

CHAPTER XXVIII

DURING all this time I was regularly working at the film studio. Near the studio I used to pass a shop which had been a big confectionery establishment in the old days, when it was noted for its home-made sweetmeats. For many months the well-known brand had been no longer made and the shop window displayed instead some very unpleasant grey sweetmeats, made of flour and honey. Whenever I passed I would see the proprietor's daughter, a pretty, jolly girl, sitting in the doorway of the shop reading a novel and waiting to serve anyone who was tempted to buy the grey sweets.

One afternoon, making my way to the studio, I met a peasant who had come from the country with a large basket of apples. Fruit was hard to get in Moscow and I promptly bought a bag of them, and took them with me. I am very fond of apples and did not care to wait, so I took one out of the bag and munched it as I walked along. As I passed the sweet-shop the pretty girl looked up and smiled, partly, I suppose, because there is something about a good rosy apple and a juicy one to wit which makes one smile, and partly because she liked apples. For my part I had long wanted to speak to her and this was an excellent means of introduction. "Have an apple," I said, and she gladly accepted. Thereafter we always nodded to each other and sometimes I would stop and chat with her.

One evening when I passed I found her sobbing as if her heart would break. What was the matter?

She told me that her father had been arrested that day by the Cheka and imprisoned in the Butirsky prison because he had been hoarding sugar and selling it at a high price to his old customers. Her father was the only relative she had; she was left all alone with the shop and did not know what to do. Nor had she any money with which to buy food for herself or make up parcels for her father in prison. Food was so scarce that, even if they had wanted to, the Bolsheviks would not have been able to give their prisoners sufficient to keep body and soul together, and in consequence they allowed relatives to send in food-parcels. As a rule, no matter how bad the famine was, by going without themselves the relatives managed to scrape together some sort of a food-parcel to take to their dear ones in prison.

I asked whether her father had any other parcels of sugar concealed, and she told me that he had.

"Well, give them to me and I will sell them for you and give you the money." She trusted me and without a moment's hesitation accepted my proposition, and that night I picked up a bag of about ten pounds of sugar. This the head of my couriers sold at a huge price the next day, and I handed the proceeds over to my friend.

Some days later, as I was on my way to the studio, a Cheka raiding party put a chain at each end of the block and began a systematic search of everyone in the street and in the houses which bordered it. Luckily for me the block was that which included the confectioner's shop, where the pretty girl was in the doorway as usual. There was not a moment to be lost. I went up to her.

"Hide me," I said; "I must not be caught."

She was very pale. "Come in," she said.

At the back of the shop was a large cauldron in which the sweets were made.

"Get in there! It is deep and I will hide you with sacking," and she took off the wooden lid. I jumped in and crouched down at the bottom; she put some old sacking over me and replaced the wooden top.

After a time I could hear the searchers approaching and examining the people in the street, and then an examining party came into the shop. The pretty girl told them that her father was in the Butirsky prison and that she was there alone. The examiners searched the shop, walked round the cauldron, took some sweets without paying for them, and went away. For another hour I remained in that miserable cauldron suffering untold agonies from cramp, and finally I ventured forth. The girl beamed on me as I came out. "Now I have repaid you for that nice apple," she said; but that was only the beginning of her payment, for she became one of my most trusted agents.

Some days later I had another shock. I was walking through the great square outside the Grand Theatre when a motor-car pulled up alongside the kerb and Dzerzhinsky himself alighted. I had to step back to let him pass, and he gave me a searching look. I had had two or three interviews with him before I grew my beard but happily he did not recognize me. Feeling thoroughly frightened I went on my way up to the Kuznetski Most and was only a little way up the hill when a perfect stranger greeted me with:

"Mr. Hill—Mr. Hill, how are you?"

"You have made a mistake," I said, while icy fingers gripped my spine. "My name is Bergmann."

The stranger looked at me in astonishment then shook his head and said: "Forgive me, I have made a mistake. You could not be the man I thought you were; he was an Englishman I have not seen since we last met in Persia, thirty years ago." I bowed coldly and walked on. I realized that he had mistaken me for my father who, thirty years before, had worn a beard.

I went to the flat occupied by the head of my destruction-gang where some of the Ukrainian organization were waiting for me. They reported that it was becoming more and more difficult to carry on the campaign against the German army, but that they thought a great deal could be done by way of sabotage and deliberate destruction of machinery in the Donetz coal mines. The trouble was that the coal mines were being watched carefully by German engineers and that they had not got the technical knowledge requisite for putting machinery and pumps out of action undetected. Now I knew that there were still in Ukraina quite a number of Belgian miners who, prior to the German occupation, had been the technical advisers in the Russian coal mines, and I decided to make a hurried visit to Kharkov and try to put some of these Belgians in touch with my organization. That evening I left Moscow in a goods truck of a pattern which was calculated to carry forty soldiers in time of war. There were more like seventy men and women in the truck into which I fought my way, and there I spent two days squatting on my haunches in a stifling atmosphere.

The crossing of the Soviet frontier was no common ordeal. I pretended that I was going to get flour for my relatives in Moscow. As evidence I had

three empty flour sacks with me; and also a tin kettle. A tin kettle with a double bottom. Inside the kettle I had U.S. dollar notes and German marks to pay for the work I wanted done. The soldering had been done by Annie most skilfully: it was quite safe to put tea leaves into the kettle and pour boiling water on them and get a good brew of tea without in the least damaging the notes.

Getting through the German control was still more difficult, as they were very thorough and extremely suspicious. Luckily my German was almost word perfect and I told the examining officer that I was a native of Riga, that my family were literally starving in Moscow, and that I had come to buy some flour to take back to them. The officer was sympathetic and promised to help me on the train on the return journey.

Kharkov presented a very different spectacle from that I had seen when I had last been there. Then it had been first under the control of a homicidal maniac and then of Antonov.

Now the station was clean, the streets policed by German soldiers, order everywhere, telephone and postal communication direct with Berlin and an air of freedom in the town. The civil population were going about their business, shops were open and trade re-established.

Within two days I had found my Belgian experts and had put my organization in touch with them. The Belgians were only too pleased to instruct my men in the art of doing the maximum of damage to the mines in the easiest way. In many cases it was simply a matter of putting certain pumps out of action by means of a handful of sand in the bearings.

Once the main pumps were out of action mines in many places would automatically flood, and many weeks of pumping would be necessary before work could be resumed.

My mission accomplished I filled two of my bags with flour. Into the third went six pounds of sugar and with these I made my way back to the frontier. The German control sergeant was as good as his word, securing me a corner in a third-class compartment on a train leaving for Moscow, and for his kindness I paid him well. Little did the poor man know the damage I had done to his cause. At the Soviet frontier I had to part with all my sugar as a bribe to the station commissar that I might be allowed to proceed to Moscow. When the train finally pulled into the Kursk station in Moscow all the passengers were carrying bags of flour with a good proportion of which they had to part to the Cheka guards before being allowed to leave the station.

The tramway system had apparently broken down and I had to stagger back under the load of the two sacks to the flat. Sally was overjoyed at receiving the flour. A little of it she gave away to our neighbours, while Evelyn presented five or six pounds to the *dvornik*, saying: "Our lodger has been to Kharkov and you must share in our good fortune." It must be remembered that we were living as the poorest of poor people. We appeared to have no money and never attempted to bribe people like the *dvornik*, but the poor help the poor the whole world over, and so it was natural for us to share our good fortune with him. He, for his part, was delighted and grateful, and in gratitude for Evelyn's kindness was the unknowing means of saving our lives a few days later.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE Red Terror was at its height. The horrors of the Inquisition were surpassed by the Bolsheviks. Arrested people gave their friends away in the hope of saving their own lives. Weak characters sold information for a few pence to the Cheka. A man wishing to wreak his vengeance on some poor fellow against whom he had a grudge had only to whisper a few words to one of the Chekist officials on the ground floor of the Lubianka and a whole household was thrown into turmoil and misery.

It was getting more difficult every day to keep my courier service going. A further twelve of my men had been executed during the Red Terror. Some of these men knew my headquarters and could undoubtedly have saved their lives by betraying me, but because they held the cause of the Allies dear, because they were White officers and gentlemen, they preferred death at the hands of a firing squad to treachery. Whenever I hear those inspiring words: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them," each of my eighteen couriers stands out vividly in my mind.

It was almost impossible to raise funds to carry on the work, as the Bolsheviks had made it illegal to sell foreign exchange and were rapidly devaluing their own currency. I knew that before long it would be necessary for me to leave Russia to get

fresh instructions from England, and that alternatively it was only a matter of time before I should be caught by the German secret service, who were now hand in glove with the Bolshevik counter-espionage section. In the meantime, however, I carried on the work, destruction-gangs were doing their best, and my couriers left regularly.

One night the day's dispatches had been coded, typed on linen and sewn up in the courier's jacket. The courier in question had stayed late with me making a report and it was dangerous to let him return to the courier headquarters by night. I therefore made up a bed for him on the couch in the living-room. We put away the typewriter and the codes and turned in for the night.

I was just dropping off to sleep when I heard motor-cars draw up outside the house. Now the only people who used motor-cars were either the more prominent Bolsheviks or the Cheka, and I was immediately alarmed. Presently I heard the tramp of soldiers and a few seconds later knew that a sentry had been posted outside our house. I crept out of bed to the window and peered out, but from my bedroom window could see nothing. I went through to the living-room, and saw that there was an armed sentry standing by our front door. I returned to my room and looking through the gap by the blind on the left, observed two or three armed men standing at the gate. Then I knew that the house was surrounded.

At once I took out the key to our code with the intention of chewing and swallowing it as soon as arrest was imminent.

Then I stole through to the girls' room and woke

Evelyn, and the two of us decided that the girls should be told but instructed to remain in their beds. The courier was tired out and fast asleep. Not being certain how he would behave in the present predicament—for panic is a terrible thing—we decided to allow him to go on sleeping.

Evelyn then went out to reconnoitre. Bare-footed and in her night attire she stole into the yard and pretended to cross to the lavatory. She saw enough to know that the whole block was surrounded by the Cheka, that it was one of their flying raids, and that they would be going through all the houses in the block. This was a great relief. It meant that they were not making a particular raid on our house, and things would not have looked so black against us if it were not for the fact that we had that courier staying with us unregistered. Nor were his documents in too good order.

After what seemed an eternity and was in fact two hours we could hear the examiners coming closer. Next door to us on the left a woman started to scream, "Don't take him, don't take him, he is innocent, I implore you don't take him." We heard the tramp of men and through my window saw a man led off into one of the waiting motor-cars.

Our house was in complete darkness. Our nerves were strung up to breaking-point and, cold as it was in my night attire, I felt beads of perspiration running down my body and collecting in little pools around my feet.

Presently Evelyn and I crept through to Sally. She was lying on the stove, quite calm and collected.

"I am afraid we are for it," she whispered. It

was the first word of English that had been spoken in our house since my arrival.

At last we heard an examining party come to the back door. Evelyn and I were standing in the little windowless hall, but as the kitchen door was open we could hear everything outside. I could hear not only my own heart pounding with the regularity of a steam pump, but strangely enough the beating of Evelyn's as well. "I am glad you let me do this work," she whispered to me. "It has been a wonderful experience. We have done good, and no matter what happens now it has been well worth it. Remember that, and don't have any regrets."

I wish I could describe the quality of her voice, quite steady and natural as it was. And I suddenly realized that she had spoken the truth and that it *was* worth it. At once my heart stopped its pounding and I knew in an instant the line I was going to take with the examining Chekists.

Then we heard the *dvornik's* voice say, "There is no need to go into this house. It is only occupied by a poor school-teacher and a dressmaker. They are ordinary people, just like us."

The examining squad hesitated. In the silence I could hear the steady snoring of the courier which suddenly seemed as loud as a fog-horn. I automatically pulled to the door of the sitting-room.

At last came the answer.

"All right, papa—if you say so," and the examining squad moved to the back door of the house on the right.

Twenty minutes later from that house came a commotion. An extra squad was marched up and somebody was brought out. We heard voices crying,

"For God's sake, for the Lord's sake, in the name of mercy be compassionate—he is innocent—wait and we will prove it—I will pay you anything," all mingled up, disjointed and together.

"Stand back," called a commanding voice, then—"Put him against the wall."

For the first time we heard the terrified voice of a man, "For the sake of Christ! For the love of Christ, what are you doing?"

There was an irregular volley and the night air was immediately rent with the wailing of women bemoaning their dead. We had just listened to one of the Cheka's summary executions.

The guards remained outside our front door and surrounded the block until the grey streaks of dawn had made their appearance in the clouds. It was a night of horror and terror for us, and but for the *dvornik*, both myself and the courier who was now awake owing to the shooting and thoroughly frightened, might have been executed just as summarily. As it grew lighter the guards were withdrawn and four motor-cars filled with Chekists and the prisoners they had taken drove back to their headquarters—the Lubianka—the Lubianka where people were taken down into the grisly execution cellar every night and where the engines of motor-cars and lorries were set going in order to drown the noise of the firing-parties.

Kalamatiano, the American secret service agent who had been captured, was taken nightly to the place of execution, but always at the last moment put through another cross-examination in an endeavour to make him give away his own confederates and the whereabouts of Sidney Reilly and the other Allied

secret service agents. Kalamatiano lived through it, stood his trial, was condemned to death, and never opened his mouth.

I carried on for a further fortnight in conditions which grew more and more difficult. The German and Bolshevik secret services were hot on the scent of my organization. I would have to break it up entirely and start afresh with a new personnel and new headquarters. I withdrew my couriers to Moscow and paid them off, and made arrangements for Sally, Annie and Evelyn to go to England.

It was essential for me to escape from Russia, get new instructions from London, and make arrangements which would enable me to have at my command sufficient funds to finance the fresh work.

The British Consul quite rightly did not feel himself justified in including me in any of the lists of English people to be evacuated to England from Moscow, as he was afraid that I might jeopardize the safety of others. For a time it looked as if I should have to spend weeks in escaping, and resort to the dangerous method of secretly crossing one of the frontiers. However, Captain Hicks, a member of Mr. Lockhart's staff, who was acting for Mr. Lockhart during the latter's imprisonment in the Kremlin, knew how important it was for me to get out quickly, and included me—with Lockhart's approval—on the list of the Mission which was now due to leave Moscow any day. While awaiting departure I took the opportunity of getting in touch with my wrecking-gangs in Ukrainia. On my return all the girls, with the exception of Evelyn, had left Moscow. But, on arrival at our headquarters, I learned from Evelyn that the man whom I had installed as the owner of my antique

shop had started a gentle form of blackmail. He had sent desperate messages to Evelyn demanding sums of money under veiled threats, and in the circumstances she had thought it best to comply with his demand and pay the money.

A few days after my return another demand came. My agent pretended that he was being blackmailed by someone who knew of our organization and that he required money to keep his mouth shut. When this second demand arrived I was in a position to take steps against him. For I had been included in Mr. Lockhart's mission, and it was necessary for me to have a respectable suit made. The first thing I did therefore was to get rid of my hateful beard; then I went to the best Moscow tailor, where I picked up one of the few remaining pieces of English cloth and had a new suit made. I bought boots, a hat and a pair of white spats and reappeared dressed once again as an Englishman.

Some Norwegian friends who knew the truth offered to put me up until the Lockhart Mission left. My first task was to settle my account with the blackmailer. Early one afternoon, white spats and all, looking like a thorough bourgeois, I boldly walked into my antique shop. "Well, Mr. K., how are you?"

"You, Captain Hill—what are you doing out, and in those clothes?"

"What do you mean?" I said. "I have always worn these clothes. I am on Mr. Lockhart's Mission, and I am shortly leaving for England. But before doing so I want an account of your stewardship."

He went scarlet and said, "You think I have been blackmailing you?"

"I know you have," was my reply. "And now you will kindly disgorge."

I put the matter on a business footing without any anger or recrimination. First of all I took back the money he had extorted from Evelyn, then I made him pay me a sum which was equivalent to about 70 per cent. of the purchase price of the antique business. But as I feared that some of my couriers might turn up and that he would try to wreak his vengeance on them, in order to "keep him sweet" I handed the business over to him as a going concern so that he might make a living.

The head of my couriers invited me and two of his most brilliant assistants to a farewell dinner in his own tiny flat. That afternoon I had been having tea with some English friends at whose country house I had stayed before my disappearance. The last visit had been a twenty-first birthday party and I had taken down my mess kit to their house and changed there. The following morning I had gone off in my khaki uniform meaning to pick up my mess dress later, but before I had the opportunity of doing so I had gone underground. My friends had brought this uniform to their Moscow house and showed it to me that evening.

Suddenly a most foolhardy idea occurred to me. I would honour my Russian friends by wearing uniform to-night. A more idiotic thing I could not have thought of.

Over the uniform I put my civilian coat and walked through the streets to my couriers' flat.

They gasped when I took off my coat and they saw my uniform, but immediately realized it was a token of appreciation for all they had done. They

took it as an enormous honour and we had a really delightful evening. I think the gods must have approved of my gesture, for they saw to it that I returned safely to my Norwegian friends in the early hours of the morning.

A few days later I joined Mr. Lockhart's Mission at the Nicolai station and we were taken up by special train from which after many days we disembarked in Finland. I was safely out of Russia. My first job was to telegraph to London for fresh instructions and somewhat to my dismay received an order to slip back into Russia for a few weeks. So one dark and frosty night I waded into the ice-cold water and swam across the stream which forms the frontier between Finland and the Russian town of Beloostrov.

It took me three weeks to carry out my instructions, and I landed back in London on the early morning of Armistice Day, November 11, 1918.

Then he came forward, shook me by the hand and asked me to make a verbal report on my last work.

It was curious to think that I had come into the secret service by chance and not by design, that until that morning, although I had worked for the last year on nothing but secret service work, I did not know The Chief or have any official existence in his department. I think one of the most pleasing recollections of that meeting was The Chief's approval and unqualified admiration and praise for the work I had done. At the end of the interview I asked for leave and was given a month in order to have a good rest.

Alas, less than a week had passed before I was summoned to his office once again. In the meantime I had met Reilly, who had safely returned from Russia and I was not surprised, when I reported, to see him in the room. Certain important information about the Black Sea coast and South Russia was wanted for the Peace Conference which was to assemble in Paris at the end of the year, and I was asked to volunteer to go with Reilly to obtain it. We had to leave London that afternoon, but as the war was over I was not very anxious to continue in the secret service. I should have preferred to go back to the Royal Air Force, and I hesitated before replying. The Chief, who saw my hesitation, was most kindly and sympathetic and discussed the matter with me much more like a friend than a senior officer. It was this kindness and understanding on his part that finally decided me to go.

In the two short hours that were left before the Southampton train was due to depart I had a great

CHAPTER XXX

A FEW days after my arrival in London I was summoned to the Secret Service headquarters for an interview with The Chief. His offices were at the top of a London building overlooking the Thames; the various rooms, corridors, entrances and exits were so like a rabbit warren that it was some time before I really knew the geography of the place. Before being admitted to The Chief I was shown into Colonel Freddie Browning's room. Colonel Browning was one of the largest-hearted and most generous men I have ever met, and a director of many companies including the Savoy Hotel. His loss was keenly felt by many of his friends when he died some years ago, and to the under-dog of London a friend in need had untimely passed on. I had not the least idea that Colonel Browning, an old acquaintance of mine, was in the secret service, and our meeting was a most happy one.

A few minutes later he took me upstairs, through bewildering passages, into the presence of The Chief. The Chief, a short, white-haired, square man, with penetrating eyes and lips which looked stern, but could in a second take on a humorous curve, was in naval uniform.

He was sitting at a desk on which were three or four telephones. Other telephones were attached to automatic brackets on the wall. For half a minute he leisurely surveyed me and I have never been so thoroughly looked over before or since in my life.

deal to do, farewells, packing, putting off appointments, cancelling the longed-for holiday. Reilly was exceedingly keen on the trip and simply could not bear the leisurely way in which I left the building with him. We were to dash via Paris to Marseilles, whence a cruiser would take us to Athens. There we were to pick up a Greek destroyer in command of a British naval officer who was a member of The Chief's organization seconded to the Greek navy, and be whisked into the Black Sea as two English merchants. If we missed our train we should miss the whole connection and, most important of all, the Greek destroyer.

"Hill," said Reilly, "I don't believe you want to catch that train. I bet you fifty pounds you won't be on it."

"My dear fellow, it would be betting on a certainty. I wouldn't dream of taking you on," was my reply.

"I still make my bet."

"Nonsense," said I.

We were now being driven in a taxi-cab along the Strand to the Savoy. Reilly became insistent, and at last I said, "Damn you, I will take your bet."

The next hour was one of ordered pandemonium in my room. I must confess that it was touch and go. Various friends helped me rush my bags down to the hall as we could not wait for the porters to fetch them. I offered the taxi-driver a small fortune to get me to Waterloo Station in record time, and arrived on the platform just as the guard was about to signal the train out.

"Wait a second," I said, dropping half a crown into the palm of his hand. "I have to reach a first-class compartment reserved for me by the Foreign Office."

Half-way up the train I saw Reilly hanging out of the window.

"That's my compartment," I said, indicating him to the porter, who rushed off to put my bags aboard. I followed at a leisurely pace to be greeted by Reilly with, "You devil, you have done this purposely!" Anyway, I had won my bet and Reilly paid up like the sportsman he was.

When we disembarked at Southampton a very queer tall figure went aboard in front of us. He had the oddest long sandy plaid coat which looked like a converted blanket. From under his hat a mass of long yellow hair straggled down over his collar and almost reached his shoulders. He was such a comical figure that I laughed aloud.

"Just look at the creature," I said to Reilly.

"Why, that is Paderewski," was Reilly's reply; and then I, too, recognized the famous musician.

The boat was overcrowded. We had left at such short notice that it had been impossible for The Chief's organization to reserve us a cabin. However, Reilly, who knew Paderewski, was certain that he had a cabin and went along to see him. Presently he came back, his eyes dancing with excitement. Paderewski had a cabin and would put us up if we cared to sleep on his sofa, but, most important of all, Paderewski the musician was on his way to Warsaw to be the first post-war Prime Minister of Poland.

This fact was as yet known to only a very few, and the three of us sat up most of that night discussing European politics and the menace of Bolshevism not only to Poland, but to all the civilized world. We did not reach Paris until the following evening and before catching the Marseilles train at the Gare de

Lyon we dined at La Rue in the Boulevard de la Madeleine.

We had chosen the restaurant because we had both known the proprietor when he was the most famous chef in St. Petersburg, some years before the war. We had a great welcome and a great dinner, with marvellous wine and the oldest of brandies served as brandy should be served, in deep crystal goblets. This dinner sustained us through a most uncomfortable night when we were packed like sardines in a first-class carriage with people sitting on the floor and along the entire length of the corridor outside the coupés.

We picked up our connection and, in spite of a terribly rough passage from Athens to the Black Sea, were made very comfortable by the English commander who sailed a Greek destroyer as if it were a British man-of-war.

We called in at every port along the Asiatic coast of the Black Sea, then up into the Russian ports and finally to Galatz, the Rumanian port at the mouth of the Danube. We went everywhere as two British merchants. It did not seem strange to people that we were travelling on a Greek destroyer, for they often carry traders. In three weeks we had collected the information for which we had been sent and were able to make our report before the Peace Conference opened.

Thereafter, for the next two or three years I was constantly employed on various political or secret service missions.

In the early part of 1920, just before Odessa was finally captured by the Bolsheviks from the White Russians, I was British Political Officer and representa-

tive of Sir Halford McKinder, the High Commissioner of South Russia at Novorosisk.

At the head of the White Russian Intelligence organization at Odessa was a certain renegade colonel whom, for his family's sake, we will call Colonel R. For a long time he had been under suspicion, and at last proof had been obtained that he was betraying his trust and selling information about the White Russians' plans to the Bolsheviks. For various reasons, mainly political, it was impossible for the Russian Command to remove him openly from his post.

One day, my secretary ushered four men into my room at the Hotel London. They were Cossack officers, dressed in long Caucasian sheepskin capes which came down to their ankles. I asked them their business. My astonishment may be imagined when they asked me to supply them with dynamite.

"What on earth do you want with dynamite?"

"To kill Colonel R.," replied the leader. "We intend to mine the road on the way to his office and when he passes over it to blow him up. That is what the dog deserves."

I rose from my chair in great wrath and let them have the full benefit of my anger. First of all I told them it was not the custom of British political officers to lend themselves to assassination; secondly that if they wanted dynamite they could get it from their own people; and thirdly that they would probably kill a dozen innocent people and not harm Colonel R., and that if that was the best method they could think of, then I was sorry for the brains of the White Russians.

Rather ashamed of themselves they said that they would think of some other plan and left me.

The plan they finally adopted was a clever one. The Governor-General of the town, General Shilling, was holding a reception at the palace at nine o'clock one evening. The palace was reached by a long circular drive. There was one gate for sledges entering and another for those leaving.

As the guests began to arrive a detachment of ten Cossacks took up their position a few yards away from the entrance gate. Every sledge that drove up to the palace was stopped by a red light and the occupants were asked their names and had to produce their documents. I myself was stopped in this manner and as soon as I showed my papers was allowed to proceed to the palace.

Then came the sledge in which was Colonel R.

"Who are you, please?" demanded the examining Cossack.

"Colonel R. Head of the Second Section of the General Staff."

"Your documents, please." Colonel R. produced them. "Yes, this is our bird," said the Cossack officer stepping back. "Fire!" and the detachment riddled Colonel R. with bullets.

A few weeks later I was back in Constantinople, for Odessa had been evacuated by the Whites and captured by the Bolsheviki. I was soon to discover that language is no bar to a trained secret service agent. The Allies particularly wanted to know what the Greeks were doing in Thrace and whether it was true that they had designs on Constantinople, and I, who hardly knew a word of Greek or Turkish, was asked to investigate the situation.

To start with I went to Athens, then to Salonica, and then through every town and village of Thrace.

Everywhere I went I found the clearest of proofs that it was the intention of the Greeks to try and occupy Constantinople. Time and again I warned Greek politicians, officers and bankers that if they did so it would be fatal. My warnings fell on deaf ears.

I knew that Adrianople was the centre where the plans were being made. Moreover, I wanted to know which of the forts of that city the Greeks had reconditioned. It would be natural enough for them to concentrate their attention on the western forts, for that would be a protective action against the Bulgarians—whose frontier was only a matter of a dozen miles away. On the other hand, if they were reconditioning the eastern forts it would point to the fact that they were arming against a possible retreat should their advance on Constantinople meet with a reverse.

My task was difficult. I had to reckon with three factions. Adrianople was practically a Turkish town, and seventy per cent. of its population were Turks, from whom I might reasonably expect information. But the Turks were cowed. The Greeks themselves were not a united camp. There were the Royalists and the Venezelists. The Royalists were in power and the Venezelists hated them more than they did the Turks. It was their mutual suspicions and animosities that made my task supremely difficult.

By the time I had reached Adrianople I was very much suspected by the Greek General Staff, and the Commandant of the town—who rather fancied himself as a sleuth—was put on to watch me.

I was living at the only European hotel. It was

kept by a woman who had the blood of pretty well every nationality in Europe in her; but German blood for cleanliness and Greek blood for driving a hard bargain were uppermost, and her hostel was habitable.

Every day when I went out my room was subjected to a systematic search by the Commandant. This I knew after my first morning. It is simply a matter of habit and training to arrange one's room and effects in such a way that after the room has once been cleaned by the maid in the morning one instantly knows if anything has been touched.

My room, when I returned, always looked to my trained eye as if the whole place had been spring-cleaned—including my bed, writing-table and clothes. The sleuth even went so far as to slip a knife into the soles of my shoes; and forgot to sew them up again. Papers were replaced in their wrong order, and my mattress was always turned. As for my trunk, which I always made a habit of leaving open, it was thoroughly searched every day.

The only place the Commandant did not search was the nickel bar hinged on the trunk. This bar was a hollow tube which was pulled out whenever one wished to get at the suits hanging on the clothes hangers. It was in this bar that I put any papers that were important and of a nature that I could not memorize.

I arranged to be given the plans of the forts at a Dervish meeting which I was attending the day before I left Adrianople. The sect I was going to visit were Whirling Dervishes, who had their own mosque at the far end of the town. It was quite the usual thing for a foreigner visiting Adrianople to be invited by the Mullah to visit their service, and as

a rule there were quite a number of visitors; moreover I knew that Greek officers were always present, and that it would be safest to receive the fort plans under their very noses.

That morning I went into the French bank where all my letters were addressed. The manager of the bank was a Frenchman whose wife was English. He was very pro-English and one of the best-informed men I met in the Near East, and it was not until years later that I knew that he was a French secret service agent. In my mail I found very distressing news. Someone very dear to me in England had had a serious operation which might easily prove fatal. The crisis, however, so the letter told me, would not be reached for ten days, and the letter had been posted ten days before. Before I left the bank I received a telegram which told me that there was practically no hope. I felt absolutely crushed. My private grief came up and choked me and almost put all thought of work out of my mind.

But I was powerless to do anything. I was six days from England, and the only thing for me was to go and get the plans.

The Mullah of the sect received me, and we went into a mosque where devotions were in progress. Then we walked across to a large stone building not unlike the interior of a mosque except that it had a very fine polished wooden floor which was railed off by a low railing.

Guests to the number of about twenty were seated on wooden platforms covered with piles of precious Persian carpets. Behind this rostrum, along the wall, were windows latticed in wood through which the Turkish women and ladies of the harem watched the

ceremony, for the women of Turkey were then still veiled and secluded from the eye of any male but their husbands.

The rite began. About twenty male dancers of all ages and shapes, dressed in long flowing robes, barefooted and befezed, entered in single file. When their leader reached the Mullah he bowed low before him and then moved off, slowly gyrating in a circle at a speed rather like that of a top at the end of its spin. One by one the dancers who followed him did the same thing, and within a few minutes twenty men were whirling round and round the room in their own orbit, each keeping an equal distance from his neighbour and the whole of them moving round in an oval formation. And round and round they went until my eyes became dizzy; until all consciousness had faded from their faces and they were like lifeless bodies obeying some unknown law which kept them spinning round and round without any reason known to the human mind. The air became heavy with the sweat of bodies, and beads of perspiration trickled off the dancers' feet until the entire floor was slippery with human dampness. Sometimes the whirlers increased their pace and their gowns whirled round above their waists. Some of them spun with their hands above their heads and at times their bodies seemed to be almost parallel with the floor.

I forgot the purpose for which I had come to the meeting. Half of my brain was hypnotized by the dance and the other half was going through agony at the thought of the person in England whom I would see no more. I was living in a mad, senseless, cruel world—watching an unnatural phenomenon of

unearthly creatures—and I wondered whether the person I was thinking of was perhaps even then passing through unknown worlds and experiencing strange, frightening things as I was doing.

Some of the dancers had commenced to froth at the mouth. Suddenly one of them collapsed and lay inert upon the floor, but the rest of the dancers whirled round the body and never touched it. This went on for over an hour until there were not more than a dozen dancers left dancing. Then suddenly they stopped and formed single file and, passing before the Mullah, bowed low and walked out of the building. On the floor remained the eight insensible forms. The ghastly performance was over.

In another room coffee was served to the guests. The man I was expecting came up to me. As we shook hands he slipped a tightly rolled paper about a foot long and the thickness of a pencil up my sleeve between my shirt and my arm. They were the latest plans of the forts of Adrianople.

No one had seen the transaction. I walked back into the town with the Greek officers and took my leave. The plans joined the other papers in my hiding-place in the trunk. That night I had my evening meal in my room, and on the following morning I took the Orient express to Constantinople.

CHAPTER XXXI

I CAN look back now on my perilous time of espionage and, collating my experiences with those of men whom I am proud to call my friends, compare our service with the services of foreign countries.

In pre-war days Russia was supposed to have the finest secret service and undoubtedly for a time she had, but her organization did not stand the test of a world war and a revolution.

Germany spent huge sums before the war on her espionage department, and yet when I read the *memoirs of her foremost secret service organizers* I come to the conclusion that they used spies in the mass and not men picked for their quality. From this generalization I particularly want to exclude Karl Lody, who would not cringe for mercy, and, early one autumn morning in 1915, was shot in the Tower of London. He met his end like a man.

The best method seems to have been that used by the British, who selected men of a resourceful kind and allowed them to work out for themselves the methods by which they found they could best achieve their individual tasks.

I endeavoured to follow the same principle in selecting my own agents, and while I always tried to keep them separate from each other, at the same time I endeavoured to give them a corporate sense that they were working for a definite end. I never tried to bribe them; I paid them in order that they might

have the means to live in comparative comfort, and most of them worked for the joy of the task or for love of their country. I do not think I ever callously sent a man into danger, and certainly not without that man knowing exactly into what danger he was going.

Secret inks, tiny cameras the size of half a crown and not much thicker, photographs reduced so that their films can be concealed in a cigarette, coding messages on linen, concealing them in bread, soap, or the soles of boots, secret wireless stations, the payment of huge rewards are all useless unless one has the essentials—will, wit and determination to carry out the task which is set.

A man like Sir Paul Dukes is one of the finest examples of those whom The Chief selected. His book—"Red Dusk and the Morrow"—gives just a peep into the life he led in Russia for two years—during which time he served both in the Cheka and the Red Army—yet managed to keep London informed of what was going on in Soviet Russia.

Then there is Sidney Reilly, who, when he left the secret service after the war, continued to fight Bolshevism with his own private fortune. With the tenacity of a bulldog he went after his quarry and finally lost his life in the cause he had espoused.

I mention Sir Paul Dukes and Sidney Reilly because their stories are known, but there are a score of other names in this silent service to which I once belonged, who could tell of tasks done and obstacles overcome which would read like fairy stories and yet contain not a syllable of exaggeration.

The secret services of all countries are functioning more actively to-day than they have ever done before in the history of the world. The Bolsheviks, together

with the Third International, have built up a new powerful secret service organization which employs an entirely new technique, which plays a prominent part in international intrigues, and which calls for the most brilliant counter-espionage work on the part of the countries they attack.

While armaments exist, secret service funds will be available no matter what the economic position of a country, and recruits will be easily found among men and women who will risk their lives for the need of money, for adventure, and in time of national danger for the love of their country.