

By Order of the Czar

A Story of Russian Power

By MARCUS EASTLAKE

CHAPTER XI.

I hear once more the harsh grating of a prison key behind me, and I am fain to groan aloud as I lean against the wall. All is dark before my eyes, whilst my anguished soul cries, "Lost! Lost! God-forsaken!"

Suddenly I feel a rough hand grasp my shoulder. I am swung forward, and find myself the center of a score of faces, all peering and grinning into mine.

I realize that I am in a general cell; that these are my fellow prisoners, and the wrathful blood leaps to my head. I shake myself free and turn fiercely to see who has dared to molest me. In my present desperate mood I am not to be trifled with.

My looks fall on a short, broad, powerfully built man in the black sheepskin cap of a Cossack, under which a pair of bold eyes glitter and dance like wildfire. He stands before me now, with his broad, brown hands on his sides, his body thrown back, and both attitude and mien bespeaking insolent defiance.

"Confound your impudence! What mean you?" I roar.

"I merely wish to look at you, brother," he replies with cool deliberation. "I am interested, we are all interested in our brother in affliction."

"You insolent, presuming hound!" I snarl on him in fury. The laugh that goes round makes it blaze up like oil on flames. I make a rush so violently and unexpectedly on the Cossack that he staggers back, and but for those behind him would have fallen.

A hubbub of voices is raised: "Go on! At him! Show your mettle, little father! Embrace, brothers! At him! At him!" The Cossack has regained his balance. His huge nostrils swell out, his breath rushes through them with a snorting noise like a horse. He bends his head forward as does a lion preparing for attack. In another moment he has darted on me, and his preternaturally long arms encircle my middle like bars of iron.

"Squeeze him! hug him! Well done, Yerack!" shriek the voices, accompanied with such noises as are used to encourage fighting dogs. I draw in my breath, and lifting the Cossack off his feet, sling him from side to side to try and shake him off, but in vain. He clings to me like a bulldog. I cannot fight a man whilst he hangs to me like this, so we struggle together silently, neither gaining an advantage for full five minutes; until a sudden movement on my part brings us both to the ground, I on top of my adversary. And now he looses his hold, and instantly I catch the gleam of steel!

My hand closes on his wrist like a vise. I wrench the weapon from his grasp and sling it from me.

"Coward!" I hiss, and deal him a blow on the head that makes it resound, like the cracking of a coconut against the floor.

His limbs relax. A deep groan escapes his breast, and I am free to rise. I do so, and stand gasping for breath and looking down on my prostrate foe. His jaw drops, and his black eyes roll up, exhibiting the whites, giving him the ghastly semblance of death. And now that my passion has spent itself, I shudder with disgust at my own folly and degradation.

"I fear you have finished him," observes some one.

"Served him right!" growls another. "He is a coward and a traitor!"

"Yes, yes, serve him right!" join in the rest. "You have acted like a true man! You are of the right sort."

Their compliments only increase my disgust. What care I for the opinion of such as these? I make no reply, but stalk over to the furthest corner of the cell and fling myself down on one of the inclined boards that are ranged round the wall.

I watch them draw the insensible Cossack to another board, and lave his brow with water from a pitcher. Almost immediately he revives and sits up, seeking me with his roving eyes. When they have found me, he rises and staggers toward me.

"I am a hound and thou art a brave man!" he says hoarsely. "Forgive me; it was the evil one prompted me to use the knife. He had possession of me and I knew not what I did!"

He waits not for my reply, but suddenly leaves my side, picks up the knife from the floor where I had hurled it, and returns it to me.

"Take it," he urges, "it is thine! I smuggled it in concealed in the folds of my sash. Slay me with it if thou wilt. My life is thine!"

As he speaks thus, his voice shakes with emotion and his dark face works strangely. I am touched with the man's contrition in spite of myself.

"Keep the dagger," I say, "it may be useful to thee, and give me rather thy hand!"

"Remember my words: My life is thine!" he reiterates. "Thou hast bought Yerack, body and soul."

And without another word, without giving me the chance of expressing the regret that is on my lips, that I should have taken his harmless sport so badly, he goes back to his board and stretches himself on it. His fellow prisoners crowd round him with questions and remarks, but he regards them not, and turning to the wall, remains perfectly still.

In a few minutes they have forgotten me both. A tall, lean Jew sits apart, mumbling to himself, and swaying his body to and fro. Ere long the loud, long-drawn moans of the Cossack mingled with the general din.

Thus the weary hours flow sluggishly merging into each other, until a break comes in the shape of a couple of warders bearing an enormous pail of cabbage soup, which they dole out to us in tin vessels, and a basketful of black bread, in rations.

I had wondered where I should get my next meal. Little thought I that it would be supplied to me free of charge by the Russian government.

After supper the warders light two oil lamps that hang high up against the wall. They illuminate with a murky yellow light the motley scene. For a time the games are renewed; coarse jests are bandied, followed by loud guffaws; songs with rollicking choruses are sung to the beating of feet; then gradually the boards are filled. A few linger wrangling over a game, until the disputed point is decided by a majority, and they too seek repose.

Vainly I toss from side to side. My gloomy musings are interrupted by the appearance of the Cossack, gliding toward me in the dim, yellow light. He squats himself noiselessly on the floor at my head, and gazes at me silently for some minutes. I am the first to speak.

"I am sorry I hurt you," I whisper.

"Forgive me, Yerack! I might have taken your harmless jesting in better part."

"Name it not," he whispers back. "It would have served me right hadst thou dashed out my brains. Wilt thou tell me," he murmurs, falling into the familiar second person which seems natural to him, "why thou art here? I would help thee if I can."

I hesitate. Shall I tell this man my strange, eventful story? Though I know, or think I know that it lies not in the power of any man to help me in my dire strait, yet it will be an unspeakable relief to me to unburden my mind to a sympathetic listener. And there is that in this man's manner which inspires me with the conviction of his good faith.

"Hast thou heard of Vladimir Alexandrovitch Lubanoff?"

He starts and stares at me. "All Russia has heard of him," he replies.

"I am he."

CHAPTER XII.

As I utter the words the Cossack gazes at me as if I were a ghost. For a moment he seems to be smitten dumb with amazement. His under lip drops. Presently a flush of color rushes to his swarthy cheeks and a strange light to his eyes. He raises his cap and bows his head before me as if I were a king.

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" he murmurs. "I believed not the rumor of thy marvelous escape. There is truly nothing too strange to happen in this strangest of worlds. Tell me about it, I pray thee."

Then in low tones I relate to him my history. When I have come to an end he clasps his brow with his broad fingers, and loses himself for fully ten minutes in profound thought. Sometimes he draws a heavy breath, as one does when encountering some obstacle that must be overcome. At last he looks up.

"I have hope," he says. "Be of good cheer, my noble brother. Listen," he says. "One of the warders about the prison is a friend of mine. He is a Cossack, though he has donned the government uniform, and we come from the same district. My term of imprisonment expires to-morrow, and if money and old acquaintanceship fail to win him over, I am not the son of my mother. I know my Cossack. I will arouse in him the slumbering longing for the wild free life of the Steppes. I will make the sight of a uniform hateful to him, and discipline an unendurable yoke. Then I will tell him of thee. The Cossacks love generosity and worship bravery; moreover, he is ever ready for adventure. Nor is gold without its charm for him, and I have the wherewith to bribe him. Only wait patiently until we have laid our heads together and planned. And when time is ripe we will act!"

Again he wrinkles his brow and seems to think deeply with his eyes on the ground, and again he bends toward me to pour into my ear the result of his cogitations.

"In a few hours, probably, thou wilt be led before the Prefect for private examination. Encourage the suspicion that thou art an important political offender, then they will most likely put thee in a private cell—or, better still, confess at once who thou art, and thou wilt make sure of solitary confinement. Under no circumstances canst thou gain ought but time by withholding thy name; it must be discovered sooner or later."

"Be it so," I respond resolutely. "I will follow thy counsel."

At this juncture the gaunt figure of the Jew rises in the opposite corner, and his mumbings reach us. Yerack gives my arm a squeeze. "Courage! Hope!" he murmurs, ere he glides back to his board.

Yerack is gone. He was removed from the cell an hour ago, throwing toward me a significant glance as he passed out. And now again the door of the cell is opened. This time for me, and I am led along several corridors, down a short flight of stone steps into an ante-room. I find myself standing at the end of a long table.

Opposite me in an armchair sits a little, gray man, in the undress uniform of a general. At a glance I ascertain that the Governor occupies another armchair somewhat apart and that Andrei Plotrovitch and the two gendarmes who took me in custody are also present.

The little gray man, who is of course the Prefect, eyes me with severe fixity out of a bush of fuzzy gray hair in a manner that is intended to strike me with awe.

"In the first place," he begins, "please to inform me whether the name on this envelope," here he lifts Maruscha's letter from the top of some papers that lie before him, "Waldemar Nicolavitch Allkanoff, is your real name or an assumed one?"

"It is an assumed one," I reply promptly.

"Humph!" he ejaculates. "Ah—indeed! Perhaps, as you seem disposed to be candid, you will also inform me by what name I may with confidence have the honor of addressing you?"

"Certainly. My name is Vladimir Alexandrovitch Lubanoff."

If a smoking bombshell had fallen into their midst it could not have created a greater sensation. An amazed exclamation arises to every lip, followed by a stir as of a sudden breeze among the trees. Andrei Plotrovitch is the first to break the silence that succeeds.

"Ha!" he exclaims. "Hinted I not so, my uncle? I recognized him, and mine is the reward! You must confess, Vladimir Alexandrovitch, that I recognized you!"

For reply I cast on him a look of scorn. "Hold thy prating tongue, Andrei," I hear the Governor whisper, as he flushes deeply, "or thou wilt compel me to expose thy lies!"

Meanwhile the Prefect has recovered himself.

"You admit that you are the Vladimir Alexandrovitch who by some marvelous mischance escaped the fate you so richly merited?" he questions.

"I am that man," I answer firmly, "who suffered—ay, suffered to the full the death he was condemned to die! I was hung. I endured the shame of it, the pain of it, even to the final death-throe! I satisfied justice that demanded my life; for I was dead. A Higher Power than the mighty Czar himself restored me my life! This life I now hold I declare to be mine by the gift of God! I had a right to do my utmost to preserve it, and he who would rob me of it commits a theft on the living God!"

"The State of which you are the enemy, Vladimir Alexandrovitch, must decide that question," says the prefect. "Meanwhile we must consign you to prison until we have communicated with the authorities in St. Petersburg. Your case is out of our jurisdiction. Your examination will take place where your heinous offense was committed, and the authorities there must pronounce your sentence. Officers, withdraw your prisoner!"

The gendarmes are leading me away when the Governor steps forward, and taking one of them aside, says something to him in a low, impressive voice. The man salutes, and rejoining us, we pass out. My guard conducts me to the right and we enter another part of the prison. Here a warder joins us and we tramp on, the air becoming even more oppressive with damp, the walls showing patches of vivid green mould and gray mildew as we advance.

At the extreme end of the corridor we pause at last. One of the heavy oaken doors is opened. I enter a cell which has the air of a charnel house. The door shuts behind me with a groan, the key is turned in the ponderous lock and I am alone.

(To be continued.)

SHOWER BATH FOR FIBBERS.

Children of the Flowery Kingdom Do Strange Penance.

Among the many curious customs that offer such endless source of interesting study to the westerner traveling in Japan perhaps there is none that arouses his interest so much as that which obtains throughout the flowery kingdom among the rich and poor alike of washing away their children's lies by a species of shower bath that is a cleanser of the physical as well as the moral being, says the Detroit Tribune.

Ablutions may play a large part in every form of Japanese worship. Before the shrine which is to be found in almost every home there is a sort of crude bathtub made in the stone floor. The water for these is supplied from pipes which send a heavy stream down from the roof. Seated before the altar in the middle of the "tub" the prevaricating culprit is made to suffer the penalty of his many lies.

The volume of water comes dashing down upon his defenseless head with a force that would make a robust American lad "see stars." But the Japanese liar knows there is no other way to appease the wrath of the injured god of truth, so he succumbs to the inevitable with a much better grace than that with which his western brother takes his whipping, and sits before the shrine of his family divinity reading aloud for the benefit of a number of bystanders the long list of lies that has brought him to this uncomfortable pass.

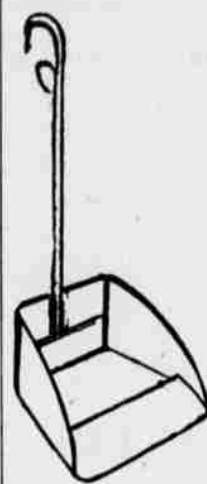
The shrine before which this moral water cure takes place resembles those which are so common in the houses of Catholic countries. The decoration of flowers and numerous candles is much like that with which the pious Italian adorns the altar of the Virgin or of his patron saint. Only the hideous little squatting figure of the Japanese god shows that this is an infidel shrine.

In the morning the reverent head of the house puts a cake, a little heap of rice and a sprig of green upon the altar, an offering intended to propitiate the god and draw down his blessing upon the family. When darkness comes a little lighted lamp is placed beside the idol to cheer him in the long hours of the night, during which, according to Japanese belief, he faithfully guards the household from all harm.



A Handy Dust Pan.

Patent carpet sweepers when first introduced were at once recognized as a very useful and labor-saving apparatus, but, although convenient and very easily manipulated, it was soon made manifest that they did not do the work as thoroughly as the old-time broom. For this reason the number used has decreased and the broom still holds its superiority. One of the disagreeable duties for the housewife after sweeping is to gather up the dust and dirt in the dust pan. An improvement in this line is shown in the illustration, the invention of a Southerner. The body of this dust pan can be of any desired size or capacity, and is formed with vertical side walls and a rear wall, the side walls converging to the rear wall. The bottom of the pan is composed of two separate portions, the front portion inclining downwardly from an intermediate step, the back portion inclining to the rear wall of the pan. An aperture is formed in the rear wall, extending its full length, while at the side of the aperture are vertical guideways for the accommodation of a movable closure or slide. Upon one side of the back wall is a socket for the reception of the handle, while connected to the closure is a rod, extending along the handle, this rod having a finger piece at its upper end, so that it can be conveniently manipulated. A lug in the closure prevents the slide from being pulled open too far. By placing the pan upon the floor and steadying it by the handle a dust heap can be readily swept over the inclined front bottom portion, dropping down over the transverse step and onto the sunken rear portion, where a considerable quantity of sweepings can be accumulated without danger of spilling, and emptied by means of the rod and slide.



The patentee is Sarah A. Albertson, of Knoxville, Tenn.

Receiver for Milk, Bread, Etc.

At regular intervals articles appear in the daily papers telling of some unfortunate being who has been caught in the act of pilfering a loaf of bread or a bottle of milk from some doorway and sent to prison, but where one is caught a thousand escape. These petty depredations only occur in the early hours of the morning, when it is an easy matter to walk up some street and practically help yourself, for every doorway will contain something for the breakfast table. It is irritating to the housewife in the morning to find her bread or milk stolen, which means a trip to the store when there is not much



NO DANGER OF BEING STOLEN.

FLANNELS A CURSE TO HIM.

Writer Tells of Tortures He Endured as a Child.

At the age of 6 I found myself—in-felix—removed to a town possessing a bleak climate and many woolen manufacturing, says a writer in the Atlantic Monthly. It was the custom of the house mothers to buy flannel by the piece, direct from the factory; red flannel, hot, thick, felled like a Laplander, and the invention of Lucifer. Out of this flannel was cut a garment, a continuous, all-embracing garment, of neutral gender, in which every child in that town might have been observed flaming Mephistophellanlike after the morning bath.

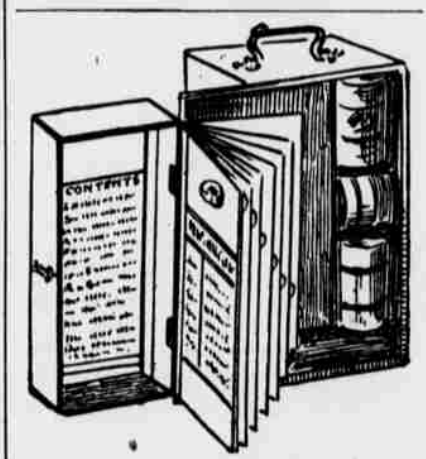
A pattern was given to our mother. The hair shirt—I laugh when I read! By definition the hair shirt must have possessed geographical limits of attack, but my flannels left no pore unlicked, untortured; they heated the flesh until scarlet fever paled into a mere plesantry, and they soured the milk of amiability within me forever. The rotation of the seasons reduced itself to terms of red flannel. In the autumn when the happy fowls and

time to spare. A New York man has invented the exceedingly novel, but at the same time simple, device shown in the illustration—a receiver for bread, etc.—which can be made to do the duty of a miniature safe. Upon the upright jamb-wall of the door-frame a bracket plate is secured at the proper height from the ground. This plate is made of sheet metal and is bent at a right angle to fit around the jamb of the wall. The receiver is in the form of a rectangular box, also made of sheet metal, having proper holding capacity for efficient service. One side of the box is open, or nearly so, through which to pass the articles it is to contain, and is hinged upon the corner of the bracket plate. After the goods have been placed within the box, the latter is swung on its hinges so as to dispose the open side opposite and close to the outer surface of the door. A spring catch is secured upon the part of the bracket next to the door, and this engages with an aperture in the side of the box which swings against it. This lock secures the box after it has been swung in, and it can only be released when the door is opened by a person on the inside of the building.

The patentee is Nelson D. Clearwater, of Binghamton, N. Y.

Emergency Case.

Many a life has been lost simply because nobody who possessed sufficient knowledge to apply in an emergency



FOR CASES OF EMERGENCY.

was present to give advice. A Philadelphia has invented an emergency case, an illustration of which is shown here, to be used in just such instances—when a physician cannot be had at once and drastic measures are necessary. It is designed to be used in case of accidents, sudden illness, collapse, poisoning, heat prostration, etc., and is made up of a box to contain articles for treatment, such as surgical dressings, bandages and instruments. This box is provided with a sliding lid and cover, the latter being hinged to the sliding lid. Inside the cover is a book of instructions. When in use the case is opened, thus admitting access to the book, which contains brief and simple but sufficient instructions for rendering emergency treatment. The case is also opened by moving back the lid, when the required surgical dressing with remedies are within reach, and they can be used in accordance with the instructions or directions contained in the book, until a physician or other proper person arrives. The articles can be nicely stored in the box and prevented from being exposed to the atmosphere, being kept in a sterile and cleanly condition. A handle is also attached to the box, so that it can be conveniently carried, and when not in use hung on the wall, desk or other proper place.

The patentee is John Bernard Norris, of Philadelphia, Pa.

foliage alive molted, shed the superfluous, when bracing October set the body in a glow, I alone of living things must be done up in flannel.

And spring, that season of vernal bourgeoning, was the time when I, too, like any other seedkin, slipped free of all stuff incasings, and could sprout and spring in air and sun, clad in blessed, blessed muslin. I shall never forget the corroding bitterness induced by flannels. At times they absolutely reduced me to fistcuffs with my religion, so that filial piety, the ordaining of the seasons, and the very catechism itself, hung in the balance of the conflict. I believe I can hardly overestimate the spiritual detriment done me by my flannels.

No Voice from the Tomb.

She—How is it that widows generally manage to marry again?
He—Because dead men tell no tales.
—Aly Sloper.

Some promoter might earn the undying gratitude of boarding-house patrons by organizing a hash trust and boosting its price beyond the reach of the masses.