

## Gems of Evil.

(Told by STUART MARTIN in Pearson's Weekly.)

## THE ORLOV DIAMOND.

A little man wearing a heavy, gorgeous fur coat stepped out of a large private car and made his way to a smart yacht lying cuddled against the banks of the river Neva just below Petrograd.

"Do you know who that is?" asked a British officer of a comrade as they watched the small figure dive down into the saloon of the luxurious ship. "No? Well, that is Boris Melnikoff, the Minister of the Interior for Russia, one of the richest men in the empire. He is a grandson of the man who brought the notorious Orlov diamond to Russia, a stone with a terrible history."

Where is the famous Orlov diamond now? Probably it is still in Russia, for it has not been sold with the flood of Russian jewels lately coming to this country.

Were it put on the market its appearance would cause as much stir as if the Kon-inoor had been taken from the British crown and offered for sale.

The value of the diamond is so great that it would take practically all the money of Hatton Garden, the home of gems, to pay for it; yet it came to the Russian crown in a way which reads like a page from the Arabian Nights.

The late Tsar of Russia believed that the stone had an evil influence, and gave orders for it to be taken from the Royal regalia; but it was too late. Disaster had already fallen on him—one more disaster in the long succession of tragedies which have marked the life of the Orlov diamond.

The Russian records of this Royal hoodoo diamond were completed just before the final revolution which swept Tsar Nicholas off the throne and landed Russia in a welter of blood and agony from which it has not yet recovered.

Special couriers had been sent over Asia, Turkey, and the Middle East to collect the data connected with the stone. When they returned the famous antiquaries of Russia set to work to link up the stories, the truth of which was beyond question.

Old documents and histories had been ransacked. Ancient shrines and localities had been visited. The temples of Persia and India had been searched for the story of the Orlov diamond. And the Tsar of all the Russians lived long enough to believe that the curse of the stone was still potent.

When Lenin handled it after the Imperial sceptre had been dragged in the dust he turned to his companions and remarked: "Here is the Orlov stone which has brought every owner to tragedy and death. How do I know it may not have the same effect on me?"

Who knows but that the spell of the Orlov diamond is still working in Russia?

In its first known rough state this sinister diamond was the eye of an idol in a temple near Trichinopoly. It had been the eye of the idol for many years, indeed, as long as human records can trace backward. It was stolen from the idol by a Frenchman who was travelling in India. This Frenchman, named Golcoquet, was one of the stragglers after the siege of the city when the French were defeated by British troops.

Golcoquet wandered through the country from town to town, a fugitive. He visited practically every bazaar

in Madras province trying to sell the diamond he had stolen; but merchants distrusted him and were afraid to buy the stone.

Knowing that they would tell the priests of the Hindu faith that he had such a diamond, Golcoquet rushed on, disguising himself as best he could. One day he saw the news of the theft of the diamond from the temple published.

A Hebrew merchant to whom he offered to sell the diamond told him that the theft was known and that the Shah of Persia had warned his police to keep a look-out for the thief.

Golcoquet was almost dying through hardships and despair, and the Hebrew, taking advantage of his state, offered him the equal of a thousand pounds for the stone. The offer, though far below the value, was eagerly accepted by the Frenchman.

A day or two later an order was issued by the Shah to the effect that the thief of the diamond had been traced to Ispahan and he was to be seized, dead or alive, and the diamond procured.

This news so upset the Hebrew merchant who had purchased the stone from the Frenchman that he sold it to an Armenian named Shafra, a dealer in precious stones.

Shafra did not know that this was the wanted stone, and he gave the shrewd Jew £12,000 for it. Then he went out of Persia, wholly unsuspecting, and unsuspecting that he had the great diamond of the Hindu deity in his possession.

Now, Shafra was one of the travelling men of the East who, in those days, made a point of bringing treasures to European Courts, and Shafra had previously brought small trinkets to Catherine the Great, whose Russian Court was the most magnificent that empire ever had.

He decided to go straight to Catherine, but Petrograd (then called St. Petersburg) was a long way off, and, as happened in the case of Golcoquet, he had not gone far on his way when the news of the loss of the stone followed him. This time the stone was described by the Hindus. Shafra knew that his diamond was the stolen one.

He had given a large sum for it. He resolved to take a chance on it, for he knew that if he once reached Russia with it he would have made his fortune. Catherine the Great was always open to buy gems.

But Shafra was very cunning. He realized that if he were caught with the diamond it meant death, whatever his explanations. Where could he hide it? Not in his clothes. It was too big for him to swallow. He dare not keep it in his mouth. So he resolved on a desperate plan. He cut a long deep wound in his leg and put the diamond inside, sewing up the wound with a silver thread!

His wound, however, was just healed when he was arrested as he was approaching the frontier. He was halted before the chief of the district, told that the diamond had been traced to him, that the previous owners had been strangled for their part in its theft and concealment; and he was ordered to give it up.

Shafra was a brave man. He told them that he had never had the diamond, that the things told of him were told to screen the real thieves, that he was merely an Armenian merchant and that all he had in his possession was a handful of money to pay for his food as he travelled.

His story was disbelieved. He was placed in prison, and strong emetics were given him. No diamonds came to light. He was put into a bath of extremely hot water, and both he and his clothes were closely examined.

But his wound had healed and the diamond was not discovered.

Then he was tortured. Still he did not tell; and finally he was released and told to clear out quickly. His money was taken from him, and so were the little goods he had with him. He tramped some way towards Russia, and then sent to his relatives for a little money. When it came he went into Russia in more comfort.

The diamond was taken from Shafra's skin as he stood before Catherine the Great in her court at St. Petersburg. Shafra stated that he wanted 240,000 for the stone. That was the lowest he would take.

"Yet I warn you," he said, "that even as my blood is now staining the marble floor of your palace, so will the blood of those who own this stone stain the Russian soil."

No one paid any attention to his warning. Catherine wanted the diamond, but she had no ready money to buy it. She offered half the amount and the remainder in gifts of land. Shafra refused the offer.

He left Russia with his diamond and went to Amsterdam. There he came into touch with Count Orlov, the famous Russian, who was travelling in Holland at the time. After Orlov had been told the story of how Catherine had liked the stone but could not buy it he asked the price.

In the end Count Orlov, who was fabulously rich, bought it and took it, and Shafra back to Russia, and presented the gem to his Imperial mistress. From that day the diamond has taken the name of the count.

Shafra had made a good bargain with the count. He demanded £70,000 down, an annuity of 2,000 roubles and a patent of nobility. These terms were agreed to. Count Orlov would have sold his soul for Catherine's sake.

The diamond was worth the payment, for experts who have valued it since then give its price at £300,000. Its weight is 185 carats. But within three weeks of buying it Orlov was murdered. Catherine died inside six months.

And Shafra? Well, as soon as the bargain was clinched Shafra decided to stay in Russia. From being a puppet (merchant) he became a gentleman, and changed his name to Lazarev. He bought mines in the Urals and large tracts of St. Petersburg. The ground rents of these latter alone were immense. The unearned increment in a few years made him a millionaire several times over. Then he too was murdered!

When the late Tsar ascended the throne it was a descendant of Shafra who paid his debts and squandered his accounts. When the shadow of the revolution spread over the throne and the Royal Family, it was a descendant of Shafra who was called to the palace to arrange for the flight of the Tsar and his family.

You may find the names of these men in the records of the Ministers of the Interior, and Delavsky, the Minister of Public Instruction, were both descendants of the Armenian trader. "Can you tell me the meaning of this curse which seems to have settled on us?" asked the Tsar.

"It has come," replied Delavsky gravely, "because as my forefather warned Catherine the Great, the Orlov diamond is in your Majesty's sceptre. Wherever that diamond has gone there have gone also death, disaster and tragedy. We too shall share these now. Even Shafra was killed by an assassin because of the wealth which the diamond brought him."

The records were fetched and laid before the Tsar. He discovered that out of thirteen wearers of the stone

only one had died in his bed.

"Who has it now?" he asked some days after he had ordered its removal from the sceptre. The reply came like a blow.

"Rasputin!" It is a matter of history that the monk Rasputin wore the diamond immediately it was taken from the sceptre. He wore it too on the day of his violent death at the hands of the avengers of his victims!

## Irish Republicans

## SEIZE N.Y. FREE STATE OFFICES.

Laurence Ginnell, of Dublin, a former Irish M.P., who is now the legal adviser and chief aide to Eamonn de Valera, arrived unannounced in New York City and proceeded immediately to seize the Irish Free State consulate in the name of the "Irish Republic." Ginnell produced a document purporting to be signed by De Valera, appointing him "envoy of the Irish Republic" to the United States. Ginnell said that after the settlement of the consulate matter he would go to Washington and depose Prof. Timothy A. Smiddy, official representative of the Irish Free State.

Soon after Ginnell had opened the door of the consulate Ginnell and six others walked in. They were followed a few minutes later by Daniel J. McGrath, the vice-consul, who had acted as consul since the retirement of Joseph Connolly several months ago. McGrath, who had sent his resignation to the Dail Eireann and had called at the office to meet his successor, who had not then appeared, told the visitors that they would have to take the matter up with the new consul.

When Lindsay Crawford, the new consul, came in, Ginnell asked McGrath to present the De Valera document to him. Those with Ginnell were Major Michael A. Kelly, secretary of the American Association for Recognition of the Irish Republic; J. J. O'Kelly, J. F. Finerty, of Washington who represents that organization in the proceedings regarding the Irish fund here, and Robert Briscoe, who said he was a member of the "Irish Republican Army." Crawford returned the paper, saying he would recognize neither it nor the bearer of it. Ginnell, followed by the others, went into the room occupied by the consul, and showing the paper toward him on the desk said: "I hereby place into your hands a paper signed by the president of the Irish Republic, and make demand in behalf of the Irish Republic for possession of this office, and I am here to take immediate possession. I request you to give up the keys of this office and to leave this place at once."

"I do not recognize you in any official capacity, and I shall remain here as consul for the Irish Free State," replied Crawford. Ginnell asked if he might take a chair. "I have no objection to that, but I do object to your presence here on such an errand as that you have announced. We are now in the United States where law prevails. If you intend to force your presence here, it must be settled by proceedings at law."

Disclaimed Use of Force. Ginnell protested that he had no idea of using force. Envoy Smiddy who had accompanied Crawford then learned that Ginnell was also preparing to oust him from his job. At the suggestion of Ginnell, he and Smiddy asserted that the consulate here was established by De Valera and his representatives, and that title to it had not passed to any one else. Moreover, he declared, the Government of the Irish Republic had not ceased to function, and the act of taking possession was one merely of resuming a lawful right to the consulate. To this representative Smiddy replied: "The movement since 1918 had as its slogan 'Secretat' or 'Free State,' and when the Irish people signed the treaty the new Government adopted that name. All property and other things identified with the movement for independence went thereafter under the jurisdiction of the Irish Free State."

Ginnell, seemingly very much agitated, told a reporter at the conclusion of the conference that he would make no statement. He said he was very tired from the effects of his hurried trip from Montreal. He went to a hotel. Finerty left for Chicago, but they left behind some half a dozen representatives to retain possession.

"These men are trespassers here," declared Smiddy. "I could call the police and have them ejected, but so long as force is not attempted I will meet the situation peacefully. However, if a like attempt is made to interfere with my office in Washington I shall use more drastic measures. It appears rather mysterious to me that this man should appear here at the moment of the departure of one consul and the appointment of his successor. The whole matter appears to me as a play in the suit here relating to the Irish fund."

While these conferences were in progress Mrs. Muriel MacSweeney, widow of Terence MacSweeney, the late Lord Mayor of Cork, accompanied by Mrs. Gertrude Corless entered and announced that they intended to take part in the siege of the office. Crawford, who came out of his office to go to a restaurant while Smiddy remained on guard, remarked: "I've come to



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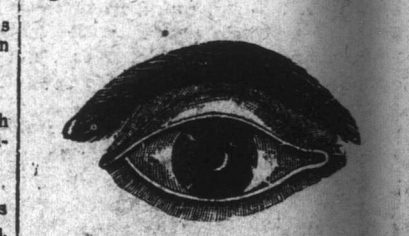


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