

# The League of Lost Causes

By H. M. EGBERT Being the Romantic Adventures of Paul Lane, American Millionaire

## The Seance at Nishikoff

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THE league was doomed; that was the substance of nearly every conversation in the diplomatic clubs of Europe. Created by Dvornak, that brilliant and erratic genius whose diatribes against democracy had stirred all the courts of the continent, it had become organized in a single year in every country between Spain and the Ural. Kings had become members of it, and the league, backed by the most powerful influences, had acquired immunity from governments and threatened to impose its will upon the civilized world. Then the inevitable happened. Factions arose, base men perverted the aims to their own ends; the best element abandoned it in disgust, a counter-organization of Western rulers was initiated, and after the issue had hung for months in the balance, the scales fell, and the league became discredited.

And up and down Europe, traveling from court to court, a cohort of paladins, each fighting singly and wholeheartedly, strove for the two factions. That the league was planning a desperate stroke in order to regain its former influence was the substance of a conversation between Lord Claude Tresham, secretary to the cabinet of kings which had fought the league successfully, and Paul Lane, the young American millionaire, as they sat together in the palm room of the Hotel des Anglais, at Geneva, and looked out at the snow-crowned mountains. It seemed so peaceful there; it was incredible to Paul that in a little space of time he would once more be plunged into the vortex of political passions and furious rivalries.

Paul's wits had been sharpened in many fights when he was serving the league. He had been induced to place his fortune and his services at its disposal by the Princess Clothilde of Austria, the guiding spirit of the society. When he came to understand that he was but a tool in the hands of an unscrupulous woman, whom, nevertheless, he had grown to love with a passion which he knew would last during the remainder of his life; when, too, he understood, in shame and humiliation, that the high motives of the league were sham masks for criminal designs, he offered his services to Lord Tresham, to fight his former friends. He had performed several missions with honor, he had met Clothilde herself in battles of wits and worsted her; but each encounter only drove home more deeply the shaft of the pitiless archer who wounded him to the heart.

For this reason he fought the more daringly. He had become, next to Tresham, the opposing organization's most powerful agent. The hatred the league felt for him was implacable and relentless; and Clothilde, finding herself unable to regain his confidence and ignorant of the depth of his passion for her, in spite of his disillusionment, had leagued herself with his most bitter enemies and pledged herself to carry out their purpose.

Tresham had summoned Paul to Switzerland to undertake a mission which was to overthrow the league's last remnants of power and influence in Europe. He explained it to him in the aftermath of the glorious August evening.

"The league has one prop, Paul," he said, "and you are to kick it away. The Kaiser has long abandoned it; so has Alfonso of Spain, its leading western ally. But in the realm of the Tsar the league still rests supreme. The Russian agent of that unscrupulous association is Apollodorus, the monk who has obtained so strong a hold over the people and over the superstition-ridden Nicholas II. As you undoubtedly know, this Apollodorus, whose headquarters are in the monastery at Nishikoff, is the latest of a long train of charlatans who have duped Nicholas with spiritualistic phenomena. At Nishikoff, they say, he calls up the ghost of his majesty the late Alexander III, and this spectral adviser, whose counsels are, of course, always those of the league, and who is, in reality, the 'medium' Apollodorus himself, directs the policy of the whole realm of Russia. Paul, did you ever turn the dark lantern on a 'spirit' at a seance?"

"I did," said Paul, "chuckling over the remembrance. "It was in my college days. I exposed the 'notorious Brule, who had fooled many leading people in New York, and photographed him with a calcium light, capering round the room in fifteen yards of crash towelling."

"That, Paul, is exactly what you are to do to Apollodorus," answered Lord Claude. "You can imagine the scene: the Tsar, wildly credulous, his attendants secretly sceptical, but outwardly believers, and just a little bit inclined to a mystical interpretation of the phenomena because of the inherent human tendency to self-deception. You can obtain admittance for you through friends at St. Petersburg. You will, then, attend the seance with a dark lantern under your coat, expose the fraud at the psychological moment, and obliterate the league's influence in Russia in a flood of ridicule. Once Nicholas has left it, we shall hear very little more about it."

Paul left for St. Petersburg on the following day, bearing a letter of introduction to Count Gabel, a man of old family who, though at present out of favor, anticipated the day when the wheel of fortune would once more place him in office. Paul had been instructed that Gabel was a firm believer in the phenomena and that he must obtain admittance to the seance in the guise of a believer. Upon presenting his card he was at once

an extraordinary fancy to this young American. She did not know very much about Clothilde, who had always moved in a circle loftier than her own; but the good soul's mind was filled with match-making. If Clothilde could learn to care for him as much as he evidently cared for her! It seemed to be a case of love at sight! Perhaps—well, stranger things had happened. She saw in her mind the acceptance of Paul as Clothilde's lover, the marriage ceremony, the bridesmaids, in white, with fragrant blossoms in their hands . . . and all this faded into the midst of dreams. The countess slept beside the fire, opposite her sleeping husband.

And Paul was stammering out his love and clasping Clothilde's little hands in his.

"Forgive me," he was saying, "for my remarks to you that day in Paris. I was mad with a sense of shame and betrayal. I have always loved you, Clothilde. I shall love you for ever more. Do you love me?"

For they never seem banal to lovers, those hackneyed words. Nor did her reply seem as insipid as the printed record of it would be; for both were in heaven.

Paul saw tears in Clothilde's eyes. "I love you, Paul," she said, and humility had replaced the imperious pride in her voice. "When you showed me to myself for what I am I suddenly realized—O, ever so many things. I knew then that I had found the one man whom I could love. I always loved you, Paul, from that strange moment of our first meeting in America. But lately—well, Paul, do you know why I am here?"

"To aid Apollodorus," he answered, with the least tinge of bitterness in his voice.

"No," she answered. "It is because I am sick of the league. I tried to bury myself here, to escape them.

Europe? He could bend a horseshoe double with one of his hands. And I have seen him—his spirit—do that, to convince Nicholas."

"It was Apollodorus."

"Never, Paul. He is a weakling and has hands like a woman. Paul, if you are here to expose the monk you will be convinced in spite of yourself."

"You are deceived by a clever impostor," Paul answered. "It cannot be, Clothilde."

She did not try further to persuade him, and a moment later the countess awoke and looked around for her knitting.

The party was to start from the station at ten o'clock on the Wednesday morning, in a special train, scheduled to reach Nishikoff late in the afternoon, when they would be received and lodged over night. The program was carried out as it had been planned. Paul caught a glimpse of the thin, nervous figure of the Tsar as he hurried into his private coach; then, with his host and Clothilde—for the countess stayed comfortably at home—he entered a compartment already three-parts filled with gentlemen of the Tsar's body-guard, and the train rolled out of the station, to pull in at Nishikoff about five in the evening. Three carriages awaited the party and drove in long procession to the monastery.

Their sleeping accommodation was in cells, for the Tsar's visits were regarded both by himself and by the head monk as disciplinary journeys; but the meal, spread on long tables in the refectory, was satisfying and almost epicurean. Evidently these monks were not averse to the good things of life; indeed, from the glances which they turned upon Clothilde it was evident that they were by no means fanatical in their asceticism. The admission of a woman,

### SCIENCE HAS A NEW WONDER

Experiments in Artificially Coloring Fish Are Said to Have Met Degree of Success.

In recent years scientists have met with wonderful success in the artificial coloring of flowers, making them more beautiful as well as more valuable. Roses, carnations, violets, and many other species of flowers have successfully been made to attain many different colors, but not until recently have the investigators extended their experiments into the animal world.

In Sicily it is said fish have been colored to suit the human fancy. As yet the experiments have not been carried out extensively, as the process used is said to be somewhat dangerous. Few fish other than carp have been experimented upon, and thus far good results have been obtained.

The process consists of the introduction of chalk, iron, and a quantity of peat into the water where the fish are kept. The fish are kept in this water for a few weeks, when they are given another chemically prepared bath into which are introduced iron and tan.

Old Philander was playing some records on his talking machine the other evening for a small party of friends. Among them were two or three women who were crazy to hear a certain record. Philander very obligingly put on the record and started the machine. The women instantly got busy talking and made enough noise to drown out the music. Philander instantly stopped the machine and sat down. In about twenty minutes one of the women looked over at Philander and said, "Isn't that simply grand. You have no idea how much I enjoyed that, Mr. Philander." "Dear, yes," echoed the other women. "I am glad you liked it," replied Philander very calmly, while the frog began to gather on the electric light fixtures. "I will now play it for you."—Hert Walker in Kansas City Star.

### OLD PHILANDER'S GOOD JOKE

Saw No Real Reason Why Three Talking Machines Should Be Going at Once.

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### The Novel and Modern Life.

A distinguished professor remarked not long ago that in order to obtain an audience nowadays it was necessary either to write novels or to write about novels. The observation is not quite true, but it is as near the truth as epigrammatic expression permits of. The novel has laid hold of modern life and subjected to all other forms of literary art. The drama is struggling; poetry is struggling; serious prose, apart from technical and professional treatises, is barely holding its own. But why, it may be said, blame the novel? The reason is obvious. There is, after all, only a limited amount of literary talent in any country at any one time. There is also only a limited number of readers. If, therefore, the novel has captured the majority of readers, there is obviously less chance for other forms of literary work. In the Elizabethan age all the ablest writers wrote plays. If the novel had been as fully developed then as it is now, and had been as sure a way of obtaining money and reputation, they would have written novels.—The Scotsman.

### Useful Whiskers.

Human whiskers are worn more for ornament than use, but in the case of animals of the cat tribe whiskers are very serviceable indeed.

In the dark, for instance, they serve practically as an extra pair of eyes. The hairs themselves are quite brittle and insensible, but the tiny glands from which they grow are the most sensitive part of the cat's skin. So whiskers take the place of a groping pair of hands.

A distinguished naturalist recently declared that a lion or tiger which had its whiskers cut would starve to death. Stealing through the jungle at night in search of prey the lion depends on his whiskers to warn him of things in his path. The slightest sound of rustling would betray his presence, but with the aid of his whiskers the lion steers clear of the twigs or leaves that would lose him his supper.

### His New Program.

The eminent dramatist was writing with his thoughts. "It must be a problem play," he said. "But what's the problem? All the old stuff is done. I want something different." He passed up and down the room with his hands behind him—in the attitude of a poulon used when they were hunting him to St. Helena. "Let me think. Ah, I've got it now! I'll write a melodrama in which the police and the authorities are balled at every step. That's the stuff. And the problem is: 'How are we to mitigate the growth of law and order?' Gee, that's a bully! There'll be a chuckle in every line and a roar in every situation. C to it, boy."—Cleveland Plain-Dealer.

### Doing One's Duty.

We often say to ourselves, "I would gladly do my duty, if I knew what it is." Doubtless there are cases in which it is hard to decide, but a mark of Goethe on the subject is worth remembering. "How can you know yourself? Never by reflection but by action. Do your duty, and you will find out the sort of man you are. 'But what is my duty?' What a day asks of you. Do not consider too far, too deeply, too seriously. The plain, present task, and do it well. It is amazing how pleasant you find when it is done—and it is not who unpleasant even in the doing."

### Methods of the Best Shot.

No marksman ever holds a rifle solidly as a rock. He may think so, but Arms and the Man insist that the best shot gives merely a "necessary impulse to the trigger," while the rifle is moving in the right direction—that is, when he takes a liberate aim. The snap-shooter who apparently by a sort of instinct, is doing successfully at a running distance through woods and over broad ground implies a knack like that of thrusting one's finger toward an indicated object.

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"Then come with me," cried Paul. "Come back to America. No one will dare molest you there. Come and—"

She placed her hand upon his arm. "Some day," she answered. "But not now. There are things to be done—do you understand? I cannot disappear so swiftly. I feel, somehow, that I must remain until the league is crushed, or till it crushes me. It will be only a little while, Paul. Promise me that, now we are sure of each other's love, you will not seek me out until I call you."

"I promise," he answered sadly. "But, Clothilde, why are you here? Did not the league send you to aid in the fraud upon the Tsar?"

She nodded. "But I found that it is no fraud, Paul," she said.

"What? You don't mean that it is true?"

She nodded, looking earnestly into his eyes.

"It is in very truth the spirit of the late Tsar," she answered. "I was most sceptical; but when I went with the count I saw and heard and touched him. None could mistake Alexander. Why, Paul, do you not know that Alexander was the strongest man in

though contrary to the strict monastic rule, was condoned in the case of one of his majesty's suite, but it proved sufficiently disconcerting for many of the inmates. Paul noticed, however, that each scrutiny of his companion was preceded by a furtive glance toward a small, thin man in a brown monk's robe made, instead of from cloth, out of horsehair, and fastened with a plain hempen girdle, and that this man, who occupied a carved chair at the head of the long table, seemed to possess a wholesome authority over the brethren.

"That is Apollodorus," whispered Clothilde to Paul; and Paul, looking at the stern, ascetic face of the man, was conscious of a fund of power in him which would make his own duty the more difficult. He grasped the little dark lantern tightly under his coat. Undoubtedly Apollodorus was no common impostor and would fight for his control over the wavering mind of Nicholas. And Paul was not among friends. He knew the self-deluded vanity of those who are tricked, which makes them the more insistent in defense of the impostor. He turned to Clothilde.

"Clothilde, as you love me, tell me, do you believe that the spirit of the Tsar really appears to Nicholas?"

"As I love you, I am sure of it, Paul," she answered. "O Paul, I know that you are here to fight against the league, to show up Apollodorus, the impostor, as you consider him. Paul, indeed it is to impudently, and in very truth Alexander III. makes himself manifest to his son."

For the first time Paul was staggered by this calm faith in the monk; he began to feel himself upon the



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neighbor, Count Gabel, swayed rhythmically in his chair and muttered excitedly as the high-pitched, musical voice rang out; on his other side he saw Clothilde staring at Apollodorus with the look of an initiate in her eyes. He recognized, too, that he himself was beginning to be aware of the man's influence; his purpose weakened; he clutched the dark lantern tighter and summoned all his resolution to spur him to his task. Then the monk stepped back behind the curtain, which fell before him, and the lights went out, leaving only the glimmer of candles in two corners of the room. The outlines of those present became faint and ghostly. The silence was complete.

From behind the curtain came a low muttering sound, gradually increasing in intensity, with broken words in deeper tones interjected as by an alien voice. Then a draught blew back the curtain till it belled in to the face of the Tsar. Nicholas drew back with a stifled shriek; a moment later the curtain was as suddenly withdrawn, and as the Tsar subsided, a huge figure of a man guided from the cabinet and stood before the company, his arms raised as in benediction.

"Do you believe? Do you believe?" whispered Count Gabel excitedly in Paul's ear. And Paul, looking, owned that he had never seen a clearer representation of the late Tsar than this spectral figure with the gaunt cheeks, gray beard, and mighty arms stretched out over the company. The Tsar had fallen upon his knees, the courtiers followed suit, and somebody among the audience was singing a Russian hymn. It died away; the figure still stood motionless before

Maybe She Does Geo. M. Too. George M. Cohen's eldest daughter, aged four and a half, is visiting her grandmother, Mrs. Mary Agnes Nolan—after whom the child is named—at Nantasket, Mass., this summer. Mr. and Mrs. George M. motored down there last week-end, and meeting his off-spring as she was hurrying out of the house the morning after their arrival, inquired as to where she was going in such haste. "I don't know," replied Mary Agnes. "Well, then, when are you coming back?" asked the nation's favorite actor-author. "I don't know that, neither," replied the child; "mamma's managing me."