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A Thrilling Escape

Of a Russian Revolutionist Who Captured a Locomotive

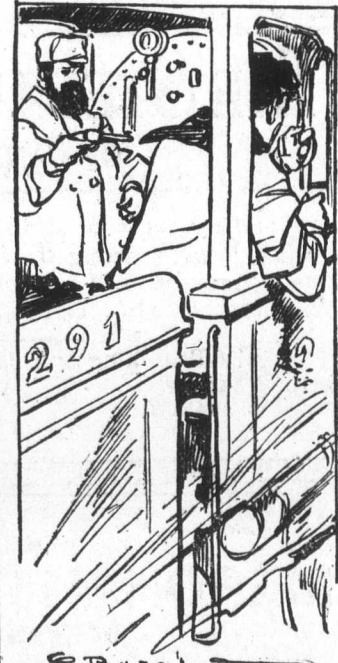
By PETER (POTOFF)

In a restaurant in the lower part of New York a number of Russian exiles were dining and talking. One of them told the following experiences:

Ten years ago we revolutionists were sometimes as much puzzled at one another's movements as the government was puzzled at both. In the first place the deepest plotters among us were pretending to be serving the government. Some were known to their revolutionary intimates to be playing this game, while some were not. I was a locomotive engineer and was supposed to be working for the chief of police. I was to receive a reward for information leading to the capture of any one either tampering with the roadbed before the expected transit over it of a high government official or the arrest of any "political" attempting to escape by the road.

Several of us were at the time conspiring to kill a prominent government official in Moscow, and we were going about the matter methodically. One of our number was watching him with a view to determining his habits. Another had the bomb in charge with which I was running the engine hauling a passenger train between Moscow and Odessa by which we might get the assassin out of Russia.

One day a young man came into the yard where I was oiling my locomotive and asked me if I would carry him out of Moscow some day on my engine. I asked him why he wished to go with me instead of in a coach, and he confessed that he desired to carry some



"NEVER MIND THE SMASHUP, GET THERE!" funds with him which another was trying to get hold of. He offered to pay me a thousand rubles to take him out. Thinking him to be one who had committed a robbery, I informed the police of the matter, describing the man minutely and pretending to suspect him of being a revolutionist up to some villainy. They failed to find him, at which I was not disappointed. My companions and myself were still watching and waiting, when one morning not long before my train left I thought I heard a distant faint boom. Being engaged at that kind of business myself, my attention was arrested, but there are many causes for such explosions in cities, and I soon forgot this one. At the starting time I pulled my train out and on reaching the outskirts of the city saw ahead of me a switch turned to throw me off the track. I was obliged to stop. A man came from behind a shed, threw the switch

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is the direct and inevitable result of irregular or constipated bowels and clogged-up kidneys and skin. The undigested food and other waste matter which is allowed to accumulate poisons the blood and the whole system. Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills act directly on the bowels, regulating them—on the kidneys, giving them ease and strength to properly filter the blood—and on the skin, opening up the pores. For pure blood and good health take

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as I reached it, and I started on. As I passed the switch the man climbed up into the cab with me.

"I wish you," he said, "to drive this engine for all she is worth."

Feeling that my load was lightened, I looked back and saw my train standing on the track behind me. Some one, doubtless a confederate, of the man in the cab with me, had uncoupled it.

"Who are you?" I asked, looking at the man beside me.

"Never mind who I am," he said, pulling a revolver from under his coat and cocking it. "Get all the speed you can out of this engine."

I remembered to have heard his voice before, and in a few moments I knew, though he was disguised, that he was the man who had offered me 1,000 rubles to let him ride with me. Evidently he was running away with the funds, as he had intended, and was using my engine for the purpose without my consent. I was unarmed, and there was nothing to do but obey him. I increased the speed.

What occupied my mind was how to make capital with the government out of the episode. I couldn't see any way to prevent his escape, but it occurred to me that the conductor of the train I had left would telegraph ahead the fact that I had run away from him. This led me to glance at the telegraph wires beside the road, and I noticed that they were sagging. I felt sure they had been cut. Then I began to realize that my passenger's flight was a deep laid scheme. He had not only a confederate who had detached the train, but one who had cut the wires. He was the coolest chap I ever met, but he was as determined as he was cool. I knew by his eye that the slightest disobedience on my part would be followed by a bullet crashing through my brain.

Being of his kind myself, I determined to have an understanding with him. "Tell me," I said, "what you wish to accomplish and I will do my part in accomplishing it for you."

"I wish to catch the boat at Odessa for Constantinople."

"It is impossible—that is, we shall have a smashup on the way."

"Never mind the smashup! Get there!"

He said this as one who would prefer to die under a heap of metal to being taken. I began to doubt if it was money he was getting away with. I determined to apply a test:

"You have killed a government official," I said, "and are endeavoring to get out of the country."

He paled. He was about to deny the charge, but changed his mind.

"And as such would you help or deter me?"

"I would sacrifice my own life to aid you."

"Very well; I will trust you. This morning I gained access, through a confederate in his service, to the office of—"

—he gave the name of the official we were intending to assassinate—and killed him. I timed my act to board your train."

"A confederate uncoupled the coach—"

"Yes."

"Another cut the telegraph wires?"

"Others—several others."

I put on every ounce of steam possible and pulled the throttle wide open.

"Do you know," I said, "that I and two others have been working all winter to accomplish the deed you have done?"

"No."

"We have. You, working on other lines, have anticipated us. Had we, instead of you, succeeded another would have been here in your place. You can understand how I feel and cannot doubt that every nerve in my body will be strained to save you."

For a few minutes I gave myself up to thinking how to avoid other trains and like dangers. Then I said to the fugitive:

"We must play a part. You can personate a government official. Tell those along the line that there has been an assassination in Moscow and the perpetrator is on a train ahead of us. At the first station south of which there is telegraphic connection order the train dispatcher to send word for all trains and obstructions to clear the track. I, as a trusted engineer of the road and the government will, if necessary, confirm your story."

I shall never forget the look he gave me.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "What a remarkable coincidence! Without some

unforeseen misfortune we shall succeed."

We soon pulled up at a station, and my passenger hurriedly called out what I had suggested, and without stopping I drove on. We knew not if the order he gave would be obeyed, but we believed it would. As we rattled along we saw trains sidetracked and persons gaping at us, though they only saw us as by a flash of lightning. Every switch was properly placed for us. Twice we were obliged to stop for water, but the fugitive ordered those connected with the tank to get to work so sharply that neither they nor we lost time.

Then we came to a station where the station master had put out a red flag. As we approached I suggested to my man to simply cry haste. I slowed down as we passed the station.

"What is it?"

"We have a telegram from Moscow to stop all trains or engines."

It was evident that the wires had been repaired.

"You have not been ordered to stop us!" yelled my companion. "We are on government business that admits of no stop. An assassination has been committed. The assassin is ahead of us and we must catch him."

I waited for no more, but pulled open the throttle, and, with a jump, our steed shot forward. Half an hour passed, during which we ran through villages, rattled over bridges, plunged through cuts, while all along the road both the people and the railroad officials stood gaping at us. As we drew near Odessa—my companion was marking the time with his watch, while I noted the miles—we saw another red flag. Just beyond it a switch was turned to throw us off.

But I noticed a man standing with his hand on it, and I believed the matter to be a bluff. At any rate, I drove on at full speed, and an instant before we reached the switch it was turned to let us go by.

But my heart was in my throat.

We both believed that we would be prevented from getting on the boat at Odessa and determined to outwit the officials by stopping half a mile from the station. We pulled up in a wood and ran for the boat. As we approached it we walked leisurely like any other passenger, but were obliged to hurry toward the end in order to get aboard before the withdrawal of the gangplank. Then we both went to a dark corner, where we kept out of sight till the vessel was well away from land.

Who my companion was I never knew—never wanted to know. I came to America, where I have lived ever since. If I go back to Russia I will either go to Siberia or the scaffold.

Wood Engraving.

It has never been satisfactorily ascertained whether the art of wood engraving came to Europe from the east or was rediscovered by some European artificer. The precise date of the first European woodcut is also a matter of serious doubt, but we have data which enable us to come pretty close to the right time. We know that European wood engraving dates certainly from the first quarter of the fifteenth century. There is considerable evidence to show that the art had its origin among the Chinese, the wonderful people who have given us so many of our "modern" inventions.

Counting the Cos.

Winkleby gazed at the new triplets with fatherly pride, but not a little apprehension in his eye nevertheless.

"What are you thinking, dear?" asked Mrs. Winkleby softly.

"Nothing, dear, nothing," he said falteringly. "Only don't you think that it would be wiser for us hereafter to build up our little family on the installment plan?"

What Mattered.

Bragging Man—Did you say I was a deadbeat?

Ferocious Little Man—Yes, and I'll say it to your face.

Bragging Man—Oh, I don't care what you do say to my face, only please don't tell anybody else.

Natural History Note.

"Teacher, do rabbits make a noise like a dog?"

"No; rabbits are practically devoid of vocal powers."

"That's odd. My story book says they eat cabbage and bark."

Barbers In Egypt.

Many barbers in Egypt are government servants. According to an edict issued by Ibrahim Pasha in 1848, village barbers were ordered to examine all dead bodies and register the necessary particulars.

Chasing Silver.

Daily—They say that the art of chasing silver is a very difficult one. Borrow—I know it is. I've been trying all the day to find a man who would lend me half a crown.—London Answers.

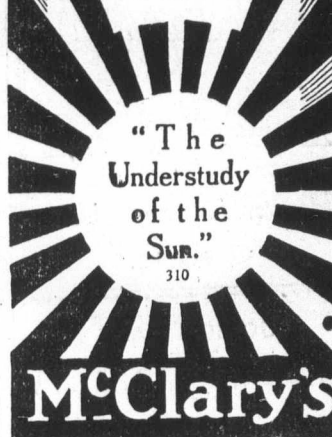
Cause of the Quarrel.

"Do you understand the cause of the girls' quarrel?"

"Why, I was told it was six feet tall, with broad shoulders and a drooping moustache."

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