

Mme. Storch— Vampire and German Spy



The Face That Lured Men to Their Deaths and Made Pawns of Empires—the Face That Was One of the Causes of the Massacre of a Whole Russian Army Corps. This Was One of Mme. Storch's Favorite Photographs of Herself. Taken While She Was Corrupting High Officials in Petrograd.

(Continued from Last Sunday)

CHAPTER V

THE sudden denunciation of the young Mme. Storch and her arrest, as described on this page last Sunday caused a great sensation in the gay company which she had gathered about her at Toledo, Spain. The army officers, diplomats and international adventurers who had been her guests at the bizarre entertainments in her villa, the majority of whom openly trailed their devotion at her dainty feet, became panic-stricken. They did not dare to display even the slightest interest in the captive beauty.

Mme. Storch protested that she was the victim of the jealousy of the French officer whom she had fascinated and who had denounced her to save himself from the consequences of his own infatuation.

Even at this time—in 1913—the war departments of Europe had been forced to adopt the principle that "spies have no sex." It was known in these departments that Germany had enlisted a shifting battalion of charming young women for secret intrigue in all the capitals on the continent. But very few had been caught, and even when caught it was difficult to overcome influences brought to bear in their behalf. Such as were successfully unmasked were given scant mercy.

It seemed as if the young, pretty and fragile Mme. Nezie would have to pay the penalty for such affairs as those of Captain Cammara and Colonel Alma, who died for her, as heretofore narrated. France sent its agents to Spain to prove Mme. Nezie had drawn valuable military information and official documents from French and Spanish officers, for the benefit of Germany. It was shown that the General Staff at Berlin had learned all the details of the proposed increase in army classes by a lengthening of the compulsory service from two to three years, a plan just then being put into effect by the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joffre. Many of the details of this plan were a secret, yet Germany knew them before they were revealed in France. The French claimed that Mme. Storch had obtained this information from officers whom she had infatuated, and had passed it on to Herr Max Steinhauer, the chief of the German Intelligence Bureau. They insisted that if she could be returned to France under arrest they might obtain

from her a clue to the German secret organization which, it was known, flourished in Paris.

Just as Mme. Nezie and Count de Beville, who was arrested with her, were about to be deported, representations in her behalf were made to King Alfonso and the Minister of the Interior of the Spanish Cabinet by Senor Jose Pascuale, a wealthy banker of Madrid. Pascuale had never met Mme. Nezie. He moved in a wholly different society. None of his friends knew her, at least not with any intimacy. But Senor Pascuale was powerful in government circles. The Minister of the Interior himself signed an order for the young woman's release. The Minister found it advisable, though, to stipulate that Mme. Nezie and the Count de Beville should leave the soil of Spain within forty-eight hours.

Just the other day Senor Pascuale found it urgent for him to leave Spain. The allies had discovered that he was one of the chiefs of the German Foreign Secret Service.

Mme. Storch, still protesting her innocence of espionage, lost no time in obeying the order of the Spanish Ministry to leave Spain. Her retinue of followers included a young man who is to figure prominently later on, the Count de Cleremont, who also was arrested when Mme. Nezie and Count de Beville were trapped in the United States.

Among the "little things" which came up for the beauty's attention upon her sudden departure was a florist's bill for orchids and violets, madame's favorite flowers, which amounted to 7,800 pesetas, or close to \$1,560. When Mme. Storch was arrested in the United States it was found that she had spent huge sums each week for orchids and violets.

When the Russian Ballet Princess Fell Into Her Wicked Net

With Count de Beville, Count de Cleremont and other gay spendthrifts of her satellite court, Mme. Nezie left Toledo between suns, within the forty-eight-hour period, going to San Remo, the principal resort on the Italian Riviera. Here she established herself temporarily to await instructions from those invisible agencies which ruled her life.

In the meantime her exit from Toledo had not been without its aftermath. Among those who had attached themselves to Mme. Nezie was a beautiful young Russian, the Princess Soubenkoff, of Petrograd. The Princess had been

a member of the famous Russian Ballet who had caught the fancy of the dashing young Prince Sergius, scion of one of Russia's wealthiest and most powerful court families. She had been lifted out of the ballet and carried away in a romantic elopement by her enamored prince.

There was a great commotion in Petrograd society when it learned that Prince Sergius Soubenkoff had stolen his ballet girl and actually married her. The new Princess Soubenkoff, who had danced on the table at many an unconventional party along "Morganatic Lane," as Petrograd's street of "left-handed loves" was called, was most chillily received in more sedate palaces.

The Fate of the Unhappy Princess—Beaten and Turned Out of Doors

Prince Sergius obtained a leave of absence from his regiment and took his charming bride to Paris and then to Spain. Suddenly—this was early in 1914—the Prince was recalled by his regimental commander.

The Prince left his Princess in Spain, promising her that he would appeal to the Czar in person, in the name of youthful love, to let him bring her to St. Petersburg under the protection of imperial favor.

Alone in Madrid, with only a professional duenna as her chaperone, and with the tastes for pleasures that would especially appeal to an emancipated dancing girl who had been since her childhood a spectator of the sensuous indulgences with which the gay aristocrats of the Russian capital whiled away their lives, the young Princess fell easy prey to the temptations that surrounded her. She found a kindred spirit in Mme. Nezie, who already had had a larger experience of the world, and became Mme. Nezie's closest intimate.

When their career at Toledo was interrupted by Mme. Nezie's sudden arrest, the Princess was dismayed. It seemed as if she were lost. In her distress she appealed to her husband at St. Petersburg, and urged him to come to her at once. The gallant young Prince left for Spain as soon as he could obtain permission from his commandant.

Prince Sergius was very wrathful when he learned the true state of affairs. He was more so when the gossip and rumors which the arrest had precipitated informed him somewhat of the extent to which the Princess had strayed from her faithfulness to him. The culmination of an exciting scene in the chateau which had been Mme. Nezie's was characteristic of the temper of the Russian husband. He left the young Princess a hysterical, crumpled heap on the floor, bruised and smarting, with great welts across her shoulders raised by his riding crop.

The Prince returned to Russia, his romance faded and his Princess but a sorrowful memory. She fled to San Remo, where she appealed to her friend, Mme. Nezie, to take her in. But she confessed that her husband would send her no more remittances, and that she would learn from him no more news of the mobilization plans of the Russian General Staff. Then Mme. Nezie laughed at the forlorn little Princess and turned

her out of doors to the mercies of the rones and adventurers who retreat to St. Remo when other resorts are closed to them!

A year afterward Prince Soubenkoff, whose regiment was cut to pieces in the trap into which Hindenburg lured the Tenth Russian Army Corps, returned to Petrograd from the front, one of the few officers who escaped the massacre. Prince Sergius was crushed and despondent. He knew, as did other gallant Russian officers, that there had been treachery at home, else Hindenburg would never have been able to ambush a whole army corps in the Mazurian Lakes. One of the first familiar faces he saw on the Nevski Prospect after his arrival from the front was that of Mme. Nezie. It was only a glimpse the Prince caught of the olive-tinted face framed among the cushions of a speeding limousine, with sables and ermine wrapped close about it. Yet that one glimpse was enough. He remembered his wife's downfall at the hands of this young woman and the latter's narrow escape at Toledo from a spy's fate.

Prince Sergius looked around him; he quietly investigated the career of Mme. Nezie in Petrograd. A Russian colonel was hanged, the general of a division was torn from her boudoir and shot at sunrise; the Minister of War was sent into chains for life and his young wife suffered disgrace, and Mme. Nezie escaped from Russia just in time to save her neck.

Her Corps of Beautiful Spies in the Czar's Turbulent Capital

It was not until the middle of the Summer of 1914 that Mme. Storch was ordered by the German Secret Service to go to Petrograd. In the meantime she remained in semi-obscurity at San Remo. It is apparent her German masters wanted the scandal which broke at Toledo to die out before it entrusted to her another important mission. The Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated at Sarajevo June 28. It is significant, in the light of after events, that the record shows that Mme. Storch arrived in St. Petersburg during the first week of July, or more than two weeks before the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia.

When Mme. Nezie arrived at St. Petersburg, as it was still called at that time, there was great commotion in the city. Never had there been so much gayety. Even the tense undercurrent of emotional stress with which the outcome of the Sarajevo assassination was awaited seemed to add to the reckless unrestraint of the city's aristocracy. Rasputin's boasts of his conquest of the Czarina, a new "love affair" of one of the grand dukes, the origin of a new necklace of diamonds around the delicate throat of Mlle. Ksheshinskaya, the Czar's favorite dancing girl—these were the things that seemed uppermost in the whole city's thoughts.

Into such an atmosphere Mme. Nezie, who was always the centre of much curiosity as a runaway harem girl, and whose voluptuous beauty was remarkable in any company of dazzling women, fitted easily and quickly. Soon she was the centre of a new circle of admirers, the



Mme. Soukhomlinoff, War Mme. Storch Who Afterward Plans to Germany

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