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(Continued.)

One slight consolation alleviated their misery. Paul Platoff journeyed at their side each day, and the strange acquaintance that began on the terrible night of the riot ripened into a deep and lasting friendship. The famous revolutionist, for such he was, possessed many traits which the boys admired. He was kind-hearted and sympathetic, and, more than all, he readily believed the tale of crime and sorrow that they poured into his willing ear. Consolation, however, could not give them. He explained the injustices and the corruption of Russian justice with a vividness that made his hearers shudder, and he showed them how utterly hopeless it would be to attack Vladimir Saradoff's entrenched position, even with abundant proofs of the dreadful crime. Of himself Platoff spoke little. He had been neither a terrorist nor an extremist, he said, but had merely laboured in behalf of social reforms.

On the flimsiest of evidence he was convicted and sentenced to Siberia for ten years. He had been educated at the Moscow University and was an educated and scholarly man. These and many other topics he discussed with the boys at every opportunity on their long march, and in this way both Maurice and Phil acquired a fluent knowledge of the Russian language that permitted them to converse freely. Platoff told them much about the mines of Kara, rules and regulations. "We are all three political prisoners," he said, "and we shall be treated as such. For some months we shall be kept in close confinement in the prison. At the expiration of that time, if we behave ourselves in accordance with the rules, we will be permitted to join the free command and live outside the prison in cabins, subject, of course, to constant police supervision."

"But how about the mines?" asked Maurice. "Will we not be compelled to work in them?" "No," replied Platoff, "only the ordinary criminals do that. Political prisoners never labour in the mines." "And when once we are allowed to join this free command and live outside the prison what are our chances of escape?" continued Maurice. Platoff shrugged his shoulders. "We won't discuss that," he said. "Many escape every year, some striking westward, others down the valley of the Amur toward the Pacific, but all are eventually recaptured, and are made to pay dearly for their brief period of liberty. Yet, if a chance offered I think I would take it. Time will tell whether I will be compelled to serve out my sentence at the mines of Kara."

"How far from the mines is the Pacific ocean?" enquired Phil. "Less than 1,000 miles," was Platoff's answer. "The Amur river leads right to Vladivostok, the Russian seaport." "And once at Vladivostok what chance of liberty would there be?" asked Maurice, eagerly. "In the harbour," said Platoff, "there are constantly English, French, German, Spanish, and American vessels—and Russian Corvettes." he added, with a grim smile. "The boys scarcely heard the last words. In imagination they saw a noble vessel riding at anchor, with the dear old Stars and Stripes waving over her deck. "March lively, now, do you hear!" cried a Cossack soldier, harshly, and with tear-dimmed eyes the boys quailed and their steps, while Platoff traded stolidly forward, buried in his own thoughts.

One thing they had overlooked. In the time that had elapsed since the riot at Irkutsk and their assault on the Czar's storehouse they had come to believe that no further punishment would be inflicted upon them. Even Platoff, who should have known better, was lulled into a false security. Everything must have an end, and so this apparently interminable sojourn in this gloomy over-assaulted Siberian wastes and frozen rivers, was finished at last, and one dreary afternoon in the month of January the mines of Kara burst upon the heartsick exiles, and presently the command to halt ran up and down the line. As the thickly falling snow little could be seen—the dim outline of gloomy houses, groups of exiles moving to and fro, and squads of armed Cossacks in all directions.

For two hours or more the newly-arrived party were kept standing in ranks until their limbs were frost-bitten and the snow was heaving on their heads and shoulders. It was dark when the little column was ordered forward again. A brief march brought them to a low, gloomy log building, and presently the prison doors were closed behind them, and the long march was ended. The gold mines of Kara are the private property of his Imperial Majesty the Czar. They consist of a series of open gold placers, located along the banks of the river Kara, a narrow and rapid mountain stream. Through this Kara valley lies a scattered chain of prisons, mines, and convict settlements. At the lower diggings centres the administration of the whole settlement. There resides the governor of the prisons, and there, in barracks, dwells a military force sufficient to quell any insurrection that may arise. Closely connected with the lower diggings lies middle Kara, where the gloomy prison of the working company force is located. There, in compact quarters, are the ordinary and vicious criminals, Maurice and his companions had been placed, though the significance of the fact did not occur to them. The interior of the convict prison was gloomy and wretched beyond description. The floor and the walls were covered with the accumulated dirt of years.

the narrow windows admitted through their dusty panes a meagre supply of light, and the atmosphere was vile and stifling. Long, slanting platforms of bare, unplanned boards served for sleeping purposes. A few benches were scattered about, but not half enough to accommodate the inmates of the prison. Inside the doorway the newly-arrived exiles, not more than 30 in number, were halted, and an officer, with a paper in his hand, called out the names one by one and checked them off as they were responded to.

The commandant of the prison, a tall, bearded officer, with a harsh face, stood by his side, closely watching the proceedings. When the last name had been called, the officer rolled up the paper and handed it to the commandant, saying: "There now, Captain Daroman, my duty is done, and I will leave these fellows under your authority. Take good care of them, and don't give them too rich food or they will all get dyspepsia."

The officer laughed at his own weak witticism, and passed out the door, which one of the Cossacks held open for him.

The weary exiles made a motion to press forward into the room, but Captain Daroman waved them back with his hand.

Then in a hoarse voice he began to speak briefly, going over the prison rules and reciting at length the severe punishment in store for anyone daring enough to break them. Maurice watched him closely and read in the lines of that cold, stern face the evidence of a pitiless and malignant disposition. Wretched indeed would existence be in that prison under the will of Captain Daroman. He ceased at last, and as he turned away Paul Platoff stepped quickly forward. "Captain Daroman," he said, respectfully, "I am a political prisoner, and so also are these two men," designating Maurice and Phil. "I should like to know why we have been brought here instead of to the political prison at the lower diggings?"

CHAPTER XVII. A DARING ACT.

Captain Daroman wheeled like a flash, an ugly expression on his face. "You mutinous dog," he shouted, "beginning already, are you? I'll make an example of you for the benefit of the others." He turned toward the soldiers, apparently on the point of giving some orders, while Platoff's face flushed crimson and his hands quivered nervously.

However, Captain Daroman suddenly changed his mind, and he turned once more to Platoff, with a grim smile hovering on his lips. "So you wish to know why you are here, do you? So this place is not good enough for you? You'll find out before you get through, let me tell you. What's your name? I can readily guess, though. You are Platoff, the revolutionist. Stand to one side there and let your two friends come forward too. Birds of a feather must flock together."

Maurice and Phil timidly advanced a few paces from the throng, and the commandant surveyed them with a lowering aspect.

"What are your names?" he asked, fiercely. Maurice hesitated. To proclaim himself under the false title by which he had been arrested would be a tacit acknowledgment of the name, while to tell the truth would undoubtedly cause serious trouble and excite Captain Daroman's wrath to its fullest extent.

At this critical moment Platoff came to the rescue. "Their names are Cunningham and Burton," he said, respectfully. "They are but little acquainted with the Russian tongue."

Maurice attempted to utter a feeble

attempt to escape would prove under the circumstances. One poor fellow had made a dash for liberty while returning from the mines at sundown, and his bullet-riddled body was brought to the prison on a plank. "Try to keep up your courage and wait," said Platoff. "That is all I can tell you. It may be that harder times are before us. Captain Daroman was summoned away the day after we arrived here. When he returns, we shall feel the change. Do you wonder now that men turn against the Czar and his Government?" "No," said Phil, with a bitter laugh. "I am surprised at nothing, Platoff, and I am getting desperate myself. Some day I shall lose all control and turn on these fiends."

Platoff looked at the lad, grimly, noting his flashing eyes, his heaving chest. "You will be shot," he said, quietly, and then to himself he added: "He's a fine fellow, with good stuff in him. We might do something after all. I'll have to look into the matter."

Platoff was right. The next day Captain Daroman returned, and the predicted change came with a vengeance. The supply of daily food was shortened, all conversation was strictly forbidden, and the wretched toilers in the mines were refused a moment's rest, with the exception of a scant ten minutes for lunch.

For a time these hardships were borne without complaint, but it soon became evident that the commandant had a special hatred against the three political prisoners, and he lost no opportunity of displaying his feelings.

One bitterly cold morning the convicts were trudging in pairs over the snow-clad plains to their daily toil. Maurice and Platoff marched in front, and close behind them was Phil, who had been transferred to their gang some time before. They had barely left the settlement and were passing along the base of a hill, part way up which stood half a dozen straggling cabins.

"Some of the free command live there," whispered Platoff, and Maurice looked with envy at the homes of the unfortunate people who were yet ten times better off than himself. Suddenly he saw, to his great surprise, a girl standing by the roadside a few yards ahead.

She was not more than 16, slender of figure and dressed in a long fur cloak and cap. Her gaze was fixed compassionately on the approaching convicts, and Maurice's heart thrilled as he met a pitying glance from her dark eyes.

(To be Continued.)

you will have no lenient task-master. I shall exact the fullest obedience. I know how to deal with fellows like you. Now go and be prepared in the morning to handle your picks in the Czar's gold mines. Captain Daroman turned haughtily away, and the crowd pressed forward, dragging Maurice and his companions with them.

Dazed by what they had just heard, they dropped mechanically on the wooden platform. It was difficult at first to realize the full import of Captain Daroman's words.

The truth dawned on them gradually, and their own fate was brought more vividly to mind by the arrival of a convict party from the mines, a haggard group of men, soaked to the skin, who entered with a clanking of chains between a file of soldiers. Toll and sleep, ever the same, without rest or change—such is life at the mines of Kara.

Platoff first fell into a paroxysm of anger, but it presently passed off, and he went calmly to sleep, an example which the boys, through sheer weariness, were forced to imitate. Maurice awoke first. A faint streak of grey was shining through the dirty window, and as he sat up rubbing his eyes a drum began to beat, and the convicts around him left their hard beds without an instant's hesitation. "Come," said Platoff, seizing Maurice by the shoulder, "daisy will insure a speedy punishment."

Phil was up by this time, and they joined the crowd, who were pressing forward toward the door. A Cossack officer stood at the entrance, book in hand, and at once proceeded with the morning verification. The men answered to their names as they were called out and then scattered through the prison.

A few moments later breakfast was served, consisting of weak tea and black rye bread, and as soon as this was over the working parties were made up for the day. Two gangs started from the prison, each surrounded by a squad of Cossacks. Maurice and Platoff were in one of these, and Phil was in the other. They marched past the few scattered log buildings that surrounded the prison, and reached the valley. "The sky was dark with clouds, and a fine snow was falling. The mining operations on the Kara river had reached a point some distance from the settlement, thus forcing on the convicts the additional misery of a long tramp through the snow each morning and evening.

The gangs consisted of 20 men each, and as soon as they reached the spot work was begun. Each party was instructed by an officer, while the Cossacks, drawing a complete cordon around the convicts, built fires to keep themselves comfortable. The gold-bearing sands along the banks of the Kara river lie buried under a stratum of clay and gravel varying in depth from 10 to 20 feet. This is dug out by picks and carted away until the red sand is exposed, and the gold is washed out by rude leucopeters. Under the watchful eyes of the overseer the men laboured unceasingly. It was a sad sight, the grim soldiers pacing through the drifting snow or grouped about the fires, the wretched toilers bending to their work with aching limbs, and in fitting harmony were the clank of chains, the creak of the wheel-barrows, and the monotonous tap of the picks. To Maurice this unaccustomed labour was especially severe. In a short time his back ached and his hands were blistered. Platoff tried to encourage him from time to time, but he was compelled more than once to stop work from exhaustion. The overseer showed some leniency toward those convicts who had just arrived from Irkutsk, and these short periods of rest were not rebuked. At mid-day a lunch of tea and bread was served, and then the labour continued without intermission until late in the afternoon.

They marched back to the prison at sunset, so weary that every step was torture. The principal meal of the day was now served, consisting of weak soup, rye bread, and a small quantity of meat, and then the convicts went to sleep in rows on the bare platforms, with their feet and hands exposed for pillows, others without pillows at all. To Maurice and Phil the first week at the mines was a period of horror, and for the first time they began to realize the unutterable misery of their situation. Platoff, with whom they were still able to converse at night, gave them no hope, and indeed they could see for

themselves now pitious an attempt to escape would prove under the circumstances. One poor fellow had made a dash for liberty while returning from the mines at sundown, and his bullet-riddled body was brought to the prison on a plank. "Try to keep up your courage and wait," said Platoff. "That is all I can tell you. It may be that harder times are before us. Captain Daroman was summoned away the day after we arrived here. When he returns, we shall feel the change. Do you wonder now that men turn against the Czar and his Government?" "No," said Phil, with a bitter laugh. "I am surprised at nothing, Platoff, and I am getting desperate myself. Some day I shall lose all control and turn on these fiends."

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When a fly accidentally gets caught in a spider's web, the spider goes calmly about the work of securing his prey. He doesn't hurry particularly. He takes his time and binds first the fly's feet, and then his wings and his entire body. That is the way with the dread enemy of mankind—consumption. It has a web—the web of trivial, neglected ailments. When a man heedlessly stumbles into that web, consumption first attacks his stomach, then his blood, then his lungs, then every organ in his body. Many doctors assert that when a man is once in this deadly web there is no escape. That is a mistake. Thousands have testified to their recovery from this disease by the use of the right remedy. Many of their letters, together with their names, addresses and photographs, appear in Dr. Pierce's Common Sense Medical Adviser. The remedy that saved them was Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It cures 95 per cent. of all cases of consumption. It cures the conditions that lead up to it. It is the great blood-maker, flesh-builder and germ-ejector. Druggists sell it.

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