

By Sidney Smith

THE VAGRANT DUKE

By GEORGE GIBBS

Author of "The Splendid Outcast," "The Yellow Dove," "The Secret Witness," Etc.

THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Peter Nicholavitch, Russian Grand Duke, cousin of the Czar, boards the British refugee ship, Phrygia, and there meets Prince Galtzin, a former courtier and diplomat.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

THERE is no Holy Russia, my friend, until she is born again. Russia is worse than traitor, worse than liar, worse than murderer and thief. She is a fool.

"All will come right in time. We go to England to wait."

"I have other plans."

"Then you will not join us? Prince Anastasie, my daughter, is here. General Semionoff."

"It is useless. I have made up my mind. Leave me, if you please."

Prince Galtzin disappeared quickly below to spread the information of his discovery among the disconsolate refugees, and it was not long before it was known from one end of the Phrygia to the other that the fellow who called himself Peter Nichols was none other than the Grand Duke Peter Nicholavitch, a cousin to his late Majesty Nicholas and a Prince of the royal blood. Peter Nichols sought the Captain in his cabin, putting the whole case before him.

"H-m," chuckled the Captain, "found ye out, did they? There's only a few of you left, that's why. Better stay 'ere in my cabin until we reach Constantinople. I'd be honored, 'Ighness, to say nothin' of savin' you a bit of bother."

"You're very kind."

"Not at all. Make yourself at 'ome. There's cigarettes on the locker and a nip of the Scotch to keep the chill out. Here's a light. You've been worryin' me some, 'Ighness. Fact is I didn't know just how big a bug you were until today, when I asked some questions. You'll forgive me, 'Ighness?"

"I take it that you don't want anybody ashore to know you're here?"

"Exactly. Most of these refugees are going to England. I have reasons for not wishing to go with them."

"Where, then, do you propose to go?"

"To the United States," said the Grand Duke eagerly.

"Without money?"

"I'd have no money if I went to England unless I subsidized on the charity of my friends. My branch of the family is not rich. The war has made us poorer. Such securities as I have are in a vault in Kiev. It would be suicide for me to attempt to reclaim them now. I'm going to try to make my own way."

"Impossible!"

The Grand Duke laughed at the Englishman's expression.

"Why?"

"Ye hands, 'Ighness."

The Grand Duke shrugged and grinned.

"I'll risk it. I'm not without resources. Will you help me to a ship sailing for America?"

"Ye—but—"

"Oh, I'll work my passage over—it nobody bothers me."

"By George, I like your grit. Give me your hand, sir. I'll do what I can. If the Bermudian hasn't sailed from the Horn yet I think I can manage it for ye."

"And keep me clear of the rest of your passengers?" added his 'Ighness.

"Right-o. They'll go on the Semaphore. You stay right 'ere and munn' the word." And Captain Blashford went out on deck, leaving Peter Nichols to his cigarette and his meditations.

Many times had the Grand Duke Peter given thanks that the hood of his father's blood, strongly in his veins. He was more British than Russian and he could remember things that had happened since he had grown to adolescence which had made the half of him that was English revolt against the Russian system. It was perhaps his musical education rather than his university training or his travels in England and France that had turned him to the intelligent. In the vast republic of art and letters he had imbibed the philosophy that was to threaten the very existence of his own clan. The spread of the revolution had not dismayed him, for he believed that in time the pendulum would swing back and bring a constitutional government to Russia. But in the weeks of struggle, of blood and passion a new Peter Nicholavitch was born.

The failure of his plans in the sudden flood of anarchy which had swept over Russia, the misery of those he had thought faithful and the attempt upon his life had changed his viewpoint. It takes a truly noble spirit to wish to kiss the finger that has pulled the trigger of a revolver, the bullet from which has gone through one's hat.

From disappointment and dismay Peter Nicholavitch had turned to anger. They had played the game with him. It wasn't cricket. His resolution to sail for the United States was decided. To throw himself, an object of charity, upon the mercy of the Earl of Sutherland, his mother's cousin, was not to be thought of.

Only the United States, whose form of government more nearly approached the ideal he had for Russia, could offer him the opportunities to discover whether or not a prince could not also be a man.

To the Princess Anastasie he gave little thought. That their common exile and the chance encounter under such circumstances had aroused no return of an entente toward what had once been a half-sentimental attachment convinced him of how little it had meant to him. There were no royal pretensions. To marry the Princess Anastasie and settle in London, living upon the proceeds of her wealthy father's American and British real estate, was of course the easiest solution of his difficulties. A life of ease, music, good sportsmanship, the effort that only England knows—the life was comely too—blond, petite, and smoked her cigarette very prettily. Their marriage had once been discussed. She wanted it still, perhaps. Somewhere in the back of Prince Galtzin's ambitious mind. The one course would be so easy, the other—

Peter Nicholavitch rose and carefully flicked his cigarette through the open port. No. One does not pass twice through such moments of struggle and self-communion as he had had in

those long nights of his escape along the Danube. He was chosen, Peter Nichols! The name amused him. If Captain Blashford was a man of his word, tonight would be the end of the Grand Duke Peter Nicholavitch and the Princess Anastasie might find some more ardent suitor to her grace and beauty.

She did not seek him out. Perhaps the hint to Galtzin had been sufficient and the Grand Duke from his hiding place saw her pretty figure set ashore among the miscellany of martyred 'r'yality. He turned away from his port-hole with a catch of his breath as the last vestige of his old life passed from sight. And then quietly took up a fresh cigarette and awaited the Captain.

The details were easily arranged. Blashford was a man of resource and at night returned from a visit to the Captain of the Bermudian, with word that all was well. He had been obliged to relate the facts, but Captain Armitage could keep a secret and promised the refugee a job under his steward, who was short-handed. And so the next morning, after shaving and dressing himself in borrowed clothing, Peter Nichols shook Captain Blashford warmly by the hand and went aboard his new ship.

Peter Nichols' new job was that of waiter at the table in the dining saloon. There were English sailors bound for Malta, Frenchmen for Marseilles and Americans of the Red Cross without number, bound for New York. Girls, too, clear-eyed, bronzed, and leery, who talked war and politics beneath their very nose, challenging his own theories.

They noticed him, too, and whispered among themselves, but true to his ambition to do every task at the best of his bent, he preserved an immobile countenance and pocketed his few, which would be useful ere long, with the grateful appreciation of one to whom shillings and franc pieces come as the gifts of God. Many were the attempts to draw him from a conversation, but where the queries could not be answered by a laconic "Yes, sir," or "No, sir," this paragon of waiters maintained a smiling silence.

"I'm sure he's a Prince or something," he heard one young girl of a hospital unit say to a young medico of the outfit. "Did you ever see such a nose and brows in your life? And his hands! You can never mistake hands. I would swear those hands had never done menial work for a thousand years."

He slept forward, messed about the galley, enriched his vocabulary and broadened his point of view. There is no love or like a ship's life, no better school of philosophy than that of men upon their "beam ends." There were many such—Poles, Slovaks, Rumanians, an Armenian or two, refugees, adventurers from America, old, young, dissolute, making a necessity of virtue under that successful oligarchy, the ship's bridge.

In the American Peter was interested with an Englishman's point of view. He had much to learn, and he invented a tale of his fortunes which set him into their confidence, especially into that of Jim Coast, waiter like himself, whose bunk adjoined his own. Jim Coast was a citizen of the world, used to privation under many flags. He had been born in New Jersey, U. S. A., of decent people, had worked in the cranberry bogs, farmed in Pennsylvania, "punched" in Wyoming, "prospected" in the South-western States, fought against Diaz and again with the insurgents in Venezuela, worked on cattlemen's and so, by easy stages, had drifted across the breadth of Europe living by his wits, the expense of the credulous and the unvarying. And now, for the first time in many years, he was going home—though just what that meant he did not know.

He had missed great fortune twice—by the skin of his teeth, as he picturesque described it, once in a mine in Arizona and again in a land deal in the Argentine. There were reasons why he hadn't dared to bet on the United States before. He was a man with a grievance, but however free in his confidences in other respects, gave the interested Peter no inkling as to what that grievance was.

No more certain acquaintance could possibly be imagined, but privation, like politics, makes strange bed-fellows, and, from tolerance and amusement, Peter, as the other called him, found himself yielding, without stint, to the fantastic spell of Jim Coast's multifarious attractions. He seemed to have no doubts as to the possibility of making a living in America and referred darkly to possible "coups" that would net a fortune. He was an agreeable villain, not above mischief to gain his ends, and Peter, who cherished an ideal, made sure that, once safe ashore, it would be best if they parted company. But he didn't tell Jim Coast so, for the conversational lingo and levity from that gentleman's acquaintance were a liberal education.

We are admonished that they are blessed who just stand and wait, and Peter Nichols, three days out from New York harbor, found himself the possessor of \$10 in tips from the voyage, with \$50 coming to him as wages—not so bad for a first venture upon the high seas of industry. It was the first real money he had ever made in his life and he was proud of it. Jangling it contentedly in his pocket and rubbing the bills luxuriously one against the other, but his plans required more than this, for he had read enough to know that in the United States one is often taken at one's own estimate, and that if he wasn't to find a job as a ditch-digger, he must make a good appearance. And so it was now time to make use of the one Grand Duke possession remaining to him, a gold ring set with a gorgeous ruby that had once belonged to his father. This ring he had always worn and had removed from his finger at Peking, in the fear that its magnificence might betray him. He had kept it carefully tied about his neck in a bag on a bit of string and had, of course, not even shown it to Jim Coast, who might have deemed it an excuse to sever their strange friendship.

Through the head steward he managed a message to Captain Armitage and was hidden in the officer's cabin, where he explained the object of his visit, exhibited his treasure and estimated its value.

"If I didn't know something of your history, Nichols," he said, with a wink, "I might think you'd been looting the strong box of the Sultan of Turkey. Pigeon's blood and as big as my thumb nail? You want to sell it?"

"I need capital."

"What do you want for it?"

"It's worth a thousand pounds of English money. Perhaps more. I don't know. I'll take what I can get."

"I'm afraid to negotiate the sale ashore?"

"Exactly. I'd be arrested."

"And you don't want explanations. I'll leave it with me overnight. I'll see the purser. He'll know."

"Thanks."

The result of this arrangement was that the ruby ring changed owners. The purser bought it for two thousand in cash. He knew a good thing when he saw it. But Peter Nichols was satisfied.

CONTINUED TOMORROW

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THE TERRIBLE TEMPERED MR. BANG AND THE NEWSPAPER



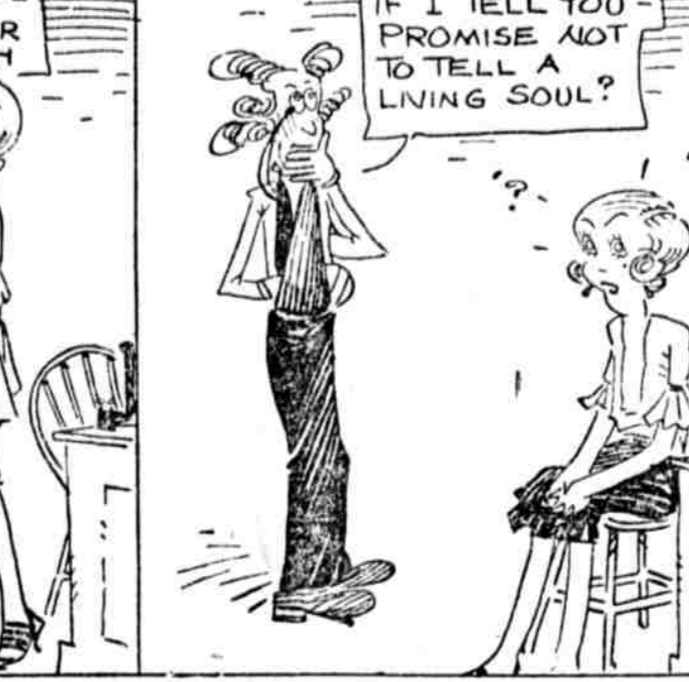
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PETEY—Such Is Life



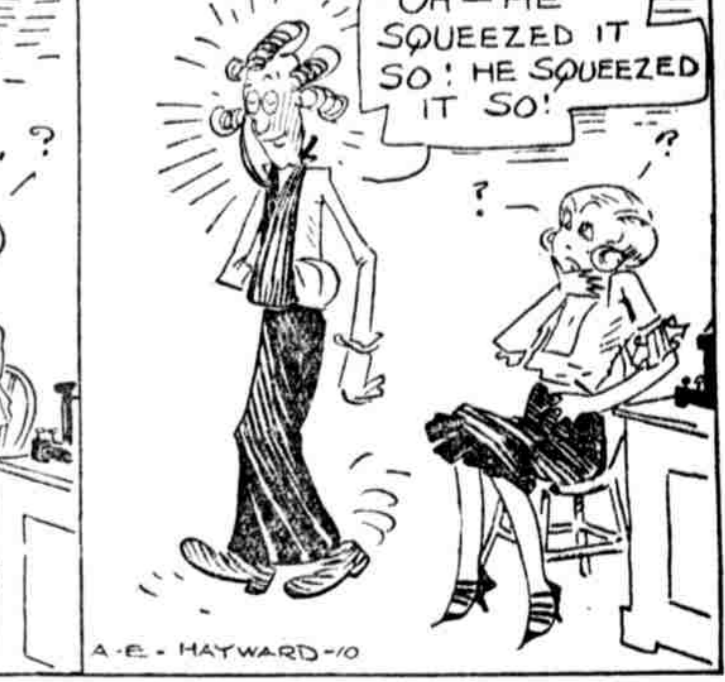
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FOOTPRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME



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POOR LONELY "VENUS"! IT MUST BE A COLD JOB BEING AN OLD MAID! ON THE JOB EVERY DAY AND AT NIGHT NOTHING TO DO BUT WAIT HERSELF TO SLEEP! AND YET SHE MOST ALWAYS HAS A SMILE! POOR, BRAVE, LONELY THING!

GOOD MORNING, DEARIE—HOW DID YOU HURT YOUR HAND? STICK IT WITH A NEEDLE?

IF I TELL YOU PROMISE NOT TO TELL A LIVING SOUL?

OH—HE SQUEEZED IT SO! HE SQUEEZED IT SO!

The young lady across the way says so many prizefights seem to be won on a foul that she should think it would be a great temptation to a contestant to commit one and get the money.

"YESTERDAY'S" #1

REMEMBERS ABOUT THE CASTOR OIL

SEE JACK RUSSELL'S NEW COMBINATION RAFT, DIVING TOWER AND SPRING BOARD—OH BOY!

There's one sensible girl—she hasn't bobbed her hair.

There's not another girl on the beach with long hair—I'd like to know that girl.

Hortense, please hold my hair while I go in the water.

See! I only got two teeth in front now, Timmie. I'll show ya what I can do with 'em.

See! I put a rubber band around 'em and play as nice a tune as anything. That's more'n you can do.

Don't you wish you could do this?

Don't ya wish you could do this?

The captain opened his eyes a bit wider as he gazed into the sanguine depths of the stone.

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"What do you want for it?"

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