

The Secret Dispatch

By JAMES GRANT

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

"Say, if he was to perish thus, suspicion might fall upon me; for he is a favorite officer of the Empress, and of Weymann, too. My plan is this: I may get the dispatch to-night in your castle."

"And if not?"

"Then I shall again lure and mislead Balgonie, and bring him here in the night."

"What then?" asked the woodman, sagely.

"How dull we are, Paulovitch. We shall drug and drown him; thus shall he die without a wound. I will take back the dispatch to Novgorod, and you can carry the body on his horse to St. Petersburg, where a sum will be given you for finding it. The poor stranger, they will say, has perished amid our keen Russian frosts, and that will be all. Nicholas Paulovitch, the carcass will be well worth twenty rubles to thee."

"And thy fifty?"

"You shall receive when the affair is over, and when you come to me at Novgorod, where I am quartered."

"By the bones of my tribe, I am with you, Podatchkine!" exclaimed the half-breed with ferocious joy. Then they shook heartily their hard and dingy hands—hands that had wrought many a deed of merciless cruelty.

A few minutes more and these worthy conspirators had separated.

There was a third person who had overheard the first savage plot, and who felt his heart stirred with pity and terror for Balgonie, who had given her the silver token at Krelko but yesterday—the gypsy girl, Olga Pavlovna, the sister of Nicholas Paulovitch, and she resolved to baffle both conspirators if she could.

CHAPTER IV.

Corporal Podatchkine was an admirable specimen of his own type of Russian. His thick black scrubby hair was cut straight across the forehead in a line with the eyebrows, and at each side it hung perpendicularly down below the ears, and was, moreover, cut square across the neck behind; and he kept alternately scratching and smoothing his rugged front, nervously and assiduously, when he removed his fur Cossack cap; and, full of affected concern, even to exhibiting tears in his small, cunning eyes, presented himself to Natalie Mierowna next morning, and besought her to have him "conducted to the chamber of his brave, his beloved captain, his comrade and brother, who was, he now learned, seriously ill, helpless and delirious"—and, in fact, just as the cunning corporal wished him to be.

There he found Balgonie, certainly too ill and weak either to recognize him or understand what he was about; so the faithful Cossack made a rapid and skillful investigation of all the officer's pockets for the dispatch. Not a vestige of it was to be found.

"What can he have done with it?" muttered the bewildered corporal; "can he have lost it in the river, or swallowed it?"

The truth is that Natalie Mierowna had her doubts about the fidelity of Podatchkine, and even of some of her own domestics, and aware of the risk run by the stranger if he lost a dispatch of the empress, she had, prior to the introduction of the corporal, secured the document, and at that moment it was hidden in her own fair bosom until she could secure it in a safer place. Poor Natalie! Alas, she little knew its contents, and the horrors they were yet to produce.

Beffed thus in his attempt to secure it, there was no resource for the faithful warrior of the steppes now but to take up his quarters where he was nothing loath to do, at the Castle of the Louisa, and there quietly await the recovery of the death, he cared not which, of Balgonie; and to concert further measures with the huge gypsy, Nicholas Paulovitch, whom he saw daily.

It was no feverish dream of Balgonie that Natalie Mierowna had been hovering about his bedside; for she and her cousin Mariolizza had been his especial nurses.

In less than three days the feverish delirium subsided, sense completely returned, and the young captain appeared to be laboring under a species of indolence.

"My dispatch," he frequently said aloud—"I must be gone with my dispatch."

"Might it not be intrusted to Corporal Podatchkine?" asked Natalie one morning, as she personally gave him his warm and soothing drink with her own hand, Katiushka, the maid, standing demurely by with a silver salver.

"Impossible, Hopesara, for so I may call you; an officer alone can carry a dispatch for the empress. Its contents are most urgent; this delay, over which I have no control, may be visited by royal displeasure, even punishment; and I fear that the air of Tobolsk or Arkutsk would suit a Scotaman's lungs, Natalie Mierowna."

"Yet tarry here you must," she said, with a smile, the beauty of which proved very bewildering; "the Louisa is coated with ice this morning, but not so thick, however, that it might not be broken by throwing a stone from here; but to travel yet would only kill you, Carl Ivanovitch, and cannot be thought of just now."

Then she glided away, with her beam- ing smile, her white hands and taper arms, her rustling dress of scarlet silk trimmed with snowy miniver, and all the same of perfume that pervaded her. Balgonie sighed wearily yet pleasantly, and half thought that beautiful figure a dream, as he turned on his soft and luxurious pillow and marveled whether his past or his present existence was the real one.

CHAPTER V.

Charles Balgonie, son of John Balgonie of Strathern, had come into the world during that which was perhaps the most eventful, saddest and impoverished of British centuries, the middle of the eighteenth century.

boyhood, upon the tender mercies of a bachelor uncle, Mr. Gamaliel Balgonie, a hard-hearted, grasping, avaricious merchant in Dundee.

In the lovely vale of Strathern stood the home of Charles Balgonie. On the death of his parents his small paternal estate of a few hundred per annum would have become his inheritance, but the relation before mentioned—the paternal uncle, Gamaliel, suddenly produced a will, by which, to the profound astonishment of all, the entire estate was left to him as a return for certain loans and sums advanced to the deceased, of which, however, no proof could be found; but it was a veritable deathbed will, written accurately by a notary, and duly signed.

Though tremulous and shaky, strangely so—and rather unlike the usual signature of the deceased laird, three men there were, accounted good, worthy and religious men, who solemnly deposed to having seen "the hand of the dead man pen those words."

It was a case which made some noise in those days, because thirty-six hours after the alleged signature was given John Balgonie died.

The law of Scotland requires that, after framing and signing such a deed, the testator must have been able to go once at least to church or market. How it came to pass we know not now, but the dispute, though without a basis, was brought before the supreme court by some friends of the orphan, for there were not a few persons in Strathern who alleged that John Balgonie's hand had certainly traced the signature which was sworn to so solemnly as his—but had done so after death; the pen being placed in the fingers of the corpse, which were guided by those of the pious and worthy merchant of Dundee, who wanted his nephew's little patrimony in aid of certain speculations of his own.

Pending a decision, the bereaved boy was removed to the busy town on Tay-side, and was left to solace his sorrows at school, prior, as he supposed, to becoming a drudge in his affectionate uncle's counting house, when the last of his slender inheritance had been frittered away in the fangs of the law.

One day his worthy uncle Gam returned to Edinburgh by the packet. The case had been decided against him, and the court was about to name trustees to look after the estate of the orphan boy. Mr. Gamaliel Balgonie was unusually grave, stern and abstracted; but he deliberately sent himself at his desk, and while humming, as was his wont, a verse of a psalm, he penned a letter addressed to the captain of a vessel then lying in the harbor, and gave it to his nephew for immediate delivery, desiring him to wait for the answer.

The boy, then in his fifteenth year, started on his errand with alacrity. He soon found the ship, which was moored at some distance from the shore, with her fore-topgallant loose, to indicate that she was ready for sea; yet Charles had no suspicion of the trap into which he was running or the cruel fate that awaited him.

The skipper, a rough, surly and brutal looking man, eyed the boy keenly, while tearing the letter into minute fragments, after he had perused it, with a grim air of satisfaction. He then went to a locker, where he poured out a glass of milk.

"Drink that, my lad," said he, "while I write an answer to your uncle."

Charles drained the glass; but scarcely had he done so when the cabin seemed to be whirling round him; he thought that he was becoming seasick, and was in the act of staggering toward the cabin stairs when he was felled to the floor by a blow from the skipper's heavy hand—a blow dealt cruelly and unparingly.

He recovered consciousness some time after, to find himself—stiff, sore and bloody, from a wound in the temple—lying on deck in the moonlight, with some twenty-five other boys, several of whom were in the same state of stupor in which they had been brought on board. To his horror and dismay, Charles now found that the ship was at sea, and running between the dangerous reef known as the Bell Rock and the flat sandy shore of Barrie; and that, through the machinations of Uncle Gamaliel, he had been lured into the hands of one of the most notorious plantation crimps that ever infested the Scottish coast, Captain Zachariah Coffin of New England, whose craft, the Picacona, was a letter of marque, carrying twelve six-pounders and fighting her own way.

After this the Picacona was hauled up, in order to go north about Cape Wrath, having on board nearly fifty boys. Storms came on when the Picacona entered the Pentland Firth, and four days after Dunnet Head with his flinty brow, 400 feet in height, had vanished into the wreck and mist again, a sudden cry of fire caused every heart to thrill on board the lawless vessel.

Whether an act of treachery or not, it was impossible to ascertain; but it had broken out near the ship's magazine, to which it communicated with frightful rapidity, for suddenly, while the crew were all running fore and aft with buckets, a dreadful explosion seemed to rend the Picacona in two. Half of the main deck was blown away with fragments of the boats. A whirlwind of fragments flew in every direction, and then the flames shot into the air in scorching volumes.

Discipline, or such a system of it as Zachariah Coffin maintained on board, was totally at an end. Some of the crew lowered the only remaining boat and fought like wild beasts for possession of it, knocking each other into the water without mercy. Captain Coffin cocked his pistol at the gangway, shot one man dead and swore that he would kill the next man who dared to precede him; but he was struck from behind by an iron marline spike and, falling, together with his savage dog, into the flaming gulf that yawned amidships, was seen no more.

Some of the crew ultimately pushed off the boat; others sprang overboard and hid on the spray and beams. But those perished miserably after being half scorched. Some were crushed to death by the falling masts and masts. Many

held on to the fore and main chains, till these became so unbearably hot that they had to drop off, with screams of despair—when they sank, faint, weary and helpless, to the bottom at last.

How it all happened Charles Balgonie never knew. But hours after the whole affair was over and the detected Picacona had burned down to her waterline and sank, leaving all the sea around her discolored and covered with floating pieces of charred wood and the buoyant parts of her cargo, he found himself adrift in the wide and stormy Pentland Firth, but wedged with comparative safety in a large fragment of the fore-top, to which, the yard being still attached by the sling, a certain amount of steadiness was given; yet his heart leaped painfully each time when the fragment of wreck rose on the summit of a green glassy wave or went surging down into the dark and watery trough between.

To add to the terrors of his lonely situation, the sun had sunk and gloomy purple clouds and a rainy night was drawing on. Half-drowned, the poor boy soon became faint and exhausted, and would seem to have dropped into a species of stupor, for when roused by the sound of strange voices he found himself close by a great and towering ship, which lay, now right in the wind's eye with her mainyard aback and her gunports and hammock nettings full of weather-beaten faces, gazing at him with eagerness and curiosity in the twilight, while a boat was lowered and pulled steadily toward him by six sailors clad in dark green.

She proved to be a Russian fifty-gun ship, the Anne Ivanovna, commanded by Thomas Mackenzie, one of the many Scottish admirals who have bravely carried the Russian flag in the Baltic and the Black Sea.

His youthful countryman became his protegee. The worthy admiral sought to make a sailor of Charles, but the latter had seen quite enough of the sea while on board the Picacona, and while he was clinging like a limpet or barnacle to the piece of drifting wreck, so he became a soldier, and served under General Ochterlov, of Gynid, in the Regiment of Smolensk, where as a cadet his superior smartness, intelligence and education, not less than his courage, soon distinguished him among his thick-skirted Russian comrades. Thus in less than ten years he became, as we find him, Captain Carl Ivanovitch Balgonie, the most trusted aide-de-camp of Lieutenant General Weymann, commander-in-chief of the city and district of St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER VI.

"You can never know, Ivanovitch Balgonie, how much I pitied you—"

"You, lady?" was the joyous response. "That is, I and Mariolizza," said Natalie Mierowna, slightly blushing. "When you were sunk on a fever bed in a foreign land, so far from your country, your friends, your mother perhaps, for you are young enough, I think, to miss her still at such a time, although a soldier."

"Far, indeed, in many ways," replied Balgonie, with a bitter smile, as he thought of Uncle Gam, or perhaps it was illness that had weakened him. "I have a country, to which it is more than probable I shall never return; but father, mother or friends I have none there—all who loved me once have gone to the silent grave before me."

"Ah?"

"Yes, lady."

"But you are making many friends in Russia," said Mariolizza cheerfully; "there are my cousin, Basil Mierowna, and my brother, Apollo Usakoff, my bold, I know, love you as a brother."

"True, and most grateful am I to them for their regard, for both are polished gentlemen. I have old General Weymann, too, though I know not what he will think of this delay in delivering the imperial dispatch."

"Alas, that most tiresome dispatch!" exclaimed Natalie. "But I forgot," she added, with a curl of her short upper lip; "those who proceed on the errands of the Empress Catharine would need seven-league boots, or the carpet of the prince in the fairy tale, which transported the owner at a wish."

"Hush, cousin," said Mariolizza, glancing timidly around.

But no one was near, save Corporal Podatchkine, who was at a little distance on the terrace, when this conversation took place two days after Balgonie became convalescent, and fully a week since the night of peril on which he swam the Louisa.

"I cannot describe to you, ladies, the relief that came to my mind in discovering that it had never been lost nor stolen, but was safe."

"In Natalie's bosom!" said Mariolizza, laughing.

(To be continued.)

NEW WAY TO RAISE BABIES.

Hospital Managers Have Devised an Eminent Successful Method.

Hospital methods are adopted more each year in the private treatment of babies—the method, that is to say, of the superior modern hospital conducted under the best medical supervision. The cradle is doomed and all its rocking memories. The child lies upon its bed and is not picked up and carried about the room even when it yells. Visitors and relatives are no longer encouraged to pound it in the ribs, pinch its chin or transfer microbes to its lips. This strictness is laughed at by ribald outsiders and resented by critics of the old time regime, which, like every other fossil, is attributed to nature, no doubt, with justice, but without relevance.

Actually, this intelligent treatment of infancy is doing much to check nervousness in our children, to protect them from bad habits and needless excursions and to make them self-reliant. Babyhood, indeed, is the best conducted age at present. When the child grows older it meets undoubted loss in the substitution of nurse's for mother's care, a tendency encouraged by the new activities of women and by city life. At the beginning, however, the first weeks and months of his existence, when change and development are more rapid than at any other period, the human being has never had such decent treatment as it is the happy fashion to bestow upon him now. He is treated for his own welfare to the end of the amusement of his

Scandinavian-Godfather's Weekly.

KOREA—'I'M 'IT.'



Topic & Time

Farm hands in Norway receive \$40 to \$80 a year.

In New York city schools 1,000 children have trachoma.

Trust company deposits now amount to over \$1,500,000,000. This is an increase of \$1,000,000,000 in the last five years.

Cheongju, the port of Seoul, the capital of Korea, looks out over a vast shallow bay, where the tide rises thirty feet.

Hetty Green sometimes rides in a \$12,800 automobile, but it is owned by her son, Edward H. R. Green, of the Texas Midland Railroad.

Since the campaign entered upon by the health authorities against the hordes of rats at the London docks, 255,372 have been destroyed.

The whistling by switch engines which work all night in the railway yards in and near cities is permitted in no country other than America.

One hundred and sixty dollars was paid recently for the pen used by the Emperors of Prussia, Austria and Russia in signing the holy alliance treaty.

James Stillman, president of the National City Bank, of New York, commonly called the Standard Oil Bank, is a director of fifty-two corporations.

A German physician recommends soap as a cure for sleeplessness. The soap latter must be allowed to dry on the skin before the patient goes to bed.

Lord Kelvin's estimate of the age of the world is: "Not so great as 40,000,000 years; possibly as little as 20,000,000 years; probably 30,000,000 years."

If the deposits now in the savings banks of this country were divided per capita, every man, woman and child would receive \$417.21. The total sum is \$2,935,204,845.

There were 144 German domestic servants last year who were awarded the servants' golden cross for having lived forty years with one family. Only one was found in Berlin.

As a protection against consumption, it is proposed to inoculate every calf in Germany with specially prepared tuberculin bacilli, on the plan of vaccination in order that the animal may not contract tuberculosis later.

Chung Kuei Ti, the leader of the guard of the court at Peking, has stated that his troops are unable to shoot, because they have never been supplied with ammunition, and so are quite unaccustomed to the sound of the rifle.

Nine-tenths of the external trade of the Bahamas, which amounted to \$1,275,000 last year, is with the United States. The principal exports of the islands are pineapples and sponges, and the imports flour and earthen and glassware.

The school savings bank system is now in practice in 797 schools in eighty-five cities of twenty-one States. The pupils have saved over \$2,000,000, of which \$1,500,000 has been withdrawn. The exact balance due depositors Jan. 1 was \$521,966.83.

Since Alaska passed into the hands of the United States the Government has received \$9,065,822 through its various departments there. The expenses of administration have been \$8,696,780, so that the Government has made a profit from its investment.

The Dogs' Protective League has arranged with veterinary surgeons throughout England to set aside a certain hour in each week when poor people may present their dogs for advice and treatment. The league also trains nurses for attendance on dogs.

The Canadian Pacific Railway officials have announced that the company has been condemned by a British judge in Hong-Kong to pay the Chinese Government \$90,000 for running down a Chinese gunboat with one of its steamships, the Empress of Japan.

In a German factory, which employs 107 men, making agricultural implements and traction engines, 25 per cent get 71 to 95 cents a day, 59 per cent get 45 cents to \$1.31, and 16 per cent get above \$1.31. This does not include boys or apprentices, and is for a nine-and-a-half-hour day.

BELIEVE IN MANY OMENS.

Credulity of West Indians Gives the Planters Decided Advantage.

The French islands have two superstitions which are not to be found in one of the West Indies. These are a belief in some sort of werewolf or vampire, which lives on the blood of wayfarers, upon whom it leaps when they are abroad in the night time, or of sleepers whom it finds in lonely spots; and, second, a belief in what is

GUYED FITZ TO HIS BORROW.

Pauline's Unexpected Demonstration of His Hitting Power.

Bob Fitzsimmons gave an unexpected demonstration of his physical might the other day in a downtown sporting goods house. The big fighter drops into this establishment frequently and edifies the clerks and whatever customers may be about by his skill at drumming the punching bag. He rarely fails to perform his old trick of knocking the bag loose from its bearings, and on this occasion, after a hard blow had torn the bag loose from the spring that held it, one of the officers of the concern who was looking on and who knows Fitz well, remarked to the pugilist:

"Oh, I don't think much of that stunt, Fitz; that piece of rope was an old one and it wouldn't take much of a blow to break it. It took you some time to get that bag loose, and my opinion is you are getting to be a back number. If you couldn't land on Coo-bett any harder than that he'd trim you in jig time."

Fitz didn't say anything in regard to the guying, but the mention of Coo-bett's name made his face take on a more determined expression.

"Then," said the business man, is telling of the incident, "I got a brand new piece of stout sash cord, nearly thick enough to lift a horse and rigged up the punching bag with this cord."

"Now," I said to Fitz, "there is something you could not knock loose in a hundred years." Fitz lammed away at the bag viciously for a while, but didn't knock it loose. I stood there guying him some more, telling him how he'd gone back and all that, and then I walked away about twenty feet.

"I turned around to see how Fitz was getting along, and as I did so I saw his arm shoot through the air so fast it was only a blur in the air, and the next thing I knew the bag was shooting through space like a bullet."

"It was coming straight for me, too, and at such speed that I didn't have time to dodge it. It cleared an intervening show case, and the next instant I was wondering whether I was in the ring or in the hospital. The flying ball caught me squarely over the eye, and I surely thought I would have to take the count. The blow dazed me for a moment and nearly put me out."

"I guess I was the one that was being guyed all the time, but in any event between the kick of a mule and a man who can drive a punching bag twenty feet through the air and hard enough to almost knock you down, the mule for mine. I don't think Fitz is quite a candidate yet for the home for superannuated old men."—New York Sun.

Trees in China.

Tree planting in Northern China is being strenuously enjoined by the authorities, not only as a productive industry for the people, but also as a means of strengthening the river embankments against floods and of checking drought. Of late years trees have been cut down wholesale for agricultural purposes, while the peasants do not take the trouble to plant fresh ones, because the soil is so loose that they must dig down very deep for a satisfactory foothold. So vast tracts of fertile land are left barren, while in the northern provinces especially the influx of sand carried by high winds from the Mongolian desert threatens to fill up the unoccupied ground.

So in the important Province of Chih, which contains the capital, Peking, is a government proclamation notifying the "eight directions for tree plantation"—most minute instructions as to the kind of trees required, the depth they should be planted and the fertilizers to be used—and the "ten benefits to be derived from the same," such, among others, as the sale of timber and fruit, the beneficial influence of trees in attracting rain, preserving the just equilibrium of wind influences, and purifying the atmosphere, while "travelers and families will find shade and rest under the branches"—a poetic truth for conclusion.—Golden Penny.

New Type of Engine.

From Germany comes news of a locomotive worked by steam and yet independent of fire of its own. The engine has just been completed at the Hohenzollern works at Dusseldorf and is of a type designed for shunting in explosive factories. Instead of carrying fire in its own boiler it is filled with steam from stationary boilers, and when so charged is capable of several hours' work. The first warming up occupies half an hour, and subsequent recharging can be done in a quarter of an hour. The apparatus is so simple that an unskilled workman is able to look after it. The absence of fire in a place where dynamite or gun powder is being handled is the reason for the invention of this type of engine.

Equal to the Emergency.

The old sexton approached the pulpit. "Parson," he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, "the church is on fire!" "All right, John, don't get excited," rejoined the good man as he stopped abruptly in the middle of his sermon. "You pass down one aisle while I go down the other and we'll quietly wake up the congregation."

Answered.

"When does a girl reach the 'mas' rizable age?"

"When her father's purse has reached the marriageable size."—Detroit Free Press.

When a leap-year girl proposes it's up to the young man to lose his self-possession.

Never crack a joke on delicate ground.