carry the bar and a drawer in one end could be used to put in nails, staples, hammer, pliers and staple puller. In the illustrations A shows top view of frame, B an end view, and C the complete side view.—J. B. Crookston, in St. Louis Republic.

## Incubator Don'ts.

- Don't use oil less than 150 test.
- Don't help the chick out of the shell.
- Don't trim the wick with scissors; scrape off the charred part with a match.
- Don't fail to fill the lamps every evening.
- Don't set the incubator near the window.
- Don't worry with moisture gauges or hygrometers.
- Don't use the same wick for more than one hatch.
- Don't turn nor cool the eggs after they are pipping.
- Don't neglect cooling the eggs; it makes strong chicks.
- Don't think you are smarter than the manufacturer of the incubator, for you have a lot to learn.