

The Secret Dispatch

By JAMES GRANT

CHAPTER XIX.

An exclamation of dismay and grief escaped Balgonie on beholding this appalling spectacle; the weird and ghastly horror of which was enhanced by the uncertain light in which it was exhibited, and which imparted a wavering and almost life-like action to the corpse, as with its long hair floating, head and arms pendant, it swayed to and fro in the morning wind against the castle wall.

"The Lord have mercy upon us!" cried Basil Mierowitz, covering his face with his hands, and permitting the musket which he had armed himself to fall to the ground with a clank, which, together with his most mournful exclamation, alone broke the silence.

"Behold," said Bernikoff, in cruel triumph. "This is your emperor—now let him head your troops. Doubtless he will make a fine figure on the imperial throne."

"Oh! Bernikoff," exclaimed Basil, "you are like Judas, as we may see him at the Kazan Church—no hand on the mouth denoting treachery, and the other on a bag of money."

"Thou liest, lieutenant! my fingers know more of the grip of steel than of gold," said the other furiously, as he snatched the hilt of his broken sabre at the speaker.

"So—so—this has been your work and decision? Thou art a cruel judge; but remember the law of Peter the Great—"

"Which makes the judge answerable for his decision. Then shall I content me, traitor, and be answerable for my decision as well as for its execution."

"You have done a deed for which hell must blush and angels weep," was the forcible reply of Mierowitz, who seemed to overcome by grief and horror as to lose all self-possession; for he now ordered his men to disperse to the woods—to seek safety in flight; and then calmly taking off his sword and belt and sash, he threw them on the ground, saying:

"Since my imperial master is dead, further resistance would be vain in me. He was almost immediately afterward struck to the earth and made prisoner by Lieut. Tschekin, who, with a party of dismounted Cossacks, had stolen through the casemates and galleries to a postern opening on the rear of the drawbridge, and these, after firing a confused volley with their pistols and muskets, fell with their sharp crooked sabres upon the now thoroughly disheartened adherents of Mierowitz. Lieut. Usakoff and Jagonski alone made any vigorous resistance, resolving not to be taken alive.

Fighting desperately, almost back to back, the former armed with the sabre of Mazepa and the latter with a musket, and both bleeding from many wounds, they were driven through the outer barrier toward the town. On the pathway Jagonski stumbled over a comrade and was taken; but Apollo Usakoff, with a shout in which triumph and despair were mingled, leaped into the Neva, the waters of which swept him away, and he was seen no more by his pursuers.

When Tschekin's Cossacks joined in the melee with the fugitives, Balgonie sprang through the wicket, sword in hand, resolved to succor his friend at all hazards; and fortunately arrived just in time to save him from the bulky giant Nicholas Paulovitch, who, with a clubbed musket, was about to give him a blow that must inevitably have proved fatal.

Paulovitch he ran through the heart, and spurning him off the blade with his foot, hurled the snorting ruffian to the ground, and raised his friend, with the assistance of a soldier and Lieut. Tschekin.

"Made prisoner, and by you, too, Carl!" said Basil, reproachfully and in a low voice, for he was faint with wounds and bruises.

"By me, but to save you."

"Seek rather to save Natalie, if you can," he whispered; "is she—"

"Where, where?" said Balgonie, impetuously and imploringly.

But there was no reply. Basil had faintly, and was borne into the Castle of Schlussburg, a prisoner of state.

Balgonie never saw the face of his friend again!

So ended for a time a scheme, the importance of which was only equalled by its bold recklessness—the scheme of two subaltern officers to revolutionize the vast empire of Russia, and to subvert the firm dominion of Catharine II.; and such was the terrible sequel to the "Secret Dispatch" of Balgonie.

Day had completely broken when he was summoned by Bernikoff. Shuddering as he passed through the court of the castle and under the very window where the corpse was yet swaying mournfully to and fro in the morning breeze, Charlie sought the presence of this detestable personage, the thunder of whose wrath he feared was about to descend upon himself.

He found the colonel in his shirt sleeves and almost covered with blood, which was flowing from a wound in his breast and another on the head, from whence it was trickling to the ends of his long and snaky-gray moustaches. To both of these cuts the barber was about to apply dressings, while the patient solaced himself by scheming out some dreadful punishment for Jagonski, who, with several others, had fallen into his gentle hands.

Balgonie, whose thoughts ran chiefly upon how to discover and succor Natalie, was roused to attention by Bernikoff saying grimly:

"Carl Ivanovitch Balgonie, for aiding in the capture of the rebel Mierowitz, I thank you; suspicious I had, but they are gone. You are now, perhaps, to rejoin the Regiment of Smolensko, and shall bear a dispatch from me to Lieut. Gen. Weymar and Lieut. Col. Caschichin, relating the affair of the last twelve hours. Vlasoff shall prepare it, and I shall sign it. Place a feather in the cap, but the captain later as he did at Lounai Nay, look not at me thus, Scout. Had you said that Prince Ivan should be put in my charge; and the devil, together with my duty to the Emperor, inspired

me to destroy him. What is done is done, and is the will of God; and you know, or ought to know, our Muscovite proverb—the Czar is high, and God is everywhere!"

"Three times has this old reprobate mentioned that terrible name, and each time bowing his sinful head!" thought Charlie, with disgust and wonder.

"Hah!" resumed Bernikoff, pursuing his own thoughts, and clenching his teeth in rage and pain, "did that sucking of a lieutenant think to deceive me—I, who have been forty years in the Russian army, and have to deal with the most cunning scoundrels between the Black Sea and the Baltic! Jagonski, too, I'll fill his mouth with gunpowder, put a fuse between his teeth and blow his head off." He gnashed his teeth with pain, and added, "Be ready to ride in an hour, captain; till then, leave me!"

CHAPTER XX.

The empress' court of Secret Chancery soon decided on the fate of Basil Mierowitz, his father, and his cousin, Mariolizn, who had been passive, though suspected in the matter, but their cases taken into future consideration, so they were kept close prisoners while their property and possessions were given up to pillage and military execution. Basil was condemned to be broken alive upon the wheel; but the empress, who had a particular tenderness for handsome men, mitigated his punishment to the less severe one of being beheaded."

A brief paragraph in the London Gazette of the 23d of October records this brave fellow's death, just fourteen days after his rash affair at Schlussburg:

"M. Mierowitz, in pursuance of his sentence, was publicly beheaded on Wednesday last; he behaved at his execution as he had done throughout the whole transaction with the greatest resignation. Six of the soldiers and under-officers who were engaged with him were so severely whipped that it is said three of them are since dead. Many more are to be punished. One, Usakoff, a lieutenant, who was pious to the design, was accidentally drowned."

Notwithstanding his rank and years, Mierowitz was retained in a dungeon among a number of miserable Russian rogues and Polish prisoners, clad in filthy sheepskin, many of them being afflicted with the terrible disease known as matted hair, which hung over their necks in clotted lumps, every tube being swollen and dilated with globules of blood, and there he died.

The lower vaults of Schlussburg were those built by Ivan the Terrible for the reception of a few of the revolutionaries of Novgorod, after he had put twenty-five thousand of her citizens to the sword. They were prisons like the frightful cells of the Bastille; those of the Inquisition, or of old castles of the Middle Ages—a rival to that Chillon to which Byron's genius has given a greater name than ever its terrors won it. One of the lower vaults of Schlussburg was a den, the floor of which was below the rocks whereon the seals of Ladoga basked in the sunshine, and which was consequently liable to be flooded during those inundations that, at certain seasons, overflow all the country for a great way north, so that no crops will grow upon the eminences.

Vaulted with stone, it was nearly square, and measured twelve feet each way, with a floor that sloped down at one end, having been unevenly hewn out when the rock was pierced; and from a portion of this rock sprang the solid arch of granite blocks which formed the roof. A narrow slit, six inches broad by twelve high, and having even in that small space a thick iron bar, admitted to the interior a feeble ray of light. This slit was partly built of stone, but its sill was the living rock of Schlussburg. It opened toward the lake, but gave no prospect save the clouds.

The prisoner, when seated on the stone bench which formed a bed or seat alternately, could only see the changing hues of the sky, and know by the darkness which gradually obscured this mere shot-hole that day was passing away, and that another night, chill, dark, dreary and hopeless, was at hand.

As the floor sloped down some twelve inches or more, the lower end was always full of water, into which the slime that gathered on the vault of the arch fell at intervals with a regular splash that, to the silent and apparently forgotten prisoner, became maddening in its monotony of sound, by day and night, by morning and evening, by dawn and sunset. Then, as the tides rose and fell, or as the waters of the vast inland lake of Ladoga are affected by the Baltic stopping the downward flow of the Neva, or by rains flooding the many tributaries that join them, so did this dark pool in the dungeon rise and fall, when the current oozed through secret and unknown channels or crannies in the granite rocks.

It was in this vault, or one of those adjoining—such a den as that in which Dante placed his demon—that the wife of Count Orloff, the beautiful daughter of the Empress Elizabeth, was drowned, ten years after the date of this history, when the waters of the Neva rose ten feet; and, as they subsided, bore her body to the Gulf of Finland.

No one could live very long in such a place—low, damp, cold and horrible. And well did Bernikoff know this, when, in the blind transports of rage and agony resulting from his double wounds, he barbarously consigned Natalie Mierowitz to such a place—ay, even Natalie, the soft and delicate, the high-bred and tenderly nurtured daughter of Mierowitz; and she had now been in the underground vault for three days and nights—seventy-two hours—which to her had resembled a horrible and protracted nightmare.

She was ignorant as yet of her brother's execution, a week before. Betrayed by one of their most trusted adherents, as the price of his own liberty, she and Katinka had been taken. Of the fate of the latter she knew nothing. For herself, the poor girl only knew she was placed there to await the pleasure of her empress and the grand chancellor.

Hope was dead, completely, in her heart; and though the desire to live was strong, her former life seemed all a dream; or something that had happened long, long ago!

"Crouching on a damp pallet that lay on the couch of stone, her hair disheveled, her dress more than ever torn, discolored and disordered, her snowy hands and arms stripped of every ornament and ring, her tender feet well nigh shoeless, her eyes half closed and surrounded by dark inflamed circles, her cheeks sunk and haggard—it would be difficult to recognize in her the once beautiful and brilliant Natalie, whose coquetry had excited the ready jealousy of Catharine; the Natalie of the imperial salons at Moscow, at Oranienbaum, or the palace of Tsarsky Selo; or the Natalie of that princely old chateau near the Louga—the proud, bright-eyed and beautiful girl whom Charlie Jagonski had loved and worshipped as a goddess.

She was pale as white marble—cold as death—a prey to utter confusion rather than profound grief. When she did rouse herself to calm reflection and the realities of her position, thought well-nigh drove her mad.

Her old father—his sturdy figure, his venerable beard and white eyebrows, his silver hair, quened by a simple ribbon, his quaint, old-fashioned costume of the first Peter's time, rose vividly before her, and with a rush of memory came all the peculiarities of disposition, his warmth of heart and temper, his kindness and irritability, his pride of race and family. Where were all these now?

Her lover, too—his voice, and eyes, and gentle manner came next, to add to her pang—for him, too, must she relinquish forever. No shelter was there now for her save the cold grave, which was perhaps to receive them all—Basil, Usakoff and Mariolizn.

Suddenly a scream escaped her; she was in total darkness. Amid her sleep or stupor a fourth night had come on—a night of storm, too, for she heard the roar of the autumn rain as it descended like a vast sheet upon the lake without. Cold and slimp things had often crossed her slender ankles, making her shiver and shudder; but now she became sensible that her feet were completely immersed in water; that the wind was howling without and rolling the waves against the rocks, and that the current of the lake was flooding the floor of her vault and rising fast within it.

It rose with appalling rapidity, and now the terror of a dreadful death made Natalie utter a succession of piercing shrieks, mingled with prayers to heaven. But her cries were unheard, for the same cold, icy tide that flooded her cell filled all the corridors by which it and others on the same floor were approached.

Rapidly it rose, this dark, silent and terrible tide—rapidly and without a sound.

She sprang upon her stone couch, but already the pillow was floated away. Up yet rose the invading water, and it was soon nearly to her waist, and gasping and shuddering cries were mingled with her prayers. A little more and the narrow slit through which she could hear the howling wind and see the black clouds careering past, and the last gleam of life and of the outer world—would vanish from her eyes as she perished in that miserable tomb, even as the Princess Orloff and many others have done, helpless and unheeded in their dying agony, drowned miserably like the prison rats that swarmed around them.

In the last energies of her despair she made her way to the enormously thick door which closed this trap of stone, and, applying her lips to the joints, shrieked loudly again and again for succor, and beat wildly and fruitlessly with her tender hands upon its massive planks and iron bolts.

Her brain seemed bursting, for she was suffocating as the air lessened. She thought she saw a red light shining through the crannies of the doorway, but whether this were fancy or reality it was impossible to say, as a faintness came over her, and she sank down choking and drowning in the flood that rose within the walls and against the door of the prison.

(To be continued.)

BEARS ARE BAD IN ALASKA.

Their Ravages Among Cattle and Sheep Are Most Destructive.

From Alaska comes a Macedonian cry for help to put a stop to the ravages of the big bear in that peninsula. Senator Foster, of Washington, has received the plea and in mentioning it says that if President Roosevelt wants a glorious hunt for bruin he can tell when the great game is plentiful. The Alaska variety of bear is said to weigh from 1,500 to 1,900 pounds.

A recent letter in Mr. Foster's mail from Seattle tells the story. "We shipped 300 head of cattle and 2,100 breeding ewes to Kodiak, Alaska, last spring," writes a firm of packers from that city. "The bears have been getting into the bunch and have killed 508 up to date. During the mixup about twelve bears were slain. About thirty days ago two bears got into the sheep and after killing twenty-one sheep and tearing the coat off one man the bears were killed. The United States marshal on hearing of this had all our men arrested for killing the bears. Five of our men were compelled to stand trial at considerable expense to us.

"The bears are very numerous on the island," concludes this letter, "and since they have tasted sheep the sheep are badly scared and are continually piling up. Unless something is done with the bears they will put us out of business."

Senator Foster is puzzled as to just how he can help his constituents in their plight. They assert that "a bounty of at least \$5 a head should be placed on bears for a year or two in order to clean them out."

Not What He Said.

The man who can neither hear correctly nor quote accurately is the victim of a little joke in the Philadelphia Ledger.

"I think you must be mistaken, sir," he said.

"What about?" asked his neighbor in the crowd.

"Didn't I just hear you say you were glad the war in Bulgaria was over?"

"Not exactly, I said I was glad the war was over in Bulgaria."

VARIETY IN SLEEVES

ALL SORTS ARE NOW STYLISH AND TO BE SEEN.

Great Deal of Ornamentation Is Permissible, but Many Women Are Rather Overdoing It in This Regard—Some of the New Hats.

New York correspondence:



ABOUT everything that ever was heard of in sleeves now appears in the stylish showing of them, this last being taken to include both what women are wearing and what dressmakers and tailors are making ready for them to wear. Even the leg-mutton outlines appear now and then, and there are many sleeves in which the point of greatest fullness has crept above the elbow. These last present so pleasing an appearance that it would seem as if they must multiply.

The upper, full portion of these sleeves is plain, but from the point where the fullness is first caught in, to the wrist is enough of elaboration to please anyone. In strong contrast with this type is a sleeve from shoulder to elbow and be-

should have fine wearing qualities. The quality, of course, is the newer soft sort, which is found in many grades, at least some of which should withstand much wear and tear. While this material is often made up with much elaboration, this is not necessary, for the silk has a certain dressiness of itself. A tailor suit of it is sketched in the initial illustration, white buttons and black silk bands giving its trimming. Dressmakers employ delicate touches of gold or color to set off their black taffeta dresses. A little red is very stylish. Self bandings and curlings are much used, accompanied or not by tucking.

Since the fancy bodice must harmonize in color with the skirt worn with it, it would seem as if makers should consent to simple fashions in these waists, but the tendency is strongly toward highly wrought effects. Three fancy silk waists appear in the accompanying pictures. The first of these was white taffeta self-banded and embroidered in gold cord. Below this is shown a waist of pale blue crepe de chine, with white cord and pearl buttons for trimmings, and at the right of the picture is red silk waist trimmed with red and white passementerie. Buttons enter into the embellishment of such waists, and are to be had in great variety. Much braid is used on them, too, and they are a splendid field for the disposal of laces.

Handsome white dresses are trimmed in military fashion with gilt, and are worn by older women than usually do such get-ups. The dress goods often is some wool stuff. White set off with gold appears also in silks, and without soldierly suggestion. A sketch is given among these waists of a white silk pongee gown embroidered in flower design with white and gold thread. Such dresses are new this season and make a fine appearance. In all the array of



SAMPLE WAISTS AND A NEW WHITE GOWN.

low of the tight coat order, but it ends in a deep and dressy cuff, so it is hardly severe. All these are striking types, and most numerous of all are the sleeves whose greatest fullness is at or close to the elbow.

Whatever the outline, there is ornamentation at the wrists, and if the bodice be of at all dressy character, this embellishment is likely to be very fanciful. In many examples the excruciations gotten in on sleeves between wrists and elbows are extraordinary. Frequently this portion is the most highly wrought of the entire gown, even when that is of elaborate nature. This tendency is reflected even in walking suits, where instead of the splendid frills of lace are pleatings of silk, these sometimes finished with stitching, again ornate with embroidery. In the increasing diversity of sleeves, too, they have become more independent of the gown. Only a few months ago the sleeves must match the rest of the dress in every detail. Now are seen models in which some of the

white that is usual during the warm months there will be very little of the black and white combination. Beside the relief of gold, there will be the touch of color, either being thought preferable to black.

Never was the matter of so buying summer millinery as to have something to show for the outlay after the summer is over so hopeless. In dressy hats everywhere, is extremely perishable; feathers, flowers, the hats themselves. In simpler headwear the case is not much better. Women of ample means should make record milliner's bills this summer. Comparatively simple hats of moderate size are much trimmed with flowers in the greatest profusion, or with a single rich plume or with a pair less fine. Lace is put on hats in quantities, such use being as characteristic of the new millinery as is banking of bloom and the mingling of blossoms and feathers. Some moderate types are shown here by the artist. The upper two in the picture were a red chiffon hat trimmed with white feathers



INCONSPICUOUS HAT TYPES.

complexity is in harmony, while the rest stands without echo or reflection in the general scheme.

Black silk skirts are no longer serviceable with fancy bodices owing to the demand for harmony of color, but a black silk suit will be a very pleasing item of the summer wardrobe, one that will give dressy use without great outlay, and that

and white roses, and a coarse white straw trimmed with white silk and pink roses. The lower were fancy soft white straw, with black velvet fold, lilacs and black ribbon pompons for trimmings, and a plain white straw with coarser tan straw and white silk for embellishment.

Fortune befriends the bold.—Dryden.

TWO YEARS IN SOLITUDE.

off the coast of Newfoundland lies a small island known as the Isle of Demons, which holds within its rocky shores a romance as thrilling and a tragedy as real as any told in fiction. About 1540 Marguerite de Roberval, niece of the French viceroy, fell in love with a young cavalier and promised him her heart and hand. Her uncle, the viceroy, considered the youth unworthy of his niece's proud position, and angered by her refusal to give up her lover, he passed a sentence of exile upon both of them. A vessel carried the couple to the Isle of Demons, leaving them there alone, with an old nurse who had attended the lady Marguerite from her childhood, and who wished to share her exile.

At first the banishment did not seem so dreadful a thing; the young man's strength stood between his wife and suffering, and for two years all went well. A child was born, and the parents began to plan for the establishment of a colony which might thrive in this island home. Then came trouble, disease smote the little family, and the young wife and mother saw her husband, child and faithful nurse all sicken and die. With her own hands she dug their graves and buried all that was dear to her; and then began a life alone, a life in which the mere question of existence became a problem hard indeed for a frail woman to solve. By means of the gun that had been her husband's, she kept herself provided with food and with skins for her clothing.

For two years she lived a Robinson Crusoe life, this gently nurtured, highly bred girl. Once a boat filled with Indians came near the shore, but the painted faces and fierce aspect of the savages frightened her, so that she hid instead of halting them. She spent weeks of labor in making a crude canoe, but her hands were unskilled, and when she launched her craft it would only tip over.

At last she was rescued by some fishermen who ventured on the island, half-frightened at first by what they thought was an evil apparition.

Marguerite was sent to France, but her uncle discovered her whereabouts and continued to persecute her. She finally found a refuge in a small French village, where she hid until the viceroy's death. After that she came into the world once more and lived to a good old age.

STORY OF THE MUFF.

Once Its Color Betokened the Rank of the Wearer.

"Do you know that the color of a muff once betokened the rank of the wearer?" said a furrer to a Philadelphia Record man as he stroked a beautiful seal-skin muff. "In the days of Charles IX., no lady could have worn this fur, for black was decreed by the King to be the badge of the common people and the court followers were restricted to colors.

"Muffs have gone through many changes but it would seem possible to invent for such a simple article of convenience. It has been long and narrow, like a sheaf, and, again, large and round. At the beginning of last century the best of size was to try the huff in a flour barrel. If it went in without much trouble then that muff was too small to be really fashionable. At the present day almost anything is proper, but those enormous cylinders would certainly draw much attention. One of the most curious styles was that of Louis XIV., called the 'chicous mauchons,' because they were made to convey little dogs in.

"The muff when first introduced was the exclusive property of the nobility and originated in Venice. These muffs were very small and consisted of a single piece of velvet, brocade or silk, lined with fur and the openings fastened with rich jewels. Such arrangements came in during the early part of the seventeenth century, but in the previous century the ladies frequently carried a piece of rich fur, which they used either as a muff or a neck piece.

"The muff reached its highest point in the reign of Louis XV., when the productions were exquisite. Then fashion declared for a cloth muff instead of fur, and the furrers made a great uproar. They petitioned the Pope to excommunicate the wearer of a cloth muff, but to no purpose. Finally some ingenious merchant bribed the headsman to carry a cloth muff on execution day. The women shrank from such association and the fur won the day. We now associate the muff only with cold weather, but in the old days it was a regular part of woman's dress and was carried in all weather. As late as 1830 a muff and a straw bonnet were not deemed incongruous."

Locating the Guilty Idiot.

Jones waited out of the bathroom in a gorgeous and purpling fury. "Some snoot has been using my razor," he howled.

"I know it," responded Mrs. Jones. She looked Jones right square in the eye.

"Who was it?" demanded Jones. His voice shook with emotion. "I say who was it?"

"John Henry," remarked his wife dispassionately. "I'll have you know that nobody uses that razor but your self."—New York Evening Sun.

A Guess.

"What is Bliggins practicing on the violin?"

"I don't know," answered the man who has no ear for music. "But it sounds like vivisection."—Washington Star.