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## A SOLDIER OF COMMERCE

BY JOHN ROSE GORDON  
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"Colonel Jurnieff and Mlle. Alma," he heard some one say. He turned to look. He stood spellbound. He had not imagined, although he knew her well, that such a being could exist as entered the door at that moment. By the side of the grim faced colonel walked a vision from some other land, it seemed. Never had anything like it been seen at a governor's ball in Tiflis. Alma's costume was a combination of Paris and the Caucasus—the daintiest lace and the costliest silks. Pearls adorned her snowy neck. Her little feet were clad in dainty shoes of white doekshin. Her white arms were round and full, her shoulders perfect. The white fan she carried seemed to waft a mystic thrill upon all she passed. Her voice was silvery in its music. She was the gayest of them all.

"Can it be that that lovely creature has at last consented to be my wife?" said the prince to himself.

"Prince Delnikoff, you know my niece, Alma Jurnieff?"

The prince bowed low. Alma extended her hand graciously.

"I know the prince very well," she said, "but since I have been enjoying my visit at Tiflis he has been quite a stranger."

"I did not—I did not know!"

"I congratulate you, prince, upon your appointment. My father wrote about it."

"What woman is this?" asked the colonel as he moved away, leaving her with Delnikoff. "She is a riddle. I cannot solve her. But she loves him. I can see love in her very eyes."

She placed her hand on the prince's arm, and they joined the throng. Turkish pashas saw her and blinked their eyes as they thought of their own faded beauties in their harems; Persian mandarins almost forgot their names when she spoke to them. She had come to conquer, and she conquered. She was the queen of the ball, and Delnikoff was the envy of princes.

"Mlle. Alma will lead the grand march with the guest of honor," said the governor.

The band struck up "The Czar!" and princes and generals fell in behind her. Delnikoff's heart beat with pride as he felt the warm and living hand of the girl upon his arm. The warm perfume that came from her fan intoxicated him. He, the suave, the wise, the gay one from St. Petersburg, was like a boy at his first party. In the dance that followed, as he felt his arm around her waist, a thrill of pleasure drove the blood quicker through his heart. After the dance he led her to the conservatory.

"You have changed," he said as his eyes devoured her. "As you grow more beautiful you grow more gracious. A year ago you spurned me almost."

"Almost!" she answered, with a coquettish laugh that sent the blood to his head. "Are you so weak that almost drives you from a woman's side?"

"But your father—"

"He said you were in love with an American. He sent you here, so he told me, to keep you from that fellow."

Alma put her fan before her face and laughed—a singularly rollicking laugh.

"Sent me away to keep me from a man I have seen but a few times, a man engaged in selling American wind-mills and pumps! Oh, prince, do you think that Tiflis, with all its strength, could keep me from the man I loved if I knew where he was to be found?"

He bent over her. His hot breath on her cheek brought a blush to it. She looked up into his face with a fascinating smile.

"Is it possible, tell me—you know how I have loved you—is it possible that you—have not thought ill of me?"

a roguish look came into her eyes, and she covered them quickly with her fan. He tore away the fan.

"Tell me!" he said.

"I wish! Some one is coming. Let us return to the ballroom. Another time we can talk."

He conducted her back to the ballroom. With reluctant she relinquished her to the governor.

"What a wonderful success!" she said as they swept past the prince, who was devouring her again with his eyes.

"I thank you," said the governor. "It was you who made it the success it is."

"Not I, but the genius of the governor of Tiflis," she answered, with a smile that stirred even his old blood.

"What has got into that girl?" asked Colonel Jurnieff of himself as he watched her. "I am beginning to think my brother was a fool in ordering me to keep her confined. Instead I should have given balls and parties for her. My course is plain now that the prince has her won. All I need do is to take the credit and win promotion."

Alma danced with her uncle. During the waltz he felt a victim to her charms.

"Am I a doll? Has she turned my head, too?" he asked himself.

He took her back to the prince, who was jealous even of the uncle.

"The next waltz is mine," he said. "But if you are tired I would prefer to sit in the conservatory."

"Would you?" glancing at him archly. "I wonder if I could guess why."

"Could you guess why? If my manner does not tell you why, shall I permit my tongue to tell? Because I love you. I loved you before, Alma, but never as I do tonight. I thought you hated me. I thought you loved that American."

"Get me some wine, prince."

He fetched the wine himself.

"For the first time from my hand! You never accepted anything from me before."

"Then enjoy the honor," she answered, laughing. "I may exact more before the night is over."

"Anything! I swear it! Tonight you are welcome to my life, to my honor, to my allegiance to the czar. Only love me."

He bent and kissed her. She drank the wine and patted his arm.

"Prince, you are a gay cavalier. One could scarcely know you in St. Petersburg, where there were so many women more beautiful than I. But here one learns that you are a bold and wicked man. Don't dare kiss me again."

"I will the very next time I get a chance."

She seemed exhausted at times and often touched her eyes with her gloved hand. Her eyes were at times recklessly gay, at others thoughtful and intense. These moods passed quickly, as if by superhuman effort. When the prince stepped away for ices, she moaned almost aloud:

"God help me to keep it up! God help me to succeed! It is the only way!"

When he returned, she greeted him with smiles as she accepted the ices.

"The next is another waltz," she said.

"I love waltzing, and you are such a splendid partner."

"Thank you. I love to waltz—with you. I love you and everything you do."

"Wait—wait till you know me better."

CHAPTER IX.  
A CAPRICIOUS WOMAN.

It was too early to offer congratulations, colonel!" asked the governor of Tiflis of Colonel Jurnieff and Alma swing past.

"I don't know. This night is a revelation to me. All this year I have been obeying the commands of the general, my brother, to keep the girl under some restraint and a careful watch. My orderly is in love with her maid, and through him I learn everything. She has made no attempt to escape nor to send or receive letters. The general wrote that she was desperately in love with an objectionable man and that he sent her to me till she consented to wed the prince. Now she blossoms out as a veritable coquette or else she is desperately in love with Delnikoff. How do you read her?"

"To me she seems like a bird let loose from a disagreeable cage," replied the governor. "Certain it is that she is the most fascinating young woman this ballroom has ever seen. Delnikoff is to be envied."

"But the change is so sudden! How do you account for it?"

"Perhaps there is really no change. Young women of the advanced type in Russia are not what our mothers were. Then women were even, deliberate, and always the same. But now! Paris has come to St. Petersburg. I think your niece has a touch of the Parisian spirit tonight. It is possible that the girl never had any real opposition to Delnikoff. He is rich, handsome and so worse morally than any of our young princes. Almost any young girl would jump at the chance to marry him. I think the girl has been misunderstood."

"Perhaps," said Jurnieff. "It would be a big feather in my hat if they should become betrothed while Delnikoff is here."

"The general is a mighty power in St. Petersburg. Should you succeed where he failed, he would no doubt reward you by promotion."

"A garrisoned capital would be the least he could give me, with the ebeurons of a general!"

"True. Now let us conspire in a loving attempt to make these two young people happy. You were young once, Jurnieff, the same with me. With the young deliberation chills enthusiasm, strike while the iron is hot! Bring them out tonight!"

"Tonight? What does your excellency mean?"

"Can you not see that the girl is warning toward the prince? As for Delnikoff, he is intoxicated with her beauty. Why not make their betrothal the toast of the supper?"

"If that could be done, my promotion would be assured. Such an event would cap the matter."

"Then do it! Strike while the iron is hot!"

Jurnieff spent many minutes thinking. If he could bring about the public announcement of the betrothal of his niece and Delnikoff at the governor's supper, the girl would not dare refuse to redeem the pledge. He saw Alma standing alone for a moment and went to her.

"My dear niece," he said in his blandest manner, "you are charming tonight. How have you changed so suddenly?"

"Oh, one cannot be very charming shut up in a stupid prison. It is happiness that gives one the power to charm."

"You have captivated everybody, from the governor down. I thought you hated the prince."

"Did I ever tell you so?"

"No; but your father wrote me to that effect."

"I do not exactly that, Alma, but I perhaps misunderstood you and your father's directions. If I have done anything to make you unhappy during your visit, I trust you will pardon me and believe it was done with an eye single to your welfare."

"You have been very kind. I presume it was the manner of my behavior that made you think I was unhappy; but, to tell the truth, I was angry."

"Angry! At something I did?"

"You and my father. I got so weary of the stupid story that I was in love with that American that I continued to act as if I were. There comes the prince. Is he not noble in that splendid uniform? Had my father not been so cruel—well, there is no use rehearsing that."

"But there is. The governor is infatuated with you. He has a pet scheme for the supper tonight. He has watched you and Delnikoff. He says you are the handsomest couple in all Russia."

"Well, we are," said Alma, with a toss of her head.

"By heaven, I'll wager you a thousand rubles you are in love with Delnikoff."

"I will not bet on so trivial a matter."

"Trivial! Then here is another. I'll wager you 2,000 rubles you dare not let the governor announce your betrothal to the prince at the supper."

"My betrothal! Do you want me to throw myself at a man? He has not asked me to be his wife."

"He has asked your father, and it is your father's dearest wish."

"But I am not a commodity. I am not hay or silk. I am a woman, and a woman likes to be something besides the salable goods in a bazaar."

"Well, think it over. The supper will not be for an hour."

As he turned to leave her he signaled to Delnikoff that he wanted to speak privately with him. After a dance Delnikoff joined Jurnieff in the smoking room.

"My dear prince," said Jurnieff, with offensiveness, "I am pleased to congratulate you. After your promotion to win happiness also! Have you gained your ambition?"

"You are giving me riddles. What do you mean?"

"I was under the impression that you were in love with my niece."

"I adore her. Who could do otherwise?"

"The governor is much interested in your little affair, as is my myself. To tell you the truth, my niece is very capricious. Tomorrow she may be unwilling to have anything to do with you. Tonight she seems to share your

infatuation. The governor, as you know, likes a little sensation of a pleasing kind. He would like the pleasure and privilege of announcing your betrothal at the supper."

"With all my heart. He may announce it a thousand times. The question rests with the little lady."

"Do ask her. I wager a hundred rubles you will not find her unwilling."

Jurnieff turned on his heel and walked away, and Delnikoff, with a fast beating heart and feverish pulse, sought Alma.

"This waits!" she asked.

"No—I could not wait—I must speak with you. Come to the conservatory."

He led her to a quiet nook shaded with palms.

"Alma," he said breathlessly, taking her hands, "I love you! You know I love you. I have longed for you this past year, believing that you hated me, and now to find you do not I am over-joyed. The governor wishes to announce our betrothal. Will you consent?"

"Oh, my darling one, let us make— you make—this ball the most memorable one Tiflis ever had. Will you consent?"

She toyed with her fan.

"I like you, prince. I have been kept in a prison for a year, and now, to find myself with this freedom, I feel like a bird let loose. I feel like making up for all the long days I have spent brooding over things I could not control. And now the time has come. I cannot resist. I want a good look—something real scandalous. You do wild things sometimes."

"Perhaps. But is our betrothal at a governor's ball not lark enough?"

"Oh, that is tame! What a splendid uniform you have, prince—Alexis! I will not call you Alexis! It is so much shorter than my own."

"Call me anything—only love me."

"He was oblivious of the fact that he was at a public function. He placed his arm around her and pressed her to him. She did not resist.

"Oh, this is tame love-making. I want to have some great ending to the night. I feel—oh, I am half wild, I suppose."

"Let the governor announce our betrothal, and you shall do anything, have anything you wish."

"Anything! I am so stricken with your uniform that I would like to have one like it. Can I not be on your staff?"

"Oh, Alma! That would be ridiculous."

"I know it. That is why the idea attracts me. I want to do something ridiculous—something unconventional—while I have this lovely hour of freedom. You are always free. You do not understand."

"What do you want to do?"

"Wear your uniform and inspect the prison."

"You inspect prisons? Why, you live in one!"

"I know. I live in the main building, but I have never yet looked into a cell. I have heard stories of all sorts of cruelty, and yet those who have been rusty like the wheels of the watch, and only need a little cleaning and oiling to put it in shape for life's battles."

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Prof. J. E. Taugany, of 61 St. Peter Street, Quebec, writes: "I had been ill for some time with La Grippe and did not regain my strength. Within a week after using Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, I was able to be around again, and I found that my system was entirely freed from any of the bad effects of the disease. I now keep a bottle of the 'Golden Medical Discovery' on hand, and when I catch cold, take a few doses, which keeps me in perfect health. As a builder up of lost strength and vitality, I do not believe you 'Discovery' has an equal."

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"I would cost me my sword if it was discovered. But you cannot be serious—you, a refined Russian girl, to don the uniform of an officer and go masquerading in a prison?"

"But can't you see? It is the oddity, the capriciousness, the very whimsy and wickedness, that appeal to me. Had you been caged a year you would fight a duel for the mere exhilaration."

"Well, if you must have your way, you must. I will go and tell Colonel Jurnieff that we are going to seek a quiet spot to talk and that you have almost given your consent to the announcement of our betrothal."

"Tell him I have, since you will do as I ask." And he kissed her rapturously.

"God help me through!" she murmured after Alexis had gone. "It is my life or his. I am willing to lose mine for him."

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CHAPTER X.  
INSPECTING THE PRISON—A CHANGE OF ORDERLIES.

WHILE the governor and Colonel Jurnieff were planning the great surprise to be given the guests two stealthy figures left the palace. Jurnieff's carriage was easily found, and they stepped into it. Prince Delnikoff was dressed in a plain uniform he had worn as lieutenant of cavalry. He wore over that a long black cloak that concealed every inch of his apparel. In his arms he carried his brilliant uniform of inspector-general of prisons.

Alma laughed, called him a good prince and patted his cheek. She lit her arm rest about her waist as the carriage hurried to Jurnieff's home. Arriving, she led the prince by a private way to the apartments. A servant met them and was dismissed with the curt remark that Colonel Jurnieff had sent them for something and they needed no attendance.

She led Delnikoff in the library and took the bundle from him. She hurried to her room. When she got there, she knelt and prayed. Marie found her on her knees and lifted her.

"Marie, hush for your life! Swear by all that you hold sacred you will not breathe a word of what you see tonight until tomorrow. Better yet, go, see nothing."

"Can you not trust me, mademoiselle?"

"I cannot trust myself. Go! You know nothing. I came home from the ball feeling ill!"

The maid retired, and Alma dressed herself in the uniform of the inspector-general of prisons. In a closet were a pair of boots she had purchased. The long cloak she had bought, as that worn by Delnikoff, covered her completely. With a pair of shears she cut her beautiful tresses short. In her excitement she left them where they fell upon the floor. She went to the library and threw aside the cloak.

"Alma," cried the prince, rushing to her, "you are superb! The uniform becomes you better than it does me, though it is a trifle large. Where did you get the boots?"

"They were left by a—by a soldier who knows Marie, my maid. Oh, I am so nervous! I can scarcely bring myself to the lark now that I have won you to it. But we have gone so far, we must go on. We will have some wine before we go."

She left the room and returned with and asked her to touch her lips to the rim. She did so and gave him her glass for the same salute.

"To the success of the handsomest, dashingest, daringest inspector of prisons the czar of Russia ever had!"

They both drank the toast.

"Now come, I know the way," she said. "The papers—the commission—I found them in the breast pocket."

"You will not need them if you make your voice heavier."

(To be continued.)

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THE WEEKLY POST, LINDSAY, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1904.

Members Assen Saturday—of keeper and Adopted (continued) WEEDSIA Council met Wed night members of Council of Town and confidat Sunday A communitat by the Warden for applying for a licence of Dr. W. the communication the proper commi On motion, the travelling Secretary for Consumm addressed the Cou of the institution grant in aid of the the standing finance mad As directed to report ability of making antarian for C quented.—Carried. Moved by Mr. Mr. Bryans. t advice be instruce advisory of the Board of Aud on motion of Mr. G. the stand Finance mad As directed to report of naming a sal respectively to the k of the House of B Moved by Mr. S Mr. Fal-bairn, a advice be instruce the advisability of be paid to the of Refuge,—The Council the clock Thursday

THURSDAY'S Council met Th with members all of the last confirmed. Smallpox Dr The Warden subm a communication of the Town of L directed by the mu with a reco on motion the standing committee on Finance and As The Warden's Moved by Mr. Gr the Finance Committee instructed to r ability of making the Warden's Council then adjou Friday morn

FRIDAY'S Council resumed F 1904, the Warden members present The Warden subm the Bank of Mon on Sept. 30th, to Finance a committee. Sundry Ma Moved by Mr. Bry Graham, that t placement committee