

By Order of the Czar

A Story of Russian Power

By MARCUS EASTLAKE

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

"Well," says Yerack, at length, "thou art good enough to show in a caravan at the fair of Nishi-Novgorod. Thou art a big man, brother, and what with the long gown and high cap of the priest, thou lookest gigantic."

He takes me by the arm and twists me about, viewing me from all sides, and his countenance grows even more grave.

"The priestly garb is a mistake," he mutters, "it adds to the height, which is already conspicuous enough. All eyes will dwell on thee. Not that it matters," he adds quickly. "So that thou art easy and composed they may stare their fill. Thy own mother might stare at thee until she grew blind, she would never know thee to be her son!"

"That she would not!" endorses Kalatch.

Now Yerack leads the troika into the middle of the road and unyokes the advance horse, which he ties with a halter to the back of the cart.

"It looks not usual for a troika to be drawing a cart of this kind," he explains. "Thus it will appear as if the beast were being led for sale. Now we shall do. We are traders journeying to the fair at Vilna, and thou art a priest who has honored us by accepting a lift. We proceed leisurely, for we have no haste; the fair only begins to-morrow. At the same time, brother, so imposing is thy appearance, that thou lookest out of place in a cart with trading Cossacks, and therefore at Borlitch we had better part company and thou wilt proceed with the post."

"But, my good friend, this will cost money, and I am without a copeck!" I cry.

"I have enough and to spare!"

"Yerack, how can I take so much from thee?" I exclaim, deeply moved by the Cossack's generosity. "Thy devotion I can never repay, but the money thou art laying out on me I may some day be able to refund. Give me some address to which I may send it. Surely in time I shall work for the means to pay my just debts."

"Bah! Keep thy mind easy and make not a mountain of a mole hill! What are a few roubles to me? I have neither kith nor kin, and what shall I do with superfluity? Let me put a trifle of it to a good use. I have taken a fancy to thee, my son. I beg thee, let a lonely man have his whim!"

Yerack's voice shakes a little as he speaks. His face is averted. What can I reply to this? Nothing. My trembling lips refuse to form even a word of thanks. Silently I wring my benefactor's hand.

It is still very, very early when we reach the town, yet before we arrive at the inn where Yerack halts we have encountered many people, but all of the lowest orders. I have had to respond to many greetings, and am made thoroughly uncomfortable by the obvious sensation I create. I feel relieved to enter the dark fore-place of the inn, with its small, dirty windows, and I hear Yerack give vent to a sigh which I know is of relief.

The innkeeper comes yawning to meet us, from an inner room, putting up his blouse. He stops with one arm above his head as he sees Yerack, and his brows go up. They are evidently old friends, these two.

"Yes, it is myself, Thoma Fedorevitch," says Yerack, grinning from ear to ear. "And I want to drop a word in thy ear, little father." With this he takes the man apart and whispers to him, during which the listener glances repeatedly in my direction, his small eyes beginning to twinkle, and his mouth widening to a grin. Sometimes he puts a question.

At length the confabulation comes to an end, and the innkeeper, after signing to us, leads the way through a passage, and opens the door of a small, dingy room at the back of the building. We enter, and he leaves us, shutting the door.

"Thoma Fedorevitch is a safe man," observes Yerack, knowingly. "That kind of man is always safe so long as you grease his palm. Thoma and I have had our little transactions together."

The landlord returns bearing a tray with breakfast. The repast consists of raw salt herring, preserved mushrooms, and white bread.

"Ah, I am as hungry as a hawk!" says Yerack, taking up a herring by the tail to hold it over his mouth and crunch it up.

I take the opportunity to ask for writing materials, and if it is to be had, a stamp, as it is still too early for the postoffice to be open.

"Certainly, Holy Father," responds the landlord, with a twinkle in his beady eye. "I can furnish your Holiness with all."

Another burst of laughter from the Cossacks, while the speaker crosses his hands on his breast and bows low before me ere he goes. He brings me the paper in his dirty finger and thumb. It is greased and soiled, the pen splutters and the ink is of the consistency and color of mud, but they suffice me to write these lines:

"On receiving this, lose not an hour in procuring thy passport, but travel day and night. I hope to precede thee, and will await the arrival of all trains from Konigsberg. Should I be deterred, seek our brother, Conrad Rosen, Stein Strasse, No. 79, who will advise and assist thee. If possible, send warning, indirectly, to Ivan and Pavel. All is known and searching inquiries will be made. I am safe and with friends. Thine until death—V."

I read over what I have written. It is sufficiently explicit and I have no fear but that Maruscha will obey my instructions to the letter, if she can!

As I am folding and addressing it, Yerack comes behind me and looks over my shoulder.

"Humph!" he grunts. "A woman; I thought as much."

I turn on him wrathfully, with an angry retort leaping to my lips, which, however, I check, remembering how much I owe to this brave fellow. I even summon up a smile.

"Yes, a woman, thou old misogynist, who yet art the son of a mother. And such a woman! Brave and true, Yerack, but for whom I should not be in the land of the living, for I owe my life to her as I owe it also to thee!"

"Well, well, if that be so. I grant thee, there are—there may be different sorts. Though, for my part, I have known but the one—the cat-like sort, sleek and fawning and false, stroking you with velvet paws in which sharp claws are hidden wherewith to tear you unaware. I like not the feline tribe."

Having spoken, he protrudes his upper lip, making his bristly mustache stand out. He looks very fierce and bitter, and though I answer nothing, I think, "Assuredly thou hast had some cruel experience, my friend!"

In a few moments, however, his face reassumes its habitual expression of complacency, and he says to me, "Now, my son, get thee something to eat and let us to business."

He places food before me; standing by and watching, with over-satisfaction, while I make it disappear.

"Thou hast done well," he observes, when I have eaten my fill and pushed the plate from me.

CHAPTER XV.

Yerack draws a chair to the table, close to my elbow, and with slow deliberation, and an expression of supreme satisfaction, takes from his tunic a large, bloated-looking pocketbook, out of which he abstracts a folded paper.

"Now, Nikor Andreivitch Tcheverin," he says, mouthing his words with an unctuous intonation. "In reply to your appeal for permission of leave of absence on the plea of ill health, I have the pleasure to hand over to you from the Archimandrite of your diocese this paper, which you will perceive, entitles you to a month's sojourn abroad."

I take the paper he holds toward me, and unfold it. Sure enough, there is the ecclesiastical seal, the wavering signature of the aged church dignitary, and on scanning it I find that here indeed is a formal leave of absence to: "My ailing son, the Reverend and Holy Father Nikor Andreivitch Tcheverin, extending over a period of one month, to enable him, by medical advice, to drink the waters of Kissingen." I suppose I look my amazement, for Yerack, watching me, begins to grin. Kalatch, who has come up behind my chair, spells it out slowly and exclaims:

"Tell us about it. How hast thou procured it?"

"Yes; how? Who is Nikor Andreivitch?" I manage to stammer.

This seems too much for Yerack. He throws himself back and indulges in one of his mighty roars.

"He knows not his own name!" he echoes. "Ah, Nikor Andreivitch! my poor Kikori; it is indeed true something was done for thy health."

Ere I have time for further question, he produces a familiar looking little greenback, the sight of which makes my heart jump; and this time, without any previous speech, he puts it into my hand.

It proves to be a passport made out in the name of this same Nikor Andreivitch, traveling to Germany. I read the description of myself as I now appear, in a sort of stupefaction. I cannot take in my good fortune all at once.

Age—thirty.

Height—above average.

Eyes—brown.

Hair and beard—brown and curled.

Complexion—fair and fresh colored.

Nose—aquiline.

Grasping the precious talisman, and realizing what it means to me, my excitement becomes so great that I can no longer sit still. I rise precipitately and fall to pacing the floor, while I vainly struggle for speech. Joy and gratitude strike me dumb, and like a woman the tears rush to my eyes and flow down my cheeks.

At length I go up to Yerack, and placing my hands on each of his shoulders, I look down into his broad, jovial face. There comes a strange stir in it, but in an instant he jumps to his feet and laughs boisterously.

"Ha, ha, ha! Come, friend Nikor, if thou wouldst catch the evening express in Vilna, thou must bestir thyself."

Meanwhile I have sufficiently mastered my emotion to say:

"Yerack, my friend—my noble friend! Thou wouldst escape my thanks. And the gratitude of my life long is all I may give thee. Generous Yerack; she, too—how she will bless thee for what thou hast done for us! Would that she were here to thank thee in her sweet, gracious way!"

"Let be, let be. Thou canst not imagine how I have enjoyed this escapade. To have tricked them so cleverly! Ah, only to have seen the face of that warden this morning when he entered the cell! Ho, ho! That skinny little prefect. How small he would look when they told him of the tragedy! How he would fume and stamp! Oh, it is splendid, splendid!"

"But I want to know how thou camest

by the documents, and in so short a time, too?" interrupts Kalatch, impatiently.

Yerack gives a contemptuous snort. "What a fuss thou makest about so small a matter!" he responds. "One would think thou hadst been born and bred a thousand miles from Russia, and knew naught of the customs of the country. Roubles—roubles—roubles! What is there in Russia that cannot be bought with Russian roubles? I rustle a handful of dirty rouble notes, and without a word of persuasion a government clerk writes out the passport to my dictation. A Holy Father prepares the other document from one he has in his possession and hands it to me with a 'Bless thee, my son!' And never a remonstrance save when I pressed a little token of my gratitude into his palm."

"Thou must have spent a fortune over me, Yerack," I say remorsefully. The weight of so many obligations oppresses me.

"And if thou hadst knocked the life out of me that time, as I deserved, what use would my money have been to me then? Moreover, I assure thee, that I speak truth when I say I have more than I need. Trust Yerack for looking after himself. He knows how far he can go. And now here is for thy journey, and I have done with thee."

He takes a thick packet of notes from his pocketbook, and without counting them divides them into two equal parts and gives me one. Though I am obliged to be still farther his debtor to the amount of my journey, I shun to take advantage of such reckless liberality. I begin to count the notes, resolved to accept what I stand in absolute need of and no more. They seem to be all twenty-five rouble notes. I separate four from the bulk.

"These will more than suffice," I say, holding the remainder toward him. "It is well for thee, my friend, that thy head is firmly fastened on thy shoulders, or thou wouldst certainly give it away."

I try to smile at him as I speak, but my trembling lips render the attempt a failure.

His reply is to snatch all the notes from me with comical fierceness, roll them up, and stuff them into the inside pocket of my kaftan.

"Enough of this fooling!" he exclaims. "Not another word will I hear on so paltry a subject. What is more to the purpose, let us settle what is to be done next. It will be best that we part here. Thou wilt go on foot into the town—straight up this street, taking the first turn to the right, and in the market is both the postoffice and the posting station. Arrived at Vilna, drive direct to the railway station. With moderate driving thou wilt be there in time to catch the evening express. And let me remind thee who thou art. Forget not thy priestly dignity. Keep also a bold front, for thou art secure. The passport will assuredly be enough, but hesitate not to show the leave of absence. The two together will at once put to flight the least shadow of doubt. There is just the fact of thy having no luggage that might arouse suspicion. Here, too, thou canst easily hoodwink them. Thou wilt describe it—go to the luggage van for the purpose of identifying it—excite thyself, get into a towering rage because it is not there; threaten to lodge a complaint against the railway servants for their neglect in not putting it in the train when it is addressed and properly labeled; make a great stir, and give special orders as to the forwarding of it without loss of time."

"I promise thee to use my utmost ability, brother," I respond. "Nor am I a novice. I have had some acting to do in my time."

"Another thing I would mention," resumes the Cossack. "I fain would hear of thy safe arrival. One line will be enough—'Arrived safe!' All well, what thou wilt. Only address it not to me, I am too well known for a scamp; moreover, I am under surveillance of the police," he chuckles, shutting up his left eye. "Let me see," he continues, with sudden gravity. "From Vilna we proceed to Minsk, on our way to the East. Arrived at the Province of the Don, where I am a native, we will pause until I have disposed of certain properties. Our final destination will be the Kirgh Steppes. There we will pitch our tent. They will scarcely follow us there. Send, therefore, thy communication to Minsk. I can always induce some sleek government clerk to call for it at the postoffice and fetch it to me."

Hereupon he takes up the pen, and with great solemnity, forming each letter with his lips the while, he writes on one of the sheets of paper. It is a slow and laborious task. I receive the paper and read: "dimitri petrovitch herzen Minsk post restante."

Yerack sticks out his lips and watches me whilst I read it.

"Thou canst make it out? Yes?" he inquires.

"With perfect ease. It is very distinct."

"Now embrace me, my son, and go thy way."

We kiss each other on both cheeks and he releases me. The same ceremony is gone through with Kalatch. I thank him for the service he has rendered me, to which he will not listen.

"I was glad of a reason for pitching 'o the accursed job," he says. "I could not have stood it much longer."

The Cossacks accompany me to the outer door. I shake hands with both in silence, fervently pressing the hand of Yerack, and hurry away into the town.

Thanks to Yerack's pass and letter, I am able to continue my journey without molestation. I pass the frontier in safety, and, at last I am out of Russia, a free man.

(To be continued.)

Necessary Adjunct.

Passenger (on ocean liner of the future)—Will you please direct me to my stateroom? It's No. 727.

Clerk—It's about half a mile aft. Take trolley car on starboard promenade.

IN THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH.



ENTRANCE TO THE STALACTITE CAVERNS OF PADIRAC.

One of the strangest holiday resorts, and one of the most interesting, is that recently made accessible to the public at Padirac, in the department of Lot, France. There a wonderful series of caverns, containing magnificent stalactites and a subterranean lake and river, has yielded its secrets to the adventurous explorer, and the dangers of the visit have now been ingeniously reduced, so that the average sightseer may traverse these "antres vast" with ease and safety. For ages the caves remained absolutely unexplored, but by the enterprise of M. Martel, a barrister, they have been thoroughly examined and described, and by means of iron stairways and galleries have been rendered accessible. The vast crater-like opening figured in our illustration is 300 feet in circumference, and when M. Martel made his first visit to the depths he had to descend on a board attached to two ropes after the manner of a swing. He went down 300 feet, and, with several companions, began an extraordinary series of discoveries. The chief of these is an underground river, which he navigated in a collapsible boat.

Science AND INVENTION

In removing a needle from the flesh Dr. E. W. Shelton first locates it by means of Roentgen rays, then moves the limb about until the needle appears as a single point. An ink spot is placed over each end, and the two spots are pressed together, slowly forcing the sharp point of the needle through the skin.

For two years the conviction has been growing upon Dr. Menzer of Halle that articular rheumatism is a parasitical disease, due to a streptococcus that enters the organism through the lungs. Acting on this theory, he has prepared a curative serum, with which he has very successfully treated both acute and chronic rheumatism.

An investigation in asylums of the United States, Canada and England, with a total of 16,512 patients, has shown Hobart Langdon only 703 insane people with light hair, and only sixty-six with red or auburn hair. That is 96 per cent of insane are brunettes, with brown or black hair.

Among the blonde insane, however, the percentage of incurables is much the greater—a fact, like that first stated, for which no explanation appears.

The discovery a few years ago by Professor Boys that fused quartz can be drawn into exceedingly fine fibers, which are superior to all others for many laboratory purposes, has been followed by Professor Shenstone with similar experiments with soapstone.

When highly heated, soapstone melts into a clear glass, which can be drawn into fine fibers, possessing all the qualities of elasticity and resistance to chemical reagents that characterize quartz fibers.

The great bulk of the supply of ivory tusks hoarded by native chiefs in Africa, and shrewdly dealt out by them to traders in such a manner as not to glut the market, come—so say London dealers—from "elephant cemeteries," places to which elephants are said to resort when about to die. These spots are met with occasionally in the jungle, and they bear evidence of having been frequented by moribund elephants for centuries. Not more than 15 per cent of the ivory now obtained in Africa comes from animals killed by hunters.

A report to the Department of Commerce and Labor from Rio de Janeiro points out the warning afforded by

Brazil, concerning the effects of forest denudation. Through the destruction of trees in northern Brazil, the report says, large states have been brought to the verge of ruin. In Rio Grande de Norte and Ceara chronic droughts occur, causing famine and depopulation in regions which were once richly timbered and well watered. The Brazilians are beginning to call for the scientific replanting of their devastated forests.

The electrical treatment of sewage, as tried by Dr. Rideal at Guilford, England, seems to have proven simple, inexpensive and effective. A solution of salt and water, or even ordinary sea water, is decomposed in a special electrolyzer of large surface and using a large volume of current, and the so-called oxychloride solution resulting is added to the sewage in quantity varying with circumstances. Any kind of sewage liquid may be treated. The worst forms are readily made as free from bacteria as drinking water, and raw sewage receiving 18½ gallons of solution per one thousand gallons showed a reduction of organisms from 23,200,000 to 540 per cubic centimeter in five hours, bacilli allied to those of typhoid diminishing from over one million to none.

Respect for Old Age.

One often observes the impatience with which some young people of the kind usually called "high-spirited" regard the little oddities of those older with whom they come in contact. Indeed, it is with great effort that this impatience is rendered unapparent, and often scarcely that.

There is a respect which youth owes to age which must not be lost sight of, and, of course, there is also a respect which age owes to youth. However, youth is the time of growth and self-restraint, and it is quite easy to indulge the little foibles of those 30 and 40 years older than ourselves by remembering they are older and that charity or love must be exercised toward everyone whom we meet—young and old alike.

Bad-tempered people used to be regarded as something out of the ordinary long ago, but nowadays we know that self-control is the one thing which makes for progression, and that we must live up to our ideals and our belief in what is the highest and best, whatever the cost.

Regard for the oddities of those older than ourselves is part of that doctrine, and must be lived up to.—Philadelphia Enquirer.

The new version is that the prodigal son is not worth the price of a fatted calf.