

Playing the Police

A Story of an American Who Protected a Russian Girl.

By ELINOR MARSH

While the last Russian revolution was coming on, Alan Thorpe, a young American, in what was then St. Petersburg was walking on the street one day when suddenly he felt a hand on his arm, a soft, small hand, evidently belonging to a woman. Glancing aside, he saw a girl seemingly about twenty years of age. Looking up appealingly, she hurriedly spoke a few words in the Russian language in a low tone. Thorpe was connected with an agency of an American business house in St. Petersburg and had lived in Russia long enough to speak the language pretty well.

"Give me your protection," said the girl. "I am followed and may be arrested."

"What do you wish me to do?"

"Say that I am your wife."

"Why do you fear arrest?"

"I am supposed to be a revolutionist."

"I am an American. You being a Russian, I doubt it."

"All the better," said the girl in broken English. "You being a foreigner, the police will be all the more careful in arresting your wife."

"Where did you learn English?"

"I speak several languages. I have been in England. I once spent some months there."

The girl withdrew her hand for a few moments, and Thorpe felt something drop in the side pocket of his overcoat.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Never mind what it is. If it is discovered there and you do not know what it is you will be really surprised. The police will think the more readily convinced that you did not put it there yourself."

"Suppose I refuse to acknowledge you?"

"In that case, if they arrest me, I am lost."

"What do you mean?"

"I shall spend the rest of my life in Siberia."

This surely was an unfortunate position in which to be placed—an attractive girl pleading for a chance to avoid a lifelong imprisonment, endangering the liberty of the man she asked to help her. Thorpe was an American, full of chivalry. He knew that the sensible thing for him to do was to disengage himself from the girl and leave her to take care of herself. But he could not bring himself to do this. It flashed through his mind that if he became involved he would find a way out of the trouble. He had the rights of any foreigner, and he was not interested in the revolution. He might suffer imprisonment for a time, but he would eventually be able to prove that he was not a revolutionist. It needed only this reasoning, in addition to the pleading face turned up to his and the feeling of the little hand on his arm, to win him to the girl's purpose.

When his mind was made up he began to talk volubly in English to his companion, pointing out various objects as he passed them with his cane, as though he were conducting her through the city as a stranger. Occasionally he used the words "my dear," but it is doubtful if the two were under surveillance or, if so, whether they were understood. For a Russian police officer is not supposed to know English. The girl, too, played the part of a visitor to the city, regarding with interest the objects pointed out and remarking upon them.

"Are we going toward your home?" asked Thorpe in a whisper.

"No; take me to yours."

This staggered the American, but he remembered the great stake of a life imprisonment in the Kara mines for the girl he was aiding, and he led the way to his lodgings. He was about to pass into the house where he lived when an officer stepped up to him and said very civilly in the Russian tongue: "Have you your passport with you, sir?"

Thorpe, who was never without his passport, took it from his pocket and handed it to the officer, who looked at it and from it to him. Seeing that the description tallied with the original, the officer handed the document back to its owner, then asked: "May I see madame's passport?"

"What does he say?" asked the girl of Thorpe, pretending not to understand.

"He wishes to see your passport."

"Oh, it is in my trunk. Ask him to come in and I will show it to him."

By this time the officer was convinced that the pair were American travelers. He went into the house and remained with Thorpe in a reception room while the girl ascended the staircase ostensibly to go to her room to get her passport. Thorpe, who knew that she would not come back, engaged the officer's attention by asking him questions. The man wished to stop the girl, but refrained from doing so until it was too late. Thorpe, who knew that when the officer was convinced that his supposed wife would not return he would take him into custody, was in agony. He remembered the girl's slipping something into his pocket and knew it would be found there. All this seemed too much to do for a woman he had never seen before, and he was tempted to free himself at once by declaring the deception; but

whether it was wise or unwise, it was now too late, and he refrained.

For awhile after the girl had gone upstairs Thorpe talked volubly to the officer, intending to give her as much time as possible to make her escape. During this period Thorpe was thinking how she could get away. There was a rear staircase by which she might descend into a back yard and thence gain another street. But it was likely that there were others on the lookout, and it was possible that her flight by this route would be intercepted. Other houses about the same height as the one they were in flanked it, and she might escape by the roof. In any event if she succeeded Thorpe would be left to the mercy of the Russian government.

What was his amazement to see her re-enter the room.

"My dear," she said, "I wish you would go upstairs and see if you can find my passport. I thought I left it in my trunk when I went out, and, though I have turned everything upside down, I haven't found it. I think that I must have placed it in your trunk, but it is locked and I could not open it. Go and see if it is not there."

What could her return mean but that she had found that she could not sacrifice her benefactor and had come back to permit him to escape instead of herself? He was not to be placed in the position of accepting such a sacrifice from a woman. Taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, he handed them to her, telling her to go herself and look for her passport in his trunk. She demurred at first, but when he handed her his overcoat, asking her to take it up with her, she consented and again left the room, with the coat on her arm.

If the officer had any suspicions they were lulled by the woman's return. And when she left the room a second time with Thorpe's coat there was a great relief in her heart. The moment she was out of the officer's sight she put her hand in the pocket of the coat to assure herself that what she had placed in it was still there. She felt it and hurried on, transferring it as she did so to her own person. During her previous absence from below she had investigated the route of escape by the roof and now kept on till she reached it. Emerging from the scuttle, she ran to the next building, which was but a few feet lower, jumped down on to it, ran over several buildings of the same height and disappeared down the scuttle of the fifth house from the one from which she had started.

When some time had passed and the girl did not return Thorpe began to show signs of impatience. He proposed to go after her, but the officer interposed. Thorpe waited a little longer, then said:

"I fear that if I do not go up at once I shall lose my valuables."

"Why so?" asked the officer. "Surely your wife would not steal from you."

"She is not my wife. I never saw her before today. She joined me on the street. I presume she is."

The officer waited not to hear the rest, but, springing up, ran to the door, gave a shrill whistle, then ran upstairs, followed by several other men. Every room in the house was searched, including Thorpe's apartments. Besides his overcoat, several articles of value were missing. He was astonished, thinking that, after all, he had been robbed by a woman who had worked on his sympathies for the purpose. But the police disabused his mind of this theory. They knew better. They had been on the track of a woman they knew well. This one they did not know, but while chasing the other had come to suspect her. She had fooled them by placing herself under Thorpe's wing and pretending to be his wife. But Thorpe was believed to be entirely innocent in the matter and was not troubled even to make an explanation.

One day Thorpe was accosted on the street by an old woman who asked for aims. He was turning away from her when she said in a low tone:

"I am the girl you saved from Siberia."

Thorpe scrutinized her and saw that her white hair was a wig; the wrinkles in her face were skillfully painted. He asked her to give him an account of herself since he saw her last. After telling him how she escaped she continued:

"The article I slipped in your overcoat pocket was a bomb. I had received it a few minutes before I joined you from a worker in the cause of Russia's liberation. When I was permitted to go upstairs for my passport I could have escaped, but I was unwilling to leave you, my benefactor, with the bomb in your overcoat pocket. Your asking me to carry your coat upstairs solved the problem. I robbed you of certain articles that it might appear to the police that I was a common thief who had deceived you. This would avoid implicating you in protecting a revolutionist. When it is safe to do so the articles will be returned to you."

"Who are you?" asked Thorpe.

"I am the daughter of a noble. My home is in the province of Vologda. I came into the revolutionary party through teaching the children on my father's estate. I am now a steady worker for the cause. But I expect to be taken in time and sent to Siberia. I have made many narrow escapes and should have been taken when I attached myself to you had it not been for the stupidity of the officer who demanded my passport. I have stopped you to thank you for what you did for me and to say that your property will be returned to you. You are henceforth while in Russia under the care of the revolutionists and have nothing to fear."

She turned away from Thorpe, and he never saw or heard of her again.

SAFETY DEMANDS FEDERAL CONTROL OF THE RAILROADS

Only Way to Meet Emergencies of Nation, Says A. P. Thom.

STATES' RIGHTS PRESERVED

Principles Which Railroads Hold Should Govern Regulatory System in Interests of Public and the Roads—Compulsory System of Federal Incorporation Favored.

Washington, Dec. 4.—That the interests of national defense require that control of railway lines should rest with the federal government and not with the states was the claim advanced by Alfred P. Thom, counsel to the Railway Executives' Advisory Committee, in concluding his preliminary statement of the case for the railways before the Newlands Joint Committee on Interstate Commerce.

"We must be efficient as a nation if we are to deal successfully with our national emergencies," said Mr. Thom, "and we must appreciate that efficient transportation is an essential condition of national efficiency. If we are to halt and weaken our transportation systems by state lines, by the permanent imposition of burdens by unwise regulation, we will make national efficiency impossible."

States' Rights Would Not Suffer.

Mr. Thom cited many instances in which shippers in one state were injuriously affected by selfish regulations imposed on the railroads by neighboring states. He pointed out that federal regulation would be no invasion of the rights of the states but would be the means of preserving the rights which they acquired when they entered the Union, one of which was the right to the free movement of their products across state boundaries.

What the Railroads Advocate.

The principles which the railroads believe should be incorporated in any just system of regulation were summarized by Mr. Thom as follows:

1. The entire power and duty of regulation should be in the hands of the national government, except as to matters so essentially local and incidental that they cannot be used to interfere with the efficiency of the service or the just rights of the carriers.

2. As one of the means of accomplishing this, a system of compulsory federal incorporation should be adopted, into which should be brought all railroad corporations engaged in interstate or foreign commerce.

3. The Interstate Commerce Commission under existing laws has too much to do and is charged with conflicting functions, including the investigation, prosecution and decision of cases. The latter duties should be placed in the hands of a new body which might be called the Federal Railroad Commission. Regional Commissions should be established in different parts of the country to assist the Interstate Commerce Commission by handling local cases.

4. The power of the Commission should be extended to enable it to prescribe minimum rates and not merely maximum rates as at present. This would increase their power to prevent unjust discriminations.

Justice to Public and Roads.

5. It should be made the duty of the Interstate Commerce Commission, in the exercise of its powers to fix reasonable rates, to so adjust these rates that they shall be just at once to the public and to the carriers. To this end the Commission, in determining rates, should consider the necessity of maintaining efficient transportation and extensions of facilities, the relation of expenses to rates and the rights of shippers, stockholders and creditors of the roads.

6. The Interstate Commerce Commission should be invested with the power to fix the rates for carrying mails.
7. The federal government should have exclusive power to supervise the issue of stocks and bonds by railroad carriers engaged in interstate and foreign commerce.

8. The law should recognize the essential difference between things which restrain trade in the case of ordinary mercantile concerns and those which restrain trade in the case of common carriers. The question of competition is not the only fair criterion.

9. The law should expressly provide for the meeting and agreement of traffic or other officers of railroads in respect of rates or practices. This should, however, be safeguarded by requiring the agreements to be filed with the Interstate Commerce Commission and to be subject to disapproval by it.

"My legal proposition," Mr. Thom said, "is that the Constitution as it now is gives full authority to Congress to regulate the instrumentalities of interstate commerce in all their parts. If the power of regulation is to reach the public requirements, it must be co-extensive with the instrumentalities of commerce."

Mr. Thom explained that the roads are not asking either of the Committee or of Congress any increase in revenues, but that they are merely asking the perfection of a system which will be responsible to any need that may arise.

The Strange Case of a Buried Soldier

By F. A. MITCHEL

Antoine Blanc, a French soldier fighting at the siege of Verdun, while engaged in a counterattack upon the Germans fell to the ground and lay motionless. The counterattack succeeded, and the French held the ground on which the fight occurred. Blanc's friend, Louis Devaure, serving in the same company, saw him fall and when the fight ceased went to him and took him up. To all appearances Blanc was dead, but Devaure could find no wound. Surgeons to whom the case was referred surmised that the man had been killed by the air pressure of a missile or, having a weak heart, had succumbed from that cause under excitement.

Devaure secured a coffin, or, rather, a box, and buried his friend near a ravine that ran through the battlefield.

That night a severe rain set in, swelling a tiny stream that ran through the ravine and overflowing its banks. In the morning Devaure visited his friend's grave and found that the flood had widened the ravine and the end of the box containing the body was exposed. Moreover, the end had been removed. This removal astonished Devaure, who, looking into the box, found it empty.

He was as much surprised at this as he had been to discover that his friend had been killed in battle without any sign of having been hit. After studying the possible causes of the absence of the body he arrived at the conclusion that the water as it receded took the body with it. But this did not account for the removal of the end of the box.

During the day several attempts were made by the Germans to recover the ground through which the ravine ran. They made a lodgment, but were not able to hold it. During the fighting Devaure was slowly retreating in the ravine, where he and his comrades were less exposed to the German fire, and while giving way before the enemy he passed the protruding end of the box from which his friend had disappeared.

What was Devaure's astonishment to see the soles of a pair of boots in the place where his dead comrade's boots should be had he remained buried! At evening the ground contained by him remained in possession of the Germans. Devaure told some of his comrades of his having failed to find Blanc's body and of his having afterward seen the soles of boots in the box during the retreat. He was laughed at for his story.

However, the contention for Blanc's burial place was not yet over. At daylight the next morning the French made another effort to possess themselves of it. In this fight Devaure was not in the ravine, but one of his friends, Pierre Larrabee, passed right under the box in question. The French were again dispossessed, and Larrabee reported that he had stood where he could see into the box, the sun lighting its interior, and it was empty.

Devaure was forced to the conclusion that his first view was correct and that in his second he must have been mistaken, though he had been as sure of seeing a pair of soles as he was of seeing the box that contained them.

A wood bordered this much fought over region, and when night fell the Germans, after shelling the wood, advanced to take it. Devaure's company was among the forces used in repelling this attack. Amid the flashing of guns, the glare of searchlights, the roaring and the shouting, the two opposing forces contended for the wood. While Devaure's company were pressing forward he saw a man rise out of the ground and turn for a moment to look at the French as if to satisfy himself whether they were friends or enemies. Then, evidently assured, he turned toward the Germans and began to fire at them with his rifle.

What was Devaure's astonishment to see in the white, haggard face of this man his friend Blanc!

Devaure was more nearly paralyzed with terror at this ghostly being than at the frightful scene about him. The ghost fell back into the ranks of the French. Devaure seized his arm, and the ghost turned.

"Louis!"

"Antoine!"

These words were spoken, though not heard by either for the din. But Devaure was assured that his friend stood with him in the flesh.

When day came and the fighting ceased Blanc recounted his remarkable adventures to his chum.

He had come to consciousness with a sense of suffocation and chilled feet, which were resting against some obstacle. With a spasmodic effort he forced this object away and felt rushing water, which soon engulfed him. Feeling that he was inclosed except at his feet, he pulled himself in that direction and struck water at or about its surface. Finding a bank, he scrambled up it and, realizing that he might be among enemies, lay still till there was light enough to see the road. Then he went there and hid.

During the next day, seeing Germans coming, he ran to the ravine and had just time to crawl again into his coffin when a light began. Not knowing which side was near him, he remained till quiet was restored, then got back to the wood, where he dug himself in. Having possessed himself of the rifle and ammunition of a dead soldier by the way, he did some fighting from his hole on his own account.

Devaure's story was vindicated.

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