

RASPUTIN—DEVIL OR SAINT by The Princess Radziwill

"Russia is essentially the land where imperial favorites play a role, and soon the whole country was not only respecting Rasputin, but was trying to make up to him and to obtain, through him, all kinds of favors and material advantages."

Although the Princess Radziwill Gained an In-ling into the Extent of Rasputin's Power as a Result of Her Interview With Him, She Was Still Unable to Account for the Reason of His Sway Over Men and Women of Undeniably Strong Character

The Group of Men Led by Witte and Rasputin Represented Those Forces in Russia Who Were Working to Line Their Own Pockets, and They Had No Objections if in Order to Do This They Would Have to Align Themselves With the German Government

CHAPTER IV—Continued

AS I was going down the stairs I met an old man slowly climbing them, with a little girl whom he was half carrying, half dragging along with him. He stopped me with the question:

"Do you happen to know whether the blessed Gregory receives visitors?"

I replied that the "prophet" was at home, but that I could not say whether he would receive any one or not.

"It is for this innocent I want to see him," moaned the man. "She is so ill and no doctor can cure her. If only the blessed Gregory would pray over her, I know that she would be well at once. Do you think that he will do so, Barinia?" the man added anxiously.

"I am sure he will," I replied, more because I did not know what to say rather than from the conviction that Rasputin would receive this new visitor. I saw the old creature continue his ascent up the staircase, and the whole time he was repeating to the child, "You shall get well, quite well, Mania; the Blessed One shall make you quite well."

Visitors for the "Blessed Gregory"

On the last steps before the stairs ended on the landing two men were busy talking. They were both typical Israelites, with hooked nose and crooked fingers. They were discussing most energetically some subject which evidently was absorbing their attention to an uncommon degree, and discussing it in German, too.

"You are quite sure that we can offer him 20 per cent?" one was saying.

"Quite sure, the concession is worth a million; the whole thing is to obtain it before the others come on the scene."

"Who are the others?" asked the first of the two men.

"The Russo-Asiatic Bank," replied the second. "You see the whole matter lies in the rapidity with which the thing is made. The only one who can persuade the minister to sign the paper is the old man upstairs," and he pointed toward Rasputin's apartment. Thereupon the two in their turn started to mount the steps.

My first interview with Rasputin, all the details of which I wrote down in my diary when I got home, gave me some inkling as to the different intrigues which were going on around this remark-



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able personage. It failed, however, to make me understand by what means he had managed to acquire, if he really acquired, a fact of which I still doubted, the strong influence which he liked to give the impression he exercised. It was quite possible that he had contrived through the magnetic gifts with which he was endowed to subdue to his will the hysterical women, whose bigotry and mystical tendencies he had excited to the highest pitch possible. But how could he, a common peasant, without any education, knowledge of the world or of mankind, have imbued ministers and statesmen with such a dread that they found themselves ready to do anything at his bidding and to dispense favors, graces and lucrative appointments to the people whom he called to their attention. There was evidently something absolutely abnormal in the whole thing, and it was the reason for this abnormality that I began to seek.

This search did not prove easy at first, but in time, by talking with persons who saw a lot of Rasputin and of the motley crew which surrounded him, I contrived to form some opinion as to the cause of his success. It seemed to me that he was the tool of a strong though small party or group of men, desirous of using him as a means to attain their own ends. There is nothing easier in the world than to make or to mar a reputation, and it is sufficient to say everywhere that a person is able to do this or that thing, to instill into the mind of the public at large the conviction that such is the case. This was precisely what occurred with Rasputin.

Count Witte, who was one of the cleverest political men in his generation and perhaps the only real statesman that Russia has known in the last twenty-five years, ever since his downfall had been sighing for the day when he should be recalled to power. He knew very well all that was going on in the imperial family, and it was easier for him than for any one else to resort to the right means to introduce an outsider into that very closed circle which surrounded the Czar. So long as he had been a minister and had under his control the public exchequer it had been relatively easy for him to obtain friends, or rather tools, that had helped him in his plans and ambitions. When this faculty for persuasion failed him he bethought himself to look elsewhere for an instrument through

which he might still achieve the ends he had in mind. He was not the kind of man who stopped before any moral consideration. For him every means was good, provided it would prove effective. When he saw that certain ladies in the entourage of the sovereigns had become imbued with the Rasputin mania, he was quick to decide that this craze might, if properly managed, prove of infinite value to him. He therefore not only encouraged it so far as was in his power by pretending himself to be impressed by the prophetic powers of the "Blessed Gregory," but he also contrived very cleverly to let the fact of the extraordinary ascendancy which Rasputin was rapidly acquiring over the minds of powerful and influential persons become known. Very soon everybody talked of the latter-day saint who had suddenly appeared on the horizon of the social life of St. Petersburg, and the fame of his reputation spread abroad like the flames of some great conflagration.

Russia is essentially the land where imperial favorites play a role, and soon the whole country was not only respecting Rasputin, but was trying to make up to him and to obtain, through him, all kinds of favors and material advantages. Together with Count Witte a whole political party was working, without the least consideration for the prestige of the dynasty which it was discreditting, to show up the rulers as associated with the common adventurer and sectarian, who, under other conditions, would undoubtedly have

found himself prosecuted by the police authorities for his conduct. They had other thoughts in their heads than the interests of the dynasty, these money-seeking, money-grubbing, ambitious men. They represented nothing beyond the desire to become powerful and wealthy. What they wanted was important posts which would give them the opportunity to indulge in various speculations and more or less fraudulent business undertakings they contemplated.

Rasputin and the German Government

Russia at the time was beginning to be seized with that frenzy for stock-exchange transactions, share buying and selling, railway concessions and mining enterprises which reached its culminating point before the beginning of the war. Men without any social standing, and with more than shady pasts, were coming forward and acquiring the reputation of being lucky speculators capable in case of necessity of developing into clever statesmen. These men began to seek their inspirations in Berlin, and through the numerous German spies with which St. Petersburg abounded they entered into relations with the German Intelligence Department, whose interests they made their own, because they believed that a war might put an end to the industrial development of the country, and thus interfere with their various speculations. The French alliance was beginning to bore those who had got out of it all that they had ever wanted; it was time something new should crop up, and the German and Russian Jews, in whose hands the whole industry and commerce of the Russian Empire lay concentrated, began to preach the necessity of an understanding with the great state whose nearest neighbor it was. A rapprochement between the Hohenzollerns and the Romanoffs began to be spoken of openly as a political necessity, and it was then that, thanks to a whole series of intrigues, the Czar was induced to go himself to Berlin to attend the nuptials of the only daughter of the Kaiser, the Princess Victoria Louise of Prussia, with the future Duke of Brunswick.

This momentous journey to Berlin was undertaken partly on account of the representations of Rasputin to the Empress, whose love for peace was very well known. Europe had just gone through the anxiety caused by the Balkan crisis, and it was repeated everywhere in St. Petersburg that a demonstration of some kind had to be made in favor of peace in general and also to prove to the world that the great Powers were determined not to allow quarrels in Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece to trouble the security of the world. The marriage festivities of which Berlin became the theatre at the time seemed a fit opportunity for this demonstration. The bureaucratic circles in the Russian capital and the influence of Rasputin were used to bring about this trip of the Czar.

Rasputin was thus fast becoming a personage, simply because it suited certain people—the pro-German party, to use the right word at last—to represent him as being important. They pushed things so far that many Ministers and persons in high places refused on purpose certain things which were asked of them and which were absolutely easy for them to perform simply because they wished Rasputin to ask for them for those who were weary of always meeting with a non possumus in questions for which they required the help of the Administration.

Rasputin's various intermediaries, through whom one had to pass before one could approach him, sold their help for more or less large sums of money, and thus began a period of vulgar agitation, to use the French expression, of which Russia was the stage, and Rasputin, together with the men who used him, the moving spirits. I very nearly said the evil spirits. But of this, more later on.

(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.

CHAPTER II (Continued)

"GOD! You have seen it?" Isabel was trembling as if with an ague. "What is it like? How much is there? Good Sebastian, I'll give you water; I'll have you set free if you tell me." "How much? I don't know. But there is much—pieces of Spanish gold, silver coins in casks and in little boxes—the boxes are bound with iron and have hasps and staples; bars of precious metal and little paper packages of gems, all tied up and hidden in leather bags." Sebastian could hear his listener panting; her bloodless fingers were wrapped tightly around the bars above his head. "Yes! Go on." "There are ornaments, too. God knows they must have come from heaven, they are so beautiful; and pearls from the Caribbean as large as plums."

"Are you speaking the truth?" "Every peso, every bar, every knick-knack I have handled with my own hands. Did I not make the hiding place all alone? Senora, everything is there just as I tell you—and more. The grunts of title from the Crown for this and the sugar plantations, they are there, too. Don Esteban used to fear the Government officials, so he hid his papers securely. Without them the lands belong to no one. You understand?"

"Of course! Yes, yes! But the jewels—God! where are they hidden?" "You would never guess!" Sebastian's voice gathered strength. "Ten thousand men in ten thousand years would never find the place, and nobody knows the secret but Don Esteban and me."

"I believe you. I knew all the time it was here. Well? Where is it?" Sebastian hesitated and said piteously, "I am dying—"

greatest treasure in all Cuba, but you shall never know where it is. I'll see to that. It was you who sold my girl; it was you who brought me to this; it was your hand that whipped me. Well, I'll tell Don Esteban how you tried to bribe his secret from me! What do you think he'll do then? Eh? You'll feel the lash on your white back—"

"You fool!" Dona Isabel looked murder. "I'll punish you for this; I'll make you speak if I have to rub your wounds with salt."

Sebastian's Curse But Sebastian closed his eyes wearily. "You can't make me suffer more than I have suffered," he said. "And now— I curse you. May that treasure be the death of you. May you live in torture like mine the rest of your days; may your beauty turn to ugliness such that men will spit at you; may you never know peace again until you die in poverty and want—"

As the sun was sinking beyond the farther rim of the Yumuri and the valley was beginning to fill with shadows, Esteban Varona rode up the hill. His temper was more evil than ever, if that were possible, for he had drunk again in an effort to drown the memory of his earlier actions. With him rode half a dozen or more of his friends, coming to dine and put in another night at his expense. There were Pablo Peza and Mario de Castano once more; Colonel Mendoza y Linares, old Pedro Miron, the advocate, and others of less consequence, whom Esteban had gathered from the Spanish Club. The host dismounted and lurching across the courtyard to Sebastian.

"So, my fine fellow," he began. "Have you had enough of rebellion by this time?" "Why did you have him flogged?" the advocate inquired. Esteban explained briefly, "He dared to raise his hand in anger against one of my guests."

the house of Salvador, Don Pablo's co-chero, where she belongs. I've warned him that he will have to tame her unruly spirit, as I have tamed yours." Sebastian had hung sick and limp against the grating, but at these words he suddenly roused. It was as if a current of electricity had galvanized him. He strained at his manacles and the bars groaned under his weight. His eyes began to roll, his lips drew back over his blue gums. Noting his expression of ferocity, Esteban cut at his naked back with the riding whip, crying:

"Ho! Not subdued yet, eh? You need another flogging!" "Curse you and all that is yours," roared the maddened slave. "May you know the misery you have put upon me. May you rot for a million years in hell. The whip was rising and falling now, for Esteban had lost what little self-control the liquor had left to him. "May your children's bodies grow filthy with disease; may they starve; may they—"

Sebastian was yelling, though his voice was hoarse with pain. The lash drew blood with every blow. Meanwhile, he wrenched and tugged at his bonds with the fury of a maniac.

"Pablo! Your machete, quick!" panted the slave owner. "God's blood! I'll make an end of this black fiend, once for all."

Vengeance Esteban Varona's guests had looked on at the scene with the same mild interest they would display at the whipping of a balky horse; and, now that the animal threatened to become dangerous, it was in their view quite the proper thing to put it out of the way. Don Pablo Peza stepped toward his mare to draw the machete from its scabbard. But he did not hand it to his friend. He heard a shout, and turned in time to see a wonderful and a terrible thing. Sebastian had braced his naked feet against the wall; he had bowed his back and bent his massive shoulders—a back and a pair of shoulders that looked as bony and muscular as those of an ox—and he was heaving with every ounce of strength in his enormous body. As Pablo stared he saw the heavy grating come away from its anchorage in the solid masonry, as a shrub is uprooted from soft ground. The rods bent and twisted; there was a clank and rattle and clash of metal upon the flags and then—Sebastian turned upon his tormentor, a free man, save only for the wide iron bracelets and their connecting chain. He was quite insane. His face was frightful to behold; it was apellike in its animal rage, and he towered above his master like some fabled creature out of the African jungle of his forefathers.

chete, but Sebastian met him before the blow could descend, and they went down together upon the hard stones. Again Sebastian smote, with his massive hands wrapped in the chain and his wrists incased in steel, and this time it was as if Don Pablo's head had been caught between a hammer and an anvil. The negro's strength, exceptional at all times, was multiplied tenfold; he had run amuck. When he arose the machete was in his grasp and Don Pablo's brains were on his knuckles.

It all happened in far less time than it takes to tell. The onlookers had not yet recovered from their first consterna-



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tion; in fact, they were still fumbling and tugging at whatever weapons they carried when Sebastian came toward them, brandishing the blade on high. Pedro Miron, the advocate, was the third to fall. He tried to scramble out of the negro's path, but, being an old man, his limbs were too stiff to serve him, and he went down shrieking. By now the horses had caught the scent of hot blood and were plunging furiously, the clatter of their hoofs mingling with the blasphemous of the riders, while Sebastian's bestial roaring made the commotion even more hideous.

Esteban's guests fought as much for their lives as for vengeance upon the slayer, for Sebastian was like a gorilla; he seemed intent upon killing them all.

He vented his fury upon whatever came within his reach; he struck at men and animals alike, and the shrieks of wounded horses added to the din.

It was a frightful combat. It seemed incredible that one man could work such dreadful havoc in so short a time. Varona and two of his friends were dead; two more were badly wounded, and a Peruvian stallion lay kicking on the flagging when Colonel Mendoza y Linares finally managed to get a bullet home in the black man's brain.

Those who came running to learn the cause of the hubbub turned away sick and pallid, for the paved yard was a

land were hidden with the rest, where 10,000 men in 10,000 years could never find them. Impressed by her manifestations of grief, Esteban's friends reasoned that the widow must have loved her husband dearly. They told one another they had wronged her.

CHAPTER III "THE O'REILLY"

AGE and easy living caused Don Mario de Castano, the sugar merchant, to take on weight. He had, in truth, become so fat that he waddled like a penguin when he walked; and when he rode, the

Now, with a person of Don Mario's importance, to decide for himself is to decide for others, and inasmuch as he knew that Dona Isabel, Rosa's stepmother, was notoriously mercenary and had not done at all well since her husband's death, it did not occur to him to doubt that his suit would prosper. It was, in fact, to make terms with her that he rode forth in the heat of this particular afternoon.

Notwithstanding the rivulets of perspiration that were coursing down every fold of his flesh, and regardless of the fact that the body of his Victoria was tipped at a drunken angle, as if struggling to escape the burdens of his great weight, Don Mario felt a jauntiness of body and of spirit almost like that of youth. He saw himself as a splendid prince riding toward the humble home of some obscure maiden whom he had graciously chosen to be his mate.

His arrival threw Dona Isabel into a flutter; the woman could scarcely contain her curiosity when she came to meet him, for he was not the sort of man to inconvenience himself by mere social visits. Their first formal greetings over, Don Mario surveyed the bare living room and remarked lugubriously:

"I see many changes here." "No doubt," the widow agreed. "Times have been hard since poor Esteban's death." "What a terrible calamity that was! I shudder when I think of it," said he. "I was his guest on the night previous, you remember? In fact, I witnessed his wager of the negro girl, Evangelina—the root of the whole tragedy. Well, well! Who would have believed that old slave, her father, would have run mad at losing her? A shocking affair, truly, and one I shall never get out of my mind."

"Shocking, yes. But what do you think of a rich man, like Esteban, who would leave his family destitute? Who would die without revealing the place where he had stored his treasure?"

Dona Isabel, it was plain, felt her wrongs keenly; she spoke with as much spirit as if her husband had permitted himself to be killed purely out of spite toward her. De Castano shook his round bullet head, saying with some impatience: "You still believe in that treasure, eh? My dear senora, the only treasure Varona left was his adorable children—and your admirable self." Immediately the speaker regretted his words, for he remembered, too late, that Dona Isabel was reputed to be a trifle unbalanced on this subject of the Varona treasure.

"I do not believe, I know!" the widow answered, with more than necessary vehemence. "What became of all Esteban's money if he did not bury it? He never gave any to me, for he was a miser. You know, as well as I, that he carried on a stupendous business in slaves and sugar; and it was common knowledge that he hid every peso he fear of his enemies. But where? Where? That is the question."

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)