

By Order of the Czar

A Story of Russian Power

By MARCUS EASTLAKE

CHAPTER XIII.

I look around me and shiver. The solid masonry of the walls is oozing with damp, which envelops me, enters my lungs, and literally permeates my being, drowning my spirits, lowering my vitality and extinguishing hope in my breast.

A warden brings me my allowance of bread and a jug of water. He informs me that I can have tea if I choose to pay for it, and shrugs his shoulders when I tell him that I have no money. On lighting my lamp he leaves me.

After a while I stretch myself on the bed, where I lie staring at the light. At times I groan aloud, I wring my hands, whilst the sweat of anguish pours from my body. And thus the night wears away—the ghastly, fevered night, whose hours seem to lengthen out more and more as they crawl toward the pale dawn.

To-day is little more than a wretched repetition of yesterday, only I feel it less. I have become apathetic. I have lost the mental energy to think strongly. For hours I sit on one spot and move not, or I stand at the grated window gazing vacantly at the river and the passing craft.

About midday the sky darkens and it begins to rain. It is a straight, steady land-rain without wind, and the monotonous patter of the drops on the water comes to me, mingled with the creaking of the rafts and the husky calls of the boatmen.

After my midday meal they take me to walk for a quarter of an hour in a court that is partly covered in, and again I shake off my apathy to observe the faces of the two gendarmes who pace at each side of me. They are stolidly personified. My eyes dart now at an official, now at a passing warden, with a vague hope that the Cossack may throw himself in my way and give me a significant glance or sign. In vain. And we are treading again the damp corridor and the gendarmes leave me in my cell.

The clock in the chapel tower of the prison tells the hour of midnight. I count the strokes mechanically, sitting on the steel with my head against the humid wall. The final stroke is still quivering in the air when I hear a faint click.

Am I dreaming, or is there really a pair of gleaming eyes looking at me through the trap in the door? Is that in very truth a hand holding something toward me? I stagger to my feet, staring with all my might.

The hand beckons impatiently. In two strides I am at the opening! I grasp cold, rough iron! It is a file! A face is advanced so that I can see a long drooping mustache, as black as jet, and a pair of red lips which pronounce one word, "Work!" And the trap is closed.

I clutch it, I hug it—the little instrument that is to give me liberty! The reaction from the deepest depths of despair to sudden, full-fledged hope, for a moment overpowers me. I sink on the edge of the bed and find relief in a succession of gasping sobs. Then I get mastery of my emotion, and rise with compressed lips, burning to commence my task. First I deliberately put out the light, after which I mount the stool and work. Even when the dawn began to glimmer I dare to continue it, until every bar is sawn through top and bottom, leaving only a thin, unfired surface to the inside, so that a single thrust will cause the entire grating to give way.

I am examining my handiwork with comparative composure, for I have grown confident during my undisturbed labors, when the unexpected click of the opening trap makes my heart stand still with sudden dismay, whilst the sweat turns icy cold on my brow. I have, however, the presence of mind to let the file slip up my sleeve. I dimly descried the points of the Cossack's black mustache thrust through the aperture. I noiselessly speed toward him.

"How much have you done?" he whispers.

"Finished," I whisper in reply.

"Good. Give me the file."

I hand it to him and he thrusts it into the breast of his uniform. Again he bends down to me and murmurs the one word: "To-night!"

I go over to the bed, and fling myself on it with a sigh of supreme satisfaction. "It is done—my task is finished. With a single thrust of my hand I can make for myself an outlet from this foul den to liberty. A few hours and I shall be free!"

It is the very longest day of my life! And when at last the shades begin to gather and enshroud me, I cast myself down on my bed utterly spent with the burden of it, and my worn-out system finds relief in sleep. When I awake the lamp is burning once more, and my supper stands on the table. I eat up all the food that has been brought me, as I have done systematically all day, and take a long pull of water. After which I seat myself opposite the door and wait breathlessly, braced for the moment of action.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, I am startled by the grating of the key in the rusty lock, and directly the Cossack enters; changes the key to the inside, and locks us in! For the first time I see my stranger friend. A single glance at him inspires me with confidence. Small, almost dwarfish; meager, colorless, his face and form are yet instinct with energy and nerve.

"Ready?" he whispers.

"Quite," I respond promptly.

"You can swim?"

"Like a fish."

"Come then. You first; I follow. Straight across where Yerack awaits us." I am on the stool preparing to thrust out the grating.

"Toward you! Toward you! Pull the bars inside," whispers the Cossack. "It will make less noise. And by all the saints, the light!" he darts to the lamp and puts it out, and is standing below me ready to receive the grating from my hand.

Already I am drawing myself up to the stone edge. My head is through the aperture when—what was that? A familiar click! The Cossack has me by the legs and is actually pulling me back! I hear him say:

"Ah, just in time, Anton Antonovitch! Not quite smart enough, my brave. Ha, ha!" as he drags me to the ground.

And while I am struggling, dazed and bewildered, to my feet he has rushed to the door, unlocked it, and by the dim light that illuminates the corridor I see him seize some one by the arm, jerk that some one into the cell and lock the door again.

"Just in time! Just in time to help me," I hear him repeat, with a strange, wild, exultation in his voice.

Then there is a short, fierce struggle in the dark. The bed creaks under a falling body. * * * A cry of "help!" that is instantly smothered, followed by gasps and groans.

What means it? Who is the vanquished? Is it the Cossack who lies groaning on the bed or that other one? In vain my eager eyes try to pierce the darkness. It is as black as pitch. The Cossack's voice reassures me at length.

"I have him!" he pants.

Another groan and a gurgling sound.

"You were going to spoil our little game—what?" says the Cossack with cutting irony; and there is an unpleasant thud as a head being knocked against a wall. "Where are you, my brother? Come here quick!" I feel my way toward the voice, and my hand comes in contact with the arm of the Cossack.

"In my trousers pocket you will find a match box. Strike a light," he dictates. "I must see what I am doing here."

I comply, and see a ghastly sight. On his back on the bed, his body convulsed, his face purple and swollen, his tongue protruding from his mouth, is the warden. The Cossack's fingers are tightly twisted in the collar of the prostrate man's uniform, and the Cossack's knee is on his chest. He is to all appearances lifeless.

"He will tell no tales," observes the Cossack. And the smile with which he regards his senseless foe is truly diabolical. "Yet he might come round. Shall I make sure?" He draws a small stiletto from the bosom of his coat and suspends it in mid-air.

I stay his hand.

"Slay him not," I say. "If he be really dead, God speed his soul. If the life is still in him, leave him the chance of it. His death will not benefit us."

"Humph; less trouble to have given him his quietus," he murmurs, hiding away his knife again. "We cannot leave him thus. We must tie his hands and gag him, or he might set the dogs on us sooner than we expect."

While he talks he loses no time. He produces some strong cord from his pocket and binds the man's wrists together behind his back. After which he proceeds to gag his gaping mouth with a handkerchief. "It is cleverly done," he chuckles. "I was quick. Yes. In an instant I had him! Once he had got away to give the alarm, though we might still have escaped by the window, I would not have given the snuff of a candle for our chances of landing at the other side save into the arms of the gendarmes. It was even the best thing that could have happened that he should have come; for now, I reckon, they will not be likely to find out that the bird has flown before 5 in the morning, and by then they will find it a difficult task to get near enough to him to strew salt on his tail."

While speaking his quick, nervous fingers are busy tying the knot at the back of his victim's head.

"There now, thou art fixed up—warranted not to go off!" he continues apostrophizing the insensible man. "Adieu, my friend, and a good recovery! And now out with the light and let us start. Yerack will think that all is lost."

In less than five minutes I am cleaving the cold, black water, striking out blindly for the opposite shore. In my rear comes the Cossack, gasping and spluttering.

The river is not wide, and I already feel the bank. Groping for a hold, my hand comes in contact with a branch, by which I pull myself up. The Cossack is close on my heels.

"Catch hold of this branch!" I whisper, bending it down to where I hear him gasping.

So hastily is it snatched from me that I almost lost my balance. I recover myself to find a dark object rising at my feet.

"Onward!" he pants, taking the lead.

A little more scrambling, and we are on the road. The Cossack hurries me along a few paces. Then a form steps out from the trees and silently confronts us. It is Yerack!

CHAPTER XIV.

My companion utters one word in a language unknown to me, and Yerack retreats into the black gloom of the trees. There is a stamping of horses and the muffled rolling of well-greased wheels. My sight having grown accustomed to the darkness, I can make out

a "troika" and some sort of vehicle as they emerge on the road. We quickly climb into the latter, which proves to be a cart laden with sacks of wool. Yerack springs to the seat in front, and away we speed as only a Russian "troika" can. Nothing says Yerack to either of us until between us and Kovno lie many versts, and the barren land is all about us. Suddenly he observes:

"Well, brothers, so far, good. And now for the transformation scene. Thou, Vladimir Alexandrovitch, as thy hands are white and thou hast something of a clerical air about thee"—here he gives vent to a sly chuckle—"art to be transformed into Russian priest, with purple, silk kaftan and flowing locks; not forgetting a beard that would grace a patriarch. It rests with thee to play thy new role well. Art thou satisfied with it?"

"Yerack, my friend, I have no words wherewith to thank thee!" I exclaim warmly.

"Bah, I merit no thanks. If I save thee, it will be life for life. I like to be level with people. And for thee, brother Kalatch, as the leopard cannot change his spots, and thou art always a Cossack confessed, every inch of thee, I have procured a Cossack's dress. In any other thou wouldst surely look like a Cossack in disguise. With a bushy beard from ear to ear and a quarter of an 'archin' off thy mustache, methinks thou wilt pass."

"I would thou wouldst make haste and let me rid myself of these soaking duds!" replies Kalatch, with irritation, while his teeth knock together like castanets. "I am certainly sickening of age!"

He gropes among the sacks and brings up two bundles, which he presents to us respectively. It is one of the most difficult things imaginable to make a complete change of toilet in a cart on top of a pile of sacks, while three horses are tearing full gallop with you through the darkness. However, necessity has been known to make a man accomplish wonders.

What bliss it is to lie still among the sacks with a dry skin, after the wet clothes have been stowed away, and listen to Kalatch describing in his terse, powerful diction, his adventure with the warden! And how Yerack enjoys it! "Good—good; well done!" he interpolates, slapping his leg.

Meanwhile a dull, smoke-gray streak has been widening on the horizon, and now I can make out the details of Yerack's dress where he sits before me on the front of the cart, and also the head of Kalatch emerging from the sacks, surmounted by the tall Cossack's cap. His profile is between me and the horizon, so that his hooked nose and the bushy beard are marked out against the growing light. Though they continue to converse together, I no longer gather the substance of their conversation, for I think of Maruscha, and how soon I may get a letter dispatched to her. I cannot help feeling a consuming anxiety about her, though I keep assuring myself that she is safe from interference until the inquiries subsequent to my trial in St. Petersburg should be instituted.

"Yerack," I say at length, "where are we at present? It is necessary that I get to a post town as soon as possible."

"We are about ten versts from Borlitch," replies Yerack, without looking around.

"I must send a letter from Borlitch," I say.

"Bah—nonsense!" exclaims Yerack, impatiently. "This is not a time to write letters! It is bad—bad—to send writing through the post! I believe not in this letter writing, it has lost many a man!"

"Yerack, when I tell thee that the safety of one to whom I owe my life is endangered through me and that the individual knows not of it, therefore without being warned cannot escape it, thou wilt recognize that I cannot argue this point with thee."

The Cossack gives a dissatisfied grunt, but says no more about it. Presently he informs me that we pass through Borlitch on our way to Vilna. "Where thou wilt take train direct to Konigsberg," he adds quietly, as if it were the simplest thing in the world my passing the frontier.

"To Konigsberg?" I repeat in amazement. "Yes; that is the program. And thou wilt arrive safe and sound in the Prussian town without a single hindrance. The officials at the frontier will doff their caps at thee and say, 'God speed thee, Holy Father!'"

A long silence ensues. Kalatch's head disappears from the range of my vision, and ere long loud snores rise at intervals near me. Yerack slackens the pace of the horses to a steady trot, and thus we proceed until we come to a long bridge thrown over a stream. He pulls up at the side of the road.

"Come, rouse thee, Kalatch," he cries. "Get down and stand by the horses' heads."

Kalatch, still half asleep, stumbles over the edge of the cart, and mechanically does as he is told.

"Now give me the clothes, Vladimir Alexandrovitch."

I dive among the sacks and fish up the two wet bundles. He takes them from me, and looks anxiously up and down the road. Having satisfied himself that it is deserted, he hurries up stream and is soon lost to sight in its tree-fringed windings. In about ten minutes he returns without the bundles.

"Sunk them in a pool," is the laconic reply.

I am on the road, stamping up and down to stretch my legs, about which the long silken skirt of the kaftan is flapping. My appearance must be startling, for as Yerack catches sight of me, he utters a little cry of surprise, which attracts the attention of Kalatch, and he, too, laughs at me. I break into a laugh at the open-mouthed wonder on their faces.

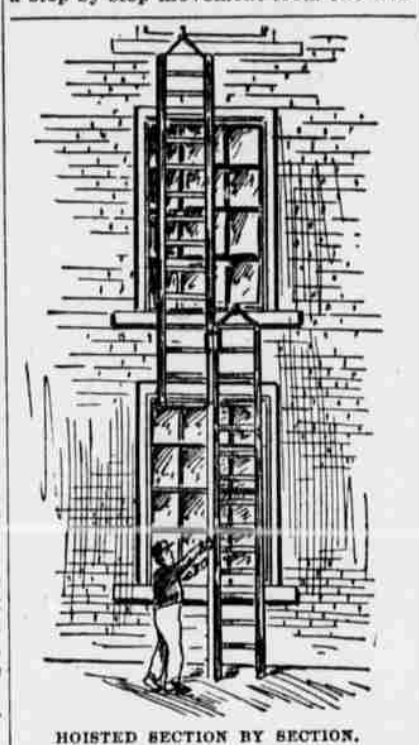
(To be continued.)

No soul is desolate as long as there is a human being for whom it can feel, trust and reverence.—George Elliot.



Scaling Ladder for Firemen.

Another device which would be of use mainly for firemen is the scaling ladder shown in the illustration. The idea of the inventor is certainly meritorious, and the advantages and efficiency will be apparent to everybody. This ladder consists of two sections, being so connected that they will always be in position for an ascent with a step-by-step movement from one win-

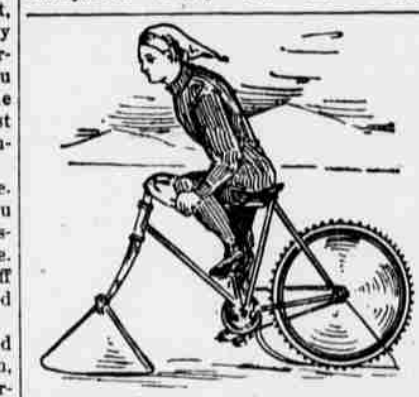


HOISTED SECTION BY SECTION.

dow-sill to another. In case of fire the hook of one section is engaged with the sill of one of the windows of the building. A rope is attached to each section, and when the fireman has reached the top of one section he stands there and guides the other section, which is pulled up by other firemen on the ground, by means of the rope. He then fastens the hook of this section on the window-sill next above and goes up as far as he can. While he is running up or after he has reached the top of the section he is on, the fireman on the ground pull the other section up and it is fastened to the next window-sill. A repetition of this operation results in rapidly elevating the sections until the top of the building has been reached, if necessary, the last movement possibly engaging the cornice of the building. In the meantime the fireman who is ascending has little to do beyond running up the ladder section by section alternately, thus saving much time and also much labor. The sections are lowered by a reversal of this operation, the firemen on the ground releasing the ropes, the ropes, of course, being of sufficient length to reach the ground.

Sled Runner Attachment for Bicycle.

It is about time now to hunt up sleds and skates and have the runners sharpened ready for the winter



FOR TRAVELING OVER ICE OR SNOW.

sport soon to follow. Those who are fond of skating never miss an opportunity to get out on the ice, as they find it an exceedingly healthful exercise. Others, who are tired of skating, can turn their attention to the device shown in the illustration—a sled

Music as a Therapeutic.

F. S. Kennedy says that much assistance is in many instances to be derived from the intelligent use of music, either vocal or instrumental, as a therapeutic adjunct. Melancholia, insomnia, hysteria, family affliction, business reverses, delirium, pain, fatigue, mental or physical, will all be helped by the beneficial influence of music, rightly used. As a post-operative measure it would have an undoubted influence for good in taking the patient's mind from his bodily distress.

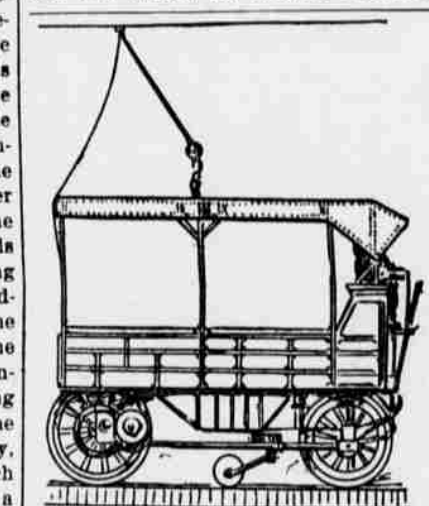
So, also, could "painless" dentistry be relieved of some of its pain and distress by the quieting influence of music, which would, as has been amply demonstrated, produce a pleasant mental influence during the administration of nitrous oxide or other anesthetic. A German writer recently stated (February, 1904), that in a number of test cases in which music was

runner attachment for bicycles, designed so as to transform an ordinary bicycle into one that can be run on ice or snow. It can be attached to any of the bicycle frames in common use and is adjustable to any size machine. The forward wheel and tire are displaced by a runner similar to a sled runner, while the rear portion also has a double runner. Fastened to the back wheel is a tire having spaced spurs at suitable intervals to engage the snow or ice, the tire being inflatable as in the ordinary bicycle. The spurs are alternately acute and obtuse in form, or each alternate spur being relatively sharp and dull. The sharper spurs will penetrate the snow or ice more readily and insure the requisite grip, while the duller spurs will prevent slipping. With a bicycle thus equipped a rider can travel over well-beaten snow-covered roads with great speed and ease, and without jarring or concussion arising from any irregularities in the surface traveled over.

Axel Erickson and Nicholas Larson, of Skanee, Mich., are the patentees.

A New Electric Vehicle.

The increase in the number of automobiles, especially in the larger cities, is apparent to everybody, and it still remains for the inventors to devise more uses for electricity and to improve those now in an imperfect state. A Philadelphian has patented a novel electric vehicle, which cannot be termed a trolley car, nor is it an automobile, although the principles of both are utilized. It is so constructed and the operating parts are so arranged that it will run on the regular trolley tracks, receiving the propelling power from the overhead wire, but if it becomes necessary or desirable to leave the tracks to pass an obstruction or a wagon, the operator can steer



NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE.

the vehicle off the track, the power in this case coming from a storage battery. This vehicle is designed mostly for passenger traffic, but can also be utilized to deliver baggage and other freight, such as packages from department stores to places remote from the tracks of the trolley system. The electric power in the storage battery which is used when the vehicle is off the trolley tracks is charged into the battery again as soon as the vehicle returns to the tracks. The idea of the inventor is to provide a series of vehicles which can operate in addition to the regular trolleys, and, although normally occupying the same tracks as the trolley cars and deriving their motive power from the same supply system, can be capable of more rapid progress. This peculiar vehicle could be devoted to the use of passengers paying a higher rate than that required for the ordinary trolley service, on account of the more rapid and direct service, due to their capacity to leave the tracks and utilize railways which otherwise are not in communication with each other and to proceed beyond the limits of the tracks.

Russell Thayer, of Philadelphia, Pa., is the patentee.

provided during the administration of the anesthetic there was an absence of distress and resistance on the part of the patient; also an absence or reduction of the post-operative nausea under the same circumstances.

To be advantageous the nature of the composition must be carefully selected with a view to the needs of the individual case, and the execution must be as nearly faultless as possible.

Effectual Way.

"I thought Smeargie was a friend of yours."

"He was until lately. I had to drop him. He was always wanting to borrow money."

"Refused him sharply, did you?"

"No; I lent him some."—Chicago Tribune.

A man occasionally gets into a mix-up where there is only one thing to do: skip out.