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My head swam, my legs seemed to collapse; I sank into a chair. Was this to be the end of all our labor and sufferings? My dear father dead in the very hour of our victory? Oh, it was too grimly cruel of destiny. I could not believe it, I could not!

"Come, come, there is no need to despair," said the chief. "He is, likely enough, making a long recovery. They would not send him forward till he was strong enough to travel without risk—the convict guard corps are not inhuman monsters, as the foreign newspapers are so fond of describing them. Your father is probably still too weak to travel, a most fortunate circumstance, as it happens, for you will now have but a few hundreds of miles to journey, in order to be at his side, instead of as many thousands. Come, play the man, and—if you are wise—take the first train for Spask. You will probably find your father there."

"Telegraph first, if you will," I said. "I cannot stand the suspense." The chief kindly did as I requested. He sent a message to the little convict station at Spask, inquiring whether Kornilof was still detained there.

I went for a walk by the Neva's banks while the message went forward and until the reply should arrive. I could not go home and talk about it all with Percy and Borofsky. My heart was too full. I must be alone—like the wounded animal, in this, that prefers to go and hide itself in order to suffer unobserved.

I tramped the whole length of the embankment twice, and those who have seen St. Petersburg will know how far that is, before I summoned courage to call again at the chancellery to hear what news had arrived at Spask.

I saw the chief in a mist and heard his voice in a dream. "I congratulate you," he said. "I think it will all be well. Read it for yourself."

He did so. The message ran, so far as I can remember the words: "Kornilof left Spask 21st. Reported ill again Nicolaief."

He was alive, then, a week ago and able to travel. Thank heaven for that! To Nicolaief I should journey as fast as the next train could carry me. But first I must tell mother all that had happened during the last few days. I had told her nothing, waiting until I could impart to her something definite and hopeful.

Counting upon as I hastened homeward what I should have to tell her good and bad and trying to strike a balance, I found it hard to decide how she would take it, whether on the whole for good or ill. Father was practically free. His enemies were defeated all down the line. All things should be smiling, if only she could take a hopeful view of this illness.

My dear mother heard my story with closed eyes and pale face, holding my hand as I told her one by one of the steps by which we had reached success

SAVE THE BABY!

A mother will risk her own life many times over, to save her babe from the horrors of hydrophobia. There are graver perils from which a mother should protect her child. A mad dog is a rarity, but thousands of children die daily because of the seeds of disease implanted in their little bodies before birth.

A woman may insure the health of her babe if she sees to it that she is thoroughly strong and healthy in a womanly way during the period of gestation.

Pierce's Favorite Prescription cures all weakness and disease of the delicate and important organs that sustain the burden of maternity. It makes them strong, healthy, vigorous and elastic. It banishes the squeamish spells of the expectant period and makes baby's introduction to the world easy and nearly painless. It rids maternity of peril. It insures the newcomer's health and an ample supply of nourishment. It transforms sickly, nervous, fretful, despondent, childless women into healthy, happy, helpful, amiable wives and mothers. Over 90,000 women have testified to the benefits derived from this marvelous medicine. It does away with the necessity for the embarrassing examinations and local treatment upon which most physicians insist. It substitutes certainty for the doubtful treatment of obscure physicians, who seldom correctly diagnose these troubles. All medicine dealers sell it, and Dr. Pierce will cheerfully give free advice to ailing women who write him.

Scores of women who have been permanently cured of obstinate and dangerous diseases by this great medicine, have permitted their names, addresses, experiences and photographs to be printed in Dr. Pierce's Common Sense Medical Adviser. This book is free and contains 1008 pages, telling the home-treatment for most diseases. Send 3 one-cent stamps, to cover mailing and customs only, for paper covered copy. Cloth binding 50 stamps. Address Dr. R. V. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y.

and of the perils which we had passed through in safety. Then I broke gently to her the news which had so dimmed for me the glory of success. Father had been very ill at Spask for many weeks and was ill again with a relapse which might be very serious at Nicolaief. I expected my mother to burst into tears and bewail the cruel chance that seemed to dash happiness from us in the very hour of its attainment, but she did nothing of the kind. On the contrary, she embraced me and bade me godspeed in my journey eastward.

"You have done most wonderfully, my son," she said, smiling radiantly. "I thank heaven has been on our side throughout. It will still be so. You will bring father home to me safe and well. Oh, I know it, I know it, for sure!"

Mother's pluck and confidence did me a world of good, and we spoke of plans and arrangements. Percy should travel with me to Nicolaief and help nurse father, if he were still unable to come home at once. Mother suggested accompanying us herself, but this I would not hear of. She was far too weak and ill. The suspense and trials of the past months had reduced her to a shadow of her old self and her strength to pitiable weakness.

Borofsky, we agreed, might now be paid off, "and well paid, too," added mother, for his services could be measured by no ordinary standard.

"Father will know what to say to him when he comes," she said, "and how to praise you, my son, and dear Percy—my own heart is too full to say what I feel—tell him so, dear, both Percy and Borofsky."

This was the only moment at which mother cried a little, and assuredly she did not weep now for any sorrow or anxiety.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE COUNT RESTORED TO HIS HOME.

Armed with the chief's own august signature, which is the next thing in Russia to the czar's ukase itself, Percy and I took the train that night for Nicolaief, which is a little convict post not far from the town of Kostroma. The railway passes Spask, the place in which my father lay sick for the first three months of his captivity, and I shuddered as I gazed at the wretched little huts occupied by the "unfortunate," as the convicts are called by the peasantry. How he must have suffered, unused as he was to roughing it—ill, lonely, distressed, almost heartbroken probably by the utterly undeserved and mysterious turn of fortune which had landed him among such surroundings and companions.

At Spask station, too, we experienced a surprise and shock which affected us not a little.

For as we stood on the platform stretching our legs and waiting for the train to proceed a gang of chained convicts were hauled out of the wretched cattle truck provided for their accommodation and marched across the platform. Some were uproariously singing, some went with black and lowering brows, some begged of the passengers whom they passed, and who mostly gave the beggars some small coin to be expended in creature comforts en route for Siberia.

Suddenly Percy joggled my arm. "Look, Boris," he whispered. "Look in the third row, quickly."

I turned my eyes in the direction indicated, and my heart seemed to give a great bound. It was Andre. He saw me at the same moment and, silent hitherto, suddenly burst into a string of blasphemous abuse far too horrible to repeat or describe. As he passed us he spat at me. In a moment he had disappeared, still looking back and foully cursing. Bah! It is the last I ever saw of him, or, I sincerely trust, ever shall see. Then the train moved on, and in an hour or two we reached Nicolaief.

With beating hearts we found our way to the penal resting station. What had destiny in store for us here? Father alive and recovering, able to travel home with us to meet and to renewed life and happiness? We began with a shock—so terrible a shock that to this day I remember to anguish the horror of it.

It was late in the afternoon and dark when we rang up the doorkeeper. This official, a soldier, was busy over his supper and sulky. He knew none of the names of the convicts, he said; neither would he trouble any one at this hour of the day who did.

I offered the fellow a ruble. "Oh!" he said. "If I am dealing with a real gentleman, that is another thing. Step in, and I will fetch the inspector."

He locked the door behind us and, leaving us in a filthy, whitewashed passage, passed into the equally filthy recesses beyond and out of our sight. Presently a repulsive looking official

returned with him, who seemed to know our business.

We replied by showing the gradonachnik's order for the release of "convict Kornilof."

The fellow reflected. He scratched his head and his cheek. He sucked his teeth, having, like the sentry, been disturbed at his supper; then he seemed to remember.

"Oh," he said, "I recollect, yes. You are too late, my friend. We carried out four of these last week, and Kornilof was one."

"Carried out?" I murmured, my heart seeming to pause in its beating for very anguish of the thought that gripped me. "What does that mean?"

"Buried," said the fellow—"the doctor's certificate of release and permission to remain behind for the Nicolaief worms to eat, instead of proceeding to Yakutsk and Sakhalin, and so on. Good night. You will excuse me. I am at supper."

Heaven knows how I got out of the door and away. Percy was there to help me. I was dazed and but half alive and stumbled and nearly fell as I went, in spite of Percy's support.

So this was the end. He was dead. They had murdered him, after all, for it was a judicial murder and nothing better. The cup was dashed from our very lips! My poor mother! Oh, the infernal, cruel, heartless, blundering brutes!

"I shall never live another day in Russia nor allow my mother to!" I suddenly burst forth. "The brutes have murdered him!"

Percy began to soothe and console me, bidding me play the man and face trouble. I turned upon him angrily, intending to bid him be quiet and let commonplaces be. This trouble was beyond commonplace consolation, but just at this point the sentry banged the door behind him and ran through the yard after us.

"Barin," he shouted, "barin, something has occurred to me!" We waited for the fellow.

"It is true," he panted, running up to us, "that four were carried out, but one of these was taken to the town, to the hospital there, carried on his bed, sick, but not dead. The inspector is not very particular, he counts them all as dead; they generally die. If they are brought back, they are entered again as alive and sent on. It might have been this one that you are inquiring after. The hospital is down in the town. If you are anxious to know, you might ask down there."

"Man," I said, "show me the way quickly. If it is my friend, and he is alive, you shall have 25 rubles; if not, you shall still have 5—only come quickly!"

What more remains to tell? God was very merciful. Father was alive, and, though still very ill, on the way to recovery. He recognized me and was able to understand that I had come with Percy to bring him home and that all was well with mother.

Naturally this was better for my dear old father than all the medicines and tonics that the British or any other pharmacopoeia could provide him withal, and within a fortnight he was able to travel back with us by easy stages to St. Petersburg.

Oh, the joy of that day—the day of our arrival! It was a magnificent winter's morning, frost of the hardest, sunshine of the brightest, the snow all a-dazzle, as though incrustated with millions of little gems—everything combined to render father's home coming as bright and happy as it could possibly be made.

My mother did not meet us. I would not have her come. No eyes, not even my own, should witness the restoration to one another of these two. There are some things that are too holy to be seen or described, and this was one of them.

But my mother was waiting for him in her own boudoir, and, though dear old father turned at the door and signed to me enter with him, I would not. He mutely shook me by the hand and entered alone.

Well, dear friends who have accompanied me through my trials and have reached with me the goal of success and happiness, this is the point where, alas, our roads diverge!

THE END.

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