

RASPUTIN—DEVIL OR SAINT

by The Princess Radziwill

"Thou canst say this to those who have sent thee to see me. Thou canst tell them that the day will come when there will be no one worth anything in our holy Russia except our Tzar and Gricha, the servant of God."—Rasputin to the Princess Radziwill.

Rasputin Did Not Impress the Princess Radziwill When She Interviewed Him—She Found Cunning in His Eyes and an Unusual Amount of Dirt Beneath His Immense, Uncut Fingernails—His Clothes Were of Excellent Material, but Filthy

CHAPTER IV (Continued)

AFTER having beckoned to me to sit down, Rasputin poured out some tea in a glass and proceeded to drink it, sipping the beverage slowly out of the saucer into which he poured it out of the glass which he had just filled. Suddenly he pushed the same saucer toward me with the word:

"Drink."

As I did not in the least feel inclined to take his remains, I declined the tempting offer, which made him draw together his black and bushy eyebrows with the remark:

"Better persons than thou art have drunk out of this saucer, but if thou wantest to make a fuss it is no concern of mine."

And then he called out, "Awdotia! Awdotia!" The elderly woman who had opened the door for me hastened to come into the room.

"There," said Rasputin, "this person"—pointing toward me with his forefinger—"this person refuses to drink out of the cup of life; take it thou instead."

The woman instantly dropped on her knees and Rasputin proceeded to open her mouth with his fingers and pour down her throat the tea which I had disdained. She then prostrated herself on the ground before him and reverently kissed his feet, remaining in this attitude until he pushed her aside with his heavy boot and said, "There, now thou canst go."

Then he turned to me once more. "Great ladies, some of the greatest in the land, are but too happy to do as this woman has done," he said dryly. "Remember that, daughter."

Then he proceeded at once with the question, "Thou hast wished to see me. What can I do for thee? I am but a poor and humble man, the servant of the Lord, but sometimes it has been my fate to do some good for others. What dost thou require of me?"

Bearding the Lion in His Den

I proceeded to explain that I wanted nothing in the matter of worldly goods, but asked this singular personage to be kind enough to tell me for the paper which I represented whether it was true that but for him Russia would have declared war upon Austria the year before.

"Who has told you such a thing?" he inquired.

"It is a common saying in St. Petersburg," I replied, "and some people say that you have been right in doing so."

"Right? Of course, I was right," he answered with considerable irritation. "All these silly people who surround our Czar would like to see him commit stupidities. They only think about themselves and about the profits which they can make. War is a crime, a great crime, the greatest which a nation can commit, and those who declare war are criminals. I only spoke the truth when I told our Czar that he would be ruined if he allowed himself to be persuaded to go to war. This country is not ready for it. Beside, God forbids war, and if Russia went to war the greatest misfortunes would fall upon her. I only spoke the truth; I always speak the truth, and people believe me."

"But," I remarked, "no one can understand how it is that your opinion always prevails in such grave matters. People think that you must have some strange power over men to make them do what you like."

"And what if I have," he exclaimed angrily. "They are, all of them, pigs—all these people who want to discuss me or my doings. I am but a poor peasant, but God has spoken to me and He has allowed me to know what it is that He wishes. I can speak with our Czar. I am not afraid to do so, as they all are. And he knows that he ought to listen to me, else all kind of evil things would befall him. I could crush them in my hand as I do this piece of bread," and while he was speaking he seized a biscuit out of a plate on the table and reduced it to crumbs. "They have tried to send me away, but they will never get rid of me, because God is with me and Gricha shall outlive them all. I have seen too much and I know too much. They are obligated to do what I like, and what I like is for the good of Russia. As for these Ministers and generals and all these big functionaries whom every one fears in this capital, I do not trouble about them. I can send them all away if I like. The spirit of God is in me and will protect me."

"Thou canst say this to those who have sent thee to see me. Thou canst tell them that the day will come when there



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will be no one worth anything in our holy Russia except our Czar and Gricha, the servant of God. Yes, thou canst tell them so, and be sure that thou dost it."

I protested that I should consider this my first duty, but at the same time begged "the servant of God," as he called himself, to explain to me by what means he had acquired the influence which he possessed.

"By telling the truth to people about themselves," he quickly replied.

"Thou dost not know what women are, and how they like to be handled. Wait and thou shalt see something. Awdotia," he called, "Is Marie Iwanowna here?" he asked, when she came in response to his call. "Yes, since three hours," was the reply. "Call her here."

A young woman of about twenty-five years of age appeared. She was very well dressed in rich furs, and ran up to Rasputin, kneeling before him, and kissing with fervor his dirty hands.

"How long hast thou been here?" he asked.

"About three hours, Batiouchka," she answered.

"This is well, thou art to remain here until midnight, and neither to eat or to drink all that time, thou hearest?"

"Yes, Batiouchka," was the reply, uttered in timid, frightened tones.

"Now go into the next room, kneel down before the Ikon, and wait for me without moving. Thou must not move until I come."

She kissed his hands once more, prostrated herself on the floor before him three times in succession, and then retired with the look of being in a kind of trance during which she could neither know nor understand what was happening to her.

"If thou carest, thou canst follow her, and see whether she obeys me or not," said Rasputin in his usual dry tone.

I declined the invitation, protesting that I had never doubted but that the "Prophet" would be obeyed, adding, however, that though I had understood he could control the fancies and imagination of women gifted with an exalted temperament, yet I was not convinced that his influence could be exerted over unemotional men, and that this was the one point which interested my friends.

"Thou must not be curious," shouted Rasputin. "I am not here to tell thee the reasons for what I choose to do. It should suffice thee to know that I would at once return to Pokrowskoie if ever I thought my services were useless to my country. Russia is governed by fools. Yes, they are all of them fools, these pigs and children of pigs," he repeated with insistence. "But I am not a fool. I know what I want, and if I try to save my country, who can blame me for it?"

Rasputin's Influence Over Ministers

"But Gregory Efimitch," I insisted, "can you not tell me at least whether it is true that some Ministers do all that you tell them?"

"Of course, they do," he replied angrily. "They know very well their chairs would not hold them long if they didn't. Thou shalt yet see some surprises before thou diest, daughter," he concluded with a certain melancholy in his accents.

Awdotia entered the room again.

"Gregory Efimitch," she said, "there is Father John of Ladoga waiting for you."

"Ah! I had forgotten him." Then he turned toward me.

"Listen again," he said; "this is a parish priest, very poor, who is seeking to be transferred into another parish somewhere in the south. Awdotia, call on the telephone the secretary of the Synod and tell him that I am very much surprised to hear that Father John has not yet been appointed to another parish. Tell him this must be done at once, and he must have a good one. I require an immediate answer."

The obedient Awdotia went out again, and we could hear her once more talk on the telephone. "The secretary of the Synod presents his humble compliments to you, Batiouchka," she said when she returned.

"Who cares for his compliments?" interrupted Rasputin. "Will the man have his parish or not? This is all that I want to know."

"The order for his transfer will be presented for the Minister's signature tomorrow," said Awdotia.

"This is right," sighed Rasputin with relief. And then turning to me:

"Art thou satisfied?" he asked, "and hast thou seen enough to tell to thy friends?"

I declared myself entirely satisfied.

"Then go," said Rasputin. "I am busy and cannot talk to thee any longer. I have so much to do. Everybody comes to me for something, and people seem to think that I am here to get them what they need or require. They believe in Gricha, these poor people, and he likes to help them. But as for the question of war, this is all nonsense. We shall not have war, and if we have, then I shall take good care it will not be for long."

He dismissed me with a nod of his head, and his face assumed quite a shocked look when he found that I was retiring without seeming to notice the hand which he was awkwardly stretching out to me. But I knew that he expected people, as a matter of course, to kiss his dirty fingers, and as I was not at all inclined to do so, I made as if I did not notice his gesture. As I was passing into the next room, I could perceive through a half open door leading into another apartment the young lady whom Rasputin had called Marie Iwanowna. She was prostrated before a sacred image hanging in a corner, with a lamp burning in front of it, with her eyes fixed on Heaven, and quite an illuminated expression on her otherwise plain features. St. Theresa might have looked like that. But seen in the light of our incredulous Twentieth Century, she appeared a worthy subject for Charcot, or some such eminent nervous doctor, and her place ought to have been the hospital of "La Salpetriere" rather than the den of the modern Cagliostro, who was making ducks and drakes out of the mighty Russian Empire.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

RAINBOW'S END

By REX BEACH
Author of "The Spoilers," "The Barrier," "Heart of the Sunset"

A novel of love, hidden treasure and rebellion in beautiful, mysterious Cuba during the exciting days of the revolt against Spain.

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THE STORY THIS FAR
DON ESTEBAN VARONA, one of the wealthiest planters in Cuba, has hoarded the jewels and gold scattered through the hands of slaves and the profits derived from his extensive sugar plantations in a secret chamber at the bottom of a well. Rumors of his treasure have spread throughout the land, and after the death of his first wife, the wily, scheming Isabel begins the search for the hidden treasure.

SEBASTIAN, Esteban's most trusted slave, is the only one to share the secret of the hoarded wealth, and Isabel vainly tries to get information from the black. She even craves to see Sebastian by suggesting that Esteban sell the slave's daughter, Evangelina, until one night, after he has become drunk in attempting to escape his wife's noose, he places Evangelina as the stake in a game and loses.

ROSA and ESTEBAN, the children of the distressed planter and his first wife, leave their beds and rooms in the room before their father to see that Evangelina, their nurse, is retained.

CHAPTER II—Continued
DON PABLO shook with laughter. "So! she belongs to you, eh? And I'm to be robbed of my winnings. Very well, then come and give me a kiss, both of you, and I'll see what can be done."

But the children saw that Don Pablo's face was strangely flushed, that his eyes were wild and his magnificent beard was wet with wine; therefore, they hung back.

"You won your bet fairly," Esteban growled at him. "Fay no heed to these babies."

"Evangelina is ours," the little ones bravely repeated.

Then their father exploded: "The devil! Am I dreaming? Where have you learned to oppose me? Back to your beds, both of you." Seeing them hesitate, he shouted for his wife. "Ho, there! Isabel, my love! Come put these impers to rest. Or must I teach them manners with my palm? A fine thing, truly! Are they to be allowed to roam the house at will and get a fever?"

Mere mention of their stepmother's name was enough for Rosa and Esteban; they scuttled away as fast as they could go, and when Dona Isabel came to their rooms a few moments later she found them in their beds, with their eyes dimly gleaming about. Evangelina was waiting in a corner. Isabel had overheard the wager and her soul was wildly

alight; she jerked the slave girl to her feet and, with a blow of her palm, sent her to her quarters. Then she turned her attention to the twins. When she left them they were weeping silently, both for themselves and for Evangelina, whom they dearly loved.

Meanwhile Don Mario had resumed his singing.

Day was breaking when Esteban Varona bade his guests good-by at the door of his house. As he stood there Sebastian came to him out of the mists of the dawn. The old man had been waiting for hours. He was half crazed with apprehension, and now cast himself prone before his master, begging for Evangelina.

Don Pablo, in whom the liquor was dying, cursed impatiently: "Carambol! Have I won the treasure of your whole establishment?" he inquired. "Perhaps you value this wench at more than a thousand pesos; if so, you will say that I cheated you."

"No! She's only an ordinary girl. My wife doesn't like her, and so I determined to get rid of her. She is yours, fairly enough," Varona told him.

"Then send her to my house. I'll breed her to Salvador, my cocher. He's the strongest man I have."

Sebastian uttered a strangled cry and rose to his feet. "Master! You must not—"

"Silence!" ordered Esteban. Wine never agreed with him, and this morning its effects, combined with his losses at gambling, had put him in a nasty temper. "Go about your business. What do you mean by this, anyhow?" he shouted.

But Sebastian, dazed of mind and sick of soul, went on, unheeding. "She is my girl. You promised me her freedom. I warn you—"

"Eh?" The planter swayed forward and with blazing eyes surveyed his slave. Esteban knew that he had done a foul thing in raking the girl upon the turn of a card, and an inner voice warned him that he would repent his action when he became sober, but in his present mood this very knowledge enraged him. "The more you warn me? Of what?" he growled.

At this moment neither master nor man knew exactly what he said or did. Sebastian raised his hands on high. In reality the gesture was meant to call heaven as a witness to his years of faithful service, but, misconstruing his intent, Pablo Peza brought his riding whip down across the old man's back, crying:

"Ho! None of that!"

A shudder ran through Sebastian's frame. Whirling, he seized Don Pablo's wrist and tore the whip from his fingers. Although the Spaniard was a strong man, he uttered a cry of pain.

At this indignity to a guest Esteban flew into a fury. "Pancho!" he cried. "Ho! Pancho!" When the manager came running, Esteban explained: "This fool is dangerous. He raised his hand to me and to Don Pablo."

Sebastian's protests were drowned by the angry voices of the others.

"Tie him to yonder grating," directed Esteban, who was still in the grip of a senseless rage. "Flog him well and make haste about it."

Sebastian, who had no time in which to recover himself, made but a weak resistance when Pancho Cueto locked his wrists into a pair of clumsy, old-fashioned manacles, first passing the chain around one of the bars of the iron window grating which Esteban had indicated. Sebastian felt that his whole world was tumbling about his ears. He thought he must be dreaming.

Cueto swung a heavy lash; the sound of his blows echoed through the quinta, and they summoned, among others, Dona Isabel, who watched the scene from behind her shutter with much satisfaction. The guests looked on approvingly.

Sebastian made no outcry. The face he turned to his master, however, was puckered with reproach and bewilderment. The whip bit deep; it drew blood and raised welts the thickness of one's thumb; nevertheless, for the first few moments, the victim suffered less in body than in spirit. His brain was so numbed, so shocked with other excitations, that he was well-nigh insensible to physical pain. That Evangelina, flesh of his flesh, had been sold, that his lifelong faithful slave had brought such reward as this that



"Then tell me—is there really a treasure, or—?" Isabel gasped. She choked; she could scarcely force the question for fear of disappointment.

Esteban, light of his soul, had turned against him—all this was simply astounding. More, his simple mind could not compass for the moment. Gradually, however, he began to resent the shrieking injustice of it all, and unsuspected forces gathered inside of him. They grew until his frame was shaken by primitive savage impulses.

After a time Don Esteban cried: "That will do, Cueto! Leave him now for the flies to punish. They will remind him of his insolence."

Then the guests departed, and Esteban staggered into the house and went to bed.

All that morning Sebastian stood with his hands chained high over his head. The sun grew hotter and ever hotter upon his isolated back; the blood dried and clotted there; a cloud of flies gathered

swarming over the raw gashes left by Cueto's whip.

Before leaving for Don Pablo's quinta, Evangelina came to bid her father an agonized farewell, and for a long time after she had gone the old man stood motionless, senseless, scarcely breathing. Nor did the other slaves venture to approach him to offer sympathy or succor. They passed with heads averted and with fear in their hearts.

Since Don Esteban's nerves, or perhaps it was his conscience, did not permit him to sleep, he arose about noontime and dressed himself. He was still drunk, and the mad rags of the early morning still possessed him; therefore, when he mounted his horse he pretended not to see the figure chained in the window

grating. Sebastian's affection for his master was doglike and he had taken his punishment as a dog takes his, more in surprise than in anger, but at this proof of callous indifference a fire kindled in the old fellow's breast, hotter by far than the fever from his fly-blown sores. He was thirsty, too, but that was the least of his sufferings.

Some time during the afternoon the negro heard himself addressed through the window against the bars of which he leaned. The speaker was Dona Isabel. She had waited patiently until she knew he must be faint from exhaustion, and then she had led herself into the room behind the grating, whence she could talk to him without fear of observation.

"Do you suffer, Sebastian?" she began in a tone of gentleness and pity.

"Yes, mistress." The speaker's tongue was thick and swollen.

"La! La! What a crime! And you the most faithful slave in all Cuba!"

"Yes, mistress."

"Can I help you?"

The negro raised his head; he shook his body to rid himself of the insects which were devouring him.

"Give me a drink of water," he said hoarsely.

"Surely, a great goodfellow, all cool and dripping from the well. But first I want you to tell me something. Come now, let us have an understanding with each other."

"A drink, for the love of Christ," panted the old man, and Dona Isabel saw how cracked and dry were his thick lips, how near the torture had come to prostrating him.

"I'll do more," she promised, and her voice was like honey. "I'll tell Pancho Cueto to unlock you, even if I risk Esteban's anger by so doing. I have suffered too much, my good fellow. Indeed you have. Well, I can help you now and in the future, or—I can make your life just such a misery as it has been today. Will you be my friend? Will you tell me something?" She was close to the window; her black eyes were gleaming; her face was ablaze with greed.

"What can I tell you?"

"Oh, you know very well! I've asked it often enough, but you have lied. Just as my husband has lied to me. He is a miser; he has no heart; he cares for nobody, as you can see. You must hate him now, even as I hate him." There was a silence, during which Dona Isabel tortured face in the sunlight. "Do you?"

"Perhaps."

"Then tell me—is there really a treasure, or—?" The woman gasped; she choked; she could scarcely force the question for fear of disappointment. "Tell me there is, Sebastian." She clutched the bars and shook them. "I've heard so many lies that I begin to doubt."

The old man nodded. "Oh, yes, there is a treasure," said he.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)