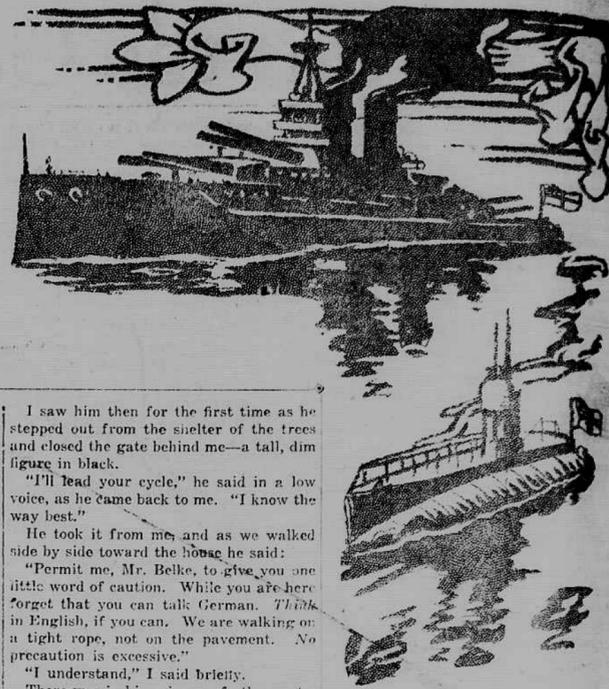


The SPY IN BLACK

BY J. STORER CLOUSTON

AUTHOR OF "THE PEER'S PROGRESS," "THE PRODIGAL FATHER," ETC.



PART II CHAPTER V (Continued)

THE cliffs fell, and a green sound opened. The mail boat turned into the sound, opening inland prospects all the while. A snug bay followed the sound, with a little gray-gabled town clinging to the very wash of the tide and a host of little vessels in the midst. Into the bay pounded the mail boat and up toward the town, and only then did the gallant minister and his fair acquaintance stroll back from the bows. The wag and his friend looked at them curiously, but they had to admit that such a prolonged flirtation had seldom left fewer visible traces. They might have been brother and sister, they both looked so indifferent.

The gangway shot aboard, and with a brief handshake the pair parted. A few minutes later Miss Holland was being greeted by an elderly gentleman in a heavy ulster, while the minister was following a porter toward a small wagonette.

CHAPTER VI The Vanishing Governess

THE House of Breck was a mansion of tolerable antiquity as mansions went in the islands, and several curious stories had already had time to incrust it, like lichen on an aged wall. But none of them was stranger than the quite up-to-date and literally true story of the vanishing governess.

Richard Craigie, Esq., of Breck, the popular and more or less respected laird of the mansion and estate, was a stout, gray-bearded gentleman with a twinkling blue eye and one of the easiest-going dispositions probably in Europe. His wife, the respected and more or less popular mistress of the mansion, was lean and short and very energetic. Their sons were employed at present like everybody else's sons and do not concern this narrative. But their daughters, aged fifteen and fourteen, were at home and do concern it materially.

It was only toward the end of July that Mrs. Craigie thought of having a governess for the two girls during the summer holidays. With a letter in her hand she hustled into Mr. Craigie's smoking room and announced that her friend, Mrs. Armitage, in Kensington, knew a lady who knew a charming and well-educated girl

"And who does she know?" interrupted her husband.

"Nobody," said Mrs. Craigie. "She is the girl."

"Oh!" said the laird. "Now, I thought that she would surely know another girl who knows a woman, who knows a man?"

"Richard!" said his wife. "Kindly listen to me!"

It had been her fate to marry a confirmed domestic humorist, but she bore her burden stoically. She told him now simply and firmly that the girl in question required a holiday and that she purposed to give her one and in return extract some teaching and supervision for their daughters.

"Have it your own way, my dear. Have it your own way," said he. "It was economy yesterday. It's a governess to-day. Have you forced the safe?"

"Which safe?" demanded the unsuspecting lady.

"At the bank. I've no more money of my own, I can tell you. However, send for your governess—get a couple of them while you're at it!"

The humorist was clearly so pleased with his jest that no further debate was to be apprehended, and his wife went out to write the letter. Mr. Craigie lit his sixteenth pipe since breakfast and chewed the cud of his wit very happily.

A fortnight later he returned one evening in the car, bringing Miss Eileen Holland, with her trunk and her brown suitcase.

"My hat, Selina!" said he to his wife as soon as the girls had led Miss Holland out of hearing. "That's the kind of governess for me. You don't mind my telling her to call me Dick, do you? It slipped out when she was squeezing my hand."

"I don't mind you're being undignified," replied Mrs. Craigie in a chilly voice, "but I do wish you wouldn't be vulgar."

AS MR. CRAIGIE'S chief joys in life were entertaining his daughters and getting a rise out of his wife, and as he also had a very genuine admiration for a pretty face, he was in the seventh heaven of happiness, and remained there for the next three days. Pipe in mouth, he invaded the schoolroom constantly and unseasonably and reduced his daughters to a state of incoherent giggling by retailing to Miss Holland various ingenious schemes for their corporal punishment, airing humorous fragments of a language he called French and questioning their instructor on supposititious romantic episodes in her career. He thought Miss Holland hardly laughed as much as she ought. Still, she was a fine girl.

At table he kept his wife continually scandalized by his jocularities, such as hoarsely whispering, "I've lost my half of the sixpence, Miss Holland," or repeating with a thoughtful air, "Under the apple tree when the moon rises; I must try and not forget the hour." Miss Holland was even less responsive to these sallies, but he enjoyed them enormously himself and still maintained she was a fine girl.

Mrs. Craigie's opinion of her new acquisition was only freely expressed afterward, and then she declared that, clever though Miss Holland undoubtedly was, and superior though she seemed, she had always suspected that something was a little wrong somewhere. She and Mr. Craigie had used considerable influence and persuasion to obtain a passport for her, and why should they have been called upon to do this—by a lady whom Mrs. Armitage admitted she had only met twice—simply to give a change of air to a healthy-looking girl? There was something behind that. Besides, Miss Holland was just a trifle too good looking. That type always had a history.

"My wife was plain Mrs. Craigie before the thing happened," observed her husband, with a twinkle, "but, dash it, she's been Mrs. Solomon ever since!"

It was on the fourth morning of Miss Holland's visit that the telegram came for her. Mr. Craigie himself brought it into the schoolroom and delivered it with much facetious mystery. He noticed that it seemed to contain a message of some importance, and that she failed to laugh at all when he offered waggishly to put "him" up for the night. But she simply put it in her pocket and volunteered no explanation. He went away feeling that he had wasted a happy quip.

After lunch Mrs. Craigie and the girls were going out in the car, and Miss Holland was to have accompanied them. It was then that she made her only reference to the telegram. She had got a wire, she said, and had a long letter to write, and so begged to be excused. Accordingly the car went off without her.

NOW five minutes later Mr. Craigie was smoking a pipe and trying to summon up energy to go for a stroll when Miss Holland entered the smoking room. He noticed that she had never looked so smiling and charming.

"Oh, Mr. Craigie," she said, "I want you to help me. I'm preparing a little surprise."

"For the girls?"

"For all of you!"

The laird loved a practical jest and scented happiness at once.

"I'm your man!" said he. "What can I do for you?"

"I'll come down again in half an hour," said she, "and then I want you to help me to carry something."

She gave him a swift, bewitching smile that left him entirely helpless, and hurried from the room.

Mr. Craigie looked at the clock and decided that he would get his stroll into the half-hour, so he took his stick and sauntered down the drive. On one side of his drive was a line of huddled, wind-lent trees, and at the end was a gate opening on the highroad, with the sea close at hand. Just as he got to the gate a stranger appeared upon the road, walking very slowly, and up to that moment concealed by the trees. He was a clergyman, tall, clean-shaven, and with what the laird afterward described as a "hawk-like" look.

There was no haughtiness whatever about the laird of Breck. He accosted every one he met, and always in the friendliest way.

"A fine day," said he heartily. "Grand weather for the crops if we could just get a wee bit more of rain soon."

The clergyman stopped.

"Yes, sir," said he, "it is fine weather."

His manner was polite, but not very hearty, the laird thought. However, he was not easily damped, and proceeded to contribute several more observations, chiefly regarding the weather prospects, and tending to become rapidly humorous. And then he remembered his appointment in the smoking room.

"Well," said he, "good day to you. I must be moving, I'm afraid."

"Good day," said the stranger courteously, and moved off promptly as he spoke.

"I wonder who will that minister be,"

Synopsis of the Preceding Instalments

THIS startling novel of the German spy system is mainly the narrative of Lieutenant von Belke, of the German navy, with a few additional chapters by Mr. Clouston. Lieutenant von Belke lands from a submarine, with his motorcycle, upon those islands where the British Grand Fleet has its lair. He carries an important paper which is to be delivered into the hands of a mysterious personage alluded to as "him." Suspicion is aroused, but he evades pursuit and reaches a point near the scheduled meeting place. Not far off rise the steep roof and gabled top of the parish manse. Along the road comes a trap drawn by a horse and driven by a man in a black, flat felt hat and overcoat. This, he is sure, is the person he is to meet.

Part II comprises "a few chapters by the editor," and introduces the Rev. Alexander Burnett, a country clergyman, who is induced to visit a parish on the very island which forms the setting for Part I, with an idea of applying for a clerical vacancy. A pleasant stranger with a big touring car so manipulates things as to call for the Rev. Burnett just at dark for the purpose of carrying him to the home of Robert Drummond, a friend of the minister's. The Rev. Burnett is afflicted with certain qualms of suspicion, both over the pleasant stranger and the chauffeur, who, though he takes care not to expose his face, is the minister's almost exact double. All at once, as they are driving along through the night, the chauffeur turns round with the news that he has seen a mysterious light. Mr. Taylor, the "pleasant stranger," descends, bidding the minister and chauffeur to follow. They approach a cliff. Suddenly the Rev. Burnett becomes violently alarmed, turns round, confronts his own image in the person of the chauffeur and is then struck unconscious.

The scene shifts to the home of Robert Drummond, who receives a telegram, ostensibly from the minister, stating that his plans are altered and he will not come after all. A couple of days later Mr. Drummond is visited by a lieutenant in the navy, who acquaints him with the news that his friend has been picked up by a patrol boat, unconscious from a blow on the head, and half drowned. The lieutenant pockets the telegram received by Mr. Drummond.

The scene again shifts to a mail boat crossing the English Channel. Two persons, a handsome lady named Miss Holland and a man in clerical attire, purporting to be the Rev. Alex. Burnett, of Berwickshire, engage in conversation. When she expresses surprise at learning his name, and says that she herself is acquainted with a Rev. Burnett, living in the same place, he coolly suggests that they stroll out to the bow of the ship. Passengers wonder about this strange couple. "I'm wondering," one passenger observed, "how long these two are going to stand there."

said Mr. Craigie to himself as he strolled back. "It's funny I never saw the man before. And I wonder, too, where he was going."

And then it occurred to him as an odd circumstance that the minister had started to go back again, not to continue as he had been walking.

"That's a funny thing," he thought.

He had hardly got back to his smoking room when Miss Holland appeared, dressed to go out, in hat and tweed coat, and dragging, of all things, her brown suitcase. It seemed to be heavily laden.

She smiled at him confidentially, as one fellow conspirator at another.

"Do you mind giving me a hand with this?" said she.

"Hello!" cried the laird. "What's this—an elopement? Can you not wait till I pack my things, too? The minister's in no hurry. I've just been speaking to him."

It struck him that Miss Holland took his jest rather seriously.

"The minister?" said she in rather an odd voice. "You've spoken to him?"

"He was only asking if I'd got the license," winked Mr. Craigie.

The curious look passed from her face, and she laughed as pleasantly as he could wish.

"I'll take the bag myself," said the laird.

"Oh, it's no weight for me. I used to be rather a dab at throwing the hammer in my day. But where am I to take it?"

"I'll show you," said she.

SO OUT they set, Mr. Craigie carrying the suitcase, and Miss Holland in the most delightful humor beside him. He felt he could have carried it for a very long way. She led him through the garden and out into a side lane between the wall and a hedge.

"Just put it down here," she said. "And now I want you to come back for something else, if you don't mind."

"Mind?" said the laird gallantly. "Not me! But I'm wondering what you are driving at."

She only smiled, but from her merry eye he felt sure that some very brilliant jest was afoot, and he joked away pleasantly as they returned to the house.

"Now," she said, "do you mind waiting in the smoking room for ten minutes or so?"

She went out and Mr. Craigie waited, mystified but happy. He waited for ten minutes; he waited for twenty; he waited for half an hour, and still there was no sign of the fascinating Miss Holland. And then he sent a servant to look for her. Her report gave Mr. Craigie the strongest sensation that had stirred that good-natured humorist for many a day. Miss Holland was not in her room, and no more apparently were her belongings. The toilet table was stripped, the wardrobe was empty. In fact, the only sign of her was her trunk, strapped and locked.

Moving with exceptional velocity, Mr.



Craigie made straight for the lane beyond the garden. The brown suitcase had disappeared.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" murmured the baffled humorist.

Very slowly and soberly he returned to the house, lit a fresh pipe and steadied his nerves with a glass of grog. When Mrs. Craigie returned she found him sufficiently revived to jest again, though in a minor key.

"To think of the girl having the impudence to make me carry her luggage out of the house for her!" said he. "Gad, but it was a clever dodge to get clear, with no one suspecting her! Well, anyhow, my reputation is safe again at last, Selina."

"Your reputation!" replied Mrs. Craigie in a withering voice. "For what? Not for common sense, anyhow!"

"You're flustered, my dear," said the laird easily. "It's a habit women get into terribly easy. You should learn a lesson from Miss Eileen Holland. Dashed if I ever met a cooler hand in my life!"

"And what do you mean to do about it?" demanded his wife.

"Do?" asked Mr. Craigie, mildly surprised. "Well, we might leave the pantry window open at night so that she can get in again if she's wanting to, or—"

"It's your duty to inform the authorities, Richard."

"Duty?" repeated the laird, still more surprised. "Fancy me starting to do my duty at my time of life!"

"Anyhow," cried Mrs. Craigie, "we've still got her trunk."

"Ah," said Mr. Craigie, happily at last, "so we have! Well, that's all right, then."

And with a benign expression the philosopher contentedly lit another pipe.

PART III Lieutenant Von Belke's Narrative Resumed

CHAPTER I The Meeting

AS THE dusk rapidly thickened and I lay in the heather waiting for the signal, I gave myself one last bit of good advice. Of "him" I was to meet I had received officially a pretty accurate description, and unofficially heard one or two curious stories. I had also, of course, had my exact relationship to him officially defined. I was to be under his orders, generally speaking, but in purely naval matters, or at least on matters of naval detail, my judgment would be accepted by him. My last word of advice to myself simply was to be perfectly firm on any such point, and permit no scheme to be set afoot, however tempting, unless it was thoroughly practical from the naval point of view.

From the rim of my hollow there on the hillside I could see several of the farms below me, as well as the manse, and I noted one little sign of British efficiency—no glimmer of light shone from any of their windows. At sea a light or two twinkled intermittently and a searchlight was playing, though fortunately not in my direction. Otherwise land and water were alike plunged in darkness. And then at last one single window of the manse glowed red for an instant. A few seconds passed and it shone red again. Finally it showed a bright yellow light twice in swift succession.

I rose and very carefully led my cycle over the heather down to the road, and then, still pushing it, walked quickly down the steep hill to where the side road turned off. There was not a sound save my foot-fall as I approached the house. A dark mass loomed in front of me, which I saw in a moment to be a garden wall with a few of the low, wind-bent island trees showing above it. This side road led right up to an iron gate in the wall, and just as I got close enough to distinguish the bars I heard a gentle creak and saw them begin to swing open. Beyond the trees over-arched the drive and the darkness was profound. I had passed between the gateposts before I saw or heard anything more. And then a quiet voice spoke.

"It is a dark night," it said in perfect English.

"Dark as pitch," I answered.

"It was darker last night," said the voice.

"It is dark enough," I answered.

Not perhaps a very remarkable conversation, you may think, but I can assure you my fingers were on my revolver, just in case one single word had been different. Now I breathed freely at last.

"Herr Tiel?" I inquired.

"Mr. Tiel," corrected the invisible man beside me.

I saw him then for the first time as he stepped out from the shelter of the trees and closed the gate behind me—a tall, dim figure in black.

"I'll lead your cycle," he said in a low voice, as he came back to me. "I know the way best."

He took it from me, and as we walked side by side toward the house he said:

"Permit me, Mr. Belke, to give you one little word of caution. While you are here forget that you can talk German. Think in English, if you can. We are walking on a tight rope, not on the pavement. No precaution is excessive."

"I understand," I said briefly.

There was in his voice, perfectly courteous though it was, a note of command which made one instinctively reply briefly—and obediently. I felt disposed to be favorably impressed with my ally.

He left me standing for a moment in the drive while he led my motorcycle round to some shed at the back, and then we entered the house by the front door.

"My servant doesn't spend the night here," he explained, "so we are safe enough after dark, as long as we make no sound that can be heard outside."

It was pitch dark inside, and only when he had closed and bolted the front door behind us did Tiel flash his electric torch. Then I saw that we stood in a small porch which opened into a little hall with a staircase facing us and a passage opening beside it into the back of the house. At either side was a door, and Tiel opened that on the right and led me into a pleasant, low, lamp-lit room with a bright peat fire blazing and a table laid for supper. I learned afterward that the clergyman who had just vacated the parish had left hurriedly and that his books and furniture had not yet followed him. Hence the room, and indeed the whole house, looked habitable and comfortable.

"This is the place I have been looking for for a long time!" I cried cheerfully, for indeed it made a pleasant contrast to a ruinous farm or the interior of a submarine.

Tiel smiled. He had a pleasant smile, but it generally passed from his face very swiftly, and left his expression cold, alert, composed and a trifle dominating.

"You had better take off your overalls and begin," he said. "There is an English warning against conversation between a full man and a fasting. I have had supper already."

When I took off my overalls, I noticed that he gave me a quick look of surprise.

"In uniform?" he exclaimed.

"It may not be much use if I'm caught," I laughed, "but I thought it a precaution worth taking."

"Excellent!" he agreed, and he seemed genuinely pleased. "It was very well thought of. Do you drink whiskey and soda?"

"You have no beer?"

He smiled and shook his head.

"I am a Scottish divine," he said, "and I am afraid my guests must submit to whiskey. Even in these little details it is well to be correct."

For the next half hour there was little conversation. To tell you the truth, I was nearly famished and had something better to do than talk. Tiel, on his part, opened a newspaper, and now and then read extracts aloud. It was an English newspaper, of course, and I laughed once or twice at its items. He smiled, too, but he did not seem much given to laughter.

And all the while I took stock of my new acquaintance very carefully.

In appearance Adolph Tiel was just as he had been described to me, and very much as my imagination had filled in the picture; a man tall, though not very tall, clean-shaven, rather thin, decidedly English in his general aspect, distinctly good looking, with hair beginning to turn gray, and cleverness marked clearly in his face. What I had not been quite prepared for was his air of good breeding and authority. Not that there was any real reason why these qualities should have been absent, but as a naval officer of a country whose military services have pretty strong prejudices, I had scarcely expected to find in a secret service agent quite this air.

Also what I had heard of Tiel had prepared me to meet a gentleman in whom cleverness was more conspicuous than dignity. Even those who professed to know something about him had admitted that he was a bit of a mystery. He was said to come either from Alsace or Lorraine, and to be of mixed parentage and the most cosmopolitan experience. One story had it that he served at one period of his very mixed career in the navy of a certain South American state, and this story I very soon came to the conclusion was correct, for he showed a considerable knowledge of naval affairs. Even when he professed ignorance of certain points, I was inclined to suspect he was simply trying to throw doubt upon the reports which he supposed I had heard, for rumor also said that he had quitted the service of his adopted country under circumstances which reflected more credit on his brains than his honesty.

In fact, my informants were agreed that Herr Tiel's brains were very remarkable indeed, and that his nerve and ad-

dress were equal to his ability. He was undoubtedly very completely in the confidence of my own government, and I could mention at least two rather serious mishaps that had befallen England which were credited to him by people who certainly ought to have known the facts.

Looking at him attentively as he sat before the fire studying "The Scotsman"—the latest paper to be obtained in those parts—I thought to myself that there was a man I should sooner have on my side than against me. If ever I had seen a wolf in sheep's clothing, it seemed to me that I beheld one now in the person of Adolph Tiel attired as a Scottish clergyman, reading a solid Scottish newspaper over the peat fire of this remote and peaceful manse. And, to complete the picture, there sat I arrayed in a German naval uniform, with the unsuspecting Grand Fleet on the other side of those shuttered and curtained windows! The piquancy of the whole situation struck me so forcibly that I laughed aloud.

Tiel looked up and laid down his paper, and his eyebrows rose inquiringly. He was not a man who wasted many words.

"We are a nice pair!" I exclaimed.

I seemed to read approval of my spirit in his eye.

"You seem none the worse for your adventures," he said, with a smile.

"No, thanks to you!" I laughed.

Again he gave me that keen look of inquiry.

"I landed on this infernal island last night," I explained.

"The deuce you did!" said he. "I was afraid you might, but as things turned out I couldn't get here sooner. What did you do with yourself?"

"First give me one of those cigars," I said, "and then I'll tell you."

He handed me the box of cigars, and I drew up an easy chair on the other side of the fire. And then I told him my adventures, and as I was not unwilling that this redoubtable adventurer should see that he had a not wholly unworthy accomplice, I told them in pretty full detail. He was an excellent listener; I must say that for him. With an amused yet appreciative smile, putting in now and then a question shrewd and to the point, he heard my tale to the end. And then he said in a quiet manner which I already realized detracted nothing from the value of his approval:

"You did remarkably well, Mr. Belke. I congratulate you."

"Thank you, Mr. Tiel," I replied. "And now may I ask you your adventures?"

"Certainly," said he. "I owe you an explanation."

CHAPTER II Tiel's Story

"How much do you know of our scheme?" asked Tiel.

"I shrugged my shoulders.

"Merely that you were going to impersonate a clergyman who was due to come here and preach this next Sunday. How you were going to achieve this feat I wasn't told."

He leaned back in his chair and sucked at his pipe, and then he began his story with a curious, detached air, as though he were surveying his own handiwork from the point of view of an impartial connoisseur.

"The idea was distinctly ingenious," said he, "and I think I may also venture to claim for it a little originality. I won't trouble you with the machinery by which we learn things. It's enough to mention that among the little things we did learn was the fact that the minister of this parish had left for another charge, and that the parishioners were choosing his successor after the Scottish custom—by hearing a number of candidates each preach a trial sermon." He broke off and asked: "Do you happen to have heard of Schumann?"

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