

Say Boys, Better Buy Your Watch of CHAMBERLIN, the Jeweler and Optician.

THE MYSTERY OF GRASLOV

By Ashley Towne

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"I said—why—now, don't get angry at your old dad—I said you were a self-willed creature and acted on your own whims."

"That is nothing to get angry about. I do. But I fear that between us we have sent the Paulpoffs to their doom."

"For goodness sake, how?"

"It was natural that—"

"It wasn't natural at all. What did I say—what have you done—to cause Vladimir Paulpoff to plot against the czar?"

"Heavens! Are you so blind? The Paulpoffs are as innocent of this charge as you or I. It was against Vladimir the plot was laid."

"I begin to catch your meaning. Who was it—Neslerov?"

"It is impossible to say whether he did or not, but I suspect him. You remember the day he was here. I met him as I came home from the bazaars, where I had been buying books for Vladimir. I did not, of course, suspect that he had been talking with you about marrying me. Unwittingly I told him they were for Vladimir and asked him also to take an interest in him."

"I also told him of a blacksmith in whom you were taking a great interest. He has put that and your independence together and has imagined Vladimir. Well?"

"I had my fears that something was afoot about Vladimir. It was so clearly a plot that I knew the jealousy of Neslerov had been aroused. When I learned what had been done, I waited two days at Perm to see Governor Guslav, but he was away, and I could not see him. It was the superintendent of police who gave me the little information I got. It seems that an inspector discovered—so they say—that nihilists were meeting in the forge. Letters were found on them which implicated Vladimir. There was a trial, so it was claimed, and Vladimir was found guilty. I am sure Vladimir would have sent to us if he could."

"I don't want to get mixed up in any nihilist scrape."

"But you will help Vladimir, will you not?"

"What can I do?"

"You can at least stop at Perm and see the governor. It will not delay us long."

"I will do that, certainly; but I don't fancy there is much use talking to Guslav. He is a stern old soldier and has no sympathy for lovers or plotters."

"But he is just and honorable."

"Yes, I am sure of that."

"Then come. We will go to Perm together and see him."

"Well, I suppose I must do as you say, but we are about ready to start for the Obl. We can stop at Perm for a day."

"That will do."

The preparations were hastily made, and four days more saw them at Perm. The governor was at home and received Mr. Gordon, the name being an open sesame anywhere in Russia. Mr. Gordon plunged at once into the matter of Vladimir's arrest.

"That he was arrested, if the circumstances were suspicious, I grant, was proper enough," said Mr. Gordon. "But was there a fair trial? Pardon me if I speak plainly. Your institutions of justice here are quite different from ours at home. I have known where men were hustled off to Siberia with no semblance of a trial."

"But they were guilty," said the governor, with a smile.

"Yes, I believe in all the instances that came under my observation they were."

"It was the same in this case. The Paulpoffs had been using their isolated position for base ends. A circle of the brotherhood of nihilists congregated there. Letters were found upon them. These letters were all signed by Vladimir Paulpoff."

"Did he admit anything?"

"They never do. It is only when a man is captured in the very act of assassination, and he knows he cannot escape the death penalty, that he admits his crime and glories in it. The Paulpoffs denied everything, of course."

"Poor Vladimir! He was as innocent as I am!" broke in Frances.

"Impossible. The letters were proof enough."

"Are the letters here?"

No; unfortunately, they were car-

ried away by one of the men who escaped."

"Then you did not see the letters?"

"No; I regret that I did not."

"What was said concerning them?"

"Their import was given by Inspector Jansky and Prince Neslerov, who found them. Their testimony so pleased the minister of justice that Jansky has been promoted to be superintendent of the police at Tomsk. You seem to think there is some doubt of the guilt of these people," said the governor, turning to Mr. Gordon.

"For my part I am quite sure they are innocent. My daughter has been interested in them since the railway ran through Perm. It is not like them to plot. They are too simple and ignorant."

"But Vladimir is not. He is shrewd and intelligent. He has been a reader of books."

"Yes; my daughter furnishes them."

"I am not at all doubtful myself," said the governor, with a grim smile.

"Were I, I would begin an open investigation at once. But, you understand, the accuser was a prince and the governor of Tomsk; and the minister of justice has set the seal of his approval on the thing. It is a delicate matter for me to reopen. But I promise you this: I will guardedly look into the thing, and if I see any chance for doubt for your sake I will do what I can to help the Paulpoffs."

"Thank you. That is all we can ask," said Mr. Gordon. "We may see them



She looked out at the savage faces and shuddered.

at Tomsk. I may say to them that your excellency is working to know the truth?"

"You may."

The interview ended, and Mr. Gordon and Frances continued their journey.

The first person they saw when they entered the train was Neslerov. The mark made by Frances' bullet was still there, but he had not, to all appearances, been seriously injured. He looked curiously at the two travelers, as if wondering when the outbreak of wrath from Gordon would come. But that gentleman walked up to him and held out his hand.

"How do you do, your excellency?" he said. "We are going to Tomsk together, it seems."

Neslerov was almost stunned, but he took the hand. Was it possible that Frances had not told her father of the scene in Paulpoff's cottage?

It was so, and Frances had her own reasons. She loved the liberty she had for years been permitted to enjoy. But she knew that if dangers and narrow escapes came to her father's ears her liberty would soon come to an end.

It was a long journey, and a weary one as well. Day after day they passed through the same scenes, crossed rivers on bridges that had been built by Jack Denton, Frances' old playmate, and the strong structures perhaps caused her to think of the hardworking young man who built them and was now planning a very large and excellent bridge across the Obl. But whatever was in Frances' mind did not find expression through her lips, for her father and Neslerov smoked and chatted and played cards with two officers going to garrisons on the border.

Frances said nothing more about the prince, for in the place to which they were going he was supreme, and to involve her father with him in a quarrel

would have been to invite a disaster similar to that which had overtaken the Paulpoffs.

Day after day Frances leaned her head against the glass window and watched the flitting scenes. At last they reached the Irish and crossed the border into that province, which was almost as much Neslerov's own as though he were a king.

There were but few passengers by that time, for the road had not been finished, and the train must stop at the Obl. Frances, half dreaming, lay back, looking at the great expanse of tundra, the new villages springing up, the old huts that were now deserted and the waste of railway supplies along the track.

The prince had asked her father to go into another car and smoke. This left her alone, and she closed her eyes and dozed.

She woke up with a start. A hand was on her shoulder. She saw Neslerov bending over her. A smile of triumph was on his face. Frightened, she glanced out of the window. The car was still. She looked forward—the rest of the train had gone on.

"What has happened?" she cried, leaping to her feet. "Where is the train? Where is my father?"

"Speeding toward the Obl, my dear," said Neslerov. "Unfortunately, at this point the couplings between this car and the next were broken, and the officers of the train, not missing you or me—for I had just come in with a cup of coffee for you—left us and went on. We are in a wild place, surrounded by various tribes of the remarkable collection of savages over whom I am governor. But I am governor, and if you will obey me I promise that you will reach Tomsk in safety."

Frances leaned back weakly and stared.

"My father gone!" she cried, and as she looked out at the savage faces that passed and looked at the car in wonder she shuddered.

"Unfortunately, your father was in a forward car. It was with his consent I came to you with coffee. Fear nothing, however, for though we are in a wild region, I am governor and will protect you. I love you, and no harm shall come to you—if you obey me."

CHAPTER VI.

AN AMERICAN GIRL'S PLUCK.

ANOTHER glance from the window showed Frances that the car had come to a stop near a new bridge over a branch of the Irish. Involuntarily she sighed for the man who had built that bridge—Denton, whose eye was keen and steady, whose muscles were of iron.

But Denton was miles farther on, at the Obl.

"Now," said Neslerov, as the girl sank back in her seat, "let us face this situation, my dear. Let us realize the true significance. We are practically alone, you and I. Save for the poor wretches in that village yonder, we are the only people on this earth just now. Can you realize the fullness of that statement? You are mine—absolutely and wholly mine."

"Oh, you cur! You coward!" exclaimed Frances. Her hand went as if by instinct toward that pocket from which she had drawn her revolver on a previous occasion. Neslerov saw her face turn whiter still, and he laughed pleasantly.

"Of course I guarded against that," he said. "I knew you would, with your American impulsiveness, try to shoot me again. So, while you slept, I quietly took your little toy pistol from your pocket. I have it here. This, I believe, deprives you of the power to do any more mischief."

"Oh, you miserable coward! You thief!" said Frances in a tense voice. "I wish there was a good American fist here to strike that grinning face of yours!"

"Undoubtedly," said Neslerov, with an exasperating coolness, "that would be pleasant for you, but it would be unfortunate for the American who owned the fist. One blow—peste! He would be torn apart by my agreeable savages yonder."

She could not resist the temptation to follow his finger as it pointed through the window on his side of the car. A short distance, on the banks of the stream, she saw a wretched, miserable village of rude huts. Men and women, dressed in leather, undressed skins, heavy cloths from Moscow merchants, stood in groups, all with their faces toward the car.

"Were I to say the word," said Neslerov, "these people would tear you limb from limb and would perform the same agreeable service for any fool who attempted to interfere between us."

"Monster!" she gasped.

"Of course I am a monster to you," he said. "All Russians are monsters to those who do not like us. We may have our little peculiarities. One of them is that what we cannot get by fair means we get some other way. I spoke to your father, and I spoke to you. I offered the honest love of a Russian prince. I was spurned. But

now the game is mine, and I shall win. You shall become my wife before your father has time to return from the Obl."

"Never! I would prefer to be torn apart by your villagers!"

"You believe that now while you are in the heat of anger, but a short period of rest and contemplation will show you the folly of your refusal. Think of this. I shall go out now and obtain some food. We may remain here a week. Who knows? Before I leave you I wish to say that until you consent to have the priest of that village make you my wife you shall not be permitted to leave this car. I much prefer, as would any man, a willing bride; but, denied this, I will compel you to obey. It will be the worse for you. I offered love—an affectionate embrace. You refused. Now I command! Think this matter settled only when we are married."

"Never! You have my revolver and, I suppose, one of your own. Shoot me if you will. I will not marry you!"

"It will not be you I shoot. What do you think your father will do when he finds you are left behind?"

"Without doubt he will obtain a special train and come here after me. Then, Prince Neslerov, beware!"

He smiled like a wolf and showed his teeth.

"That is what I wanted you to say. If when your father comes here you are not my wife, I will shoot him dead."

"You dare not!" she gasped.

"I dare anything. No report of mine would be discredited at St. Petersburg. I could prove that your father was a conspirator against the government and was shot while fighting my soldiers."

"There is a government of the United States of America!"

"True, but at a distance. I do not fear it. But consider what I have said. I will return with food."

He left the car, securing the doors to prevent her escape. When she saw him striding toward the village, she leaned against the window and studied the rude people.

"I am helpless—absolutely helpless!" she moaned. "Oh, if he had not taken my revolver I could have shot him—or myself."

She looked about her for some method whereby she could, if the need should come, take her own life rather than submit to his demands. She knew that if there were a priest in this squalid place he would obey Neslerov, and mumble some words perfectly meaningless to her, but which would give Neslerov power over her. She walked the length of the apartment like a caged lioness.

Women turned into their huts and came out again. She saw Neslerov start back toward the car carrying a wooden tray. She shuddered again.

"God give me strength, courage, calmness," she murmured. "To lose consciousness would be to fall a victim to him."

She nerved herself to meet him as his footsteps sounded on the platform. The door opened, and he entered with a bowl of gruel, some steaming potatoes, roast fowl, coffee and some coarse bread.

"It is not quite like our usual fare," he said, "but it is better than being hungry."

He set the dishes on a table he improvised out of the back of a seat. He had a large traveling bag with him, and from it he took a bottle of wine.

"We will pledge each other," he said, with a laugh.

"I do not wish any," said Frances.

"Come, don't be childish! Let us get over the unpleasant part. Drink a toast to your future husband."

"I will not. I will not touch it!"

"Drink—drink my health!" he commanded.

"I will not!"

"I will make you!"

He held the cup in his right hand. With his left he grasped her by the hair. He bent back her head.

"Open your mouth. Swallow the wine. I will choke you!" he cried.

With a powerful effort she wrenched herself free and to her feet, and the wine went to the floor with a smash.

Her eyes were glaring with desperation. She clinched her fist and rained blow upon blow upon his face.

Curses deep and terrible burst from him. He clutched her round the waist and struggled with her. She exerted all her strength. She was like a ferocious tigress. Her nails scratched his face and tore his hair. Her blows cut his lips on his teeth. But he was a powerful man and used his strength against this captive woman. With a gasp she succumbed and sank helpless and exhausted almost in his arms.

"Curse you!" he spluttered between his swollen lips. "I have wasted my kindness on you! I should have starved you. But I will delay no longer. I'll drag you to the priest, and in ten minutes you will be the Princess Neslerov—and my slave for life. I'll break your heart, you devil!"

UPRISING IN MACEDONIA

Bulgarians Reported Arming to Invade Turkish Territory.

POWERS INSIST ON REFORMS.

Austria and Russia Make the Demand. Albanians Said to Have Attacked Rumanian Consulate at Mitrovitza—Balkan War Cloud Lowers.

Vienna, Feb. 23.—It is reported that the Macedonian leader, Sarafoff, has organized within the past fortnight several well equipped Bulgarian bands in Macedonia, each consisting of about 250 men. Four thousand armed Macedonians are concentrated near the celebrated Rila monastery, forty miles from Sofia, and are preparing to attack the town of Meulik, in the Turkish province of Sere. There is an unconfirmed rumor that the Albanians have attacked the Rumanian consulate at Mitrovitza, Turkey.

Constantinople, Feb. 23.—The Austrian and Russian ambassadors presented to the grand vizier identical memoranda embodying the demands for reforms in Macedonia. They afterwards acquainted the foreign minister of the step taken. This course was adopted to give the proceedings a semi-official character.

The chief proposal made in the memoranda is the appointment of an inspector general, with power to act independently and to requisition troops in case of emergency. The plan also provides for the reorganization of the gendarmes and police under European instructors, for administrative and financial reforms and for a more equitable collection of taxes. These reforms do not affect the sultan's prerogatives or wound the religious susceptibilities of the Musselmans.

STRIKERS CREATE TROUBLE.

Rioters Attack Power House at South Bend and Injure Workmen.

South Bend, Ind., Feb. 23.—An attempt was made by a mob of 150 men to wreck the power house of the Indiana Railway company and do injury to the employes there yesterday. There were seven men at the power house when the attack was made. One, the watchman, named Deitrich, was thrown bodily through a window and M. L. Lester was badly pummelled and gashed by brickbats, stones and clubs. The attack was planned for an hour when it was thought the police could not reach the scene in force, but proved ill-timed, for a detail reached the place in time to effect several arrests. Among those arrested are two ex-employes of the company who went on a strike, named Warrell and Boeche. They will be charged with conspiracy, riot and assault with intent to kill. The hose was turned on the fire made under the boilers. Considerable damage was done to property.

Verdict of Manslaughter.

Charlotte, N. C., Feb. 23.—The jury in the case of Arthur L. Bishop, the traveling salesman charged with the murder of C. J. Wilson, rendered a verdict of manslaughter. Bishop killed Wilson in December last. He had gone to Wilson's home in company with Miss Schultz and Miss Ada Wilson, daughter of the deceased. Wilson discovered the three in his parlor drinking wine and ordered Miss Schultz and Bishop to leave. Bishop wanted to parley and Wilson endeavored to eject him, when he was shot and killed.

General Foster Dying.

Indianapolis, Feb. 23.—Major General Robert S. Foster is dying at his home here. Physicians say he can live but a few hours. He commanded the first division of the Twenty-fourth corps in the civil war and headed off General Lee at Appotomax, causing his surrender. He was one of the founders of the G. A. R., and was first junior vice commander. He was United States marshal for Indiana under General field and is now quartermaster general of Indiana.

New Type of Submarine Craft.

New York, Feb. 23.—The submarine torpedo boat Protector, a new type of vessel which will shortly be put through a series of trials for the purpose of demonstrating her capabilities to officers of the United States navy, is being overhauled at City Island and put in first class condition for the coming tests. The Protector was built in Bridgeport, Conn., by Captain Simon Lake. The vessel is designed for harbor defense. She is built of steel and equipped with two wheels to enable her to travel along the bottom of the sea.

LADRONES AGAIN ACTIVE

Uniformed Bandits Appear in Rizal Province, Luzon.

SURROUND PHILIPPINE TOWNS.

Capture and Disarm Defending Constabulary—Reinforcements Sent Against Them and Additional Troops May Be Ordered Out.

Manila, Feb. 23.—A force of ladrones under San Miguel reappeared in Rizal province yesterday. They avoided an engagement with the main force in the south, but captured three small detachments of constabulary. The enemy surrounded the towns of Cainta and Taytay, eleven miles east of Manila, and captured thirty scouts and ten men of the constabulary, whom they disarmed and set free.

Inspector McIlwaine, at the head of ten constabulary, was surprised and captured near Montalban, sixteen miles northeast of Manila. The ladrones promised to release them if the constabulary would surrender their arms. While they were conferring on this point, McIlwaine made a dash for liberty and he and all the constabulary effected their escape.

When the news of the reappearance of General San Miguel's force reached Manila, reinforcements of scouts and constabulary were hurried into Rizal province. General Allen and Colonel Scott went to Antipolo and assumed command of the forces there. They met with small detachments of the enemy and a few skirmishes took place. They were unable to locate the main body of ladrones. General Allen and Colonel Scott are continuing the pursuit and hope to overtake the released prisoners. It is said that General San Miguel's force consists of 300 men, armed and uniformed. The zone of ladrone activity extends from Caloccan, four miles north of Manila, eastward to the mountains of Rizal and skirting the northern limits of Manila.

General Davis has ordered another battalion of scouts to report to General Allen. It is expected that additional troops will be ordered out.

According to news from Albay, Luzon, a force of ladrones attacked a small detachment of constabulary Friday. The constabulary retreated, but killed eleven of the enemy. Two of the constabulary were killed.

GERMANY ASKS FOR CASH.

Requests Money Before It is Due Under Terms of Agreement.

Washington, Feb. 23.—The German government, through its representative, Baron von Sternburg, has made a request of Mr. Bowen for the immediate payment of the £5,500 which it was stipulated in the protocol signed on Feb. 13 should be paid within thirty days from that date, as a preliminary to the raising of the blockade against Venezuelan ports and the agreement to send the question of preferential treatment of the blockading nations to The Hague for determination. Mr. Bowen promptly declined to accede to the request, but informed Baron von Sternburg that as provided in the protocol the money would be paid to the German representative at Caracas thirty days from Feb. 13, which would be on the 14th of March.

The reason that animated the German government in making the request is not disclosed here, nor is Mr. Bowen aware of it. The matter, however, has some significance, perhaps, in view of the fact that the ships taken by the Germans during the blockade have not yet been returned to Venezuela.

During the day Mr. Bowen had calls from the French ambassador, M. Jusserand; the Spanish minister, Senor Ojeda, and the Belgian minister, Baron Moncheur, in regard to the protocols that are in preparation for the settlement of the claims of the citizens of their countries against Venezuela. Rough drafts of these instruments are on their way by mail to the European governments interested. The protocols are expected to reach their destination the latter part of this week, pending which no final steps for their joint signature can be taken.

Colombian Gunboat Wrecked.

Panama, Feb. 23.—The gunboat Chucuito brought the news of the loss of the historic gunboat Boyaca, while entering the narrow and rocky channel of Port Bethsabe, about forty miles north of Agua Dulce. All on board were saved. It is reported that it will be impossible to float the Boyaca, which is sunk between the rocks at the entrance to the port. The government has sent an expedition to salvage the cannon.