

The CZAR'S SPY

The Mystery of a Silent Love

By Chevalier WILLIAM LE QUEUX

AUTHOR OF "THE CLOSED BOOK," ETC.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. D. RHODES

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CHAPTER XV—Continued.

"Quite likely," he answered. "But our first object must be to rediscover Muriel. Would it not be best to send an urgent wire to the address where I always write? She would then reply here, no doubt. I've told you practically everything, my dear old fellow. The facts of the affair can be made known only by Muriel. I tell you, we must find her."

"Yes, we must—at all hazards," I said. "Let's go across to the telegraph office opposite Charing Cross. It's open always." And we rose and walked out along the Strand, now nearly deserted, and dispatched an urgent message to Muriel at an address in Hurlingham road, Fulham.

Afterwards we stood outside on the curb, still talking, I loath to part from him when there passed by in the shadow two men in dark overcoats, who crossed the road behind us to the front of Charing Cross station, and then continued on towards Trafalgar square.

As the light of the street lamp fell upon them I thought I recognized the face of one as that of a person I had seen before, yet I was not at all certain, and my failure to remember whom the passer-by resembled prevented me from saying anything further to Jack than:

"A fellow I know has just gone by, I think."

"We seem to be meeting hosts of friends tonight," he laughed. "After all, old chap, it does one good to come back to our dear, dirty old town again. We abuse it when we are here, and talk of the life in Paris and Vienna and Brussels, but when we are away there is no place on earth so dear to us, for it is 'home.' But there!" he laughed. "I'm actually growing romantic. Ah! if we could only find Muriel! But we must tomorrow. Ta-ta! I shall go around to the club and sleep, for I haven't fixed on any diggings yet. Come in at ten tomorrow, and we will decide upon some plan. One thing is plainly certain—Elma must at once be got out of Russia. She's certainly in deadly peril of her life there."

"Yes," I said. "And you will help me?"

"With all my heart, old fellow," answered my friend, warmly grasping my hand, and then we parted, he strolling along towards the National Gallery on his way back to the "Junior," while I returned to the Cecil alone.

"Captain Durnford?" I inquired of the hall porter of the club next morning.

"Not here, sir."

"But he slept here last night," I remarked. "I have an appointment with him."

The man consulted the big book before him, and answered: "Captain Durnford went out at 9:27 last night, sir, but has not returned." Strange, I thought, but although I waited in the club nearly an hour, he did not put in an appearance.

About four o'clock, as I was passing through the big hall of the hotel, I heard a voice behind me utter a greeting in Italian, and, turning in surprise, found Olinto, dressed in his best suit of black, standing hand in hand.

In an instant I recollected what Jack had told me, and regarded him with some suspicion.

"Signor Commendatore," he said in a low voice, as though fearing to be overheard, "may I be permitted to speak in private with you?"

"Certainly," I said, and I took him in a lift up to my room.

"I have come to warn you, signore," he said, when I had given him a seat. "Your enemies mean harm to you."

"Look here, Olinto!" I exclaimed determinedly. "I've had enough of this confounded mystery. Tell me the truth regarding the assassination of your poor wife in Scotland."

"Ah, signore!" he answered sadly in a changed voice, "I do not know. It was a plot. Someone represented me—but he was killed also. They believed they had struck me down," he added, with a bitter laugh. "Poor Armida's body was found concealed behind a rock on the opposite side of the wood. I saw it—ah!" he cried shuddering.

The police had, it seemed, succeeded in discovering the unfortunate woman after all, and had found that she was his wife.

"You know a man named Leithcourt?" I asked a few minutes later.

"Now, tell the truth. In this affair, Olinto, our interests are mutual, are they not?"

He nodded, after a moment's hesitation.

"And you know also a man named Archer—who is sometimes known as Hornby, or Woodroffe—as well as a friend of his called Chater?"

"SI, signore," he said. "I have met them all—to my regret."

"And have you ever met a Russian—a certain Baron Oberg—and his niece, Elma Heath?"

"His niece? She isn't his niece."

"Then who is she?" I demanded.

"How do I know? I have seen her once or twice. But she's dead, isn't she? She knew the secret of those men, and they intended to kill her."

I tried to prevent them taking her away on the yacht, and I would have gone to the police—only I dare not because my own hands were not quite clean. I knew they intended to silence her, but I was powerless to save her, poor young lady. They took her on board Leithcourt's yacht, the Iris, and they sailed for the Mediterranean, I believe."

"And what was your connection with them?"

"Well, I was Leithcourt's servant," was his reply. "I was steward on the Iris for a year, until I suppose they thought that I began to see too much, and then I was placed in a position ashore."

"And what did you see?"

"More than I care to tell, signore. If they were arrested I should be arrested, too, you see."

"But I mean to solve the mystery, Olinto," I said fiercely, for I was in no trifling mood. "I'll fathom it if it costs me my life."

"If the signor solves it, then I cannot be charged with revealing the truth," was the man's diplomatic reply.

"But I fear they are far too wary."

"Armida has lost her life. Surely that is sufficient incentive for you to bring them all to justice?"

"Of course. But if the law falls upon them, it will also fall upon me."

I explained the terrible affliction to which my love had been subjected by those heartless brutes, whereupon he cried enthusiastically: "Then she is not dead! She can tell us everything!"

"But cannot you tell us?"

"But what is the use, if we have no clear proof?" was his evasive reply. I could see plainly that he feared being implicated in some extraordinary plot, the exact nature of which he so steadfastly refused to reveal to me.

We talked on for half an hour, and from his conversation I gathered that he was well acquainted with Elma.

"Ah, signore, she was such a pleasant and kind-hearted young lady. I always felt very sorry for her. She was in deadly fear of them."

"But why did they induce you to entice me to that house in Lambeth? Why did they so evidently desire that I should be killed?"

"By accident," he interrupted, correcting me. "Always by accident," and he smiled grimly.

"Surely you know their secret motive?" I remarked.

"At the time I did not," he declared. "I acted on their instructions, being compelled to, for they hold my future in their hands. Therefore I could not disobey. You know too much, therefore you were marked down for death—just as you are now."

"And who is it who is now seeking my life?" I inquired gravely. "I only returned from Russia yesterday."

"Your movements are well known," answered the young Italian. "You cannot be too careful. Woodroffe has been in Russia with you, has he not?"

"And Chater is in London."

"And the Leithcourts?"

He shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of ignorance, adding, "The Signorina Muriel returned to London from Eastbourne this morning."

"Where can I find her?" I inquired eagerly. "It is of the utmost importance that I should see her."

"She is with a relation, a cousin, I think, at Bassett road, Notting Hill. The house is called 'Holmwood.'"

Then, after a pause, he added, with a strange, earnest look in his dark eyes, "Pardon me, Signor Commendatore, if I presume to suggest something, will you not?"

"Certainly. What do you suggest?"

"That you should remain here, in this hotel, and not venture out."

"For fear of something unfortunate happening to me?" I laughed. "I'm really not afraid, Olinto," I added.

"Now, tell the truth. In this affair, Olinto, our interests are mutual, are they not?"

He nodded, after a moment's hesitation.

"And you know also a man named Archer—who is sometimes known as Hornby, or Woodroffe—as well as a friend of his called Chater?"

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"His niece? She isn't his niece."

"Then who is she?" I demanded.

"How do I know? I have seen her once or twice. But she's dead, isn't she? She knew the secret of those men, and they intended to kill her."

"You know I carry this," and I drew out my revolver from my hip pocket. "But, signore, have a care for yourself," cried the Italian, laying his hand upon my arm. "You are a marked man. Ah! do I not know," he exclaimed breathlessly, "if you go out you may run right into—well, the fatal accident."

"Never fear, Olinto," I replied reassuringly. "I shall keep my eyes wide open. Here, in London, one's life is safer than anywhere else in the world, perhaps—certainly safer than in some places I could name in your own country, eh?" at which he grinned.

The next moment he grew serious again, and said:

"I only warn the signore that if he goes out it is at his own peril."

"Then let it be so," I laughed, feeling self-confident that no one could lead me into a trap. I was neither a foreigner nor a country cousin. I knew London too well. He was silent and shook his head; then, after telling me that he was still at the same restaurant in Westbourne Grove, he took his departure, warning me once more not to go forth.

Half an hour later, disregarding his words, I strode out into the Strand, and again walked round to the "Junior." The short, wintry day had ended, the gas lamps were lit and the darkness of night was gradually creeping on.

Jack had not been to the club, and I began now to grow thoroughly uneasy. He had parted from me at the corner of the Strand with only a few minutes' walk before him, and yet he had apparently disappeared. My first impulse was to drive to Notting Hill to inquire of Muriel if she had news of him, but somehow the Italian's warning words made me wonder if he had met with foul play.

I suddenly recollected those two men who had passed by as we had talked, and how that the features of one had seemed strangely familiar. Therefore I took a cab to the police station down at Whitehall and made inquiry of the inspector on duty in the big, bare office with its glaring gas jets in wire globes. He heard me to the end, then turning back the book of "occurrences" before him, glanced through the ruled entries.

"I should think this is the gentleman, sir," he said. And he read to me the entry as follows:

P. O. 462A reports that at 2:07 a. m., while on duty outside the National Gallery, he heard a revolver shot, followed by a man's cry. He ran to the corner of Suffolk street, where he found a gentleman lying upon the pavement suffering from a serious shot-wound in the chest and quite unconscious. He obtained the assistance of P. C.'s 218A and 242A, and the gentleman, who was not identified, was taken to the Charing Cross hospital, where the house surgeon expressed a doubt whether he could live. Neither P. C.'s recollect having noticed any suspicious-looking person in the vicinity.

JOHN PERVALIC, Inspector.

I waited for no more, but rushed round to the hospital in the cab, and was, five minutes later, taken along the ward, where I identified poor Jack lying in bed, white-faced and unconscious.

"The doctor was here a quarter of an hour ago," whispered the sister. "And he fears he is sinking."

"Has he uttered no words?" I asked anxiously. "Made no statement?"

"None. He has never regained consciousness, and I fear, sir, he never will. It is a case of deliberate murder, the police told me early this morning."

I clenched my fists and swore a fierce revenge for that dastardly act. And as I stood beside the narrow bed, I realized that what Olinto had said regarding my own peril was the actual truth. I was a marked man. Was I never to penetrate that inscrutable and ever-increasing mystery?

CHAPTER XVI.

The Truth About the Lola.

Throughout the long night I called many times at the hospital, but the reply was always the same. Jack had not regained consciousness, and the doctor regarded his case as hopeless.

In the morning I drove in hot haste to Bassett road, Notting Hill, and at the address Olinto had given me found Muriel. When she entered the room with folding doors into which I had been shown, I saw that she was pale and apprehensive, for we had not met since her flight, and she was, no doubt, at a loss for an explanation. But I did not press her for one. I merely told her that the Italian Santini had given me her address and that I came as bearer of unfortunate news.

"What is it?" she gasped quickly.

"It concerns Captain Durnford," I replied. "He has been injured in the street, and is in Charing Cross hospital."

"Ah!" she cried. "I see. You do not explain the truth. By your face I can tell there is something more. He's dead! Tell me the worst."

"No, Miss Leithcourt," I said gravely. "Not dead, but the doctors fear that he may not recover. His wound is dangerous. He has been shot by some unknown person."

"Shot!" she echoed, bursting into

tears. "Then they have allowed him, after all! They have deceived me, and now, as they intend to take him from me, I will myself protect him. You, Mr. Gregg, have been in peril of your life, that I know, but Jack's enemies are yours, and they shall not go unpunished. May I see him?"

"I fear not, but we will ask at the hospital." And after the exchange of some further explanations we took a hansom back to Charing Cross.

At first the sister refused to allow Muriel to see the patient, but she implored so earnestly that at last she consented, and the distressed girl in the black coat and hat crept on tiptoe to the bedside.

"He was conscious for a quarter of an hour or so," whispered the nurse who sat there. "He asked after some lady named Muriel."

The girl at my side burst into low sobbing.

"Tell him," she said, "that Muriel is here—that she has seen him, and is waiting for him to recover."

Day succeeded day, and although I was not allowed to visit my friend, I was told that he was very slowly progressing. I idled at the Hotel Cecil, longing daily for news of Elma. Only once did a letter come from her, a brief, well-written note, from which it appeared that she was quite well and happy, although she longed to be able to go out. The princess was very kind, and indeed to her, she added, was making secret arrangements for her escape across the Russian frontier into Germany.

I saw Muriel many times, but never once did she refer to Rannocho or their sudden departure. Her only thought was of the man she loved.

One afternoon, ten days after the attempt upon Jack, I was allowed to sit by his bedside and question him.

"Ah, Gordon, old fellow!" he said faintly. "I've had a narrow escape—by

but I did not heed it. I somehow trusted the fellow."

Jack, now thoroughly recovered, called almost daily at Bassett road, and would often bring Muriel to the Cecil to tea or to luncheon. Often I inquired the whereabouts of her father and of Hylton Chater, but she declared herself in entire ignorance, and believed they were abroad.

One afternoon, shortly before Christmas, as we were idling in the American bar of the hotel, my friend told me that Muriel had invited us to tea at her cousin's that afternoon, and accordingly we went there in company.

As we sat together Muriel, a smart figure in pale blue gown, poured tea for us and chatted more merrily, I thought, than ever before. She seemed quiet and nervous and yet full of happiness, as she should indeed have been, for Jack Durnford was one of the best fellows in the world, and his restoration to health little short of miraculous.

"Gordon," he said to me with a sudden seriousness when tea had ended and we had placed down our cups. "I want to tell you something—something I've been longing always to tell you, and now I have got dear Muriel's consent. I want to tell you about her father and his friends."

"And about Elma, too?" I said in quick eagerness. "Yes, tell me everything."

"No, not everything, for I don't know it myself. But what I know I will explain as briefly as I can, and leave you to form your own conclusions. It is," he went on, "a strange—most amazing story. When I myself became first cognizant of the mystery I was on board the flagship the Renown, under Admiral Sir John Fisher. We were lying in Malta when there arrived the English yacht Iris, owned by Mr. Philip Leithcourt, and among those on board cruising for pleasure were Mr. Martin Woodroffe, Mr. Hylton Chater, and the owner's wife and daughter Muriel."

"Muriel and I met first at a tennis party, and afterwards frequently at various houses in Malta, for anyone who goes there and entertains is soon entertained in return. A mutual attachment sprang up between Muriel and myself," he said, placing his hand tenderly upon her and smiling, "and we often met in secret and took long walks, until quite suddenly Leithcourt said that it was necessary to sail for Smyrna to pick up some friends who had been travelling in Palestine. The night they sailed a great consternation was caused on the island by the news that the safe in the admiral superintendent's office had been opened by expert safe-breakers, and certain most important secret documents stolen."

"Well?" I asked, much interested.

"Again, two months later, when the villa of the prince of Montevichi, at Palermo, was broken into and the whole of the famous jewels of the princess stolen, it was a very strange fact that the Iris was at the moment in that port. But it was not until the third occasion, when the yacht was at Villefranche, and our squadron being at Toulon I got four days' leave to go along the Riviera, that my suspicions were aroused, for at the very hour when I was dining at the London house at Nice with Muriel and a schoolfellow of hers, Elma Heath—who was spending the winter there with a lady who was Baron Oberg's cousin—that a great robbery was committed in one of the big hotels up at Cimiez, the wife of an American millionaire losing jewels valued at thirty thousand pounds. Then the robberies, coincident with the visit of the yacht, aroused my strong suspicion. I remarked the nature of those documents stolen from Malta, and recognized that they could only be of service to a foreign government. Then came the Leghorn incident of which you told me. The yacht's name had been changed to the Lola, and she had been repainted. I made search in inquiry, and found that on the evening she was purposely run aground in order to strike up a friendship at the consulate, a Russian gunboat was lying in the vicinity. The consul's safe was rifled, and the scheme certainly was to transfer any thing obtained from it to the Russian gunboat."

"But what was in the safe?" I asked.

"Fortunately nothing. But you see they knew that our squadron was due in Leghorn, and that some extremely important dispatches were on the way to the admiral—secret orders based upon the decision of the British cabinet as to the vexed question of Russian ships passing the Dardanelles—they expected that they would be lodged in the safe until the arrival of the squadron, as they always are. They were, however, bitterly disappointed because the dispatches had not arrived."

"And then?"

"Must Be Durable."

Lenders—Say, I've been carrying those I. O. U.'s of yours until they are about worn out.

Burrows—Sorry, old man. Next time I'll use better paper.

Beef Cutlets.

Put the beef through the chopper (as for hamburger steak), season with sage and pepper, moisten with cream then mold in cutlet form and broil. Serve with a brown sauce made by browning a slice of onion in two table-spoonfuls of butter, adding a little salt, pepper and two table-spoonfuls of stock. Boil until smooth, then add a hard-boiled egg, chopped in small pieces.

Marshmallow Pudding.

Take two dozen marshmallow drops—stale or fresh—and put them in the bottom of a baking dish. Pour over rich cocoa, made as for breakfast except for a thickening of cornstarch; put the dish on the stove and bake for half an hour. Then take it out and add a meringue and brown this. Serve cold. The cooking melts the marshmallows, which give the cocoa pudding a most delectable taste.

Indian Huckleberry Pudding.

Boil one quart of milk, remove from the stove and stir into it a small cup of Indian meal. When cool add two well-beaten eggs, two table-spoonfuls of finely-chopped suet, one table-spoonful of molasses, a pinch of salt and one quart of huckleberries. Fill a mold two-thirds full and steam three hours. Use a five-pound lard pail. Use any sauce you care to make.—Exchange.

Brown Betty.

Put a layer of white bread crumbs in a baking dish and then a layer of sliced cooking apples, and so on until the dish is almost full. Sprinkle each layer of apples with sugar and a little spice, if the taste is liked, and also mix small nuts of butter through the layers, being sure to have some of the seasoning on top of the dish. Bake a light brown.

Ice Cream Hint.

Ice cream is sometimes frozen so hard that it does not come out of the mold easily. When this happens let the cold water run over the outside of the can. The water is so much warmer than the ice cream that it melts it sufficiently to start it out and does not melt it enough to spoil the shape of the mold.

Frosted Coffee.

Frosted coffee is delightfully invigorating on a hot day. To prepare, make a strong, clear drip coffee. Sweeten to taste, and chill thoroughly. Just before serving drop on each glassful a heaping teaspoonful of whipped cream which has been faintly sweetened and slightly flavored with vanilla.

High Rents in Cities.

The enormous rise in London rents, among rich and poor alike, during the past five years is shown by statistics issued by the board of trade. Lord Allendale, who three years ago paid \$5,560 a year for his house in Piccadilly, now pays \$8,250. The rent of the United Service club, which until 1904 was \$725, is now \$19,150; and that of Lloyds bank, at the corner of St. James street and King street, is \$15,000 a year. One must, however, go to New York to find the most highly rented tenement in the world—Mr. Murray Guggenheim, who pays \$25,000 a year for his residence at the corner of Fifth avenue and Eighty-first street.

NOT SABBATH FOR THE RABBI

Miracle Had to Be Performed to Keep Him From Breaking Law, and He Did It.

A gabbe, the special messenger of a miracle-performing rabbi, so the story is told, came to a village and all the idlers gathered around him. The conversation fell upon the subject of miracles. "I heard of a wonderful rabbi," said one of the villagers, "who performed great miracles. One day he was out walking, when clouds gathered, and before he could find shelter it commenced to rain. The rabbi did not have an umbrella with him, and, not wishing to get drenched he uttered a command. And to the right of him and to the left of him it rained, but where the rabbi walked it did not rain."

The villagers were greatly impressed, but the gabbe made little of the matter.

"That's nothing compared to what my rabbi did one day," he said. "He went out driving in a carriage one afternoon, and darkness overtook him before he reached home. As it is a sin to ride on the Sabbath, the rabbi for a moment was perplexed what to do. Then he uttered a command, and to the right of him and to the left of him it was Sabbath, in front of him and in back of him it was Sabbath, but where the rabbi rode it was not Sabbath!"

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SOME COOKERY HINTS

IDEAS THAT MAY BE OF VALUE TO THE HOUSEWIFE.

How the Ideal Custard Should Be Made—Mayonnaise With Just the Right Flavor—Best Way to Serve Cucumbers.

The best custards ever made have not been baked on the oven floor. The tried-and-true method to make the delicious custard is one quart of fresh milk, scalded in a double boiler. No more nor less than four eggs beaten and stirred into one cup of granulated sugar. Always lemon extract with a pinch of nutmeg for the delicate custard. It kills the egg flavor. Now, here is your secret, place it in a pan of boiling water in the oven, cover your baking dish, bake it one-half hour in a warm but not hot oven. Insert a silver knife in the middle of the custard. If it comes out clean, the custard is done, otherwise the ingredients stick to the knife.

Of all the professional secrets hardest to obtain for the delicious mayonnaise this was the hardest. That unmistakable "tang," the tasty snap, though hidden with other condiments was found to be nothing else but cucumber. No, you could not taste it, for it was blended with the mayonnaise. The cucumber is grated for the purpose. Then, think of it, the vinegar used. Ordinary vinegar? Yes, but prepared with brown sugar, boiled with spices and churned into a white foam with one-half its bulk of olive oil. For potato salad this mayonnaise, mixed with the cucumber and hard-boiled eggs is, really, one of the finest flavored salad dressings known to the chefs who dislike to make known their professional secrets.

Have you seen the cucumber sliced, but in half and decorated with slices of red radish? Very pretty. Score the rounded sides of the cucumber into one-eighth inch sections, but do not cut through the cucumber. Place the flat or cut side of the cucumber on the dish, slice the red radishes, leaving on the red rim. Insert these slices of radishes between the slices of cucumber, alternating the red and white; garnish with parsley, small pickles, small flecks of beet, and serve with salad dressing.

A delicious luncheon dish is known as "Devils on Horseback." Plump cardines are used. Each has a little blanket of bacon pinned around his "tummy tum tum" and all is fried in deep fat and served on buttered toast.

Don't Lose the Pie Juice.

To keep the juice in the pie, instead of using the cloth strips, which spoils the edge of the pie anyway, have the bottom crust larger than the pan. Cut the apples into sections. Before putting them in, cover the bottom of the pastry with half the sugar. One cupful of sugar to a good-sized pie will not be too much if the apples are sour. Lay sections of apples all around the edge. Then fill in the middle. Add the rest of the sugar. Roll out the top crust to fit and lay on. Wet the edge all around and turn up over the top crust the surplus of the under crust. Press down with the fingers, then mark all around with a fork. Make a hole in the top of the pie and wet all over with cold water. The oven should be fairly hot for the first 15 or 20 minutes. Then the heat may be reduced so that the apples may cook thoroughly. It will take about 40 minutes to bake a good-sized pie.

Beef Cutlets.

Put the beef through the chopper (as for hamburger steak), season with sage and pepper, moisten with cream then mold in cutlet form and broil. Serve with a brown sauce made by browning a slice of onion in two table-spoonfuls of butter, adding a little salt, pepper and two table-spoonfuls of stock. Boil until smooth, then add a hard-boiled egg, chopped in small pieces.

Marshmallow Pudding.

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Indian Huckleberry Pudding.

Boil one quart of milk, remove from the stove and stir into it a small cup of Indian meal. When cool add two well-beaten eggs, two table-spoonfuls of finely-chopped suet, one table-spoonful of molasses, a pinch of salt and one quart of huckleberries. Fill a mold two-thirds full and steam three hours. Use a five-pound lard pail. Use any sauce you care to make.—Exchange.

Brown Betty.

Put a layer of white bread crumbs in a baking dish and then a layer of sliced cooking apples, and so on until the dish is almost full. Sprinkle each layer of apples with sugar and a little spice, if the taste is liked, and also mix small nuts of