

## An Avenger

Story of an Assassination  
by a Russian Nihilist

By C. L. POINEER

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I was making a tour of Switzerland last year. All the luggage I had with me was strapped on my back, and in my hand I carried a light alpenstock. One morning I started from Interlaken to walk to Thun. The road I took leads along the west bank of Lake Thun, or Thundsee lake, one of the loveliest bodies of water in Switzerland. From the road one has a perfect view of the Bernese Alps, the Matterhorn, the Monks and the Jungfrau. The snow peaks rising high in the distance may often be mistaken for clouds. The sun was shining on the lake, over whose bosom the little boats were running between Interlaken and Thun loaded with tourists were coming back and forth.

Not far from Interlaken the road passes through a tunnel in a perpendicular cliff that forms the bank of the lake. While walking through this tunnel I caught up with a youth who, judging from his pack, was making a long journey to the same as I. He spoke to me in German, the language of that part of Switzerland, but I signified that I did not understand him, and he repeated his question in French.

"How far is it, sir, to Thun?"

"Ten or twelve miles, I believe."

"I was inclined to let me go on my own, but, preferring company, I adapted myself to his. He was apparently not more than eighteen years old. No beard had yet started on his face, and his hair and complexion were fair. I took him for a Swede or a Norwegian, though such light hair and skin are common in northern Germany. We walked on together, chatting and enjoying the beautiful panorama of the lake, the hills beyond and still beyond these mountains. For awhile the young man was guarded in his speech. He then discovered that I was an American—he had supposed me to be an Englishman—and this seemed to awaken confidence, though I rather a fellow feeling, for he was still in ignorance as to who I was or where he was going. I was, however, from his conversation, that he was highly educated and one of those persons who are born to think. I was astonished at his familiarity with the various schools of philosophy. That he was a dreamer as well as a thinker was apparent from ideas advanced, which to me seemed a world ahead of the times.

Merlingen we halted for lunch, eating sandwiches and drinking from a table under the trees in front of the hotel. We rested for an hour, then, luncheon, smoking, I my pipe, and companion cigarettes (the usual of a smoke in that country).

Subject that most interested him was America and how to get there. I told him that it all depended on where he started from and waited for him to tell me from what point he would start. "The Riviera," was his reply.

Upon I informed him that from point on the Riviera—say Nice or Marseilles—one might by a short rail journey reach Genoa, from which steamers are constantly leaving for the United States. He seemed interested in this and more so when I told him that I had engaged passage by that route myself. When I told him that I had no intention of leaving my country he replied that I was not.

Reached Thun about 5 o'clock. After refreshing ourselves with a glass of beer in the gardens of the hotel, I went to my hotel, my companion going I knew not where. One of all kinds of people traveling, especially if one likes to form acquaintances as I do. Of all those met in any of my tours the one who made the most impression on me was the young philosopher whom I learned nothing.

By rail from Thun to Paris, where I found at Montone General A. who had been minister of the interior in Russia. Indeed, I stopped to talk with him. Those who knew told me that several attempts had been made upon his life, and that he was closely guarded. During his incumbency he had sent hundreds of people to prison, besides those he had executed. He had been proscribed by the revolutionists, they having vowed to kill him. I asked why he should dread death so far from home and was told that he could work to better advantage beyond the Russian borders than within them. In Russia the government could act direct. In other countries more or less red tape was required to arrest a suspect, and he could be done an assassination in the place. General A. was a man of season at Montone for his long affliction with some nervousness. It seemed to me that a man in fear for his life would not have nerve trouble. He was regular in his habits, going to bed in the morning and to the afternoon, always attended in citizens' dress, who had every one who approached him.

Understanding the precautions taken, I was assassinated at the end of the time I was there.

It was in June and the days were long. About half past 8 o'clock one evening I went up to my room after dinner and, lighting a cigar, stood for a moment at my window, which was on the north side of the hotel. Several buildings were near, and from a window of one of them I saw a puff of smoke and heard a crack. There was nothing to be seen in the window, for the blinds had been closed. If a shot had been fired it must have been from between the slats.

The occurrence did not make much impression on me, but an hour later, on going downstairs, I found the hotel proprietor, the servants, the guests, all horror stricken. On asking the cause I was told that General A. had been shot by some one who had fired a bullet into his room through an open window. Upon asking the time the affair occurred I was told that it was about half past 8.

I knew perfectly well that I had seen the smoke of the weapon that had done the deed and could point out the window from which it had been fired, but I held my peace. Some one had revenge a long list of barbarities visited upon those who had dared to attempt to build up an oppressed people, and I was not interested in taking any part in the affair. I inquired if it was known from what point the shot was fired and was told that it was believed it had come from a tree that grew near the general's window. By this I knew that I was the only person who had witnessed the firing. By giving the information I possessed the police would have a description of the person or persons occupying the room from which the assassin had done the work, and they would be pretty sure to make the arrest. I confess, sympathizing with the Russian revolutionists, I had no intention of enlightening them.

I was pleased, however, possessing such a secret, that the time had come for me to leave Montone. My steamer was due to sail from Genoa the next morning, and I took a night train for that city. I stood, shortly before sailing, on the upper deck looking at the swarm of people, some hurrying aboard, some going ashore, all infected by that bustle usual to a steamer about to leave port.

A girl came up the gangway whose face was familiar to me. Where had I seen her? It bothers me to see a face without being able to place it, and this case annoyed me more than usual. However, since I could not recollect where I had met her I ceased to think about her. Interesting myself in other persons. We soon passed out on to the bosom of the Mediterranean, and I rejoiced at the prospect of getting home.

During the next few days I looked for the girl whom I had been unable to place, both on deck and in the dining saloon. I did not see her till we had passed Gibraltar and steamed out on to the Atlantic. Then one morning, while walking on the highest of all the decks, where there were no other passengers, I suddenly came upon her sitting on the boards, leaning up against a projection that shielded her from the wind.

She turned white as a cloth.

At first I thought I would stop and ask her where we had met, but she turned her eyes away from me, and I saw that either I had made a mistake in supposing that I had known her or she had no desire to continue the acquaintance. But why had the meeting with me so affected her? I thought over every one I had met abroad—indeed, every one I had ever known—in order to discover if there was any with whom I had had trouble. No; the record was clear.

We stopped at Madeira and the Azores. I did not see the girl again till we had left the latter islands. But I had thought a great deal of her, and finally it suddenly flashed upon me who she was and where I had met her. She was the young man with whom I had walked from Interlaken to Thun.

After leaving the Azores I came upon her, sitting on deck where I had first seen her. I was about to pass her when she smiled at me. Of course I joined her.

"Now that we have touched at the last European port," she said, "I am willing to make myself known to you. We walked together one day in Switzerland."

"Is the costume you wore then or the one you wear now your legitimate dress?"

"The one I wear now."

"I waited for her to explain, but she did not. So I said:

"Why have you deferred making yourself known to me?"

"Because I am a fugitive. Had I not had confidence that you would not betray me I should not have planned to take this steamer. Yet I was obliged to take it. You will not betray me?"

"How do you know that? If you have committed a crime it is my duty to betray you."

"I have committed no crime except in the cause of justice."

That was the end of the confidence she gave me. I did not wish her to give me any more. I knew all she could have told me. I wished that I did not know it lest I might be called upon to bear witness concerning it. I leave it to the reader to infer what I inferred. It is too terrible and too dangerous to be expressed in words.

I saw something of the girl every day or so on shipboard, but when we reached port I did not think it safe to be seen with her. I did not see her when she left the ship. For several days I eagerly scanned the newspapers, dreading to read of her arrest. Since I did not and have heard nothing of her since, I have concluded that she landed without detection. What became of her after that I do not know.

### The Brahman Funeral Pyre.

After the body of a Brahman has been anointed with sesamum oil the two toes are bound together and the two thumbs. It is then lashed to a litter made of two long parallel poles, to which are fastened seven transverse pieces of wood. The shroud is very simple, a large piece of cloth wrapped round the body and bound with ropes of straw. If the dead Brahman leaves a will his face is not covered; otherwise the shroud is brought up over the head. The burning ground, or ghāt, is usually near a river, that those who have taken part in the ceremonies may purify themselves as quickly and as easily as possible. Before erecting the funeral pyre a shallow pit is dug and partially filled with dry wood; the body is covered with splinters of dry wood and sprinkled with panchagaria, an inflammable liquid, and placed on the pyre and covered with branches and roots, like a hut. The nearest relative or heir then takes a lighted taper and sets fire to the four corners of the pile and leaves at once to perform the ceremony of purification. The carriers, being of the lowest caste, remain until the body is entirely consumed.

### Love, Honor and Obey.

The controversy about including the word "obey" in the marriage vow is probably as old as the marriage ceremony itself. When Marion Harland's parents were married in 1825 (as she tells us in her autobiography) the bride had "laughingly threatened that she would not promise to 'obey' and that a scene would follow the use of the obnoxious word in the marriage service. The young divine, with this in mind or in a fit of absentmindedness or of stage fright, actually blundered out, 'Love, honor—and obey in all things consistent.'" The costumes worn on this occasion were hardly as modern as the unfortunate amendment. "The bride wore a soft sheer India muslin, a veil falling to the hem of the gown and white brocade slippers embroidered with faint blue flowers. The bridegroom's suit was of fine blue cloth with real silver buttons. His feet were clad in white stockings and low shoes with wrought silver buckles."

### The Vampire Bat.

The true vampire bat is a quite insignificant creature, not unlike our noctule bat in general appearance and size, but with a small "nose leaf" and no web between the hind legs. The really remarkable thing about it is its perfect adaptation for secret and painless bloodletting. Most bats have teeth very like those of the carnivora, with long canines and small incisors, but in the true bloodsucking vampire bat the incisors are very large and broad and exceedingly sharp edged, thus being able to inflict a shaving surface cut which causes no pain, but a great deal of bleeding. Indeed, not only does the sleeper very rarely wake under the winged bloodletter's attentions, but a bite may be inflicted without a person who is awake at the time.—London Graphic.

### Rossetti Liked Odd Words.

Dante Rossetti, like Signor d'Annunzio, took infinite pains to extend his vocabulary, says the London Chronicle. W. M. Rossetti relates that his brother used to hunt "through all manner of old romances to pluck upon stunning words for poetry" and make lists of them. The words thus noted were of a miscellaneous character, such as euphrasy, fat kidneyed, fat witted, fleshquake, foolhappy, gorbellish, program, lass torn, iustrial, primorle, recreand, angelot, cherubance, trifukate, laureole, novelries, fecuous, cumberworld and jobbernowl. Some of these explain themselves, but how many people could say offhand what "gorbellish" means? It does not figure in the English Historical Dictionary. And yet a good month filling epithet surely deserves to live.

### Completing the Circuit.

Uncompromising integrity voiced with irony was a marked characteristic of the Duke of Wellington. When he was in India after the British victory at Assaye the envoy of the nizâm offered £70,000 for some information as to the districts to be assigned to his master, General Wellesley, as the duke then was, listened to the proposal with great gravity and when the Indian had ceased to speak said to him, "Can you keep a secret?"

"Certainly, anshib," said the envoy eagerly.

The general made a low bow. "And so can I," he said dryly.

### A Way Out.

"She insists that her paternal ancestor came over on the Mayflower."

"But I thought they proved to her that there was no such name on the Mayflower register?"

"They did. And now she says he was a stowaway."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The Story Needed Confirmation.

"George, did you know that I was going to marry your sister?"

"Well, I heard her say so, but she's had that idea about so many other fellows that I didn't feel sure about it till you told me."—Brooklyn Life.

### Poor Product.

"I'm a self made man, I am."

"Well, there is one thing you needn't worry about."

"What is that?"

"Taking out a patent."

### The Heaviest Meal.

"When do you take the heaviest meal of the day?" asked a bachelor of a married man.

"When my wife cooks it," came the reply.

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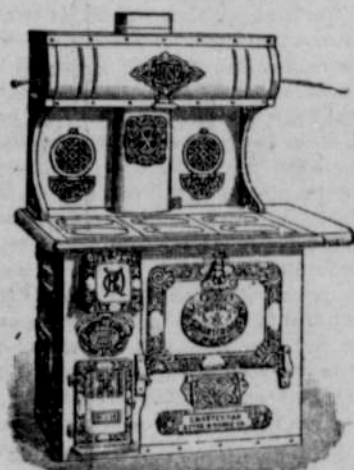
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