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 Mazeppa—that Pole whose story is so well known, and who after being bound naked on 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 Ukarine, 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 Mierowna. 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 uncared 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. Katinka, 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—yea, 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 grandly terrible a figure was made by Mohammed the Great when, on a stage before his discontented 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 dusky 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 those 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. Weymarn, by a special messenger, while I was loitering at Louga."

"So, so! We must be prompt in action. I have cruised thrice 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 Ukarine and the Don, among whom we have many impatient adherents, and by all who hold of the Houses of Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel, 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 Utal 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 but 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 Palatine ship 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 sooth his ruffled feelings by several enormous pinches of the sharp snuff of Berezovski, from the box which had been found in the fob of the later Peter III.; and by beating with his cane the Cossack, Jagouski.

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

"Nicholas Paulovitch, 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 leagued 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 Vlasfef, Lieutenant Tschekin, 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.)

How He Worked and What He Made.

A professor who was easily irritated conducted the clinic of nervous diseases at a medical college, Chicago. Remarking about the influence of occupation upon nervous conditions, he illustrated by a patient, an awkward Swede, requesting him to be brief and accurate in his replies, as both teacher and students were tired out and time limited.

"Now, sir, what do you do?" he commenced.

"Aw am not vera well."

"No! I say, what do you do?"

"Oh, yas. Aw verk."

"Yes, I know; but what kind of work?"

"Oh, eet ees hard verk."

"Yes, but do you shovel, drive a car, work at a machine, or do——"

"Oh, yas. Aw verk at a masheen."

"Ah! What kind of a machine?"

"Oh, eet ees a big masheen."

By this time the class was grinning broadly, which caused the professor to be angry, and he said:

"Now, look here, sir; I want no more of this. You answer the questions I ask you or go home. What do you make on this machine?"

"Oh, now Aw understan' you'. Yo' vant to know vat Aw mak on the masheen. Aw mak seventeen cents an hour."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

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 fail in your examination to-morrow?"

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

Point of View.

She—The society women of Boston are going to start a magazine.

He—That's a good idea. Of course, they have plenty of powder for the purpose.

DOINGS OF WOMEN

To the Tactless and Outspoken.

Whenever I hear a person make a tactless speech it always reminds me of an incident that happened when I first went to keeping house. My mother-in-law was a very enthusiastic housekeeper, and had heard me express a wish for a particular kind of cake tin, so one day, having found one on a shopping expedition, she bought it for me. It happened that my younger sister, a very quick-spoken, unthinking girl, came to call on her that same day, and my mother-in-law brought forth the tin, asking if she wouldn't like to see my present.

My sister, however, understood that it was one I had given to her, instead of the other way round, and looking at it critically, blurted out, "Well, I don't think that is much of a present. Couldn't she think of anything better than that?"

As mother's face began to redden, my husband, who was present, could not resist the ludicrousness of it and roared, manlike. When he recovered himself and explained it was my sister's turn to display a blush.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," she stammered. "It—it—it's so different—that way you know, as Mary is just beginning housekeeping." But the thing was said, and my husband rejoiced in it for many a day. It was a lesson to my poor sister to sometimes think before she spoke.

There are so many of us that say such things unknowingly. I wonder sometimes if we are not nearly as much to be feared as is the woman who prides herself on being so outspoken, "always saying just what she thinks." We are somewhat prepared for it, however, when such a person sympathetically says, "Poor dear, you are not feeling well to-day, I know. You are looking so sallow," or in speaking of our bonnet we have economized so closely for, say, "That is pretty, but not nearly so becoming as that little one you wore for so long after you were married."

I find it safest to await developments before giving my opinion of others' sayings, doings and belongings. It was such a shock to me one morning when I was wearing a corn-colored ribbon stock to have a man say to me, "Have you a sore throat? I see you have it wrapped up." It startled me so that I replied, "Yes, it feels real bad." I can laugh about it now, but then I thought if that was the effect of my new ribbon, I would wear it no more.—Mabel G. Flint, in New England Homestead.

Spring Tailor-Made Gown.

Ethical Side of Good Cookery.

The lecturer at a household club talked to her audience the other day about the moral side of good cookery, and told her hearers that she believed the immoral side to be found in bakers' pies, bread and cake, in canned meats, vegetables and preserves. The woman who, to gain time for what she calls the higher needs of her family or for her own culture, habitually shifts her cooking to the shoulders of the grocer, is robbing her husband and children of health and strength, and using her money for household expenses in the most extravagant way. One may belong to a dozen clubs and be a bright and shining light therein, may paint china, sing divinely, and feed and clothe the heathen; but the duty that lies nearest her, and the foundation of all true advancement, begins with nutritious and suitable food daintily served.

Woman's Rights in Russia.

While the woman's rights crusade seems to be practically at a standstill in the United States, it seems to be making considerable strides in unlooked-for portions of Europe. It has penetrated even into Russia, and bids fair to become one of the more important agencies in ushering in the brighter day, which is surely, if yet slowly, dawning even upon that country. Already the government has made important concessions to the women. In many parts of the country they have been allowed to participate in the deliberations of the city and county councils, and the influence which they have thus been enabled to wield has proved beneficial to the country. In several places, especially in the cities, schools for young girls have of late years been established and have met with considerable success. The movement for the higher education of woman has been especially successful. The society in St. Petersburg for the instruction of women in the higher branches of education recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary.

The Spanish women are also beginning to awake to a consciousness of their rights. Unlike Russia, the movement in Spain is mainly confined to the humbler classes, and, like Germany, has largely fallen into the hands of the Socialists.

Mrs. Sarah R. Hadden, a heroine of the Utah Indian wars, has died near Ephraim, Utah. She was one of the pioneers who crossed the plains with the Mormon expedition from Nauvoo, Ill.

Ex-Empress Eugenie has been spending some time in Paris, the scene of many glories in her past life. Her stay in the French capital seemed to benefit her health, though she is quite feeble.

Miss Florence Hayward, special lady commissioner of the St. Louis fair, is in New Orleans collecting material for the historical exhibit, which will be limited to matter pertaining solely to the history of the Louisiana Territory.

Miss May W. Charles, of London, has been admitted to membership in the Royal Institute of British Architects. She graduated from the schools of the Royal Academy and after being established in business six years now has a fine connection.

Miss E. L. Chamberlain, president of the London Women's Gardening Association, is herself a jobbing gardener, having been in business thirteen years. She recommends women to take up the work in this way instead of seeking regular situations.

Miss Nellie Burke, the only woman machinist who ever applied for admission to a labor union, will be admitted to the local organization of the International Machinists at Wilkesbarre, Pa. Her application has been approved by President O'Connell.

Character in Walking.

Tiptoe walking symbolizes surprise, curiosity, discretion or mystery.

Turned-in toes are often found with pre-occupied, absent-minded persons.

The miser's walk is represented as stooping and noiseless, with short, nervous, anxious steps.

Slow steps, whether long or short, suggest a gentle or reflective state of mind, as the case may be.

Where a revengeful purpose is hidden under a feigned smile, the step will be slinking and noiseless.

The proud step is slow and measured; the toes are conspicuously turned out, the legs straightened.

The direction of the steps wavering and following every changing impulse of the mind inevitably betrays uncertainty, hesitation and indecision.

Obstinate people, who in argument rely more on muscularity than on intellectual power, rest the feet flatly and firmly on the ground, walk heavily and slowly, and stand with the legs firmly planted and far apart.

Woman's Best Years.

A woman should be at her best in middle age. She should be more beautiful at 40 than at 16, if she is not a victim to the ravages of disease. Most of the world-famous beauties reached their zenith at 40. Helen of Troy was first heard of at that age. Cleopatra was considerably more than 30 when she first met Antony. Aspasia was 23 when she married Pericles, and was still a brilliant figure twenty years later. Anne of Austria was 38 when pronounced the most beautiful woman in Europe. Catherine of Russia ascended the throne at 3 and reigned thirty-five years. Mlle. Recamier was at her zenith at 40. From 35 to 50 should be the richest and best years of a woman's life.

For Quilted Sunbonnets.

When making quilted sunbonnets, have a piece of strong, thin goods (flour sacks are fine) large enough for three head pieces; starch with well-cooked flour starch and when partially dry fold to the size of the head piece and iron until entirely dry. All of the starch will never get out of this lining no matter how many wettings the bonnet receives. Baste the outside over this starched piece and quilt. When the bonnet is made it is ready to wear without a "doing up."

HIS FRENZY VANISHED THEN.

When the Undersized Negro Saw Who His Opponent Was.

A black gang of street hands, engaged on a pipe-laying job in South Washington, were regaling themselves during the noon hour a few days ago in a Jim Crow groggery to which they happened to be handy. One of them was a gigantic black, about 6 feet 4 inches in height, whose rolled-up sleeves exhibited arms with muscles on them standing out like huge effusions of resin on the trunk of a pine. He looked as if it would have been no trick at all for him to hold a barrel of flour out at arm's length.

He was eating his bucket-dinner when an excited-looking little black man, carrying his coat on his arm, bounded through the swinging doors of the groggery. He was about 5 feet 2 inches short, and compared to the Nubian giant at the end of the bar, he looked something as a Shetland might when ranged alongside a Percheron. But what he lacked in inches he appeared to make up in aggressiveness. Plainly he had blood in his eye and a chip on his shoulder.

He skated over to the center of the bar-room, tossed his coat onto the floor, jumped on it, and then demanded in a frenzied shriek:

"Ah, wants tuh see de coluh o' de nigguh whut beat up mah brothuh las' night!"

The loungers of the street gang turned from the bar and regarded him curiously and silently. The silence with which they received his defiance seemed to lend courage to the undersized black. He jumped on the wadded-up coat a couple of more times, glared around him fiercely, and again yelled with all his might:

"Ah'm waitin' fo' tuh hab a peek at de onnehy, blue-gummed coon whut beat up mah brothuh at de pahloh social las' night!"

Then the gigantic Ethiopian strolled over to the middle of the groggery floor, where the little black was looking defiant. Placing a vast paw on his hip in an easy attitude, the giant inclined himself forward and leaned down so that he could look into the small black's face, and he said in a low, indifferent tone:

"Ah'm de niggur whut beat him!"

All of the aggressiveness seemed to percolate out of the undersized black at the sight of the gigantic frame of the man bending over him. His eyes rolled and his features twitched. Then he reached down and picked up his stamped-on coat and began to nudge toward the door. As he shuffled toward the door he stopped long enough to say to the grinning black giant:

"Well, man, yo' sho'ly come uh-nigh uh-killin' him!"

Then he shot through the swinging doors and took down the street as if all the uniformed Dorsey Foultz chasers in the District of Columbia were after him.—Washington Post.

SIMPLICITY OF THE POPE.

How He Once Prepared Coffee for a Guest with His Own Hands.

One morning early a friend of mine, a Venetian nobleman, called on him. Mgr. Sarto had said mass and settled down to work. His sister had gone out to mass, or for the household marketing, which they were doing at the Rialto on August 4, 1903, the day of wonders in their simple life.

"Has the count taken coffee?" asked the bishop.

"Well, to tell the truth, no, because the business was urgent, and I have come straight from the railway station," the guest replied.

No excuse availed, and Mgr. Sarto rose and went into the kitchen. So the bishop of ducal Mantua and his guest might have been seen there talking and laughing, while monsignor coaxed the charcoal with a black kitchen fan, the coffee fizzed in a tin pot on the range, and the count got out cups and saucers, in order to save his distinguished host what menial service he could. Then they had coffee together at the kitchen table.—Century.

The Daily Press.

The daily press, as I look at it, is a wonderful detective. It can run down public opinion and report it marvelously. In this respect it has an ever-widening outlook. As a news-gatherer its facilities perpetually astonish me. The weapon of publicity it often wields with undoubted power. But, when all is said, is it much more than a gigantic reporter? Does it really instruct and guide? Or does it simply furnish by the myriad page the stuff out of which the people construct their own independent judgment? I confess that newspapers seem to me more and more to exemplify Gladstone's definition of the orator—they receive from the public as mist what they give back as a shower."—Century.

What Was Wrong.

A workman, on coming home in the evening, was asked by his wife to look at the clock. She complained that the clock had been silent all day, and she could not tell the reason. Her husband took it down and examined it carefully. Then he took off the hands and face and looked at the works with the aid of a magnifying glass. Next he blew into it with the bellows, oiled the wheels, and then put it back again. But still it would not strike. Tired and puzzled he went off to bed. Next morning at breakfast his wife said to him:

"George, I think I can tell what is amiss with our clock."

"Well, what is it?" he sharply asked.

"It wants winding up," said his partner.

It is the law of self-preservation that makes a man wearing a silk hat look over his shoulder when he passes a small boy with a snowball.