The CZAR'S SPY

The Mystery of a Silent Love

by Chevalier WILLIAM LE QUEUX

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CHAPTER XVI—Continued.

—16—

"Well, the only Russian who appeared to have any connection with them was Baron Oberg, the governor general of Finland, whose habit it was to spend part of the winter in the Mediterranean. From Elma Heath's conversation at dinner that evening at Nice I gathered that she and her uncle had been guests on the Iris on several occasions, although I must say that Muriel was extremely reticent regarding all that concerned the yacht."

"Of course," she said quickly. "Now that I have told you the truth, Jack, don't you think it was only natural?"

"Most certainly, dear," he answered, still holding her hand. "Yours was not a secret that you could very well tell to me until you could thoroughly trust me, especially as your father had been implicated in the theft of those documents from Malta. The truth is," he said, turning to me, "Philip Leithcourt has all along been the catspaw of Baron Oberg. A few years ago he was a well-known money lender in the city, and in that capacity met the baron, who, being in disgrace, required a loan. He was also in the habit of having certain shady transactions with that daring gang of continental thieves of whom Dick Archer and Hylton Chater were leaders. For this reason he purchased a yacht for their use, so that they might not only use it for the purpose of storing the stolen goods, but for the purpose of sailing from place to place under the guise of wealthy Englishmen traveling for pleasure. Upon that vessel, indeed, was stored thousands and thousands of pounds' worth of jewels and objects of value, the proceeds of many great robberies in England, France and Belgium. Sometimes they traveled for the purpose of disposing of the jewels in various inland towns where the gems, having been recut, were not recognized, while at other times, Chater and Archer, assisted by Mackintosh, the captain, and Olinto Santini, the steward, sailed for a port, landed, committed a robbery, and then sailed away again, quite unsuspected, as rich Englishmen."

"And the crew?" I asked, after a pause.

"They were, of course, well paid, and were kept in ignorance of what the supposed owner and his friends did ashore."

"But Oberg's connection with it?" I asked, surprised at those revelations.

"Ah!" exclaimed Muriel. "The ingenuity of that crafty villain is fiendish. Before he got into the czar's favor he owed my father a large sum, and then sought how to evade repayment. By means of his spies he discovered the real purpose of the cruises of the Iris—for I was often taken on board with a maid in order to allay any suspicion that might arise if only men were cruising. Then he not only compelled my father to cancel the debt, but he impressed the vessel and those who owned and navigated it into the secret service of Russia. A dozen times did we make attempts to obtain secret papers from Italian, French and English dockyards, but only once in the case of Malta and once at Toulon did we succeed. Ah! Mr. Gregg," she added, "you do not know all the anxiety I suffered, how at every hour we were in danger of betrayal or capture, and of the hundred narrow escapes we have had of customhouse officers rummaging the yacht for contraband. You will no doubt recollect the sensation caused by the theft of the jewels of the Princess Wilhelmine of Schaumbourg-Lippe from the lady's maid in the rapide between Cannes and Les Arcs, the robbery from the Marseilles branch of the Credit Lyonnais, and the great haul of plate from the chateau of Bardon, the Paris millionaire, close to Arcachon."

"Yes," I said, for they were all robberies of which I had read in the newspapers a couple of years before.

"Well," she said, "they were all committed by Archer or Woodroffe and his gang—with accomplices ashore, of course—and never once did it seem that any suspicion fell upon us. While the police were frantically searching hither and thither, we used to weigh anchor and calmly steam away with our booty on board. We had with us an old Dutch lapidary, and one of the cabins was fitted as a workshop, where he altered the appearance of the stones, and prepared them ready for sale while the gold was melted in a crucible and put ashore to be sent to agents in Hamburg."

"But that night in Leghorn?" I said. "What happened to poor Elma?"

"I do not know," was Muriel's reply. "We were both on board together, and standing at the crack of the door watched you sitting at dinner that evening. The instant, however, you went ashore, Chater, Woodroffe—whom you called Hornby—and Mackintosh, the captain—who, by the way, was an old ticket-of-leave man—went ashore, and, of course, broke into the consulate. Then, as soon as they returned, Elma came to my cabin, awoke me, and said that the baron was taking her ashore, and that they were to travel overland back to London. She was ready dressed to go. I kissed her, and promising to meet her soon, we parted. That was the last I saw of her. What happened to her afterwards only she alone can tell us."

"But she is not the baron's niece?" I said.

"No. There is some mystery," declared Muriel. "She holds some secret which he fears she may divulge. But of what nature, I am in ignorance."

"You say that your father has never taken any active part in the robberies? Where is he now?" I asked.

"Ah!" she exclaimed sadly, her face pale and haggard.

"I have heard that the vessel was scuttled somewhere in the Baltic."

"That is true. Oberg's purpose having been served, he demanded half the property on board or he would give notice to the Russian naval authorities that the pirate yacht was afloat. He attempted to blackmail my father, as he had already done so many times, but his scheme was frustrated. My father, because of his inhuman treatment of poor Elma, defied him, when it appears that Oberg, who was in Helsingfors, telegraphed to the admiral of the Russian fleet in the Baltic. The crew from the Iris were at once landed at Riga, and only Mackintosh and my father put to sea again. Ah! my father was desperate, for he knew the merciless character of that man whose victim he had been for so long. They watched a Russian cruiser bearing down upon them, when, just as it drew near, they got off in a boat and blew up the yacht, which sank in three minutes with its ill-obtained wealth on board."

"And your father?"

She was silent, and I saw tears standing in her eyes.

"There was a tragedy," Jack explained in a low, hoarse voice. "He and the captain did not, unfortunately, get sufficiently far from the yacht when they blew her up, and they went down with her."

And I looked in silence at Muriel, who stood with her head bent and her white face covered with her hands.

Almost at the same moment there was a low tap at the door, and the servant maid announced:

"Mr. Santini, miss."

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack quickly, as Olinto entered the room. "Then you had my note! We have asked you here to reveal to us this dastardly plot which seemed to have been formed against Mr. Gregg and myself. As you know, I've had a narrow escape."

"I know, signore. And the signor commendatore is also threatened."

"By whom?"

"By those who killed my poor wife, and who intended also to silence me," was his answer.

"The same who compelled you to take me to that house where the fatal chair was prepared, eh?"

"It was Archer, who, fearing that you came to London in search of them, devised that devilish contrivance," he said in his broken English. Then continuing, he went on fiercely: "Now that I have discovered why my poor Armida was killed, I will tell the truth, and not spare them. Since you left Scotland, signore, I have been up in Dumfries, and have discovered several facts which prove that for some reason known only to himself, Leithcourt, while at Rannoch, wrote to both Armida and myself separately, making an appointment to see us at the same time at that spot on the edge of the wood, as he had some secret commission to entrust to us. The letter addressed to me apparently fell into someone else's hands—probably one of the secret agents of Baron Oberg, who were always watching Leithcourt's doings, and he, anxious to learn what was intended, made himself up to look like me, and kept the appointment in my place. Armida, having received the letter unknown to me, went up to Scotland, and was also there at the appointed time. What actually transpired can only be surmised, yet it seems that Leithcourt was in the habit of going up to that spot and loitering there in the evening in order to meet Chater in secret, as the latter was in hiding in a small hotel in Dumfries. Therefore those who formed the plot must have endeavored to throw suspicion upon Leithcourt. It is plain, however, as both myself and Armida knew the gang, it was to their interest to get rid of us, because the suspicions of the police had at last become aroused. Poor Armida was therefore deliberately enticed there to her death, while the inquisitive man whom the assassin took to be myself was also struck down."

"By whom?"

"Not by Chater, for he was in London on that night."

"Then by Woodroffe?" Durnford said.

"Without a doubt. It was all most cleverly thought out. It was to his advantage alone to close our lips, because in that same fatal chair in Lambeth old Jacob Moser, the Jew bullion broker of Hatton Garden, met his death—a most dastardly crime, with which none of his friends were associated, and of which we alone held knowledge. He therefore wrote to us as though from Leithcourt, calling us up to Rannoch, in order to strike the blows in the darkness," he added in his peculiar Italian manner. "Besides, he feared we would tell the signore the truth."

"You have not told the police?"

"I dare not, signore. Surely the less the police know about this matter the better, otherwise the Signorina Leithcourt must suffer for her father's avarice and evil-doing."

"Yes," cried Jack anxiously. "That's right, Olinto. The police must know nothing. The reprisals we must make ourselves. But who was it who shot me in Suffolk street?"

"The same man, Martin Woodroffe."

"Then the assassin is back from Russia?"

"He followed closely behind the Signor Commendatore. Markoff, a clever secret agent of Baron Oberg's, came with him."

Then for the first time I recollected that the man I had recognized in the Strand was a fellow I had seen lounging in the anteroom of the palace of the governor-general of Finland. The pair, fearing that I should reveal what I knew, were undoubtedly in London to take my life in secret. Now that Leithcourt was dead, Woodroffe had united forces with Oberg, and intended to silence me because they feared that Elma, besides escaping them, had also revealed her secret.

"I trust that the Signorina Leithcourt has explained the story of the yacht and its crew," Olinto remarked. "And has also shown you how I was implicated. You will therefore discern the reason why I have hitherto feared to give you any explanation."

"Yes," I said, "Miss Leithcourt has told me a great deal, but not everything. I cannot yet gather for what reason she and her father fled from Rannoch."

"Then I will tell you," said Muriel quickly. "My father suspected Woodroffe of being the assassin in Rannoch wood, for he knew that he had broken away from the original compact, and had now allied himself with Oberg. Yet it was also my father's object to appear in fear of them, because he was only awaiting an opportunity to lay plans for poor Elma's rescue from Finland. Therefore one evening Woodroffe called, and my father encountered him in the avenue, and admitted him with his own latchkey by one of the side doors of the castle, afterwards taking him up to the study. He knew that he had come to try and make terms for Oberg, therefore he saw that he must fly at once to Newcastle, where the Iris was lying, get on board, and sail away.

"With some excuse he left him in the study, and then warned my mother and myself to prepare to leave. But while we were packing, it appeared that Chater, who had followed, was shown into the study by the butler, or rather he entered there himself, being well acquainted with the house. Thus the two men, now bitter enemies met. A fierce quarrel must have ensued, and Chater was poisoned and concealed, Woodroffe, of course, believing he had killed him. My father entered the study again, and seeing only Woodroffe there, did not know what had occurred. Some words probably arose, when my father again turned and left. Then we fled to Carlisle and on to Newcastle, and next morning were on board the yacht out in the North sea, afterwards landing at Rotterdam. Those," she added, "are briefly the facts, as my poor father related them to me."

"And what of poor Elma—and of her secret? When, I wonder, shall I see her?" I cried in despair.

"You will see her now, signore," answered Olinto. "A servant of the Princess Zurloff brought her to London this afternoon, and I have just conveyed her from the station. She is in the next room, in ignorance, however, that you are here."

And without another word I fled forward joyfully, and threw open the folding doors which separated me from my silent love.

Silent, yes! But she could, nevertheless, tell her story—surely the strangest that any woman has ever lived to tell.

CHAPTER XVII.

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Contains Elma's Story.

Before me stood my love, a slim, tragic, rather wan figure in a heavy dark traveling coat and felt toque, her sweet lips parted and a look of bewildered amazement upon her countenance as I burst in so suddenly upon her.

In silence I grasped her tiny black-gloved hand, and then, also in silence, raised it passionately to my eager lips. Her soft, dark eyes—those eyes that spoke although she was mute—met mine, and in them was a look that I had never seen there before—a look which as plainly as any words told me that my wild fevered passion was reciprocated.

She gazed beyond into the room where the others had assembled, and then looked at me inquiringly, whereupon I led her forward to where they were, and Muriel fell upon her and kissed her with tears streaming from her eyes.

"I prepared this surprise for you, Mr. Gregg," Muriel said, laughing through her tears of joy. "Olinto learned that she was on her way to London, and I sent him to meet her. The princess has managed magnificently, has she not?"

"Yes. Thank God she is free!" I exclaimed. "But we must induce her to tell us everything."

Muriel was already helping my love out of her heavy Russian coat, a costly garment lined with sable, and when, after greeting Jack and Olinto, she was comfortably seated, I took some notepaper from the little writing table by the window and scribbled in pencil the words:

"I need not write how delighted I am that you are safe—that the Almighty has heard my prayers for you. Jack and Muriel have told me all



And Threw Open the Folding Door Which Separated Me From My Silent Love.

about Leithcourt and his scoundrelly associates. I know, too, dear—for I may call you that, may I not?—how terribly you must have suffered in silence through it all. Leithcourt is dead. He sank the yacht with all the stolen property on board, but by accident was himself engulfed."

Bending and watching intently as I wrote, she drew back in horror and surprise at the words. Then I added: "We are all four determined that the guilty shall not go unpunished, and that the affliction placed upon you shall be adequately avenged. You are my own love—I am bold enough to call you so. Some strong but mysterious bond of affinity between us caused me to seek you out, and your pictured face seemed to call me to your side although I was unaware of your peril. I was sent to you by the unseen power to extricate you from the hands of your enemies. Therefore tell us everything—all that you know—without fear, for now that we are united no harm can assail us."

She took the pencil, and holding it in her white fingers sat staring first at us, and then looking hesitatingly at the white paper before her. Her position, amid a hundred conflicting emotions, was one of extreme difficulty. It seemed as though even now she was loath to reveal to us the absolute truth.

Muriel, standing behind her chair, tenderly stroked back the wealth of chestnut hair from her white brow. Her complexion was perfect, even though her face was pale and jaded, and her eyes heavy, consequent upon her long, weary journey from the now frozen North.

Presently, when by signs both Jack and Olinto had urged her to write, she bent suddenly, and her pencil began to run swiftly over the paper.

All of us stood exchanging glances in silence, neither looking over her but each determined to wait in patience until the end. Once started however, she did not pause. Sheet after sheet she covered. The silence for a long time was complete, broken only by the rapid running of the pencil over the rough surface of the paper. She had apparently become seized by a sudden determination to explain everything, now that she saw we were in real, dead earnest.

I watched her sweet face bent so intently, and as the firelight fell across it found it incomparable. Yes; she was afflicted by loss of speech, it was true, yet she was surely inexpressibly sweet and womanly, peerless above all others.

With a deep-drawn sigh she at last finished, and, her head still bowed in an attitude of humiliation, it seemed, she handed what she had written to me.

In breathless eagerness I read as follows:

"Is it true, dear love—for I call you so in return—that you were impelled towards me by the mysterious hand that directs all things? You came in search of me, and you risked your life for mine at Kajana, therefore you have a right to know the truth. You, as my champion, and the princess as my friend, have contrived to effect my freedom. Were it not for you, I should ere this have been on my way to Saghalien, to the tomb to which Oberg had so ingeniously contrived to consign me. Ah! you do not know—you never can know—all that I have suffered ever since I was a girl."

Here the statement broke off, and recommenced as follows:

"In order that you should understand the truth, I had better begin at the beginning. My father was an English merchant in Petersburg, and my mother, Vera Bessanoff, who, before her marriage with my father, was celebrated at court for her beauty, and was one of the maids of honor to the czarina. She was the only daughter of Count Paul Bessanoff, ex-governor of Kharkoff, and before marrying my father she had, with her mother, been a well-known figure in society. Immediately after her marriage her father died, leaving her in possession of an ample fortune, which with my father's own wealth, placed them among the richest and most influential in Petersburg.

"Among my father's most intimate friends was Baron Xavier Oberg—who, at that time, held a very subordinate position in the ministry of the interior—and from my earliest recollections I can remember him coming frequently to our house and being invited to the brilliant entertainments which my mother gave. When I was thirteen, however, my father died of a chill contracted while boar-hunting on his estate in Kiev, and within a few months a further disaster happened to us. One night, while I was sitting alone reading aloud to my mother, two strangers were announced, and on being shown in they arrested my dear mother on a charge of complicity in a revolutionary plot against the czar which had been discovered at Peterhof. I stood defiant and indignant, for my mother was certainly no nihilist, yet they said that the bomb had been introduced into the palace by the Countess Anna Shiproff, one of the ladies-in-waiting, who was an intimate friend of my mother's and often used to visit her. They alleged that the conspiracy had been hatched in our house, color being lent to that theory by the fact that a year before a well-known Russian with whom my father had had many business dealings had been proved to be the author of the plot by which the czar's train was blown up near Livadia. They tore my mother away from me and placed her in the gray prison-van, the sight of which in the streets of Petersburg strikes terror into the heart of every Russian, for a person once in that rumbling vehicle is, as you know, lost forever to the world. I watched her from the window being placed in that fatal conveyance, and then I think I must have fainted, for I recollect nothing more until I found myself upon the floor, with the gray dawn spreading, and all the horrible truth came back to me. My mother was gone from me forever!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Didn't Break Her Word.

"Maud married! Why only last June she told me she wouldn't marry the best man that walks the earth."

"That's all right; the man she married rides in an automobile."

Prominent Style Features in Gowns



The most attractive of the new gowns already displayed for the coming winter, are characterized by the long straight lines that belong to the semifitting princess, and by the inspiration of the Russian blouse. Combinations of two materials in the same gown are worked out in one-piece frocks made of cloth and silk, or cloth and velvet. Buttons and braids and sashes of the same fabrics as the gown appear with such frequency that they are assured a place in the coming season's fashions.

In suits there are numbers of severely plain and perfectly tailored designs, the coats semifitting, with the skirt portion showing a ripple or full flare. Dark cloths are chosen for these. The skirts, while amply full, are not decidedly flaring but they are decidedly short.

The Russian idea is developed with fine success in the various pile fabrics used for dressier suits. Many novelties in the light weight plushes and fur cloths, as well as plain velvet, promise much for the popularity of this style.

One of the handsomest of these suits is shown in the picture. The skirt is full and plaited and reaches to the shoe tops. It is made of a plain, light weight, silky plush with an overdrapery of a striped plush of the same color. The stripe is made by a difference in the direction of the pile and not by a difference in color.

The coat is the regulation Russian model buttoning to the side. It is worn with a belt of patent leather.

In the management of the collar and cuffs the designer has introduced an individual touch. A narrow "V" shaped collar is attached to the blouse apparently by high buttons. It supports a wide turnover about the sides and back.

The wide turned-back cuffs slope outward and the edges are curved forward. A row of buttons finishes each of them.

The long sash ends of self fabric which appear on many of the new gowns merit much consideration. Besides their pleasing novelty they are graceful and give opportunity for very effective decoration which adds much to the finish of a frock or suit.

Two of the New High Boots for Street Wear



Two out of many beautiful specimens in footwear for fall are pictured here. They are combinations of cloth and leather in high boots for street wear, and are among the most conservative of the new designs. They are trim, shapely and neat, with everything in style and finish to recommend them.

The very short skirts, which, in many instances glimpse the stockings above the boot-tops, make smart dressing of the feet imperative. New footwear embodies many styles in which contrasting colors are used with uppers made of cloth and the remainder of the shoe in dull finish or in patent kid. But the colors used for tops are quiet, with various tan and gray shades predominating. The dark colors which are correct for tailored gowns are used in the uppers for shoes to match. Or for midwinter wear spats like the tailored gown are to be worn with black shoes.

Among the fancier shoes are those without seams made of light tan, black or bronze leathers, that lace on the inside. The leather uppers seem to be in one piece stretched to fit the foot. They suggest a close-fitting boot like those worn by men in days gone by.

Even more daringly masculine are the short Cossack boots with their ornamental turnover band at the top. They are fascinating achievements in footwear and are steadily gaining headway, appearing with more frequency on the promenade than at any time since their introduction.

Very light shades in tan are liked for all-leather street boots, to be worn with suits in any dark color. The Cossack boot ought to appear with greater frequency as the season advances and Russian street suits, fur-trimmed, come more and more into vogue.

JULIA BOTTOMLEY.

Borax for Colored Linens.

The delicate shades of the now fashionable colored linens may be kept from fading by using plenty of pure pulverized borax in the water in which they are washed and rinsed.

CITY PROVIDES BIRD HOUSES

Inducement for Feathered Songsters to Make a Season's Home in Cleveland.

The city of Cleveland proposes to encourage friendliness toward birds, and no one will believe it misdirected effort. There is growing appreciation everywhere of the desirability, economic and sentimental, of bringing back our native song birds in as large numbers as possible.

East Technical high school is making for the city forestry department 200 model bird houses, which will be placed in various parks. Some of them already have been delivered. It is a fine piece of co-operation between two branches of municipal activity.

Forester Boddy has prepared a list of fruit-bearing trees, shrubs and vines that furnish food for birds, which will be a help for those who wish to put out bird houses about their own premises. The time is at hand when the native birds return from the warmer climate, and will be seeking nesting spots.

It is all an excellent bit of city government usefulness of which the public will approve. It should result in a widespread revival of interest in the whole subject of bird conservation. It may be considered to represent the same sentiment which demands of the present legislature that quail be further protected from hunters.

Nature of Genius.

Men may, he says, with Cincinnatus, prefer plowing to war and statecraft, but they are not able to follow their bent. They are possessed of an insatiable desire to be at work in whatever their line may be. Those who conquer nations and found empires are not moved by ambition. They are moved by the enormous force of vitality which struggles within them and must find a way out. Cicero was more intellectually nimble than Caesar. Ben Jonson had more learning than Shakespeare. Babeuf's intentions were better than Bonaparte's (he lost his head for them). Sir Harry Vane was a far more logical revolutionary than Oliver Cromwell. What was there in the four great men I have named which brought them to the front? Had they any gift in common, setting them apart from other men? Yes, one, and one only. Not deep insight, not high moral purpose, not desire for fame. They did not become supermen by studying for the position, not by taking thought and laying careful plans. They came to the front without appearing to make any effort to get there—because they were more alive than other men.—T. P.'s Weekly.

A Rubber Armor Plate.

Andrew Setzinger, a Pittsburgh policeman, has invented a shock absorber for battleships and other armored vessels. By his method the armor plate is lined with a rubberlike substance, thickly studded, and made by a process which he has invented.

According to Mr. Setzinger, when a projectile penetrates the armor plate, even should it pass through into the ship, the hole cut out will close up through the action of the rubberlike substance, which vulcanizes from the heat caused by the friction from the projectile. This will keep the water out. This process, it was said, has been tested on a small scale and found efficient. It was stated that a foreign government is now arranging for a test of it with large-caliber guns.

Horse Stands Over His Dead Rider.

J. Stulton, English lance corporal, tells this story:

"One man of the ——th lancers I found lying on his back with his eyes staring at the skies. He was dead without doubt. Standing over him was his horse, without a wound. It was looking into his face every few minutes, and then neighing in a pitiful way that sounded just like a human being in an excess of grief. To hear that poor animal was enough to bring tears to the eyes of the most hardened of men."

Here is another incident related by an English soldier:

"Colonel —— and I rode over the awful Vailly bridge at the rear of his regiment. The noise of shell fire was so great that we could not hear each other. He stopped, pulled out his revolver, got off, and shot a horse. Then remounted. At other moments four shells at a time struck that bridge. Yet while his act of mercy was being done not one came near it; ten seconds later it was white with shell bursts."

Queer Orchid Freaks.

An extraordinary collection of plants, many of them hitherto unknown, is to be exhibited in New York city by Harry J. Black, an American, who has spent years on Bolivia, Peru and Brazil, hunting orchids and other strange flora. The collection of orchids which he is bringing with him to the show is valued at $75,000. Among his other flowers, one specimen is so sensitive that it closes its petals in fright at a sharp noise. Others wilt into unconsciousness if anesthetics are applied to their leaves. A species of jatropha, from Colombia, secretes a poison, which it shoots through two fangs like a serpent's when touched, and the sting is deadly. Another stinging plant is covered with coarse hairs, and when one of them is snapped enough poison is discharged to kill a man.

Effective Beads.

Yellow beads on a black cord, or beads combining green, gold and blue tones on a dull blue cord are very effective, as are amber and jet beads on a yellow cord. Pretty combinations can be made, and as they are not at all expensive and can be made at home, one can possess a number of them. Some are finished with a silk tassel, while others are made from small beads in tassel form, ending at the top with a large bead. Quite new are the long braided chains made of flat silk cord, using two contrasting colors to each strand and braiding as flat as possible. Finish each end with a tassel made by fringing the braid.

Languid Larry's Luck.

Gentleman—"What would you do with a nickel if I gave you one?" Tramp (sarcastically)—"Git a new rig, mister, an' some supper an' a night's lodgin' an' breakfast an' dinner tomorrow." Gentleman—"My good fellow, take this quarter and support yourself for the rest of your life."

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