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(Continued.)

he sprang to the ground, and in three leaps reached the luckless officer's side. Grasping him under the arms, he pulled with all his might, once, twice, and as the portly form yielded, he sprang back with his burly hands under the very hoofs of the snorting horses and sank down on the trampled snow. The heavy cannon passed within an inch of his feet, and then, with a sickening crunch, the wheels rolled over the fallen steed. Eager hands lifted them to their feet, and a shouting mob surged around on all sides.

The officer, who was apparently uninjured, tore loose from the Cossacks, who were brushing his uniform, and seizing Maurice in his arms implanted a kiss fairly upon his lips, talking roughly all the while in Russian. He was a noble-looking man, with a light wavy beard and moustache. "I can't speak Russian," Maurice finally stammered, in despair. "Ha!" cried the officer, joyously. "You are English. I speak your language, too. That was a noble deed. These base cowards here were too ashamed to move. To whom do I owe my life?" And he thrust a card into Maurice's hands.

At that moment a bareheaded man, wearing the garb of one of the palace servants, pushed forward and momentarily attracted the officer's attention. On the same instant a pair of strong arms were thrown about Maurice, and he was forcibly dragged through the crowd and lifted into the sleigh. Ivan Tambor—for it was he—shouted to the driver, and before Maurice could recover breath to speak the sleigh had passed out of the square, and the horses were galloping swiftly through the crowded street.

"What did you do that for?" he exclaimed, indignantly. Ivan Tambor stared him full in the eyes, with an expression on his face that made Maurice shiver.

"It was necessary," he said, briefly. "We should have been arrested. Private sleighs are not allowed in the square during a review."

"I don't believe what he says," whispered Phil, when the Russian's back was turned. "I mistrust that man, Maurice. You should have seen how savage he looked when you dragged that officer out of danger. I wonder who he was?"

"I have his card," whispered Maurice, "but I don't intend to risk taking it out here. Ivan don't know I have it."

Little did Maurice imagine when he acted on that resolve what an important bearing that deed was destined to have upon future events.

The short winter day was nearly over when they reached Vladimir Saradoff's mansion, and the dim, coppery sun was slanting on the gilded domes and spires of the imperial city.

Dinner was served in solitary state, a fitting accompaniment to the magnificence which the boys had just witnessed.

Walters attired in European full dress supplied them with curious Russian dishes, and all the while Ivan Tambor stood motionless in a corner of the room.

"His Excellency your uncle wishes you to start for Moscow at 4 o'clock in the morning," he said to Maurice when the boys had returned to the library. "Do you prefer to retire early or shall I escort you to the Italian opera?"

"I don't care anything about the opera for any part," said Maurice, "but I should like very much to see the city by night. What do you say, Phil?"

"Splendid!" rejoined his friend. Ivan shrugged his shoulders, gave an order to a servant who answered the bell, and in ten minutes the sleigh was again at the door.

They drove for miles through the dimly-lighted streets, finally passing out on the frozen Neva and speeding far down toward the gulf of Finland on the smooth crust.

As they were returning through one of the spacious streets leading into the Nevskoi Prospekt a man in fur

the features were very like those of his uncle, he felt sure. Puzzling over this and various other incidents of his brief visit, he fell asleep.

"The boys were awakened early, and after a hasty breakfast, eaten by the light of huge bronze lamps, Ivan announced that the sleigh was waiting to convey them to the station. At his request the boys handed him their passports.

He refused to accept any money for the railway tickets.

"His excellency your uncle has given me instructions," he said, quietly. "Distress yourself about nothing." St. Petersburg was silent as the grave when they drove away from Vladimir Saradoff's mansion.

As the more central parts of the city were reached some activity was noticed, and at the railway station all was hurry and excitement. "It is fourteen hours to Moscow," said Ivan. "You will want sleeping apartments. Stay here while I get the tickets."

In the brief period that he was gone Maurice found time to examine the card given him the day before by the Russian officer. He read it aloud, "Colonel Alexis Jaroslav, St. Petersburg."

"I'll put that away safely," he said to his companion. "I may meet the colonel some day after our return from Moscow."

Little did Maurice think under what circumstances he and Colonel Jaroslav would next meet.

He had barely time to replace the card in the inner pocket of his vest when Ivan came hurrying back with the tickets, and in twenty minutes they were rattling over the frozen land toward the distant city of Moscow.

The sleeping apartments were quite as comfortable as those on American railways, and the boys slept undisturbed until long past noon. Then they took their places by the window, eager to see the country they were traveling through. The landscape was flat and monotonous, relieved at long intervals by straggling villages and occasional lonely dwellings. Thus the afternoon wore on, and the short day came to an end.

Shortly after dark Ivan gave the boys their passports, which they placed in their pockets without examining. "I have had them properly stamped," he exclaimed. "Thus you will have no delay at Moscow."

"How near are we to the city?" asked Maurice. "Half an hour's ride," was the reply, and after piling the boys' baggage on a seat in front of them Ivan entered a rear car.

"It is difficult to believe that we are really approaching Moscow," said Maurice. "I feel quite reconciled already to leaving St. Petersburg."

"I've been thinking about Napoleon and the terrible retreat of his army all the afternoon," said Phil. "I wonder if any traces still remain of the great fire?"

Suddenly the train slowed up and then stopped abruptly, with little jerk.

Looking out of the window, the boys saw a stretch of trodden snow, and the feeble glow from a couple of lamp-posts shone on a little group of general officers, with white caps ornamented with crimson cockades, and half a dozen mounted Cossacks in the background, with their dull green uniforms.

"Why, this is not Moscow," exclaimed Maurice. "There are no houses in sight. Why have we stopped, and what is going on?"

The other passengers in the car, half a dozen in number, looked curiously to the window. At that instant the door was thrown open, and a grave, stern-faced man in heavy military cloak and cap strode in, followed by half a dozen gendarmes, who carried drawn swords.

These comprised a bunch of what resembled hand-bills printed in strange characters, half a dozen letters sealed and addressed, and two or three books bound in yellow paper covers, the titles of which Maurice was unable to read.

Forgetting all prudence, he sprang to his feet. "This is a mistake," he exclaimed. "Those are not our things. Send for my uncle, Vladimir Saradoff. He can explain this."

Before he could say more, two gendarmes jerked him back on his chair, a forcible manner of enjoining silence which Maurice was not slow to understand.

The officer inspected these strange objects with a grave countenance. He continued dictating to the assistants, who wrote as rapidly as their hands could travel over the paper.

It was evident that the situation had now assumed a serious phase. The boys still believed that an error had been made somewhere. Not a glimmer of the truth entered their minds. Unable to speak a word of Russian, they were in a bad plight. How could they acquaint Vladimir Saradoff with their predicament? Maurice had fairly resolved to make another effort to speak when the officer signalled to the gendarmes, and the boys were led into another apartment furnished with a ruff bed, two chairs, and a small table. The heavy door was locked, and they were alone.

"This is dreadful," exclaimed Phil, throwing himself on the bed. "I wish we had never seen Russia."

"Keep up your spirits," replied Maurice. "All will come right. My uncle will discover where we are before the night is over."

Unable to sleep, the boys discussed their strange situation for an hour or more, expecting every moment to learn that Vladimir Saradoff had arrived.

The passengers, divining only too well the cause of this interruption, withdrew in fear to their seats. The officer halted before the wondering boys.

"Passports," he demanded, sternly, and as they were handed to him he glanced them over briefly and thrust them into his pocket.

He nodded to the gendarmes behind him, who instantly seized the pile of baggage, and then he clapped Maurice and Phil on the shoulder in a manner that was unmistakable.

"What do you want?" cried Maurice, in bewilderment. "Is anything wrong with our passports? Where is Ivan? He can explain this blunder."

But Ivan was nowhere to be seen. As the boys hesitated, the officer gave an emphatic command in Russian, and instantly the gendarmes closed in on them and dragged them roughly from the car. Their baggage had already preceded them.

Reaching the ground, they had a brief view of a lonely, deserted street, two long rows of glimmering lamp-posts that dwindled to a point, and a gloomy, closed carriage, with two gendarmes mounted on the box.

The door was flung open to admit them and closed with a sharp click. They had a glimpse of the train as it moved slowly forward again, with its curious passengers swarming at the windows, and then the carriage rumbled noisily through the deserted outskirts of the city, surrounded by a cordon of mounted Cossacks.

In far-away St. Petersburg Vladimir Saradoff, with a smile on his lips, is whirling a fair partner over the waxen floors of the French Legion to the bewitching strains of the Grenadiers' band.

Thousands of versts to the eastward the heartbroken Russian exiles are sleeping their sad sleep on frozen Siberian wastes.

Russia is the land of extremes.

CHAPTER IV.  
OFF FOR SIBERIA.

A gendarme had accompanied them into the carriage, and when Maurice attempted to speak he harshly enjoined silence.

The boys felt but little alarm or uneasiness. They were familiar with the strict system of espionage that prevails in Russia, and naturally supposed that something was wrong with their passports.

That it was a very remarkable proceeding for the police to stop a train on the outskirts of Moscow never occurred to them.

Thus, in happy ignorance of their fate, worried only on Ivan's account, who they feared was ignorant of what had happened, they rode on into the city, turning in and out through dark, gloomy streets until a sombre stone building was reached, feebly lighted by a bunch of gas jets over the portal.

They were hurried across the sidewalk, through a gloomy hall, and ushered into a small apartment, where two severe-looking men were writing at tables. A couple of windows, crossed by heavy iron bars, seemed to open on the street.

In the centre of the room was a square pen, surrounded by a railing, and as the boys entered this, two gendarmes followed them in and began to search their clothing.

No part of their persons was neglected. Their handkerchiefs, pocket-books, cardcases, and watches were removed and placed on a large table, where their rattling bags were already lying.

The gendarmes retired to a bench on the other side of the room, the officials at the table ceased writing, and presently the officers who had boarded the train entered by a private door, and sat down at a large desk facing the boys.

He took their passports from his pocket, and glancing over them, spoke a few words in Russian to the two assistants, who at once began to write.

A gendarme stood by his side handing him the various articles from time to time, which he subjected to a minute examination. The money and watches were laid to one side, and then he opened the cardcases.

Maurice, who saw all that was going on, was amazed to see that they were empty. Cards, letters, and various memoranda that they had possessed were missing.

But a still greater surprise was in store for him.

The officer opened the travelling bags and turned the contents upon the desk. He placed aside the various toilet articles; clothes, brushes, collars, and other articles of apparel, until there remained before him a collection of strange objects that neither Maurice nor Phil had ever seen before.

These comprised a bunch of what resembled hand-bills printed in strange characters, half a dozen letters sealed and addressed, and two or three books bound in yellow paper covers, the titles of which Maurice was unable to read.

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the prison door was opened to admit the officer who had conducted the examination. But no such glad tidings awaited them.

The Russian seated himself on a chair and sharply surveyed his prisoners before he spoke.

"Then he drew a card from his pocket which Maurice recognized as the one given to him by the man he had saved from death."

"I speak your language," he said, in badly accented English. "I may be able to mitigate you, lot if you are sensible. This card was found in your possession. We have reason to believe that a conspiracy exists against his Highness Colonel Jaroslav. Your own case is hopeless. Any information you may give will help yourselves and will be used in secret."

The officer looked enquiringly at the boys, who were quite at a loss to know what to make of this strange speech. "I don't understand you," said Maurice. "I only know that a great mistake has been made, and with your permission I will try to explain."

The officer nodded, and straightway Maurice related everything that had happened to them from the moment they left Berlin, dwelling especially on his relationship to Vladimir Saradoff.

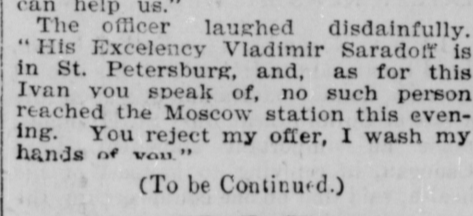
As he proceeded in his narration the Russian's face expressed a strange mixture of incredulity and anger. It was evident that he did not believe one word that Maurice was saying.

"Stop," he exclaimed, impatiently. "I have listened to enough lies. You refuse my offer. You will repent it when too late. You deny, then, that you are the Englishmen, Cummings and Burton, named in the passports; that you are the agents of the revolutionists in London; that you were bound to Moscow with the nihilistic placards and books and letters, dressed to dangerous and suspected persons. Our Government is always alert. The Minister of the Interior had accurate knowledge of your movements, and by his instruction you were arrested on the train. I should have told you nothing, but I wished to offer you this chance of benefiting yourselves."

"Send for Vladimir Saradoff!" cried Maurice, excitedly. "This is all a terrible mistake, I assure you. My uncle can help us."

The officer laughed disdainfully. "His Excellency Vladimir Saradoff is in St. Petersburg, and, as for this Ivan you speak of, no such person reached the Moscow station this evening. You reject my offer, I wash my hands of you."

(To be Continued.)



Disease weaves its web around people a little at a time. They are not dangerously ill all at once. The beginnings of illness are mere trifles. First a little indigestion, perhaps; or headaches; or an occasional bilious turn. It is hard to realize how you are being tangled up in the strands of sickness until you are fairly caught.

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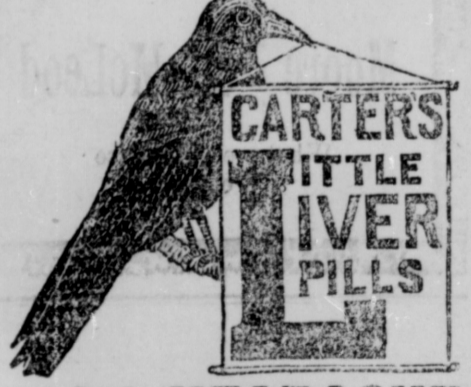


The officer halted before the wondering boys.

coat and cap emerged from the portal of a brilliantly-lighted mansion. The rays from a lamp-post close by showed Maurice a strangely-familiar face. "Is not that my uncle," he exclaimed, "that man with the heavy coat?" Ivan Tambor turned quickly in the direction Maurice indicated, but the man had already vanished in the shadows.

"His Excellency is in Moscow," he said. "There may have been a resemblance, nothing more."

Maurice was readily satisfied with this explanation, but an hour later, as he tossed sleepily on his bed, he wondered vaguely whether that could have been Vladimir Saradoff or not.



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