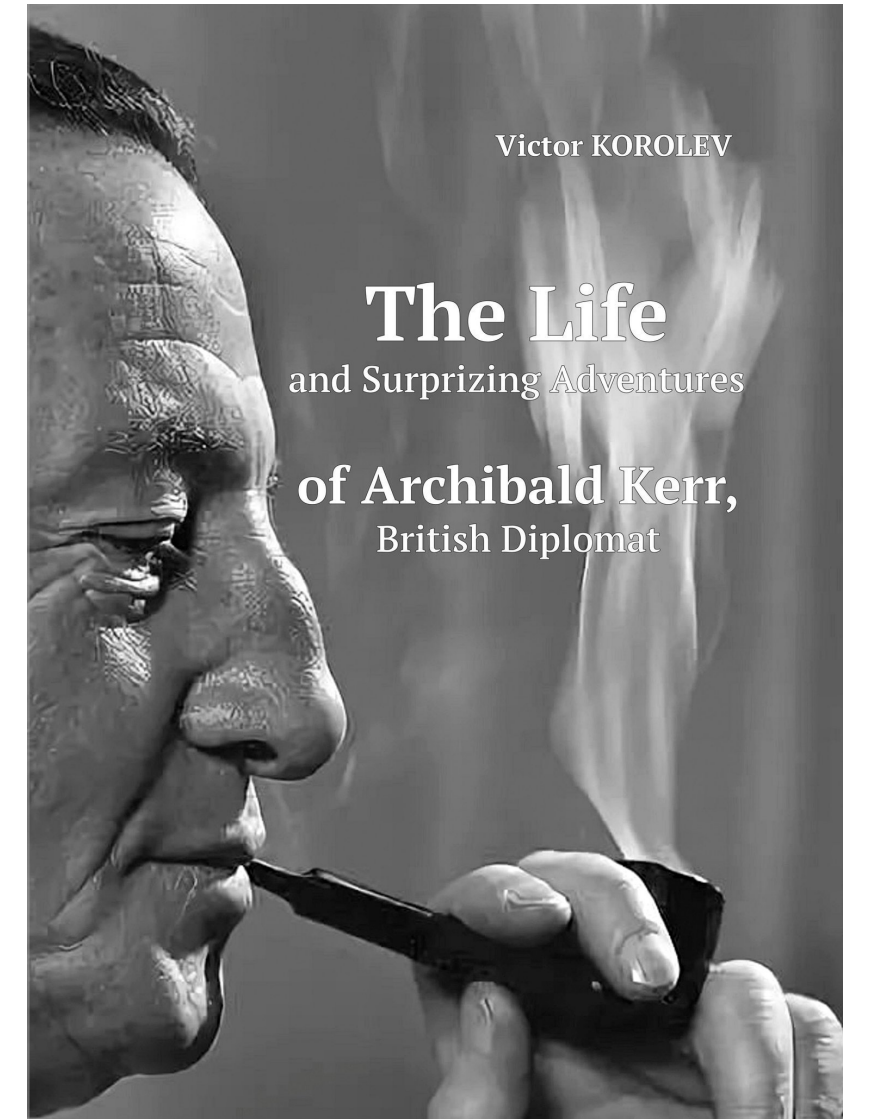




Victor KOROLEV

The Life

and Surprising Adventures

of Archibald Kerr,

British Diplomat

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The Life and Surprizing Adventures of Archibald Kerr, British Diplomat.

Historical novel / Korolev Victor: Academizdat; Novosibirsk; 2020

ISBN 978-5-6043924-5-4

Аннотация

In his head was born brilliant ideas on how to arrange the world. He considered war the greatest evil in the world. He was sure that this evil can be defeated by the power of the word. He was friends with Kings and Generalissimos, with writers and politicians. He suggested the right decisions to the leaders of the “Big Three” during the Second World War. He was one of the best diplomats of the twentieth century. It is a pity that the name of Archibald Kerr today is little known...

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Victor Korolev
The Life and Surprising
Adventures of Archibald
Kerr, British Diplomat
Historical novel

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From the Author

I have always been interested in the line that the author is allowed to cross in historical books, when he writes how everything happened, what exactly the characters of his work said. This line between fiction and speculation occupies me today. For detective or romance novels, this is not so important. And for historical novels it is very important.

As an author, it gives me great pleasure to tell the unknown about people who have left a noticeable mark in history. Such people very many, and here is know about them most often very few. And so it does not matter, in my opinion, what and how the characters say, what they wear and what they ride. These are details. And much more important are their actions, their difficult life path with all its repetitions.

A writer is not a historian. It doesn't work with sources. His task is to penetrate into the soul of his hero, see the world through his eyes, and then tell about what he saw. And not to lie at the same time, not to invent what was not and could not be. This is necessary if you write about a person not just real, but significant, known in his time.

I wanted to tell you about the British diplomat Archibald Kerr, who did a lot for Russia. He represented Britain in fifteen different countries. From 1942 to 1946 he was Ambassador to the USSR. I was very surprised to learn that there is no book

about this interesting man in Russian. Moreover – and in English there is only one: Donald Gillies. “Radical Diplomat: The Life of Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, Lord Inverchapel, 1882–1951”.

It was published twenty years ago, has survived several editions, but today it is somehow forgotten.

The author of this English book faithfully, observing the chronology, described the vicissitudes of life of his hero. He had access to the diplomat's personal archives and diaries, and he cited hundreds of his letters. And only rarely commented on them and expressed his opinion about certain events. This is a very thorough work of the historian. His book cannot be called a work of art. But her help for the novel was enormous.

I would not like, of course, to idealize the hero of my novel, but I am very impressed with his views on the war. Archibald Kerr volunteered for the front as a private soldier, although service in the Foreign Office gave him reservations. And there, in the trenches of the First World War, he realized an important truth: war is the most terrible thing on earth. Only those who know how to negotiate – diplomats – can stop this evil.

Archibald Kerr was an excellent diplomat. One of the best in the twentieth century – now that I've read everything about him, I'm sure of it. Therefore, a novel was born about the life and amazing adventures of such an extraordinary person.

Instead of prologue

Thoughts about the hero, about which at first little was known

Everyone who laughed at the kilt was long dead

Oh, how I want to paint the birth of a son at John Kerr! The bright colours, the spicy smells, the screams of the gulls, the March sun rising, the mica glints on the snowy peaks of the distant Grampian Mountains, and the joyous cry of the old midwife:

‘It’s a son! You have a son!’

And he would go into the house his grandfather had built, look at the pink, wrinkled face of his firstborn, put on his holiday kilt, and walk down the familiar path, and already painted with coloured crocuses. He would open the door to a tavern that smelled of salt and tar, and order a festive seven-course Scottish dinner: one bottle of whisky and six pints of good ale. And all familiar sailors and granite craftsmen will drink to the health of the heir:

‘John Kerr, we congratulate you on the new John Kerr!’

He was respected here. His father, also John Kerr, was remembered here. There was no doubt that another John Kerr had been born.

Half the friends in honour of such an event will be dressed in plaid shirts and canvas pants, a stake standing because of fish oil. Half the friends in honour of such an event will be dressed in tartan shirts and canvas pants, a stake standing because of fish oil. And those who are not in the sea or at the factory today came light, in plaid kilts. Fish scales sparkle in their beards like silver coins. So the day went on the right course, anger and sadness has no place in this smoky room today. Not all Scots drink whisky, but everyone will drink it tonight.

And let a few dark Englishmen in frock-coats and caps enter the tavern for a contrast – there will be enough room for all, no one has been at war for a long time. And let the youngest of them laugh, looking at the cheerful bearded man in a festive kilt. Not need to finger at poke, a boy, in the answer stonemason John Kerr grudgingly will raise with benches in the entire its six-foot growth and, showing fellow enormous fist, will tell on the entire hall:

‘Everyone who laughed at the kilt is dead!’

No one will get cutlasses, because no one ordered a fight. The Scots would order more whisky, for complete mugs, and move their mugs:

‘Drink to England!’

And they will drink for a long time and laugh even longer. Then they would drink again to the lady of the seas, winking at each other.

To the sound of bagpipes drunken John will be funny to dance

in the middle of the hall, hammering boots into the floor with a pull and a thump. And when it gets dark, he'll go home. He would sit by his pale wife's bedside and watch her feed the baby. Then the child, wrapped in thin cambric swaddling clothes and a goat-hair blanket, would fall asleep, and they would talk, looking at the child's face, so bright in the firelight.

'I'm so glad he's going to be John, too!'

'When the midwife cries "son", all are happy' he will tell in the answer. 'But then let a girl be born, I not against. When a lot of children in the house – it's to wealth.'

'I want our John to have a few names. In honour of you and your father already is. And can be still in honour my mother's?'

'Clara? You're crazy!'

'At least let it is Clark.'

'Well, so be it. Clark is as short and clear as John.'

'And Archibald – in honour of the fighters for the independence of Scotland, can you?'

'Go to sleep!'

And he will sit for a long time at the fading fireplace, which he folded with his own hands before the wedding. And he carved the mantelpiece himself out of local Aberdeen granite with spangles of mica. It was warm in the house old John had built.

Of all the tight people his grandfather was the tightest. And so he saved up for a house, and his father bought goats and the first sheep. Thank you grandfather and father for house, for goats and for sheep! Then John, who built the house, died; father died in a

factory explosion of a steam engine. And for his son today began a new life. He had a son of his own today.

He adored his young wife. Kat Louise- that was her name – had brought a considerable dowry to the house, and she was easy-going and domesticated, and life in the family began to improve quickly. She loved her husband, too, though she sometimes made fun of him. Over his red beard, which, as she argued, well brush you're not only pans, but and drunken snout. She did not beat her husband, like her other girlfriends.

She knew that if it happened, it would be the first and last time. Nor did he imagine himself alone. He dreamed of a large family and well celebrated today the birth of a son...

...About so I wanted to paint the birth of the firstborn in the family of Kerr, a resident of the old Scottish city of Aberdeen. But that wasn't really the case. Maybe it's better this way?

...Future diplomat Archibald Clark John Kerr was not born in Scotland, but in Australia. It happened on March 17, 1882.

So the father of the as yet unborn John Kerr – also John, son of John, and grandson of old hoarder John, who had saved for a house – was married to a young woman with a good dowry. They all hail from Aberdeen, the former capital of the Scottish kings. Their ancestors still managed to participate in the ongoing wars with the British for the independence of their part of the island. But that was a century and a half ago.

When the industrial revolution began, Aberdeen stonemasons had a hard time. New machines drove the grinders out of their homes. Well, if they still had time to hire a sailor on a sailing ship of the East India Company in their home Harbor or in Glasgow.

The diplomat's father was already a master of the axe and had joined a merchant ship. He enriched the local merchants with Indian spices by going to Bengal. He'd heard a lot of bilge stories over the months about the mad races of tea clippers ship and unbearably, childishly longed for home and for the still beardless friends on the bench in the tavern.

The ship finally docked in London. Port was recruiting for the East India Company's own clipper ship, built exactly to the plans of an American ship, but John decided to return to Aberdeen. It was right. The clipper sank before reaching Shanghai. And then there were the opium wars in China and the war in India. In short, when the money earned came to an end, he returned to port in Aberdeen. But it was different. All sailing vessels were scrapped, giving way to steamers. Carpenters were not needed, mechanics were needed.

John Kerr-senior had already become familiar with steam engines at the factory, these thundering monsters, shooting jets of scalding steam and splashes of hot oil. And he said to his son: 'You've seen whales in the North Sea, weathered storms in the ocean – don't you have to be afraid of steam boilers? Go learn to read and write!'

And John Kerr Jr. went to the newly opened free school. He

was twenty years old, nearly six feet tall, and weighed nine stone. When one of his classmates decided to make fun of his kilt, he with one hand lifted mischief's to the ceiling and said to the others:

‘Everyone who laughed at the kilt is dead!’ Kilt for a Scotsman-this pride, his need to earn.’

For two years of study ahead of all, learned to read and count quickly, learned the basics of navigation and safety when working with steam engines. His father died in a factory accident. Then John Kerr Jr. buried his grandfather and mother. Forty days later he brought home his young wife, her name was Kat Louise Robertson.

Now, it seems, everything is as it was in reality. But life in his family did not improve. At first it was unbearably hard, and then harder and harder. What's the Celtic revival? Even after many, many years, the already well-formed diplomat Archibald Clark John Kerr will walk away from talking about that period, tacitly stating that neither the rich Celts nor the noble Welsh, his relatives have nothing to do, his father was a simple worker and, not to die of hunger, sold the house and went to Australia in search of a better life.

People were being squeezed out of Aberdeen. At night someone set fire to wooden houses – whole streets burned. Someone was setting them on fire to make room for new factory floors. The English had the best seats in the town hall and in the port. Thousands of Scots went to Glasgow, London – wherever

they had to.

They had no work. They had no children either. In the evenings John Kerr and Kat sat by the fire. He read aloud to his wife a book about cruel pirates, talked about storms and distant lands, about amazing Indian animals as tall as a house and a nose as long as a hose. She did not believe that there were such big animals in the world, she called her husband a sea – wolf and a storyteller, but her eyes burned, and her face shone with the expectation of female happiness.

‘I really want to see it all, if you're not kidding!’ she whispered, hugging her husband.

Almost all the neighbors and friends left the old town. And one day John picked up an old Edinburgh paper in the harbor. He glanced at the big headline and raced home.

‘Look what's happening! The British bought shares in the Suez Canal! Now Australia can be reached in just a month! Going?’

The house and the goats were sold at half price, enough money for the journey to London, two one-way steamer tickets, and not much left.

‘Let the starboard side, but a separate cabin for two, it's an unthinkable luxury!’ John the sea wolf laughed. ‘You have no idea, Kat, how cramped we were on the ship for a year!’

There were so many things that he had to return to the dock several times. At last he hauled the last of the trunks over, shrugging off the heavy sack.

‘What's the matter with you? Why are you so sad?’

His wife sat at the open porthole, looking as lost as if they had forgotten something important in Scotland.

‘Look, John!’

It would be better if he didn't look.

Two feet below floated cigarette butts, sodden Newspapers, and old rags, all of which threatened to spill into the cabin when the ship tilted slightly on Board. In addition, the seashell-covered pier piles swayed in front of his eyes. There was no sky or sun.

‘Close it,’ Kat said softly.

He closed the porthole, pulled back the curtains, and lit a kerosene lamp.

‘Never mind, dear, we've only been sailing this way for a month. Lie down to rest...’

There was only one bunk. His wife refused to sleep in the hammock. She made her bed and fell asleep instantly. Nor did he hear the steamer leave the harbor and head for Sydney.

He was awakened by his wife screaming. She was thrown out of bed, and the next wave threw her stomach onto the table. The ship rocked so violently that he grabbed the hook and barely managed to get out of the hammock. The lamp went out. They sat for hours on the floor, hugging each other and fighting off the flying baskets and trunks in the darkness.

When the storm subsided, John went to the Laundry, it wasn't far. His wife sat on the bed, staring at nothing. She could neither eat nor talk – and sat or lay flat for days until the ship passed the gates of Gibraltar.

Then it got very hot, just unbearably hot. The cabin was as hot as a tin can on a fire. John was wiping his wife with wet sheets that dried instantly. Another week passed. Kat was terrifying to look at; she had lost a lot of weight and was breathing hard. As the ship approached Port Said, he carried her – weightless as a child – on deck.

The sun was rising over the canal. She felt better in the fresh air.

‘How strange it is! Why? What is it?’ she whispered. ‘Everywhere only sand, and suddenly water, and not a single person is visible...’

Then, in the Indian Ocean, they were again waiting for the storm. But the ultimate goal was getting closer and closer.

Sydney seemed to them a poor village, a huge construction site, where temporary huts were standing mixed in with military tents and tents of nomads.

The University had been in operation in Aberdeen for a long time, the stately castles were surrounded by gardens, on Sundays there was a fountain in the Central Square, and they went to see it after the sermon. And here, as can be here at all to live?

She waited in silence on the pier for John to bring the hired van and load up. She crawled under the tarp. Neither of them knew where to go next. They stayed in a shack where they were given a room for a month for a gold sovereign. The prices were ridiculous.

While Kat was recovering, John was not idle. He bought

twenty acres of land and laid the Foundation for his own house. Before the beginning of the rainy season they managed to make a roof at the house. A stone house with a fireplace – what else does a young family need? Ah, children. There were problems with that. The doctor said:

‘You have to accept. That storm in the Atlantic is to blame.’

The years went by. John's hands, his ability to handle stone or wood, horses or cars equally well, made a lot of money. And the natural the Scot's thrift brought them out of poverty very quickly. They even took a maid from the local aborigines. She worked from morning till late at night in the kitchen garden and cattle, freeing her wife from the hardest work.

Kat hadn't made a fuss when she'd caught her husband in hip contact with the staff. On the contrary, she began to teach her to read and write, gave her a name – Martha. It is clear that the mother of the child born on March 17, 1882, was considered to be Kat Louise. She asked her husband only one question:

‘Is it okay that he was born on St. Patrick's Day?’

‘It's nothing! The Irish, too, in life inherited. They're with us!’ John said, clearly implying that all of humanity had long been divided into English and everyone else, and Celtic celebration could be celebrated in Dublin, Glasgow and Sydney. Everywhere but London!

Little Kerr was baptized in a small local Church. Kat put on a white dress. Father put on his kilt and a plaid shirt. Son, as and dreamed parents, gave triple name of-Archibald Clark John. It

was believed that the more names a person had, the more lives were waiting for him on earth. Actually, it happened. The first life of the future diplomat began.

By then Sydney had become one of the largest cities in the British Empire and even the world! Here, too, a University had opened, fountains had sprung up in the squares, high – rise buildings and Victorian palaces had been built-all of which reminded the Kerr of their native Aberdeen. And when they saw a huge elephant, camels, kangaroos, monkeys and colorful parrots in the zoo, Kat told her husband that she would never leave warm Australia now. Her dream had come true.

The boy was born fair-haired, big like his father, only his nose flattened, like a boxer's. And the fight he accounted for often. He broke his noses when people laughed at his kilt. And he got a lot from his father. The elder John believed in the old-fashioned way that strong parental slaps grow healthy guys. Kat tried to shield the child from the discipline of the stick, but her husband was adamant. And Martha was not allowed to see the baby at all.

To read and write Archibald learned sooner, than secured for themselves not only parental pride, but and physical inviolability. At school, however, fists came in handy. The first person to ask why he wasn't red – headed, like all Scots, got hit in the nose.

The next boy asked what the newcomer had under his kilt and regretted his curiosity. Anyone who deliberately mispronounced the word “Scot” risked their nose.

There were many Britons, Celts, Welsh, and even Indians in

the class. The Scots immediately recognized Archie as the leader. And when one of his new friends told him in a whisper that Kerr was nicknamed “Australopithecus” by the seniors, Kerr was delighted:

‘So they think I'm a local old-timer!’

Archibald's mother died before he was eighteen. For some reason, he wasn't too worried about it. But he was very indignant when Martha moved with things in his father's room.

‘Do you want to live with a servant as a wife? Are you crazy, father?’

“Hey, you can only hear bad children in the house!” his father answered, looking at him strangely. ‘While you're in my house, don't you dare shout and tell me what to do! I wish I'd broken a few sticks on you when you were little!’

For the first time in their lives they had a fight. Archibald was yelling at his father:

‘The sooner I get out of here, the better! I don't want to live like you! I don't want to be like you, either outwardly or inwardly!’

John senior could barely contain his anger:

‘Well, son, you have your way, follow it. But do not forget the old truth: walking on the bones of your loved ones, you will reach your own bones...’

He didn't want to go home after school. The city had recently started trams, and he rode around the city until late at night. He had seen many wonderful things.

He drove to the huge tea warehouse on the riverbank, walked

across the bridge to the southern part of the city, sat for a long time on the parapet, waiting for a passenger train to crawl over the next bridge. A small locomotive with a long chimney usually pulled six or seven cars. The windows of the first two glowed with lights, it was first class. Kerosene lamps glinted in the windows of the next cars. And at the end of the train were the prisoners. The barred windows of their cars were dark, and armed soldiers stood on the platforms.

Archie would take the tram again and go all the way to the turnpike, skirting the city on the other side. There were endless wharves and warehouses, ships and docks. It was a different life where the tram brought him. There were no tall houses or clear streets. Here were the tents of the newcomers in search of happiness, and across the road, in a deep ravine hundreds of convicts were washing gold.

They stood in a solid wall, shoulder to shoulder, on either side of this ravine, at the bottom of which flowed a small river. They scooped clay earth into the trays and passed it down the chain to those who stood knee-deep in water and washed the trays, and then passed them to the other side, above. There they were received by the same slaves, and already they poured into bags what was left in the trays, and loaded the bags onto carts. Horses, camels, oxen were waiting for their draught fate...

It was a ghastly sight, hundreds of people in the wild crowding and utter silence swarming like ants in the muddy ground. And from above, armed British soldiers in red uniforms looked down

on them and grinned merrily.

‘Hey, boy, what are you so interested in here?’ one shouted. ‘You want a uniform and a rifle, too? So you go ahead and sign up, we need volunteers!’

The soldier began to whistle what sounded like a “Moonlight Sonata”. Archie walked away in silence. He got on the tram and went home. Every soldier is a Beethoven, he thought, secretly envious of the red coats.

The return journey took more than two hours. His father didn't look for him – didn't even ask where he was. And Martha had never had the right to ask.

The next time he also saw the amazing: a whole herd of strange birds rushed past him with wild speed. They weren't exactly ostriches – he had seen ostriches in the zoo. But they did not look like swans either – for their short black necks protruded from their powerful bodies, which were covered with yellow-straw feathers. These creepy monsters grunted louder than adult pigs. They went like a train, leaving a cloud of dust behind them.

And the next day two red kangaroos fought beside Archie. About ten of them were grazing peacefully behind the outermost huts, when suddenly another animal flew over the fences jumping, found the main one in the peaceful family-and began to beat him at once with both front paws. And then, leaning on its thick tail, it raised its hind legs and swung them so that it almost ripped open its opponent's stomach.

‘He'll kill him!’ Archie cried, grabbing a thick stick from the

ground, rushed to separate them.

‘Stop!’ somebody’s rough hand grabbed him by the collar.

Archie twisted, but didn’t drop the stick. Before him stood a bearded man in a turban, looking like a camel driver.

‘Hey, drop the stick!’ the bearded man said. ‘Don’t you know they can cripple a man?’

‘He’s going to kill him!’

‘You’re not local, are you?’

‘Local! They even call me *Australopithecus* at school!’

‘This is a different conversation!’ laughed the camel driver. ‘But I’ll tell you it’s more of a game than a fight.’ They both realize that the freedom to swing a fist at someone else’s nose ends where that nose begins. See, the old kangaroo won’t fight back? And young only pretends to be at war. He tests the old one: will he give up the slack, will he give up the main place in the herd. If the old heroically survive the attacks of the newcomer-the test will end with the victory of the old...’

‘And if he retreats, he loses?’

The bearded man laughed again.

‘Kangaroos don’t know how to back up, that’s something our army should learn from them. And let’s get down to business-do you want to help me?’

For three hours Archie helped the bearded man load the sacks. As the camel-train started, the bearded man said:

‘Come here tomorrow – make more money.’

It was the first shilling earned in the life of Archibald Clark

Kerr. He would no longer steal change from his father. He grew up.

Then he had to work part time on ships in the harbor and with gold miners. He graduated from school among the best. His father tried to talk to him about further studies, but the conversation again failed. Archie just drove across the river in silence and came home in the dark. That night he had his first taste of whiskey with the longshoremen.

Days, weeks, months passed. He wanted a change – and the change was not long in coming.

...Of course, and so you can start a novel about an interesting man, Archibald Kerr, a British diplomat. But all that has been said above is invented. In fact, his life and adventures do not need speculation. All that will be said below is true. If not, the author will have to apologize. Everything described below is based on real events, and discrepancies in names, dates, facts and phenomena are most likely accidental.

Part I



Chapter 1

Who to thank for happy childhood?

The future English diplomat Archibald Kerr was born on

St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1882, in the suburbs of Sydney (South Wales, Australia). He was the penultimate child of eleven children born to John Kerr Clark (1838–1910) and Kat Louise Robertson (1846–1926). The Clarks lived on their ancestral Scottish estate, Inverchapel, and they had all been successful farmers for centuries. The name of our hero has changed many times: before becoming Lord Inverchapel, he tried several options, until in 1911 he stopped at the simplest. So he will be called below – Archibald Kerr.

Archie's paternal grandfather, James Clark, did not finish his studies at the University of Edinburgh, got a job in a trading firm, where he quickly married the owner's daughter Margaret Kerr. This short marriage ended with the birth of their only son, Margaret died in childbirth. The heartbroken grandfather returned to Inverchapel, and the child was named John Kerr Clark – he will be the father of the future diplomat.

After graduating from the local school, young John Kerr Clark traveled a lot in Europe. His father's wealth allowed it, though he had three other sons and several daughters by his second marriage. Of long-distance travel, John returned to the family, which every year became more and more strange. He was in his early twenties when he decided to seek his fortune abroad.

He went to Australia. Two hundred miles from Sydney, he and his uncle had bought property, and then they had acquired adjoining lots, so that in a few years they had more than two hundred thousand acres and forty thousand sheep. A few years

later, the wealthy John Kerr Clark married Kat Louise, daughter of the neighboring landowner John Robertson, former Premier of New South Wales.

To say that his Scottish father – in-law was the head of the Australian state government is to say nothing of such a unique personality as John Robertson. In thirty years, this Australian grandfather of the future diplomat became Prime Minister five times. On the face of the terrible, he kept at bay the whole of the South-Eastern part of the Australian continent. There were two passions boiling inside him: for alcoholic beverages and to coarse language. By the end of his life, titled sir, he did not change these passions, and if someone loved more, it was his own numerous children, especially girls.

Kat's eldest daughter Louise was married to wealthy neighbor John Kerr Clark, and her youngest daughter to Robert Clark. Two families, so to speak, became related twice. But the youngest daughter's marriage was short-lived: at twenty-one, Margaret-Emma Robertson-Clark became a widow and returned to her father's house.

The house was gigantic. A wide wooden staircase led up to a huge veranda, where a long table on holidays gathered numerous relatives. On weekdays, the children were fed here, which every year became more and more. Children in the Robertson-Clark family were named after grandparents, so the names Margaret, James or John, for example, were answered by several people at once. Archibald in this sense was lucky.

He remembered his Australian grandfather John for life. And his Scottish grandfather James died before he was born. So Archie's childhood memories were the most vivid: a formidable grandfather, a huge house with many bedrooms on the second floor, a lawn in front of the main entrance and fun games with brothers and sisters in the Indians.

One day my grandfather brought with him a thin, bearded guest. He looked like an Egyptian, or even an Indian, but not a Scotsman or an Australian.

‘Here are my Penates, my dear Nicholas!’ Grandpa John said, trying to avoid strong language. ‘Come, women, we’ll have a table in a jiffy! Do not make a mistake before the Russian scientist, and then I will...’

Guest – Russian! Wow! From that far and wide country where there are no roads at all, and bears easily approach doors, as if postmen. The kids immediately clung to the table, opening his mouth, looking at the strange guest. But grandfather drove them away:

‘All of you get out!’

The three of them remained: the owner himself, the Russian scientist from bear's corner, and Aunt Margaret-Emma. That's how it all started. Five minutes later the visitor had nothing to say to the chief Minister of state. He and Aunt Margaret looked at each other and asked and asked and told. She talked about what she had read recently, about wanting to study singing in Italy, about her last trip to London. He talked about the construction

of a biological station not far from here, about traveling far from here, about what he had seen in distant countries and where he was going to go again.

Then they laughed that they had double surnames: she had Robertson-Clark, he had Miklukho-Maklay. Then they gasped that they had a mutual acquaintance in London- the eldest daughter of a famous Russian revolutionary. They did not know yet about the tragic fate of this delicate nature: Natalia Herzen will put an end to the intricate love triangles of her father and his faithful friend, confessing her love for Ogarev, and soon she will go mad.

There was much they did not know, young Margaret and Nicholas. Only six months later, leaving on business in St. Petersburg, he will leave her a letter with a proposal of marriage. And her answer would be waiting for Nicholas in the Russian capital before his ship docked in the Gulf of Finland. The answer was short:

‘I agree. I will wait for you from all your travels.’

He would return to Australia and they would marry. He will then return to the island of New Guinea, where only the Papuans lived, and Nicholas would describe their life in diaries and in detailed letters to his wife. She read them aloud in the evenings, sitting at the long table on the veranda. Sir John Robinson was not at home till late, and all the children sat down next to Aunt Margaret, and eagerly listened to every word from so far and wild a country.

‘The natives of the coast on which we landed had never before come in contact with a white race,’ Aunt Margaret read slowly. ‘These Papuans live in the stone age. They do not know how to make a fire and always keep the log burning, lit once from a tree that was struck by lightning. When they travel, they carry this burning log with them...’

Night was falling. The children were put to bed, but neither Archie nor his siblings could sleep for a long time. And the next morning in the bushes near the old Fig tree, the action began. The older ones whittled spears, the younger ones made new clothes out of burdocks and smeared their faces with soot and clay. An hour later, a band of bedraggled savages were whooping around the house. Archibald's brother Robin, as the eldest, pounded his chest with his fist:

‘I'm Maklay!’

No one argued with him. And each had to give his Indian name. Archie became Mikl-Ukho... And in the evening all, already washed, again, holding their breath, listened to the letters of Uncle Nicholas. They were so afraid that the savages would eat him, as they had done to cook, the traveler, a hundred years ago. Aunt Margaret was most afraid of it. But Nicholas reassured her in his letters:

‘They love me here; they call me the man from the moon. Nobody's going to eat me, don't worry. I was bitten by huge fish, bees and wasps, orangutans and monkeys, stung by poisonous

plants and insects. But all is well, I am well, and I really missed you and the children.'

He and Aunt Margaret had two sons. But they were still small and could not play with all. And all made caches and secrets, hid in them matches, glass, beads, needles, knives- everything that could be useful in future battles.

'No wars!' the sisters, Margaret-Emma and Kat Louise, said sternly.

And they began to tell how once the Papuans gathered with spears, axes and bows to fight with a neighboring tribe. They did it every year – and there was no other reason. When Uncle Nicholas heard this, he silently filled a bowl with water, added a little kerosene, and set it on fire. He said: 'I will set fire to the sea if you start a war.' They threw down their spears and buried their axes in the sand. So-never any wars, children...

And the children obediently laid down their spears and sat around the table on the veranda.

'Read on, Aunt Margaret, read on!'

'When I looked back, I saw a man who seemed to have grown out of the ground, who looked in my direction for a second and ran into the bushes,' Aunt Margaret continued to read. 'I followed him almost at a run down the path, waving the red ribbon I had in my pocket. When he saw that I was alone, without any weapons, he stopped. I slowly approached the savage, silently handed him a red cloth, he took it with pleasure and tied it on his head...'

In the morning all the young tribe ran with red ribbons on

their heads.

Who to thank for a happy childhood? Why childhood ends quickly, but in the memory of a person remains until the last day? Why in old age it is impossible to remember the name of a neighbor, and children's nicknames are remembered forever? Everything in this life is strange. It was strange that Nicholas Miklukho-Maklay had died so young, and Aunt Margaret was a widow again. It is strange that at school it's not as interesting as in the house of my grandfather. It was there that Archie found the answer to the question "Who to be?" He wants to visit different countries.

The dream of becoming a traveler was not supported by Archie's mother. She considered herself a matron, worthy of a high position in London society. They can't live in Australia with drunken cattlemen. It's a shame to baptize a child in the street, under an old Fig tree!

Sir John Robertson was not so fierce and terrible, he had grown old. Shortly before his death, Archibald's mother and father announced their decision to return to England. He could no longer curse or order.

In Britain his parents bought a house. Archie followed his brother Robin to the local College.

The years went by. Before graduation, his mother asked if he would like to become a diplomat, because they also travel a lot around the world. He willingly and with complete seriousness said:

‘There are very difficult exams, but I think I'll be able to prepare. It won't take a year, but you and dad won't be ashamed of me. I promise to work hard to get my statue in Trafalgar Square!’

Chapter 2

Two Secretaries and the Third Secretary

It's decided: he will be a diplomat! It is clear that one College is not enough – it is necessary to study, study and study again. Those wishing to serve the United Kingdom in the field of foreign policy must pass difficult entrance exams. Some foreign languages need to know at least four, plus other subjects.

It would take Kerr a long six years to get that knowledge. He spent a year in France, another year at a private College in London, where his family moved to support him in his chosen profession, and then years of study in Germany, Italy, Spain and again in France.

To support a son is to pay for his studies. Tutors and then cost a lot of money. And even if he had successfully passed the entrance examination, his parents would have had to pay another four hundred pounds-a guarantee that the choice of the young man and his parents is as firm as their purse.

And if will accept, then the first time salaries him at all not in sight. A diplomat is entitled to two hundred pounds a year from the position of third Secretary alone. It's only two hundred a year, half a pound a day. Such rules, for a long time and they were invented not by us...

Even during the summer holidays Kerr did not forget about

cramming, surprising seriousness of all relatives. The ancestral home in Inverchapel, the low Scottish mountains, lakes, forests

are great places for fun games, fishing and hunting. And he never leaves his books.

“Today I’m German.” And all that the young man saw before him, he described aloud in German, the whole world was stacked in heavy frame structures. Repeating the complex rules past time, he thought only of his bright future. He thought, of course, also in German.

The next day he is French. He wandered among the rocks and listened to the echoes answering him with a rolling Burr. On the third day he took a boat and in the middle of the lake he sang Neapolitan songs at the top of his lungs – to the indignant cries of seagulls. And so he did every day, in a circle. He was only twenty, but he had no doubt of the path he had chosen. Not then, not for the next forty years.

Finally, Archie decided that he was ready to fight for a place in the diplomatic service. In early 1905, he participated in the entrance examinations, the winners of which will be offered a job in the Foreign Office. He didn’t... Or rather, did not get points. Not even in the top five. It was a shame to tears.

‘Nothing, Archie!’ his mother said. ‘You’re doing the right thing, and you’re going to win.’

The next year there were four seats. Kerr was in the top three. In March, just before his birthday, the postman brought to their

house the long-awaited envelope from the Ministry of foreign Affairs. The postman didn't have to knock twice.

‘Wow!’ That was the first word Archibald whispered as he entered the main Foreign Office building on King Charles Street. It was something to gasp. The ceiling of the vestibule is a masterpiece of architecture, remarkably like the work of the great Michelangelo in the Vatican – these frescoes, stuc

co, columns, chandeliers... No, it is a great honor to be in the service of His Majesty king Edward VII, to represent Britain in foreign missions.

However, until overseas missions was still far. At least six months is a mandatory period before the first foreign trip.

The duties of junior clerks were surprisingly easy. They worked from eleven to one o'clock, then from five to seven. Most of the time was spent on minor matters: registering and sorting telegrams, sending letters to the Cabinet office in Whitehall, copying documents, typing texts and other “bring-give”.

Letters of a confidential nature came in special green envelopes. They were forbidden to be opened.

The clerks were only responsible for their registration. And when the Department had two young secretaries, there was absolutely nothing to do.

Kerr was the first to meet them. They were both nice. Maria was a blonde, Elizabeth is a brunette. Contrary to Victorian etiquette, Archibald introduced himself. He even joked about

being Scottish and offered to help. The girls answered in unison: 'If you help us in any way, we won't have any work to do ourselves!'

Contact was established.

'Good morning, ladies!' so he now began his working day, looking first at the Secretariat. He had short, light conversations with the girls – he made fun of them and of himself, and gave them candies. Cuties with great pleasure flirted with him. In the eyes of both in turn Archie read in them a wandering hope of something more, something very pleasant. And that's right – the season of ballroom Dating in London always began in April. One afternoon he passed the secretariat and, of course, looked in. The waiting room was empty. But on the way back, he almost bumped into Elizabeth in the hallway.

'Oh, Liz, it's so good to see you!'

The brunette looked at him for some reason with a bleak expression.

'Archie, you're very nice. But I shouldn't be standing next to you. It wouldn't be nice if Maria saw us together. She's my friend...'

And she was gone. "Yeah, so the blonde Maria chose me," Kerr thought. The very next day he saw Maria from afar, hurrying somewhere along a deserted corridor.

'Maria, wait, please, I you should something say!'

She waited for him. And strangely, she put a finger to her lips.

'Hush, Archie, hush! You're very nice. But I shouldn't be

standing next to you. It wouldn't be nice if Elizabeth saw us together. She's my friend.'

"Oh," flashed in the mind of Kerr. 'Girls are actually created uniquely – each of them can beat two hearts at once.'

He was less frequent in the waiting room. He tried to forget himself in his work. One day he wrote an important letter. He thought he would be praised, taken to his superiors. He got it on the nose: to write letters on your own, you need to be over thirty years old, not twenty-five, and do not need to run ahead of the horse.

But you can do sports, it is welcome. And when the bosses disappeared, junior clerks played cricket in the corridors – rolls of paper instead of clubs.

Swimming, horse riding, fencing, shooting at the shooting range were encouraged. It was implied that the young diplomats of the British Kingdom are not only impeccably educated, but also physically strong.

However, sport now his little relished. Archie was sitting idle, and therefore unhappy and lonely. This spleen would have covered his head if he hadn't remembered his father's instructions in time:

'In days of doubt and brooding, put on your kilt, think of your native Scotland and you'll be strong and confident.'

And so he did. And so in a kilt he came to the Embassy. Then something unexpected happened. The Minister was coming towards him with a stranger in the uniform of an American

captain. Kerr would have been reprimanded if it hadn't been for the guest, which suddenly yelled on the entire corridor:

‘Archie, wow you look good!’

The American rushed to embrace him. Kerr recognized him instantly: they had met in Europe and had even once been neighbors in a hotel. The American's name was also Archibald. Lieutenant Butt was twenty years older than Kerr and had been stationed in the Philippines...

The Minister's eyes nearly popped out of his head: the guest of honor, chief military adviser to American President Theodore Roosevelt, embracing some junior clerk?! Who was the guy in the plaid kilt?

They were just good friends, the two Archibald. And it is not known how their relationship would have developed further, if Major Butt in April 1912 did not set foot on the deck of the Titanic. He was said to have helped women and children to the last. His body was never found...

Needless to say, a week after this meeting at the Ministry, Archibald Kerr was promoted to third Secretary. From that day his life began to change rapidly. The receptionists, Maria and Elizabeth, greeted him first:

‘Good morning, sir. How are you? What are the instructions?’

They greeted him as if there had never been any intimacy between them, no mischievous glances or hints. It was as if he were a different man. And he, as before, treated them to sweets and instructed them to always remain as dazzlingly beautiful.

Two cuties – one black, the other white – both at once, fun rushed to perform...

Chapter 3

Berlin tango with the aroma of Greek Fig tree

Six months of his probationary service had expired. The first foreign trip is designated – Berlin. The Foreign Office believed that the British mission in Germany was the most important and responsible place. The rivalry of both countries is growing, no one wants to give in, and the military power of the Germans and their aggressiveness is stronger and stronger.

Archibald Kerr was not impressed. In his diary he wrote: “The thought of working in this place fills me with the blackest despair”.

It was in this mood that he arrived in the German capital. With such thoughts and served, more and more closed and suffering from routine, more and more dreaming of independent work and more and increasingly he wore a kilt.

The Embassy officials in Berlin squinted at him, wondering if he should be wearing a tuxedo instead of a plaid kilt. However, Archibald himself was thinking of buying a dress gentleman's set from the first salary. Almost half of the two hundred pounds was spent on new clothes and shoes. Such a dandy of London, in full dress, he walked all the way from the Brandenburg gate to the British Embassy and deliberately climbed slowly up the wide

stairs. The podium led to victory. Fifteen minutes later he was summoned to the Ambassador's presence.

Kerr had been in this huge office before. The former Ambassador had been on friendly terms with Wilhelm II, but the stronger the bond between them grew, the more often the Emperor of Germany developed a strange and savage hatred of all things English. Who was the cause is unknown, but one day the thread broke, and the UK had to urgently look for a replacement. The new Ambassador, as he could, began to settle the situation.

When Kerr entered his office, the Ambassador something was playing the violin. He put down his instrument and smiled good-naturedly:

‘Good morning, Archie. Thanks for stopping by. I have a surprise for you! Kaiser's sister Sophie invites us to a party. Previously, such invitations were ignored. But now I suggest you come with me to the crown Princess's Palace and meet the local elite. It's been ignored before, and I suggest you ride with me to the crown Princess Palace and meet the local elite. You don't mind?’

Another would argue.

Kerr, of course, had heard about the Princess Sophie. The granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England, the wife of the Greek crown Prince, the mother of five children, she could Eclipse the beauty of any at the court of the German Emperor. Slim, lithe, she loved social gatherings and fun picnics in nature.

Sophie had just arrived from Athens, and was making up in her own home for what seemed impermissible at the court of her crowned father-in-law.

Archibald was introduced to the Princess. He bowed his head courteously. Sophie held out her hand for a kiss, and when Kerr looked up, her laughing face was close to his.

‘I am very glad to see you,’ she said in German. ‘At last there are real English gentlemen in this palace!’

The Ambassador offered some witty toast, everyone smiled, drank champagne. One of the Grand Dukes offered a toast to the health of His Majesty King Edward VII – again drank. Within half an hour, the guests had broken up into Islands, where glasses rang, individual toasts and bursts of laughter sounded.

Kerr couldn't take his eyes off Sophie. She was the only one at the party in a tight dress. The narrowed skirt without a bustle, unlike the other ladies, the stand-up collar, the flowing kimono sleeves; the wide hips, and the serpentine waist – she looked like a mermaid in her silvery attire. Archibald stood amazed and muttered to himself: ‘I don't know what it means, that I am so sad...’

A silver mermaid slid out of a nearby islet and swam toward the young diplomat.

‘I hope you are not bored here at my place. We gathered today specifically without music. We'll dance with you next time, won't we?’

‘I will,’ he barely managed to squeeze out one word.

Sophie laughed, tilting her head back a little. Her gray eyes turned blue-green.

‘You're very nice. But you needn't be shy. We have everything in a simple way. Would you like me to show you both palaces?’

And without waiting for an answer, she turned and walked away. Kerr quickly caught up with her. The Princess told him of the purpose of the rooms through which they passed.

‘At first there was one Palace, for the Crown Princes. My brother was born there. A little later, a Palace of princesses was built nearby. Now they are connected by a passage. But we're not going there. Let's sit on this couch and talk. Tell me about yourself!’

As in an exam, Kerr started with his parents and the place where he was born. The Princess was surprised by his account of Australia. She even moved closer to him.

‘What, what are they called?’ she laughed. ‘Emu? What a strange name! Do they really look like a little running haystack? Grunting like pigs? It can't be, Archie!’

She studied his face with interest. And she kept asking.

‘Did they call you *Australopithecus* at school? Is it just because you were born in Sydney? Are you really the son of a native? Anyone punished? Did you get your nose broken, too? Oh, God, Archie, I feel sorry for you. And you've never loved anyone before? Not once? How interesting I am with you...’

She was twelve years older than Kerr, but she enjoyed the conversation quite sincerely. And then Sophie began to pour out

her heart to the young man: how unhappy she was in Greece and how she loved her mother and through her grandmother and all Britain.

An hour later they returned to their guests. The Ambassador of His Majesty King Edward VII had already left the party without his subordinate...

In August, the third Secretary of the British Embassy, Archibald Kerr, received a personal invitation to come to the summer residence of the Kaiser family as a personal guest of Princess Sophie. On the day off, he went there.

The Princess met him in an Amazon costume. She led him away from the castle and seated him on a bench in a small artificial grotto.

'This is where we'll continue our conversation, do you mind, Archie? And then I'll introduce you to my brother, and we'll go to Breakfast.'

They laughed a lot again, and talked about everything, interrupting each other. Then he stood before the stern eyes of the Kaiser.

At noon the great doors were thrown open, and Wilhelm II. He was dressed in a field Marshal's uniform, which fitted him perfectly. Oddly enough, he carried a glittering iron helmet with a crest on it.

The Emperor first greeted his sister, and then he waved them into the dining room, where he seated his guest to his right. The table was laid simply, the only delicacy being the golden bell,

which the Emperor used whenever it was time for a change of dishes. There was soup, roast, and fruit dessert. There was no champagne, no liqueurs, only red Rhine wine.

The Kaiser spoke only to the guest. He ate with surprising speed, despite his left arm, which had been paralyzed since childhood. The Emperor used a special fork, which had a serrated blade on one side, and he cut off pieces of roast meat with admirable dexterity.

Kerr found it impolite to eat when the Emperor was talking to you, so he listened, hanging on every word, and hardly touched his breakfast.

Taking two of the largest figs from the vase, the Kaiser swallowed them instantly, washed them down with wine, wiped his famously curled moustache with a napkin, and silently nodded goodbye. The guest and Princess Sophie were alone again.

They also walked through a wonderful park, sat by the fountain on a bench.

‘Archie, close your eyes,’ Sophie said suddenly.

He was suddenly afraid that the Princess was going to kiss him.

‘Don't peek! And don't blush so! Say, what smells?’

It smelled of fresh figs and Cologne water. He hadn't lied to the Princess.

‘It smells like figs and Cologne.’

Sophie laughed her silver bell.

‘That's right! Here is and let this smells will remain you on

memory from me!’ And she stroked his face with her warm hand.

All the way back in the coat-of-arms carriage, Kerr could smell it.

...In September, Princess Sophie had to return to Athens: in neighboring Turkey, there was a coup, trouble could touch Greece, and her husband demanded her presence. Kerr also received an invitation to the farewell party. The Ambassador unconditionally released him and even gave him a short vacation, saying at the same time:

‘My dear Archie, I am truly pleased that you are making progress not only in business matters, but also in matters of the heart. I can't keep up with you.’

Kerr probably wouldn't have been surprised if Sophie had thrown her arms around him when they met – she was so glad to see him.

However, he, too, was very glad. Here's what he wrote in his diary a couple of days later:

“After dinner we danced the Creole tango. I blushed because I did not know a single movement of the new-fangled dance she had taught me. I danced most of the time with Sophie... And I blush again, saying that I took a strange pleasure in holding her in my arms. Moreover, it seemed to me that she was completely at my mercy and felt the same...”

Outside the window the night rain was rustling, it was time for him to leave. He was gone, gone unnoticed. But the night was not over. He could not sleep. About an hour later, Sophie knocked

on the door of Kerr's room in the Palace.

‘Archie,’ she whispered. ‘I can't just let you go...’

She came close to him, took his hand, and led him as if he were a little boy. Through the dimly lighted corridor, through the suite of deserted salons where music had played, champagne and Rhenish wine flowed like a river, ladies in smart dresses and their partners – German officers in high boots and crowned offspring in tailcoats–glided across the parquet floor.

It was only when they reached her apartment that Sophie turned to face him.

‘Know I shouldn't do this, but... Hush, please don't interrupt. Don't say anything, or I'll change my mind!’

So they crossed all boundaries, but did not pass on “you”. They listened in silence to the rain pattering on the bedroom windows. Finally, Sophie spoke.

‘There's so much I want to tell you, Archie. I see in you a kindred spirit. We're so alike.’

Kerr understood her German fluently, but the last word, in which the Princess brought together two incomparable feelings – resemblance and loneliness, – made him smile. She smiled kindly, too.

‘Are you a spy, Archie?’

‘No. I dream of a career only in my profession.’

‘Thank God, there are plenty of spies here. Believe me, I can't even open up to my husband. Especially now, that he had a new mistress. It's hard to imagine now that twenty years ago I was in

love with this man. Do you know what a great wedding we

had? Granddaughter of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and crown Prince of the Greek Crown – Constantine and I were related not only to each other, but to almost all the Royal houses of Europe. It was believed that Constantinople and St. Sophia would again unite with Greece when Constantine and Sophia ascended the throne. Thousands of guests arrived. We were married twice – first in the Orthodox rite, then in the Lutheran. And my brother, when he found out about it, forbade me to go to Berlin. Have you noticed his oddities?

And then the Princess just carried.

‘You know he was born crippled, with a dry arm and a crooked neck? That he had an oedipal complex? All his teenage sexual dreams he transferred to his mother and even tried to make her, the daughter of the British Queen, his mistress! He's a terrible man, Archie! The more his mother tried to convince him, that it was wrong, the more he hated everything English. It was his fault she had died so young. His malice has no bounds. Believe he will soon bring Germany to a terrible war with everyone, including England. My brother fancies himself a great warrior and general, he does not get off his horse, and several times a day dressed in different uniforms – he is supposed to command artillery, fleet, and cavalry. And have you seen his helmet?’

‘I saw it,’ Kerr said, trying to remember everything.

‘Not the other one. He has ordered a helmet of pure gold,

and wears it when he receives kings and emperors of the highest order. He fancied himself master of the world. It's awful! And yet, Archie, he has nothing to say against it, no one has the right to argue with him. He is sure that the Kaiser of Germany is never mistaken, that his wife and all relatives are beyond suspicion, like angels in the flesh. He was sure of it until he got slapped in the face with this sex scandal...'

'Not understand. What scandal?'

'You don't know?! It was a universal fall from grace. All the Newspapers wrote! Look... It was like this. At the beginning of 1891, ladies and gentlemen-fifteen in number, all of blue blood – were sledding in the vicinity of Berlin. And then they came to the hunting castle, threw off their fur coats, drove away the servants, got drunk – and it began! It was a grand orgy. Intimate places they slightly covered with leaves of a Fig tree, and even without them did. Couples changed in a circle. There was all that Bohemia could do in her disorderly fancy. Do you know what Bohemia is, Archie?'

'Translated from French it seems to be Gypsies,' said Kerr.

'That's right! Can you imagine a whole camp of princes and princesses making love? And same sex love too. And after all for same-sex sex have us incarcerate, as and in of England...'

She smelled strongly of cologne, wine and figs... "High, high relations," Kerr thought. He almost asked: "Were you there too, Your Highness?" But he bit his tongue in time.

'It would have been all right, Archie, but a few days after the

party anonymous letters began to arrive with details of the orgy. Everyone got hurt. Then the letters began to receive uninvolved persons: politicians, journalists, aristocrats, relatives. Even the Empress Dowager, mother of both Wilhelm and my, received several such letters. Everyone was just in shock, each was afraid that his name would be mentioned in the next letter.'

'What did the anonymous blackmailer demand?'

'That's just it, he didn't ask for anything. He was just giving away intimate secrets. And it is not known whether it was "he" or "she". Examination established that the handwriting, rather, female. Suspicion fell on my older sister Charlotte, but she herself received many of these offensive anonymous letters. Can you imagine how mad our brother was?'

'I'm sure the Kaiser ordered an immediate investigation to find the culprit!'

'What's the use? Letters have been coming for years. Imagine, for years! And in each letter were juicy details from the personal life of someone from the Imperial family. The secret police arrested anyone who might have had anything to do with it. Many people were arrested and released. Everyone quarreled with each other. Several duels were fatal. Ah, the authority of the monarchy is undermined! Ah, the Emperor and his court live by a double morality! Still the echoes of this scandal can be heard...'

'So they found the scoundrel?'

'Found. My sister Charlotte once lost her diary, and in it she wrote down everything-all the secrets and even her own

fantasies. This diary fell into the hands of the blackmailer. Wilhelm banished him from the country.'

Sophie at parting embraced Kerr.

'Archie, dear Archie, never keep diaries; they have a fatal tendency to be read by other people! Will you find your way back?'

The next morning they met before Breakfast in the rainsoaked garden. Sophie was not alone; her older sister, Charlotte, was sitting beside her. Sophie seemed to be telling her something funny, for her sister laughed incessantly, opening her mouth ugly.

A few hours later Sophie left for Athens. They parted good friends.

When Kerr returned home, he wanted to write down in his diary his thoughts on the events of the last hours. He felt guilty for some reason. The whole thing looked very strange. It was a horrible mixture of delight and disappointment, joy and emptiness at the same time. He had no other words. He remembered the hot whisper of the Princess: "Never keep a diary!" And he laid down his pen.

A few days later he wrote in a treasured notebook: "Berlin demolishes all the masculinity of a person and makes him a kind of asexual medusa. I'm imbued with an unspeakable hatred of Berlin."

To Princess Sophie this hatred did not apply. He still thought of her with warmth and tenderness. They would meet again in 1914. The last summer before the war Kerr will spend on a cruise

in the Mediterranean, and in Athens he will pay a friendly visit to the house of the King of Greece, or rather his wife.

Queen Sophie was heartily glad to see him and held out her hand. They sat for a while on a soft Sofa in the shade of an old Fig tree. Then, as she had six years before, she led him by the hand into the Palace. In the ornate hall she showed a novelty – a portable gramophone. Smiling affectionately, she put on a record.

‘That's Tine Rossi – a charming voice, is not it? Remember our tango in Berlin?’

‘Of course I do,’ Kerr said. ‘I have a professional memory.’

Chapter 4

What can you do make for victory?

Before Easter 1910, Archibald Kerr finally said goodbye to Berlin. A decade later, he sadly wrote in his diary: "I think that I did not pay enough attention to official Affairs, I spent too much time on different meetings, and I should have been more serious in Berlin. It's clear that today I cannot change anything..."

However, the Ministry of foreign Affairs officially stated that Kerr was the most conscientious and hardworking employee while working in Germany. In any case, over the years he has accumulated experience, increased self-esteem and confidence in the right choice of profession, as well as the ability to apply diplomatic charm to the envy of friends and enemies.

His new assignment in Buenos Aires was very short. Kerr didn't even have time to look around and understand his responsibilities. He had come to the endlessly bustling, manyvoiced city, noisily celebrating the centenary of freedom, and at the first opportunity had gone to the shores of La Plata to take a break from the constant noise. He did not succeed. Early in the morning he was awakened by the neighing of a horse and shouts near the tent.

'Mr. Kerr! I'm looking for Mr. Archibald Kerr!'

He had to get dressed and leave the tent.

'There's an urgent telegram for you!'

The postman, still on his horse, handed him the yellow paper. 'Please accept my condolences!'

He put two fingers to the peak of his uniform cap and rode away.

The message from Sydney was short: "Father died on the twenty-second. Please come. The funeral will take place on the twenty-seventh."

It was a heavy blow. Archie hadn't seen his father in ten years, but he felt his father's concern and pride in his diplomat son. And now his father was gone. Father's gone forever now, and there's nothing you can do.

The Ministry sincerely sympathized and gave additional leave, so that Kerr could remain in Australia until the spring. During this time he tried to calm his mother and did another important thing. A difficult relationship with Australian relatives forced him to change his surname. Since 1911, he officially became known by another name – Archibald John Kerr. With small correction: the first its name of Archibald he always liked much more second. So it goes from the beginning of our story.

In March, Archie Kerr returned to duty. However it was not Argentina. He was assigned to the British mission in Washington. At the time, there were only nine diplomats under the liberal James Bryce, a completely unique personality.

Bryce was in his seventies. He was Scottish, too. And he, too, after the community colleges raised their education in the German and French universities. He and Kerr had a lot in

common. And the difference is one – in age.

‘I could adopt you, Archie,’ Bryce said, smiling. ‘But I see my task in having time to convey to you, such an ambitious and talented person, the accumulated knowledge and understanding of life.’

Bryce was an expert in everything. His student works on the history of the Roman Empire received first places at the University. He was a brilliant jurist. By the time he was Kerr's age, He was head of the civil law Department at Oxford. He knew several languages. He traveled a lot, was engaged in mountaineering. He conquered many mountain peaks. And when he came down from Ararat, he claimed to have seen the remains of Noah's ark. No one believed him then, but in vain – it was there, in a completely inaccessible place, a century later the nose of an ancient ship will be seen from an airplane...

‘Would you like to travel with me to Russia, young man? Are you tempted to ride on the Trans-Siberian railway through this huge and mysterious country?’

Archibald didn't know what to say.

‘Maybe some other time.’

‘I hope you'll have the opportunity later. Don't miss it!’

In the eyes of the young diplomat, Bryce was not a boss, he was a real hero. Kerr admired his intelligence and eccentricity, especially his habit of beginning every morning with a dictionary of the country in which he was or where he was going.

‘A diplomat must know foreign languages. Read ten or twenty

pages of someone else's dictionary every morning,' the old Professor advised. 'Let you remember nothing – but when it is necessary, the brain itself will pull out the right words from the subconscious. To understand someone else's speech is very important for a diplomat.'

One year has passed. James Bryce went to the Far East. Without such a teacher, Kerr was suddenly lonely. Other friends in this small collective at it and did not appear. Everyone now had to work almost for days. Fortunately, it was holiday time, and Kerr left for London.

At last there was his long-awaited meeting with his mother. He wrote letters to her almost daily, worried, anxious to make sure she was well and happy. This love for his mother was celebrated by all who knew Kerr.

One day he went to the Ministry. On the steps of the wide staircase he almost collided with a man in a magnificent dress uniform. His doublet without epaulette was embroidered with gold stitches; a long row of buttons spoke of the high status of an official. The dazzling white stockings were tight, the pantaloons and gloves perfectly white. A sword with an expensive hilt on the left side, sparkling buckles on patent leather shoes. Who is it?

'Good afternoon, sir.' Kerr respectfully removed his bowler hat.

The stranger stopped.

'Archibald! Good to see you, my young friend! How are you? How is your mother?'

Oh, my God! This is Walter Townley, his former superior, who was envoy to Argentina and met Kerr in Buenos Aires. They had not known each other well at the time, but when the telegram came that his father was dead, Townley had helped a great deal to get Archibald to the funeral and to do all the necessary work in far-off Australia.

Even now he was brief and matter-of-fact. Asked directly: 'I've been appointed envoy to Teheran – would you like to join me?'

Kerr agreed at once, and they went up to the secretariat. Girls for a long time there was not. The mustachioed clerk spoke to Townley with great deference, and asked Kerr to come the next day. Kerr did so.

The clerk did not even rise when Archibald entered the room. Without looking into his eyes, he spoke slowly and even casually: 'The Minister has the impression that you seem somewhat inclined to change positions too quickly...'

Kerr was furious. How so?! He had only three positions in six years, especially since he left Argentina because of circumstances beyond his control. But he could only sulk and suffer. He must return to Washington. Walter Townley hugged him when he came to say goodbye:

'Don't worry, Archie. My offer remains in force. Persia will not run away from you.'

Another year passed. In February 1914 he finally became second Secretary and would be transferred to Europe. So Kerr's

last peaceful vacation was on a Mediterranean cruise. The news of the war he received in the Chancery of the Embassy in Rome.

No one could understand why the turmoil in the Balkans had so quickly turned into the conflagration of a world war. And more than once Kerr had to remember that night with Princess Sophie, her whisper:

‘My Brother Wilhelm's malice has no bounds. Believe, soon he will bring Germany to a terrible war with all, including England.’

At all intersections hung posters “What can you do make for victory?” It seemed to Kerr that the soldier with the rifle asked him personally: “Have you already signed up as a volunteer?” Right on the streets were opened points where they recorded those wishing to fight. Dozens of men stood in front of the tables. Also Robin, Kerr's older brother, wrote that he had enlisted as a captain in the 7th battalion of the Scottish Chasseurs. That was the last straw. Archibald decided: I should be with them, military interpreters are very necessary, since so many countries are involved in the war.

The military attache in Rome wrote a petition to the Foreign Office on his behalf, but the Ministry said there was no clear rules yet on which diplomats could enlist and which could not; if the Ambassador dispensed with a second Secretary, there was a chance. The Ambassador replied harshly:

‘Our Embassy is understaffed. Later, you'll thank me for keeping you alive. The only thing I can concede – I will agree in

your transfer to another country...’

Kerr did not accuse the chief of cowardice. He just submitted his resignation. However, the Foreign Office was not so easy to beat. It was unclear why they clung to him, but it was said that if he resigned, the Ministry would see to it that he did not go to the front, and ensure that he would not be taken into the army. It was a dead end. It remained to agree to an Embassy in Teheran.

Chapter 5

“The West remained a stranger, East is not my East...”

Archibald wrote bitterly to his mother: “Appointed to Teheran. Accepted under pressure.” The way the Ministry had treated him had hurt Kerr deeply. He felt hurt, betrayed.

In this black mood he returned to London. He was lucky to have met old friends, to have been invited to dinner at the Admiralty, where he told the first Lord Winston Churchill, over a cigar, of his desire to fight. He promised to do what he could. But to promise – not to marry, nothing that did not. Kerr must go to Teheran.

He reached Persia by circuitous routes, through several countries. Walter Townley, noticeably older, was cordial and brief, and laid out his cards at once:

‘Officially, Persia is neutral. But while there is no change on the Western front, a major fire is breaking out here in ancient Mesopotamia. Turkey presses from all sides, Russia dreams of seizing the Straits, the local tribes are bought by German spies, and the Teheran government is helpless. We're sitting on a powder keg. So get down to business with your sleeves rolled up.’

The plight of the small British mission in Tehran became even direr after the Foreign Office unexpectedly replaced Townley

with Charles Marling. The new envoy immediately criticized everything that had been done before him – all contacts, agreements, and plans. He made elaborate mockery of the Persian officials, insulting them to their faces. Everything that was built was broken. It is clear that Archibald could not accept such ignorant and stupid leadership. His heart and mind were on the Western front, and certainly not in the sands of Mesopotamia.

Kerr's relationship with Marling deteriorated when the Turks left Basra: the British landing force, supported by the ironclad and gunboats, was rapidly moving south to the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates. The envoy was triumphant, as if he had personally planned and carried out this military operation. Marling's triumph, however, was short-lived.

At the end of November, 1915, not having reached thirty kilometers to Baghdad, the expeditionary corps suffered the most severe defeat. The Turks utterly defeated the British. The remnants of their regiments withdrew to El-Kut, where they had to spend Christmas almost completely surrounded.

To help the besieged from Basra moved powerful reinforcements, the fighting was terrible, and they lasted for weeks. The troops of His Majesty King George V could not advance a mile. Losses numbered in the thousands. The situation of those who remained in El-Kut became deplorable.

They had no food, no water, and no ammunition. Half the defenders were mowed down by malaria. And then the British command turned to the allies. Russian help came quickly...

The order for Esaul Basil Gamaly was brief: not later than fourteen days to connect with the British troops in the area of Basra. The purpose of the Raid: to create the impression that the enemy hundred Kuban Cossacks – is the head watch of a large Russian group, rushing to the aid of the British allies.

There are two routes to Basra. One is through a valley where food and forage are plentiful, but full of hostile tribes. The second is shorter-through the desert, which the local nomads called the Valley of death. Gamaly after the council with the conductors chose him.

From the first day the hundred had to engage in numerous battles. They were aided by the fifty thousand Russian rubles, the gold Persian money, and the ten thousand pounds sterling from the British representative.

Avoiding meetings with local bandits, a hundred a bit deviated from route, managed to replenish supplies of food and drinking water and disappeared in the dunes Valleys of death.

All the oases in the desert were occupied by Turkish infantry, the caravan trails were controlled by cavalry on the ground and airplanes from the air. Driving them away with machine-gun fire, cutting down enemy ambushes, the Cossacks steadily approached the goal. They lost only eight men.

The unprecedented March of a thousand miles through the rear of the Turkish army was completed not in fourteen, but in ten days. This allowed the British to gain time. Gathering their strength, they quickly drove the Turks from the Tigris river

valley.

The Russian high command highly appreciated this Cossack Raid. For his courage and bravery, Gamaly was awarded the order of St. George, 4th degree, the officers of the detachment – gold weapons, all lower ranks – St. George crosses. This was the second time in the history of the Russian Empire, when the heroism of an entire unit was celebrated with St. George's awards (the first was the crew of the cruiser “Varyag”).

The British side had to respond. His Majesty George V ordered to award military orders of the United Kingdom the most distinguished Cossacks. They were to be handed over by the envoy extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. Seeing that Marling was afraid to go to the army, Kerr volunteered to present the orders. The Ambassador gladly agreed, and even allowed his second Secretary to stay for a while with the allies as an observer.

It was freedom. This was what the Cossacks sing about in their songs, Smoking a pipe with Turkish bitter tobacco. This was the war Kerr had dreamed of for so long. For three months he had been in the saddle, and more than once he had had to draw his sword when they were dealing with the warlike tribes on the Mesopotamian frontier or with the cavalry of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

He became a friend to the Russian Cossacks on the first day, when after awarding orders from behalf of king Archibald Kerr on grave dead in is Raid Cossacks have read on – English bearing:

*On the first hour of my first day
In the front trench I fell...
Children in boxes at a play
Stand up to watch it well.*

Crumpling his black Kuban hat in his hands, the mustachioed Cossack approached him and, crossing himself, asked quietly: ‘Tell me, friend, what is the name of this prayer?’
Confusing Russian words, Kerr told him about the “Epitaph” of the English poet Rudyard Kipling. Take Me To Church, Amen! Then, until nightfall, the Cossacks commemorated the fallen, letting vodka in a circle, and then drank again, throwing in a pot of new orders, and the English diplomat Archibald Kerr drank along with them.

He did not yet know that Kipling's son had been killed on the Western front at the battle of Loos, near Lille. In the same terrible slaughter will die and Robin is the brother of Archibald. And it is not known who killed them – the Germans or the British themselves.

That was the first time the British had used poison. More than a hundred tons of poisonous chlorine wind drove to the German positions. But suddenly his direction changed, and the attacking Marines were trapped. Thousands of the British died in terrible agony, the rest were killed by machine-gun fire in no man's land.

Then another three days the British command was sent to the bullets of the reserves and their allies – the French. The field in front of this suburb of Lille was strewn with the dead.

More than three hundred thousand people died on both sides. Of the battalion of highland Scots guards commanded by Brother Robin, there were only a few survivors.

The letter, which told about the death of his brother in a gas attack, Kerr received, just about to say goodbye to the Russian Cossacks. He wanted immediate revenge on everyone – Turks, Germans, and Austrians. But... suddenly a gray-yellow veil floated Up, the whole world trembled like a Mirage, the eyes ceased to see, as if they were not covered with sand, but burned with caustic chlorine. He was taken to the Embassy quite ill. The doctor said firmly: the second Secretary must return to England at once.

After a difficult journey, Archibald Kerr found himself in London. Long treated. When his eyes began to see better, he went to Scotland. In the spring of 1917 he went to work in the commercial Department of the Ministry. He liked the new duties and the salary was much higher, but the desire to join the army remained just as strong. All the more that behind sometimes whispered: cleverly, they say, he settled.

For almost a year Kerr endured. Then he came up with the idea-by hook or by crook, he got a medical certificate that the work in this Department is not suitable for his vision, and therefore there is no reason to deny him the desire to join the army volunteers. It helped him...

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