

The DESTROYER

By BURTON E. STEVENSON

CHAPTER SEVEN (Continued.)

"There is some doubt on that point," answered Crochard slowly. "That little road is used but seldom, for a better one now leads around the base of the hill; and few people ever have occasion to enter the grove. It was, of course, for this very reason that the hut was chosen for this installation. I have found no one who saw any man at work there. On the other hand, a friend of mine, who has a cabaret on the main road just outside the city gate, has seen pass a number of times within the past week a man who, from his face and dress, was evidently not a Frenchman, and whose actions appeared to my friend to be suspicious."

Delcasse smiled.

"You seem to have many friends," he remarked; "and unusually observant ones."

"Yes," agreed Crochard; "I am fortunate in my friends; and they find it greatly to their interest to keep their eyes open."

"Did you secure a description of this stranger?"

"Yes; but there should have been much more than a mere description. Some of my friends are more intelligent than others. Still, it may be of service. This stranger was a small man, slightly built, with grey hair and bright, dark eyes. His complexion was also rather dark, and my friend hazarded the guess that he was a Spaniard. He was dressed in dark clothes, cut after a fashion not French, and wore a soft, dark hat."

"But that is a splendid description!" cried Delcasse. "What more did you want?"

"Ah, sir," replied Crochard, "if it had been some of my friends, they would have managed to meet this man; they would have engaged him in conversation, have discovered his business and place of abode; instead of which, this friend in question merely sits at the door of his cabaret and watches the man pass! He was not doing his duty—but he will not make such a mistake again!"

"His duty?" echoed Delcasse. "His duty to whom?"

"His duty to me," replied Crochard.

"But I do not understand," said the minister, more and more amazed. "Why should your friends have any such duty to you?"

Crochard hesitated. Lepine's face was fairly saturnine.

"I cannot explain that to you now, sir," said Crochard, finally. "I can only say that it is part of a system which has existed for a very long time, and of which I now happen to be the head."

Delcasse pondered this for a moment, his eyes on Crochard's face. Then he turned to Lepine.

"You must learn more of this stranger, Lepine," he said. "You, also, are at the head of a system—and a very expensive one."

"Yes, and a good one, sir," said Lepine, quickly. "One which is worth all it costs. But men will not work for money as they do for self interest; and then, my system is a mere infant beside that of our friend here, which must be at least 200 years old."

"Oh, much more than that!" said Crochard, quickly, and smiled at Delcasse's astounded face.

"Please understand," he added, "that I do not assert that this is the man we want. There is as yet no absolute proof, though I hope soon to have it. But there is one significant fact: when going from the city he frequently carried a heavy bundle, but never when returning."

"That is indeed significant," agreed Delcasse. "But it indicates another thing which astonishes me. If he did all this alone, it was because he had no one to assist him. But if he had no accomplice, who were the two men who watched the destruction of La Liberte? And, above all, who is this man who plans, alone and unaided, the destruction of our navy? What is his purpose? Whence did he come? Whither has he gone? Is he a madman—an anarchist?"

Delcasse ran his fingers through his hair with a despairing gesture. "He astounds me!" he added. "My brain falters at thought of such a man!"

But Marbeau, to whom much of this talk had been incomprehensible, began at last to understand,

and shook his head in violent protest.

"Whoever the man may have been," he broke out, "or whatever his business, it could have had nothing to do with the destruction of La Liberte."

Delcasse wheeled upon him.

"Why do you say that?" he demanded.

"Because, sir, it is absurd to suppose that the magazines of the ship could be exploded by wireless. Wireless has no such power. And, in this instance, it is quite easy to prove that they were not so exploded."

"Prove it, then," said the minister, impatiently.

"In the first place, the signal, which we now know came from that hut up yonder, were first noted on Saturday. They continued for half an hour, and yet no explosion occurred. In the second place, we caused them to be repeated today, and again there was no explosion."

"La Liberte was no longer there to explode," Delcasse objected grimly.

"True; but there were other ships near by—La Patrie, La Republique, La Verite. These ships and others were also there at the time of the explosion, yet they were not affected, although all of them had precisely the same sort of powder in their magazines that La Liberte had in hers."

"But you have already said that the waves could be intensified in a certain direction," Delcasse pointed out.

"So they can; but they cannot be confined to a channel or directed at a mark, as a bullet is. The hut in the grove is fully three miles away from the harbor, and I assert that every ship in the harbor felt the waves with the same intensity as La Liberte."

"And what is your deduction from all this?" inquired Delcasse.

"My deduction is that those signals did not and could not cause the explosion."

"Then what was their purpose? How do you explain them?"

Marbeau made a gesture of helplessness.

"I do not know what their purpose was; I cannot explain them," he said; "but I am confident that they could not have destroyed La Liberte."

"I agree with General Marbeau," said Crochard suddenly.

They all stared at him, astonished that he should admit himself defeated.

"But I would add one word to his deduction," he added. "The word 'alone.'"

"Alone?" echoed Delcasse.

"I would make the statement thus: 'Those signals alone did not and could not cause the explosion.'"

Delcasse looked at him with puzzled eyes, and again ran his fingers impatiently through his hair.

"I do not understand," he said. "You are getting beyond me. What is your theory, then?"

The line in Crochard's brow deepened.

"It is a thing, sir," he answered slowly, "which I find difficult to express in words. There is, at the back of my mind, an idea, vague, misty, of which as yet I catch only the dim outlines. My process of reasoning is this: it is certain, as General Marbeau says, that the signals from the hut were, in themselves, harmless, or there would have been other explosions than that on board La Liberte. Wireless waves can be directed and concentrated only to a very limited extent. They can be made a little stronger in one general direction than in others, that is all. And, in this case, that general direction would have embraced all the ships at anchor in the harbor."

"There must, then, have been some other force which, at the appointed time, struck from this stream of signals a spark, so to speak, into the magazines of La Liberte, one after the other. That there was an appointed time we cannot doubt—we know that it was the moment of sunrise yesterday. That the magazines were fired one at a time, and a spaced interval, we also know. That they could not explode of themselves in that way seems certain."

"You will remember that the signals began more than an hour before sunrise, and continued for

at least half an hour afterwards. We know that the signals were sent automatically. Why? Partly, no doubt, because it was necessary that they be absolutely regular; but also because the man who did this thing—who is himself, perhaps, the inventor of the method—chose to make no confidants, to have no accomplices, and he could not himself be in the hut to send the signals. Again you ask why. Not because the danger of discovery, since there was no such danger. I believe it was because it was necessary that he be somewhere else, directing from an angle, perhaps, that other force, so mysterious and so deadly. I seem to see two forces, traveling in converging lines, as two bullets might travel, their point of meeting the magazines of La Liberte. At the instant of their meeting, there is a shock, a spark—as though flint and steel met—and the magazine explodes—first the forward magazine, then the after magazine, then the main magazine—one, two, three! This is all mere guesswork, you understand, sir," Crochard added, in another tone, "but so I see it. And, after all, it is susceptible of proof."

"What proof?" demanded Delcasse.

"If my theory is the true one," Crochard explained, "there must have been, somewhere, another installation to create the intercepting force; which, of course, must also be transmitted by ether waves as wireless is, if it is to penetrate wood and steel. It must have been within an hour's walk—probably half an hour's walk—of the hut in the grove. For remember, the mechanism there was set going an hour before sunrise, and the man had then to reach his other mechanism, and have it ready to start at sunrise. It is for us to discover the place where this second mechanism was installed—and where it probably still remains."

"Yes, that would be proof," agreed Delcasse thoughtfully; "and for myself, I will say that I believe your theory the right one. But you have not yet explained the part played by the two watchers on the way."

"Their part was that of watchers merely," said Crochard. "They were sent there to observe and to report to their masters—as they did."

"As they did?"

"Surely it is evident," Crochard explained, "that, if our theory is true, they would hasten to report. Imagine their master's anxiety until he heard from them! As a matter of fact, their report was filed within 15 minutes after the explosion. M. Lepine has it in his pocket."

Delcasse stared, uncomprehending; but Lepine, his face suddenly illumined, snatched out his pocket-book and produced the sheets of yellow tissue.

"Ah, yes, certainly!" he cried. "I was blind not to see it! The report was in form agreed upon: 'We continued our trip as planned. All well. You will understand now, sir,' he added, to Delcasse, 'the reason for the high opinion I entertain of this gentleman!'"

"But that message was sent to Brussels," objected the minister. "It was sent 'restante.' A man was waiting at the postoffice to receive it and forward it instantly to Berlin."

Delcasse's face was a study, as he turned this over in his mind.

"What is your reading of the other message?" he asked, at last.

"My reading," answered Crochard, slowly, "is that, at the last moment, the emperor, appalled at the possible consequences, decided to forbid the atrocity, to which he had, perhaps, been persuaded against his better judgment, or in a moment of passion."

"And if the message had not been delayed, La Liberte would have been saved!"

"Precisely that, sir."

Delcasse's lips were twitching.

"You may be right," he said thickly; "you may be right; but it seems incredible. After all, it is merely guesswork!"

"You will pardon me, sir, but it is not guesswork," protested Crochard. "M. Lepine will tell you that, in a case of this kind, it must be all or nothing. Every detail, even to the slightest, the most significant, must fit perfectly, or they are all worthless. If I am wrong in this detail, I am wrong in all the others; if I am right in the others, I am also right in this. They stand or fall together. And I believe they will stand!"

The great minister was gazing fascinated at the speaker; for the first time, he caught a real glimpse of his tremendous personality.

"You mean, then," he said, finally, "that if any details we may discover hereafter fail to fit this theory, the theory must be dis-

carded?"

"Discarded utterly and without hesitation," agreed Crochard. "More than that—"

A tap at the door interrupted him.

"Come in," said Delcasse.

His secretary entered, followed by a courier, carrying a portfolio.

"From Paris, sir," said the secretary, and the courier, with a bow, laid the portfolio on the minister's desk.

Delcasse took from his pocket a tiny key, unlocked the portfolio, drew out a package and glanced at the superscription.

"Ah," he said; "the photographs!" and ripped the package open.

There were some two dozen of them, together with a long typewritten report, which Delcasse glanced through rapidly.

"These are the result of the first report from Berlin," he said, "of officers who are absent from their commands and whose present whereabouts is not definitely known. A supplementary report will follow."

"We can begin with these," said Lepine, and looked them over.

Crochard had risen and was looking at the photographs over the detective's shoulder.

"We shall have to shave them first," he remarked.

"Shave them?"

"Divest them of those ornaments," and he indicated the upturned moustaches, a la kaiser, with which nearly all the pictured faces were adorned. "A brush and tablet of water color will do it."

M. Delcasse arose.

"I will leave that in your hands, gentlemen," he said. "I must meet the board of inquiry almost at once. General Marbeau, I think you for your assistance. You will, of course, say nothing of all this to any one. As for you, sir," he added to Crochard, "I shall think you better another day. Till this evening, M. Lepine," and he bowed the three men out.

Half an hour later, Lepine and Crochard were closeted with Monsieur and Madame Brisson in the former's bureau at the du Nord. The little inn keeper and his wife were inarticulate with excitement, for they had guessed Lepine's identity from his resemblance to the pictures which every illustrated paper published at frequent intervals, and they suspected, from his bearing, that Crochard was a person of even greater importance. Their faces were glowing with pride, too, for their proffered refreshment had not been declined. In after days, when the sentence of silence had been lifted, they would tell the story to their admiring friends:

"Imagine it. Here we sat, I here, Gabrielle there; in that chair, M. Lepine, prefect of the Paris, service du surete, a little thin man with eyes oh, so bright; and in the fourth chair, with eyes still brighter and an air distinguished which there could be no mistaking—whom do you think? None other than the Duc de B—"; or the Prince de R—, or the Marquis de C—; that was a detail to be filled in later; but a great highness, rest assured, of that! And the way that both M. Lepine and the unknown highness relished their Chateau Yquem was a great compliment to the house."

After these amenities, Lepine produced the demostatched photographs.

"Look well at these," he said; "have care—do not speak unless you are very sure," and he passed the photographs one by one to Madame Gabrielle, who handed them on to her husband. Some 10 or 12 were examined without comment, and then Madame uttered a sudden exclamation.

"It is he!" she cried. "It is one of them!"

"One of whom?" asked Lepine.

"One of those men. Behold, Aristide!"

Brisson took the card and looked at it.

"Sacred heart! But you are right, Gabrielle!"

"You are sure?" persisted Lepine.

"Sure! But of a certainty! I would swear to him!"

Lepine put the photograph in his pocket, and turned to the others. But there was no second recognition. Brisson and his wife went through them twice, until they had convinced themselves that their other guest was not among them. Finally Lepine gathered the photographs together.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.)

NEWS OF NEWSPAPERS.

Journalism the Chief Weapon of Democracy.

From an address by Walter Williams, dean of the school of Journalism of the University of Missouri.

The service of constructive criticism falls within the province of the press. Mistakes will be made in the conduct of the war—mistakes have been made in the conduct of the war. It is the duty of the press, freed from the meshes of partisanship and without thought of selfish advantage, to point out in the broadest way such mistakes and thereby to guard as far as may be possible against their recurrence. Individuals temporarily holding public office—clothed with a little brief authority or large—will err in the exercise of publicity and of criticism. The press must not grant them this freedom. It will not grant it. Methods of taxation, of the delegation of power, of the raising of revenue and of its disbursement, questions as to the aim and purpose of the war and of its continuance are of vital interest and importance to the American people.

Supreme Task of Press.

Here again the press has a plain duty to perform. Publicity will cure evils in war time no less than in the piping days of peace. A single example—in the enforcement of the selective draft measure—will meet within the draft of partisanship, asked to answer a question regarding exemption, a question unfortunately expressed and which at the last it was sought to withdraw or explain away. When the question was honestly answered in accordance with the registration law, we were gravely told that that answer constituted cowardice on the part of those who replied. Again, statements sent out from Washington blundered into the bureaucratic error of announcing that registration totals should equal certain census figures. Their figures, however, were estimates made on the census of 1910, pure guess work as to the probable growth of states in population from 1910 to 1917, an estimate manifestly impossible to make with any degree of accuracy. On such census bureau estimates charges of slacker states and slacker communities were unwarrantedly made. It is in connection with such practices as these and matters of much larger consequences, involving property and life and liberty itself, that the press of the country must do the service of constructive criticism. Bureaucracy as well as autocracy is the enemy of democracy.

No more important battle in behalf of democracy has been waged in recent years than the struggle in congress against the enactment of the censorship provision of the espionage bill. As members of the profession of journalism, charged with solemn responsibilities in this grave hour, we may not congratulate ourselves upon a complete and well reasoned victory. Unfortunately the victory was not won upon the plain issue of the freedom of the press—fundamental to a democracy—but was in some measure the result of the desire of certain members of congress to oppose a bill presented by one of the agents of the people in office in Washington. Victory did not come upon the broad ground of the constitutional prerogative of the press, but to a degree upon clouded and partisan issues. Fortunately, however, we have a constitutional provision upon which the press may stand. Let me quote from an old document which is the basis of our supreme law in the United States, made for times of war, as for times of peace. "Congress shall have no power," says the constitution of the United States, "to pass laws abridging the freedom of speech or of the press."

The people of this republic, it may be said in passing, declined to ratify the constitution until this addition thereto was agreed upon.

Publicity Aid in War Time.

Back even to the constitution is the fundamental right and necessity of public opinion to express itself—without which there is no democracy. We cannot have the superior power. The statement of its sovereignty needs no apology. Not only the honor and dignity but the very existence of a democratic state depend upon it. To preserve and promote them, by the creation of a sound and wholesome public opinion, is the supreme task to which the press must summon its every resource. Let no so-called necessity of war be permitted to be a cover for reactionary measures. It hath not yet been proved that a republic armed to the teeth and bent only upon material things shall endure. It is the spirit of nations, as of men, that keepeth alive.

Would Have Prevented War.

If the press of Europe had been for a century free to print the news uncolored by government influence, if it had been free to discuss in public the machinations of diplomacy, this hideous war would have come. Certainly national antagonisms were increased and racial hatreds embittered by the international news served out by official or semi-official sources, the Wolff agency in Germany, Reuters in England, the Havas in France, the Correspondence Wilhelm in Austria, the Stefanie in Italy, the Ministry of the Telegraph—frankly official—in Russia, and others in other lands. The news as thus circulated was seldom the actual truth—it was what the governments wished the people of their own nations and the governments and people of other nations to think was the truth. Let us permit no such frightful blunder to be made—even under the specious plea of military necessity—in this republic. Many others than Bismarck manipulated the news. War took place in the open because—thanks to an enslaved and complacent press—the preparations therefore were carried on in secret. Censorship was an necessary before the colossal waste of war even if it was not a principal in bringing it about.

Private Property of Autocrats.

From the Omaha World-Herald.

The autocrats of Russia robbed the people of very plainly shown by the amount of property seized and the grand riches held in their own names. It is stated that the private property of the government has seized property valued at \$200,000,000 from which the former czar Nicholas enjoyed a life revenue. Seizure of other properties valued at \$85,000,000 and of properties of grand dukes and duchesses valued at \$210,000,000 is being considered. The czar still has \$50,000,000 on deposit in the Bank of England and Grand Duke Alexis left \$10,000,000 in the Bank of France. The czar's annual income at the time he was deposed is estimated at \$55,000,000.

As yet no inventory of the Kaiser's private property has been published, but after the war, when it is made, it is not likely that it will be far below that of the czar. He and the empress also have three deposits in other countries. It has been suggested that if Germany is assessed with damages done in Belgium that the property of the aristocrats be taken for an indemnity instead of placing it upon the common people by a government tax. There are other autocrats in Europe who hold immense amounts of property in their own names that rightfully belongs to the people. They have all cast an anchor to leeward, however, by making large deposits in other countries, to ward against a day when they may be touched off their thrones. There are millions of such deposits in New York and perhaps also in the banks of other cities in this country.

Peace With Justice.

From the New Haven Journal-Courier.

Nothing will satisfy this free republic but the definite assurance that democracy has been made safe. In the meantime those who permit themselves to be deceived by the rumors of restlessness and peace yearnings in Germany are weakening America's power of resistance. It has become necessary to teach Germany a lesson she will heed. Peace with justice can alone be considered.

Hand That Rocks the Boat.

From the New Republic.

The underlying philosophy of most battle criticism is this: The hand that rocks the boat rules the world. It is not an inexcusable basis for criticism, considering the stupidity and folly of the particular world administration we have, but it has the disadvantage of indicating a whole class and may just as well be used from that. It is a class which can make a mistake in the first place, as soon as any order or reasonable consideration.



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HOW TO CONQUER THE CRAMP
Worst Effect is Panic, Which Causes the Swimmer to Let All the Air Out of His Lungs.

A cramp is merely a contraction of the muscles caused by the penetration of the cold. Obviously, it could not of itself cause drowning. Its effect, according to Popular Science Monthly, is to cause a panic which throws the swimmer off his guard, causing him to let the air out of his lungs and thus allow the air passages to become filled with water. The safeguard against such a panic is absolute confidence in the floating power of the body and a demonstrable knowledge of the proper way to quickly fill the lungs to utmost capacity with air.

The moment a cramp is felt, the swimmer should turn on his back and begin to gulp the air, making no effort to keep himself from sinking. As he sinks he slowly exhales under water, through the mouth, with the lips puckered as for whistling. If it is a stomach cramp the knees will be drawn up against the abdomen, but the swimmer should force them out, pushing on them with both hands and using all his strength until they are fully extended. This will no doubt cause great pain for a few seconds, but as soon as the legs are straightened out the cramp will vanish, and the body, buoyed up by the air in the lungs, will shoot up to the surface. There still inhaling in great gulps and exhaling through puckered lips, the swimmer may float until he regains his strength or is picked up.

In case of cramp in the leg or arm the same system of breathing is followed and the affected part is straightened out by sheer strength.

Plumbers.
Whenever you invite the plumbers in to spend the week and fix the kitchen faucet you should plan ahead. Have everything in readiness.

Plumbers are often a little hurt to see that there have been no preparations. Plumbers take these things very keenly.

If a pipe is leaking and you are going to have the plumbers come, move everything out of the kitchen so they will have room for their tools. With good weather and no mishaps they may get all of their tools around the first day.

Getting all the tools around is a good day's work for two plumbers and a boy. On the second day they examine the leak and make notes then get busy planning the week's work on it. If the leak is a plain hole then the thing is simple and they finish it up in smart shape within the week.

It is best to send the children to the country when the plumbers come. Put a lid over the goldfish bowl. If you haven't a spare room or a stable you might arrange to have them board with the neighbors—Illinois State Register.

Had Good Reason.
Bystander—You have certainly shown great bravery in saving that man's life. Is he a relative of yours?
Hero—Relative? Oh, no! But he owes me \$200.

Unwritten poems and unprinted songs make life endurable.

A Perfect Day
should end—as well as begin—with a perfect food, say—
Grape-Nuts
with cream.

A crisp, delicious food, containing the entire nutriment of whole wheat and barley, including the vital mineral elements, so richly provided by Nature in these grains.

Every daily should have its daily ration of Grape-Nuts.
"There's a Reason"