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(Continued)

When night came again it was found, as reported that the daring revolutionist had found a resting place at the bottom of the sea.

The two negligent sentries were put in irons, the gratings at the six other windows were strengthened, and the fortress settled down to its usual routine again.

Colonel Jaroslav informed the boys of the sad occurrence. Phil burst into tears, and Maurice, throwing himself on the bed, hid his face in the pillow. When the door had closed behind the colonel, he sprang up.

"Phil," he exclaimed, excitedly, "don't you believe it. Plattoff is not drowned. It can't be true. He has escaped, and we shall see him again some day. I am sure of it."

Phil was inclined to be sceptical, but Maurice remained true to his convictions and steadfastly refused to credit his friend's death.

Two days later, in custody of Colonel Jaroslav's own guard of Cossacks, the boys commenced the long 6,000 mile journey back to St. Petersburg—first by sea to the mouth of the Amur, then successively by river, carriage and rail.

On the night of the 19th of July Vladimir Saradoff was sitting at his library table, a cigar in his mouth and the Moscow Gazette on his knee. It was quite unusual to find him in St. Petersburg at this time of year, when the neighbouring mansions on the Nevski Prospekt were boarded up and their owners scattered over the Continent, but he had merely dropped in on his way to Paris from one of his northern estates and preferred the comforts of his home and the ministrations of his faithful Ivan to the gloomy solitude of the club.

If any remorse for his fearful crime lurked in his heart, he did not show it. His calm, haughty features expressed self-complacency and content plain than words would have told.

"Katkoff's paper ought to be suppressed," he muttered, tossing the Gazette over on the table. "It's tone is becoming decidedly dangerous."

"Is everything packed?" he added, turning to Ivan, who was standing motionless by his chair. "We take the Berlin express at noon to-morrow."

"All is ready," said Ivan, quietly, "except the money. I shall go to the banker's in the morning."

"Get 5,000 in large notes," said his master, "and a draft on Rothschild for the balance. Ah, a letter for me," as a servant entered with a sealed envelope in a silver salver.

Vladimir Saradoff looked carelessly at the superscription and broke the seal. He drew out a folded paper, and holding it under the lamp read the following words, hastily written in a bold, dashing hand:—

"Not unmindful of past favours, I assume the risk of requiring in some measure the debt of gratitude I owe you. A warrant has been issued for your arrest on a terrible charge. I have seen the proofs. I need say no more. Count Brosky is implacable and determined. He fears complications with the American Government, and will not spare you. The boys are now in the city. Flee at once if yet there is time. Even now it may be too late. Burn this note.

"Yours, etc.,
"VOROUZOW."

He read it through to the end, word for word, and then as the paper fluttered from his nerveless fingers he dropped heavily into the chair from which he had half risen. His lips mumbled, but no sound came, and his face was white as chalk.

Ivan, deeply alarmed by his sudden collapse, sprang to his master's side with a doctor, snatched hastily from the buffet. A snasm passed hastily over Saradoff's features as he took the glass from Ivan, and the powerful stimulant brought a flush to his cheek. He stared wildly about the room, and

men sprang to his feet. In that brief five minutes Vladimir Saradoff had aged—had suffered the agonies of a lifetime.

"Read that," he cried, tossing the letter to Ivan. "It comes from Vorouzuw, private secretary to the court. His information may be relied on. Some person has played the traitor. But never mind. My vengeance will come. Escape is the first thing."

He shuddered and passed his hand over his forehead.

"Quick, Ivan," he cried, with sudden terror, "quick, or I am lost. Escape by rail is cut off. They will watch the stations. I must take to the yacht. It still lies at the docks of Vassili Ortoff. I lent it to Count Adlerberg. It waits his arrival in the morning. Do you hear me, Ivan? I must foil these bloodhounds. Call a cab at once. See if the street is empty."

The perspiration was standing in drops on his forehead, and his hands trembled.

Ivan, no less terrified than his master, hurried from the room, dropping the crumpled letter to the floor. Vladimir Saradoff picked it up and held it over the globe of the lamp. As the last fragment turned to ashes Ivan returned. "I have been fortunate," he panted. "I found a cab close by. The street is empty. Go quick. They may arrive at any moment."

Without a word his master dropped into a chair, seized a pen and ink and chequebook, and drove his hand rapidly over the paper.

"Here, take this," he cried. "You must remain behind. Disguise yourself and you will be safe. Go to the bank in the morning, get foreign drafts for this whole amount if you can, and join me in Paris at the Hotel Bristol. Now a coat, Ivan—a light coat—and my pistols; don't forget them."

A moment later he was ready. A few brief injunctions to Ivan, a hasty farewell, and he hurried down the broad stairway, through the long, magnificently-furnished hall, and passed into the street.

He turned with a bitter pallidation on his lips for a last look at the station

front of his palace—the last time he would ever see it, he knew well—and then bolted into the cab, the obsequious driver holding the door open for him.

"Catherine's wharf, docks of Vassili Ortoff," he cried. "Twenty roubles if you get there in fifteen minutes. Don't spare your horses."

The door closed with a bang. The driver mounted his box and lashed his steeds. The cab rumbled briskly over the cobblestones, and then drew up with a jerk.

"Drive on, you idiot!" shouted Saradoff. "Go on, I say! Why do you stop?"

The cab started, moved a few paces and stopped again.

Vladimir Saradoff threw up the blind. A lamp across the way shed a yellow light on the street. The driver was standing on the ground. Two dark figures held the horses, and a third was approaching the cab—a tall, bearded man, in a blue uniform, and a sword at his side.

A little distance off other figures were visible in the shadow, and the lamplight fell on gleaming rifle barrels.

The cab door was thrown open.

"Vladimir Saradoff, I arrest you in the name of the Czar," said the officer. "Here is the warrant. Shall I read it?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONCLUSION.

But there was no reply. A few seconds passed in silence. Then a flash of light lit up the darkness of the cab, a sharp report echoed through the gloomy street, and the horses, rearing in the air, made a desperate attempt to break loose.

The police dashed forward, surrounding the cab, and a crowd, sprung from no one knows where, quickly blocked the street. A lantern was hastily brought, and a surgeon summoned to the spot, but it was too late for medical aid. Vladimir Saradoff had evaded arrest and punishment.

He was taken back to his stately residence and borne through the startled group of servants to his chamber. There they left him alone, and an officer guarded the entrance.

The police took possession of the

house and drove curious spectators from the door all night long, for the news had spread rapidly. The morning journals announced in startling headlines the crime and death of Vladimir Saradoff, and St. Petersburg, from the highest to the lowest circles, was wild with excitement.

That day the boys were brought before Count Brosky, Minister of the Interior. The proof and testimony that Jaroslav was prepared to offer were unneeded.

Ivan, Vladimir Saradoff's servant, who had been arrested while escaping from the rear of the house, came forward with a full confession, made on condition that his punishment should be mitigated.

He told all, how the plot had been laid, the false passports and nihilistic documents substituted for the boys' papers, and finally, by bringing an assistant at the morgue, the genuine passports had been concealed on the persons of two unfortunate wretches found in the Neva.

At the close of the examination the boys were freed with a most profuse and elaborate apology from Count Brosky, and went off in a carriage to the residence of Colonel Jaroslav, whose guests they intended remaining for a few days.

The colonel had promised to do all in his power for them—a promise which he kept to the letter. Vladimir Saradoff's affairs were at once taken in hand by the Government, and through Colonel Jaroslav's influence the fortune of \$200,000 of which Maurice had been robbed was preserved from the wreck, subject, of course, to legal formalities connected with the lad's guardianship.

Colonel Jaroslav advanced him as much money as he needed, and Maurice's first act was to pay the fine of 20,000 roubles that had been imposed on Nicolas Poussin and to write that worthy merchant a long and grateful letter.

Phil meanwhile wrote home to his father, fearing the shock that a cablegram might produce.

During their stay in the Russian capital Maurice met Miss Melkoff, who had just returned with her father from the mines of Kara. They had a long and interesting interview, but the part which that young lady played in the boy's escape was kept a rigorous secret.

"Why, my father might actually send me back to work in the mines if he knew what I had done," said Miss Lora. "He is so awfully strict, you know."

And the old general confirmed that opinion on meeting Maurice.

"And so you are the fellow that struck an officer," he said, gruffly, "and rescued my daughter too? Well, young man, I would have shot you for the one and rewarded you for the other." And then he graciously shook hands with him.

The boys greatly enjoyed their stay in St. Petersburg, for Colonel Jaroslav was a most delightful host, but their hearts yearned for America, and late in July they parted from their kind friend, and the many other acquaintances they had made in the Russian capital, and started by rail across the Continent, sailing from Havre a week later.

It was a clear and beautiful August morning when the Grand Monarque steamed majestically up New York harbour.

At the foot of the narrow street which opened on the wharf a motley crowd was gathered, curious to see the two young Americans who had just tasted the horrors of Siberian exile, for the papers had proclaimed far and wide their expected arrival.

Off the Battery a tugboat put out to the steamer containing a tall, gray bearded man, whose actions evinced great excitement. He was hoisted on board the Grand Monarque, and a moment later Phil was clasped in his father's embrace, to the manifest delight of the passengers.

"My poor boy, my poor boy!" was all he could utter for a long while, but presently he became more composed and extended Maurice an affectionate greeting.

"Your guardian is not here, my boy," he said as he clasped his hand. "Colonel Hoffman could not come. You will know all later."

Maurice detected the strange embarrassment in his manner, but before he could ask an explanation the steamer was at the wharf, and they hurried across the landing to a cab that was waiting.

A wild cheer burst from the crowd, and half a dozen reporters sprang forward, notebooks in hand.

Turning a deaf ear to the representatives of the press, the boys gained the cab, and Maurice already had one foot on the step, when a strong hand seized his shoulder, and he turned, half-anxiously, to meet the honest, tear-dimmed face of Paul Plattoff.

With a cry of joy he staggered back and would have fallen, but the sturdy Russian caught him in his arms, and they went together, unmindful of the excited spectators, who cheered again and again, and pressed forward so impetuously that the indignant policemen could not drive them back.

Between the mingled embraces of the two boys and the jostling of the crowd Plattoff was well nigh suffocated, but finally they were all bundled into the cab, and were soon rattling up noisy Broadway.

In husky, broken sentences Plattoff related how he had gained the shelter of an American sailing vessel on that terrible night of his escape, and how the noble captain, on learning his story, hid him so securely that the Russian soldiers failed to find him.

Two days later the vessel left for home, and after a long voyage arrived safely at Boston.

"I knew you were safe," he said, "and I saw afterward by the papers that you were coming home on this steamer."

"I knew it," said Maurice. "I knew you were not dead. What did I tell you, Phil?"

That night Mr. Danvers' untown residence was brilliantly lighted in honour of the boys' return, and many friends called to offer their congratulations and to shake hands with the brave Russian, whose heroic conduct was now being discussed throughout the city.

One thing marred Maurice's pleasure. Colonel Hercules Hoffman had been thrown from his horse in Central park a week before, and died two days later, leaving a sealed packet for his ward.

This Maurice opened on the first opportunity, and read with sorrow the shameful confession that threw still more light on Vladimir Saradoff's crime. The story of the malachite box of jewels, the interview at the Hotel Bristol in Paris, the later correspondence of Vladimir Saradoff, all was told without reserve, and the writer ended by expressing a hope of forgiveness and willing his fortune to Maurice as a partial restitution.

It must be remembered that Colonel Hoffman, at the time of writing this, knew that the boys had been rescued from their fate, and it must have been a great relief to his burdened conscience to discover that they were not dead, as he, no doubt, had believed.

Maurice generously determined that his guardian's reputation for honesty and uprightiness should not be blotted with this foul story; so he burned the confession and locked up the secret in his own breast.

He was now possessed of a handsome fortune, for Colonel Hoffman had been worth nearly \$100,000 himself.

With great difficulty he compelled Paul Plattoff to accept a sum that would make him independent for life, and, indeed, it was only through the most dire threats that the brave fellow could be induced to listen to such a proposition.

Plattoff was, as we have stated, a man of education, refinement and ability, and these attainments, which his own Government spurned, he now devoted to his adopted country, becoming a true American at heart.

And now we must leave our heroes—happily freed from their perils—to enjoy the new life that opens before them under the shadow of the stars and stripes, a flag unstained by tyranny or despotism.

To Paul Plattoff, who has passed through the furnace of oppression, our Government will always be all that is noble and just, while Maurice and Phil, who have seen and realized for themselves the oppression and misery that lurk beneath the flag of autocratic Russia, will, we venture to think, be enabled more and more to reach and realize the truest ideal of young American manhood.

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THE END.

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