

By Order of the Czar

A Story of Russian Power

By MARCUS EASTLAKE

CHAPTER I.

It is a patch of sunlight—a tiny patch, no larger than the palm of my hand. I dreamily follow the bar of glimmering light upward, until my eyes are arrested by the grated window of a prison.

In an instant I have sprung from my low pallet, where—God is pitiful!—I have been sleeping away the last few hours of my mortal existence. I stand here on my prison floor, in full possession of all my faculties, feeling the warm, swift blood coursing in my veins.

I fall to pacing the narrow limits of my cell with rapid strides. A burning impatience of inaction is consuming me—a pressing desire to be doing something to bridge over the minutes which must elapse before the moment arrives when I shall stride to the scaffold, with dauntless mien, to meet my doom. My acute sense of hearing detects the clink of the trap in my door. A pair of eyes are looking at me out of a brown, bearded face. I smile and nod affably.

"Good morning, Vladimir Alexandrovitch. I am glad to see you in good spirits," says my official.

"And I thank you for your good wishes, my friend," I reply. "But my breakfast? I tell you, I have a fierce hunger upon me. Remember it will be the last time I shall have the pleasure of gratifying my keen appetite, until I take my first meal of nectar and ambrosia, and they might chance to keep me long waiting for it on the other side."

My official laughs. "Keep your mind easy, your breakfast comes; and look you," lowering his voice, "just because I love a brave spirit, little brother, I will deprive myself of some caviar I have in reserve for my own relish."

"Thanks, my Christian friend!" I cry, reaching my hand toward him through the trap. "May you never die hungry. One minute. Tell me, if you know—if you have seen him—the lad—keeps he a good heart?"

My voice shakes in my eagerness, whilst I rifle my pockets for my last five-rouble note. "Take it, it is all I have, or I would give you more. How bears he himself? He is but nineteen?"

"I saw him even now," replies the man, as he seizes the note. "He does badly. He eats not, and his strength has left him. He lies on his bed and moves not."

At these words the sweat starts to my brow, and the water to my eyes.

"Friend, good friend," I whisper hoarsely, "see him again! Tell him that Vladimir Alexandrovitch bids him be brave! Tell him to eat—he must eat ere he go forth!"

"Listen, I will take your message, just because you are a brave one, and I like you."

"I embrace thee, my brother!" I murmur fervently, and he hurries away.

I am alone again, and continue my walk; but now my mind is troubled with a vision of the fair-faced boy stretched on his pallet, and anon I seem to see his writhing body on the gallows. I shudder and another groan that rises to my lips, and turn to seek comfort in the reflection that it will soon be over for him. "He is sure to faint. God grant it!"

Approaching steps in the corridor. My door is unlocked, thrown open, and here is my breakfast and the caviar. When the official enters I wear a smiling face again, for I have a character to sustain. No man should have it to say that he saw a cloud on the brow of Vladimir Alexandrovitch Lubanoff on the morning of his execution. The official is watching me curiously.

"How long now before the play begins, my friend?" I ask between the bites.

It gratifies me to note how he flushes red, and stares at me a space, as if taken aback, before he stammers, "Twenty minutes, Excellency."

I laugh. The notion of an official thrusting a title on a prisoner amuses me. After another prolonged stare he leaves me.

Twenty minutes! Half an hour hence I shall be a lump of cold, senseless clay. And that mysterious actuating essence we call soul, what of it? What will become of it, forced from the tenement wherein it has, for twenty-seven years, ruled supreme? Will it, too, be extinguished like a torch that is stamped out under the foot of man? Away vain speculations. Let me rather, in these my last moments, snuff up the good that has been mine. I have tasted as much happiness as this world can offer, and I leave it ere it begins to pall. I have known the rare blessing of true friendship.

"My spirit flies out to meet thee, O my friend, and clasp thee in a farewell embrace!" I have—I still rejoice in the beauty and perfect excellence of woman's pure and entire love!

"Ah, my Maruscha, thou art my only regret. Could I but take thee with me, my dove! My better soul! For I know that without me thy life henceforth will be but a joyless groping through a valley where there is no sin."

I am surprised by a tear on my cheek, and dash it hastily away. Boom! It is the quarter bell sounding from the fortress clock. I close my eyes, and gradually a feeling of peace descends on me. Now I can pray. My hands meet and interlace.

"Spirit of perfect God, forgive me my sins. Fortify me and my comrades in our last agony. Let the evil we have done perish with our bodies, and the good return to dwell eternally with Thee!"

I hear the tramp of soldiery approaching, and raise my head.

"Maruscha, thou shalt not blush for me!" I whisper, and I feel that it is a radiant face I show them as they enter. I advance to meet my executioner, place my arms in position and silently submit to be pinioned. Not a word is spoken, and in a minute we are ready, and passing in file along the corridor to join the others in the hall of the prison.

I cast a swift glance from face to face of my fellow martyrs, which is answered by a flash of recognition and greeting from all save one, and that is poor Vasil. He is a sorry spectacle; his blue eyes roll vaguely, without speculation; his ashen lips hang apart. A gendarme is supporting him.

We are side by side. "Vasil!" I whisper. He starts as if from some awful dream. Our eyes meet. He gives a great gasp, sets his lips tightly, and pulls himself together, and I am suddenly wheeled round and placed in the front.

Then our last walk begins—through the court, out of the gates into the great open space, where straight in front rises the long platform, and on it the gallows!

Sudden as a flash, a shock of horror seizes me. Only now, with my terrible doom before my seeing eyes, do I fully realize it. To be hanged by the neck! Merciful God, stand by me! But as sudden my soul cries to my shrinking body. "What! Art going to fall now?" and I check the shudder that is already holding me, draw up my body to its full height and march steadily forward.

The steps to the platform creak beneath my heavy tread. I stand high above the heads of the people, and overlook them. Their thousand upturned faces are like the white waves of a troubled ocean. Which is Maruscha's? My eager glances skim the multitude in search of it.

It is there! Quite near me. I could almost kiss it by bending far forward. It is white. Ah! how white! but firm. The eyes are full of tenderness; they are melting with love unspeakable, but they are strong! Our hearts meet and mingle for one brief moment, then I tear mine away. I have a word to say before I die. I step forward to the edge of the platform and cry:

"Brothers, I repent not! I die joyfully for the cause of liberty."

The multitude stir and murmur like a forest of trees swayed by the wind. The drums roll out in deafening wail. Already the executioner's hands are upon me. I cast one last look around on Maruscha, and up at the sky.

Something is pulled over my eyes. I am hastily placed in position beneath the touch of the loose rope on my neck. A stupendous shock as if a crashing blow—a noise as of many rushing waters in my ears—a feeling as if my head was bursting asunder—before my eyes a million whirling pinpoints, whilst I plunge madly for a footing. Yet I do not die! I seem to suffer an eternity of agony before it gives place to stupefaction, and I pass away.

CHAPTER II.

Faintly, fearfully my spirit is fluttering in and out of the deserted house from whence it has been driven, uncertain to go or stay, giving me the faintest hint of my identity, to leave me again in darkness, yet returning each time with greater confidence, until it finally stays to feebly spread itself from heart to brain, and I realize that I am I.

I try to move, though it costs me an effort. My body feels as if swollen to an enormous size. I am oppressed for space. I strive to make elbow room. What is this? I stretch out my stiffened arms, and come in contact with my coffin! From all my pores the cold sweat is bursting. My brain is on fire as recollection rushes upon me—the gallows, my death agony, and the appalling conviction that I have been cut down too soon and buried alive!

In my wild anguish I fight out madly with both hands; but, strange, I fight the air! There is no lid, then, to my coffin! I writhe myself into a sitting posture, and there dawns for me a glimmer of hope. Cautiously I begin to feel about me, growing every moment more mystified, for my hand comes in contact with a wooden surface, on which the coffin evidently stands. Though I am in my coffin, I certainly am not in my grave!

A ray of light shoots suddenly from behind me across the gloom, revealing one side of the rough deal shell in which I sit, a strip of the table on which it rests, and facing me a door. I follow with my tortured eyeballs the beam, and see that it is the moon shining through a small window. There is a door and a window, then, in my mysterious abiding place! The hope leaps instantly into vigorous being, and with it the determination to escape. I feel strongly about the second life of mine, that it is a divine gift direct from the hands of God. To have to yield it up now would be to die ten thousand deaths. My other life I risked on a forlorn hope, and lost. There was justice in it. I knew the penalty, and had counted the cost. I suffered death in its most degrading, most awful form, and have therefore paid in full. I have satisfied the law, therefore this life I hold in all my own, and to the last drop of blood I will protect and defend it.

I am in some outhouse adjoining either a dissecting room or the residence of some doctor who has purchased my body for dissection. There are two means of exit, a door and a window. The former will be certainly locked. The window—I turn toward it—is a casement. Alas, for my broad shoulders; it is small!

However, it is my one chance. I must try it. As we are in summer when the nights are short, it must be the dead hour. I have no time to lose. I scramble out of the coffin. I drop my stiffened legs to the floor.

I feel like a drunken man—I make the half circuit of the table, reach the window, and seek with my shaking fingers for button or hasp, and there is a rush of cool night air on my brow. It revives me somewhat, and now for it! I set my teeth, and raise myself with my hands by the frons, thrusting out my head and part of my shoulders. Then I pause to gather up my forces. Something taps my crown, making my heart leap to my mouth. It is only the swaying lough of a tree! Another violent effort and my shoulders stick fast!

And now commences a fearful struggle. It is almost as bad as hanging—the sensations are certainly similar—eyeballs starting, skull bursting, and legs plunging aimlessly, until a frantic kick backward brings my foot unexpectedly in contact with the edge of the table, and—I get a purchase.

I strain every sinew. There is a crackling and crunching which I imagine to be my shoulder blade, and I am precipitated forward, carrying the window frame, with a crash to the ground, where I lie, cut, bruised and panting.

There is no sound save the wind rustling with the trees and bushes that enclose me. No! what is that? It is the faint music of trickling water! My very soul longs for it! My swollen and parched tongue makes a futile effort to lick my lips.

At length, putting out my shaking hand, I feel the ground moist. Another movement, and yet another, and I come in contact with a cool iron tank! Still one desperate effort, and I have dragged myself up by its edge. My fingers are in water, my lips touch it!

I take—ah, what a draught; and sink to the ground again, whilst tears I cannot check rush to my eyes—a perfect torrent of unspeakable relief. I scramble to my feet. That drink has wonderfully revived me. And a moment I pause to lave my temples in the water before starting on my hazardous venture.

To get out from amongst the trees and ascertain my whereabouts must be my first step; so I commence to feel my way along the wall until I turn the corner of my recent prison, and at length emerge under the open sky, on what appears to be a gravel drive. I can dimly discern the outlines of things near me, and within a few feet of me the sleeping box of a watchman, which impels me to beat a hasty retreat in amongst the trees again. Now I begin moving in a slanting direction, with a view to arriving at the garden wall; and I eventually come against it; but, alas! my hopes of escape are on the wane again—it is too high to scale! Baffled, but still determined, I set my teeth, and follow the wall. Presently I come out on a path, and before me is a long, low shed, open to the front. "It is a gardener's toolshed," I surmise, and swift as light follows the thought: "Here I shall surely find something to aid me!"

I grope my way in, and just then, as if sent by a merciful Providence, the moon breaks through a cloud, and shows me a gardener's light ladder. In a moment it is dark again. But I have the ladder, and the darkness is just what I want.

It is the work of a few moments to place the ladder in position, to mount it, and drop to the other side. I lean for support against the wall, unconscious of everything save the overwhelming shock of pain in my head. It is my head—my head! If only it fell me not, I have confidence in my legs, uncertain though they be, to carry me whither I wish to go.

When I am able to open my eyes I at once recognize the locality, for I am as familiar with St. Petersburg as a school boy with the interior of his trousers' pockets. I am in the very heart of the city. This is the Nevski Prospect, and I stand outside the extensive grounds of Prof. Schleenow, one of the first surgeons we have, and second to few in the world.

"And so you have purchased the body of your old pupil for dissection, little father!" I smile grimly. "And I am a thief, for I am stealing it from you."

The light of a street lamp shines full on me. I retire quickly out of its radiation, and pause to consider my next move.

My object has been, since quitting the shady retreat of my coffin, to make for the quarters of my friend Ivan Ivanovitch Kollinsky, there to lie in hiding until I should have sufficiently regained my forces to fly the country! now, however, I must change my plans. Ivan lodges fully three versts from here; to reach him I should have to traverse many streets and run many risks, even if my strength held out. I put a hand to my ringing temples, and pass in review the different members of our section. In the urgency of the case I may not indulge preference; the nearest must be my designation. It is none other than Maruscha! Yes, to gain her lodging is my only chance, for I can gain it in twenty minutes if I am fortunate. My love lives at this end of the "Bazar" over a furrier's shop.

(To be continued.)

Largest Foot in Germany.
There is a New York barber who wears a number 12 shoe. He was a sergeant in the German army, noted for his stability. He has a brother in the old country whose foot is so big that no ready-made shoe can be found to fit him. When he needs a new pair of shoes he buys a side of leather and sends for a shoemaker, who fashions his footgear at home. His foot is the largest in all Germany, about No. 17 in size.

Alfred Capus, a Parisian playwright, says few if any real dramas are written in the United States or England.

SOME GIANT FISHES.

Four Kinds of Sharks Which Stand in the Front Rank for Size.

At the mention of giant fishes many young folk will at once think of the sharks, among which, indeed, are found the largest existing fishes. Of the numerous kinds of sharks noteworthy on account of their size there are four in the front rank; these are the sleeper shark, the man-eater shark, the basking shark and the whale shark.

The sleeper shark, whose scientific name (*Somniosus microcephalus*), meaning sleepy small-headed fish fits it so admirably, appears to have developed its body at the expense of its brain, for it is a sluggish, stupid glutton, about six times as long as the average man. Its home is in the Arctic regions, but it sometimes makes visits as far south as Massachusetts, Oregon and the British Isles. It is usually seen lying quietly at the surface, apparently dozing, and is easily approached by vessels; but sometimes, when hungry, it rouses itself and goes in search of its prey, severely attacking and injuring whales, apparently unconscious of the great difference in their respective sizes.

One of the largest, and perhaps the most formidable, of sharks is the "man-eater," or great blue shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*). It roams through all temperate and tropical seas, and is everywhere dreaded. Its maximum length is forty feet and its teeth are three inches long. While there are few authentic records of sharks attacking human beings, there have undoubtedly been many cases of sharks simply swallowing people who have fallen overboard, just as they would swallow any other food. How easy it would be for a man-eater to devour a person may be judged from the finding of a whole hundred-pound sea lion in the stomach of a thirty-foot shark on the California coast. A certain man-eater, thirty-six and a half feet long, had jaws twenty inches wide inside and teeth two and a half inches long.

The basking shark, known also as the elephant shark and bone-shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) is an inhabitant of the polar seas, but is occasionally observed as far south as Virginia and California, and some years ago was not rare on the English and New England coasts. It reaches a maximum length of fifty feet, and is exceeded in size by only three or four animals now alive. Provided with small teeth, it feeds on fishes and floating crustaceans, and is not of a ferocious disposition. It is dangerous only because of its great bulk, and when attacked its powerful tail easily demolishes small boats. The basking shark was formerly hunted on the coasts of Norway and Iceland for its oil. It was also sought on the shores of Massachusetts in the early part of the last century, and many of these sharks from twenty-five to thirty-eight feet long were recorded. The liver of a large specimen sometimes yielded twelve barrels of oil.

The largest of all fishes, the largest of all cold-blooded animals, and the largest of all existing whales, is the whale shark (*Rhincodon typicus*), originally discovered at the Cape of Good Hope, but now known in Japan, India, South America, Panama, California and elsewhere, a specimen having recently been obtained in Florida. This shark is said to attain a length of seventy feet, and is known to exceed fifty feet.—St. Nicholas.

A THREAT AND A PROMISE.



"Sary," said the bashful youth at the corn husking, "if I find a red ear I'm a-going to steal a kiss."

"Hezekiah," responded the candid Sarah, "if you steal a kiss you'll have two red ears."—Chicago Tribune.

A Poor Provider.

"I appreciate your feeling for me," assured the anemic poetess with deep emotion to the young man bidding her good-night at her door, "but I can never return your sentiments. I am married to 'Immortal Verse.'"

"He doesn't seem to be making much of a living for you," returned her admirer, who clerked in the corner grocery and knew; "you'd better get a divorce from him and come on with me, Imabella."—New Orleans Picayune.

Her Vocation.

He—You say that she is a business woman, this friend of yours. What business is she interested in?
"Everybody's."—Detroit Free Press.



Another club woman, Mrs. Haule, of Edgerton, Wis., tells how she was cured of irregularities and uterine trouble, terrible pains and backache, by the use of Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM:—A while ago my health began to fail because of female troubles. The doctor did not help me. I remembered that my mother had used Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound on many occasions for irregularities and uterine troubles, and I felt sure that it could not harm me at any rate to give it a trial.

"I was certainly glad to find that within a week I felt much better, the terrible pains in the back and side were beginning to cease, and at the time of menstruation I did not have nearly as serious a time as heretofore, so I continued its use for two months, and at the end of that time I was like a new woman. I really have never felt better in my life, have not had a sick headache since, and weigh 29 pounds more than I ever did, so I unhesitatingly recommend your medicine."—MRS. MAY HAULE, Edgerton, Wis., Pres. Household Economics Club.—\$3.000 profit if original of above letter proving genuineness cannot be produced.

A Queer Marriage Ceremony.

Among the Kherrias of India the marriage ceremony is very funny. Taking a small portion of the hair of the bride and groom in turn from the center of the forehead, the priest draws it down on to the bridge of the nose. Then, pouring oil on the head, he watches it carefully as it trickles down the portion of hair. If the oil runs straight on to the tip of their nose their future will be fortunate, but if it spreads over the forehead or trickles off on either side of the nose, bad luck is sure to follow. Their fortunes told, generally to their own satisfaction, the essential and irrevocable part of the ceremony takes place. Standing up side by side, but with faces strictly averted, the bride and groom mark each other's forehead with with "sindur" (vermillion).

Wanted a Pleasant Expression.

Mr. Grumps—Good morning. Do you take pictures by the instantaneous process?

Photographer—Yes, sir.
Mr. Grumps—Well, this is Mrs. Grumps, my wife, you know. I want her picture taken.

Photographer—Certainly. But are you particular about having it instantaneous?
Mr. Grumps—Of course. When you get things ready, tell her to look pleasant, and then snap off the machine before the expression fades away. You've gotter be quicker'n lightning.

Music, Heavenly Maid.

Hostess—Won't you play something for us, Miss Keynote?

Gifted Amateur—Certainly. If it is your desire. What would you prefer?

Hostess—Oh, anything, only so it isn't loud enough to interfere with the conversation.

Wooded an' Married and A'.

Mrs. Gadd—Oh, have you heard the news? Miss De Ledger and her father's bookkeeper were secretly married six months ago.

Mrs. Gabb—Dearie me! How did it look out?

Mrs. Gadd—Some one overheard them quarreling.

How It Happened.

Washington, Sr.—What, you young rascal, do you mean to stand up there and say that you cut that cherry tree!

Washington, Jr.—Yes, dad, I didn't mean to tell the truth, but you didn't give me time to hatch out a suitable yarn.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who has been a member of the British House of Commons more than forty years, will leave public life and may be offered a peerage.

Around the World

"I have used your Fish Brand Stickers for years in the Hawaiian Islands and found them the only article that suited. I am now in this country (Africa) and think a great deal of your costs."
(NAME ON APPLICATION)

The world-wide reputation of Tower's Water-proof Oiled Clothing assures the buyer of the positive worth of all garments bearing this sign of the Fish.



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