The Overton Claim.

By Martha McCulloch Williams

"When yo' went away," he said, "I went an axed old marster ter lemme go see granny. Word had come that she wus sick, sick er heap, an I thought I'd lik' ter see her once ergin 'fore she died, ef dat got ter happen right soon. Yo' know she lives 'tween here an Ridgeley. So when marster say he ain't got no bejections ter doin without me fer the rest of the week I put on my clean shirt an my Sunday clothes an come lippen erlong ter her house, jest beyant the Boilin Spring church meetin house. When I got dar, I saw er fine horse wid er man's saddle on hitched sorter behin the house, lik' whoever done rode it wus sorter 'feared somebody'd fin out he been dar. I say ter myself: 'Ef dat's de doctor man's critter, mus' be he's 'feared ter let folks know he 'tendin on de ole conjure woman. So I better stay outside tell he's done gon erway.' Den I crope ter de chimbley corner an peep through de little winder granny had cut 'tween de logs dar at de head er her bed. Miss Dare, who yo' reckon I see inside, lookin black as de dark night too? Shore as we stan's here it wus dat ar Mr. Hawkins whut come ter Ridgeley arter Mr. Allen Fauntleroy. De sight er 'im skeered me good, I tell yo'. I jump back from dat winder an scrooch down under hit, an dar I heard him say, I did, Miss Dare, it's God's truf e I'm er tellin you: 'Well, aunty, I have brought what you asked for, a lock of my enemy's hair an one of his handkerchiefs. I spent $50 to get them, too, so yo' may guess what money there is in it for yo' if only the spell works right.

"I popped up an peeped through the winder ergin. Granny wus layin in de bed, wid er eyes half shet, but soon as he laid dem t'ings in her hand she laugh out loud an say, sorter mawkin him: 'Ef yo' had told me the truth, yo' might have saved yo'r money. Ef my spells would work on Frank Overton, he would have died 50 years ago.'

" 'How you know it's 'im?' de man say, settin down hard in de cheer, he wus so 'stonished. Granny shet 'er mouf wid er snap an say, "Never min, I know.' Den he try ter 'suade her hit warn't ole marster. She mus' work de spell anyway, but she tole him 'tain't no use. Ef she wus, hit would come back on her. At las' he got up an come out de do', an as he got on his critter I hear 'im say ter hisself: 'That ole fool is more afraid of her master than she is of the devil. I'm t'inkin there is nothin for it now but to get some of these hill fellows to put a bullet in 'im.'

"When he had done rid erway, I sauntered up lik' I jes' done come, an warn't granny mad! Ax me whut I come dar dat time er week fer. She ain't sick. Nee'n ter think she gwine die yit erwhile, but she do look sick. An arter I give her de money I fotch she say I'm ain't such er bad boy, eat my dinner out de cupboard an run erlong home. I did eat, an all de time she wus axin me 'bout yo' an ole marster, an everything at Ridgeley, an Mr. Allen Fauntleroy. Seem lik' she know everthing, but she want special ter fin out whar he is."

"Do you know?" Dare asked, all a-tremble.

"I kin fin him easy," Jubilee returned, speaking the last word in a whisper to himself.

"You must find him at once," Dare said. "Find him and tell him my grandfather is in danger, and I look to him to save him from it."

"He will, Miss Dare. Don't yo' be uneasy. I'd 'a' gone to him first, but thought best to ask your commission," Jubilee said, pulling himself back into a polysyllabic frame of speech. "He just about owns that man Hawkins. Don't yo' fret. We'll take care of old marster."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Law is full of surprises, but this is about the most surprising," Mr. Hildreth said, refolding the yellow letter that Major Overton had put into his hands. "Why, major," he went on, "it really seems that this young fellow is determined to beat you. You refuse his surrender, and he at once goes to work developing a new line of evidence that 30 years ago might have won your case for you."

"Why not now as well as then?" Major Overton asked.

"Because, let me see—yes, it is 30 years since Bruce Stirling died. If we had known while he lived that he had a hand in the matter, we could easily have got the truth, of course paying well for it. While we may be morally certain of his turpitude, I see no way in the world of proving it. No, major," shaking his head commiseratingly, "though this letter explains much that has always been dark it can in no way affect either side with the courts, and loath as I am to say it we are very nearly at the end of our rope. If within the next three months we do not find at least a trace of the missing papers—your deeds, the records, one or both—the other side must be confirmed in possession, as they would have been 10 years back had their case been vigorously pressed. While Allen Fauntleroy was a minor and out of the country it was easy enough to have the business set over from term to term. You know it waited 10 years the first time for a hearing in the higher court after hanging so long in the lower ones. Then, when it came back, I know my father fought for delay. He said he knew he had the side of right and justice and kept hoping time would show it. I think you know that I took up the case as whole heartedly as he had done and fought it the best I could, hoping, I confess, to wear the other side out, if I could do nothing more. You have shown me that that was useless; that you will not accept victory by default. Since the property has found a prospective purchaser, there is such activity among our enemies that the end must come soon. I wish I could persuade you to compromise, major. This letter ought to show you that your opponents are innocent parties to the fraud against you, and surely young Fauntleroy's action"——

"Don't speak of it," Major Overton said hoarsely. "Hildreth, you—you—don't know—everything. You can never understand just why I must do as I do or how I hate myself for—for finding it impossible longer to hate him."

Mr. Hildreth got up and walked twice or thrice about the office, stopping at last in front of his client to say:

"Major, keeping secrets from one's lawyer is nearly as suicidal as keeping them from one's doctor. But if you choose to do it I have no word to say. Listen to this, though, I beg: Your granddaughter has some claim on you. Are you willing she should be left without a roof, a protector? I know some things, more perhaps than you imagine. I guess others, and in face of all I say it is your duty as a gentleman, a man of honor, either to agree to a settlement that shall divide the property equally betwixt the Overtons and Fauntleroys or else to the marriage of Allen Fauntleroy to your grandchild."

Major Overton got up, white to the lips.

"You forget yourself, Mr. Hildreth," he said freezingly. "With an Overton material considerations do not weigh against honor. I thought I had sufficiently impressed that on your mind. Permit me to wish you a very good day."

"Poor old Spartan! He's three parts a monomaniac," Mr. Hildreth said compassionately as the door closed behind him. Vance looked up from his desk at the room's far end to say:

"No. He happens to live just 500 years too late. His is one of the souls made for crusades and jousts to the death for a liege's name or a lady's glove. His superb impracticality is quite out of place in this late nineteenth century. But, do you know, whenever he passes I take off my hat and stand bareheaded even to his shadow?"

"It's a contest in Quixotism betwixt him and young Fauntleroy. Why, talk of the devil. There he is now. Give you good day, young gentleman. What brings you with such a face of concern

"With an Overton material considerations do not weigh against honor."

into the enemy's camp?" Mr. Hildreth said, rising and holding out a cordial hand. Vance made as if to go, but the newcomer stopped him, saying with an impatient gesture:

"Stay if you meant any part of what you have just said about that poor old man."

"We both would fight or lie for him," Mr. Hildreth said lightly. Then, seeing that Allen's eyes were still full of horror: "What is up, Mr. Fauntleroy? Has murder been done?"

"No. Only plotted, and I am come to you for help in thwarting the assassins," Allen said very low.

"Who are they?" asked Vance. Allen answered in a whisper.

For an hour the three men talked eagerly together, arguing, suggesting, planning. When the young fellow at last went away, Hildreth said, drawing a deep breath:

"Here's a pretty go! Planning riot, sedition and murder in the face of daylight. I always knew Hawkins wasn't the clear grit, but hang me if I thought he'd wade this fashion up to his neck in iniquity."

"He is really a monomaniac," Vance said, lighting a cigar. "He has been money crazy ever since he first sat at a desk in the other Allen Fauntleroy's office. What surprises me, though, is that those poor hill folk listen to him when he tells them that Major Overton is their enemy, the only thing that stands betwixt them and the work that means prosperity."

"You forget. Hawkins has truth on his side, a mighty good ally even for a rascal such as he," Mr. Hildreth said, taking a revolver out of his desk and running his fingers along the barrel. Holding it muzzle down, he went on: "I wonder if—no, it can't be! Melissa Townley can't know all his scheme. Anyway we will manage to spoil his little game for him, but if we let the major get wind of it first"——

"There'd be the devil to pay and no pitch hot," Vance supplemented, with his hand on the knob.

Hildreth nodded an emphatic assent.

"Poor old major! We must save him, even in spite of himself."

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Dare had been 10 days at Exeter, it seemed to her that years lay betwixt her and the old colorless life. The day but one after Jubilee's warning she had found a line, likewise ambushed in field flowers, upon her dressing table, which said:

"Keep a stout heart. There is no danger yet that the old tree will be cut down."

There was neither date nor signature, but none was needed to tell her whence it came. Intuitively she knew that her message had gone straight to Allen Fauntleroy, and this was his answer. Trusting in him, her heart was at rest. She could let herself be amused with what went on about her; could laugh in girlish mirth over Holtham's droll stories; listen unwearied to all her aunt could tell her of dead and gone Dares, who once had ruffled it with the best; freeze Hawkins utterly upon the rare occasions when he ventured to address her—above everything, sun her vanity in the light of Royal Cleve's eyes.

Though all untaught, she was wise enough, woman enough, to know that she attracted him as perhaps no other had ever done. No day shone but brought him to Exeter. Often indeed midnight struck ere he took himself away. In spite of all, though, his wooing made scant headway. Often upon the homeward way Mr. Cleve swore roundly at himself as both fool and coward thus to falter and stand abashed before this girl, who had no arts of fence save those of nature's providing.

It was ridiculous, worse, he told himself, that he, who had made love half the world over, who had been courted and caressed by dark women and fair, for whom more than one beauty had dimmed her sweet eyes, should find himself thus taken aback by this slip of a girl, whose guard of delicate haughtiness he could neither pass over nor break down. A hundred times he had begun to tell his love outright; as many times his speech had been deftly turned aside or passed over as a jest.

This must not be, could not, should not endure. Aside from his own headlong passion, there was Hawkins in the background, inexorably urging him to "make hay while the sun shone" and hinting more than darkly the dangers of delay. He must speak out, speak at once, and under such conditions as to make refusal out of the question.

Hawkins easily supplied them. Upon his motion, Mrs. Townley agreed that all her household should go for a day's excursion into the heart of the disputed iron tract, where work had so long ceased that for the most part everything was picturesquely ruinous. It was a region of steep, thickly wooded hills, seamed through and through with hollows so dark and narrow that in them midday was as twilight. A labyrinth of paths and cartways ran hither and yon, many overgrown to the merest trace, others showing still scant signs of use by the hill folk, squatters whose cabins clung here and there to a hillside or sent blue thready smoke up from some darkling hollow.

Once all the region had been alive with noise of axes cutting timber for the charcoal pit, ring and rattle of chain, hoof, wheel, shouts from hill to hill, singing and laughter of oremen working at the breasts in full daylight. The old folk remembered it well. They had told the younger ones over and over of the good old times when work and money were plenty, when iron, king of metals, went out and came back silver and gold. What wonder if the remnant who clung still to the tract, getting a bare subsistence as best they might, sighed for the good times gone, the friends who went with them, or that their sons, trained in penury's hard school, were easily stirred to anger against the man who, they were told, stood needlessly betwixt them and the return of that golden age?

No such thought, such knowledge, came to Dare as she rode through the sylvan maze with the tall handsome stranger close at her bridle rein. All the party were on horseback, and as soon as they were well within the hills Hawkins and Cleve had fallen to disputing as to which was the better, more picturesque route to the old forge, the day's appointed rendezvous. Both had recently spent days there in exploration, and each contended stoutly for the way of his choice. Dare herself had settled the matter by saying, with a delicious smile:

"There is nothing for it but to divide and conquer both routes. Aunt Mel, we will go with Mr. Cleve. Mr. Hawkins can take Mr. Holtham and Patsey and the dinner, and we will see who gets there first and easiest."

"Just what I was about to propose," Cleve said, with a quick flash of the eye. Mrs. Townley demurred.

"I'm afraid to risk it," she said, shaking her head. "This is a fearful place to get lost in. You might wander for days on one hill of these coalings and never find your way out. I am sure Mr. Cleve thinks he knows the way perfectly, but I had rather trust Mr. Hawkins."

"Well, I had not," Dare said willfully. "Come, Patsey. We will follow him. Aunt Mel, if we hear you crying in the wilderness, we will come and find you."

"That we will," Cleve said triumphantly, touching his hat to the others and turning the horses' heads into a track running almost at right angles to that they had been following. A little way farther it climbed a sharp hill, which Patsey's mule utterly refused to breast, though he showed by turning completely around that he was willing enough to rejoin the other party.

[CONTINUED.]

Equal Suffrage Stationery.

Mrs. Rachel Foster Avery has prepared equal suffrage paper and envelopes, with the heading, "Governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed," and a sunflower surrounding the figures "1848," the date of the first local woman suffrage convention ever held. The design is in blue. In accordance with the vote passed at the recent Washington convention, this paper will be sold for the benefit of the N. A. W. S. A. A box containing 24 sheets and envelopes will be sent postpaid for 30 cents. It may be ordered from Mrs. Avery at the headquarters, 1341 Arch street, Philadelphia.

Bright Colored Gloves In Vogue.

The Marie Antoinette blue glove is a novelty. It is made of fine suede, and in that peculiar shade of blue which has been so popular throughout the winter. A bright terra cotta glove is another novelty shown for early spring wear. All the shades of tan, from a pale fawn to a delicate brown, are the vogue for this season of the year. A new shade of tan is known as Smyrna, and promises to be much worn with the spring tailor made gown. Fashionable women are wearing both glace kid and suede gloves. One is quite as popular as the other.

RUSSIAN PEASANTS.

SHIFTLESSNESS AND IMPROVIDENCE OF QUONDAM SERFS.

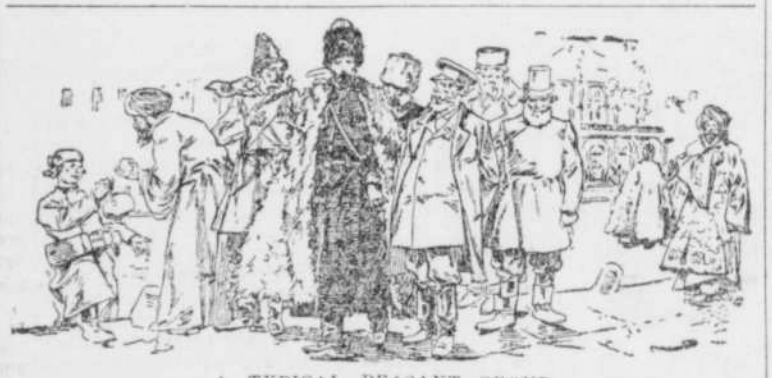
The Kind of People Who Trampled Each Other to Death at the Coronation Feast—Numbers and Variety of the Nationalities in the Empire.

Subjects of the Czar.

The awful panic in which over 2,000 persons lost their lives on the Hodynsky Plain, just outside the walls of Moscow, did not seem to mar the festivities of the coronation, for, although the Czar and Czarina went through the form of visiting the hospitals and speaking to those who, though maimed, were fortunate enough to escape death, the dancing and rejoicings went on according to the program already arranged, and the ghastly incident seemed to make little impression on the court circle. Those who perished in the terrible rush for the food provided

ESQUIMAUX IN RUSSIA.

by the beneficence of the Czar were only peasants, and that the death of a few hundreds or even a few thousands of peasants should be permitted to interfere with the general joyousness of the occasion when a young Czar is crowned was not to be thought of for a moment, so the merry-making and the funerals progressed at the same time, and while the strains of the waltz floated out from the windows of the Kremlin palaces, the wails of widows and orphans went up from the plain outside, where the dead were being buried in great trenches, with scarcely more formality than would be shown in the case of so many cattle.



A TYPICAL PEASANT GROUP.

Showing, as it does, the little esteem in which the mass of Russian population is held by the court and better classes, the incident is painfully suggestive, for it indicates that between the rulers and the ruled in that vast empire there is a great gulf fixed that hardly can be bridged even by the wings of human sympathy. For Russia is but a compulsory aggregation of

A PEASANT DINNER.

conquered provinces, held together by the iron hand of despotism, the 120,000,000 human units which make up the population being regarded only as so many items of wealth or so much material for the merciless conscription when the Czar needs soldiers to fight his battles.

In such a miscellaneous and heterogeneous mass of peoples as make up the empire it is impossible that there should be any cohesion. No State on the earth, not even the British, contains so varied a collection of nationalities as the Russian Empire. Over 100 nations, speaking nearly as many languages and dialects, acknowledge the authority of the Czar, and so wide is the dominion of this potentate that he governs alike sealskin-clad Esquimaux of the polar circle and half-naked savages on the torrid plains to the east of the Caspian, where the heat of the sun, reflected from burning sands, renders life almost unendurable.

Between these extremes are crowded Russians, Poles, Lithuanians, Finns, Lapps, Germans from the Baltic provinces of Germany, Poles, Hungarians, Serbs, Slavs, Cossacks of a dozen tribes, Tchuds, Vots, Livs, Esths, Tartars, Nogais, Meshtcherjaks, Bashkirs, Kirghiz, Yakuts, Buriats, Tunguslans, Ainos, Chinese, Calmucks, Samoyeds, Ostiaks, Uzbacks, Turcomans, Tajiks, Circassians, Georgians, Lesghians, Grusians, Persians, Armenians, Turks, Jews, Greeks, besides scores of others, whose names are even less known than these. Some of these tribes comprise only a few hundred thousand of the population, but, on the other hand, several number millions, and annually send thousands of soldiers into the armies of the Czar. So far as Europe is concerned, however, the great bulk of the population is Russian, and it is probable that most of the unfortunates who were trampled to death at the coronation feast were of that nationality and of the lowest and poorest classes of the peasantry. Attracted by the unusual occasion and by the prodigality, barbarian in its profusion, with which the populace are always entertained at such an event, they came by hundreds of thousands, an undisciplined, half-starved rabble, and when the signal was given to approach the tables prepared, there was a rush like that of a stampeded herd of cattle and wholesale death was the natural result.

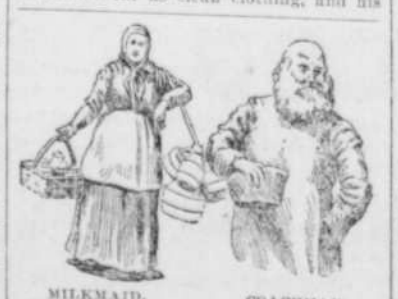
The wretched peasants who trod one another into the earth to get a meal were the product of ages of iron oppression. Historians paint graphic pictures of the condition of the commons, the farmers, farm laborers and country people generally in the days when all Europe was owned by kings and barons, and when the tillers of the soil were bought and sold with the estates on which they lived, but we do not need to go back five centuries to witness such a state of affairs, for it exists in Russia to-day. In the land of the Czar, the Middle Ages and their ideas still prevail; Russia has not yet emerged from the darkness of the feudal system. It is true that the Emperor Alexander issued a decree abolishing serfdom, and thereby technically emancipated over 20,000,000 serfs, but emancipation, to men unprepared to take advantage of it, is a mockery, and to the present day the great masses of Russian peasantry are free only in name. They may not be sold with the estates, but without means to move elsewhere, without the knowledge that they can better their condition by moving, and under the belief that they would be brought back if they did go, the name of freedom becomes a hollow delusion. In fact, though they have the name, it is all in reality that they do have, and to all intents and purposes they are just as much in slavery now as before the Czar's decree.

The bulk of Russian laborers are agricultural, and in this vast empire agriculture is carried on in a fashion only less primitive than in Palestine or Egypt. In our patent office may be seen over 10,000 models of plows; in Russia there is but one, and that one a clumsy affair which, from time immemorial, has been in use among the peasantry, nor can they be persuaded to change it for a better, for of all human beings the Russian peasant is the most conservative. He is now what his fathers were 300 years ago; wears the same kind of clothing they wore, keeps himself warm in winter and roasts in summer under the same kind of sheepskin cloak that was in common use all over Europe in the days of the Empress Anna, and cannot be induced to make a change, for what was good enough for his father is good enough for him.

In the country districts a sort of commune system, apparently contrived with extreme ingenuity to keep the people poor, is in vogue almost everywhere. The farmers live in a village, having a sort of local self-government, which every year or two partitions out the fields among the population, making a reassignment so frequently that no farmer feels any particular interest in the permanent improvement of the ground allotted to him, for he knows that in a year or two he will be given another field, and that the rewards of his improvements, should he make any, will be reaped by another. The result is, no one improves the ground to which he is assigned; each strives to get from it all he can during the season he holds it, and to put on it as little labor and expense as possible. All the agricultural community of Russia thus, after a fashion, lives from hand to mouth, no one feeling called on to make any especial exertion, for when a man grows old the community is bound to take care of him, and one of the strongest incentives to providence and self-denying exertion is taken away.

This system alone would be enough to account for the general poverty and misery of the peasantry in the Russian Empire, but there are others quite as potent. The people are grossly ignorant and superstitious beyond belief. There is a pretense of popular education, it is true, but to the peasant farmers it is only a pretense, for not one in ten can read a line. The clergy of the Greek Church, always passively and frequently actively, oppose efforts at advancement, and the result is that schools, when they exist at all, are devoted rather to the devotional than to the intellectual training of the young and thus the ignorance is perpetuated.

The home life of the Russian peasant is exceedingly rude and primitive. In the country districts log houses, greatly resembling those once in use in the early days of this country, are very common, while in regions where stone is more easily obtained than lumber, the houses are of that material. The lower class Russian is not noted for his cleanliness, and, though he may take a vapor bath every Saturday night, his company is not always rendered the more agreeable, in virtue of that fact, the rest of the week, for his ideas of cleanliness do not always extend as far as clean clothing, and his



MILKMAID. COACHMAN.

sheepskin jacket and cloak frequently swarm with vermin. Long beards and hair are the rule rather than the exception, despite the efforts of Peter the Great to abolish both, and these capillary attractions are usually so unkempt and uncared for as to detract greatly from the personal appearance of the wearer. The home is no more attractive than its owner. Two or three miserably dark rooms, often shared with domestic animals, a big brick stove on one side, which, in very cold weather, serves as the bed of all the inmates of the house, a bench, a table, a few crude cooking utensils and a sacred picture in the corner, constitute the furnishings and furniture, while pork, milk, cheese and black bread, so coarse and [illegible] smelling as often to be repulsive, [illegible] the leading articles of diet. Poor and [illegible] sufficient as his food may be, however, every Russian peasant considers himself fully compensated if, on the frequent [illegible] days, he has the means of getting an adequate supply of vodki, and of all the [illegible] drinks that ever went down the human throat, this is probably the vilest. Imagine the worst possible brand of whiskey mingled with the stalest beer ever drunk by a bum from a three-day-old beer keg, tinctured with asafoetida, tobacco juice, a little essence of "jimson weed," a dash of wormwood and gall and a taste of liquid fire, and there is vodki. Only a Russian throat can stand it, and even a Russian throat can endure it only on holiday occasions. The Russians do not drink as incidental to occasions of sociability. The Englishman, Frenchman, German and American may get drunk, but is generally because they are with friends and, flushed with social emotion and conversation, transcend the limits of prudent drinking. The Russian gets drunk with premeditation and malice aforethought; deliberately goes to a shop where his favorite tipple is sold, pays his money and in a moment swallows enough to make a beast of him for twenty-four hours, and even longer, for it is a peculiarity of vodki that it can make a man drunker for a longer time and for less money than any other drink known to the tippler. It is even said in Russia that after a vodki drunk has apparently run its course and gone the way of all drunks, the subject may revive it by going and lying in the sun, and in a quarter of an hour will be as drunk as ever. So the student of Russian political economics must take into account, not only the number of holidays, but also the number of days during the holidays, for working the day after a vodki drunk is an impossibility, and thus is the effectiveness of the Russian laborer still further reduced. If he can make enough to support his family he can get drunk, too, so much the better, if not the family goes hungry, for to the Russian peasant a holiday without vodki is but a barren ideality.

Such are the ignorant, shiftless, improvident people who crowded the neighborhood of the ancient capital in anticipation of a free feast from the hand of the Czar. That they trampled each other to death around the tables, that they were drowned in a sea of beer provided for their use, is not to be wondered at, for a herd of cattle would act quite as intelligently as the degraded creatures who starved themselves for a whole day that they might be better prepared to profit by the Czar's generosity. The future of this vast mass of ignorance may well be viewed with apprehension. The Russian peasants do not now know their strength, just as the equally ignorant and down-trodden French peasantry a century ago were ignorant of their power, but when they discover it, as some day they surely will, the aristocracy of Russia may fare as badly as did the nobility that crowded the gay court of Louis XVI. The day of reckoning may be distant, for national movements are generally slow, but, on the other hand, the world moves faster and goes further in a decade than it formerly did in a century, so there may be men living who will see the social earthquake that will come when the Russian peasants discover their wrongs and rise to take vengeance on their oppressors.

Most Unexpected.

Wonderful things happen in the world, and many other things, possibly more wonderful still, are said to happen. Thus the New York Tribune reports that a company of American travelers were telling stories in the smoking-room of a steamer. One thing led to another, till a member of the party capped the climax by narrating an adventure that once befell him in Germany.

"There is in Hanover, as some of you know," he began, "a beautiful garden at Herrenhausen, on which the kings of Hanover, when there were kings of Hanover, lavished much attention. Some years ago I visited Herrenhausen with my wife and children, and some persons whose acquaintance we had made on the steamer. It was a beautiful day in summer, and we all felt in the highest spirits.

"It happened that at the hotel some one had told me of the statue of a former margravine of Hanover, which was soon to be unveiled in Herrenhausen. It was to stand in a shell-shaped structure, the whole of which was boarded over at that time.

"When our party reached this shelter like affair, I began to tell what I knew there for, who the margravine was and so on, pretending a vast knowledge of the whole business. One of my children then wanted to know if we could not see the statue. In a joking way I said certainly, and going up to the gate of the shed, drew a bunch of keys from my pocket.

"I made as if I were going to open the lock, and actually put a key into it, taking the first that came to hand. I turned the key to carry out the joke, and was astonished beyond measure to find the lock yield and the door open.

"My little daughter clapped her hands and exclaimed, 'Oh, papa's opened the door!' and rushed in to see the statue. The others followed, while I for a moment was too dazed to say a word. I began to feel more or less alarmed. I had heard a great deal about the severeness of German enforcement of law and knew that technically I had committed burglary.

"The question also arose in my mind whether I could not be haled up for lese-majesty and sent to prison for six months. At the same time it would have been embarrassing and humiliating to confess to my children that I had made a mistake, and had no right in there.

"The statue was covered with cloth and so I managed to hustle the party out of the shed after a short time. One of the laborers chanced to pass, and he was evidently surprised to see me there. He must have taken me for the sculptor or something of the kind, and did not summon a policeman.

"I was in the greatest trepidation until I relocked the door and finally got away with my family and friends. There were probably a million chances to one that my key wouldn't fit the particular lock, but I haven't liked to be too practical in my jokes since that time."