

By Order of the Czar

A Story of Russian Power

By MARCUS EASTLAKE

CHAPTER V.

"Vladimir, thou art feeling stronger? Is it not so?" says Ivan, putting a hand on each of my shoulders and looking down anxiously in my face.

"Certainly I am—much stronger than when I came to thee a week ago," I reply with a smile.

"Because thou wilt have to make a move again," resumes Ivan. "It is no longer safe for thee here. To-day my landlord met me as I left the house, and asked me who I had staying with me; though I know not how he has discovered thy presence here. I said: 'A cousin, who is merely passing through the town en route to Novgorod.' He asked your name. I was taken aback, but fortunately the first lie led up to the second, and the name of an actual cousin came to me and I pronounced it. So now thou art Waldemar Nicolavitch Alkanoff! I have thought, Vladimir," he resumes, "that it were well to make known thy existence to our section. Thou knowest they are to be trusted to a man. What joy there will be amongst them when they know thou art alive! They will all be ready to die for thee! And amongst us we can easily conceal thee. Thou canst pass from one to the other until thou art able to venture on flight."

"I have always advised it," I respond. "Long since I would have shown myself to them but for Maruscha. She thinks there is risk in so many knowing it whilst I am still in the country."

Ivan shrugs his shoulders. "I see no alternative. Something we must risk," he says. "There is strength in unity, and are we not as one man in purpose? The sooner thou art away from here the better. What thinkest thou of going first to Pavel Yegorevitch?" he asks. "I would trust Pavel as my own soul!" I reply, fervently, for I like the man. He is a silent, deep nature—I always distrust the glib tongue—a man who makes no professions, slow and deliberate both in speech and action, but having once chosen a course is not to be turned from it.

"Thou wilt lock thyself in," says Ivan. "And if any one, save Maruscha, should come and knock for admittance thou wilt keep silent as a shade until they depart. Adieu, I will not be long."

As I lie, with my hands clasped above my head, my eyes fixed on the bit of sky gleaming gray, through the small dormer window, the being of all others I most long for stands at the other side of the door. I know well Maruscha's particular rap, and it is her voice that whispers my name:

"Vladimir!" I spring to my feet and hasten to admit her. For some minutes, holding the beloved form in my arms, I forget all else, realizing only the rapture of the present. Only when she releases herself and looks round for Ivan, I remember how much I have to tell her.

She turns white when she hears about the landlord's questions, and I tell her that Ivan has gone to see Pavel Yegorevitch to make arrangements for my removal there to-night. At this she clasps her hands. "Is it well—oh, is it well that others should know about thee? Pavel is silent and trustworthy, it is true; but still I fear me. It will break out. One by one they will be told—they will be flocking to see thee. The attention of the police be attracted. I wish, I wish Ivan had come to me! Surely we two could have managed to conceal thee somewhere—somewhere!"

"Thou art too fearful, my Maruscha," I reply soothingly. "And thou seest it has become imperative to seek the aid of others. I only wish I had insisted on doing so before I drew this danger on Ivan. And as to my safety, there is not a man of them who would not render up his life rather than betray me!"

"Not willingly, not willfully, I know, Vladimir, but what matters it when they have by their coming and going, attracted those bloodhounds to thy hiding place? It is a mistake, I tell thee!" persists Maruscha.

For a while she stares straight before her, and I see the anguish of terrible possibilities growing in her eyes until the tears begin to gather, her features to work, and she casts herself on my breast.

"Vladimir! Vladimir!" she cries, "If they tear thee from me now I shall die!"

I say what I can to reassure her, stroking her bright head and pressing my lips to it, for her hat—that sweet little hat that I have watched her trim—has slipped to her shoulders. And she sobs out her woe with tears abundant, at which I rejoice, because experience has taught me that after Maruscha has wept much, she is wont to be very calm.

"How long wilt thou stay with Pavel Yegorevitch?" she asks. "As short a time as possible," I reply. "I am quite strong now, and the sooner I begin to make for the frontier the better. By remaining I only endanger my friends. Moreover, Maruscha, as I explained to thee before, having ceased to approve of the methods of the party to which I have hitherto belonged, my wisest plan is to escape from it, quietly and silently. I have thought it out, and to attempt any explanation would be madness. I could not make myself understood."

Maruscha sighs as if she would excuse me to herself.

"Surely thou hast done enough," she murmurs.

"By no means!" I cry vehemently. "No man can ever say: I have done enough, in a good cause! Once its true disciple, his liabilities to it end only with his life,

and my watchword is now as heretofore, 'Liberty.' And it is for liberty that I will fight to my last breath! No longer, therefore, can I be the slave of a party whose tyranny is as great as the Czar himself! It is Nihilism I have served—slavishly, abjectedly. What it has decreed I have done, silencing my conscience—smothering the dictate of the Divine voice within my heart which would have whispered: 'Thou shalt not take God-given life, even though it be that of thine enemy!'"

"What wilt thou do—when thou hast left us?" she asks, with quivering lips.

"Thou speakest as if I could choose," I reply, with a touch of bitterness. "A stranger and an alien in a foreign land, should I reach it, my prospects are nil." Then noting the effect of my gloomy observations in her downcast features, I hasten to add more cheerfully: "Nevertheless, Maruscha, I have my hands and my head, and being willing to make use of either as opportunity offers, I shall surely find work to do."

"Could I but have gone with thee!" she cries, with a heaven of tenderness in her voice. "Could not I?"

"It were impossible, my heart of hearts! Thou wouldst but retard my flight, increase my danger, and, more than all, run a terrible risk thyself. Nor couldst thou endure the hardships I may have to encounter. Alone thou canst follow me by rail, in perfect safety, and we will trust in my lucky star that soon I may bid thee come. Meanwhile, keep a brave heart, and avoid getting embroiled with the Nihilists. Wilt thou do this for love of me, my Maruscha?" In reply she takes my hand in both of hers and presses it to her lips.

CHAPTER VI.

Whilst we have been talking the shades of night have been closing in, until now, leaning together as we sit, we can barely see each other's faces. Maruscha rises to light the lamp, and in the silence I hear how the wind, which has been blowing a gale all day, is rattling the window in its frame and howling wildly round the house. From a gale it has developed to a tempest.

"Ivan will see thee home, Maruscha," I observed. "It is a wild night."

Suddenly flying steps startle us ascending the stairs! The handle of the door is shaken, and a breathless whisper, which is not Ivan's, comes to us:

"Open—open quickly! It is I—Pavel!"

Maruscha, pale of a sudden to the lips, is at the door before I, in my surprise and consternation, find the power to stir. I sit gazing and expectant of I know not what, but something of ill—and Pavel is before me. He must have sped quickly, for he puts his hand to his heaving side, and with wild eyes darting at me, gasps forth:

"Hide! Hide for thy life! They are upon us!"

Maruscha wrings her hands. "Fly! fly! stand not thus, Vladimir!"

I am beginning to make blindly for the door, when Pavel's voice arrests me.

"No—no time; they will meet thee—thou must hide!"

I look around at the four walls and laugh stupidly.

"The window—it is dark!" It is Maruscha who speaks, pointing upward.

"It is a chance!" gasps Pavel.

The window rises from the roof. It is high. Already Maruscha is dragging forward a chair for me to mount.

"My shoulders—better," gasps Pavel again, instantly turning to me his back and lowering his body.

Something of their anxious energy is lent to me in this supreme moment. I spring with marvelous agility to the proffered shoulders—I open the window, and with a rush of wind comes to me the tramp, tramp of gendarmes! The wind compasses me about—it tears, it roars at me. I clutch the window frame—my feet are on the sloping roof, which seems to move away under them.

Pavel's head shoots up for a moment through the window. I see the wind seize his black hair and toss it about in wanton fury ere it disappears and the window is shut. I have now got a firm grip of the projecting slates that edge the dormer roof. Fortunately, I am shod with soft slippers, so that my feet can bend with them and get a certain purchase on the slates. I move cautiously sideways, until I can extend my left arm over a corner of the projection. Thus by bending my body forward I can see into the room, myself unseen.

Maruscha is sitting at the table. Her eyes are turned to the door, as if in startled surprise. Pavel is at the door, holding it open to admit four police officers, two of whom have Ivan in custody. Pavel's manner is perfect. His eyebrows are raised. He looks astonished and personified. With a polite gesture he seems to invite the intruders to enter, search, examine—anything they like, so that they are satisfied.

There is an air of baffled mystification on the faces of all the officers as their glances travel about the room. One of them, a superior, locks the door and puts the key in his pocket.

Ivan, standing apart, with gyved wrists, wears a look of sullen indifference. Only once I catch him dart a swift glance at Maruscha, who has risen to her feet and stands with proud, uplifted head in mute protest at the unseemly interruption.

The superior officer steps forward in front of Pavel, and holding him with a stern eye, evidently commences to question him. I strain every nerve to hear what is being said, but what with the swish of the wind and the intervening glass, I cannot distinguish a single

word. I can only guess what is transpiring by a close observation of the dumb show.

Pavel fixes steadfast, unflinching eyes on his examiner. Occasionally he smiles slightly. His lips move as if in prompt reply. Presently he takes out his pocketbook, produces a card from it, which he hands to the officer. Then Maruscha's turn comes.

My brave girl! She bears herself like an enraged queen. I can see that her manner impresses the officer—Russian officers are particularly impressionable!—she would impress the Czar himself! The fellow bows courteously at every reply of hers. He takes down her address and name on the back of Pavel's card, and makes her a profound bow ere he turns from her.

She sits quietly down and speaks not again, but silently watches every movement of the officers, who have now got orders to prosecute a search. They pull out drawer after drawer, upsetting the contents on the floor, while their superior stands by, looking on.

The bottom drawer is the only one that is locked, and Ivan is commanded to give up the key. With perfect unconcern he directs one of the officers to his waistcoat pocket, and—ah, at last here are papers! I note the gleam of exultation with which they are unfolded; glanced over with increasing disappointment, one by one, and laid aside. I could almost chuckle at their discomfiture, knowing as I do, that Ivan has another hiding place, and one that they are not likely to stumble on for his secret papers.

They leave no corner uninvestigated, and it occupies a considerable time. Finally they give up the search and leave the house. The tramp of the police officers below in the street gradually grows fainter until it dies in the distance. I breathe a prayer of thanksgiving.

It is Maruscha's small head, blown about by ringed wavelets of hair, which next starts up against the sky, and her voice gasping out my name in an intense, awful whisper:

"Vladimir!" She cannot see me, her gaze sets out on a distracted, dubious search. I raise my head. She utters a low cry of joy.

"I am here, Maruscha," I call to her. "Oh, Vladimir, be careful! Hold fast! Take time!"

She stretches out her hand toward me, though she cannot help me, while I slowly and painfully descend. Once my foot slips forward and she utters a scream of terror.

I reassure her. "Fear not for me, Maruscha. I keep a firm hold, and holding, I cannot fall."

And once more I stand in the room, and Maruscha's arms are clasping my neck.

CHAPTER VII.

Around me is a chaos of confusion. Ivan's belongings strew the floor like the leaves on the strand after a tempest. His open desk, with its contents scattered broadcast, is at my feet; his bedclothes lie a twisted heap, with the mattress beside the bed. The table, too, is littered with old letters, manuscripts, note scraps relative to his law studies; but where is their owner? Where is Pavel Yegorevitch?

"They have been taken," I groan, a huge wave of bitterest remorse rising and sweeping over my soul. Have I returned to this miserable world only to bring misfortune to those who are dearest to me? Am I ever to be doomed to blast like a thunderbolt all I come in contact with? To prove a curse where I most would bless?

Maruscha, who now that the fierce strain has been removed from her nerves, is sobbing hysterically, with her head on my breast, lifts her tear-stained face at my words, anxiety for me bringing her sobs to an immediate check.

"Yes, they have both had to go, but it is a mere form. To-morrow they will be released. Nothing was found, nothing can be proved against them," she hastens to inform me.

I laugh harshly. "Hast thou forgotten Vera Sassulitch?" I say. "There was nothing found against her—nothing but the faintest shadow of a suspicion rested on her, yet that hindered her not from keeping her two long years of her girl's life in the fortress without trial! And she was scarcely eighteen!"

Maruscha hangs her head and sighs drearily. She replies not. What can she reply to this cruel fate?

"I need scarcely ask of what they accuse our brothers," I observe at length, with bitterness. "It is not the manner of the Russian authorities to prefer an accusation when they arrest a subject. It is enough that they have decided to drag him to prison, and well for him if he is not left to rot there!"

"They made no accusation, it is true; but, from their questions I could guess that they expected to find that someone was hiding—being hidden."

"It is as I thought," I interrupt. "That malignant demon, Isajeff, the furrier, is at the bottom of it!"

Then instantly, with a shock of dismay, I recollect that it was from Maruscha's lodging Isajeff had followed us! Yet she is here—she has not been arrested with the others. He has spared her; it is due to his reticence that she is not now in a prison cell! Why has he spared her? My brain reels as I contemplate the only possible reason this wretch can have for acting as he has done—to have her in his power.

And I am powerless to protect her from him! Nay, I must fly from her—hasten to put miles between us, for every moment that I remain at her side I imperil her very life!

(To be continued.)

The American firm of Clarkson & Co., in Vladivostok, have substituted Russian laborers for Chinamen in their coal mines. The Russians are working co-operatively, by the job, and produce coal for 2 cents a ton. With Chinese cheap labor the cost was 5 cents a ton.

THE OLD FOLKS AT HOME

Are Never Without Pe-ru-na in the Home for Catarrhal Diseases.



Under date of January 10, 1897, Dr. Hartman received the following letter: "My wife has been a sufferer from a complication of diseases for the past 25 years. Her case has baffled the skill of some of the most noted physicans. One of her worst troubles was chronic constipation of several years' standing. She was also passing through that most critical period in the life of a woman—change of life.

"In June, 1895, I wrote to you about her case. You advised a course of Peruna and Manalin, which we at once commenced, and have to say it completely cured her.

"About the same time I wrote you about my own case of catarrh, which had been of 25 years' standing. At times I was almost past going.

I commenced to use Peruna according to your instructions and continued its use for about a year and it has completely cured me. Your remedies do all that you claim for them and even more."—John O. Atkinson.

In a letter dated January 1, 1900, Mr. Atkinson says, after five years' experience with Peruna:

"I will ever continue to speak a good word for Peruna. I am still cured of catarrh."—John O. Atkinson, Independence, Mo., Box 272.

Mrs. Alla Schwandt, Sanborn, Minn., writes:

"I have been troubled with rheumatism and catarrh for twenty-five years. Could not sleep day or night. After having used Peruna I can sleep and nothing bothers me now. If I ever am affected with any kind of sickness Peruna will be the medicine I shall use. My son was cured of catarrh of the larynx by Peruna."

Mrs. Alla Schwandt.

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When old age comes on, catarrhal diseases come also. Systemic catarrh is almost universal in old people.

This explains why Peruna has become so indispensable to old people. Peruna is their safeguard. Peruna is the only remedy yet devised that entirely meets these cases. Nothing but an effective systemic remedy can cure them.

A reward of \$10,000 has been deposited in the Market Exchange bank, Columbus, Ohio, as a guarantee that the above testimonials are genuine; that we hold in our possession authentic letters certifying to the same. During many years' advertising we have never used, in part or in whole, a single spurious testimonial. Every one of our testimonials are genuine and in the words of the one whose name is appended.

Real Powers.

"Say, Winston, how would you like to witness a conflict between the powers?"

"Witnessed one the other day."

"Between the powers?"

"Sure! My wife, the cook and the ice-man began a three-cornered squabble in the yard."

About one pineapple in 20,000 has seeds in it, and it is from these seeds that new varieties are produced.

The population of the earth doubles in 200 years.

Longest Fence in the World.

The longest fence in the world is probably that which has been erected by a well-known American cattle company along the Mexican border. It is seventy-five miles in length, and separates exactly for its entire distance the two republics of North America. The fence was built to keep the cattle from running across the border and falling an easy prey to the Mexican cow punchers. Although it cost a great deal of money, it is estimated that cattle enough will be saved in one year to more than pay for it.

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