

teddy legrand

brain war

**THE
SEPT HEADS FROM
DRAGON GREEN**



The Savoisien

THE SEPT HEADS
FROM DRAGON GREEN

25 copies on pure Lafuma
vellum were printed from this work,
numbered from 1 to 25.

18

Those who find without seeking are those who have long sought without finding.
A useless servant, among the others

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LENCULUS

For the Digital Excommunicated Bookstore of Curiosity to Read the Usuals

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brain war

THE
SEPT HEADS FROM
DRAGON GREEN

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Works by Charles Lucieto

The War of the Brains

- On Special Missions (1926)
- The Red Virgin of the Kremlin (1927)
- Delivered to the Enemy (1928) • The Black Devil (1928) • The Kaiser's Spy (1929) • The Tragic Case of Bullway Castle (1929) • Sampierro, a Corsican gentleman (1930) • The Jade Pirates (1931)
- The spy with bloody hands (1931) • The mystery of Monte-Carlo (1932) • The Wolf Brigade (1932)

Behind the scenes of international espionage the marvelous exploits of James Nobody

- No. 1. — A Drama at the War Office. • No. 2. — The Courier du Tzar. • N° 3. — In the land of terror.
- No. 4. — The Wolf of Cape Spartiventi.
- No. 5. — The Bloody Mummy. • No. 6. — The Companions of Despair. • No. 7. — The Mysteries of the Sainte-Vehme. • No. 8. — The Tragic End of a Spy. • No. 9. — The Terrible Drama of Malhem. • No. 10. — The Avengers of Isis. No. 11. — A Drama at the Kaiser's Headquarters. • No. 12. — The Secret of the Fellah.

PREFACE

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A few weeks before his death, *which nothing foreshadowed at the time*, my friend Charles Lucieto suddenly said to me in a serious tone, contrasting with his usual good humor:

“ If I were to die prematurely — which is always possible, for too many people have an interest in my not continuing my task—there is a man who could pursue it better than anyone.

This man is Teddy Legrand, currently I believe on a special mission to the Hejaz border, the only one who has managed to beat the famous Miss Doktor. If he ever made up his mind to speak, how many mysterious undercurrents of contemporary history he could clear up! !

This wish of Lucieto, I tried to realize *when he had disappeared*, and I wrote to the address he had given me.

My letter remained unanswered.

Two years passed.

And now, at the beginning of January, Teddy Reagan was announced at my office.

— I'm back from a mission, he said to me, I just found your note...

He was recalcitrant at first, but his deceased friend's wish, the arguments that I was able to implement, the feeling above all that he was fulfilling knows a duty in warning public opinion, all of this ends up persuade him to write the present volume, a sensational document on the unsuspected perils which threaten the peace of the world.

IS

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FIRST PART

First chapter

The photo and the icon.

Practicing the profession of spy or counter-spy develops, it is said, a kind of sixth sense in those who are used to "living dangerously" in the service of one of these organizations, of which, the British Intelligence passes, wrongly, for the prototype.

I was certain that someone had entered my house recently, taking advantage of my absence, as soon as I had slipped my key — a flat key of a very special shape — into the lock of the exterior door of the foot-to-door. earth, where I live, between two missions, each time I am in Paris.

The strong smell of English tobacco which persisted, dominating those of naphtha line and camphor, even indicated that the visit had taken place, at the most, forty-eight hours previously.

Ordinarily, overly curious people who imagine they can find documents or clues within the walls of my house, go about it with more skill.

The latest in date must have been an amateur or a novice, not yet up to date with the "finesses", unless—I was thinking about it—he was some old fox, too certain of impunity to try to hide his tracks.

In any case, after having opened my shutters wide, — my suitcase once deposited on the carpet of my entrance, — I was able to verify that my room, my bathroom and my studio had been methodically searched, — this which is called searched— and by someone who knew how to sniff out every possible hiding place.

It is not, - that one forgives me this rather prosaic detail, - even the "roll", widower of toilet paper, of my toilets, which would not have been worked meticulously and by hand of master, for the case where it had contained the "pot of roses" that we were looking for.

the seven heads of the green dragon

Since March 1918—it is in September 1929 that this story opens—I have gotten used to these "attacks of pernicious curiosity" (1) which bring an increase of the unexpected into an already hectic life, both taste than by profession.

So many occult powers have a vested interest in destroying *what I hold!*

Since the week following the butchery of Yekaterinenburg, the odious consecration of the last Tzar and the imperial family, in this Ipatieff house which, as the only Frenchman, I entered at the end of July 1918, when the blood of the Romanoffs was still smeared the boards,... for eleven years, they are relentless.

Without Emile Pages (2), moreover, after my wound at Kharbine, would I ever have been able to join the Janin mission and embark with her on *the Athos*, at Port Dairen? Without him, whom they did not suspect, would my photos, my precious photos, have ever reached Marseilles?

Yes, certainly, they will have earned me some not trivial "hiccups" these 6 ½ — 11 films, impressed by my Kodak before we could have faked, at leisure, the places of the drama where a dynasty sank .

And it was not a rash judgment to link, to their "dark series", the accident - improbable rupture of the strap of the saddle of my me hara - which had occurred in the middle of town, towards the end of my *ethnographic* trek to the Hoggar, an accident which had forced me—barely a fortnight ago—to carve two new notches in the worn butt of my Colt. It should have been written, no doubt, that after this stay of six months, on a special mission in the desert, among the Tuareg Imaziren, under the pretext of studying the manners and customs of these simple people, who descend, perhaps, of the Crusaders, — my particular adversaries would spoil the joys of my return!

Particular adversaries, yes.

Because if, frequently, the agents of an allied or rival nation attacked my skin, they never bothered to attack my poor furniture!

1. According to the expression that is dear to my ex-colleague from Syria, Mosul and Asia Minor, the famous Colonel Lawrence, with whom I "worked" during the war, against the Turks, before, by order of his chiefs, he did not use his skill, his formidable authority over the Arab populations to undermine French influence.

2. I will never be able to give enough thanks to Émile Pages, then radio operator in General Janin's Mission, for the devotion he showed to me at the risk of his life and for the "gut" he showed.

the picture of the icon

This time again, to repair the damage done by the "search" of my scrupulous visitor, will I be forced to ruin myself in bills from the cabinetmaker, the upholsterer, the bookbinder?

At least—after a rapid examination of the cupboards and wardrobes—large enough for a daring person to be able to hide there, in order to surprise my little secrets—I had the moral satisfaction of noting that the indiscreet explorer of my household had to leave empty-handed.

Curtains drawn on the windows, my desk lamp on, all I have to do is leaf through this old photo album, with a green plush cover, faded and yellowed in places, which I generally leave lying around on Boule's chest of drawers, where which he occupied, near the small bronze by Barye and the flamed sandstone by Massier, in my parents' living room.

I am very attached to this relic of all my family past, rich in the memories of my childhood, where I find the forgotten faces of old cousins, distant uncles, lost sight of, since my first communion, alongside the physiognomies loved ones I have lost.

But I cared about it even more, at the time of this adventure, because some of these cardboard boxes, gilded on the edge, on which spread out, at the bottom of a faded effigy, the signature, also gilded, of a provincial photographer, had attached to their backs the originals of the fourteen small 6 ½ — 11 negatives, taken by me in the Urals, as well as a set of duplicate proofs.

This revelation no longer has any drawbacks.

Still held together by their angles with thick sheets of bristol, my lares gods no longer serve to protect, against theft and unbridled covetousness, these "capital pieces" which were to lead me, shortly after the return in question, to the first of the discoveries that I have resolved to expose!

For me, Edgar Allan Poe remains a man of genius.

Once again it was verified that the ingenious principle of his short story, *The Purloined Letter*, is of an exact psychology.

The cleverest of the "investigators" who had operated on my premises, since my mission in Russia, had all let themselves be taken in by M. Dupin's (1) renewed trick, too simple for them to be able to fan it.



1. The precursor of all the "policemen" of contemporary fiction.

If General Gaïda, who commanded in chief the Czechoslovak forces in Siberia during the anti-Red offensive of July 1918, had not since been condemned, in Prague, by his compatriots, for the crime of high treason(1), I imagine that he would have jumped when he learned from these memoirs that Dédina, his cook, whose behind he kicked when the paprika goulash, which he loved, was not sufficiently seasoned, heard not only the kind of deformed Slavonic patois from his Bohemian province, but German, Russian, Bulgarian, English, Italian, Osmanli, Arabic, Spanish and Greek, in addition, of course, to French !

Was I that hairy cook, drunkard, gluttonous, stupid and ignorant, "turkish head" of the staff and mess orderlies, but whose "boss" sometimes tolerated familiarity, when he had the full belly, after those co-pious feasts where my culinary art shone?

Prince of master chefs, Escoffier—whose attentive student I was, under an assumed name, for one semester—how many serious assets I owe you, as much as to the "masters" who boasted of my "extraordinary gift of languages", while, promised, it seemed, to the most brilliant destinies that were in the University, I was preparing for the École Normale at the brasseries of the Quartier Latin.

"Teaching leads to everything. " Eh yes !

This aphorism which must, I believe, be attributed to M. Guizot could not be better illustrated than by the series of avatars into which I was thrown by the war.

...What a touch I had!

This photo taken, in Omsk, by Lucien Altmeyer, my comrade on mission, detached, like me, secretly, on the anti-Bolshevik front...mas sacred since, gutted in the village of Verkh-Isset, by facetious *Tovarishs*, restores me the incarnation of which I was perhaps most proud, because it was the first time that I found myself obliged to "compose" a character with this constant meticulousness.

Poor Altmeyer!

If he had been able to reach Diteriks (2), at the outposts of Kolchak, who had just left Tobolsk in the direction of Baikal, and transmit to him the verbal report with which I had entrusted him, a precise report establishing the negotiations , on

1. Sentence pronounced behind closed doors by the court-martial for collusion with the Soviets on September 13, 1926.

2. White general, commanding a Caucasian division.



Fig. 1

General Gaïda, commander-in-chief of the Czechoslovakian forces in Siberia, never suspected the true personality of his cook. I had become a master in the art of preparing goulash.

(Photo taken on July 3, 1918 in Omsk.)

the seven heads of the green dragon

taken by me, between the Tchrezvytchkaia(1) and the chief of the Czech divisions, it is probable that the imperial family would have been saved!

...Here I am disguised as a pope, thanks to the care of Father Stojoreff, the last confessor of the Tsar, when I was attached to the Ekaterinenburg hospice, the hospice where, suffering from exanthematous typhus, Medvieff(2) "passed in my arms, *eighteen* days after, on the formal and repeated order of Yourovsky (3) he would have finished off the Empress and her daughter Tatiana with *eighteen* clean bayonets, on the already larded floor of the Ipatieff house.

It is from him that I got the icon of Saint Seraphim of Sarof, ornament of my fireplace.

He bequeathed it to me, after I had consented to give him absolution *in ex tremis*—not without talking, talking, relieving his tortuous conscience—confiding to me that he had taken it on the corpse of Alexandra Feodorovna Romanoff.

They have nothing very picturesque about the other shots that complete my col Siberian election.

..A large ordinary white house, on the raised ground floor, on a sort of attic rise, all surrounded by a palisade of barely squared tree trunks.

...Short inscriptions in pencil, on dirty and decrepit walls.

...Scattered, mismatched furniture, in rooms that are far too big, where a dismal atmosphere of moving seems to float.

..A bedroom partition, lined with hideous striped paper, punctured, chipped in places, revealing the slats that held the plaster in place, crumbling in a pile of rubble on the dark-stained parquet floor.

...A mineshaft, opening in the center of a clearing in the forest.

...Fragments of charred bones. ...Miscellaneous uniform buttons, made of metal, eaten away by acid.

...A rack in good condition.

...A broken and bent eyeglass.

Deceased Judge Sokoloff(4) who, however, concluded his *official* investigation into the imperial tragedy of Ekaterinenburg, taking into account the instructions 1.

"Extraordinary Commission for the fight against the Counter-Revolution", all-powerful then and the very basis of the Soviet regime in Russia.

2. One of the Tsar's assassins.

3. The People's Commissar, responsible for the massacre.

4. Investigating Judge Sokoloff of the Omsk Court.



Fig. 2

This priest's disguise was to allow me to enter Ekaterinenburg, still in the hands of the Reds, three days after the massacre of the Russian imperial family.

*(Photo taken on July 23, 1918
in front of the palisade which isolated the tragic Ipatieff house.)*

the seven heads of the green dragon

Admiral Kolchak— *who was obeying the orders of Lloyd George's emissaries* —died— insiders know this—for having hinted too much that he knew the documents establishing the truth.

This is always a terrible truth for those who allowed the massacre, who provoked it, to put it better, for those of whom the Presidium of the Executive Committee of Workers and Peasants and Red Guards of the Urals was only a discreet instrument...for those whom I want to unmask, before their harmful action causes other catastrophes or would collapse the peace of Europe!



I am not afraid of denials.

They tried to buy me off when *they* learned of my intentions.

Intimidations, threats, all forms of powerful pressure have been implemented, *from above*, on the obscure soldier that I am!

If those who were my leaders for a long time are forced to disavow me, it doesn't matter, I have a wide back!

I know that the noblest of them approve of the action I am taking, under my responsibility and at my own risk and peril, now that I have regained the absolute right to speak.



It took a rather violent ringing of the doorbell to tear me away from the ghosts of memory, which the evocation of my Russian hours always brings to mind, those which — I was still very young when the mobilization order touched me in the French school in the defunct Saint-Petersburg — marked the most in my life.

None of my relatives, however, nor any of the very few friends that my perpetual absences allow me to keep knew I had returned to France.

At the ministry, I was not expected for three weeks.

So who knows?

I went to open.

— Enter Nobody. Come in ! I said.

...The man before whom I stood aside and who straight away walked towards the light of my studio, with quiet assurance, is undoubtedly one of the most prodigious secret artisans of defeat. of Germany.

the picture of the icon

If the agreement had continued to exist between the Allies, after the peace of Brest Litovsk(1), and if its leaders had listened to its prophetic suggestions, the dictatorship of Lenin could never have been established, nor especially consolidated. on dying Russia. There would be no more USSR, today, to contaminate, to plague other peoples.

...Poor Charles Lucieto, who was intimate with us both, also died for having made light of too many grudges and for having seen them too clearly, made famous the nickname, renewed of Homer,...of Jules Verne(2) which, on a certain day, his comrades, a little jealous, of His Britannic Majesty's intelligence service raved about.

This "*nick-name*"(3), I will leave it to him.

We so often have to forget our surname in our common profession!

" Son, " he said, with his characteristic way of entering into the matter abruptly . a month auscultating the moukhères of Tanezrouff and if I had been able to suspect that the *Chanzy* would land you yesterday morning at La Joliette, I would have saved myself the trouble of smoking sixty pipes at your place, without waiting for your return.

"You've changed tobacco since Constantinople," I said! I haven't found the familiar smell of your *navy-cut*.

- It's true ! he admitted calmly. The doctor forces me to use only *bird's eye* now. My arteries are getting old, you see.

...I had the opportunity to bond closely with Nobody, after the armistice, in Stamboul, where we worked side by side for almost a year.

I owe him valuable advice which has completed my education in the practice of my profession.

I rescued him from a bad situation, where he risked more than his life.

So it was not as an enemy that he entered my house!

' *Downing Street* is involved too?' I questioned. Between us, right? *Slade* (5) interested in my photos?

1. The shameful peace which consecrated the collapse of the Russian front.

2. Nobody = Nemo = Nobody!

3. Sobriquet.

4. James Nobody has retained—an old habit of war—this way of designating the agents of the Second Bureau.

5. Major General Sir Austin Slade, DSOKCB then Grand Chief of

the seven heads of the green dragon

"Not him, old man.

- You ?

—Right ! Just.

James had that engaging smile, which sometimes blooms his ruddy face of an English squire, a face which reminds me of that of Mr. natural kindness.

— I very much doubt that my hierarchical superiors today show an exaggerated enthusiasm, he went on, in his slow and precise French, if they ever know the reasons for my presence in rue de Bellechasse... I am elsewhere on free leave since Sir Ian's retirement(2).

"He would probably have understood and encouraged me, I suppose. But I hardly approve of the new wind blowing over the service, any more than one would appreciate my present activities there, if one suspected the cause.

"In other words, if I still work on my own time, despite my age, being overweight, and disabled, it's *freelancing*, on my own account...with the prospect of one day seeing my oysters seasoned with a culture of Eberth's bacilli! »

"How can I help you, *Old Man* ?" A gleam, which I know well, filtered under James's eyelids.

— Well, I would like to compare the photograph you took of the Czarina's Swastika with the reproduction given by Judge Sokoloff, in figure 21 of the book where he summarized the conclusions of his investigation (3).

The Czarina's Swastika!

Had it sufficiently intrigued all the cryptographers in the world, this short inscription, traced by the unfortunate sovereign in the embrasure of a window of the Ipatieff house!

A date, it seemed, surmounted by the fateful sign borrowed from the symbolism of Asia...of this "third mark" that one always finds ritually engraved under the feet of Çakya-Mouni(4).

l'Intelligence Service.

1. Dickens' famous hero.

2. Sir Ian Mornington who until October 1928 directed with what mastery the delicate cogs of the "secret service" of Downing Street.

3. A volume entitled: *Judicial inquiry into the assassination of the Russian imperial family*, by Nicolas Sokoloff, magistrate at the court of Omsk. Payot, 1926.

4. Incarnation of the Buddha.

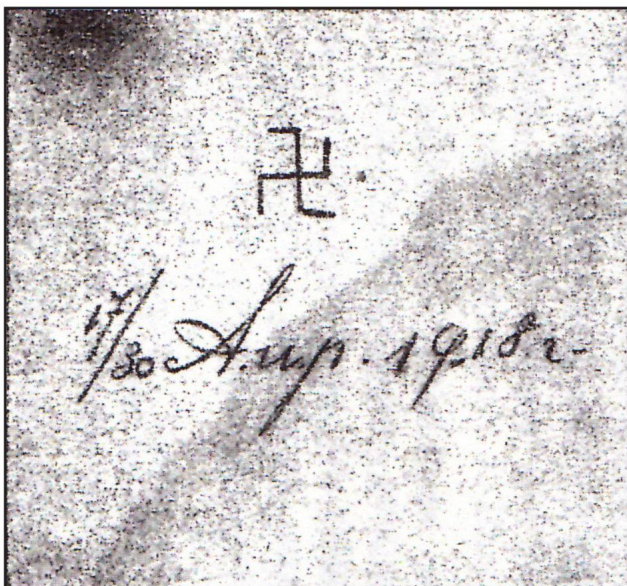


Fig. 3.

Tiny and yet capital differences between these two documents!

The first (on the left), rigorously authentic, reproduces the last message of the Czarina, as it was photographed by me on July 24 on a wall of the Ipatieff house.

The second (right), although published eight months later in Judge Sokoloff's official report, was obviously faked to prevent the latest revelations from the hapless sovereign.

the seven heads of the green dragon

Invocation to the memory of the Staretz, of Rasputin, for whom the prisoner seems to have preserved, until the end, her same mystical veneration?

Supreme message to sure friends, to the last dispersed faithful, the only ones able to understand its meaning?

I had good reason to believe that no one had deciphered it!

...Without hesitating for a second, I went to get the plush album on the marble top of the chest of drawers where, before opening the door, I had put it back in its place and took this little portrait from it. of the young girl that was my mother, at the bottom of which we still read, alongside a Lorraine thistle: J. Barco, photographer, Nancy.

Nobody showed no astonishment at seeing me detach, from the pale blue back, the proof he wanted to compare with the one he had just extracted from his wallet in the meantime.

"*Even old monkeys learn,*" he said, wiping with his handkerchief the thick lens of the monocle, which he uses as a magnifying glass.

His examination barely lasted ten seconds.

- I was sure of it ! he continued, straightening up. The two texts do not agree.

The fact is that between the photo, taken by me on July 24, and the one, *later in date*, which was published, by the care of this unfortunate Sokoloff, then reproduced in millions of copies, on various occasions, by the press around the world, there was a difference.

Insignificant, I will; but which was nevertheless obvious.

My document clearly bore, under the reversed Swastika, this line, *undoubtedly in the Czarina's handwriting*:

17 | 30 Au p. 19-18. ?-

while the official document, put under seal by Nametkine(2) and photographed, as soon as the reds had been driven out, i.e. on August 14 only, presented the following variant:

17 | 30 Aug. 1918 ?-

"So," continued James, with conviction, "is it established, as I have

1. Old monkeys have yet to learn.

2. Investigating magistrate who was first appointed to investigate the murder of the Imperial family and who, no sooner had he produced his first report, was supplanted by Sokoloff.

the picture of the icon

always doubted that *someone* had an interest in faking this inscription, where I persist in seeing a sort of testament of Alexandra Feodorovna Romanov.

"Otherwise why would we have done it?"

"Why, above all, would they have sought, so bitterly, to suppress the proof of this skilful trickery, by suppressing you, at the same time. »

— Our conclusions are identical! I recognized. In the early days, I spent days and days trying to interpret, in plain language, these seventeen signs. I never got there. I gave it up. It's so far. And then what would it have been used for? Czarism is dead and dead.

' *It's because I'm sure I can solve the riddle that I've come to find you, cards on the table,* ' Nobody said, without discussing this somewhat weak opinion. But time is running out, because the only man who is able to speak has only a few days left to live.

"I was almost in despair the day before yesterday when I left your house without having been able to get my hands on your damned photos. Luckily you came back..."

- Who is this ? I say intrigued. I confess...

"His Beatitude Basil III, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople," he said.



"If your 'family' showed exemplary discretion," continued Nobody, smiling his Pickwickian smile, shortly after I had finished revealing to him the full contents of my green album, "there are foreigners who have had better tongues.

He had taken me by the left arm and, with slow steps, he was taking me around my studio—as one sometimes proceeds when, among amateurs, one has fun with these primitive experiences of transmission. of thought which consist in guessing where an object has been hidden.

"Then you don't suspect anything?" He was obviously enjoying his revenge.

- No way ! I said.

He leaned his powerful back against the marble of the fireplace.

- In fact, you have never had the slightest twitch of the muscles.

"Now I take from the famous Pickmann(1), whose teaching has often earned me

1. The famous hypnotist who had all of Europe running to his sessions.

the seven heads of the green dragon

a seer's prestige, that a subject, even master of himself, involuntarily betrays himself by passing in front of a hiding place that he is trying to conceal. »

He had a great laugh.

' *By Jove*, all the same I haven't quite wasted my time, old bachelor, by smoking my pipes at your house.

He spun around and grabbed my Orthodox icon of Saint Seraphim.

So, you didn't suspect the immense value of the gift that the late Medvieff gave you, when you were Pope Tikhine?

I was less in control of my reflexes than he had been of his, and the surprise I betrayed seemed to enchant him doubly.

— *Wait and see.*

Having placed the holy image on an armchair—the enamel on the side of the velvet—he tapped the back of it with a series of small sharp taps.

I heard a faint click...the sound of a falling penny.

- So !

With a conjuring gesture, James presented me, again, with the object that is so familiar to me.

The golden glory, the kind of aureole which had hitherto surrounded the ascetic face of the holy anchorite of Sarof had disappeared, revealing a large surface of blackened silver, on which shone a few words engraved in way to a point.

Nice lesson in humility!

For fourteen years, this icon had been in my possession without my ever dreaming that it could have a secret and Nobody, in a few touches...

At school, Teddy, my friend!

...Under the light of the lamp, the inscription, though scratching, barely, the surface of the metal, was easily decipherable.

The inscriptions, in fact, rather!



Fig. 4.

When Nobody had detached the aureole from this icon, found on the corpse of the Czarina, we could read the crested inscription which was to put us on the track of the "Green Dragon".

the seven heads of the green dragon

The first, traced surely by a nervous woman's hand, had four initials, followed by a sign, then seven words, written in correct English:

S. I. M. P. : : The green Dragon. You were absolutely right.

The second, masculine this time, consisted of two words only, with a spelling mistake: *To late*, which means: too late!

...There was a time when what touches the esoteric constituted, in a way, my violin of Ingres.

So it was very easy for me to regain my prestige in the eyes of my old comrade, visibly embarrassed by the enigmatic beginning of the longest of the inscriptions.

- *The Green dragon*, etc ... I understand, parbleu, the literal meaning of the text! he grumbled, his ruddy face wrinkled with the effort. mental.

"It means: *Green Dragon* or *Green Hydra*, your choice, and: *You were absolutely right*."

"But what are these six points doing there; like a double masonic badge? And what formula does this S, this M, this I, this P represent? I've already racked my brains over it since my little visit the day before yesterday. »

"It is a question of a more secret society," I answered, "than that of the *Children of the Widow* ." These six points schematize, my friend, the famous *Seal of Solomon*, a cabalistic figure—two intertwined equilateral triangles—which constitutes the "signature" of Martinism.

Nobody looked at me with genuine interest.

"I thought," he said, "that this sect which, if I'm not mistaken, played, behind the scenes, a capital role, around 1789, in the French Revolution, of which it was, according to Thackeray, the initiator real, had completely disappeared in 1795, once its task was completed!

"For my part, I am convinced," I replied, "that his influence never ceased again, in 1830 with us, then in 1848. There have always been disciples of Martinez de Pasqually and of Louis Claude de Saint- Martin among the occult promoters of regime upheavals.

"The historian who would endeavor to study their actions would shed a singular light on the underside of the events from which the Republic resulted...

1. Freemasonry.

the picture of the icon

"...Anyway, Master Philippe — in question here — I struck the violated icon with the tip of my fingernail, was well, incontestably, and for more than five years, the true master of All the Russians! »

— Master Philippe, the Thaumaturge, that former tripe maker who pulled the strings of Nicolas II and whom Rasputin supplanted! That's him SIM P.(1)..six points?

— Yes, these are the initials that designate him to those who know, Georges Louis (2), see, in particular, who did not know how to use it and Paléologue (3) who understood — but too late — the immense party that in could have fired France....

...Strange figure, in truth, that this Nizier-Anthelme-Philippe, a small butcher from Savoy, who came to try his luck in Lyon, who — introduced by Manouiloff, secret agent of the Okhrana, under the auspices of the Magus Papus (4), at the imperial couple at Compiègne(5) — was to become, shortly afterwards, the secret arbiter of the destinies of an empire of one hundred million men.

...Imposter and informant of the diplomatic police, hypnotist and tanklatan, according to the bitter enemies that earned him, in Petersburg, his exclusive, predominant authority over the credulous guests of Tsarkoye-Selo?

...Sent by God, holder of a super-normal power, even incarnation of Christ, for those whom he fanaticized?

There is no doubt, in any case, that he had an unimaginable, absolute influence on the rather special household of "Nicky" and Alexandra, who were grieving at the time to be unable to have a son,—from the day when his intercession won an heir to the throne.

Chance, adultery imposed in the name of reason of state, involvement of occult forces?

My own opinion is made on the exceptional being who rests in the cemetery of Logasse, in Lyon, and whose illustrious family — *whose child he resurrected(6)*, according to authentic witnesses — continues to maintain more than magnificent only the grave.

1. SIMP = Unknown Superior, Master Philippe.

2. Ambassador of France before 1914.

3. Ambassador of France during the war, whose memoirs constitute one of the most valid documents on the history of the Russian Court.

4. Dr. Encausse who in 1890 "recreated" the Martinist order, at the same time as Sar Peladan resuscitated the Rose-Croix, and this is not, believe me, a simple coincidence.

5. September 20, 1901.

6. Cf: Sédir: *Some friends of God* (Legrand, publisher in Rouen).

the seven heads of the green dragon

"In the Intelligence Service, we remain convinced that he took advantage of the fondness shown by the Czarina for the young Prince Goluchowski," mused James, whose reflections had been akin to mine.

"Besides, the little tsarevich bore a striking resemblance to that handsome, seductive fellow, afflicted like him with hemophilia—who disappeared in the mysterious fashion of Koenigsmark when he had ceased to serve. »

"It's likely," I admitted. Despite Gilliard's denials(1), Dr. Peters gives the physiological reasons for this marital impotence. Without a coadjutor Nicolas would only have been able to procreate daughters!

"We are no further ahead.

Nobody thoughtfully flicked the gold enamel halo that had fallen on the seat of the chair into his outstretched palm.

"Is there any connection between the glory of Saint Seraphim, the crested seal of Solomon, and the disguised Swastika of the Ipatieff house?"

"Are we in the presence of two keys that can open the same door?"

"What is this Green Dragon?"

"Who was so right?"

"And why was it too late?" »

These six questions, I had just asked myself, mentally, in roughly similar terms.

Also, when after a silence James inquired casually, "I suppose ethnography will leave you with some leisure?" I answered without hesitation:

"Enough, if you want me, for me to book our two seats for tonight on the Orient Express."

"The Phanar(2) appeals to me too! »

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1. The Czarevich's tutor.

2. Residence in Constantinople of the Ecumenical Patriarch; the Vatican of the Orthodox.

Chapter II

Phanar, September 1929.

It was almost 11 p.m. and the Simplon Orient-Express, which was "making 90", had just passed Laroche, when, in the deserted hallway, where we were smoking cigarettes, in front of the door of our sleeper, a young woman believed us. Her, already in night pajamas, under a heavy travel coat.

"She looks like Natacha!" I said, while the tall, harmoniously swaying silhouette disappeared at the end of the coach, into one of the narrow cells where the Compagnie des Wagons-Lits is hiding you for two days.

...Natacha, these three Slavic syllables suddenly brought to life for me post-war Constantinople, this unbalanced Stamboul, hotbed of conspiracies and intrigues, meeting place for all the fishermen in troubled waters of Europe and Asia, where I lived the two most ardent years, the fullest of my career as a secret agent.

A cuddly and whimsical little girl, animated by a dark energy, who maintained, in her exile, a fierce hatred of everything to do with the Soviet regime.

It was through her, precisely, that I had known Nobody—she served as my informer—and, without having ever received any confidences on the subject, I had supposed that he had let himself be taken in, him, by the bitter charm of this niece of the Wyrubova, this goddaughter of the dead Tzarina.

I noticed that all it took was often a word to set off, in James's mind, a train followed by associations of ideas which generally lead to an unforeseen result.

By what torturous sequence, the first name pronounced by me led him to murmur, about ten minutes later, while we were burning Thunder:

— Yes, it must have been at Youssouf's (1) that these people were mentioned.

1. Prince Youssouf, cousin of the Tsar, who "rid Russia" of Rasputin, convinced as he was that the Staretz was dragging the Empire down.

the seven heads of the green dragon

"What people?" I said.

— Those who, from Sweden, maneuvered Rasputin from afar and whose occult orders he slavishly obeyed.

Curious new coincidence.

I affirm that, all evening long, I had confusedly haunted the strange inscription, discovered under the aureole of the icon of Saint Seraphim of Sarof: *The green dragon*. The *green dragon* .

Where had I heard of something similar?

I was there now, parbleu!

Was it not by Obolensky, the former director of the Russian Post Office, disgraced because he had expressed too much astonishment to the Czar at the abundance of encrypted telegrams received by Rasputin and *signed Green*.

However, neither Prince Lvof's investigation(1), carried out in February 18, nor those carried out by our services and Intelligence in Stockholm, had ever been able to reveal the personality of those who had used the Staretz, to completely disintegrate the imperial high society and thus prepare the way for the advent of Bolshevism.

" *Green dragon — The Greens*," I repeated.

...Would Master Philippe therefore have warned, as a preventive measure, the Empress Alexandra against the action of the formidable forces which had undermined Russia, these forces whose particular hostility I felt,...because they supposed me capable of unmasking them one day! And had the unfortunate sovereign recognized *too late* that the Lyonnais was right?

"...Natacha!"

The same three syllables came back to Nobody's lips, as I climbed the two steps of the ladder, to hoist myself onto the upper bunk.

And, shortly after, lamp on the night light, in the humming intimacy of our railway cabin, he let himself go, with that great freshness of soul which astonishes in an old trucker of his kind, to evoke the strange eyes, the smile always ambiguous, the passions and impulses of the one Charles Luciéto, who had also known her, called *the Mermaid of the Bosphorus*.

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1. President of the provisional government which was organized after the abdication of the Tsar.

Phanar, September 1929

While a taxi, still new, took us, without hurry - time does not count in the East - from the station of Sir Kedji to the grand hotel Tokatlian, the modern palace of Pera, James did not stop cursing against "that sa laud of Kemal," through whose fault Istanbul was little more than a dead city devoid of any character, in which we both felt—not without some melancholy—absolutely out of place.

It was the end of Byzantium, of course!

And our hearts were heavy, as at the bedside of a dying woman, now old and decrepit, whom we had known and loved in all the voluptuous splendor, the seductions of her summer.

So it was with a kind of gratitude for *Kismet*(1) that, in the personage, strapped in a dazzling jacket, who came out of the "reception" - all bows - to greet us, we recognized Panaioti Théopoulos, this old "Pana," fatter, no doubt, pudgier, more laden with rings than ever, but whose syrupy pupils shone with a light quickly extinguished before our familiar faces.

...Théopoulos, the popular tenant of the famous *Garden* — (Ambassadors, Folies-Bergère and Luna-Park, all at the same time) — that all Allied officers, all mission attachés, all traffickers in oil, arms or jewelry, frequented, sure of finding a show of taste, branded champagne, choice companions... at fair prices, especially since... the "merchandise" that was served there was never adulterated.

We had, professionally, had many opportunities to appreciate the reliability of his information, the value of his discretion and we owed him, moreover, to have been able to deliver us, in peace, to these necessary "borders", by the how we relaxed, once in a while, at that time, from these exhausting manhunts, where we figured, in turn, when it was not at the same time, the game or the bloodhound.

Panaioti was careful not to visibly show his pleasure in seeing us again and, as long as we were in the hall, then in the slow and vast elevator, he simply had towards us the attitude of a perfect manager, conscious of receiving him, incognito, distinguished guests.

The price of the "private apartment" to which he took us should have justified, in the eyes of any indiscreet person, the obsequious, even servile deference he showed.

"You want to ruin us, you old rascal!" said James, point-blank,

1. The fate of Muslims.

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when the door had closed behind the valet who had carried our light suitcases.

Theopoulos' soft flesh opened up into a broad smile.

- For old friends like you, there are always arrangements. To see you together again!... Just now, I thought I was a decade younger. Ah! those were the good times, weren't they!

To the sincerity of the Greek, responded like an emotion in Nobody's gaze.

But, a rather rare gesture with him, although he has Irish blood, he shrugged his shoulders twice and it was in a very high voice, in a very cheeky tone, that he replied: "Then the *Ghazi(1)* got you!"

The fact that at the dreaded nickname of the current Master of Ankhara, Panaioti had not flinched, that he had not slipped a glance in the direction of the door, proved to me that he was not afraid that the walls...had ears.

"...You regret it, huh, the post-war period! continued James, always jo vial. That brought you in, old bandit, the trade in Russian princesses, the sparkling wine at a hundred and fifty piastres and the letters stolen from the signs or drunken commodores! Hell if I suspected that we would find you here!

"Better to shoot than to perish at the end of a rope!" »

Panaioti looked at me, blinking his oily eyelids, surrounded by a strong Koheul trait.

'Still the same then, I see. My companion slapped him hard on the shoulder.

" *Good old scout!*" he exclaimed, suddenly softened again.

And from then on, I understood very well where all his questions were going to tend.

— Did you sell your Garden? he began, indifferent, apparently ence, at least.

Theopoulos would certainly have spat on the ground if the floor had not been three-quarters covered with a marvelous Smyrna carpet.

'They closed it, gentlemen, the year they forbade the sisters to reopen the French schools. It's enough to disgust you with everything.

"And Manouissef?" James cut in. A small ribald gleam shone in the eyes of "Pana".

- That's funnier! he said.

1. *The Victorious*, a title solemnly awarded to Kemal Pasha.

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"Can you imagine that the animal managed to sleep with the wife of an American embassy attaché and that she divorced him, after he had, the same night, proved to her eleven times the worth of the Circassian cavalry. »

But the amorous prowess of Wrangel's ex-aide-de-camp does not interest Nobody.

"Little Mickham?" he continued, again, to put us off the scent.

I am sure he did not hear Theopoulos' reply.

- Natasha? he inquired, then, in a voice that trembled a little.

- She ? The Tcheka had it, by force. We found his body, strangled, near the Ile aux Princes. The crabs had already eaten it.

And then the Greek had to remember and he crossed his lips quickly, three times.

In our art, it is sometimes more difficult to hold on with a crushed heart than to risk your dog's life, knowingly, with a smile.

So I frankly admired James who, his eyes barely misting up, went on in the same bargain-hunting tone he used so much with regard to Panaioti:

"So still as devout?"

"Shouldn't we make our salvation?" We don't know who lives or who dies! answered the other seriously.

The Pickwickian laugh rang clear.

"You will see that one day he will sit near Saints Cyril and Methodius, like a just man, at the right hand of God!"

"But I'm kidding, it's not all that, he went on, tell us, 'as a friend,' what do you think is correct in these vague rumors of the Phanar? Is it true that His Beatitude Basil III is dying? »

This specific question immediately triggered a new series of hasty signs of the cross.

- Alas! groaned Theopoulos, it is to be feared that the terrible persecutions of the time of Mahomet II will soon recur against our brothers.

He was tempted, once again, to spit on the ground, restrained himself.

"The Orthodox Church, as then, is divided against itself... The Phanar (— he lowered his voice —) is a den of thieves. The Igoumenes receive with one hand the alms of the poor people and with the other they touch Ghazi! We are deceived, betrayal reigns. »

"Why didn't you go pop?" I insinuated; but he did not laugh at this joke which would have made him guffaw in other circumstances.

"For me, the Most Holy Patriarch is already dead!" he continued. We are

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cache to prepare, to falsify, at leisure, the election of his successor.

"With him the last light of Faith will have been extinguished, the bulwark of true Christianity! »

When Panaioti began to philosophize in this way, it was either that he knew nothing or that he meant nothing.

James doesn't insist on passing.

'Come on, old man, we didn't come here to lament the fate of your co-religionists. He only half worries me. They've seen other and worse ones and they've always gotten away with it!

"We are here to have fun. You will provide us with a guide, by hand, which will show us the places where we amuse ourselves in spite of the Kemal police. »

And, as the fat Greek protested that there was no longer a "box", worthy of the name, in all of Istanbul, he took him quickly by the arm, spun him around and propelled him towards the door, saying :

"Well, get on with it!" But we hear laughter.

"...If he is not convinced, this time, that we are on a special mission, he resumed, when the heavy steps of the manager had moved away along the flagstone vestibule, I will make myself a tax collector on the way back. going to rack your brains to guess who we're dealing with and I think that, until tomorrow, he'll leave us in royal peace. Until then. But... "

He stopped and it was with a grimace that he said:

" *Damn it !* Provided, all the same, that he is not right... that we are not too late. »



It is fairly generally believed that the bond, this bond of obedience which united the Russian Churches to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople had been only nominal for centuries.

This is a mistake, in my opinion...

Not only did all the leaders of the Holy Synod retain a sort of indelible imprint of Byzantium, which is expressed, superficially, at least, by an almost unhealthy taste for secrecy, for mystery—even where there is no There aren't any — but before 1918, a whole skein, happily complicated, of hidden hierarchies existed between Istanbul and Kiev between Kiev, Moscow, Petersburg.

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Strannis and starets were constantly traveling from one town to another.

Certainly the Phanar did not give orders. He recommended, suggested, but one can say, without being mistaken, that his influence was exercised even in the political field, since he constantly "animated"—indirectly it is true—with a truly unified view. prophetic, to name only these two, Constantin Pobiednotseff, the creator of Pan-Slavism, the first intimate adviser and dearest friend of Alexander III and his successor von Plehwe, the mentor of Nicolas II, the founder of the Okrana, whose assassination(1) led to the debacle of absolutism.

Better placed than the Holy Synod to judge the European situation as a whole, the Phanar—I have had proof of this—had foreseen, from the beginning of July 1914, the catastrophe into which—how long? — the worst Empire of the Czars!

His Beatitude Basil III had not said verbatim to Father Quêtand, a Redemptorist, who maintained affectionate relations with Her, while he was carrying out his excavations on the side of the tomb of Achilles:

— *Such a war will not be popular with the Russian masses. The idea of a revolution is much more familiar to him than a victory over the Germans...*

"Finally, neither peoples nor men escape their destiny for an hour," after which She crossed herself.

As soon as Muscovite power began to shake, people were prepared on the Orthodox shores of the Bosphorus to collect all the religious archives of Holy Russia.

Bolshevism does not seem, moreover, an irremediable evil, quite the contrary, to the Igoumenes.

Do some of them not see in it a kind of necessary test, from which the mysticism of the Slavic soul must be reborn as purified, in a renewal of ardent faith, a faith finally rid of what like to call western rot.

And such fanatics are not far from blessing, basically, those of the masters of the USSR who tend to return Russia to her Asian destinies!

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...I have been received in audience at the Vatican many times, and not so long ago. I searched the Phanar twice in 1920 and discovered there proof of the role played by the Bulgarian monks of a convent on Mont 1. Juillet 1904.

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Athos during the "submarine warfare", as fuel suppliers and refuellers of the "U schiffs" which operated, at that time, in the passes of the Dodecanese.

These visits symbolize for me, better than any possible treatise of complicated theology, the fundamental differences which exist between the two now divorced, conflicting branches of primitive Christianity.

On one side, a sumptuous palace, where all is order and harmony, on the other a tangle of low buildings, devoid of any unity, of any style, having only one common measure, the almost complete shortage of openings on the outside and where - the narrow threshold crossed - one loses oneself, immediately, in a tangled maze of corridors, dark staircases, cul-de-sacs, of space.

Yet there is one point in common between the two opposing Churches.

In both, the sacristans have more or less the same way of dragging their feet on the flagstones and are endowed with the same cocky look.

...The old man who greeted us in the hallway of the Phanar was no exception to this rule.

Confident in his filthy cassock, which was studded with dandruff, he ushered us, on the left, into a narrow, dark room, furnished with mismatched chairs, the walls of which were adorned with chromos in the worst Saint Sulpician taste, and inquired, then, in Greek, — bowing most humbly, — of the desire of our Lordships.

However, his squint look had already, from below, gauged us, despised, perhaps feared.

I know the "house" well enough to know that this waiting room is usually reserved for unimportant visitors, so I replied, in French, in a tone of displeasure:

"But see the Patriarch, parbleu!"

"To be admitted to the honor of having a special audience with the Most Holy Basil III, my good man!" Confirmed Nobody, mockingly...

Fifty years of hypocrisy had given the phanariote perfect self-control; yet this brazen request made his ugly oily face pale.

He had a frightened look at the annoying images of holiness, hung on the wall, and did not know what to answer in Greek, in a low, almost frightened voice:

"But Your Lordships must make a request in writing, with the statement of the reasons, the detailed object, the reasons for the visit they wish to make.

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to His...to His Beatitude. The Secretariat will respond and grant if necessary!

The bewilderment of the puppet was, of course, quite pleasing to see, although quite understandable.

Imagine the "face" that a Swiss, or even a noble guard, would make at the door of the Vatican, if someone ordered him to take him, without further delay, to the presence of the Most Holy Father!

Now, if he is much more obscure for the mass of Christendom, the Ecumenical Patriarch is perhaps less accessible than the Vicar of Christ in Rome.

- Hurry up ! We are in a hurry ! resumed Nobody, with a haughty air, with that disdain for the *natives* natural to any good Englishman.

The sexton squirmed.

"I can only repeat...

- It's good, I cut. That is ! Take us to Archimandrite Theophanes.

"Tell him that there is someone waiting to bring him the golden cross from the Armenian Chapel of the Holy Servitudes. »

My friend looked at me with a look that meant:

- Well, you do not lack "bolt"!

The fact is that eleven years ago this golden — but hollow — pectoral cross had played a decisive role in the trial of Pope Dionis, a bold emissary of the Soviets, shot at San Stéfano after he had been sold for a thousand pounds by the already influential figure of the Phanar, the igumen Theophanes (1).

This time the old sexton seemed completely disconcerted.

"I'll see if His Eminence is visible," he sighed. Until then Your Excellencies deign to wait.

- Here ? Oh but no!

The man definitely understood that he had made a blunder and, defeated, he led us, but without any good grace, through a completely deserted cloister, to a sort of rotunda, lit by buckets of oil, so ment overloaded with gilding it looked like the interior of a reliquary.

Our eyes had a hard time getting used to this half-light at first, but we had plenty of time to appreciate the details of the archaic Byzantine mosaic to which the trembling reflections of the nightlights clung.

And even, as our guide was late, I admit that an insidious uneasiness came over me, under the great empty eyes of the immense saints who stared at us from the walls, the vaults, the stained-glass windows.

1. In the Catholic hierarchy igoumene corresponds to priest and archimandrite corresponds to archpriest and gives right to the title of Monsignor.

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And this perpetual sliding of vague shadows, glimpsed through the trefoil-shaped door, finished scouring the nerves, while died on the threshold - under these muffled rustles - the mysterious noises of the palace: silvery tinkling of a bell, last echo of a psalmody.

Certainly we were being spied on!

And that bugger sexton who still didn't come back!

...Finally, he reappeared, after an interminable half hour, more obsessed and more cocky, and, without a word, he waved to us.

Vaulted corridors, low, so low that I feared that Nobody, taller than me, would knock himself out there!... casemate stairs going down to go up, for no reason, a few meters further... damp, dark, heavy courtyards of all the hints of the Orient... of the chapels glimpsed, so dark that the scarlet lamps, burning in front of the iconostasis, did not awaken a twinkle.

The impression came over us, both, that the modern rhythm of our steps was committing, in such a place, a kind of sacrilege.

Dads, seeing us, suddenly disappeared in front of us, then melted into the darkness.

The old man was still advancing, as if he were trying to lose us through the tortuous labyrinth.

...For a moment we were seized, rolled in the sound waves of a liturgical chant, hoarse, wild, of infinite despair, proclaimed by magnificent basses.

The man was still trotting, like a rat, and this silent procession was, by and large, a nightmare.

We were still disgusted by the indefinable smell which is attached to Byzantine worship, and which obsessed our nostrils, a mixture of incense, sweat, dirt, mold and damp fabrics.

Suddenly our guide stopped in front of a door concealed by the scrolling of a very old fresco, with faded colors.

He scratched, opened.

And the shock, the visual shock that I received felt like a punch in the face.

...Archimandrite Theophanes was seated, when we entered, behind an enormous American-style roll-top desk, and he was typing on a typewriter—a late-model *Underwood*—with the methodical speed of a professional.

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The furnishings consisted of filing cabinets, leather seats, numerous mahogany files.

And the room, plastered with whitewash, lit by very large bay windows, overlooking a garden planted with beautiful centuries-old fruit trees, was filled with a thick smoke fragrant with expensive cigars.

In fact, as soon as he saw us, the high Orthodox dignitary precipitately crushed a *Henri-Clay* in a cup and came to meet us, eager, with both hands outstretched.

He was huge now, red, glistening, apoplectic, bursting, as they say, with health.

But the thick hair that rose in glossy bushes to his eyes was still the same inky black and the eyes, still liquid, under the eyelids, which were a little heavier, retained the same dull metallic sheen.

'Ah, Captain,' he said with effusive cordiality, wrapping his two soft, spongy, moist palms around my fingers for a long time. How kind of you, really, to remember me thus! What an honor to receive you in this house, - he made a gesture that embraced his absurd "tourage" of a businessman, - where I try to introduce a little of the essential modernism, even if it means passing, near some, for a henchman of the Old Enemy!

He spoke decent French.

It was in English, however, that he resumed, leaning towards James

— *Delighted, I am sure, to meet the famous Nobody* (1).

No more than I was my comrade taken in by this exuberant oriental politeness.

For Archimandrite Theophanes, we certainly represented potential trouble, perhaps—did he know? - a danger.

...Legs crossed, half sprawled on the *tan leather sofa*, after having established us in heavy comfortable "*morris*", our host finally thought it appropriate to inquire into the reason for our presence at the Phanar.

"My God, here it is..."

James glanced at me, looking embarrassed.

And I resumed, playing his game:

— Well, my friend would have liked to see His Beatitude, so...

- For a small private question, finished Nobody, peacefully.

1. Delighted, you can believe me, to meet the famous Nobody.

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- Oh! Very well ! But it is understood! exclaimed thick lips.

And the tone seemed to say: "Well, to see you two here, I would have believed in more imperious, more robust demands!" »

"...How so, I would be happy to do you this small favor. »

The voice took a moment and the thick mouth wrinkled under the beard.

"Only, isn't it, for the moment, it's a little difficult for me. I'm sorry, you're wrong. His Beatitude is seized up.

"Oh nothing serious. »

The presentation took a confidential turn:

"Transient indisposition, but with a worn-out old man, of the age of the Most Holy Patriarch, doctors are required to take justified precautions and visits are suspended.

"Of course, if it were up to me, I would gladly break these rules to oblige you. But I would attract the wrath of the *Episcopi*, frozen in a rigid tradition.

"Can you wait eight days? Until then, the illustrious égotant will certainly be put back and I will be happy to obtain your audience for you".

From the beginning of this speech, my opinion was made up.

Despite his commanding smile and his anesthetic pathos, Theophane sweated lies.

There was no doubt that the old Basil III must have been on the brink of death and they were chambering his agony—Panaioti had sensed it—to prepare for his succession, according to the new breeze blowing from Asia on the Bosphorus.

The "Jeune-Phanar", would not miss this great opportunity to take control.

"Eight days, of course. Fifteen if necessary! replied Nobody, jovially. There's really no rush!

Perhaps the Archimandrite was in too much of a rush to escort us back to the Phanar's outer gate—a much shorter route—a slight mistake in tactics.

But his "victory" was to make him more cordial, more exuberant.

No doubt, he thought, apart from him:

"A week from now Basil will be exhibited on a catafalque and you will have, my good friends, to content yourself with going and piously kissing the hand of his remains. »

So much so that it was only in the terminal vestibule that he asked us the question I had been waiting for from the start:

"By the way, perhaps I myself could have procured for you, without further delay,

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the information you intended to request from the Holy Patriarch.

"All Church archives are at my disposal. »

"Then be careful, old man," I said to him in a Parthian dart. To know their secrets too well, one hardly makes old bones!



It is useless, is it, for me to recount how we lost the "apprentice" who did his best to follow us, after our departure from the Phanar, nor what were our dealings with the Armenian Braïdjian when, more late, between dog and wolf, we slipped discreetly into his stinking shop.



Although it was one o'clock in the morning, no one slept at the Phanar, sure enough, that night.

And when the two mitred abbots of the Russian convents of Mount Athos — Pantalelmon and Saint-André — disembarked from their automobile in front of the thick studded door and inquired from the porter about the igoumen on duty, the immense composite building resounded with a murmur, a confused buzzing, rather, similar to that of a beehive.

The *papa*, who came to greet them, knew all that was due to these influential voters, whose word would carry weight during the very next conclave too, he hastened to them, worried- he of their needs, after having piously kissed them on the shoulder.

They refused the collation which he offered to have served to them, in that low voice, with a hoarse accent, of solitaries who have lost even the habit of speaking and, saying they were tired of the journey—they had as soon as the messages were received, they demanded only a cell where they could gather there, before replenishing their exhausted strength by a few hours of sleep.

Then, the rite of hospitality (1) performed by a young deacon, — God, they had their feet anointed with a holy and ancient filth! — they were led, with little pomp, to the apartment which the igoumene-bursar, having been warned, had in the meantime had prepared for them.

The bumps of the bad roads traveled from Cavalla - either some

1. Ritual foot washing which takes place in a special room.

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five hundred kilometers - must certainly have crushed them, for hardly had they been installed in a vast room, furnished in the "Second Empire" period, than they fell down, side by side, on the immense oversized bed of a rather abnormal width, an eloquent but mute witness to the very singular pastimes in which such ephthemis indulge.

Anyone who had come in — ah discreetly and on tiptoe, of course — to make sure they were resting, in the half hour that followed, would have found them already snoring with closed fists and fully dressed, careless of the quilts that they quietly soiled with their muddy, muddy boots and gray, oily hair.

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— *Get a move on you*(1) !

Nobody gently nudged me.

With his turgid beard he looked at least as much like a highwayman as the leader of one of the richest communities of the Ancient world.

— *Yes a bloody move* (2) ! he resumed.

...Rarely does a dubious word escape James' courteous lips.

I understood what tension of spirit this coarseness betrayed, what reaction it expressed against the bewitchment of the atmosphere.

He was morally suffocating in his anchorite cast-off.

And that energetic outburst kept him from being devoured by the character he was playing.

I answered him in French — French, without a tonic accent, is the language which is most easily whispered; she is the one who gets along the least distance.

— I have a precise point of reference. We are right next to the chapel of Saint-Euloge.

Blessed be that providential old scoundrel Braidjian!

God grant that gratitude for past services will remain an Armenian virtue!

Not only the two frocks of the Order of Blessed Saint Athanase,

1. Get busy.

2. Hurry up, N.. of D...

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procured by the second-hand dealer in Top-Hane were exact, faithful in every detail, but the plan of the patriarchy—acquired at a high price—was clear!

...Our colts, with the safety catch in the right pocket of our cassocks, we slipped in the corridor.

It seemed fortunately deserted, but, nevertheless, the night vibrated like invisible presences.

An infinitely lugubrious song rose from the nearby sanctuary, where I recognized the accents, chanted "*Paraskhou, Kyrie*", of the psalm for the dying.

Preceded by thurifers, an officiant passed us, without their seeming to notice us, enveloped as they were, all three, in a thick cloud of incense and so golden that they looked as if they had descended of an icon.

We went, resolute in everything, using the map at the crossroads of the tangled corridors.

Finally, such passages crossed, such numerous meanders traveled, we were on the underground threshold behind which the Slayer watched!

That she was there?

Without a doubt!

One had only to listen to the crackling, regular rattle which dominated, at intervals, the last liturgical echoes, arriving from the world of the living.

We pushed open a metal door.

In a completely bare cell, mournfully lit by a red iconostasis lamp, an old man was dying, alone, on a bed of straps, a pallet.

Only ? Or at least away from any pious human presence.

For the eyes which were still alive, and with what brilliance, were fixed on a gigantic icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, gleaming with precious stones, which an easel held upright at the foot of the wretched bed.

A glory of this world was passing!

...I would have scrupled to interrupt this mute mystical colloquium, so profound that the dying man did not suspect our presence.

But already James, without hesitation, had approached the diaper, having taken the icon of Saint Seraphim of Sarof from an inside pocket of his pants.

Basil III gave a start.

His gaze fell away from the Queen of Mercy.

His waxy hands scraped the sheet.

the seven heads of the green dragon

And, leaning in my turn, I heard rising from her lips, cracked with fever and bloodless:

- I forgive you. But let the dogs wait until I'm cold to fight over my old bones! So much impatience is sacrilege! Let me fall asleep in peace.

"Elect whoever you want. But you will never prevent the will of the Most High from manifesting itself with brilliance. I don't hate you anymore. Leave quickly. »

- Dad ! I whispered.

The emotion, the deference in my voice seemed to astonish him, and no doubt he must have suspected something.

And then his gaze touched the pious image that James held out to him.

He saw the halo removed and his body gave such a start that I thought he was passing away.

"Father," I repeated. We need to talk ! ...to your friends Teddy Legrand, James Nobody, you know well who brought you the supreme words of Patriarch Thikkone (1).

"We must be helped to understand the secret of this inscription. The blood of the righteous cries out for vengeance. Father, may it please you to offer to heaven the precious sacrifice of your last earthly minutes. The judge is there. He is very close!

"The chalice!" Ah! Get him away!

The lips quivered for a few moments as if for a very short prayer.

Visibly—divine miracle, miracle of a masterful will—the soft rant regained strength.

I even believe that a smile crossed his tawny face.

"You fooled them, my sons. You have reached me! »

Nobody insisted, pressing.

"Speak, speak quickly, *my lord!*" If you do not enlighten us, the stain of blood will spread, this time, over all of Europe and Christianity will perish.

- Too late ! groaned the broken voice.

For eleven years I have waited for this icon of the Czarina.

"Sure emissaries have scoured Siberia in every way. Nothing, ever; I never knew. And it only comes to me when the gates of Death open ajar. My poor eyes no longer have the strength to read the message. That

does he say? »

1. Tortured by the Cheka and whom Nobody managed to approach — but that's another story — in time for him to reveal the hiding place of the Holy Synod's treasure which the Bolsheviks wanted to appropriate.

Phanar, September 1929

I whispered it to him.

His fingers then sought and then grazed the sharp characters, etched on the polished silver surface.

— Yes, that is their handwriting! Aleksandra; poor Nicky! How right he was. Too late !

I would never have believed that this emaciated body still contained such reserves of energy, such great vitality.

The magnificent soul dominated the exhausted earthly cast-off, bandaged it, galvanized it.

The luminous thought springs from the cave of the mouth, in a strange form certainly and well made to confuse.

— When the ghost of Alexander III appeared at the magical seances of the lodge of Tsarkoïe and communicated to his son his instructions from beyond the grave (1), we knew here, in advance, in what terms the fire tsar would speak.

“Philippe would not have risked incurring our anathema. It was a precious instrument.

“His nine medianimic prestige on the mysticism of the court reinforced our warnings, those that we had to make heard...”

The old man who had risen on his pillows fell back.

His panting breath missed him.

He wanted to continue anyway.

“Only the Tsar could prevent the predictions from coming to pass...The Battle of Armageddon. The Battle of the Apocalypse. The white horses.

The Hydra with seven heads and seven crowns. The Green Hydra! »

Sacred delirium! Vision brought by the imminent approach of death.

The sunken eyes widened.

The being who so vaticinated was already no longer of this world.

Prophecy? Nightmare ? Whirlwind of those supreme memories that haunt those who are about to pass?

“The bad shepherds are clothed in the skin of sheep. One head severed, two heads regrow. Rasputin, cursed puppet! Hatred of Europe, hatred of him who wanted perpetual peace. Blood on the white tunic! The two madmen of Serajévo. No one has understood that the Green Hydra had armed the arm of the Serb... However old he is the son of Helles, on his rock, his golden rock, is not satisfied... The brain is on the land icy, if the tentacles extend and ramify over the world...Holy Russia, barrier of Europe,

1. See, in confirmation, the Memoirs of Palaeologus, volume III, page 93.

the seven heads of the green dragon

support of the Church, if you give in, the mares of Tamerlane will bathe on the shores of Brittany.

"Thank you, Lord, I will not see the time of abomination. A breath passed over my face and my hair stood on end.

"The English, if he arrives, shaken Russia finds an army and the Germanic wave breaks. But the abyss has opened up. The forces of evil are unleashed. Nothing can stop them anymore.

"Yes, however, a man, this Jew, this Rathenau who wanted to make the Franco-German alliance. We conferred at length. He could see clearly...but they killed him. And the time is approaching when Europe will tremble under the sharp spurs of *the Man with two Zs*.

" Too late. No, maybe, if you...

...We were so suspended, Nobody and I, with the gasping aunts of the dying man that we had not heard the door of the cell open.

A cry from the old man saved us, a strangled cry of terror.

Behind us a giant *papa* brandished, like a club, an enormous copper candlestick.

With a punch under the left breast, Nobody sent him rolling.

And it was, in a few seconds, alongside the dying, an atrocious melee and confused.

A furious stream of Levite men rushed upon us in an uproar of chewed Greek imprecations.

In the blink of an eye our false beards and wigs were torn off.

We would surely have succumbed under the claws of these madmen and under their improvised weapons, if the very excess of their rage and the cramped conditions of the place had not made their blows clumsy and their gestures uncertain.

Closed too closely to be able to use our pistols, which we should have hit first, we defended ourselves well, however, and each of our ripostes snuffed out his man, all the better than a heavy silver cross. massive and a dented gold censer, torn off in the hand-to-hand combat, constituted, in our hands, rather effective tools.

Jostled, the icon of the Virgin tumbled from the easel, causing a stir in the mass.

I jumped.



Fig. 5.

The embalming corpse of His Beatitude Basil III, Patriarch of Constantinople, tied to his throne, according to the Orthodox rite.

(Photograph taken on October 1 , two days after our escape from the Phanar and kindly communicated by Ibrahim Bey, of the Ottoman Security.)

the seven heads of the green dragon

- Hello Nobody! I exclaimed.

In two whirls, I broke the two oil lamps.

And, in total darkness, through the human swarm that reeked of sweat and goatee, under the vociferations, we managed to reach the door.

It was the beginning of a frantic race through the corridors, the galleries, the deserted corridors; but this time, our two colts in hand, we no longer had much to fear, the more so as our aggressors seemed to wish to confine themselves to making us prisoners alive.

The horror of my last vision of the patriarch obsessed me, while I quickened my gymnastic step, shoulder to shoulder with Nobody, surprisingly stamina for a big man who was over fifty.

...The desiccated body, collapsed backwards across the bed, the white head touching the ground, the ivory features revulsed, the mouth open as if frozen on the supreme cry of terror...

A dirty dawn peeking timidly through the stained-glass windows allowed us to head wisely towards the exit.

We had outrun the pack; but, for a moment, at a detour, the sound of footsteps approaching made us believe that a new obstacle was about to arise in front of us.

They were just two little boys, as handsome as cherubs, touchingly serious under their oversized cassocks.

As soon as they saw our weapons, they fell on their knees in terror, imploring mercy.

Always running, we were far before they thought of shouting.

Finally a window appeared.

Break it, jump three meters into the kind of little garden that surrounds the walls, painted faded blue, of the Patriarchate, climb the mediocre gate that protects – very badly – the Phanar ... this time we were saved and richer information of inestimable value than we could have hoped for.

To look at us mutually, our gaiety took back its rights. And we burst out laughing, more perhaps as a natural reaction, due to the effect of the comical spectacle, suddenly ripe, that we were both presenting.

What a touch indeed we had, with our beards sticking out, our ragged cassocks, our scratched and swollen faces.

Was it this singular draw or the fact that, bearers of apparent weapons, we contravened the Edicts of Kemal Pasha?

Phanar, September 1929

The fact remains that the Ottoman *zaptiés* who returned empty-handed from a tour of Balata(1) did not hesitate for a second to put their hands on our collar!

Brave pandores with astrakhan hats! Providential backup 1

Shadows were beginning to swarm over the narrow parvis of Saint-Georges, under the gate of Fanar-Kapou.

What would have happened to us, if the igumens had been able to alert the fanatical plebs who lodge in the Byzantine ruins of ancient Pammacaristos, the alleys of EivanSerai, the hovels of Petri-Kapu, by designating us to their rage as the Assassins of Basil?

We would have been torn before we could even reach the Vieux-Pont or the Golden Horn!

While under the somewhat brutal protection of the *djandarma* !

— *Let's do Tchabouk! Police Station(2) !*

Faced with these bizarre delinquents, who insistently demanded to be taken to the police station, the two policemen hesitated.

Maybe they felt like they were getting into a trap.

But as Nobody continued:

- *Haide! Barber gueliniz! Chlike var! Chok baksheesh(3) !* they dragged us away immediately, at a brisk pace, splitting with a *Varda(4) !* imperious the gathering, hostile in appearance, which was beginning to surround us on all sides.

A few blows from the truncheon sufficed to cause the immediate crowding of the "curious" (?) who had come out of the neighboring dead ends, and very soon we had only a few obstinate phanariotes in our way, prowling at a distance behind us, like the hyena fearing the stones of the passing caravan.



Although, since our arrival in Istanbul, James had not ceased to rail against the Ghazi, his good faith nevertheless obliged him to recognize that in certain cases the dictatorship of Kemal had excellent effects.

Instead of the old , fetid *Karakol(5)*, which used to be found at the entrance to the

1. The old Jewish quarter near the Phanar.
2. Hurry to the police station!
3. Hurry up, come with us. There is danger. Big tip.
4. For!
5. "Violin"

the seven heads of the green dragon

Balouk-Bazar, we found a police station, modern and clean, a brigadier and very courteous inspectors, an intelligent secretary.

And twenty minutes had not elapsed when the telephone having gone off, at the instigation of James, who knows how to talk to the Turks, a car came to pick us up at the door of the Merkez and, under the escort of our zaptiés, took us to Eski-Seraï(1), now assigned to the services of the police prefecture, the *Poliss bath mudirieti*.

In the meantime, the timely distribution of twenty *medjodies* had won us the deferential good graces of our argousins and enabled us, by means of hot water, soap and alcohol taken from a portable pharmacy, to restore our almost respectable appearance, which fit with our stitched and respectfully brushed Levites.

So we were, once again, looking almost like gentlemen—despite our attire—when an usher ushered us into the office of *the oula* (2) who insisted on receiving us.

The office of the "*commissioner chief of control*" of Scotland Yard is certainly not laid out with more sober care than the one we entered, and I have hardly known in France but a great prefect - Corsican - who could have laughed, like elegance, with the handsome, tanned boy, obviously dressed in a posh Bond-street tailor, who gazed at us half-sternly, half-intrigued.

- You owe me a revenge poker aces! Ibrahim Bey, I exclaimed, recognizing in the high official, seated behind a cluttered desk, this former little inspector who had, for a time, been paid — handsomely, my faith — in our services and to whom I had, very often, predicted a rapid ascent, contributing to it, by my notes, as far as I could.

His surprise was as frank, it seemed to me, as his pleasure—slightly proud, perhaps—at being in a position to help me in turn.

"You, Captain!" Oh for example. *Mashallah!* If I expected.

I introduced him to Nobody, whom he had probably never known, and the deference he showed my old companion from then on proved to me that his *savoir-vivre* equaled his diplomacy.

From this we were to have a more positive testimony later on. our interview.

1. The former Ministry of War.

2. Senior police official with the rank of colonel.

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- I do not have to know, Gentlemen, he declared to us in substance, how you attracted this...excess of hospitality on the part of the Patriarchate.

"I can assure you, however, that given the circumstances, the *epitropes* will be careful not to bring a complaint against you...

"Archimandrite Theophanes is too shrewd, in my opinion, to draw attention to the singular events which preceded, in Phanar, the death of the last Patriarch. But yes, his death has just been confirmed to me unofficially.

"I don't believe at all that he cares for the Orthodox crowds to learn, from people worthy of faith, that His late Beatitude may not have exactly had an end...peaceful and natural! »

I smile, delighted.

Ibrahim was decidedly very strong and deserved his advancement.

He already *knew* the details of our little misadventure.

Did he suspect the reasons?

He seemed very proud of the glance of "professional appreciation" that I gave him and especially of the "*Fine work*" (1) of which Nobody underlined my approval.

"...However, I would be sorry," he went on, after a while, "to have to accompany you to the Balekli cemetery and to be obliged to classify your premature death under the heading of accidents...I therefore believe that we we agree.

— The first train to Adrianople always leaves at 2 p.m. 30 ? Nobody inquired quietly.

"In that case, is it going too far, dear friend, to ask you to have two superimposed berths retained there?" I asked, still smiling.

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1. Nice work!

Suffice it to say here that it was Ibrahim himself who had our hotel bills settled and had our suitcases picked up there and that he then drove us to Sirkedji station, in his magnificent Chrysler, after that we had, at his place, resumed our normal appearances and our usual clothes...

Nevertheless, at the last moment, as the train was about to pull away, two stocky men burst into the first-class pullman in which we were occupying two seats...two men with borrowed manners, badly cut black clothes, nails bereaved, who smelled, twenty meters away, the phanariote!...

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Chapter III

Orient-Express.

After the hectic night James and I had spent inside the Phanar, sleeping would have been the greatest blessing for us.

Now, although we had won our two berths early, we could hardly sleep a wink.

The body aches resulting from the numerous blows received during the tragic scuffle, at the bedside of Basil III, had something to do with it; but we were above all worried about the continual comings and goings of the two bearded phanariotes who kept coming and going again and again in front of the door of our bed, like sentries, until daylight.

Were our two corridor surveyors clumsily zealous, clumsily presumptuous? Were they in such a hurry to send us *ad patres* that they did not want to miss the slightest favorable opportunity?

In fact, we never knew it, because, as we arrived at the station of Lule-Bourgas, where - on the Turkish-Bulgarian border - the inspection of passports and small hand luggage is practiced, two gendarmes of King Boris jumped, as soon as the train stopped, on the step of our car and, advising our "guardian angels", rudely begged them to get off and follow in their footsteps.

They protested, of course, for the form, with a lot of unctuous gestures, but, grabbed without care, they quickly had to give in to force and we saw them, shortly after, disappear, under good escort, behind the door of the office next to the special commissioner.

...Lule-Bourgas, dirty little town, promoted by the oddity of the treaties with the far too heavy dignity of a border town, you seemed to us, from then on, despite the gray and cold dawn and the fog, something, you see, like the enchanting edge of the Promised Land, far from neo-Orthodox hatreds and their complicated revenges.

the seven heads of the green dragon

Fear ? Nope ! We weren't scared.

But it was pleasant enough to be able to make a few projects beyond the immediate future, without fear of a fatal hitch, without worrying about a fatal accident.

Small happiness that we savor when we lead a bumpy life like ours, to James and to me.

— Brave Ibrahim Bey! I murmured, quite convinced that we owed to this distant solicitude the evasion of our "hopes".

Nobody's reply seemed to me quite absurd and interrupted the recital of thanksgiving that I dedicated to my ex-collaborator.

- Oh that ! another conquest of feminism! he said, half-sarcastically, suddenly grabbing my elbow.

I admit that, following the direction he was pointing to me with a firm pressure on the arm, I couldn't hold back a jerk.

In the Balkans, of course, I have made it a rule to surprise myself as little as possible. But still, this time!

... Miter in head, crozier in hand, amethyst on finger — a few yards on the quay — a bishop was finishing his blessing of a hundred faithful who, kneeling on the ground, surrounded him in a fervent and meditative circle.

To tell the truth, pretty girls and stocky teenagers dominated among these flocks.

...It was already surprising to see a bishop about to board the Orient-Express in priestly vestments. It was, perhaps, even more so to realize that this bishop could be, at the most, thirty years old, and that he had painted cheeks, artificially red lips!

Faced with this unusual spectacle, the many passengers on the train, from dead to treading water, crowded, rather cheeky, on the side of the strange prelate; the windows of the carriages rolled down, letting inquisitive heads still blurred by sleep.

But surely much more would have been needed to disturb the ecclesiastical dignitary's my nifest serenity.

His green gaze met mine, too quickly for me to blend into the denser crowd, gathered together, and, apparently satisfied, as if he had finally discovered the person he was looking for there, he again blessed his young suite and quietly headed for the entrance to the lounge car that had just been hooked up behind the direct cars for Vienna.

- All the same ! grumbled Nobody, his eyes following the rather hazy figure as it swayed in a harmonious sway.

And stifled sneers, ironic reflections, exchanged within earshot, confirmed to us that we were not the victims of a mistake.

Forgive me for this coined word, but this character dressed in all Catholic pomp... this bishop was a *bishop* !

"All the same," resumed my friend, when we had regained our compartment shortly afterwards, and the train had started. I am not suspected of tenderness with regard to your popery, but let it be disfigured in these sacrilegious mass carades! I have not seen anything, even in Eastern Europe, so shocking. These people must be hysterical.

I smile :

"It is very certain that strange ceremonies must bring together the beautiful faithful and followers of this sort. I know that in Poland, recently, the false bishop Kowalski, who was the promoter, was severely condemned, as well as his "mystical wives", by the court of Plock for public assault on morals.

Nobody thought for a while and said, more than questioned:

"So this 'grue' would be Mariavite?"

- Lady ! I said, amused by the accent with which he pronounced the name of fickle wader; I only know them for having, thus, a female clergy, whose costume and hierarchy are very exactly modeled on those of the Catholic clergy...

"That doesn't surprise me, anyway," I continued, when my voice ceased to be drowned out by the scrapping clamor of a bridge being crossed at sixty kilometers an hour. Following its failure in Poland, Mariavism spread to Bulgaria where it made many conquests! The "Bugres" have fire in the veins!

Long experience has proved to me that these sorts of sects—erotic under cover of mysticism—do not only have the tendency to lead their faithful disciples towards the joys of the "inner circle", the "par touzes" of the "marriages of 'souls'.

They are all war machines mounted against the Church of Rome which they discredit by borrowing the outward signs of its cult.

the seven heads of the green dragon

"What, Towianski, Kowalowski, I'm putting it all in the same bag!" concludes Nobody, lighting a *bird's eye* pipe . Polish fragrance: incense, thigh and "Slavic charm"!

I balked.

- Let's go! You are not going to confuse the master of Mickiewicz, of Michelet with the revealing lover of the "little mother" Kozłowska... the great prophet of modern times with this henchman of black masses.

- Has... ! said my companion mischievously. I suspected it.

I had given in the panel, so tight, like a novice.

And I backed away, furious at seeing the only personal secret I cared about.

No doubt, I am part of the very closed group, thus designated by its very rare insiders, but that concerns only me and I was angry with my friend for having snatched from me this intimate semi-confidence.



James found a cordial way to snap me, in ten words, out of my shell.

"With your prodigious memory, you remembered all the Patriarch's words, didn't you?" he inquired innocently, after a long if constrained lence.

I would have had very bad grace to resist this flattery, especially since he thus approached the subject which I had hardly ceased to think about since leaving Lule-Bourgas.

"Certainly," I said. I have only to close my eyelids to find even the precise intonation. Too bad the veil, half-opened for a moment, closed again, much too quickly, in front of us; that truths stated with supreme clairvoyance have been mingled with such a stream of smoky, practically incomprehensible vaticinations.

Nobody looked at me with an ambiguous smile:

"Then, if I understand you correctly, you make two very different parts in the precious revelations that we have been able to gather from the mouth of the dying man, one... last glimmer cast by an off-line intelligence, the other... ramblings of an already disordered sick brain.

He emptied the hot bowl of his pipe under the seat.

"I don't agree with you. For me, the dying person has not derailed, even for a second. His specific allusions were simply followed by other

statements so rich, so heavy with a deep meaning, symbols, according to an allegorical key which must have been extremely familiar to him and which we will have to guess.

James nodded, rubbing his left ear vigorously.

"I grant you that practically, from the point of view which concerns us, it amounts to the same, almost.

Maybe he was right.

"So be it," I resumed. We can always try a first ranking.

Let's start by sorting out what seems indisputable, after which we will tackle the deciphering of what remains nebulous, of the obscure jumble.

"I've been doing it, *old man*, since we fled from Constantinople," replied my friend with a new touch of malice. I don't have the normalien spirit, but the old Scottish good sense...

He counted on his too short fingers.

— What emerges, in the first place, from the "confidences" of the Patriarch is, it seems to me, that there exists between the political events that appear the least connected...the most dissimilar in aspect, a link, a sort of guideline.

"In other words," I said, "mysterious forces have been running the world, secretly, for years...for certain specific purposes. This is a hypothesis based on numerous observations and which is particularly dear to me.

"His late Beatitude seems to me to have seen very correctly, certainly, on this point. »

'It was not an opinion with him; but a certainty! cor chuckled Nobody softly. Forces or causes, for him, there is no doubt! It would be the same troublemakers who would have first provoked the two murders of Sarajevo, in order to start the war, the disappearance of Kitchener who was very capable of stopping it, the savage, calculated massacre of the Russian imperial family, catastrophe which plunged Europe into the indescribable chaos from which it cannot emerge, the assassination of Rathenau who was working, with all his might, to rebuild the Peace of the World...

"Okay," I said. And still according to the Ecumenical Patriarch, the "game makers" in question, the responsible "troublemakers" would be the very people that Philippe and Rasputin called the *Greens*, those whom the Lyon occultist tried in vain to resist, these Unknown who, from Sweden, directed the action of the *Staretz*.

the seven heads of the green dragon

But James was, as a popular expression goes, fired up, for now. He didn't let me continue.

'It remains,' he said, 'to explain the allusion to the old Hellenic man gorged with honors on his golden rock and yet not satiated... the coming of the scourge of God who will be this *Man with two Zs!*

- I confess that I do not understand at all what can correspond to these strange names.



At the same time, I flinched and kicked James in the legs so hard that he kept the mark for a long time.

It's that imperceptibly the door of the reserved compartment that we were occupying had just...slid a few centimeters and that, in the gap, fingers were showing...feminine, although a little tall, but tapered and with nails faded to carmine.

I stopped, with a wink, the gesture that my comrade was already sketching towards his revolver pocket...

The door finished sliding, delivering, as I expected, passage to our beautiful *bishop!*

She was in a cassock this time, a black cassock, edged with purple, which perfectly set off the gold of her sumptuous hair and the dazzling color of a slightly oily blond flesh.

And I was embarrassed by it, more than by the vision of the station, because much more than the sacerdotal ornaments of a moment ago, the sticky fabric underlined the firm curves of a Valkyrie's chest and buttocks. ...and there was something disturbing about the sacrilege of the contrast.

The "young woman" stood in front of us for a few moments, smiling, mute, certainly relishing the equivocal confusion into which she was throwing us.

I noticed that Nobody had turned red, very red up to his ears, up to his forehead, and that he had suddenly stopped drawing on his extinguished pipe.

The Mariavite "prelate" continued, very quietly, to stare at us, with a somewhat mocking expression.

She certainly knew us—her green eyes testified to it—was amused by our obvious surprise and embarrassment.

For twenty seconds I conceived an impression, rather painful, I admit, of inferiority.



Fig. 6.

Our ex-enemy Irma Staub the famous spy..., at the time where she was a Mariavite "bishop" .

the seven heads of the green dragon

But suddenly a distant vision passed before my eyes, knew how to perpose itself to the image that filled my eyes.

I was about to speak, but Nobody, quicker than me, got ahead of me.

With a phlegmatic air, in a calm voice, but which, for me, was tinged with an indefinable contempt, he observed:

"Still very beautiful, I see, Fräulein Doktor. This black suits you perfectly.

"Mademoiselle Docteur", this name, this nickname rather, had immediately played the role of a catalyst in my memory.

Irma Staub, if you prefer, the famous German spy, the most formidable adversary my friend had ever had and whom I had reason to believe was dead.

So it was the damned ex-soul of the Germanic General-Stab who now identified himself with this Mariavite *bishopric* !

The two enemies thus found themselves in the presence of one another.

I felt like a strange mixture of worry and joy, sensing that I was going to witness an unusual duel. The witness and also the actor!

As soon as I was recognized, the Austrian (I have proof that she was born in Vienna and not at all in Potsdam, as so many people have claimed) sat gracefully beside me, still smiling and silent, so that I had plenty of time to examine it in detail.

No, of course, she hadn't changed. She was still the same, just as seductive, just as beautiful, with a gripping Nordic beauty, with that Junian brilliance that was, in truth, one of her surest weapons.

To believe that she had slipped between the years as before between the many "mousetraps" that our Intelligence Services and the "Intelligence" held out to her.

I assessed Nobody's perplexity at the sharpness of his attack:

— Does the job pay off? he said, with an expressive glance at the overly tight cassock.

The response was simpered:

'Less, of course, than the one which consists in entering the Phanar, wearing the robes of Saint Athanasius.

James appreciates *fair play* too much not to have admired this shot, delivered by the hand of a master.

So his face lit up with a very Pickwickian bonhomie.

"I certainly no longer imagined that I had the honor and the pleasure of meeting you."

counter in this world, *gnädiges Fräulein*. I welcome it. This proves to me that the game deserves to be played, played tight..., that it is worth it.

The "prelate" turned to me:

"All the more so, my dear captain, since this time I am offering you a novel diversion, for, if my assistance pleases you, we will find ourselves, you and me, me and you, on the same side of the barricade, if I may say so.

Was this woman playing wonderfully, once again, the comedy?

All trace of banter gone, a discouraged expression invaded her huge pupils and it was, in a pleading tone, clasping her hands, that she continued:

"I implore you, captain, and you, Nobody, believe me!"

"Enemies we have been, but loyal enemies, as far as our profession allows. In the name of this bond, certainly special, that this reciprocal courtesy, chivalrous on your part, perhaps sentimental on my part, has been able to establish between us, in the name of our own honor, *give me credit*, on the -field, of a parcel of confidence. »

The low voice vibrated *crescendo*; breathing gasped.

"We don't have a second..., a second, I tell you, to lose!

She approached:

"Listen, the train is full of *their* agents. In a few minutes, at the bend before the suspension bridge over the Maritza—you know? — play the alarm signal. Jump on the march. Lose yourself immediately, in the thickets. Cover your tracks, immediately!

"Why this concern?" I was not used to it! Nobody quipped, ironically. But I knew him well enough to feel that this vehemence, this sincerity of tone, had undermined the skepticism to which his attitude testified.

She wrung her hands, her face contorting in undeniable despair.

- How to convince you? However, I *must* save you. *It's necessary!*

- Why? I asked softly.

"Because the work I pursue has earned me implacable enemies and your alliance is useful to me!"

And in a lower voice, expressing real terror, one would have said:

'They are the same enemies as yours, Mr. Nobody. *I'm talking about your new bosses!*

And she added, an argument which dispelled my last doubts, and every word of which seemed to me to have been wrung from her by a force greater than her will.

the seven heads of the green dragon

"For the revenge I have sworn to achieve, whatever the cost, your assistance is essential to me. We are volunteers for the same cause!

James and I exchanged meaningful glances.

We found there, all of us, *our* passionate Irma Staub!

- Come ! she begged. Come. I will jump with you, if necessary.

The train slowed down a little after a long whistle.

And I was already stretching out my hand for the nickel-plated brass handle when our wagon swayed.

Then, with a tremendous crash, the mass of the sleeping bag capsized and slipped away from under our feet.

At the same moment a heavy suitcase with copper corners, thrown very violently from the net, hit me in the left temple.

And my last precise memory was, close to me, an atrocious cry, that of a woman being slaughtered.

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If dying were just that, it certainly wouldn't be terrible.

I had slipped into nothingness, padded with black, where slowly, my consciousness had dissolved.

The regaining of possession of my senses was marked, above all, by a sharp boring pain along the cervical vertebrae.

The instinctive reflex movement that I made at first wrung a moan from me and I heard, both very far and very near, a well-known voice, that of James, repeating to me:

— *Hello, boy!* Now is not the time to leave at all. *Cheer up!* I desperately need you.

I opened my eyes.

My comrade was on his knees beside me, unscathed, at least apparently. My comrade was on his knees beside me, unscathed, at least apparently.

Skillfully, he felt my limbs.

I ran two fingers over my forehead, brought them back smeared with blood.

'Nothing, old man; split scalp only; no lesion; I've already made sure! Nobody told me peacefully.

He grabbed me by the armpits, lifted me with a powerful effort and, although I stumbled, like a drunken man, I managed to stand.

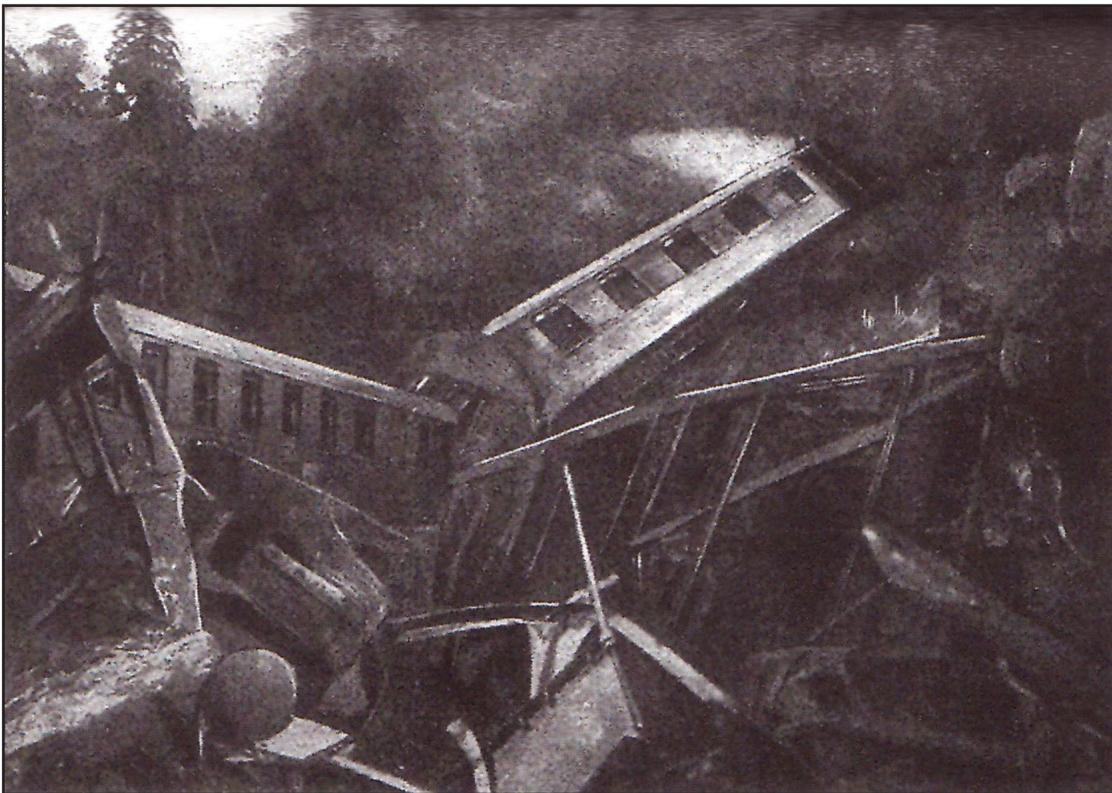


Fig. 7.

The catastrophe of the Maritza bridge where we should have perished.

the seven heads of the green dragon

My flesh felt like it had just been pulped, around my broken bones; I was ground, sore, but overall, without injury grave.

It was then, only then, that I finally realized the appalling damage caused by the attack, of which we had very nearly been the victims.

..Horrible spectacles, I have seen many of them, alas, in my career, but none reached, for me, such intensity of horror..., which is explained by the total shock of my nervous system.

The train, therefore, had derailed, at the entrance to the suspension bridge which crossed the Maritza.

The locomotive, the tender and the first four wagons had tumbled to the bottom of the narrow, steep-sided gorge where the torrential river flows, some fifty meters below.

It was nothing more than a heap of tangled ironwork, of shattered, smoking woodwork, from which rose atrocious howls.

Ragged bodies splotched scarlet on ledges, bushes on the rocky slope, where rescuers bustled about like ants and files.

..The last four cars, on the other hand, of which ours was the second, had broken their coupling, thus narrowly avoiding falling to the bottom of the precipice.

The *sleeping car*, the very one where we were talking just now, and the pullman *who* followed it, were lying on its side, intact, it seemed, through the windows.

Men were running back and forth along the broken track; contradictory orders sounded. And those moans, those groans, those cries!

Some twenty-five paces from us, red—but red from head to toe—busy doctors were tirelessly bandaging panting flesh.

Stained tarps covered rows of corpses, lined up at the bottom of the embankment. And the influx of wounded and dead increased constantly.

Was it really possible that we were indirectly responsible for this disaster? That it had been contrived solely for our intention ?

So the importance of our secret was so prodigious?

— Still, Fräulein Doktor was too right! I whispered.

Instead of answering, Nobody alerted me with a quick glance.

Haggard, a train employee approached us, half-bent, like a feline ready to pounce.

But, no sooner had he seen the gesture that James was making towards his pocket...noted that our two eyes were immediately fixed on him...that he moved away, backwards, with a big laugh, like a beast of darkness. surprised by a sudden jet of light..., a hyena who fears the brandished stone.

..A poor, lost-mind being from the concussion? An agent in charge of perfecting the work of the catastrophe, failed in what affects us at least? It would have been so easy to attribute to a crazy gesture, in the present confusion, the regrettable elimination of two surviving travelers.

— The all-steel material is good! I resumed shortly after, flattering with an uncertain hand the varnished wall of the sleeping area, to which we owed the existence and which had telescoped the car in front of it, a car with a wooden casing.

Joy of living, of taking a few steps, of gradually regaining the use of one's human rags. Animal joy to breathe, to move, in the middle of the rubble of a "cataclysm", from which one has just emerged unscathed.

- Given the circumstances, it is better that I heal you myself! concludes Nobody, following a small internal debate of which I guessed the reasons.

"It is not useful for a superficial gash to fester.

"And, on the other hand, do you ever know if, among this band of medics, opportunely appearing, there is not a merchant of sudden death in the wages of *others* ? Luckily I have my whiskey! »

Very sober, James claims, nevertheless, that there are times when a sip of "*Johnnie Walker*" can give the failing carcass the much needed boost and he always carries him in one of his back pockets. , a well-filled flat gourd.

Three minutes later, revived by a powerful swig of *Scotch tape*..., a compress of the same liquid, acting as a hemostat, attached to my frontal wound, I felt back on my feet and able to reason.

"And *her* ?" I finally asked.

- At the aid station. Bad state. But at any price, for the moment, we must not approach it. She is delirious a little. Do you see that she begins to speak more clearly, seeing us at her bedside?

"I had to confine myself, for lack of anything better, to watching her from a little distance, since I regained consciousness. »

the seven heads of the green dragon

My comrade bent down and picked up, on the ballast, a severed woman's leg, like an anatomical piece, at the top of the bronze stocking.

"A piece, most likely, of that plump little Rumanian who dined across from us last night; you remember ? She was proud of her calves and showed them generously. When I think we...

He coughed and slipped this tragic human debris under the tarpaulin.

My heart sank and I had to borrow new strength from the flat flask of whiskey.

- It's been a long time since you opened your eyes? I continued, as James fraternally helped me up the clay embankment, soggy from recent rains.

We made a detour through the dense thickets to reach a dense clump of birches from where, without being seen, we could watch the aid station.

And it was only, after having installed me on a trunk, a coarse but comfortable seat, that Nobody answered me:

"The derailment happened a little over an hour ago. The shock made me immediately lose control of my actions for an incalculable time. Did I pass out for good? Was I struck with only momentary amnesia?

"Anyway, when I resumed my almost normal perceptions, you were lying, stretched out beside me, on the embankment.

"But *our* bishopric was not there...neither in the spared sleeping quarters nor near moth of us. »

James slowly began to stuff his inevitable *briar*.

- This discovery gave me the effect of an electric shock, he continued, while heaping the light tobacco in the stove, and galvanized me so well that I took care on the spot of looking for our ex-enemy. .

There was a silence between us.

It was without any enthusiasm that I admired this professional conscience of Nobody.

His first act had been not to take care of me, but to find, immediately, the trail that had been muddled by the accident.

He continued, a little embarrassed, and without my having said anything to him:

"I have such confidence in your veins, in your robust constitution. And then, in such moments, do we really know what we are doing?

And he concludes with a sort of restrained ardor which showed how passionate he was about our dangerous escapade:

' *She* lives, by the way. *She* will speak. Yes, she will speak, thank God!

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If it is very pleasant for me to pay a fully deserved tribute to the Bulgarian Red Cross, for its remarkable promptness in organizing relief..., if I have only to praise myself, of course, for the hospitality cordial, often generous, granted by the local authorities and the entire population of the "circle" of Philoppopoli, to the survivors of train 28..., I am forced to recognize that the police of King Boris showed a signal awkwardness in the search for *real* responsible for the disaster!

We certainly remember the conclusions of this investigation, carried out despite common sense, the scandalous arrest of this shoemaker from Sofia, a poor madman, paranoid, persecuted persecutor, who was held responsible.

A megalomaniac mythomaniac, he never ceased for a second, in a kind of delirious ecstasy, to boast, to accuse himself, to exalt his anarchic role as an adversary of society. So much so that the jury sent him to an asylum.

May he die there in peace, even if he was the material instrument of the crime! But is it not, at least, strange that neither instruction nor defense dared to find out *who* had pushed this poor wretch, this wreck, this rag, to provoke such an attack, without profit, or, *at the very least to endorse it*. Because my own conviction remains.

If we had taken the trouble to verify *the alibi*, which he naively began to provide, as soon as he was arrested, we would have found that he was serving, in this, as a scapegoat and that he had been suggested so that he would bear, in this case, all the sins of Israel!

This would again justify Kipling's famous phrase.
So back to our story.

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A few cleverly distributed bribes, right and left—Philippopoli was for a long time under the domination of the Turks—enabled us, without getting too directly involved in the matter, to ensure that Irma Staub was transported to a hotel, in spite of of his serious condition.

the seven heads of the green dragon

We were too afraid that the hospital was for her, in the short term, merely the antechamber of the morgue, and we were more reassured when that brave Swiss Feller, cordial patron of the Metropolis, who had "worked" for James, had called to his bedside an excellent doctor from Baden, residing in the rue Zar Siméon.

The former *stabs-artz* (1) did not hide from us that if the fracture of the tibia could be easily reduced, he was much more worried about the lesion of the right lung, due to the crushing of the ribs, lesion of which he could hardly determine the severity only after an x-ray, when Irma Staub would be transportable.

...The young woman was in a lot of pain when we entered her room, after Dr. Muller and his assistants had carried out plaster operations on both the leg and the torso.

She was breathing with difficulty, the wings of her nose were pinched and her discolored mouth let out, at times, a little painful rattle.

She remained beautiful, however, her heavy golden hair scattered around her drawn face, more beautiful, indeed, than I had ever seen her.

"I wasn't expecting you," she said, noticing us, after having painfully turned her head on the pillow. "But I'm glad to see you, anyway," she resumed, sketching a weak pathetic smile.

James sat down at her bedside, gently taking her hand.

And a woman this time, a little girl even, Fräulein Doktor languishes...

"Stay close to me, Nobody. It helps me die! she says.

"You are crazy, my dear," he lied, with magnificent aplomb. We ran into your doctor barely a quarter of an hour ago, downstairs in the hotel lobby. He swore to us by God that you would be completely out of business within three weeks.

She rolled, three times, her milky neck on the canvas and in a breath she whispered:

- I will tell you everything, everything, yes everything!

And you will continue, won't you, the task that they are preventing me from completing. But when the one I'm waiting for and whom I sent for, arrives in a few minutes, you will leave me alone with him...a few moments. You understand ?

Beneath Nobody's pink skin, the jaws twitched, albeit imperceptibly.

What game was this devil playing? What else had she combined?

1. Major.

- Who is this ? he said rather harshly.

- I do not know, she moaned. A priest, a pope, a monk. Doesn't matter, so as not to die like a female dog!

She had a heart-rending complaint, in which rose all the confused mysticism which remained in her, while the animality, still alive, revolted.

- I'm afraid ! she resumed, panting.

And it seems to me that there was a sudden glint of great panic terror in his eyes, something like a distant reminiscence of dread, which made cavemen shudder at the lifeless corpse of one of theirs.

When one practices a career like ours, it is an enormous force to be of Anglo-Saxon race.

A Latin would never have had the cruel courage to insist with the phlegm of Nobody:

- And that ? he said ironically, pointing with a disdainful gesture to the ecclesiastical vestments scattered on the chairs in the room.

She was shaken with such a jolt that the copper bed shook.

- Exactly, precisely, I'm afraid. I believed in nothing, before this religious masquerade. Now I have the notion of evil; I fear sacrilege.

"He had warned me well, *Him !* »

Two tears rolled down her cheeks, tears she didn't even try to hold back or wipe away.

Curiously enough, the turmoil into which our presence had thrown him gave him back a little strength and our confidence, courage.

It was clearly in a better voice that she continued:

"I hope, however, that I will be forgiven a great deal, because of the aim pursued. I had sworn to *avenge* him! From up there, sure, he protects me. Finally, I feel *him* against me and I listen to everything *he* says to me. »

At first I thought she was delirious, prey to an abnormal fever.

But, as she spoke, her remarks took on more cohesion and clarity, without losing any of their vehemence.

She had forgotten the pope, the apprehension of an approaching end and, soon bent on revenge, she lost sight of her transient, belated religious scruples.

Watching him, I rediscovered impressions that were already old; but I had never yet had the opportunity to check so closely the close relationship that could exist between it and a black panther, for example.

the seven heads of the green dragon

It was not only in soul and latent ferocity, insidious cruelty, that she resembled his model.

She had feline gestures. And this particular way of looking with lowered eyelids, this curious movement of the shoulders, this continual palpitation, so special of the wings of the nose!

Strange beast, certainly, but endearing and desirable, yes, ah how!



Unlike other women, even the most intelligent, our ex-adversary knew that a story should be direct, stripped of frills and without unnecessary digressions.

Despite his nervous exhaustion, there emanated from his remarks such a force of conviction that James and I, both endowed with a fairly lively critical sense, found nothing to object to his assertions, followed by frequently verifiable evidence.

We have had, moreover, since then, the opportunity, on various occasions, to verify the assertions made by her on this day and we have noticed that the facts were correct, down to the smallest detail, ... the sensible interpretations.

...From what she was able to tell us then, it is not yet possible for me to reveal the essential. Too many people, still in power, or in office, would be called into question, without profit for humanity, and too great precisions would risk to obstruct such international action of appeasement, to invenomate certain conflicts.

I will therefore confine myself, strictly, to reporting what had an immediate repercussion on our personal destinies, in the crucial confidences of the one who, by order of the Kaiser, had become the mistress of the Jew Walther Rathenau in September 1918.

But in contact with the "great gentleman" who was the master of the AEG (1), - the real dictator of Germany behind the scenes at the end of hostilities - Guillaume's spy had quickly given way to the woman, to the happy and fulfilled lover, then to the ardent collaborator, passionate, fanatic of the work undertaken by the son of the small broker Ephraim, alias Emile Rathenow, out of the Polish ghettos.

1. General Electricity Society.

This work, public opinion did not even suspect it and those very ones who knew about it or who guessed, generally misunderstood its tendencies!

In short, according to *Irma Staub*, Walther Rathenau—fixated on the secret and deep causes of the immense global malaise—had devoted himself to the economic recovery of Europe, to a very noble task of appeasement, of reconstruction, capable of avoiding other catastrophes, of palliating the misfortunes of the times, of preventing new wars.

A member of that all-powerful oligarchy in the capitalist domain, which for nearly a hundred and twenty years has truly led the world, he had, immediately after the armistice, made himself the leader of the very small clear-sighted group which, in the bosom of his advice, opposed the action of the Greens (1).

For the kind of permanent conspiracy against the white race—against Western Greco-Latin civilization—tending to undermine, crack, shake the already so unstable edifice of present-day Europe, he claimed to substitute *an* action beneficent, such that the nations could produce in tent and in concord, and flourish in peace.

A magnificent battle that a single man had waged, almost single-handedly, against fanaticism and hatred, against sordid interests, malefic greed, sources of irritation, of suffering, of disorder for humanity.

Denouncing, attacking those whom he called the "bad shepherds", assigning to the people of Israel a great role of catalyst - (a bloc around which the best of men would come to unite to prepare the times New, a sort of return to the Golden Age), — he had been able to win very quickly, by the undeniable nobility of his prophetic conceptions, the clairvoyant opportunity of the solutions he proposed to the serious problems of the time, sympathies and alliances, valuable assistance both in France and in England and in America... also with this power, whose influence he considers to be more capital than any other, I mean the Vatican.

On June 16, 1922, the great Jew fell, under the blows of the same hand which on July 16, 18 had brought down Tsarism!

1. He also called them that (cf. Washington's speech of March 4, 1919). See also the works of Mrs Webster: *The French Revolution; The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion; Disraëli's Memoirs* (Lord Beaconsfield); the very works of Rathenau: *Listen to Israel*, etc.

the seven heads of the green dragon

The Ecumenical Patriarch had just shared their fate, three days ago now.

Officially Rathenau had been assassinated by some mad Pangermanists, "belonging to the Sainte-Vehme"!

The German judicial investigation stopped there!



As for Irma Staub, having been able to collect both the last breath and the last words of the man to whom she had devoted herself — body and soul, heart, flesh and brain — she had fled from the Reich, knowing , also targeted.

For a time, she had thought she would find the most effective support, near *the Intelligence Service*, for the work she was pursuing—to avenge her "dear Walt" at all costs—but she had, in due time, , realized his dangerous "blunder".

She had disappeared from London and started "hunting" on her own.

Beware of the one who killed the male of the black panther!

One day or another, she will jump on his back, from an overhanging branch.

There is no trick she does not employ to achieve this end.

And she will have no respite until her sharp claws sink into the entrails of the murderer.

... It was not chance alone that had made him seek our help and our covenant.

Temporary ? Maybe !

Durable ?

It would depend on how long it would take us to rid the world of its gnawing cancer, to kill it or eradicate it!



"Did you find near the Holy Patriarch what you were looking for?" resumed Fräulein Doktor, when her confidences ended, her bag emptied in a way, we came, two days later—when she was already better, thanks to the care of Doctor Muller—to seriously consider our plan of campaign to together, against this common adversary who first had to be unmasked!

"Partly only," I admitted.

"For a few seconds the veil of mystery lifted, only to fall again almost immediately," James added truthfully.

"I know, there was a fight," said the young woman, half leaning back on her pillows. That's why I made sure to wait for you at Lule-Bourgas.

Nobody ni moi ne bronchâmes.

She was lost in silence.

But her plastic, mobile face betrayed a violent combat, a prodigious inner struggle.

However, she ends up telling us:

- After Basil III, there is only one man left - yes only one - who *knows!*

And, her mouth against my ear, she whispered a name...a name that was *then* unknown to me.

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SECOND PART

First chapter

Nobody propose, l'Intelligence Service dispose !

If I have the time, later, and if — according to an image dear to Nobody — I haven't been sweetened by then with potassium cyanide, I will have some nice stories to tell about the way in which Irma Staub knew how to discharge—once she was recovered—the part that fell to her in our common plan of action where, from the outset, we practiced the division of labor.

For the clarity of this account, it will be enough for me to indicate that, six months after the accident in which she had broken three ribs, she was spreading, throughout India, the good word of Ghandi, a teaching strangely in conformity— between us — at *the Swaraj Green Plan*, in the same way as Miss Slade, the secretary-confident — sponsor of the Mahatma, who is — by the way — the own daughter of General Slade, head of the Intelligence Service (1).

As for us, faithful to the fundamental axiom of espionage which states that between two discoveries, the shortest path is *always* the broken line...not the straight line, we voluntarily mimed, this time, a few weeks to pass without tapping from one track to another.

The result was that one day, I was able to state, for sure, this remark which will seem insignificant to many people,... if others understand it half-word.

— It is, all the same, rather curious that this number of 72 comes back every moment...as soon as it comes to these famous *Greens*.

"...Reality or symbol?"

"So we're not the first to have noticed, *old man*, that there are 72 kinds of bastards who claim to turn the world upside down," replied the "old James", placidly.

- OK ! I said. Is it not, however, significant that this number plays

1. I know very well that the general officially disowned the faithful of the Man with the spinning wheel, but informed people know what such a disavowal hides.

the seven heads of the green dragon

a very important role in occultism and Kabbalah and that it accompanies in the Bible the ideas of destruction, of absolute domination?

"...Isn't it a confusion of 72 languages that results in the fall of the Tower of Babel? Are there not, on the other hand, 72 attributes of Javeh...72 old bacons in the Synagogue?

"And, in the Zohar, are it not 72 angels who govern the Zodiac, that is, human destiny? »

- See! interrupted Nobody, emulating Montaigne. "It is about men and not about angels. And it would take a good rope to hang them, as soon as possible, those "bloody children of female dogs"!



It is generally enough for me to take ten steps in a house to guess the profession of the person who lives there.

There is, in each of us, a professional atmosphere which is betrayed by a few traits...almost imperceptible details.

I manage very well to distinguish the office of a man of letters from the cabinet of a playwright, the drawing-room of a big dealer in hides and skins, from the living-room of such a broker in the halls, the hotel of 'A Northern Spinner from the Abode of a Silken.

But it is certainly more difficult to differentiate, from the outset, the housing of a poor soldier from that of a priest or a monk.

If I hadn't known where I was, I might well have hesitated when we visited, on January 25, 1930, the person who lived in this very modest apartment in an insignificant and sad street, on the border of Vaugirard.

Some outfits certainly evoked the military, but an old icon, lit by a small oil lamp, also said the religious.

...We were made to wait a long time.

After which, a woman, still young, pretty under her white hair, tried to dismiss us diplomatically, gently, with that roll of the r's which always moves me in a Slav.

For a quarter of an hour, with all the forms of refined politeness, she made it clear to us that we had bad grace in insisting in such a way!... and that the general never received strangers. This was a formal order!

...The general ? Yes !

Nobody propose ...

But also, in a way, the pontiff of an almost abolished religion, a tenuous flame, which veils of mourning protected—oh painfully—against the most formidable storm that had ever shaken the world.

...General Koutiépoff, undisputed leader of the White Russians, perhaps the first defender of the mysticism of Tsarism!

If the gentle guardian of the hearth, his tutelary protectress, was tenacious, James and I showed at least equal stubbornness, because we absolutely had to have this interview—and without delay.

It was then that I thought of a sesame that should be effective, almost for sure!

"Will you be so kind as to tell the general only," I then said in a fairly loud voice, "that the seventh seal is going to break!"

I had hardly finished these words when a door opened behind us and a man, ageless, appeared in the modest dining room of a foreman.

Sesame had operated.

A chef, really, this little man, dressed in clean but threadbare clothes, with this paunchy belly, this flowery complexion, this rare hair?

Yes! You could see it in the eyes, two torches that lit up the soul.

I received the shock of the gaze, both heavy and sharp, without blinking an eyelid. Then there was...an intense silence.

Instinctively I was waiting for the "come on, gentlemen! », prelude of the duels.

"General," Nobody said, immediately attacking as a bonus. "We are only three men here, but allies we can, I bet, come to the end, on our own, of seventy-two famous rascals!

The general blushed a little, but didn't answer right away.

However, at a discreet sign, Madame Koutiépoff slipped away, while, approaching a little to the badly lit icon, hanging on the wall, I noticed that it was a replica of that of Saint Seraphim of Sarof.

'General,' continued 'Old James,' peacefully, 'you must believe, like me, that a lot of time has been wasted since a certain day in July of the year 1918...for lack of authentic documents.

"Thanks to the rigging of an inscription!" I specified.

The leader of the White Russians remained on the defensive.

- What do you mean? he asked.

"Faith," I resumed, "chance would have it that I was able to penetrate, on the 24th, into the house of his Ipatieff, before the successive camouflages

the seven heads of the green dragon

covered all tracks. At that time, I owned a Kodak, an excellent one by the way, and I already had a real passion for photography.

- A proof ?

Koutiepoff's voice had become dull and hoarse.

'Perhaps you've heard of a certain pope Tikhin, in whose arms that scoundrel Yuroswsky died, the murderer of the Czarina and also of that Czech cook General Gaida. Well, that last one was me, I asserted.

I noticed it quite often. The more a man makes an effort to remain master of himself, the more he becomes confused when he suddenly loses control of his reflexes.

- In this case you have the icon, ... the photo of the real inscription under the swastika! he stammered, white as a sheet. Twelve years, twelve years I've been looking for them! That we seek them, all, in vain.

"That's what His Beatitude Basil III told us again, some time before he died," James interrupted, placidly. The torch he dropped, you must take it up again, since it is not yet extinguished.

I held out icon and proof.

General Koutiépoŧ, staggering almost like a drunken man, his hands trembling, received them.

He was piously kissing the image of the anchorite, for whom the late imperial family had a deep devotion, when the door began to open very slowly.

Quick as gunpowder, our host placed the two unique pieces on the table and covered them with a magazine, then, with that exuberance which sometimes surprises the Slavs, he ran to the newcomer, seized him in his too short arms and pressed on his chest.

The other returned the hug with a touching, all-Russian effusion, which I couldn't help but consider a little theatrical.

Besides, I then noticed that he slipped, in our direction, a glance below, furtive, and which was certainly not particularly pleasant!

The character, of whom Koutiepoff had said: "My friend Igor, one of our most precious recruits," when he drew him towards James and me, was—a sensitive intuition—immediately antipathetic to me!

It was a strange figure, in truth, this great body, at the top of which

Nobody propose ...

swayed on a neck that was too long and too slender, a little round head, with the protruding cheekbones of a Kalmouk and slightly slanted eyes.

The completely shaved head gave him, moreover, a very disturbing, unforgettable aspect.

His face relaxed into a smile, not without mischief, only on a quick *but inaccurate* statement from the general:

- Imagine that these gentlemen believe they have discovered the key to the "swas tika of the Czarina"..., that they have found the hidden meaning of the inscription that Sokoloff, neither Medvieff, nor the rest of us, have yet been able to decipher. .

"Do you want to go tell our brothers in the council?" You'll call them for 9:00 a.m. 35 where you know, if you have nothing against, yourself. »

The stranger looked at us, again, with skepticism.

Then he bent down to Koutiepoff's ear and murmured words that I did not hear.

But the general's gesture enlightened me, as did his answer:

- I know who they are, I tell you! he said, in Russian, quickly. I know we can trust, at least in one of them.

The ball-headed "giant" shrugged his massive shoulders:

- Mistrust ! he just repeated.

I was neither surprised nor angry.

The supporters of the old regime are surrounded by so many spies; some of them penetrate so skilfully into their most secret committees that they tend to always remain on their guard.

- Go ! Go ! resumed the general, with a trace of impatience. The others must be warned, without delay. I'm counting on you.

- It's good, I'll alert them, replied the man, without enthusiasm.

But before he left, he got a second, perfectly significant look.

General Koutiépoiff waited until the shuffling step had receded, first down the corridor and then up the steps. So he turned to us.

"This man is imposed on me," he said. But I don't trust him much. I used the first pretext, quite plausible, to keep him away.

He lifted the crumpled magazine and neglecting, for the moment, the icon, whose roe of glory hid the invisible secret, he concentrated his attention on the few letters traced by the Czarina's own hand under the too famous swastika.

the seven heads of the green dragon

'So you took this photo on July 24, then,' he went on..., whereas Sokoloff's was not taken until the end of August.

An undeniable emotion seized him, again, and more than just now, his hands were shaken with a violent tremor.
nervous.

- Finally ! he whispered. Finally !

Without letting go of the ordeal, he went to a small window located in the opposite corner of the room, moved a row of books, pulled out, from behind, a volume bound simply in red morocco and which opened "Italian" style. .

Furtively, he placed his lips on the worn binding, then he explained to us, with a sort of concentrated fervor, like a priest speaking of his God:

"Here, gentlemen, is a copy of the secret code used by their Imperial Majesties when they corresponded with each other.

"It was first a game for them, a charming game, during the engagement, when the Tzarevich Nicolas visited Asia, Japan. Then they understood, later on, the usefulness of it, when they had to correspond freely, apart from the various controls which were exerted - they knew it - in their immediate entourage. »

General Koutiéppoff sat down on one of the cane chairs, offered us two and continued:

- I understood *who* you could be! he continued. I therefore have no hesitation in speaking to you with an open heart, as I do. Certainly yes, you can provide me with effective help and I have the means to direct you exactly in your research.

Mechanically, his thick fingers caressed the flat of the volume.

"Know to begin with," he said, "that at the end of 1909, feeling constantly spied on, my sovereigns, by trickery, had two codes, the one we know today and whose existence they confessed to some of their familiar; the other, almost identical in appearance, of which even Rasputin was never aware, I am quite sure. "It is the first of these two codes (1)

which Sokoloff was able to attach to the suspect documents in his report.

"The other, the real one, I have; here it is. I will tell you, a little later, how it is in my hands. »

He slowly leafed through a few pages of the last profane book, no doubt, which the victims of Ekaterinenburg had studied.

And suddenly his face changed.

1. Refer to Judge Sokoloff's investigation, published by Payot.

Nobody propose ...

"It would be Greek!" There too ! we heard him whisper.

He closed the thin volume, inserted our photo and put everything back in his pocket.

There was another silence.

Koutiepoff remained mute, but he was so pale that I was afraid he would faint.

Finally, with an effort, he succeeded in regaining a shadow of composure.

- It's incredible ! he breathed. This man would therefore be the Anti-Christ!

He jumped.

A quick, heavy footstep approached down the hall.

He just had time to tell us:

— Tomorrow at four o'clock, meet at the corner of the avenue La Motte-Picquet and the little rue Tiphaine.

The door opened.

Igor enters.

...Our host may not have started the conversation quickly enough.

And then he did it so badly... his remarks were so uncertain that an individual, less informed than the man with the cannonball head, would have understood that the interview had deviated in his presence.

Also, when the general decided to ask:

- So, dear, already back? he had the calm insolence to point to us with his index finger and to indicate, by his mimicry, that he would not say anything, as long as we... had not deserted the place!

So much so that we took our leave, embarrassed and worried, at the end, of a hostility so neat.

"What do you think, old man?" I asked Nobody, in the taxi that took us drove home.

' That the general *knows* now... that he's understood everything, thanks to us, but that he'll try, despite everything, to tell us as little as possible.

- Bah ! I replied. Don't we have the means to make him speak.

"You have to reckon with Igor!"

And, pulling out his classic *briar*, James began to stuff it slowly, meticulously, a sign that he meant to think things over before discussing further.

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...We were quite determined, of course, to arrive at the rendezvous a little before Koutiépoff.

the seven heads of the green dragon

So we made sure to leave rue Bassano, where Nobody had temporarily taken up residence, around 3 a.m. 35, on my watch—a precious Patek chronometer—which hasn't changed a second in the twenty years it has been in my possession.

As we needed ten minutes, at the very most, to reach the point fixed the night before—with my little Peugeot—we had plenty of time.

So it was at a very moderate pace that I drove along the Cours-la-Reine, for the moment almost empty of cars.

I was perhaps slightly absorbed in certain thoughts, but the reflexes of a driver who—this is my case—has been long accustomed to the steering wheel, have become automatic.

This is why, when the tri-carrier (which came out, like a beetle—crazy pedals—from the rue Bayard, sprang into the side alley, just in front of my bumper, I began a sudden swerve that would have made it possible to avoid it if it had not, in the blink of an eye, with a deliberate volte, deliberately thrown back under my wheels.

Still, I only took him quite weakly in the sling.

But, with the sound of breaking glass, the varnished crate overturned and the man, thrown three paces away, among the shards, howled louder than a pig being slaughtered.

There was enough to stir up the whole neighborhood against us!

That was not lacking, by the way.

In fifty seconds, the empty avenue was invaded by a dozen, then twenty fanatics, who had come out, no one knew where, who surrounded our car in a hostile and threatening circle.

First I had — why should I hide it? — the temptation to rush through this scum, which has arisen quite opportunely, my faith, to overwhelm us with jarring apostrophes and coarse insults.

Nobody m'en dissuada.

We wouldn't have reached the Pont des Invalides if we hadn't been spotted immediately, with our dented wing, and treated like dangerous drivers.

It was therefore better to dismount, to lose a few minutes if necessary.

I had scarcely leaned over the wounded man—whose face was now dripping with blood—when I had already noticed that he had in fact no deep scratches.

- Set up! I conclude immediately.

Only real onlookers, this time, joined the first comrades, and impressed by the pitiful aspect of the *victim...*, by the passionate comments of the false witnesses of the accident, were indignant, as we can imagine, against these "bullied motorists".

I saw the moment when the throng, sincere, would tear us apart..., would do us a disservice.

Fortunately, a cycling agent finally appeared, majestic, on the site of the little drama!

At first deafened by shouts, furious vociferations, benevolent explanations — as diverse as they were overwhelming for Nobody and for myself — he ended up verbalizing, in relative silence, then authoritatively stopping a Renault taxi, in marauding, he installed the bleeding man there—(accompanied by a doctor who, as if by chance, offered his services to him, out of humanity)—and meant that he would be taken instantly to Beaujon.

After which, he invited us, quite firmly, to follow him to the post of the Grand Palais, about six hundred meters away. I then noticed that the people who were the most determined to accuse us at the beginning had slipped through the crowd, so much so that when we arrived at the police station we were hardly followed except by curious people, who would have been well prevented from describing the collision.

Certain pieces of identification, exhibited opportunely, to a very courteous secretary, exempted us from explanations which might have been tedious.

I called the hospital, however, to be fixed on the seriousness of the condition of the man "overthrown" by us!

As I expected, moreover, no department had admitted any wounded who corresponded to the description I gave.

And it was easily established—from the beginning of the investigation—that the tricycle, "borrowed" the day before from a great grocer, contained only bottles as empty as they were mismatched.

Will we be surprised to learn that, when we got back to my car, which remained there, we discovered that the four tires had been punctured?

It was 4 p.m. 10 now!

Leaving our vehicle there, we jumped into the first Citroën that passed and, as I had promised a hundred francs tip to the driver—a Russian—if he went full throttle, we only took seven minutes.

the seven heads of the green dragon

exactly to reach the crossroads, fixed, the day before, as a meeting place..., not without having been "whistling", on three different occasions, — hence three theft tickets, — in the avenue de La Tour - Maubourg!

Koutiepoff was no longer there!

Had he ever been there?

We know that he disappeared, around the time he should have joined us!

I only point out, in passing, that the description which was made at the time of the "false agent", by various trustworthy witnesses, singularly corresponded to the precise description of Igor!

My opinion, moreover, is made as to the reasons which prevented the White Russians from reporting to General Security the parallel disappearance of the man with the cannonball head!



The general public has been made aware by the entire press of the police search to find the general, mysteriously kidnapped.

The most bizarre hypotheses, the most incredible too, were, in turn, considered, then abandoned by the investigation.

Le *Populaire* saw in it, with unusual clairvoyance, the "mark" of Downing-Street. Nobody, he had the proof!

But if we both knew that the operation performed had certainly been done at the *indirect* instigation of the Intelligence Service, we did not manage to understand, or rather we understood too much. , the motives of the new hierarchical chiefs of my English friend.

The world must not learn the meaning of the twenty signs, traced by the deceased Tzarina, under the fateful swastika of the Ipatieff house!

... It was a very curious coincidence that launched us, two days later, that is February 1, on a trail that should eventually allow us to find the end of the lost thread!

For ten years, the *Illustrated Supplement of the Petit Journal* has published a collection of naive prints, colored in violent, almost garish tints, always outrageously designed, which make the most beautiful ornament of thatched cottages and stalls.

This weekly - grandson of the old image of Epinal - had, then, as editorial secretary, rue La Fayette, a rather odd fellow, through whom I had been able to enter certain closed groups, small chapels

Nobody propose ...

esoteric, of which he was an initiated member.

Although he had often expressed, in front of me, a marked regret at not having entered La Trappe, I strongly suspected him of practicing, on occasion, Tibetan tantric magic.

However, the color cover of the issue of his "duck", which followed, within twenty-four hours, the kidnapping of Koutiépoiff, immediately presented, for me, certain particularities ... the main one being that, *Le Petit Journal* (organ of total "conformism" at the time) did not agree, this time, with the official version, as far as the abduction was concerned!

This page represented a valley in the Pays de Caux, near which a powerful gray automobile was parked, and the caption which appeared on the back verse suggested—for those who read between the lines—that the editorial staff of the newspaper knew of one of the possible solutions of this obscure problem.

More curiously, the number had been sent to me, at home, before it was put on sale, in a sealed envelope, without a word.

So the next day—a Friday—I rang my journalist's doorbell, who—he prides himself on being a magician—didn't seem at all surprised to receive such a visit.

He swore to me on the Chariot of Fire of the Prophet Ezekiel (his greatest oath, it seems), that he had nothing to do with the sending of the famous "special" number..., that the engraving of the first page, made of chic, had for object only to facilitate the sale; but he didn't get angry when I told him quite frankly that I didn't believe a word of it!

I knew enough, however, to take leave without delay!

I might add that he held me back at the door for a few seconds and whispered in my ear:

'If that professional dog didn't keep me in Paris, I'd have the pleasure, at this moment, of spending a week on the coast, in a quiet corner.

Do you know the Ailly lighthouse?



...As the keeper of the Ailly lighthouse at the time, Jagu Duhamel, originally from Morlaix, was the brother-in-law of Louis Autret, who was himself the cousin of Jeanne Leguivic, the bride of my ex-painter Pierre Tinel, it was relatively easy for me—thanks to luck—to insinuate myself into the good graces of this Breton, a former sailor, amputated with one arm, on the Yser.

the seven heads of the green dragon

However, despite bowls, bistouilles, "consoled" coffee and rincettes, I believed that I would never be able to overcome the stubbornness of this armoric brain, morning of Norman cunning.

If he *knew* anything, in fact, the coastal light officer intended to keep his personal findings to himself.

And I was going, my faith, to give up, for that day, to "pull the worms out of his nose", as they say, when Nobody used the only argument likely to act on such a nature.

"Faith, my dear fellow, we're not going to waste your time any longer," he declared, getting up from the long inn bench on which he was sitting...

We realize now that you didn't see anything at all!
Besides...

He took a little time, as in the theatre, and finished, in a quiet, indifferent tone: "...your neighbour, Mrs. Dubois, told us so, just now!" »

A quick survey in Ailly had taught us in the morning that this lady Dubois, a surly widow, was the pitiless enemy of the misogynist Duhamel.

The latter gave the sticky, wobbly table of the cabaret a formidable blow with his fist which made our empty glasses jump and the waitress rush up.

I paid...

The lighthouse keeper had now turned as scarlet as a brick!

"The old camel!" he growled. She will see a bit, the bitch!

Then, still shaking with indignation, combined with the massive dose of alcohol he'd ingested over the hour he'd spent in the barroom, standing up to us, without much difficulty, he half-proposed -voice :

- Sometimes we would go for a walk, as it were in the valley?

- It's not a refusal, of course! I answered. It will do us good to stretch ourselves.

Let's go!

... Having passed the last houses of the village of Petit Ailly and having made sure, after a quick overview, that we were the only ones who could hear, from then on, what he would say, Jagu Duhamel exploded:

- So, that way, this old witch will have told you, I bet, eh, that I had a drunk that day, which prevented me from opening my eyes? What is she getting involved in, the poison?

He shrugged his stocky shoulders.



Fig. 8.

The one who put us on the trail of Koutiépoiff's kidnappers,
Duhamel, the keeper of the Ailly lighthouse.

the seven heads of the green dragon

And while turning left towards the valleuse de Vastréval, he continued to grumble:

- Well damn, if I could talk!



The motives for which the honest lighthouse keeper had kept silent—although two skilful investigators from the Sûreté had questioned him, without attaching any other interest, moreover, to his testimony—were perfectly respectable.

They proceeded from a fairly strong family feeling!

But could he go and confess to these gentlemen of the police that he had not only clearly seen the black trawler (on board which it was supposed, in the end, that Koutiépoiff had been sequestered!) but that he had identified as the *Belle Hougue* de Jersey, her younger sister Hortense's husband's own boat!

Especially since his brother-in-law, Guérin, — a subject of King George, — was trawling that evening, illicitly, well below the limit of French territorial waters, where the fish were giving full, as one might say on purpose. !...

..Besides, this fishing had to have been extremely fruitful because since then, so it was said, this fellow hadn't stopped getting his fill in the bistros of Saint-Aubin, Saint-Héliér...and had paid his wife for a TSF device

I still have a grudge today against this big fellow of an Anglo-Norman sea bass, a true buccaneer, which earned me a twenty-hour crossing, in rough seas, on this little cutter from Dieppe, the only one that — in spite of the coquettish price offered by Nobody—would not have hesitated to go out in the north wind, under three reefs.

I was sick as a dog, I who—I confess to my shame—have already "heavy heart" when I take the river boat between Concorde and Saint-Cloud.

And I vowed, ten times a minute, to the vengeance of the Erynies, my comrade who, rosy-cheeked and indifferent to the spray, savored his briar pipe, the intermittent puffs of which, smelling of castor oil, knock down constantly shot towards me by successive bursts, further increased my discomfort.

Nobody propose ...

Luckily this ceased as soon as we had doubled the dyke of Fort Elizabeth and a generous embrace of the little whiskey from the pocket of "old James" put me back on my feet.

..It was certainly not in Queen Street that we discovered our man, but the pub(1) where he frequented — near the Regent barracks — under the sign of the *Smart seeman*, or the *Coquet Navigateur*... still smelled *the ale*, the wax and the well-washed humanity.

Emile Guérin still had a "good breeze in the sails", but he was no longer "lost drunk" and his malice took the place of both prudence and savvy.

He quickly realized the value of his secret for these two "gentlemen" who, coming on behalf of the Duhamel guy, had not hesitated, despite the raging storm, to risk their skins through so many miles of English Channel in fury.

If he hadn't already been at his wit's end, I very much doubt he would have spoken, and our arguments would have been about as fruitful as a conference in Geneva.

We found, moreover, a very unexpected ally in his wife who, having come to fetch him to bring him home, around "supper" time, was more sensitive to the crystalline music of the "sovereigns" and the beauties. louis d'or from before the war, which Nobody had provided himself with, only to all the harmonious waves of the radio concerts of the world.

To tell the truth, the tow boss of La *Belle Hougue* had no very serious reason to hide his actions of January 31 from us. And if he had played a role in the kidnapping of Koutiépoiff it was, in fact, without his knowledge and in an episodal way.

He had committed no crime by estimating, a little too accurately, the distance which separated him, that evening, from the French coast!

The Cauchois fishermen were embarrassed, perhaps, to return the favor to the Anglo-Norman trawlers, when the schools of hake spawned in the vicinity of the Minquiers, to believe even that they imagined that the rocks were theirs!

Was it more reprehensible not to have abandoned, adrift, this large motor boat encountered, further offshore, at nightfall, in front of Saint Valéry-en-Caux and whose northern occupants had paid very handsomely for it? to hit them a trailer.

None of his business, eh, if a yacht — a fine yacht, well, painted white —

1. Bistro, English.

the seven heads of the green dragon

"hoped" the canoe, under Serk, cruising, at a slow pace, from the Etac to the Baleine!

The sea is for everyone, huh... and no one had asked him to watch the squall, so therefore!

The flag of that yacht, he hadn't seen it, of course!

The colors are not hoisted to the horn. before sunrise, on self-respecting pleasure craft, and dawn was just whitening the sky, when the canoe it was towing had come alongside the gangway!

- The name ?

— That, as if on purpose, there was a piece of tarpaulin hanging from the crowning and which hid a large section of the back, at the precise place where the letters of gold from the stern!

This Norman placidity ended up exasperating me.

But Nobody continued to question without impatience:

"And you didn't notice anything special about the rigging?" Emile Guérin's face lit up:

— For that, I still know 'core distinguish a three-master boat, when I see one, especially, is not it, that the mixed *yaks* , tricked out like that, are rather rare in the Channel, to c 't' time.

"...If I've ever seen one of the same? he repeated after a while on another "attack" from James.

He scratched his head.

"Well, now that you remind me of that. There was going to be a Scandinavian or a Baltic at the Cowes regattas last year, what had that touch! »

My comrade must have estimated that the owner of La *Belle Hougue* had finished emptying the bottom of his bag, as they say, because after discreetly extending a pile of yellowets towards Duhamel's young sister, he vigorously shook hands of the couple and announced that we would leave early the next day for the continent.

The old aphorism that the night brings advice was verified once more that morning, for we had not finished our breakfast, in one of the still deserted rooms of *the Esplanade*, - before taking, at the end of the port, the little steamer from Granville, which Hortense Guérin appeared, a little timidly, on the doorstep.

A coffee made her talkative.

'You shouldn't tell her man, that he'd make him miserable afterwards, whenever he found out.

"But since these gentlemen wanted to be so generous...

(James blinked his right eyelid and pulled out, ostensibly, from his pocket, a "sovereign")

"..It might interest them to know that, in the motorboat, towed by *La Belle Hougue*, was...

She leaned forward, her eyes shining.

"..a man who seemed very ill and who had been lying all the time, da, in the *cockpit*, under a slew of blankets.

"Apparently he hadn't moved his feet or paws the whole way, but that he moaned frequently, in a rather comical way and in a funny gibberish!..."

Four louis slipped on the tablecloth; the bold look sparkled.

And Duhamel's younger sister, with scarlet cheeks, got up, made a low bow and ran away...happy, clutching her "loot" in her fingers.

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Chapter II

Aboard the Asgård.

In subsidized theatres, actresses do not usually attain the rather formidable honor of taking on the roles of ingenue until they are over fifty.

This unfortunate rule suffered from at least one exception, in the person of the very blonde, very frail and so fresh Elsa Eriksenn, at the time *prima donna* of the Royal Opera of Oslo, although she certainly had no not yet over thirty.

...If happiness is of this world, could he be a happier man than Baron von Bautenas, private-external councilor of the Lithuanian Republic, since he possessed both the love and the fidelity of the delicious singer and this magnificent large mixed yacht, - rigged, a rare thing, in three masts barque, - whiter than a seagull, *the Asgård*.

The most marvelous of flower-girls, out of the Scandinavian Sagas, one of the most modern, perhaps, the fastest, the best designed of all the pleasure boats that a billionaire's caprice has ever launched on the waves.

Baron Otto must certainly have been colossally rich!

It certainly had to be to maintain on such a footing, such magical luxury on board... but even more so that the beautiful, capricious Elsa had discovered her "soul mate" under this coarse carnal envelope. which certainly had nothing "attractive" or seductive!

If the adviser had not been authentically one of the highest officials of the government of the dictator Valdeméras, one of the "lights" of Kovno,... the fiercest animator of the anti-Polish movement, we could have taken him, at first sight, for a Cossack of Kuban, brutal, illiterate... ripper!

He had bow-legged hands, huge, square-fingered hands,... small slanted jet eyes, constantly in motion. And he would have won

the seven heads of the green dragon

certainly not to do his hair like this, in the fashion of Central Europe, which required him to shave his head with a beard trimmer!

He was, moreover, a courteous, polite and affable man.

And it was always a delight to taste the deep and constantly renewed charm of his very lively intelligence, a charm that added even more to the euphoria one felt while sailing, all sails out, on this white-winged halcyon. , to the safe flight that was *Asgård*, to the more subtle pleasure of flirting with this blonde, almost unreal and yet extraordinarily voluptuous creature called Elsa Eriksenn.

What's more, the yacht's English bar concealed a choice whisky, the *White Horse* 1904, the favorite year, it seems, of grain alcohol lovers.



...We understand, under these conditions, that the two Yankee engineers of the *Chicago Machine-Tool Corporation*, — presently on mission in the Baltic States and, passengers, for eight days, of the three-masted bark — floating palace, — would not have did not do much to hasten the conclusion of this deal which they were charged with discussing, between their firm on the one hand, and the Lithuanian state, on the other.

William P. Sleets and Andréas J. Gadger, as soon as they arrived in Vilna, where the Council of Bautenas was leading the open struggle against the territorial ambitions of Warsaw, had contacted, without delay, with the powerful character, whose intervention they had reason to believe would earn them the very important order they had come to win!

There are no small profits!

Valdeméras's right-hand man had understood, for his part, that the commission allocated for the success of the case would be worth the trouble, even for those who were used to juggling millions of crowns. And, as his yacht was setting sail for a cruise to the fjords, just two days later, he had asked the two men, who had come from distant Chicago, to join his guests!

Pleasure trip, no doubt, accomplished in short stages, with fairly numerous stopovers in Malmoë, Göteborg, Fredrikshald, Christiansund...and which now continued towards Stavanger and Bergen, to extend towards Aalesund, can - even be as far as Trondjhem, if the season allowed it.

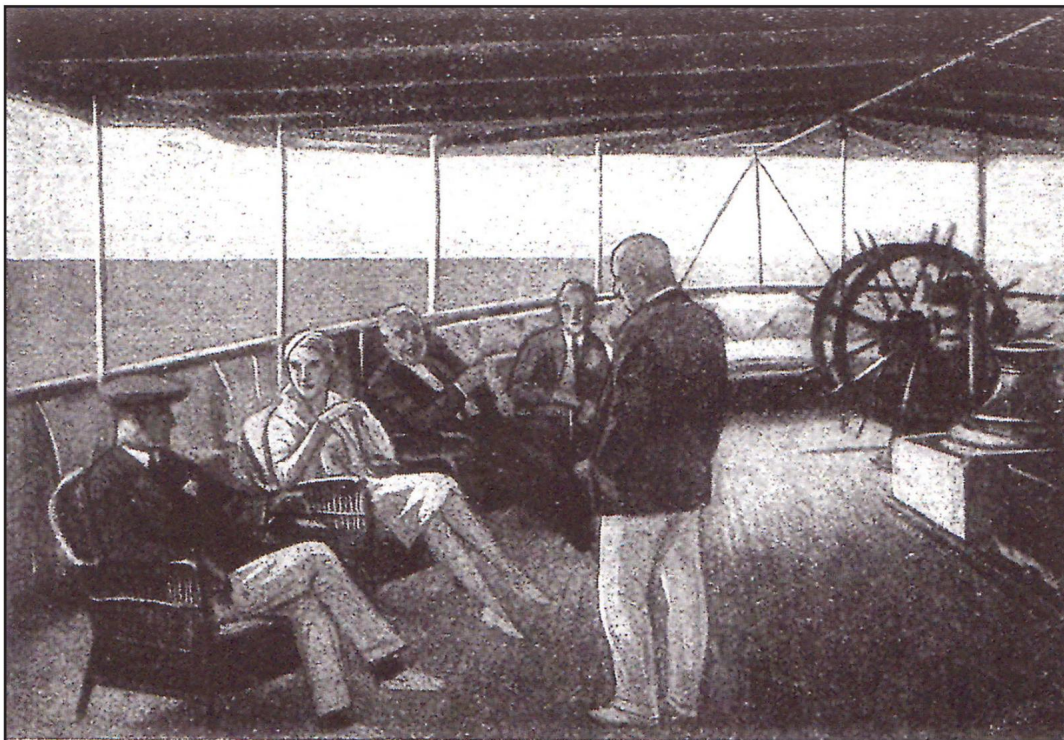


Fig. 9.

Bad as it is, this greatly enlarged snapshot taken aboard *the Asg rd* is nevertheless one of the most precious pieces of my collection. Left to right: Engineer Andreas J. Gadger; opera singer Elsa Eriksenn; engineer William P. Sleeps; the king of matches Ivar Kreuger. Standing, the Baltic Baron von Bautenas.

the seven heads of the green dragon

The big white boat, baptized — was it fortuitously? — with a word whose Icelandic legends designate paradise on earth (the kingdom of the King of Thule), stopped randomly at the fjords, . . . at the whims of Elsa Eriksenn.

Everything was a pretext for walks, long shore excursions, during which the singer very visibly sought AJGadger's company, while Bautenas monopolized William P. Sleets.

Curiously by coincidence, however, as soon as *the Asgård*'s motor boat had dropped off the excursionists on the coast, the wireless began to crackle actively, used as it was, for consecutive hours, by the fourth guest on board, the only "customer", so to speak, of the "radio", since the yacht had crossed the Kattegat.

Strange and dull character, this tall blond, feverish boy, for whom Baron Otto seemed to have a long-standing, very special friendship!

Was he in love with Elsa?

Maybe ; but then, timidly, for he let nothing show of it, except by his attitude, when, by chance, she spoke to him.

So, . he suddenly blushed, like a schoolboy caught in the act, stammered and fled, after answering him with a few monosyllables.

His soft, nondescript features, moreover, never brightened up so much as when a certain cheeky little ship's boy passed near him whom he very frequently called— under pretexts—to his cabin!

The councilor's affection for her showed itself in constant attention. He surrounded her with a thousand cares, respected her many quirks, some of which were irritating, saw to it that nothing was ever lacking in her habits, in the demands of her comfort.

Thus, as, through the negligence of a steward, the supply of special brand cigars which this pampered guest was smoking might dry up before the cruise was over, Bautenas did not hesitate to telegraph a seaplane which, in ten hours, reported, from Oslo to *Asgård*, twenty-five boxes of *King's Habanas!*

Moreover, Ivar Kreuger did not take any of his meals with the other passengers and the cuisine he was served was a separate cuisine.

To say that he horrified Gadger and especially Sleets would still be an understatement.

aboard the "Asgård"

And the singer had confided to the first that she would gladly have slapped this "head for slaps" if her master and lord had not *demande*d that she be extremely kind to him.

Two or three times—and for no apparent reason—the fair-haired Swede, suddenly ceasing to play the bear, had joined in the talks of the adviser and the Yankees, and they must have agreed that he was infinitely more smarter than he seemed.

He had come to life, or almost, had lost his awkwardness and had expressed, not only original, but brilliant and most sensible opinions, on the future, in particular, of capitalism in Europe, and the bankruptcy in which risked falling, sooner or later, the society of the wealthy if drastic remedies were not applied, very quickly, to the appalling global stagnation.

He had even let it be understood that, thanks to the numerous and powerful relations he maintained in most of the great countries, he would try, one day soon, to restore this balance, without which the round machine risked rolling into the abyss!

That he was sensitive in his own way to the splendors of the Nordic winter?

Possible ! Because the Americans heard him, on several occasions, deplore that his hundred factories contributed to the deforestation of these magnificent forests, whose dense foliage of a dark green was continually reflected in the still water of the fjords.

But, in fact, most of the time, he seemed manifestly plunged into a kind of bewilderment, analogous to that of patients who indulge in excessive doses of "snow", opium or morphine... only Bautenas managed to get him out.

So Kreuger literally clung to the Baron, like a drowned man to a branch, and you could see them together, pacing for hours on end, without saying a word, the planks of the spadeck.

After which, generally, the adviser sent a few brief messages a radio !

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The Hardanger Fjord is perhaps the most picturesque on the coast, dominated as it is by the sparkling mass of the Lange-Fjeld, the glacier where, depending on the hour, beryls, rubies, emeralds or amethysts shine.

the seven heads of the green dragon

The race must have been quite long and the group of excursionists had left very early, in order to reach, for lunch, the famous cave of Rosmersholm, that enchanted palace carved by the geniuses of the mountain in the translucent ice of the Berg.

As an exception, that day, Kreuger had decided to accompany Bautenas and one would have said, so eagerly was he climbing the paths, which wound through the moraine, a young man who had escaped from college.

Gadger resolutely took advantage of the *tete-a-tete* that favorable circumstances afforded him with Elsa and, while the Swede and the Balt disappeared, ahead, at the bend of the paths, he flirted firmly with the blonde fairy. snows, even more troubling, in his boyish woolens.

Did the singer see — while throbbing, she pressed herself, a moment later against him — the smile which played on her lips, carefully shaved, when she confided to him, blushing, that he kissed "like a Frenchman"? ?



The Asgård, left shortly after dawn, was not reached until dusk. Elsa's warm little hand squeezed that of the youngest American significantly, as they parted at the top of the gangway ladder, while the merry baron and his "dear Ivar", excited by the march and by the grand air, were still exchanging, laughing, fat and heavy jokes.

...The first concern of the engineer was to go and get news of his friend William P. Slets, whom an attack of malaria, caught long ago in the trenches of the Culebra lock, had prevented, in the morning, from joining at the caravan.

The fat man was stretched out comfortably on his frame, with a decent *night-peg close at hand*, more than half empty already.

He greeted his comrade with the beaming smile of a convalescent, sings to be off the hook.

"The Rosmersholm?" he asked.

— *Most gorgeous ! Wonderful ! Splendid !*(1).

— *Elsa ?*

— *Lovely, dear fellow ! Got the sweetest lips in the world*(2).

— *Bautenas ?*

- More than ever full of attention to *us* .

1. Dazzling. Wonderful. Splendid.

2. Exquisite, my dear friend. She has the sweetest lips in the world!

aboard the "Asgård"

- Kreuger?

"A kid, old man, frolicking and happy to live!"

...William P. Sleets rolled his eyes and stuck out a whitish tongue.

This grimace must have had a precise meaning for Andreas J. Gadger, because he immediately returned to his cabin, adjoining it, moreover, and communicating, by a door, with that of his colleague!



At two o'clock in the morning, when everyone on board was sleeping, this door opened ajar, noiselessly, and William Sleets, in his pajamas, came and slipped discreetly under the sheets, near his younger brother, whose snoring was fake!

Oh, shame on anyone who thinks wrong!

It was only a precaution, very ingenious, that the two men had adopted, from the day when they had found themselves on *Asgård*, in order to be able to converse quietly and at leisure, without any risk of being overheard by prying ears.

Some cabins are so noisy, especially on some yachts!

"Well, that bloody bout of fever had kicked me so low," the fat engineer whispered, with a Pickwickian smile that bore a striking resemblance to James Nobody's, "that I had to drag myself to to the doctor's cabin!

"..This one was very frightened by this attack of malaria,..by this rising temperature, by this delirium which took on an epileptiform appearance and he lavished care and painkillers on me until noon.

"My illness was visibly baffling him with symptoms he had never seen before, and for good reason...! »

A gleam shone, ironically, in the half-closed eyes.

"Also, when fatigue helped, resumed the low voice, homely, I began to fall asleep, on the *doctor's own bed*, a sleep of total exhaustion, he considered it very appropriate to let me rest alone, relying on good nature to complete my healing. »

..Nobody brought his lips closer to my ear.

"Would you believe that on board *the Asgård*, where all the brass gleams brightly, where the planks of the deck are bricked with rare meticulousness, even on the *men of war* of the fleet, the cleaning is so badly done? »

the seven heads of the green dragon

The small Pickwickian smile reappeared on the thick lips.

"...Yes, no offense to our exquisite and hospitable hostess, — he nudged me! — some cabins are really swept despite the good blood.

"Do you want proof of that, too? »

From the pocket of his pajamas, from which protruded a green silk pouch, the "old James" took out a small copper medallion, the obverse of which bore the fairly recognizable profile of Christ, surrounded by the letters *yod* and *schinn*, at this so it seemed to me, at least, and whose reverse was charged with a short Hebrew inscription, which I did not know how to decipher.

"This medal," continued the pseudo-William P. Sleets, with sudden seriousness, "was very fortunately stuck between the frame and the partition of the doctor's cabin and I had some trouble, I swear to you, old Teddy, at the release.

...I had recognized, for my part, by now, this facsimile of the coin of my antique naie, familiar to archaeologists and which numismatists designate by the name of "Denier de Trajan".

I knew that large volumes had been devoted to it, because its inscription hailed Jesus Christ as the Messiah, awaited by all Israel, which leads one to think that it had served in the time of primitive Christianity as a sign of recognition and of rallying to the first followers of the new faith, to the disciples of the Nazarene!

Didn't I even read, somewhere, that, struck shortly after the crucifixion on Calvary, there was the greatest chance that she would reproduce the true features of the son of Mary?

— This medal never left General Koutiépo! continued Nobody, with as much muffled vehemence as he could muster in his tone, given the circumstances. Do you understand now?

I nodded affirmatively!

— He wore it at the end of a thin steel chain around his neck.

"His relatives certified it to me, while you were in London, to prepare for our escapade.

"His Slavic mysticism found there an opportunity to hope, even in the most painful hours. It had been given to him, it seems, by one of the superior minds of our time, a certain Sédir. You know ? »

'Yes, the founder,' I stated, of these *Spiritual Friendships*, of which the so-called 'Denier of Trajan' is precisely the emblem.

"So our lead was good!"



Fig. 10.

"Denier de Trajan" that belonged to General Koutiépoff.

Found aboard the Asgård, the yacht of Baron von Bautenas—which I was the guest of with Ivar Kreuger—this medal confirmed to us that the leader of the White Russians had been kidnapped there.

the seven heads of the green dragon

James's still half-closed eyes shone with that filtering light that conveys the joy of success.

“...Koutiepoff was indeed embarked on this boat! »

And a quivering silence fell between us, a silence full of profound exaltation, the most beautiful that a man can know, in my opinion, that of the *hunt* !

...Thanks be to the affectionate complicity of our friend, General JC Parker, former senior agent of the American Intelligence Service of the AEF(1) and presently *vice-chairman*(2) of the *Chicago Machine-Tool* !

Without him, would we have ever been able to discover a plausible reason for introducing ourselves, in this way, into the daily intimacy of Councilor Bautenas and would it have been given to us to become companions of *the Asgård*, of the magnificent yacht, with the rigging rare three-masted boat, whose very exact description we owe to Émile Guérin, brother-in-law of Jagu Duhamel, one-armed keeper, but fortunately not blind, at the Ailly lighthouse!



This discovery led us to primordial deductions!

We had the clear conviction that General Koutiépoiff had been kidnapped, on the orders of those famous *Greens*, whose existence, for us at least, was in no way hypothetical and that he was in a position to help us unmask!

Bautenas, accordingly, was one of 72 *Greens*. And not the least, of course, if we were to judge by the luxury of a billionaire that he deployed.

He was the one who had to be made to talk in order to find the key to the mystery of the sudden and tragic disappearance of the leader of the White Russians, whom all the police forces in the world were looking for... but softly!

Through him, we would finally, *finally*, hold a link in the chain!

Let us be excused, but this thought prevailed in us, for a few moments, the hope of freeing the one whom a tortured wife was crying, in the unlikely event, moreover, where he would have been alive!

...Another point still attracted — it must be said — our attention, namely seeing the relations that existed between Kreuger — meteor, suddenly sprang up at the

-
1. The American Expeditionary Force.
 2. Vice-president.

aboard the "Asgård"

firmament of finance, support for the tottering budgets of so many European states, king of Swedish matches—and the Lithuanian baron, member of the occult brotherhood that claims to dominate the globe.

Such an association threw, in our view, a singular light on the prodigious fortune of this dim Scandinavian, as we have said, rather limited, of a rather troubled mentality, who became, in such a short time, as we know, one of the pillars of world capitalism...and whose conceptions were only brilliant, original, brilliant, when it was - it is an absolute fact - "in a state second »1

...Without wanting to give us gloves, allow us to point out that, in the report sent by us, *confidentially*, at the time, to the very great Lorrain who was in charge of the finances of the French Republic, we insisted on the danger there would be in dealing with the one we consider like a creature of the *Greens* !

Events were soon to prove us right, moreover, since the death of Kreuger—(there would therefore be a lot to be said about the "suggested suicides" since Loewenstein's death!)—shook, to the very foundations, the very structure of Eastern Europe was one of the main causes of the collapse seriously from the pound!

The murder of Sarajevo, the massacre of Nicolas II, the assassination of Rathenau... the crash of the King of Matches, so many victorious steps towards the outcome prepared for a long time by the 72...

There was one game left to play, but it mustn't be lost!

Would the little we already knew allow us to burst the green abscess, to unbridle it, to prevent the fatal gangrene from spreading further?

Could we dedicate in time the eyes of the leaders of peoples, to raise them united against the Hydra, the Dragon with 72 heads?

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Chapter III

A duck hunting story!

This new attack of malaria, which seriously endangered the precious days of William Sleets—without Nobody, to tell the truth, being in the least inconvenienced—had somewhat forced *the Asgård* to cut short our cruise and put in at Stockholm . .

The care of a charming and very competent nurse, Vera Petrovna Vassilief, who had been provided to us on the hour by the venerable "Matron" of the Haakon hospital, the calm of a comfortable and peaceful room of the Hotel Dagmar, were to contribute fortunately to a rapid recovery!

So that day, February 6, James slumped in an armchair, close to the double window, which let in an almost dazzling morning light, was chatting in his placid tone, with his Pickwickian phlegm, in front of your servant and his girlfriend. nurse, herself seated casually astride a chair, the back of which served as a support for her hands and her chin.

Il devisait.

It would be better to say that he was giving a lecture for the exclusive benefit of his two listeners present.

' *Echinocactus Williamsi*, ' he had begun, as a man who fully possesses his subject, 'is a cactus which hardly grows except on the semi-desert plateaus of central Mexico.

"Some English collectors of cacti — and there are many of them — have called it '*turnip-cactus* ', which I believe describes its appearance quite accurately, for it does indeed look like a big dirty green turnip. , whose head would be divided into eight lobes of unequal size.

"As far as we go back in history, even pre-Columbian, *little girl* (James smiled fatherly at the young Slav), we see that

the seven heads of the green dragon

the Echinocactus Williamsi was known to certain Indian tribes, who had baptized it *peyote*, from a name of the Nahuatl dialect..., and who already appreciated its very curious properties. Nobody folded up his legs, braced his loins and continued:

— Peyote, for the natives of primitive America, was a kind of plant-god and the Huichah priests, who live in the Sierra del Norte, paid him a true worship which he is not far from deserving.

"Even today, the young men of this indigenous tribe, whose habitat is, however, a little more than two hundred leagues from the area where the peyote grows, do not hesitate to travel, once a year, eight hundred kilometers of impossible tracks, of impassable deserts and mountains, to bring back to their tribe the supply of the "green turnip", which they cannot do without.

"Because anyone who has tasted peyote can no longer break the habit of chewing it! »

James paused to relight his old briar pipe and sniffed two or three satisfied puffs.

"This peyote, the Huichah Indians dry it," he continued, "according to secret methods, which they jealously pass on from grandfather to grandson.

"They cut it into thin slices—which look like those dried porcini mushrooms sold at grocers—and which English ethnographers have called '*mescal buttons*'.

"The feeling one gets from chewing these sorts of quids is very unpleasant at first," I interrupted, wanting to loosen up my tongue a bit and show myself a certain erudition in front of Vera Vassilief. The smell is frankly sickening, the peppery taste dries out the mouth and often causes nausea that the natives dismiss with bizarre incantations without any effect, moreover, on pure Europeans.

sang.

'I've tasted it many times.

Old James insisted on placing his "conference" in its entirety.

So I was silent and listened to him, all the more willingly because he has more extensive and older experience of narcotics than mine.

"After the first half-hour, after the absorption of a single dose — a '*mescal button*' is quite enough — one generally feels the sensation of euphoria which a shot of morphine gives to addicts.

"But the impression is much more vivid and more complex, too, than that produced by the interference of opium alkaloids.

"It is moreover difficult to express, when one returns from the species of nirvana in which one finds oneself very quickly plunged,... when the fantasies that accompany the second state dissipate,... when one regains one's footing on this earth ! »

Nobody thought, absently sucked on his unlit pipe again, carelessly, and his voice changed.

"Can you imagine that the colors, the smallest object, take on an absolutely extraordinary brilliance,... that a noise, even non-musical, evokes magical fantasies, dazzling plays of light, analogous to those obtained in a pressing long enough and hard enough on the eyelids,...with the difference that these fireworks, these projections, occur outside of you,...that we actually see them. »

Rarely for an Anglo-Saxon—even with Irish blood—James had taken to drawing arabesques in a vacuum with the bowl of his pipe, like a Latin.

My word, he was making gestures!

"At the same time, your whole existence appears to you," he continued. The smallest details reappear faithfully in your memory, with truly prodigious speed, but without holes, in perfect order!

"Better to try the experiment only in front of very dear friends who you can trust, because this kind of waking dream, you translate it aloud, without even suspecting it. You describe all your visions, you repeat in a clear way the relieved circumstances... in a total confession, which leaves no more mystery on the nature of your acts and your true mentality! »

"If the Inquisition had known about your drug, it would have avoided torture many times over!" whispered Vera Petrovna Vassilief rather pensively! Luckily the Tcheka didn't use it six months ago, when Commissioner Goncharoff questioned me about the reasons for my trip to Kharbin!

"The first travelers who had the opportunity to observe the effects of the *turnip cactus* up close ," Nobody purred, as if he hadn't even heard, believed, mistakenly, that it predicted the future...Fichaises!

"The actual services he can render are much more interesting. »

the seven heads of the green dragon

"And where can you get peyote?" questioned the Slav, whose eyebrows had furrowed as she stretched herself, feline.

James pretended not to have perceived the positive question, but he answered it no less exactly, in his own way.

— In the Rio Grande del Norte, half-breed traffickers collect *the Echino cactus Williamsi*, steal it from the Indians if need be, and then sell it for exorbitant prices in certain ports of the New World, under the characteristic name of *'n't you think, from dry whiskey* (1).

"Prohibition has, moreover, made this clandestine trade one of the most prosperous industries, typically North American, where you get rich much faster than in the state of bootlegger.

"Liverpool, Hamburg and Marseilles followed the progress very quickly and opened peyote pharmacies, which compete with the distributors of coconut, heroin, "snow" and opium. »

Vera Petrovna Vassilief resumed her white sphyngéal pose, interrupted for a few moments and her smooth forehead once again became serenely marble.

James, placid, continued his course:

— Fifteen years ago, peyote was for the first time the object of scientific research in the laboratories of Europe. And since this special question interests you both, I strongly advise you to read the very well done work that a well-known French pharmacist, Mr. Alexandre Rouhier, devoted to the vegetable-god of the Indians, Huichahs and Nahuatl...Reading is endearing, captivating like that of a novel.

'I've already gone through it,' I said, tired of my mute role.

Nobody drowned my remark under the almost inexhaustible flow of his steady delivery.

"Scholars, therefore, have succeeded in isolating and preserving peyote alkaloids, as they did with morphine, extracted, *as you know*, from opium and cocaine , coke.

"Of course, these alkaloids, which have the significant advantage of being easy to administer, do not have exactly the same properties as peyote.

"Two of them, relatively quite easy to obtain, *muscaline and peyote*, have the effect of provoking colored phenomena of fantastic intensity, but do not act on memory and do not recreate the past.

1. Whisky sec.

"On the contrary, *lophophorine*, a much less stable alkaloid, of a complicated preparation, very toxic in normal doses, when used in homeopathic doses causes an absolutely irresistible recrudescence of memories. »

James' face lit up with a slightly ambiguous smile.

From then on it seemed to be addressing me exclusively.

'You are not unaware, *old chap*, that the great administration of which I was the zealous instrument, for a very large number of years, possesses the most perfected analytical laboratories.

"Peyote naturally *had to* keep our chemists busy.

"You understand why, don't you?

"And all we had to do was rent each other, time after time, *lophophorine*. »

- How can we get it? insisted Vera Petrovna, whose singing voice had taken on almost tragic inflections.

"If the use of peyote were to spread among the public," replied old James softly, "it would wreak far greater havoc there than all the other drugs put together, including the few laboratories that produce *lophophorine* ." are they tightly controlled. And its use is only tolerated in infinitesimal doses in such pharmaceutical products.

"Fifty bottles of..."

(He quoted a well-known specialty, recommended for asthenics, for nervously exhausted people.)

"...when properly distilled, will give you a very sufficient residue.

sant, for the experience you seem to be meditating on..."

The Pickwickian smile played once again on the full lips, "if by chance I cannot find in the clutter of my cabin briefcase the sample of several grams entrusted to me by my old friend Johnny Langford, the *chief* Intelligence Service *chemist* ! »



Leaving behind his unusual professorial tone and aspect, James Nobody rebecame, for a few minutes, himself, before resuming the facies, the expressions, of William Sleets.

It was with a paternal hand that he touched the cheek, very pale, of the little Russian nurse.

"I understand, *little girl*, " he said. And I approve...

the seven heads of the green dragon

"May the process that I tell you succeed. Believe me, it is infallible, when you know how to use it. »

A sudden resolution appeared in the steely gray eyes of the smooth-fronted girl.

'Don't worry, I'll know, sir,' she said, getting up. And the three brothers who will help me are not at their first attempt.

"Like me, they have sworn, on the triple sacred icon of Saint Seraphim of Sarof, to succeed or perish!" »

And the one that white Russian youth venerated fanatically, the one who had devoted her charm, her beauty, her virginity to the cause of the deceased tsarism, as one enters into religion, the one who, for that time, thought only of finding or to avenge General Koutiépofov, solemnly repeated:

- Do not be afraid. I will succeed !



This wild duck hunt, in the reeds of Lake Moëlar, left me, in truth, an unforgettable memory.

Delighted to find his host of *Asgård*, so quickly recovered, Baron von Bautenas had immediately acceded to the whim of the vigorous convalescent that was William Sleets and gave the necessary orders so that the team was fertile in hunting emotions. .

The Baltic baron's "Mercédès" was, in its way, as beautiful and as sleek as his yacht, and when it tidied up the steps of the Hotel Dagmar, around seven o'clock on Thursday, March 2, - a month, a day for the day, let us remember, after the mysterious kidnapping of the supreme leader of the White Russians—we could not help but admire its elegance, its silent suppleness, its line.

The adviser, a very good gun, seemed in excellent humor. Elsa Eriksenn would have returned points to Diana the Huntress.

Neither of them seemed to regret Ivar Kreuger, who was apparently expecting an urgent response from Paris to his proposal to take over the monopoly of matches by replacing the Indirect Contributions to do so.

Needless to say, is it not, that we were already fixed on the nature of the latter. That would be going off topic!

So, while the double windows of the car froze, the wheels, leaving the lanes of a cheerful and coquettish suburb - in its de-

horns of evergreen trees—went along the smooth tarmac of superb forest roads.

For hours we drove, wedged between two cliffs of black pines, then it was the region of the lakes, whose water sparkled motionless between the clear trunks of the birches, this water, a pure mirror which completely reflects the blue of the sky, naive as a childish look!

Even Bautenas, who, however, had hardly the soul of an artist, was silent, won over, little by little, by the great quivering silence of this winter nature, whose aerial passage of the car barely disturbed the translucent and dry atmosphere of extraordinary clarity.

The mystery of this virgin world, it seemed, of all contact, of all human pollution, had something disturbing and a little exhilarating at the same time.

And I had the subtle impression of being the first explorer of a region sung by dreams!

She was magical, marvelous, but hallucinating, at the same time, by this constant repetition of landscapes that were always the same.

These pines, these birches, these lakes resembled each other, blended together, with what almost became a nightmarish identity. Didn't I have the anxiety to turn continually in the same area?

Also, although the warm thigh, under Elsa's very short skirt, had hardly ceased, since Oslo, to lean against mine, thanks to the soft complicity of the opossum blanket, I felt some relief when the "Mercédès" stopped.

We had to cross, on foot, about sixty meters in the middle of the frozen reeds, on the edge of Lake Moëlar, to reach the transparent ice as solid as an ice floe.

As we had left the bank, the shrill cry of a belated owl filled the dry air, sparkling like champagne, with its mournful hoot three times.

Bautenas pricked up his ears, stopped, scanned the thickets with some concern, then, shrugging his broad shoulders, joined the fake William Sleets.

Elsa had turned a little pale, clung to my arm.

- Bad omen! she said nervously. You are going to make fun of me, accuse me of superstition; but the old women here say that this is a sign of death.

I reassured her as best I could, with all the gallantry of which this Gadger that I had to personify was capable!

the seven heads of the green dragon

Nobody must have responded to a similar remark, for I heard him declare, rather loudly, with a big laugh:

- Intersigne, if you like, but unfortunate only, I bet, for the unfortunate ducks who fall under our lead!

He turned towards me :

" Is not it ?

And his wink, a little mocking, which could be interpreted as a mockery, not malicious, of the "credulity" of the Balt, meant, for me alone:

- *All right!* Our people are in place! Let them try not to miss it!



Three huts of dried reeds had recently been built on the baron's orders, to receive his guests.

They stood, in the middle of the extremely dense aquatic vegetation which hid them, two hundred meters from each other, on a kind of islet, to which one could, through the thick ice, reach, now, dry foot,... islet at the intersection of the two main arms of the lake, towards which, in a few moments, two strong teams of beaters, riding noisy petro-trollers, would beat back the flocks of ducks through the water channels in core libre.

"Are you casting lots for me, gentlemen?" offered Elsa, all laughing, breaking three twigs of rush as crumbly as glass. Whoever shoots the shortest will have me as the finest ornament on his *wigwam*(1) until noon. I'll be his devoted *squaw* ! I'll reload his gun and go get his game!

Chance or feminine cunning?

The palm fell to me!

Bautenas grimaced a little at the thought that I would remain alone for two full hours with the one who was the "pearl of his eye."

But he pretended to share the opinion of Nobody who proclaimed

— Consoling hecatombs are promised to us! Losing at the pretty game of Eros, we will win at the game of Nimrod!



1. Indian hut.

Of course, I would have to be inoculated with a strong dose of *lophophorine*, to compel me to evoke the delicious memories that I keep of those one hundred and twenty minutes, so precious, spent with the too tender Elsa, in the little hut so warm, so cozy, of Lake Moëlar!

The fact that, on the other hand, a more serious game was being played, the stakes of which were close to my heart—that two hundred yards from me—did not in any way prevent me from savoring the advantages that I took from the circumstances. and the charming state of mind of my hunting partner!

" *Carpe Diem !* " Take advantage of the hour!" The epicurean's advice is a maxim of my profession!

Do not believe, however, that my hammerless has been idle!

Because my painting, already...royal, was extended by an honorable list, as soon as the first "past"1

Eros, far from disturbing my shot, gave it more firmness.

In fact, I applied myself, moreover, to put, in everything, the double bites...
...The excitement into which our mutual triumph had thrown us,...the delicate satisfaction of a long shared desire, prevented Elsa Eriksenn from realizing, immediately, that on the fifth pass of ducks, Slets was the only one to shoot .

- Take care, she said, suddenly, pushing my lips away from hers.

" *He* suspected something. *He* left his post. Listen. We no longer hear his rifle. If he saw us, if he saw us! He's jealous if you knew. He would be capable of anything, and even...to shoot us down! »

Nothing could be done to drive away this insidious anxiety.

As the silence, certainly intriguing, of the Winchester persisted—that Winchester whose prowess the Baron had praised to us, and which had hardly ceased to thunder during the first four flights—Elsa couldn't stand it any longer.

A certainty was worth more than this unbearable anguish.

She wanted to go out, go see!

If he had seen us, what did it matter!

If he had spied on us, too bad

If he was lying in wait to hit us? Eh, we would have there, after all, only the punishment of our faults!

Ah! They would catch him again, risking his position, his very life, for a stranger.

the seven heads of the green dragon



Although the owl had hissed again, twice this time, I must have affected the greatest surprise when, on entering Bautenas's hut, on the ground strewn with empty casings, we noted the inexplicable disappearance of the councilor .

Neither my calls, nor those, powerful, stentorian, of the pseudo-Williams, nor the pleas of Elsa, soon in tears, distraught, caused the slightest echo.

After a beat, which lasted in vain until dusk,...beat which joined the driver of the Mercédès and the woodcutters, attracted by our useless clamor, we had to return to Stockholm with the automobile.

What the Scandinavian press was to call, the next day, "the new Koutiépoft affair" began, in truth.

A case that flouted the finest sleuths of the Baltic police and the Swedish police, working in rivalry.

The waters of the lake did not return the corpse of the dictator's adviser Valdémeras!

Like that of the white general, who disappeared just a month earlier, it seemed to have strangely, oddly vanished!

...I might add that inconsolable at the loss of a dear companion, Elsa Eriksenn refused to see the Yankee engineer again whom she held, definitively, responsible for her mourning.

Convinced as she was that Otto had committed suicide, as soon as he had—unfortunately—had to notice his... misfortune, she finally accepted, in the first week of April, the flowery and gilded tributes of the king of matches. : Kruger!

The Asgård, — renamed, — renamed with a new name, — too well known, since then, of Lloyd's, — was used for their...honeymoon.

Some Slavs are big kids.

They have an annoying and infinitely regrettable propensity to break the most beautiful toys!

Those who likewise knew how to imitate the cry of the owl added, without our knowledge, and on their own authority, a finale to the scenario which we had meticulously and very precisely regulated.

My maternal grandfather, who was one of the still admired masters of psychology

chophysiology, repeated, quite willingly, an aphorism of which the very beautiful Vera Petrovna Vassilief was the living illustration.

"Be careful, child," he said, — when I barely had a bachelor's degree, I thought I was a man, for having frequented a few regulars in the brasseries of the Latin Quarter, — beware of women, but above all remember that the most Dangerous are those to whom we would give the Good Lord, yes, without confession!

Flee like the plague from those who look like fair-haired angels descended from heaven!

...Never mind how I found out, but I do know that there is currently, in an asylum in Leningrad, a madman who greatly intrigues the illustrious Professor Pavloff, the most prominent psychiatrist in the world today. USSR and its sitting so much llegal, one of the "aces", without a doubt, of psychopathology.

The subject in question, registered under the number 3008, relates to the body of the scars identical to those of the insane, already residents of the asylum... and who were sent there, after a prolonged stay in the prisons of the Cheka.

There is the same removal of strips of flesh on the back, on the chest and on the thighs.

The teeth have been pulled out—with pieces of the jawbone—as well as the fingernails... the toes have been broken off, the two ears cut off.

The man, however, was never entrusted to the "special commissions".

No official register mentions his report, before he was found—his wounds already healed—by the Red Guards, responsible for evacuating, each evening, the mausoleum where Lenin sleeps, under his glass sarcophagus.

The authorities never succeeded in identifying him, so much the cheeks, the face and the neck, the fingers and the palms of the hands were burned by the acid!

His bewilderment remains total.

But he sometimes has strange vasomotor disorders which make the two doctors believe that he was poisoned, at some point in his life, by powerful alkaloids, plant alkaloids related to the series...

C13 H17O3N !...

Certainly Koutiépoff was duly avenged!

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Chapter IV

The Man with the Green Gloves.

It was not only in Sweden, Latvia and Finland that the total disappearance of Councilor Bautenas provoked emotion.

Minds much more subtle, perspicacious, than the journalists and the Scandinavian policemen applied themselves to solve the enigma.

I want to leave to "old James" the full authorship of this detestable pun

— *Don't Worry (1) ! They will stay green !*

In fact, if we never knew what happened to Koutiépoiff, we never knew, either, except for the privileged few, the fate of Baron Otto!



...Cavalière, on the Côte des Maures is, in the center of an amphitheater of harmonious, wooded mountains, the most enchanting stay that can be dreamed of, in March, for those who love solitude.

The tiny hotel, on the beach, shaded by umbrella pines, where thousands of birds nest, looks like a miniature Eden and the paths, smelling of myrtle and the resin of Cap Nègre, on the side of the red rocks caressed by the sea transparent and too blue, constitutes for the last gods who survived Olympus the most adequate stay.

Didn't I think fifty times that I had surprised, in the foam, of a deserted cove, the undulating body of a mermaid?

Did I not hear, towards evening, resounding on the shady crest, the flute of the divine Goatfoot?

All day long, installed in some isolated corner of the pine forest my ritime, in front of easels, carrying hastily smeared canvases,

1. Don't worry!

the seven heads of the green dragon

— disguised as a painter, an avatar which allows, without being surprised, certain eccentricities, — James and I, we deciphered the numerous pages re-covered with a very clear shorthand, dispatched inside a box of tubes of fine colors, under the label of Paul Foinet, the merchant of rue Bréa.

..Bautenas had been particularly talkative.

His ramblings included a considerable hodgepodge for a few revelations. useful articles.

Even these were enveloped in mist, fog, smoke!

Under the influence of peyote, he had spoken, *but for himself*, speaking more by allusions than by objective expressions.

And we would have, I'm afraid, "dried up," as they say, if I hadn't had a key!

It has sometimes helped me to have been an anthroposophist!

This sect is a recent schism from the famous Theosophical Society of Adyar, India.

But, while the contemporary theosophical movement - whose occult influence is great - has always developed according to British directives, the anthroposophists, on the contrary, had as their first founder a Hungarian, Rudolf Steiner, a doctor from a great intelligence and an encyclopaedic science, which, according to informed people, would have had a moment of ties with the illustrious Society of Jesus... which I believe to be true!

...I admit that at the time when I was affiliated to this society, the origins of Steiner interested me, certainly, much less than his activity in the political order... secret politics!

Although very young, at that time, the instinct which was to lead me to follow my current career already pushed me to try to understand the motives of the subject of François-Joseph.

It very quickly became clear to me that, under the pretext of resurrecting, of restoring the Rose Croix, he was seeking, above all, to unite a large number of "small chapels" of "small fraternities", of esoteric groupings into a German-ophile bloc which would oppose the Anglo-Saxon tendencies of the Theosophists.

Perhaps some day I will recount the sly struggle which broke out between the antagonistic forces and what was its repercussion on the destinies of Europe, America and Asia!

the man with the green gloves

It suffices to know, for the moment, that I was, by order of my leaders, one of the model proselytes of the "Steinerian crusade", since I was granted the golden rose, a rare badge of the supreme rank. , granted only to the leaders of the "Higher Committee"

The disciples of the Hungarian doctor, among whom must be included the famous Jules Sauerwein, the former director of the foreign services of *Le Matin*, among others, do not seem to have continued his pan-German crusade.

They focus, almost exclusively, today, on determining the knowledge which makes it possible to study the deep and secret constitution of man.

If I have continued to pay my dues for a long time, it is certainly not because my leisure allows me to be passionate about such fallacious research

But for us "people in the shadows", it can be extremely useful to maintain relationships in occult societies.

The environment is a marvelous nursery, you will want to believe me, for indicators of all kinds. One can recruit, without difficulty, as many agents provocateurs and even more than one can wish,... as many spies of low level, susceptible of all the jobs.

Only, they are not always of excellent quality.

Esoteric practices — and this is their least flaw — very quickly blunt the critical sense and these people too often take their desires, their inclinations for tangible realities!



There is not an anthroposophist, an occultist of quality, who did not frequent, in his time, the famous *Villa Bleue*, in Nice!

The Countess P... welcomed, with what infinite good grace and what my majestic dignity, all those curious about the "Beyond" who came to ring at her door.

One could only regret that her kindness, which is too fundamental, and her misunderstanding of contingencies led her to take a taste, even a mania for the occult, as a certificate of honesty!

One encountered in his salons—and that's what attracted me there—the best and also the worst.

the seven heads of the green dragon

Was this noble and excellent person ever able to suspect the complicated and shady intrigues that were going on all around her?

Her husband translated Scandinavian authors, one of her relatives Rudolf Steiner. She herself sought the truth, with a touching good faith, making a fuss about convinced and perfectly honorable people as well as charlatans, rascals or thieves, without the slightest discernment.

It was at her place that I met a certain number of "great followers" who not only lived off her bank account, but who also benefited from the secret funds of ten countries, serving them or betraying them, in turn, according to their whims or their immediate interest.

Inayat-Khan,...Gourdjieff...Dennis, will I tell your best stories?

I would probably be accused of romanticizing my memories and making roman-feuilleton !

And yet what there would be to say about your hosts, strange Villa Bleue!

..Among these puppets, more or less formidable, an individual, of great stature, this one, stands out in the foreground.

During his six-month stay with the Countess P..., he edified or stupefied, as you like, the usual circle by the display of his extraordinary magnetic gifts.

He taught me many things.

I learned even more about him when I went through his extremely complete file at the General Security, with the same initials as mine. I prefer to give him the name he had then, Dordji-Den.

He was a Tibetan lama of the so-called sect of the Red Caps,... for the initiates, a Dzog-Tchène.

He in no way concealed that he was of Semitic origin, but he gave clear proof of the superior lamaic initiation which he had received at the monastery of Sera, near Lhasa, the holy city of the living Buddha.

The funny thing is that at that time, he was perhaps not lying!

Besides—and this is his strength—that man is always sincere.

Is it his fault if circumstances force him, quite frequently, to change his sincerity!

..Dirty as hell, he didn't lack allure, under his costume which recalls, in many ways, that of those Nestorian priests who sank, with their schism, into the depths of Asia, pursued as they were, then, by the vindictiveness of the Basileus!



Fig. 11.

The lama Djordji-Den, whose teaching was to be so useful to me in my fight against the " Green Dragon ". — He holds in his hand a theu-threng composed of one hundred and eight slices of bone, cut from one hundred and six human skulls.

the seven heads of the green dragon

He had taken a liking to me, very openly, because of my rather extensive knowledge of esotericism, unexpected knowledge in a marine engineering engineer from the port of Toulon - a role that I had chosen to play and which earned me, on the other hand, in this same rather mixed world, pretty feminine successes!

In exchange for a few "tips" that I allowed myself to be snatched from on our most recent submersibles, he showered me with unpublished explanations on the rather special symbolism of his costume.

I learned from him the exact meaning of the tantric sorcerers' trident, which they call *the dung khatan* ... trumpet, cut from a human femur;...I learned to salute according to the triple sacred formula: "*kale jou den jag*" and I was able to drape myself, as well as he, in Zen, this sort of toga, the prerogative of the monks of his sect.

...I had more difficulty, it must be admitted, in getting myself a *theu-threng*, this cha pelet which the lama uses to sing endless litanies, punctuated with stakes *Om mani padme hung* (oh! the jewel in the lotus !) and I even had to pay with the blueprint of an automobile torpedo (which was never in service) for this row of one hundred and eight bone washers tightly packed, flat washers, each cut out of a different human skull!

One hundred and eight, exactly. This is the ritual number par excellence.

...Why, then, did Bautenas clearly specify, on three different occasions, in his forced revelations, *that the theu-threng, serving as a sign of recognition to his peers, must have one hundred and ten roundels?*



It was now a question, first, of faking my own rosary, so that it could continue to appear authentic to those who would have to examine it, then,—an even more difficult thing—of procuring one. second, which was in no danger of being taken for a coarse imitation.

...An interested visit, to one of the people who knows mysterious Tibet best and who lives, somewhere on the road from Nice to Digne, in a peaceful retreat, which is called, over there, the Villa of the Silence provided us with information that was extremely valuable to us for the rest of our mission – an increasingly special mission! — but, despite the warm intercession of his secretary, the obliging Miss Spinly, our

the man with the green gloves

hostess, Mrs. David-Neel, did not think it necessary to get rid of the *theu-threngs* given to her by the lama Yong-Den!

...We were thinking very seriously — because, to tell the truth, time was running out — of robbing the showcases of the Jacques Bacot collection, which is in the Guimet Museum, when information, published in an esoteric journal, told me that my friend M R. (1) had returned to Paris, after a three-year stay at the lamaic monastery of Chorten-Nyama, sanctuary and venerated residence of one of the four living Buddhas!

Mr. R..., taken into his confidence, procured for us, in a few hours, — with enthusiasm, — the objects which we could need... and assured us that those who would examine our *theu-threngs*, would find them loaded with fluid, imponderable for the common people, but which would make them recognized as authentic by the initiates whom we would first have to convince...



On the strength of the details obtained from our "ally" Irma Staub, following a telegram, which looked innocent, sent four days earlier to Simla, we were able to reach Berlin, after a short detour to London.

Who is this wise man who said that as religion lost followers... tarot cards and coffee grounds gained them!...

The only profession which is not idle, in all of Germany, at the present time is that of soothsayer, or else of founder of occult sects.

Since the war, the Reich has been undermined, in truth, by a host of more or less magical "little chapels", many of which touch on the blackest magic!

The "big stars" like Keyser-ling, like Bo-Yin-Ra, in no way harm the "utilities"; on the contrary.

A little of their luster reflects on the "25-mark wizards" who swarm, moreover, both on the outskirts of Unter-den-Linden and on the filthy suburbs of Moabit.

At the time when we found ourselves staying at the Hotel Adlon, the most notorious of the "Magi" in view—because doubtless the most expensive—was the one whom a reporter from the *Berliner Zeitung* had nicknamed, at following an in

1. (note of Lenculus) Initials of M . Marked River.

the seven heads of the green dragon

terview retentissant, «*Der Mensch mit den grünen Handschuen* », autrement dit, *l'Homme aux gants verts*.

It was obvious that men of the caliber of Hugenberg sometimes went to consult him and had he not, in the Press, predicted, on three occasions already, the exact number of Hitlerites that contested elections, however bitterly, sent to sit in the Reichstag!

...But our deductions — (checked by meticulous cross-checking) — based on the revelations extracted from Bautenas, had led us to think that the person in question, who operated König's gasse, should be the logical outcome of our tenacious investigation.



The padded waiting room, all upholstered in silks, a kind of little private mansion, in this cul-de-sac where the noises of Berlin died away, contained authentic marvels.

The black and gold bas-reliefs of the second Han dynasty, — representing the successive embraces of Nieu-Koual and Fou-Hi,... the very singular avatars of Houang-Ti,... the procession of the White Tiger, visiting Lao Tseu, — the bronzes of the Wei period,... the porcelains of the reign of Wu, would not have marred the treasures of the Ségalen collection.

The acrid and sweet, sugary perfume of tuberoses, which reigned, the light of cave or temple, contributed, very quickly, to put us, in a way, out of time, out of our Western world.

It seemed to me that, little by little, my will was diluting, dissolving, that I was losing control of my will.

It took all the energy I was capable of to hold on, to resist this sneaky, insidious, depressing hold.

And I was grateful to Nobody, whose British nerves are less—much less—sensitive than mine, for having suddenly slapped me straight in the chest, a brutal way, but guaranteed to bring me back to my senses.

The appearance of the Asian butler, who, without a word, handed us a silver tray to receive our cards, finished galvanizing me.

And I smiled at the bewilderment that appeared on his snub face—which replaced the very obvious contempt in which he seemed to hold the two Anglo-Saxons, brick-skinned, in gray flannels, which we apparently were—when, on

the man with the green gloves

his board stretched out, we threw, by way of cards, our *theu-threngs* to the *one hundred and ten* discs !

The wait was not, however, long... just the time it took, at most, for a lively and trained man to count the skull fragments and double check their unusual number. !

With a quiet step we followed the servant under an arch, climbed five steps, then five more.

A curtain rose.

We were, finally, in the presence of one of those whom we had been looking for, with the relentlessness that we know, for a little over six months!

The first milestone of the chain!

No, the Living Buddha of Ourga cannot have a more hieratic, more majestic attitude,... a look more cruel, more piercing and more astute at the same time than the species of idol that we saw, seated on a sort of throne. , at the bottom of a raised niche.

In the half-light, his sacerdotal vestments shot fires and sparkled like a "shrine".

But I saw, in this ensemble, at first, only one detail, a single one, the green gloves, reaching up to the elbows, and phosphorescent, with a brightness similar to that of fireflies.

The "man with the green gloves" must have—at the cost of what prodigious, what painful training—conquered absolute mastery over the least of his reflexes.

When he bet us, not a muscle in his face quivered; her lips did not even part.

I had the unpleasant feeling that a human voice came from inside a painted statue.

And the enamel eyes, motionless, had not even lowered. They were still looking away.

The lyrics, however, were crisp and pronounced, believe me, in excellent Oxford English.

— Although you, gentlemen, are neither of my race, the green hand is extended to you, since you bring the keys which open the hundred and ten locks of the secret Kingdom of Aggharti.

“ So has the *City* understood its true interests?

“That its ambassadors please tell me what they expect from we ! »

the seven heads of the green dragon

Thus we were indeed face to face with one of those whose occult action is leading Europe towards chaos. In front of one of those famous *greens*, whose existence we affirm, in spite of the incredulous jokes of those who officially rule the nations.

It remained for us to support the crushing, formidable role, which we had just taken on, under the pretext of negotiating an agreement between the Great Anglo-Saxon Bank - this group of complex interests which we designate with a symbolic word: the "City" - and those who had animated or suppressed, in turn, the Archduke François Ferdinand, the famous staretz Rasputin, the last Tsar Nicolas II, the Israelite Rathenau, the Ecumenical Patriarch Basil III, General Koutiépoïff, the financier Ivar Kreuger... how many others, of lesser importance.

James replied with a few words, without the other interrupting him.

Then this time the painted lips moved, the sparkle in the eyes faded:

"Agreed, tomorrow at six o'clock."

"The man with the two Zs will be there!" »

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