

Ex 9350

FOR GOD AND THE CZAR!

FOR GOD AND THE CZAR!

BY

J. E. MUDDOCK,

AUTHOR OF

"Stormlight," "As the Shadows Fall," "The Dead Man's Secret,"
"Stones Weird and Wonderful," "From the Bosom of the Deep,"
"Maid Marian and Robin Hood," &c.

GEORGE NEWNES, LIMITED,
SOUTHAMPTON STREET AND EXETER
STREET, STRAND.

1892.

Dedication.

To Jew and Gentile alike this book is humbly dedicated, in the hope that even the feeble attempt which I have made, under the guise of fiction, to lay bare the rottenness of Russia may not be without some good effect, and that honest men and women throughout the world, who believe that all races and creeds find acceptance in God's sight, will raise their voices against a system of government which is at once a disgrace and an outrage. The exile system peculiar to Russia, and the power that is placed in the hands of illiterate and stupid subordinates, would not be tolerated in any other civilized country where the people claimed to be free. But surely the day is not far off when the down-trodden millions of Russia will resent this, and, bursting their shackles with a mighty wrench, will shake the world with their cry of Freedom. I, who love freedom and just laws, pray that God, the Father of all mankind, may hasten the coming of that day.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
IN THE GOSTINNOI-DVOR	1
CHAPTER II.	
THE MADNESS OF PASSION	12
CHAPTER III.	
IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY	22
CHAPTER IV.	
THE SENTENCE—SAKHALIN	32
CHAPTER V.	
FATHER AND SON	47
CHAPTER VI.	
ARAMA'S VENGEANCE	59
CHAPTER VII.	
THE WORK OF THE NIGHT	71
CHAPTER VIII.	
IN THE DAWNING OF THE DAY	80
CHAPTER IX.	
HOW JUSTICE WAS MOCKED	87
CHAPTER X.	
IN THE PASSION OF WOUNDED PRIDE	96

	PAGE
CHAPTER XI.	
RACHEL MAKES A RESOLUTION	103
CHAPTER XII.	
THE HOUR OF RETALIATION	112
CHAPTER XIII.	
A FAIR VICTIM	119
CHAPTER XIV.	
FOR A WOMAN'S SAKE... ..	131
CHAPTER XV.	
A PROUD SPIRIT	142
CHAPTER XVI.	
A CHECK	153
CHAPTER XVII.	
ON THE GREAT SIBERIAN ROAD	163
CHAPTER XVIII.	
A COMMON BOND OF UNION	175
CHAPTER XIX.	
THE BONDS ARE STRENGTHENED	183
CHAPTER XX.	
AT THE KARA MINES	196
CHAPTER XXI.	
WHO CAN AVERT HIS DESTINY?	202
CHAPTER XXII.	
THE MEETING AND THE PARTING	213
CHAPTER XXIII.	
THE MYSTERY OF THE UNKNOWN	220

CONTENTS.

ix

PAGE

CHAPTER XXIV.

WAS IT A PHANTOM THAT LURED HIM?... ... 231

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRIUMPH OF IVAN ALEXIEFF 238

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST MARCH 247

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNEXPECTED DENOUEMENT 256

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE COMPACT 265

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE REVOLT 276

CHAPTER XXX.

OUT OF TRIBULATION 284

FOR GOD AND THE CZAR!

CHAPTER I.

IN THE GOSTINNOI-DVOR.

"HERE will I build a window through which I can look into Europe," exclaimed the imperious monarch Peter the Great, when he beheld the dreary and desolate marshes through which flowed the sluggish Neva, and where the heron and the bittern piped and boomed in the keen Arctic blasts. And, in accordance with the Imperial edict, there arose the stately city of St. Petersburg, the stage on which this drama of passion and plot commences. Peter was an autocratic despot, and thousands of his poor subjects died in rearing his city, and the suffering and the misery were unutterable. But it was all endured in silence, for the people toiled and died "For God and the Czar." St. Petersburg is a strange city, full of contradictions, and if one sought for a simile to typify it, not an inapt one would be—a casket, gilt and fair seeming on the exterior, but full of rottenness and corruption within.

Generations have passed since the founder of the marsh city went down into the dust from whence he sprang, but his "window" remains, and it is in St. Petersburg that the pulse of all the Russias beats.

"The voice of the Lord cried aloud upon the waters, saying: 'Come hither and receive the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, and of the fear of the Lord of Christ, who is manifested unto us.'"

Thus chant the priests when on the festival of Epiphania they go to bless the Neva, which for thirteen miles winds its way through the Imperial city, and every true Russian believes that it is in St. Petersburg that the "spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, and the fear of the Lord of Christ" abideth. Presently we shall see to what extent the belief is justified.

Come we now to this City of the Marshes. It is an early June day, and the boreal winter still grips the earth, as if reluctant to let go its hold. But there is hope in the westering sun, which, slowly sinking, casts long slanting shadows across the rippling waters, and the grim pile, so full of bitter memories, and known as the fortress of St. Peter and Paul, with its gilt spire, its towers, its chimneys, and its embrasured battlements, stands out like a painted picture, as all its angles and outlines are brought into sharp relief against the pale green sky which is such a marked feature of the strange Russian climate. Some day, in the not far-distant future, the crushed people

will rise in their might and sweep this accursed place from the face of the land, even as the angry multitude in France hurled the Bastile to the ground. St. Peter and Paul is the Russian Bastile. The groans of its victims go up to the Throne of Grace, and its stones are reddened with the blood of those who have been done to death in the name of God and the Czar.

Through the Gostinnoi-dvor, or Great Bazaar, walks in stately pride Aaron Arama. He has been transacting business, and thoughtful and contemplative he is returning to his home, where a welcome awaits him, and where beauty shines like a northern star of the first magnitude on a night of frosty splendour.

"Who is that man?" asks a stranger to the city of a companion, as Aaron passes them.

"A Jew," is the contemptuous answer, accompanied by an expectoration, as if the mere utterance of the word "Jew" had defiled his mouth.

"By St. Peter, that is manifest in his bearing," exclaimed the questioner; "and one that hath wealth, I'll warrant, and who squeezes the poor even as he would drain a sponge."

"Aye, truly, it is so," answered the speaker's companion.

"It is strange that our Little Father, the all-powerful Czar, permits these accursed Jews to find shelter in Holy Russia," continued the first man. "Were I the Czar, I would command that throughout

the Empire 'Death to the Jews' be a watchword, and these unbelievers should be smitten hip and thigh."

Aaron Arama, who had overheard the conversation, paused in his walk, and turning, faced the speakers. He was a picturesque, almost majestic figure. Tall and straight, with a noble head and a face full of dignity and beaming with intelligence. A long, flowing white beard gave him a patriarchal appearance, and from the edge of the black skull-cap he wore his grey locks depended to his shoulders. He was attired in a caftan or long cloak edged with fur, for though it was June the air was still raw and cold during the afternoons and evenings.

"Wherefore should my race be smitten?" he asked in a commanding voice, that was full and resonant as a deep-toned bell.

"For eighteen hundred years my people have suffered and been tortured by you Christians, who prowl about us like wolves, thirsting for our blood. We have been patient under our afflictions, silent in spite of our torture; yet have you persecuted us. Our sobbing and our tears, and the wail of our women and our children, might have wrung pity from statues; but men who, like ourselves, are flesh and blood, and created by God, have in the name of the All Powerful inflicted upon us wrongs and sufferings at which Heaven itself has wept. Shame on you. Go you to your homes and pray that you may be forgiven." He paused for a moment; then raising his hands he cried,

with startling impressiveness, "God of vengeance, wherefore doth Thy wrath sleep? How long shall our people groan beneath their wrongs? What are the crimes that we have committed that we should thus be ground into the dust, and our blood spilt as if it were water? - Answer, O Lord, for long have we suffered, and we wait for a sign."

"Dog of a Jew!" sneered the man who had answered his friend's question. "Preach not to us; we are Christians——"

"And barbarians," added Aaron Arama.

"A curse on you," cried the second man, passionately, and making a menacing movement towards the Jew. "You pollute the land, and should be swept from its face."

"Down with the Jew!" cried several angry voices in the crowd that had collected around, attracted by the altercation, and the mob began to press upon Aaron with the evident design of hustling him; but raising his right hand heavenward, he exclaimed:—

"He who respects not the grey hairs of honourable age will assuredly be accursed. The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac will protect me. Back, I say, lest your arms fall palsied at your side, and your mocking tongues grow dumb for ever, as the wrath of the Lord is hurled against you."

He spoke like one inspired, and his dark eyes were filled with the anger-fire of indignation and wounded pride. Some of those who crowded about him were

so impressed by his stately bearing and commanding manner that they seemed awed, and recoiled away. But others again jeered and laughed, calling them cowards, and asking :—

“Wherefore are you afraid of a Jew? Know you not that in our Little Father’s land a Jew hath not so much value as a swine? If you kill a swine that belongs not to you the judges will exact a fine, but what judge will fine you for killing a Jew?”

This argument told, and the angry swelling of the voices of the jostling crowd was like the moan of the sea in the rising wind ; it presaged mischief. The people closed about the old man, and one plucked his beard, and another snatched off the cap that covered his head.

“Shame on you, children of ignorance and stupidity,” he cried, as calm and defiant he towered above his tormentors. “Know you not that for thirty-five years I have lived in this city as an honourable citizen : lived in peace and harmony with all my fellows, Christian and Jew alike, and I have molested no man?”

“You have taken usurer’s interest,” cried one.

“’Tis false,” answered Aaron. “I lend not my moneys. I am a trader.”

“And cheat the Christian,” put in another.

“False again,” said Aaron, “for I am honest and trade fair.”

“How comes it, then, that you have made a fortune?”

demanded a big, burly fellow, clad in a greasy sheep-skin, and wearing a large fur cap on his head ; and as he pressed forward he flourished his great fist in the Jew's face.

"O, man of gross passion and pitiable ignorance," exclaimed Aaron, contemptuously ; "when you have slept I have toiled. When you have been steeped in besotted stupidity through indulgence in vodka, I have had a clear head and a brain to think. I have outraged not Nature's laws, but have humbly striven to live the life of an upright man, whom God made in His own image."

His answer, justified though it was perhaps, and which was characteristic of the fearless independence of Aaron Arama, was in no way calculated to allay the aroused passions of those who heard it. Aaron was a well-known figure in St. Petersburg, and was distinguished no less for his learning and great intelligence than for his kindness of heart and generous nature. But his race and religion had ever been objects of hatred with the people in whose midst he lived, and the most ignorant and drunken loafer of the bazaars felt and believed that he was fully privileged to insult and sneer at a Jew.

The man who had been addressed as a "man of gross passions and pitiable ignorance" was stirred into wrathful anger, and, turning to the fellows about him, he cried, appealingly :—

"Little fathers, is it thus that we are to be preached

at by a dog of a denying Jew? Are we to be told that we are men of gross passions and pitiable ignorance, and yet remain patient and quiet as if we had no voices, and no feelings, and no hearts?"

"No, no," cried many. "It shall not be. Down with the accursed Jew."

"Aye, down with him, and all his tribe," shouted the man, growing bolder as he saw that the mob was in sympathy with him. "Let us beat him, and break his bones, and strip his fine caftan from him." The fellow made a desperate clutch at the Jew's cloak, tearing away its fastenings, but he had calculated too much on Aaron's age and patience, for the old man seized him with a suddenness that astonished him, and a vice-like grip that brought the paleness of craven fear into his greasy face. But the crowd roared, and jostled, and surged, like a pack of ravening wolves struggling for prey; the man was wrested from the grip in which he was held, and there is no doubt it would have gone hard with Arama had not the people been stayed in their intentions by a loud and angry voice crying out, "Stoi, stoi!" (stop, stop!) The authority with which the words were uttered exerted so much influence over the crowd that they paused, and then a stalwart, handsome young man forced his way into their midst, exclaiming:—

"Back, dogs and foo's, and leave this gentleman alone, or you shall suffer in purse and body. I have spoken. Beware!"

In the new-comer who thus courageously championed the Jew some of the people recognised Ivan Alexieff, the only son of the chief of the St. Petersburg police ; but as Ivan was known to be a Christian, and the son of a Christian, great was the astonishment that was expressed that he should thus take Aaron's part.

"Pajoust catinska " (as you please), growled the man who had assaulted Arama, as he retreated before the threatening Ivan, "but I have a grievance against this Jew, and I will treasure it."

Ivan Alexieff took no notice of the threat, but, turning to Aaron, he said, "Follow me." Then, by a vigorous use of his elbows, he pushed the crowd on one side, and he and Arama were free.

"It were well not to linger here," he said, "these fools are angry, and an angry fool hath no discretion."

"I owe you a debt," answered Aaron, "but since I recognise you not, tell me your name, I pray, that it may be honoured in my family."

"By your family I would have it so honoured," replied Ivan. "Know me, then, as Ivan Alexieff, son of Peter Alexieff."

"The recently-appointed Chief of the Police?"

"The same."

"How comes it, then, that you have taken my part? For, if report belies him not, your father is an uncompromising hater of my race."

"That is true," answered Ivan, "but father and son do not always think alike."

"You are a noble youth, a noble youth," said Aaron, "and the Lord will prosper you. I would know you better, and would value your friendship. Therefore, the door of my house will ever be open to you, and my wife and my daughter will greet you at all times with a welcome."

"Rest assured that I shall put that to the test," Ivan said, with a display of eagerness that escaped Arama's attention, or he might have been curious to know the cause.

In a few minutes they parted, as their roads lay in opposite directions; and as Ivan went on his way he was very thoughtful, and his thoughts were of the Jew's daughter.

Ivan Alexieff was still little more than a youth, for he was only in his twenty-third year, and Nature had endowed him with physical attributes than won for him the respect and envy of his fellows. He was a young giant in strength; and women had spoken of him as being "handsome as Apollo." He had been pampered and spoilt and had run wild, so that between him and his kinsmen much friction had resulted, and his father had at one time threatened to disown him. For two or three years Ivan had been out of the country. He had visited France and England, and had but recently returned, somewhat more restless in spirit, and with his views and ideas

more undecided than they were when he went away.

His father was a time-server, a place-hunter; an unscrupulous player for the prizes in life. He was ambitious and craved for power, and to satisfy his cravings he would stop at nothing. Tolerance and human brotherhood found no place in his creed. The only love he knew was love of self—and by nature he was a crafty despot, a pitiless tyrant. For years he had been secretary to Count Nicholas Suvorof, and through that nobleman's influence he had recently been installed in position as Chief of the Police, a position that had been rendered vacant by the assassination of Alexieff's predecessor. Such was the father. The son was unlike him in many respects. His mother was noted for her beauty, and was a woman of deep sympathies and of a religious turn of mind. Ivan had been much under her influence, and his character, whatever it was, had taken its colouring to some extent from her. But in many respects Ivan was an original. He thought and acted for himself. In matters of love no one could guide him. He had looked upon Rachel, the daughter of Aaron Arama, and his heart had gone out towards her, although no opportunity had occurred for him to tell her his love. But it was the influence of her beauty that had led him to protect Aaron from the anger of the mob in the Gostinnoi-dvor.

CHAPTER II.

THE MADNESS OF PASSION.

RACHEL ARAMA was a type—the very highest type—of Jewish beauty. It was the beauty of the night, for she was as dark as a raven, and her eyes were like two scintillating stars. The glory of the rose's colour had dyed her lips, and the olive's clearness tinted her cheeks. In a mould of faultless grace and perfection had she been cast, and it seemed as if Nature, in this her sweet handiwork, had resolved that there should be neither fault nor flaw. Rachel Arama was beautiful. She was a vision of beauty—a dream of loveliness—the embodiment of the poet's and artist's ideal when they seek to express the beauty of heaven in woman's form.

An only daughter, she was as the apple of her father's eye and the pride and joy of her mother, also a beautiful woman.

Rachel had completed her twenty-first year, and in order to mark the occasion her parents gave a ball, to which some of the leading members of society, Christian and Jew alike, were invited. Russia has been described as a country of sublime sadness, and yet the

joyous feelings of the people find expression on every possible occasion in social gatherings, in music, in singing, and in dancing. Aaron Arama was a man of high importance amongst his co-religionists in St. Petersburg, and even the more enlightened Christians regarded him with respect and tolerance. He was rich, and riches go for much in a land where poverty is the rule ; and his wife and daughter were counted amongst the most beautiful women in the city. But it was on Rachel that the interest centred. Her own sex envied her, and men, without respect of creed or caste, gazed upon her with longing, and were dazzled, even as he who looks upon the sun is dazzled, so that when he turns away all else is dark. But the favoured one was Moshka Umanski, a young man of great promise, a little older than she was, and who seemed peculiarly fitted in every way to become her mate.

Moshka was the son of one of the Chief Rabbis of Moscow, and he himself had aspired to enter the church of his people, and for that purpose had studied. But at last, by his father's desire, he had given up thoughts of the church, and had taken to the law, in which he promised to distinguish himself. Very happy indeed was Moshka when he thought of Rachel the beautiful, who was to be his bride ; and he had said to her :—

“God is good and the world sublime. We shall live a life of unclouded happiness, for love can beautify

life, and we love each other as man and woman never loved before."

Rachel assented to this, and so they dreamed as lovers always dream, and they saw nothing of the dark shadows that were gathering ahead, and out of which the lightning was to come and smite them.

It was in the Petersburgskaia Storona, which is the northern and oldest part of the town, that Aaron Arama lived with his family. The citadel stands in this quarter, and round about it cluster huge houses, which are for the most part inhabited by those of the Jewish faith. Externally this section of the town is the shabbiest and most squalid-looking, but probably there is more wealth collected there than is to be found in any area of the same extent in the whole of the vast town. To this quarter longing and greedy eyes were often turned as to an El Dorado ; and not infrequently had threats been uttered that some day it should be given to the flames, the Jews driven out, and their property confiscated.

In one of the most ancient, but one of the most picturesque of the houses, dwelt Aaron Arama in peace and contentment. He had been a good citizen, fulfilling his duties to the State in the strictest sense ; and he had endeavoured with might and main to sweep away some of the prejudice that existed amongst the Christians against his race and creed.

To the ball, Ivan Alexieff was invited, for how could Aaron forget the service the young man had

rendered him in the Bazaar?—and the opportunity that Ivan had so long sighed for was thus at last his. He knew that the beauty of Rachel was as a tale amongst the people, and he had gazed upon her often, but never a chance had been given him to exchange sentiments with her. But now he was under the same roof; now was he privileged to address her, and conscious of his own natural attractions, he was strongly hopeful that he could so impress her, in spite of the difference in their faith, that she would give him ear.

The scene was a brilliant one, for Aaron had been lavish in his expenditure, and the Russian love of colour was displayed in the decoration of the rooms, the gay dresses of the ladies, and the uniforms of the officials and military men who had accepted the rich Jew's invitation to partake of his hospitality and to celebrate the coming of age of Rachel. There were many beautiful women present, but Rachel was the most distinguished of them all. Her radiant beauty eclipsed all the others, and her irresistible fascination drew men to her even as moths are drawn to the flame.

Ivan Alexieff was blind to all else but her—deaf to everything but the music of her voice; and he felt that to win her he would dare the torture of Hades itself. Unable longer to remain silent, he seized a moment when she stood alone to approach her, and he said in low tones:—

“Give me, I crave, a few minutes' speech with you.

I am Ivan Alexieff, son of Peter Alexieff, Chief of the Police, and I have had the supreme good fortune to render some slight service to your father."

"I know, I know," she answered quickly, and with a trace of trepidation, for instinctively she guessed what he would say to her, and her olive cheeks became suffused with red. "My father has spoken very highly of you," she continued, "and need I say that his friends are welcome here?"

These words gave Ivan hope and courage, for he was not aware at this time that she was betrothed to Moshka Umanski, and he said :—

"Presuming upon my welcome, then, I pray you give me your arm, and let me lead you into the corridor."

She hesitated for a moment, but only for a moment, and then, remembering how highly her father had spoken of the young man, she complied with his request, and laying the tips of her gloved hand on his arm, she allowed him to lead her to the corridor, a huge stone passage, as in most Russian houses, and now decorated for the nonce with evergreens and rare plants. Then, with the impulsiveness that was part of his nature, he said, abruptly :—

"Rachel, I have seen you often, and love for you has grown up in my heart, until it seems to me as if the world without you would be a howling wilderness."

"But you are a Christian," she exclaimed,

drawing a little away from him, and looking very astonished.

"And what of that? Love levels all. Love has no creed; it sweeps away every barrier of race and faith. But for your sake I would renounce everything, and will become your slave."

"Hush, you must not speak like that," she answered, trembling a little with the excitement his words caused her. "I admit that love is all-powerful, but, though I hope to have your friendship, I cannot give you love; it is impossible."

"Impossible!" he echoed.

"Yes."

"Wherefore impossible?"

"Because I am already betrothed and pledged to a co-religionist."

This announcement seemed to cause Ivan to stagger. Fire came into his eyes and his cheeks reddened, while his voice was quivering as he said:—

"Betrothed and pledged! No, no, say not that. I have dreamed of you. Let me not awake to find that I have been mocked by a phantom. Betrothed and pledged! Nay, though it be so, I will hope to win you. I know not my rival; but I am as good as he, as brave as he, as strong as he, and I will be his deadly enemy, even to the Jaws of Death."

"Oh, how strangely you talk," Rachel exclaimed, with a shudder. "Wherefore do you speak like that? It is not kind. It is not manly."

"Not manly," cried Ivan, with a laugh of bitterness. "Not manly to hate one's rival, and to wish to slay him? The lower animals brook no rivalry. Is man less than the animals? Love that is thwarted becomes madness, and madness is reckless of consequences. I tell you, Rachel, I love you, and if any man stands between us, let him beware!"

Over Rachel's beautiful face there swept a look of fear and pain that was quite foreign to it, and, gazing tearfully on Ivan, who addressed her in language that she had never heard before in all her life, she said:—

"Talk not like that. You frighten me, and I shall flee from you as from one who would do me harm and destroy my happiness. I tell you that my love and pledge are already given. How, then, can I bestow them on you?"

"I confess I have been hasty," he answered, apologetically. "But I have nursed my admiration for you so long in silence that now, when the opportunity is given me to speak, I feel as if many words would but waste time. Again I say to you, Rachel, that the world to me without you will be a blank, and my life will be purposeless."

"Oh! why do you distress me," she moaned, "by talking thus? You have no claim upon me. There can be nothing in common between us. Our paths lie wide asunder. A man must not aim at the impossible; he should not leap at the stars, and it is sinful for him to attempt to sap the happiness of a woman. Up to

now my life has been without one discordant note. Why should you now sound a discord? To Moshka Umanski I am pledged, and Moshka Umanski will become my husband. He is one of my people, he is the choice of my parents, he is the heart of my heart. For me to listen to words of love under these circumstances would be a deadly sin. If you desire my friendship you shall have it. Here is my hand in pledge thereof. But more than friendship I can never give you."

She had spoken hurriedly, and with some display of excitement; but with an evident intelligent grasp of the situation. Alexieff seized her hand with an amount of nervous energy that quite startled her, and with blazing eyes he looked into her exquisitely beautiful face, that was pale now with fear and misgiving. She tried to draw away, but he held her fast, and said with a certain subdued fierceness:—

"To look on you is to forget everything else. I have looked on you, and all the world has faded from my gaze. If I turn my eyes from you I shall be blind, even as a sun-gazer is. Bid me live, bid me hope, bid me rejoice. Tell me to grovel in the dust at your feet and I will do it. There is no request you can make that I will not comply with, save to go from you in despair."

"Ivan Alexieff, release me!" she cried, with growing anger, which flushed her face once more, and caused her eyes to glow until they flashed like the stars that sparkle in frosty splendour in the Arctic

heavens. But her anger only enhanced her unspeakable beauty ; and those wondrous eyes burned into his very soul, making him bolder, more reckless, more determined.

"You must give me hope!" he said passionately.

"It cannot be ; it is impossible!"

"Impossible! There is no such word. A passion of love such as burns within my veins can sweep every obstacle away, even as the avalanche that thunders down the mountain-side sweeps all before it."

"Are you mad?" she groaned, still trying to release herself.

"If love for you be madness, then am I mad," he answered. "Again I ask you to give me hope."

"And again I say that cannot be."

"Oh, Rachel! harden not your heart against me!"

"I would not do so, but you are forcing me to it. I would be your friend. I will love you as a sister."

"Such a love will not satisfy my great passion, which burns like a volcano, and will not be subdued. I am a bound slave to this love of mine, which controls me, and I am utterly powerless to resist it. I would rather see you rigid in the marble embrace of death than the bride of another."

He was so excited, he looked so strange, his language was so extravagant, that she thought he must either be under the influence of some strong drink, or else not in his right frame of mind ; and she grew more frightened, and struggled to release herself as a

captured bird tries to free itself from its captor. But he still held her hand, and, bending towards her until his face almost touched hers, he said, sibilantly :—

“Let me embrace you ; let me press my lips to your lips. Give me, in the name of Heaven, a kiss of love !”

Thoroughly alarmed by his manner, she could no longer suppress a cry, and at that moment a man rushed forward ; Alexieff was seized in a powerful grasp, turned completely round, and hurled with considerable force against the wall. The cry of Rachel had brought her a deliverer.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

WHEN Ivan Alexieff recovered his equilibrium, he found himself face to face with a young man about his own age, to whom Rachel was clinging ; and while this man held her with his left arm about her waist, he stood on the defensive, with his right arm slightly extended, the fist clenched ready to dart forward should circumstances necessitate it.

The new-comer was Moshka Umanski. He had missed Rachel, and was in search of her when her cry drew him to her. He was of medium height, powerfully built, but lacked the handsome face of his rival ; and yet he was by no means ill-looking. He was excited now, and there was a fierce anger glow in his eyes, while his sternly compressed lips spoke of determination.

Ivan drew himself up, and for some moments glared at his rival as if he contemplated a conflict. But presently he spoke. His voice was steady, and he seemed to exercise wonderful self-command when all the circumstances of his position are considered.

“ You are Moshka Umanski ? ” he said.

"I am."

"You have assaulted me."

"No. I deny it."

"You are my rival."

"If you have the presumption and audacity to seek to win the favour of this young lady, then I am your rival."

"Yes, it is so. I do seek to win that lady, therefore are we enemies. In war and love all things are fair. If I kill you I may take your place; if you kill me she will be your bride. And since I will not renounce my right to woo her, I will pit my life against yours. We will fight till one falls dead. If you be not a coward, say that it shall be so."

Rachel cried out in an agony of mental pain; her arms enfolded the neck of her lover, and she said distressfully unto him:—

"No, no, Moshka, you must not. This shall not be. This man is mad. You shall not fight with a madman."

"You hear what Rachel says," remarked Moshka, disdainfully.

"I do. But a lover has often had to fight to retain that which he has won. Therefore you *must* fight me. You *shall* fight me, or be unworthy of the love you have gained."

"You shall not, shall not," screamed Rachel, clinging closer to her lover. "You are an assassin, a madman." (This to Ivan.)

"You hear again," said Moshka, sternly.

"I do, but heed not."

"Then mark this—I will not fight you."

"Then do I brand you as a coward," answered Alexieff. "But I can wait ; and he who waits wins."

His coolness of manner and self-command were in striking contrast to his passion of a few minutes ago, and served to stamp him as an extraordinary man, no less than a dangerous one. He uttered no more words, but went his way ; and, having secured his cloak and hat, he passed out of the house into the night.

Rachel was terribly alarmed. She divined, too surely, from what had passed, that it was in Ivan's nature to be an implacable enemy, and there was something in what he had said which was unmistakably a menace. But Moshka comforted her. He told her there was no danger. That he who spoke loudest acted the least. That Alexieff was an idle boaster, and that he feared him not. •

"But should he dare me," he said, "then will I fight him and slay him——".

"Oh, no, no!" cried Rachel. "Though you had justice on your side, think you that the slaying of a Christian by one of our despised race would be forgiven? We must avoid him ; and when you are my husband you can take me away, and he will forget me."

Moshka was thoughtful. He knew that she had spoken too truly when she had reminded him that he

could hope for no mercy if he slew a Christian. Law there was for the Jew in Russia, but justice was unknown. And when he had pondered on her words he said mournfully :—

“Yes, my well-beloved, we must endure in silence. Persecution and wrong are our lot. But thou art mine, and I shall hold thee, even at the peril of my life.”

At these words there came into Rachel's superb face a new expression ; an expression that had never been there before. It was an expression of anxiety, which she in vain tried to conceal, for she knew intuitively that there was danger. Her people lived on the thin crust of a volcano that might at any moment burst forth and scatter them to the winds. Already harsher, sterner, and more unjust laws and decrees had been enacted against the Jews dwelling in St. Petersburg since the accession of Peter Alexieff to power. It was well known that he and his patron, Count Nicholas Suvorof, whose creature he was, were uncompromising haters of the Jewish race. And when Alexieff was installed at the bureau of police as its head the Jews said one to another : “An evil day dawns for us ; for this man is pitiless.”

Remembering this, Rachel shuddered, for she felt as if the shadows of some coming sorrow had enveloped her. Then she and Moshka went to Aaron and told him all that had happened ; and when he had heard the story he said : “Calm yourselves, my

children, and fear not. Ivan's anger and passion will pass away. In a few days it will be summer. Then daughter, you shall go to the country, and your whereabouts shall be kept secret until the time comes for Moshka to take you to his house as his bride."

Rachel drew comfort from her father's words, and hope rose strong again ; and in a few days it was summer, as Aaron had said. For summer in Russia comes in with a suddenness that is like a marvel to the foreigner who knows not the climate. It is even as a transformation scene. The winter sun descends one night in a sky of glowing green, which is flecked with gold and crimson bars, and on the morrow the heat has come. The birds are carolling in every tree, the buds are bursting, the earth is aglow with flowers. Then there is an exodus from St. Petersburg, for the summer heat in the town is intolerable. Everybody who can goes into the country, and the *butshinks*, or street sentinels, sleep peacefully in their boxes, which stand at the corner of every street.

Aaron Arama had a country house in the village of Tsarskoe Selo, not very far removed from the capital, and which is known as "the Royal village," for it is a collection of villas all built of wood, and was founded by Catherine II., who reared it as a refuge for oppressed serfs. There is a palace there which is at once an excrescence and a wonder ; for architecturally it is hideous, but internally it has rooms laid with exotic wood that cost more than a hundred roubles

for every square yard ; and there is one room that is entirely lined with transparent amber. To this village the élite of St. Petersburg go to spend the summer, and thither went Aaron with his wife and daughter and Moshka Umanski.

As the weeks sped away and Rachel heard nothing and saw nothing of Ivan Alexieff, her shadowy fears left her, and she grew bright and happy again—so happy in the company of him whose bride she was to be. But at last Moshka had to return to the capital, for his holiday had expired, and duty called him. Aaron and his daughter, however, were to remain at Tsarskoe Selo for some little time longer.

Then the hour of parting for the lovers came. Rachel admonished Moshka to exercise all caution and care. But he laughed, and said :—

“Fear not, little one ; all will be well.”

As their lips met in a sweet embrace a slight shudder thrilled her. Some vague and undefinable sense of coming evil oppressed her, so that the light in her eyes grew dim with tears.

“What is it that makes you tremble, beloved ?” he asked, with some anxiety manifesting itself in his tone.

“It is nothing,” she answered, with a laugh that was forced. “They say when one shudders somebody is walking over one’s grave. I suppose that is it. Somebody passes over the place where I shall find rest.”

“Talk not so, Rachel,” he remarked reprovingly.

"It will be long ere your grave is made ; and the spot where it shall be no man knoweth."

"And yet the spot exists," she answered. "For death comes to us all, and the kindly earth receives our weary bodies."

"Wherefore speak of death while yet our lives are but beginning?" he asked, in a tone of tender chiding. "Before us stretch the years ; and the flowers bloom in our way, and the sun shines for us. It is true the world is full of evil and wicked men, but he who is conscious of no wrong may walk upright amidst the evil, and remain uncontaminated. We have naught to fear. If we be true to our trust, God's face will be turned to us."

"Ah," she sighed, as if his argument had failed to reassure her ; and he took her in his arms and pressed her to his breast, saying the while :—

"Here is your refuge, my heart of hearts. Here shall you find peace and joy, and when the bond has joined us we will journey to some land beyond the sea where there is freedom for all men, and just laws, and where a man may worship as he chooses without fear of persecution. Such a land is England, and in England we will make our home."

"It shall be so," she answered softly, leaning her head upon his breast, and with her face upturned to his. And they kissed and kissed again, and then he bade her farewell and went on his way ; and she prayed for him in her prayers, and asked the Lord of

Hosts to protect him and bring him safe to her arms again.

When Moshka arrived in St. Petersburg it was still partially deserted, and the heat was very great, for there the two extremes of climate are experienced: the tropical heat of summer, the Polar cold of winter. But the young man applied himself to his duties, which demanded his attention. He found that there was much talk in the city of some Nihilist plot, and he heard that there had been many arrests, and a number of students amongst others had been consigned to the grim fortress of St. Peter and Paul. He was in no ways concerned, however, for he was above suspicion. Whatever views he might have held with reference to the barbarous oppression of the people, to say nothing of the persecution of his own race, he held his peace and disclosed them to no man; for he knew that it was dangerous even to whisper one's sentiments about the rulers of the land. The very air seemed filled with spies, and the stones of the streets had tongues.

One day during the second week after his return from the country, he went with a merry party of young men to one of the islands of the Neva, which are favourite resorts of the St. Petersburg people in the summer. He was unusually bright and cheerful, for he had that morning received from Rachel a letter that glowed with love for him; and he had despatched one to her in which he had poured out his very soul in the

poetic sentiment which love engenders. He told her that he was well and happy, and dreamed of her night and day.

The island to which Moshka and his friends went was Yelagin Island, where there is an Imperial residence, surrounded with charming grounds, and where the views are truly beautiful. It was a burning day, and the cafés and restaurants were very busy. As the day began to wane, streams of people flowed towards what is known as "The Point" on the island, from whence there is an enchanting view seaward of the setting sun. Thither went Umanski and his friends. They were very lively, a trifle noisy, and they sang songs as they went.

The sun set in a glory of colour, such as words would fail to paint. The whole heavens seemed aflame with golden and crimson fire that was reflected back from the waters, and glowed on the spires and domes of the distant capital. The very air palpitated with colour, and as the vesper bells rang out men removed their hats and crossed themselves, and there was a solemn silence until the great sun was hidden below the horizon. Then laughter burst forth again, and shouts and cries, and the golden glory faded, the purple deepened, and in the cloudless sky the stars shone with northern brilliancy.

Umanski and his party lingered yet a little longer, and presently, as the night advanced, they rose and returned to the city. But when they would have

separated they were suddenly surrounded with armed men, who almost seemed as if they had sprung up out of the ground. They were police and soldiers, and when Moshka Umanski heard the dread words uttered, "You are arrested on suspicion of being conspirators," his heart seemed to turn to stone. In any other country mere suspicion that was unsupported by proof would have involved nothing more perhaps than a few hours of unpleasant detention. But in Russia it was different. Suspicion there meant years of body-and-soul-destroying imprisonment, with Siberia always looming in the distance. Nevertheless, Moshka, conscious of no guilt, tried to believe that in a few days he would be free again; but as he was marched away with his companions he suddenly caught sight of a face that seemed filled with a subtle smile of triumph. It was a face brought into strong relief by the light of an adjacent lamp that fell full upon it. And the face was that of Ivan Alexieff.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SENTENCE—SAKHALIN.

AN arrest such as that described was too much of an everyday event in St. Petersburg to cause more than a mere passing surprise to those who had no direct interest in the prisoners. For some time the air had been full of rumours of plots against the Czar, and whenever that was the case, suspicion, like an epidemic, seized upon the official mind, and no man could be sure that his liberty was safe for twenty-four hours. All the Moshka party who had been arrested were Jews, and when the news spread through the city a feeling of bitter anger manifested itself amongst the Christians, who said—'unjustly, of course—"It is owing to these accursed Jews that we are brought under suspicion. They are the disturbing elements in our Holy Russia, and they should be driven forth and exterminated."

Such expressions as these served to show the bent of men's minds. All sense of right and justice was forgotten in the race hatred which is so powerful throughout the Czar's domains. No one who was not a Jew paused to ask himself whether there was any

ground for the suspicion harboured against the unfortunate prisoners. To be a Jew was in itself a crime, according to the doctrine of the Russian Christians.

When the news reached the village of Tsarskoe Selo, Rachel threw up her hands with a wild cry of despair, and fell fainting to the floor. Aaron at once decided to return with his family to St. Petersburg, and use every influence he could bring to bear in order to effect the release of Moshka. When he sought for information, he found that the charge formulated against the prisoners was that of "conspiracy against the peace and happiness of the Czar and his realm," and it was stated that in the houses of some of the party revolutionary documents had been found.

Arama knew that, if this were true, Moshka, though as innocent as a new-born babe, would suffer from the mere fact that he had associated with the conspirators, however unconscious he might have been of their doings. Nevertheless, Aaron put forth every effort, but his hopes sank and his heart grew cold as it was impressed upon him that Peter Alexicff—"the Jew hater," as he was called—was gloating over "the haul he had made."

There was mourning and wailing in the house of Arama during the dread weeks of suspense that followed the arrest. Rachel was prostrated. Communication with her lover was out of the question, and it

was impossible even to ascertain where he was incarcerated. As in the days of the old Bastille in France, when a person was arrested under a *lettre de cachet* he suddenly disappeared from the world, perhaps never to be heard of again, so in Russia at the present day. A suspected person disappears; if there is strong proof against him, he will in due time be brought to trial, and finally executed or banished to Siberia; but in the absence of such proof he will still be detained until hope deferred has crushed his spirit, and his chains have eaten into his flesh and cankered his bones.

As the time wore on Aaron lost hope, although he did not tell his daughter so. But such information as came to him left no doubt in his mind that Moshka would be banished, however guiltless he might be. He learned at last that there was to be a semblance of a public trial, for the Government did not want it to be said that they had dealt with their Jewish prisoners in a secret manner. And when the morning of the trial came he said to Rachel:—

“Daughter, arise and come with me. And let your tongue be as silent as a rock though your heart bursts with speech. On the carrying out of this injunction much depends.”

Then Rachel arose and went to her father. The beauty of her face was touched with ineffable sadness, and her eyes were red with the tears that for many days had flowed there. He clothed her in a cloak that

concealed her dark tresses and her face so that no man could look upon her, and, taking her hand, he led her forth to the court where the trial of her lover was to take place. Presently she saw him brought in and ranged before his judges. He was pale and haggard, and there were chains upon his hands and his feet. She could have cried out with a great cry of passionate sorrow, for her heart was truly bursting with emotion, but her tongue remained dumb even as her father commanded that it should be.

The indictment was a long one. It charged the prisoner with having consorted with other "wicked and malignant persons" with a view to "inflict bodily harm upon the great and glorious Czar," and to endanger the peace of the Czar's realm. When the reading of this document was ended, Moshka was asked how he pleaded; and in a voice that was weakened by the suffering he had endured, and yet withal clearly and distinctly, he said:—

"I plead utterly guiltless; and in the name of the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, I vow that I have ever been a loyal, loving, and dutiful subject of the all-wise and intelligent greatness, the Czar of this mighty realm."

This speech was denounced by the prosecutor as impious, and he demanded that the trial should proceed. Then came an army of witnesses, who swore by their conscience and their faith that they knew the prisoner for a dangerous conspirator, and that he and

his people were leagued together against the peace and happiness of the Little Father, the Czar.

When this perjury was uttered a murmur of anger and indignation ran through the crowded court, and some of the spectators cried out, "Down with the Jews!"

Rachel, still entirely concealed by her cloak, moved uneasily in her seat, and a sob had well-nigh burst from her lips. But Aaron sat motionless as if he had been made of marble, though his fine eyes and noble face bore testimony to the storm of indignation that was working within him.

And so the trial proceeded until it was past high noon, and ever and anon the spectators muttered threats against the Hebrew population, and cried out, "Down with the accursed Jews!" and no one connected with the court made any attempt to suppress these demonstrations of public feeling.

Still hidden in her cloak, Rachel sat dumb, though her heart shivered with its passion of sorrow, and her eyes were hardly ever removed from the sad, pale face of her husband-elect. And she saw him look round often, as though he sought someone who would bid him hope, and she yearned to cry out to him:—

"Moshka, my beloved, be of good cheer, for God is good, and man's wickedness endureth not for ever."

But her father had bade her be dumb, and she spoke not; for she was a Jewish maiden, and her father's commands were law.

At last came the point in the trial when the presiding judge was to deliver sentence. Then up rose Aaron Arama, looking like a patriarchal prophet, as his white beard flowed over his breast, and his long white locks fell upon his shoulders; and raising his thin white hand, as if to claim attention and command silence, he exclaimed in a voice that sounded rich and mellow as a flute :—

“Oh, wise judge, hear me. I am Aaron Arama, an humble and loyal citizen of the all-powerful Czar. And I would speak in favour of the prisoner, even as the law of this land permits.”

“We know you, Aaron Arama,” said the judge, “and we will hear you. Say on. For the law is just and the Czar mighty.”

“Thus, then, do I say,” continued Arama; “they who have testified against the prisoner have borne false witness.”

“Shame on you, Jew; down with the Jews,” shouted the mob, as these words were uttered. But Aaron flinched not; boldly did he answer :—

“I say again that all that has been charged against Moshka Umanski is false in the sight of Heaven.”

“Muzzle the Jew,” cried out somebody amongst the spectators, and the judge exclaimed sternly to Aaron :

“If you have naught else to say but flatly to deny the truth of the sworn evidence which has been given before the court, resume your seat, old man, for we will hear no more.”

"Aye, I have much to say," answered Aaron, still standing and glancing fearlessly round on the sneering, mocking faces that everywhere met his gaze. The time has come when it were a crime to remain silent. Moshka Umanski is innocent. I'll be bond for his innocence to the extent of every rouble I can command."

"Foolish old man," said the judge, with an affectation of kindness, although a covert sneer played about his hard, stern mouth. "Resume your seat. Have we not heard evidence that leaves no room to doubt that the prisoner has been guilty of treason?"

"I say the evidence is false," was Aaron's response.

"Peace, peace!" said the judge, angrily and sternly; and at these words there was a move amongst the officers of the court, who waited for the judge's signal to pounce upon the old Jew and drag him out. And again arose the cry from many throats of—

"Down with the Jews! Sweep them out of the land!"

Then the judge raised his hand to command silence, and, taking advantage of it, Arama spoke again—but now there had come a huskiness in his voice, and there was a dimness in his eyes.

"Ye who are fathers, listen to me, and steel not your hearts against a father's cry. Though you tear my tongue out, I will say it again that Moshka Umanski is innocent. Give him back to me

and mine, for if you take him from us you blast and sap the happiness of a whole household for ever."

"What relationship is there between you and the prisoner?" asked the judge.

"There is no relationship."

"Then how comes it that you interest yourself in him so much?"

"He is a co-religionist."

At this a jeer went up from the people.

"Why do you jeer?" asked Aaron, growing excited. "Were not Jews and Christians made by the same God? Is not one as good as the other?"

At this arose a tumult, and there were cries of "Blasphemy! He dares to say that a Jew is as good as a Christian."

Once more the judge restored order. He was anxious to make a show of tolerance, although his sympathies were entirely with the people and against the Jew.

"We can listen no longer to you, Aaron Arama," he said, "unless you have some evidence to offer."

"I have evidence to offer, evidence that should appeal to your hearts and sympathies. Behold it here." As he spoke he raised his daughter from her seat, and drawing down the cloak, exposed her face, revealing her superb and chaste beauty to the astonished court. She was very pale, but though her

eyes were cast down in maiden bashfulness, she knew instinctively that every eye there was bent upon her, and the blood mounted to her temples.

"By Heaven, she is beautiful!" whispered one lawyer to another. "What a pity it is she is a Jewess."

"A vision—a dream," was the answer. "How comes it that such unique beauty is given to these accursed people?"

When the prisoner saw the woman whom he had hoped to make his bride so suddenly presented before his gaze, he felt as if the whole place was swimming around him. But with a mighty effort he controlled himself.

"What means this mummerly?" asked the judge, with growing sternness.

"This is my daughter, judge, and she is the pledged bride of the young man who stands there with the shackles of shame riveted upon his limbs. I am her father, and yet I say she is beautiful, and the court can see that I speak not vainly. With such a prize as this to win, and the fortune that goes with it, Moshka Umanski must have been mad or a fool—aye, a triple fool—to do ought that would jeopardize his chances of the prize."

The judge smiled coldly as he asked :—

"And is it for this only that you have brought your daughter here, and exposed her beauty to the ribald gaze of the mob? A tiger is beautiful, but the people

love it not. And beautiful as your child is, she belongs to a race against which exists a strong prejudice."

Poor Aaron's heart sank, and seemed to grow cold as these cruel words were uttered. He had been entirely led away by a mistaken belief that Rachel's beauty would have made an impression upon the judge; and now that he realized his error, a sense of shame came over him, and covering his daughter again with the cloak, he hugged her to him, and at this there was a roar of laughter amongst the people. And his feelings getting the better of him, Aaron turned upon them like a grand old lion at bay, and thundered out:—

"Ribald, mocking fools! Go your ways and pray to your God to soften your hearts and to give you wisdom."

This speech inflamed the people, and a murmur of anger arose and threats were uttered. Then the judge stood up on the dais and motioned to the soldiers, and some of them approached Aaron and told him he must leave the court. He seemed dazed and broken, but he moved away, still clasping his daughter to him, and a great sob broke from her. Out of that temple of the law, where the scales of Justice were not balanced, went poor Aaron and his child, and when they gained the outer vestibule they sat on one of the stone benches. And presently they heard an exultant cheer from the people in the court.

A lawyer in his gown came out, and was hurrying away, but Aaron clutched him.

"Tell me," he said, "is he condemned?"

"He is."

"And the sentence?"

"Sakhalin," curtly and gruffly answered the lawyer, and hurried away.

All alert as she was, Rachel heard that dread word, and with a sob that came from her bursting heart, she moaned in the agony of her distress this prayer:—

"Oh Lord, God of the weary and sorrowful, uphold me and comfort me in this hour of my bitter trial, I pray Thee, and give me strength to bear this cruel blow."

Even though it compels us for a moment or two to turn aside from the incidents in the story, it may be well to give here some account of the famous prison to which Moshka had been sentenced. Sakhalin is one of the largest islands in the world, and is situated in the Northern Pacific, off the east coast of Russian Manchuria, from which it is separated by a narrow strait six miles in width, and known as the Gulf of Tartary. This island is used as a Russian convict station, and is one of the most dreadful and desolate regions on the face of the globe. It is out of the route of trading vessels; and so wild and barren is it, so difficult of access, so wrapped in everlasting gloom and fog, so full of fever and disease of all kinds, that it seems verily to be accursed. And yet to this awful place the

Russian Government, in its pitiless barbarity, sends its prisoners whom it is ashamed to execute, but whom it wishes to bury alive.

It was in 1869 that Russia first began to send her convicts there, and removed as it is from all civilization, and shut off by pitiless, ice-bound and stormy seas from trading ships, the cries of agony that are wrung from the suffering victims are heard not, and the world knows nothing of the inhuman torture that the brutal governors inflict upon their charges. The island is 670 miles long, and from 20 to 160 broad. The aborigines are a barbarous and savage race known as Ghilaks and Ainos, and a mountain people called Oroks. They number altogether only 5,000, and eke out a miserable existence by hunting. The only thing in the island of any value besides the fur animals is coal, but as this cannot be shipped away it is practically useless. There is a mountain range from 2,000 to 5,000 feet, covered with sub-Arctic vegetation, while the valleys are miasmatic swamps, where cultivation is impossible.

The convict settlement is about the middle of the island, at a place called Alexandrovsk. There are two huge prisons here amidst surroundings that suggest the gloom of Danté's "Inferno." The food supplies for these prisons are transported from the only harbour the island boasts of on the backs of convicts, a journey of sixty miles across the mountains. Many of the people perish during this terrible

journey, either from the severe labour or the whips of the brutal gaolers. The bodies are left where they fall, and no mercy or pity is shown to the dying. If anyone thinks that these statements are exaggerated I would refer him to the report of Dr. Petri, published in the "Jahresbericht," of the Geographical Society of Berne, during 1883-84.

The first batch of convicts were sent to Sakhalin in 1869. They marched 4,700 miles across Siberia, and more than half the number perished by the way, while those who arrived were half-rotten with scurvy, while some had become hopeless imbeciles. At the present day the convicts are sent from Odessa by ships, but their sufferings, while shorter, are so terrible that the poor wretches say they would prefer the march overland. The governor of the island has absolute power of life and death in his hands, and, as with all Russian governors, brutal tyranny would seem to be his motto. The convicts labour in heavy chains, which are never removed, and the least act of insubordination is punished with death. It appears that one of the great inducements for the Government to send its victims to Sakhalin, apart from the certainty of their dying soon, was the apparent impossibility of escape.

But an official report published a few years ago stated that something like 16 per cent. of the prisoners got clear of the prisons. Many of these are captured, however, by the natives, who are encouraged thereto by the offer of a reward. If the prisoner is returned

alive the capturer gets ten roubles ; if dead the price is five roubles. Rifles have been distributed by the administration amongst the natives, who are warned to shoot the escaped prisoners down if they show the slightest resistance ; and as death is preferable to recapture, which would subject them to barbarous torture, they prefer being shot to being retaken. But, notwithstanding the appalling difficulties and risks, some of them do get clear entirely by reaching the coast, making a rough raft, and floating out to sea, where they have the chance of being picked up by some of the American whalers which fish there. A few years ago a prisoner named Kamoloff succeeded in reaching the mainland by crossing the narrow strait of Tartary on the ice in the winter. Then for two weary years he made his way over mountains and rivers, over the steppes and through the forests—living, Heaven knows how, and yet always drawn on by the desire to see his wife and children once more.

And at last he gained his native village, bowed, worn, grey-headed, haggard, and gaunt, although a young man in years. In the bosom of his family he remained for a short time, until some of his neighbours betrayed him, and once more he was brought before the court, and when sentence of banishment was again pronounced, he raised his hands to Heaven, with a wail of agony, and exclaimed :—

“The ice and the rivers, and the stormy Baikal, and the Arctic snows harmed me not. Nay, these things

pitied me. The very wolves let me pass ; man alone is pitiless, and betrays me."

This little story is not a romance, but fact—stern, terrible fact ; and the incident happened in "civilized" and "Christian" Russia. Whether the poor fellow lived to reach the living tomb again, it is impossible to say.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

IVAN ALEXIEFF was in no way responsible for Moshka's arrest. As a matter of fact it was the outcome of the panic that had seized the officials, and which every now and again breaks out like an epidemic in Russia. So sensitive is the official mind to the merest whisper of treason or plot, that wholesale arrests and banishments are the result. In this case, however, the Chief of the Police, Peter Alexieff, urged on by his patron and supporter, Count Nicholas Suvorof, needed but the flimsiest excuse to swoop down on the Jews, against whom the spies and hirelings pointed as engaged in a plot, and having once got them in his power, it was the easiest thing imaginable to manufacture evidence against them. It needed but the outlay of a few roubles. But, though Ivan had not brought about his rival's fall, he rejoiced thereat, for Fate was favouring him, so he thought, and his hope of winning Rachel would yet become fruition. He allowed three or four weeks to pass, however, before he made any attempt to see her ; and

then he went to Arama's house. Now, Arama being aware of what had taken place between his daughter and Ivan on the night of the ball, and how Moshka had interfered, and how angry and fiery words and dark threats had been uttered by Ivan, very naturally suspected that Ivan might have had some hand in bringing about Moshka's imprisonment. He therefore received him with studied dignity and coldness, saying :—

"You rendered me service once, and the hospitality of my house shall not be denied you ; and yet do I fear that you cross my threshold as an enemy and not as a friend."

"Wherefore think you so?" asked Ivan, with a certain sharpness of manner, as though he were annoyed by the mere suspicion.

"Ivan Alexieff," answered Arama, as he stood with his hands crossed before him, and his eyes upturned, "it lies not in me to do any man wrong, and if I wrong you by word or deed, my sin will not be a wilful deed, and it can find no lasting record in Heaven. But my thought is this, that it is through you that we have lost Umanski, and that Rachel mourns as for one that is dead, and refuses to be comforted."

"By my honour, you *do* wrong me," exclaimed Ivan, with a strength of emphasis that caused his listener to waver in his belief. "I say again and again, you wrong me," continued Ivan, with increased warmth ;

"and if I speak not the truth, may my tongue be palsied."

"I dare not doubt you now. Give me your hand," said Arama, with a cordiality of expression that left no doubt of his sincerity.

"Stay," responded Ivan, and he drew back a pace or two. "Let us understand each other. I strike no man in the dark nor behind his back; and no one, neither Jew nor Gentile, shall say that Ivan Alexieff is a coward. In no way, either directly or indirectly, have I been instrumental in bringing about Moshka Umanski's fall. But I rejoice at it. Nay, scowl not at me so. He was my rival; being my rival, he was mine enemy; and being mine enemy, I am filled with joy that he can no more come between me and the object of my devotion."

"This is strange and unjustifiable language——"

"Wherefore unjustifiable? Does not the justification lie in your daughter?"

"But her love is given to Moshka; wherefore seek that which it is impossible to gain?" said Aaron sternly.

"I deny that I seek the impossible. Moshka Umanski is condemned to hard labour in the island of Sakhalin. Few men who go to Sakhalin ever come back. Therefore Moshka is dead to Rachel. A woman may nurse a dead love for a time, but in the end her heart warms into life again. I would woo her. Give me leave, and I will strive to win her

fairly ; but failing, I will honestly confess my defeat, and you shall hear of me no more."

Aaron was evidently deeply moved and troubled. He could not fail to be impressed by Ivan's sincerity, but he loved Moshka, and yet he knew that Ivan had spoken a terrible truth when he said that but few men came back from the living grave of Sakhalin. If Moshka had not been a Jew it might not have been impossible by means of heavy bribes to get his sentence reduced, if not reversed altogether; but the law having fastened its grip on a Jew, clung with the tenacity of the devilfish, and nothing could make it release its hold. Aaron knew all this, and, knowing it, felt that it were worse than folly to hope that Rachel and Moshka could now ever be united. Presently he spoke in answer to Ivan, and these were his words :—

"I am Rachel's father, and my child's happiness is to me more precious than wealth ; and I would not have her love cling to a dead thing. But though in the fulness of time she may wail no more for Moshka, there is a gulf between you and her."

"How mean you ?" asked Ivan quickly.

"You are a Christian, she is a Jewess."

"But there is no law, either human or divine, which prevents a Christian and a Jewess from marrying."

"True, true," muttered Aaron, in an absorbed way ; and pacing the room for awhile he seemed much

troubled. "I am an old man," he continued, "and my wife is old, too, and soon we shall be called upon to lay down the burden of life. But before the end comes I would do much to insure my child's happiness. And yet, how is that to be done? Alas, I know not, for the heart of man is false. Moshka was true, though ; aye, true as the pole-star to the north, but he is dead to us now, dead—dead !"

The old Jew was much affected, his voice had grown unsteady, and he pressed his handkerchief to his eyes.

"Yes, Moshka is dead to you," remarked Ivan, "and I would take his place—give me leave to woo your daughter."

"My daughter shall speak for herself," cried Aaron. "I will fetch her, and out of her own lips shall you know her mind."

He hurried from the room, returning shortly with Rachel leaning on his arm. Her face wore a look of ineffable sorrow, and her eyes were filled with an expression of yearning sadness. As she came into the room and beheld Ivan, she shuddered and clung closer to her father, who had not told her that Ivan was there.

"You see that she shudders in your presence and shrinks from you !" said Aaron.

"Why is it so, Rachel ?" asked Ivan.

"Wherefore do you ask me ? Let your own conscience answer."

Guessing her meaning, Ivan turned to Arama and said:—

“Speak for me, I pray you, for she thinks me guilty.”

“It is true, she does,” answered Arama. “But, Rachel, I have his assurance that he did not bring about Moshka’s arrest.”

“And you believe it?” she asked, with something like an incredulous smile playing about her mouth.

“Aye, for he has sworn it.”

“And swear it again,” broke in Ivan. “I did not influence his arrest—did not know he was to be arrested. May death strike me before I can speak again if this be not true!”

Rachel fixed Ivan with her ravishing eyes, but he quailed nor flinched not under their piercing gaze. Then, thinking perhaps as her father thought, that it were better to have him as a friend than an enemy, she said:—

“I will believe you,” and she extended her hand to him, and he pressed his lips to it.

Thus were their differences adjusted; but she dreamed not then of allowing him to talk love to her. Ivan Alexieff, however, had no intention of abandoning his suit. He had all his father’s stern determination of purpose, but was without his father’s faults. For Ivan was honest, while his father was an unscrupulous knave. And so the son, having a goal in view, pressed towards it, and that goal was to win the beautiful

Rachel, and take her to wife, for his love for her burned fiercer and stronger day by day. And yet, though gracious and kindly to him, she would give him no hope. Her answer always was—

“My heart is Moshka’s; and Moshka takes it with him into his exile.”

And this repetition irritated Ivan, though he concealed his irritation; but he felt that he hated Moshka with a hatred that could not be expressed by words.

So far his visits to Arama’s house and his interviews with Rachel had been kept secret from his people; at least, he hoped and believed so; for, though he had shown that he had nothing craven in his nature, he dreaded the consequences of his father coming to know. But he had forgotten how his father’s spies were everywhere; and had his hot love allowed him a little time for cool reflection, he must have foreseen that sooner or later his secret would be a secret no longer. And so it came to pass that one evening, when he returned to his home, a messenger bade him repair to his father’s presence. He obeyed the command, and when he looked at his father he must immediately have felt that a storm of violence was about to burst.

Peter Alexieff was a hard, stern-faced man, with cruelty writ large upon his countenance. Such thin, drawn lips, and such cold, watchful eyes were never seen in connection with a humane and genial dis-

position. Peter Alexieff combined with the purring, docile, cringing nature of the courtier the tiger's ferocity. He had cruel claws, but he kept them embedded in fur; and he had a beak that could tear out the heart of his enemy. This is figurative language, but it aptly describes Peter Alexieff's disposition. He had climbed to power by trampling into the dust everyone who would have opposed him; and if any such thing as pity had ever held a place in his breast, he must long ago have plucked it out by the roots and cast it from him. Peter Alexieff was pitiless!

He was in his own sphere a petty king. As Chief of the Administrative Bureau of Police he had tremendous power in his hands, and he used that power like a tyrant and a despot. He had thousands of men subject to his beck and nod, and his spies were scattered through Europe. He knew that there were Nihilists and Jews who thirsted for his blood, and so he was ever surrounded with a body-guard of servile creatures whom he believed were devoted to him. Perhaps they were, for knowing that his life depended on the faithfulness of his henchmen, he treated them with every indulgence. His predecessor in office had been treacherously assassinated, and Peter, when he came to power—which was only little short of that wielded by the Czar himself—resolved to avoid the errors that brought about that predecessor's death.

As Ivan entered the room his father eyed him with a sternness that plainly indicated what was coming.

"The pride of my race seems not to dwell in you," he began, "since you have so far forgotten what is due to me and your kinsmen as to spend your time in the company of a Jewess."

"Your spies, sir, seem to do their duty well," remarked Ivan, with a faint suspicion of a sneer in his tone.

"My spies would cease to be my spies if they did not," returned his father. "But do you deny or confess the report true?"

"It is quite true."

This bold answer caused the fire of passion to leap into Peter Alexieff's eyes, and as he struck the table violently with the palm of his hand he exclaimed:—

"You must be mad or you would not dare to tell me this to my face." Then, moderating his passion, he added: "But there, there; the mere dalliance with a Jewess may be tolerated in one of my own flesh and blood, much as I hate the whole race of accursed unbelievers. But——"

"Let me correct your mistake, sir," interrupted Ivan. "It is not dalliance on my part. I seek to make Rachel Arama my wife."

His father leaned back in his chair aghast. The power of speech was almost taken from him by this daring and startling announcement.

"Now do I know that you are mad," he cried at last.

"No, I am not mad, father."

"Better ten thousand times for you that you were," said his father fiercely, "for then would I pity you. But since you are not mad, you are dangerous. Know you, sir, that were you to bring a Jewess into my family I should feel that we were contaminated, tainted, and accursed, even as the whole Jewish race is accursed. No, Ivan Alexieff, this thing shall not be while an *oubliette* remains in St. Peter and Paul."

A perceptible look of concern swept over Ivan's face, and it did not escape his father's keen eyes. The youth had not thought until that moment that his father would push his power to such an extreme as to immure him in one of the dreadful dungeons of the dread fortress. But now he saw at once, that if the dark threat were carried out, his father would have no difficulty in finding an excuse for so doing. Nor could he doubt for a moment, knowing his father's nature as he did, that he would not hesitate to take even such an extreme step as that, rather than have his despotic will thwarted. Nevertheless, he answered boldly, after some reflection :—

"Your power to fulfil your threat I do not doubt. But I should not be the first man who had suffered martyrdom for love's sake."

"Bah!" exclaimed Peter Alexieff, with a long-

drawn sneer. "You must surely be possessed of a devil if you talk of being in love with a Jewess."

"But know you not, father, that Rachel Arama is one of the most beautiful women in St. Petersburg?"

"Beautiful! A snake may be beautiful, but you wouldn't love it. But let the bandying of words cease. I have spoken. This madness of yours must be cured. Go out into the streets and pick up the most abandoned creature you can find and make her your wife, and I will forgive you. But to speak of marrying a Jewess—Ugh! I shudder at the very thought. My hatred for the whole Jewish race I drew in with my mother's milk. She hated them, and I should be unworthy of her if I did otherwise. Put the thought of Rachel Arama out of your head, or dread the consequences. I have said my say. Now go. Hark ye, though, do not attempt to defy me."

Ivan did go. He was glad to get away, for he knew that if he argued for hours he would never alter his father's views. And yet, in spite of the danger that threatened him, he had no intention of giving Rachel up. She had enslaved him, and he was powerless to set himself free. But he had no wish to do so. He was content to remain her slave for all time. Leastways, that was his thought.

As soon as Ivan had left, the Chief of Police struck a bell, and immediately a panel slid back in the wall, and a man stepped into the room and made a military salute—a dark-browed, vicious-looking man,

with the cunning of the serpent manifesting itself in his face.

"Pavloff," said the Chief, "you have heard what has taken place?"

"I have, your greatness!"

"That is well. Watch my son, then. Let him not pass from your sight."

"It shall be as you command," answered Pavloff.

"And stay, Pavloff. Have you—have you of late heard any feeling expressed against the Jewish population by the people?"

"Truly, oh, Little Father, the people cry out ever against the Jews!"

"Ah! some day, Pavloff, the people will give up crying and resort to deeds!"

"Then will they be like the storm-winds let loose from the cave of the winds. Woe to those who would obstruct them."

"You speak like a prophet, Pavloff. Be watchful and wary. I see promotion hovering over you. The interview is ended. You may go."

Pavloff made another salute, then retired as mysteriously as he had entered, and the Chief of the Police resumed the writing on which he had been engaged when his son came to him.

CHAPTER VI.

ARAMA'S VENGEANCE.

COUNT NICHOLAS SUVOROF was in high favour with the Czar, for he was a powerful noble, and a member of one of the oldest sections of the Russian nobility. Peter Alexieff was in high favour with the Count, for he was a servile flatterer and as potter's clay in the Count's hands. Count Nicholas Suvorof had been instrumental in getting severer, harsher, and more pitiless laws framed against the Jews residing in the Czar's dominions, and these laws were carried out with unswerving fidelity by Peter Alexieff in the name of "God and the Czar."

After that stormy interview between father and son many days were scored off the calendar, and then, full of a great concern, Peter Alexieff went to his master, the Count, and made known to him that his heart was sore and his pride outraged by his unworthy son, who—as reported to him by his faithful creature, Pavloff—was still secretly going to Aaron Arama's house, in order that he might be with Rachel.

"This accursed Jewess has bewitched my son,

Count," said Peter. "Like Delilah, the shame-faced woman of old, who took away Samson's strength and enslaved him; so has this shameless unbeliever enslaved Ivan."

"And are you so powerless, Peter Alexieff—Chief of the Police—that you cannot stop the evil practices of this Jewish witch?" asked the Count, with an ironical smile.

"My son defies me."

"Because the witch bewitches him never so well," returned the Count. "And yet mayhap if the charm were destroyed your son would be restored to his senses, and once more become amenable to your influence!"

Peter looked at his patron, and his patron seemed absorbed in the contemplation of an *ikon* that hung on the wall. And presently Peter spoke cautiously.

"Since to you, all-wise Count, I have ever looked for guidance, give me, I pray you, a sign in this matter."

The Count turned round sharply and faced him.

"You were not wont to be so dull-witted, Peter. Were I ruler of this great realm never a Jew should find a footing in it. And were I Chief of the Police of this magnificent city, which gleams like a diadem on Neva's brow, the unbeliever should not pollute it."

"But, Count, I am not Dictator."

"But, Peter Alexieff, you are Chief of the Police."

"True, oh mightiness, thanks to your generosity

and great influence ; and yet I cannot expel these Jews."

" You can harry them," remarked the Count, slowly, and laying stress upon the words.

" How ? "

" How ! God's goodness, Peter, your accession to power has surely blunted your senses. Sweep them out of the city ! Is that plain enough for you ? "

" But the Little Father would hardly tolerate that."

" Set the mob against them. The mob is like a bloodhound held in leash. Give it blood to smell, then slip the leash, and see what the brute will do."

A strange smile came into Alexieff's face at these words. He understood now, and acknowledged that his understanding was awakened by bowing to the Count, and in a little while he went his way.

The dark hint thrown out by the Count was but a reflex of the thoughts that had over and over again passed through Alexieff's mind ; though he had deemed it diplomatic to appear a little obtuse while in his patron's presence. He knew that he had many enemies, for he had been raised to power over the heads of others who had far stronger claims to the post, and great had been the jealousy and discontent that this fact had given rise to. Now Peter was far too diplomatic to be indifferent to this jealousy, and he was well aware that his enemies watched him with a fierce thirsting for the plums of office, and that any false step, any error of judgment on his part, would

be hailed with delight, and he might suddenly find himself deposed. Therefore it behoved him to be circumspect in all his doings. But now that he knew his patron's mind, he felt free to act, though he was too cautious to do anything precipitate. The fitting opportunity must arise, and till it did he could wait.

At last fate and chance played strangely into his hands.

It fell out that ere a moon had run its course from that day when he waited upon the Count, a Christian and a Jew quarrelled in the Apraxin-dvor, which is the *bric-à-brac* and curiosity bazaar of St. Petersburg. The quarrel was over some trading matter, and the Christian accused the Jew of having been guilty of sharp practice. The Jew resented this, and there were high words, and hot blood was engendered. Ultimately the Christian knocked the Jew down. Stirred by uncontrollable rage, the man sprang up, and, drawing a knife upon his assailant, he stabbed him to the heart. Then did the Christians of the bazaar fall upon the Jew and beat him until he was left for dead.

This incident caused intense excitement, and Peter Alexieff saw his chance. So that the next day Pavloff—who was not known to be Peter Alexieff's spy—went into the bazaar amongst the excited people, who neglected their respective businesses to talk of the murder of the Christian, and the feeling that was manifested against the Jews was intense.

Pavloff joined in the gossip, and at last harangued the crowd.

"How long," he asked, "are we to bear the infliction of these unbelievers, who take from us our trade, who push us from all the good offices, and aspire to rule us? I say, again, how long shall these things be?"

"We are fools to put up with it," cried many voices.

Then from the outer edge of the crowd a man with a strident voice exclaimed:—

"If you be not slaves and cowards, exterminate these accursed Hebrews!"

The man with the strident voice was named Samuel Skavrónsky. He was a moujik who had come in from one of the neighbouring provinces to search for work in the city, and he was the same man who had assaulted Aaron Arama in the Gostinnoi-dvor.

"You speak well, comrade and friend," answered Pavloff; "and unless we be cowards and slaves we shall not rest quietly and see our countrymen stabbed to death by these intruders. But who dares to rise up and say we are either cowards or slaves?"

"Aye. Who? Who?" shouted the people, angrily.

"Not you, friend," continued Pavloff, addressing him of the strident voice.

"By the Little Father on the great throne of Russia, no," returned Skavrónsky. "I hate these Jews, as my blessed father and mother before me did. Am I less than my father and mother that I should love the Jews?"

"What is your name, comrade?" asked Pavloff.

"One that I blush not to own, though I be but a moujik. It is Samuel Skavrónsky."

"I give you greeting, Samuel Skavrónsky," said the spy of the Chief of the Police. "If you honour the memory of your father and mother you will continue to hate the Jews."

"Hate them! Have you no stronger word than that? Hate them! 'Fore Heaven, I feel as if I could not breathe when one is near me."

"Many of us feel like that," remarked the crafty Pavloff, "and yet we see our countrymen murdered and are afraid to rise in our might and have blood for blood." This told as he intended it should tell, and Skavrónsky, who was dreaming of the reputed wealth of the Jew's quarter, answered him with a growl:—

"Speak for yourself, friend. I am not afraid, and if a dozen trusty fellows will follow me, there shall be great work done ere the night closes."

This was greeted with a great shout from the people, who began to stir like the uprising waves when the storm-wind bursts over the sea suddenly.

"Down with the Jews!" exclaimed Pavloff, gauging to a nicety the temper and the feelings of his listeners.

"Aye, down with them! Down with them! Roast them!" was the response from numerous throats; and now the mob swayed this way and that, and there was a confused scuffling of feet and the sound of stertorous breathing as men pressed against men.

These things were ominous signs of the rising wrath, and one or two Jews, who had stood at some little distance listening in fear, slunk away and made it known to their co-religionists, as far as they could, that a storm was brewing. Then were shops hastily closed, the doors secured, and valuables removed, and Pavloff, having laid the mine and fired the train, left the explosion to do its work. And the angry multitude, wanting a leader, looked to Samuel Skavrónsky ; whereupon his vanity was flattered, and he unchained the passions of the people, who roared as roars the breath of the hurricane, and arming themselves with whatever was at hand—sticks, stones, axes, and knives from the butchers' shops, bars of iron from a contiguous smithy—they swept like a whirlwind through the bazaar, shouting :—

“ To the Petersburgskaia Storona. Down with the Jews.”

On their way they came to a gunsmith's, and like locusts that swoop down on a field of grain, so swooped the rioters on the arms and ammunition. Then on they swept again in their fierce wrath, still howling, “ Down with the Jews.” And as they went the cry proved infectious, and from the slums and alleys poured forth the human wolves that scented prey, and they howled in chorus ; and so the stream, ever gathering an accession of strength, became a mighty flood, carrying everything before it ; pillaging the shops as they went, the now irresponsible mob—

which Count Suvorof had aptly likened to a blood-hound—inflamed themselves with vodka, and, scenting blood, roared like savage beasts.

A warning of the oncoming danger had preceded the rioters to the Petersburgskaia Storona, and the unfortunate people fell into a panic; but hasty attempts were made to put the women and children in a place of safety, though the time was too short, and Aaron Arama, who remained cool, advised his neighbours to await calmly for the onslaught, and only strike in self-defence, for the honour of their wives and sisters, and the safety of their children. But children wailed, women wept, and men with clenched teeth and pale, agitated faces cried: "Oh Lord, how long must this endure?"

Then, on the air rose the hoarse tumult of the on-sweeping rush of the mob, that had now become thousands strong. Down they poured on the Hebrew quarters, and an old blind man that stood in their way was smitten to the ground and trampled in the mire; and the bloodhounds having whetted their fangs with this, the first blood, yelled and screeched for more. Battering down the doors, crushing in the windows, they gained access to the houses, and then began a scene that would have made the angels of Heaven weep. Furniture was cast out into the street and, being piled in heaps, was fired. Women were seized and subjected to violence, while helpless babes and children were battered to death on the stones.

and against the walls, and even cast alive on the flaming piles of furniture. An earthquake's might seemed to be in the roar of the brutal mob, for the solid earth shook and the houses rocked.

Night closed. The stars looked out and then hid themselves behind heavy clouds, while the heavens shed tears and the wind moaned. But in the hearts of the Christians there was no pity; in their eyes were no tears; and up to the weeping heavens arose from hundreds of hoarse throats the rallying cry of "Down with the accursed Jews." And the Jews went down before the wrath of their fellow-men. Their blood flowed like water; women cried aloud to God to help them; and the wailing and shrieking of children added to the horror of the scene. But the madness of fanaticism and the spirit of ferocity had no ears either for the cries of women or the wailing of children. Not the ravening tigers of Indian jungles could have been more ferocious, more pitiless than were those fierce Christians who howled and howled again.

"Do we this thing for God and the Czar! These Jews pollute the land. They must be swept from it."

Against Aaron Arama's house the brutal violence of the mob seemed to be specially directed, for Samuel Skavrónsky—treasuring up his supposed wrong against Aaron—thirsted for his blood, and he egged the people on. At last an entrance was gained, and with Skavrónsky at their head, fifty people at

least rushed up the stairs, and on the great landing they were confronted by Aaron Arama, with his daughter clinging to him. She was pale as a figure of Death, and yet—unless that paleness was a sign—she showed no outward signs of fear. Calmly, yet sternly, Aaron stood; looking grand in his very calmness. His left arm was about his daughter, and in his right he held a revolver pointed at the mob.

“Wherefore enter you thus into a peaceful man’s house?” he demanded, in a wonderfully steady voice, and standing firm as a rock.

Skavrónsky and those immediately behind him paused as they beheld the imposing sight of this grand old man, who held the power of death in his hand, while the stern, determined look of his face said plainly that he would not hesitate to use that power.

“Strike him down,” cried someone.

And to this Skavrónsky growled:—

“Aye, let us down with him, and scize that Jezebel daughter of his.”

As the ruffian gazed on the wondrous beauty of Rachel he was inflamed, but Aaron planted his foot more firmly, and, putting his daughter a little behind him so as the better to cover her, he exclaimed:—

“Back, lest the vengeance of the Lord of Hosts fall suddenly upon you. Ill becomes it one of my tribe to shed blood, but in defence of the honour of my child and my own life, I will strike him into the dust

who dares advance a step ! I hold here the means of dealing death, and I warn you to retreat ! ”

The mob were temporarily overawed by the coolness and determination of this grey-haired old man ; but they swayed, surged, and growled like a pack of wolves baulked of their prey. Taking advantage of their hesitation, Aaron raised his mellow voice and said :—

“ Poor misguided people, wherefore do you let your passions thus run riot ? I have injured you not——”

“ You are a Jew ! ” shouted the people.

“ And by what Divine command are you ordered to pour out your wrath on my devoted people ? We have endured your scorn and contumely through the ages. Yet have we been patient under our suffering. But even the worm may turn, and I say beware, beware lest out of Heaven come a fire that will consume you.”

“ Down with him ! These unbelieving Jews should be driven out of Russia,” roared those behind ; but those in front feared the glittering weapon that the old man held, and they pressed back with craven fear.

“ Aye, drive us out of Russia,” answered Aaron, “ and your strength will be gone. Drive us out of Russia, and Russia itself will go to pieces. The day that sees an exodus of my people from this country will be a fatal day for Russia. I speak it. Give heed to my words, for the despised Jew is Russia’s strength.”

He had become a little excited, his eyes glowed as if with the light of prophecy, and his vigilance being for the moment relaxed, Skavrónsky made a snatch at the pistol, but missed securing it. Displaying terror for the first time, Rachel, thinking, perhaps, that her father had lost the weapon, sprang in front of him as if to protect him. It was Skavrónsky's opportunity, and, darting forward, he seized her round the waist, intending to carry her off. But Aaron hesitated not, now that outrage was offered to his beloved child, and he sped a bullet through the ruffian's head. Without a cry, the fellow threw up his arms and fell back against the struggling people on the stairs. A panic ensued. These human animals, being cooped up and wedged in one by the other, lost their nerves. They roared and howled, and swayed with a mighty weight against the protecting balustrade of the stairs, which, strong as it was, gave way, and then, with mingled oaths and shrieks and cries for mercy, the mass of people crashed like a mighty avalanche on to the stone corridor below.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORK OF THE NIGHT.

DURING the time that the terrible scene was being enacted on the stairs in Aaron Arama's house, a man had forced his way in from the street as far as the foot of the stairs; but there his further passage was barred by the wedged-in and closely-packed crowd of excited people. And though he assumed an authoritative tone, and at last commanded and then threatened, he made no more impression than he would have done if he had told the sun to stand still, or the waves of a stormy sea to cease to roll. This man was Ivan Alexieff, and his object was to render assistance to Rachel and her father; for he had gathered enough of what was going on to know that they were in danger, although from his position he could not see them.

It is testimony to the sincere feelings Alexieff bore for Rachel that he was ready to run any risk, and to imperil himself in order to aid her. As soon as he heard that an attack was being made on the Jews' quarter, he drove in a dhrosky with all possible speed to the Petersburgskaia Storona, knowing full well that

an attempt would be made to wreck Arama's house, and that Rachel was hardly likely to escape insult, and might even lose her life. Therefore he paused not, nor did he reflect what the consequences to himself would be if his proceedings should become known to his father. But love pauses not to reason, and though Ivan had displayed an impetuosity and a strength of passion that were remarkable, it would be unfair to him to suggest that his love was passion only.

As he vainly endeavoured to force his way up the stairs he was suddenly startled by the pistol shot; then he heard the savage cry of anger that succeeded it, and immediately following that he saw what might have been the result of an earthquake, so sudden and awful was it. The iron and wooden banisters crashed and splintered to pieces, and pell-mell, headlong fell the mob. It was an awful sight, but the catastrophe cleared away the obstacle that had hitherto imposed itself between him and those he sought; and then at the head of the stairs he beheld the old man still holding the smoking weapon, and looking in his sternness and determination almost like some Heaven-appointed agent of vengeance. But on her knees, her arms around his waist, her long hair loose and straggling, her superb face bloodless and haggard, and filled with a frightened expression, was poor Rachel.

The incidents of the dramatic scene had taken place very rapidly, and the tableau thus suddenly

revealed to Ivan's anxious eyes enabled him to understand the plot of the tragedy. The smoking weapon in Arama's hand, and the alarm and distress of Rachel, told their own tale. And so, with one wild upward rush he stood beside them, and, excited and agitated, he exclaimed :—

“You must fly ! Quick ! or the bloodhounds, when they have recovered themselves, will tear you to pieces.”

The words aroused Arama. He had been in a dream, or rather he had been dazed ; but now, with a groan of despair he realized his position, and with the flash of a thought, as it were, he saw all the consequences that were likely to ensue to himself and those who were dearer to him than life ; and in that awful moment of agony of mind and heart he suddenly turned his weapon on his daughter, his intention being to kill her and then himself. But Ivan divined what he would do, and snatching the weapon away, thrust it into his pocket. Then he seized Rachel, and by sheer physical strength raised her up, for she seemed to have lost both presence of mind and power to act.

“Are you mad ?” he demanded, addressing Arama. “Arouse yourself, and let us seek a place of safety while there is yet time. Rachel, you shall not remain here. Come, come, I beseech you, and I will defend you with my life.”

She was wailing now like one who was stricken

with a mortal agony, and looked appealingly to her father, who had recovered all his self-possession and presence of mind.

"Ivan Alexieff," he said, sadly and sternly, "it is a moment that permits of no argument or parley. I see all that will come out of it. But within this house my wife lies nigh unto death, and I go not from her. Into your hands, however, I commit the safety and honour of my child, and I charge you solemnly, in the name of the High God, to guard them well. Go."

"Father!" cried Rachel, despairingly, and stretching her hands towards him as if in that one exclamation she was beseeching him to revoke his decision. But he waved her off, and repeated twice :—

"Go. Go." Then he added : "The Lord's might is greater than man's. We will trust in it. Men are but as grains of sand, and are scattered by the Lord's breath, and our enemies shall be confounded." He paused as if from some pang of emotion ; but, in a moment, repeated the word "Go," more emphatically.

Used to obeying her father with unanswering and implicit obedience, Rachel held up her face for him to kiss her. He did so, and then turned away so that she might not see how deeply he was affected. And she gave her hand to Ivan, saying :—

"My father has delivered me into your charge. I will go where you lead me."

Ivan Alèxieff saw that it would be utter madness to attempt to force a passage through the frantic rabble, whose aim and object now were fire and slaughter.

"Is there no other way out?" he asked, anxiously, of Rachel.

"Yes," she answered, with an unnatural calmness. "Follow me," and he followed her, and she led the way along an upper passage, and up another flight of steps, and presently emerged on the roof, which, in common with many Russian houses, was flat, or partially so.

It was a strange scene that met the anxious gaze of the fugitives. The darkness of the starless night was in a measure dispersed by the lurid glare of flaming houses, and by the light of these flames could be seen below the rioters as they rushed about in search of prey. The rain was still falling, and the wind moaned drearily.

"And whither now?" asked Ivan, betraying in his voice the keen anxiety he was feeling, for he could not be indifferent to the danger that menaced his companion. Perhaps the danger to himself was hardly less; but it was of her he was thinking. He was brave and reckless to a degree, and scarcely knew such a thing as fear. But for this Jewish maiden, whose beauty had woven such a spell about him, he was greatly concerned, for he knew that if she fell into the hands of the mob no power of his could save her.

"There is but one way," she answered, still with that unnatural calmness; "we must traverse the parapet to some other house, and so endeavour to reach the street."

"Come then," he said, fully alive to the risk, as he took her hand, and helped her on to the parapet, which was not more than a foot broad, and was slippery with the rain. A false step, and one or both of them would topple headlong into the street below. It was not a time, however, for thought, but action, and at such a moment brave men are capable of great deeds. Thus it was that Ivan braced his nerves to the situation, and, grasping his companion's hand firmly, he piloted her along the giddy edge, which was fraught with an additional danger now on account of the glow of the flames, which might reveal their presence to the mob below. But the passage was accomplished without mishap, and the roof of another house reached some distance away. The door that led from the roof to the upper passage was locked, but Ivan burst it open with his broad shoulders, and then he and Rachel descended cautiously. The house seemed to be deserted. Its inmates had either taken fright or been massacred. At any rate, no one was stirring, and there were no sounds.

At last the fugitives gained the door that led into the street. It was intact and closed. Ivan opened it with great caution and peered out. A little lower down the street fiendish work was being carried on,

but from that point the coast was clear. He turned to his companion, who looked pale and ill, and as if she were about to faint.

"Come, Rachel," he said, "let us go while the way is yet open."

She recovered herself with an effort, and exclaimed :—

"But what of my father and mother?"

So far she had meekly obeyed her father's injunctions, but she had never for a moment ceased to think of the peril her parents were in, and the anxiety she felt was made manifest in the tone in which she asked the question.

If Ivan had spoken the true thoughts of his mind, he must have told her that he considered the chances of her father's and mother's escape as very poor indeed. But he did not do so. He merely said :—

"The issue of this night's work must be left to God."

"Aye, truly," replied Rachel, with a great sigh. "May He deliver us out of our affliction."

She signified to her companion that she was ready, and then the two went forth into the pitying night, which, in its starless darkness, afforded them greater means of escape. They walked rapidly in the direction of the citadel, and they heard the bugles and drums as the soldiers mustered preparatory to sallying forth to suppress the rioters. The sounds reminded Ivan that it were wise for him not to be seen with Rachel, and so he drew her into a street that ran at

right angles with the citadel, and when they had proceeded some little distance he stopped and asked her what they were to do now; whither were they to go to? Up to then he had scarcely been able to think of that, but now the question could not be avoided. Shelter for Rachel must be found; but where? It was a problem, but she solved it.

"I know not," she said, "save it be to the house of my father's friend, Nekrassoff."

"But Nekrassoff is a Christian," exclaimed Ivan in surprise.

"True, but all Christians are not as the misguided men who have made this night hideous with the slaughter of my people and the destruction of their property. Nekrassoff is beholden to my father for many good acts. When he was pressed by his creditors, my father came to his rescue and lent him moneys without bond or bail, nor has he ever demanded one shekel of it back. Nekrassoff has two daughters who have expressed great friendship for me, and now, in this hour of my misfortune, they will surely not turn me from their door."

"Come then," said Ivan, with a certain scepticism manifesting itself in his tone, "we will put it to the test." And so they hurried on, and in a little while reached Nekrassoff's house, which stood just at the entrance to the Nevski Prospect.

Nekrassoff was a merchant who had not been very successful, and he had received great assistance and

met with much kindness from Aaron Arama, and he showed now that he was neither ungrateful nor unmindful of it; for when the old Jew's daughter sought succour and shelter, Nekrassoff received her with an honest welcome, and bade his girls entertain her well and give her all the comfort they could.

So far, then, Ivan Alexieff's self-imposed task was accomplished, and he had rescued from a deadly peril the woman who had enslaved him, and, having placed her in a position of safety, he took his leave. As he was departing from her she said :—

“You have rendered me great service, and I am grateful, but neither rest nor peace can be mine until I know that my parents are safe. Will you bring me news?”

He promised to bring her word as early as he possibly could, and, kissing her hand, he went his way with a strong feeling that, if he had not quite won her, there was but little more required to be able to call her his own; and yet could he have lifted the veil for one brief instant that shrouded the future, and had caught a glimpse of what lay before him, he would surely have shrunk back, and with white lips have cursed the fatal hour that Rachel Arama's beauty came into his vision, and threw its magic spell about him.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE DAWNING OF THE DAY.

VERY tardily, and, as it seemed, purposely so, troops were mustered in the citadel, and then sent forth against the rioters, whose fangs being whetted and their worst passions aroused, opposed themselves to the soldiers. Then, with their inflaming and rallying cry of "Death to the Jews!" they hurled themselves against the grey-coated men, who received them with fixed bayonets, and in that whirlwind of wrath many a soul took its flight to the presence of the God of all men—Jew and Christian, white and black alike—there to answer for its deeds. The mob recoiled from the shock, but maddened beyond all pause or reasoning, they yelled in fury and poured in a fusillade on the soldiers with the weapons they had stolen from the gunsmith's shop. Many a soldier bit the dust, and their comrades—chafing now—were ordered to fire a volley, then charge with the bayonet. But the people were stubborn and did not yield readily. The slaughter was great, and the streets were strewn with dead and reddened with blood.

Slowly the awful night waned, and as the cold grey

light of the dawning day crept up from the east it revealed the havoc that had been wrought. The smoking ruins of the burnt houses ; the dying and the dead ; soldier and civilian, Christian and Jew, were heartrending evidence of the furious storm of human passion that had caused the woe and misery. But in all that scene of death and wrong there was nothing more pathetic than was to be witnessed in an upper room of the half-wrecked house of Aaron Arama.

For some weeks his wife, stricken with a painful illness, aggravated if not altogether produced by the arrest and condemnation of Moshka Umanski, to whom she was greatly attached, had lain nigh unto death. And the narrow gap that separated her from the Great Unknown had been bridged over during the early part of the attack on the house. So that when Aaron returned to the chamber where she lay, after he had given his daughter into the charge of Alexieff, he found that she had passed into the shadows from whence no sound nor sign reaches us, cry we ever so loud, or pray we ever so well.

Then to the old man it seemed as if his cup of sorrow was well-nigh full to overflowing, and as he bowed his head over his dead wife so that his white hair covered her face, thus he prayed : " Oh, Great Jehovah, who delivered Elijah, and whose angel walked with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, hear my cry in this hour of great need, and should it seem fit to Thee in Thy divine

wisdom, deliver Thine unworthy servant from out of his tribulation. For I am very weary, O Lord, and the sun of my life has set. Fain would I lie now with her who has been to me a faithful and loving helpmate. Let me die, let me die, for I would rest."

And so he poured out his lamentations, and for hours he sat by the dead woman, and the firing and cries in the streets disturbed him not. The great sorrow that had come upon him seemed to deaden his senses to all external sounds.

Soon after the day had dawned Peter Alexieff appeared upon the scene, accompanied by his creature Pavloff and a retinue of spies and police. It was his duty to inquire into the origin of the riot and the cause that had led up to the massacre. As he saw the blood in the streets, the dead strewn about, and the blackened and still smoking ruins of the destroyed houses, a strange smile passed over his sardonic face, and, turning to Pavloff, he said, "There has been hot work, Pavloff."

"Truly so, your greatness."

"And the murderer—Aaron Arama—who shot the moujik, does he still live, Pavloff, or has he escaped?"

"I have watched well, but have not seen him depart," was the creature's answer.

"And his daughter—what of her, Pavloff?"

Pavloff smiled as he said, "Where the father is there will the daughter be also. Aaron's wife was stricken with illness, and I will be bound that we find

them all within the house, for the old lion would not leave his den."

Then did Alexieff order his myrmidons to guard the house, and, flourishing a drawn sword, and accompanied by a dozen of his men, he mounted the wrecked staircase, and cried :—

"Aaron Arama, if you be here, come forth in the name of the law, and answer to the law for the slaying of one of the Little Father's peaceful subjects."

To this mocking speech there was no response, and the swarthy face of the Chief of the Police darkened, for he began to think that, after all, perhaps he had been cheated of his prey. Then did he and his followers proceed to search the house, and in due course they came to the chamber of death, where still sat Arama, bowed and sorrow-stricken, by the side of her who could no longer be affected by man's inhumanity. But as the police clattered into the room Aaron arose, and, facing his foes, he exclaimed :—

"Wherefore do you intrude here? Have you no respect for the sanctity of the presence of death?"

"Aaron Arama, you will yield yourself to the law's agents," answered Peter Alexieff.

"On what charge?" demanded the old man.

"On a charge of wilfully slaying one of the Czar's subjects. By name——"

"Samuel Skavrónsky," put in Pavloff, as his chief paused.

"Samuel Skavrónsky, an honest moujik," continued the chief.

"I slew him in self-defence," answered Aaron, drawing himself up, and looking proudly defiant, as he faced Alexieff.

"Mayhap it was so," said Alexieff, "and should proof be forthcoming of that, then will you be free again. But I am the servant of the law, and my duty must be done."

At these words Aaron grew wrathful, and his eyes blazed with the flashing fire of uprising passion.

"How comes it, sir, that you have only thought of your duty now?" he asked. "Had you done your duty earlier, those of my people whose blood has been spilt in this dark night's work would still be living, and our property would have been saved from the fury of the insensate mob."

"You are insolent, Jew," growled Alexieff between his set teeth, for to be thus bearded before his subordinates was intolérable, from his point of view.

"And you are false to your trust, Christian," retorted Arama, "for you have remained inactive and silent while we were being subjected to fire and slaughter."

"Arrest him!" exclaimed Alexieff, savagely; and at this command two stalwart men stepped forward and laid their hands on Aaron's shoulders. But he

drew back, and, raising high his hand heavenward, he cried passionately :—

“Pollute me not with the touch of your slavish ervitors. If I have broken the law, I will answer to the law. I am Aaron Arama, an honest man, who for thirty-five years have lived in this city, and no one can truthfully point to me and say I have done him wrong. My word is my bond, and I will yield myself unto you when I have paid the last rites to my honoured dead.”

“My duty is to take you now,” urged Alexieff, smarting from the moral castigation he had received.

“Have you no respect for the majesty of death?” demanded Arama, again, as he pointed to the bed. “It were sacrilege to drag me from my dead wife’s side, and if you do the curse of the just God will fall upon you. I myself will invoke a curse upon you, and pray that you may wither day by day like one who is smitten with the palsy.”

At the pathetic appeal uttered by Aaron Arama, the ignorant and superstitious men who stood around shrank back with a sense of fear, and turned to their chief for instructions. He felt the difficulty of the position in which he was placed, and not wishing it to go forth to his enemies that he had acted like a barbarian, he made answer :—

“You shall have two days in which to bury your wife, but four of my men shall be charged with the task of not losing sight of you, and at the end of

the two days you shall surrender yourself to answer for the crime you have committed."

At this the old Jew fell on his knees at the bedside, and, bowing his head, he moaned :—

"Oh, Lord God, deliver me from my persecutors."

Having given instructions to four of his men to keep guard in the house, Alexieff and the rest left the room. At the head of the stairs he met Pavloff.

"Well, what news?" the chief asked.

"I have searched the place from roof to basement," answered the creature, "but I can find no trace of the girl."

"It is strange," muttered Alexieff. "He must have sent her away. Pavloff, methinks you have not been as vigilant as you might have been."

"Nay, your greatness, I assure you——"

"Peace," commanded the chief, sternly. Then in a whisper to Pavloff he said, "See to it, if you would retrieve your position in my estimation, and find out where the girl has gone, for my son must by some means be protected from her wiles and machinations."

Pavloff bowed, and he followed the chief down the stairs as a beaten hound follows its master.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW JUSTICE WAS MOCKED.

OF course it was necessary that some sort of an official inquiry should be made into the causes that had led to the rioting, massacre, and destruction in the Jews' quarter of the city of St. Petersburg. But anyone at all acquainted with the burlesque Russian justice which was meted out to the Jews knew perfectly well beforehand what the result of such an inquiry would be.

It was useless for the persecuted race to hope that they would be compensated for the wilful destruction of their property ; while those who had to bewail the loss of their friends and relatives who had been so cruelly butchered moaned in silence. And they prayed that the day might soon dawn when they would be delivered from the barbarities of a Government which, while boasting that it was enlightened and civilized, would by its acts have disgraced many Oriental countries about which the world has from time to time affected to be highly indignant.

But as yet Russia and the Russian people seem in many ways to have scarcely emerged from the dark-

ness and ignorance of the mediæval ages. All that is bad in Governments—oppression, persecution, harsh laws, the suppression of the liberty of the subject, the liberty of the Press, freedom of speech, open criticism—is still upheld in the Czar's kingdom, and the man who dares to raise his voice against it all can hope for no mercy.

The official court of inquiry was constituted and opened with a great flourish of trumpets and much display of red-tapism and that pomp which the semi-barbaric Russian official so dearly loves. Count Nicholas Suvorof was chosen president of the court, in spite of his well-known and undisguised hatred of the Jews.

A formidable array of witnesses were called forth, and much care was taken that the Christians should outnumber the Jews. It was a great thing for the Government that they were enabled to say that the riot had had its origin in the killing of the Christian by the Jew in the Apraxin-dvor. It was nothing to the point that the unfortunate Jew had been provoked almost to madness by being beaten and knocked down by the Christian first of all.

"These Jews have too much liberty, and have become insolent," Count Suvorof observed, loftily, "and they must be taught the lesson that they are not to take the life of a Christian because he happens to have committed an assault. The law is just, and recognises no distinction between Jew and Christian

in its administration. If a Jew hath a grievance, let him bring it before the court, and he will be heard and his grievance redressed."

When this was said a groan escaped from the lips of one who had been called as a witness, and he exclaimed, with a rash boldness :—

"Alas ! how the Goddess of Truth must hide her face and weep as she hears such a black lie as that uttered in her name."

He who thus gave expression to his thoughts was Aaron Arama, who, although a prisoner charged with the crime of wilfully slaying one of the Czar's subjects, had been brought forward to give his evidence. He had laid his dead wife to rest ; and then, broken-hearted as he realized the loss and destruction of all that had given him a hold on life, he yielded to the force he could not resist.

The scowl that swept over the dark face of Count Suvorof showed how the barbed shaft of words had pierced him, and, addressing his *confrères*, he said :—

"Did I not say that these Jews had become insolent ? and here, out of the mouth of one of their shining lights, we have direct evidence of it ; for this man who thus dares to insult us, who are charged to administer impartial justice, is guilty of the crime of murder."

"It is a lie, a shameless lie !" cried Aaron, starting to his feet, and looking grand in his fiery anger. "I slew a human brute who would have polluted my child

by his touch ; and the father who hesitates to protect his daughter's honour is unworthy to walk God's fair earth."

"Peace, peace !" exclaimed the president, passionately ; and then to Alexieff, who was present, he said :

"This Jew must be removed, since he hath no respect for the majesty and dignity which we represent. The business of the court, which, in the name of God and the Czar, is constituted to see that justice is done to all those who are aggrieved, cannot be disturbed by such unseemly interruption. Therefore, take him away."

Then did the myrmidons of Peter Alexieff lay their hands, at his bidding, on the old Jew and forcibly remove him from the court. And as he went he raised his hands, joining them as if in supplication, and said with a suppressed fierceness :—

"As surely as the sun shines when the sky is cloudless, the Jews' hour of vengeance will strike. Then let Russia tremble, for her people, who now groan beneath a barbaric despotism, and whose souls can hardly be called their own, will rise in their might and fling off the accursed yoke which crushes them into the dust, even as the slaves of old Egypt were crushed."

This little speech fell like a bombshell on the assembly, and if before there had been the slightest loophole of escape for the ill-starred Arama, it was quite closed now, as with brutal roughness he was

thrust from the court, and being placed at once in a dhrosky, was driven under a strong escort to the fortress of St. Peter and Paul. A man who had the daring to use such seditious language was considered so dangerous that only the strongest dungeon in the fortress was likely to keep him quiet.

The disturbing element of the court having thus been got rid of, the business proceeded with an affected solemnity that was very much like blasphemy. Peter Alexieff, the Chief of the Police, was then examined, and he testified to the quarrel in the bazaar between the Jew and Christian, and how, "with ferocious violence," the Jew had slain the Christian without any provocation. At this the wrath of the people had risen, and before they could be called to order they had rushed to the Petersburgskaia Storona and attacked the Jews' houses. But even then they would hardly have proceeded to the length they did had not Aaron Arama unjustifiably fired upon them, slaying an honest moujik named Skavrónsky. The mob revenged this murder, and the result was the lamentable loss of life that had occurred.

Such was Alexieff's lying version of the affair, and he further added that he had lost not a moment in getting his men out, and then, finding that with the force at his command he could not cope with the rioters, armed as they were, he had invoked the aid of the military, and it was only by that means that the riot was suppressed.

After this evidence of the Chief of the Police, it was not considered necessary to proceed any further. It was very clear to the court, "which had carefully and impartially inquired into all the details of the riot, that the Jews had broken the law in the first instance; and that not only were they not entitled to any compensation, but the ringleaders were liable to fine and imprisonment, and would have to be dealt with by the police. As for Aaron Arama, apart from his having defied the law of the country in which he lived, he had grossly and shamefully insulted the Court of Inquiry, and had given utterance to language so outrageous, that it was painfully clear he was a very dangerous person, and likely, unless dealt with severely, to cause dissatisfaction amongst the peaceful subjects of the great and humane Czar, who was ever striving to make his people happy and contented."

As soon as ever this bombastic decision of the court was delivered the police swooped down upon the Jews, and arrests were made wholesale.

The following day Peter Alexieff sat in his bureau, and to him entered Pavloff in obedience to an order he had received.

"What news, Pavloff?" asked the chief.

"I have discovered the hiding-place of the Jew's daughter."

"Ah, that is good," exclaimed Alexieff, with a slight smile of satisfaction. "Where is she?"

"At the house of Nekrassoff, the merchant."

"Nekrassoff—the — merchant?" cried Alexieff elevating his bushy eyebrows in amazement.

"Even so, your greatness."

"But Nekrassoff is a Christian."

"That also is true, your greatness; but he was much indebted to Arama, and he has given Rachel shelter."

Alexieff bit his lip with vexation, and, running his fingers through his hair, said:—

"Nekrassoff must be watched. You understand?"

"Perfectly."

"And it is a pity that we cannot place Rachel under arrest. Is it not possible? *I say, is it not possible*, Pavloff, having regard to all that has taken place, that she may have given utterance to some seditious language, and that witnesses could be found who could testify to it?"

"Truly, Little Father, she has uttered many dangerous sentiments, and there be those who will swear to having heard them. But it may so hap that we shall be saved any trouble, for Rachel, as report informs me, is stricken with a serious illness of the brain, from which she is not likely to recover."

Alexieff smiled again as he bent over his desk; and he remarked:—

"You are a very conscientious and clever agent, Pavloff; and what of my son? Does he know of Rachel's retreat?"

"No ; I have no evidence that he does."

"It is well. You may go."

Pavloff retired, and then Alexieff penned a despatch to the chief magistrate of the city, saying that by means of his trusty agents, he had learnt that a most determined attempt was to be made by the Jews, by means of heavy bribes or otherwise, as circumstances might dictate, to release Aaron Arama, who, beyond doubt, was secretly allied to the Nihilists, who were then causing so much uneasiness in the Czar's kingdom. It was therefore advisable that steps should be taken to have Arama removed to the greater security of the State criminal prison of Schlüsselburg, and should his greatness the chief magistrate think proper to issue the necessary papers for this purpose, and intrust them to his humble and devoted servant, he would see the order duly carried out.

When the despatch was finished, Alexieff summoned one of his trusty attendants and bade him convey the document to the chief magistrate. This having been done, the reply came back in due course, and Peter Alexieff, Chief of the Police, was authorized and instructed to lose no time in having "the dangerous conspirator and criminal, Aaron Arama," removed to the ancient prison fortress of Schlüsselburg, where he would be kept and safely guarded until brought up for trial.

"The fangs of mine enemy are crushed now for

ever," muttered Alexieff, with a triumphant laugh, as he proceeded to St. Peter and Paul with the chief magistrate's warrant in his pocket.

His exultation was fairly well justified ; for in such a country as Russia, where the administration of the law is an outrage on justice, a man like Aaron Arama, against whom it might be difficult to get such proof as would warrant his condemnation, could be kept in prison indefinitely—kept there until he rotted body and soul, or went raving mad with the horrible silence and unbroken gloom of an underground dungeon. Alexieff, being a low-minded man, without an ennobling trait in his composition, hated Aaron Arama with a bitterness that struggled to find expression in subjecting him to all the indignities and torture that could be inflicted on him. And he knew that when once the great gates of the lonely and water-engirt fortress prison of Schlüsselburg had closed upon the wretched man, his life would practically end. It is true he might continue to live on for months or years, but it would be a living death, to which the mystery and eternal silence of the grave would be a thousand times preferable.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE PASSION OF WOUNDED PRIDE.

THE suggestion that the unfortunate Jew was not in safe keeping in the fortress of St. Peter and Paul was absurd. In this dreadful prison, the horrors of which could not be exaggerated, prisoners could be subjected to the most brutal torture, and even privately executed without the world knowing anything at all about it; while the probabilities of escape were infinitesimally small. The dungeons in the various casemates are all below the level of the river, and exude such moisture and miasma that prisoners confined in them contract the most horrible diseases. And to add to their suffering they are subjected to constant espionage, for in connection with all the cells are spy holes, by means of which the warders and guards can always see the prisoner without being seen.

This awful place of gloom and misery is said to be built on dead men's bodies, for when the foundations were being laid in the miasmatic swamp of Jani-saari thousands of workmen perished and were buried mostly where they died, and during its unhallowed existence it has played no part that would entitle it

to the grateful remembrance of a patriotic people. It was erected as a living grave for the enemies of autocratic Russia, and the human suffering that has been endured within its ponderous walls no pen can ever depict. Surely the day will come when the long-suffering Russian people will rend the blood-stained building stone from stone and sow the execrable spot with salt. Three hundred acres of land are covered by the fortress, which literally contains accommodation of a kind for thousands of prisoners, and the dungeons are so numerous that no one save the Governor knows them all. Most of these cells are constructed in a remarkable way. The walls are of unusual thickness, and are covered with painted felt. The floor is also covered with felt of great thickness.

But this is not all. At a distance of a few inches from the walls is a wire netting, which goes from floor to ceiling, and over the netting is tightly stretched painted canvas. This arrangement not only prevents prisoners from communicating with each other by means of taps on the wall or floor, but it deadens every sound. The cell thus becomes a grave. No sign from the outer world reaches it, and the horrible silence drives the prisoners slowly mad. The mind rots in the body, as it were. The warders, under heavy penalties, are not allowed to speak to a prisoner nor to answer even the most casual question.

Schlüsselburg is forty miles from St. Petersburg, at

the source of the Neva as it flows from the great lake Ladoga. Here on a lonely island the fortress is erected. It is away from everything save the wretched and desolate village of the same name, in which only a limited number of inhabitants are allowed to reside, and they are closely watched by the Government spies. The prisoners who are sent to Schlüsselburg are conveyed there in the dead of night. They simply bear a number on their clothes, and save those who are responsible for their being sent, nobody knows who they are nor whence they come. Once there they may, by secret orders conveyed in a letter sealed with the arms of the Czar of All the Russias, be shot, strangled, poisoned, or drowned in the lake. The penalty of breaking this seal by anyone except the person to whom the letter is addressed is death.

In this hideous place are *oubliettes* — that is, dungeons where prisoners are confined who are to be forgotten and lost to the world, although living. Such prisoners are fed on the most meagre of diet. They hear no sound and see no living thing, for their food, such as it is, is thrust in to them through a trap-door. No light save the glimmer of a small lamp, which is allowed to penetrate from the outside corridor, reaches the dismal dungeon, and the prisoner loses all count of time, knowing not when it is day nor when it is night. At last he becomes imbecile, and is slowly starved to death.

Let it be remembered that this horrible place is no

mere fancy of the writer ; but it exists at the present hour in holy and Christian Russia, and under the so-called benign government of the present Czar. It was to Schlüsselburg that Aaron Arama was removed, under an order which Peter Alexieff presented with a vindictive pleasure that he knew not how to conceal. And that pleasure would have been enhanced could he have sent Rachel to the same place. But his power, after all, was limited, and though he had many tools and creatures under him, he himself was only the tool of those in higher authority, and it was necessary that some external show of civilization should be made. Therefore, without some semblance of legal right it was not deemed advisable to arrest a person, especially a woman.

Of course, it was no difficult matter to produce this semblance. But nobody save the depraved Alexieff had any desire to deprive Rachel of her liberty, for she was not considered of the slightest political importance. Her lover had been condemned and sent to Siberia ; now her father, whose independence of spirit and superior intellect made him a power to be dreaded, was charged with the double crime of having wilfully slain a man, and using seditious language calculated to inflame the minds of the Czar's peaceful subjects. That charge was one that he was hardly likely to clear himself of. What more, then, could his enemies desire ?

When the poor old man entered the gloomy fortress

on the banks of the Neva, he himself felt that his life was done. Crushed by the death of his wife, to whom he had been passionately attached, he had scarcely been able to think of anything else. Even anxiety about his daughter was deadened, but when his thoughts did turn to her he tried to believe that she was safe, and that in consigning her into the keeping of Ivan Alexieff he had placed her in good hands. Perhaps, too—even in his blank despair—he had some shadowy idea that he and she would meet again. This idea, however, was killed when the announcement was made to him that he was to be removed. He knew too much of Russian administration to be indifferent as to what this meant.

It was night-time when he was taken from his cell. He was loaded with chains which clanked with his every movement. When he was brought up he beheld his arch enemy, Peter Alexieff, and a troop of gendarmes, and he was handed over by the Governor of the fortress to the custody of the Chief of the Police.

"Whither would you take me now?" Aaron asked as he was thus once more confronted with the man from whom, of all others, he knew he had the most to fear.

"To a place of greater security," answered Peter, brusquely.

Arama smiled sadly as he asked :—

"Is an old and broken man considered so dangerous that the great fortress of St. Peter and Paul is not

strong enough to hold him? My life flickers but feebly now; a little puff will extinguish it. Why not do that here?"

"Jew," exclaimed the Chief of the Police contemptuously, "even one who has offended against the law as deeply as you have is not condemned unheard. We who administer the law are not assassins."

Aaron turned upon the speaker with the energy of a sudden uprising fierceness.

"Peter Alexieff," he cried, "many a man who has suffered the law's vengeance for murder has been less of an assassin than you are. The lies uttered by your lips cannot deceive one who can read your heart as I can. When the great day of judgment comes the souls of those who have suffered at your hands will rise up to bear witness against your infamous deeds of cruelty."

For a moment or two Alexieff stood dumfounded by the very audacity of these words. Then, his passion overcoming his discretion, he spat in the Jew's face, and hissed forth these words:—

"Dog of an unbelieving Jew, think you that Heaven will ever punish me for aught that I have done to any of your thrice accursed race, against whom the gates of Paradise are for ever shut?"

The insult was more than even Arama could withstand, and, with the passion begotten by his deeply-wounded pride, he twisted the chains that bound his hands, and struck the Chief of the Police

across the face with such force that blood gushed forth, and he fell stunned to the ground. Then arose a sudden cry of alarm amongst the police and soldiers grouped around, and they swooped down on Aaron, and seemed disposed to rend him in pieces. But the Governor interposed, and bade them bind the prisoner still more securely, as the chief magistrate's order would have to be complied with. Then a doctor was hastily summoned. The wounded man was raised up. Blood was flowing freely from a terrible gash in his face that had cut deeply into one of his eyes. When the surgeon came and examined him he pronounced the wound serious, and said the sight of one eye was entirely destroyed, and the other might also become affected.

They carried him into an inner part of the fortress, where he could receive the necessary surgical attention; and the poor Jew, bending beneath the weight of his chains, was thrust into a waggon, and, after a terribly rough journey, he was taken by boat to the island on which Schlüsselburg stood, and in the cold grey light of a dismal morning he entered the gloomy prison, and the great iron gate clanged ominously behind him.

CHAPTER XI.

RACHEL MAKES A RESOLUTION.

NO man who had inflicted an injury on another could have regretted it more sincerely than did Aaron Arama when he heard how serious were the consequences of the blow he had given to Peter Alexieff. And yet was ever blow more richly deserved? The dastardly insult of spitting in the Jew's face was one that no one worthy the name of a man would have endured calmly. But Aaron was a lover of peace and an exponent of goodwill towards all, irrespective of faith or colour. The long years he had passed in St. Petersburg had been without exciting event until that unhappy day in the Gostinnoi-dvor, when the new-comer to the city, the ignorant and benighted moujik, Samuel Skavrónsky, assailed him. Since then misfortune had dogged his steps and those he loved, until at last he found himself immured in the terrible and dreaded prison of Schlüsselburg.

All now was lost, as it seemed ; and his one intense yearning was to see his daughter for the last time and then turn his face to the wall and pray for that rest which man cannot disturb. But that yearning was

not likely to be gratified as regarded his daughter. He knew that only too well; but with the deep, ingrained philosophy of his nature he abandoned himself to his fate, whatever it might be, with the devout resignation of a man who fervently believed in the goodness and wisdom of the God he worshipped, and who was conscious of having humbly striven all his days to be honest, upright, and just, and to walk truly and with reverent feet in the path which he felt it his duty to follow. Fortunate it was, perhaps, for him that he was not aware of the storm of indignation and execration that was howled forth against him and his people when the so-called "outrage" became known.

With the unfairness and partiality so characteristic of the Russian Press, the affair was described as the "Brutal and dastardly attack by the Jew prisoner, Aaron Arama, on the President of the Police, the respected and high-minded Peter Alexieff." The very worst construction was put upon it, and no mention whatever was made of the foul indignity Alexieff had subjected the prisoner to by spitting in his face. Public sentiment found vent in the most violent and inflammatory expressions, and the authorities deemed it wise in the interests of common decency to afford some protection to the threatened Jews.

If Count Suvorof had had his way he would, to use his own favourite phrase, have let the bloodhound

mob fly at its prey again, and there would have been more massacres, more burnings to chronicle. But the Count, powerful as he was, was compelled after all to give some heed to the voice of reason. Jew-baiting was pleasant sport enough to the Christian, and once indulged in, the votary found it difficult to satisfy his desires for more. The Government, however, vaunted itself as one that was eminently civilized and humane, and it was important that some semblance of the character should be maintained.

In a quiet way the Jews could be harried and persecuted. But the screams and wailing of women and children as they were ruthlessly butchered could be heard far beyond the confines of Russia, vast as it was ; while the flames of incendiary fires would cast their lurid glow over the rest of the civilized world. And it was undesirable that Europe should rise up with a shout of indignation and exclaim :—

“Shame on you, Russia. You who claim to rank in the van of nations are guilty of deeds of brutality and darkness that would have disgraced the mediæval ages.”

So it came to pass that a display of force was made to keep the mob in subjection ; and the papers were warned not to inflame the passions of the people by too frequent a reference to the incident that had occurred in St. Peter and Paul.

Now there was one person who could not view with unconcern the course affairs had taken. That

person was Ivan Alexieff, and he hurried to his father to express his sympathy and sorrow. He found the chief furious with a bitter anger, and he vowed in his son's presence by all the saints and sacred pictures of his creed that he would have a deep and terrible revenge.

"An eye for an eye," he hissed. "The hateful, cursed Jew has disfigured me and blinded me, and he and his shall know what it is to incur the hatred of Peter Alexieff."

With singular indiscretion, and yet pardonable on account of his youth, Ivan made answer:—

"If you desire vengeance, father, let it fall on Aaron alone. Why extend it to those who have not injured you?"

The purport of this remark was too apparent to be overlooked, and with a show of passion that told how dangerous he was, Peter started up from his bed of suffering, and sawing the air wildly with his hands—his uninjured eye being tightly bandaged, to exclude the light he could not see—he cried out with a perfectly savage fierceness:—

"Boy, have a care. The Jew's daughter is in your mind, and she has woven a spell about you. But the law of the land gives me, your father and lawful guardian, rights which I will make you respect. This Jezebel, who has cast a glamour over you and deprived you of your senses, shall be rendered harmless, I warrant you, and she shall befool you no longer."

"But, father——"

"Peace! or, in order to save you from yourself and from disgracing your name and kindred, you shall be whipped and imprisoned for disobedience."

Ivan pursued the argument no further. He saw the uselessness of it, but full of a great sorrow, and gravely troubled by his father's dark threat against poor Rachel, the young man went secretly to the house of Nekrassoff, the merchant, where for many days Rachel had been lying, oblivious of the world and its woes. The terrible experiences of that fateful night when her people were attacked by the brutal mob, added to the intense strain she had endured owing to the arrest and condemnation of her lover, and the serious illness of her mother, told upon her to such an extent that brain fever set in and prostrated her. It is to the credit of Nekrassoff and his family that they were greatly concerned about her condition, and, notwithstanding the risks they knew they necessarily ran by sheltering the daughter of one who had incurred the hatred of the people, they were resolved to protect her and succour her so far as they could.

Nekrassoff was an enlightened man, and much travel in various parts of Europe had broadened his views, so that he by no means shared the public sentiment of dislike for the Jewish population. Moreover, he had experienced at the hands of Arama the greatest kindness, and but for the Jew's generosity he would then have been a ruined man and rotting in a

debtors' prison. Gratitude may be a rare thing, but at least Nekrassoff possessed it.

Ivan Alexieff had heard of Rachel's illness with a concern he could not conceal, and though he knew that he was closely watched by his father's spies, he managed to get daily news of her condition, and the sorrow he felt manifested itself in his looks. Neither time nor events had softened the passion her beauty had engendered in him, and with the fervour of youth about whom the spell of love is woven, he recked not of consequences; and he believed that without her the world for him would be but as a waste, in which neither pleasure nor profit was to be found.

After that last stormy interview, however, with his father, his eyes were opened to the ever-present danger that menaced the beloved woman whom he regarded as essential to his happiness. And so he took counsel with Nekrassoff, and told him all that the Chief of the Police had said.

"Matters are very serious," remarked Nekrassoff, thoughtfully, "for your father's vengeance will fall upon me and mine if he knows that I am giving shelter to the Jewess. Something must be done."

"But surely you will not abandon her?" cried Ivan, in his distress.

"No, no. I shall not abandon her, for I am neither coward nor ingrate. But you will see with me that something must be done."

"Aye, truly ; but what is that something to be? Where can she go to?"

Nekrassoff pondered and reflected for some time, and then, having revolved the matter over and over in his mind, thus he spoke :—

"Listen, Ivan. I am interested in you, and wish you well, and I vow by the Ikon yonder that I will do my best to shelter and shield Rachel Arama. But let me counsel and advise thee to thine own welfare. Conquer this passion of yours which you have fostered for her, and which has already been productive of so much misery. You are youthful, and youth is often guilty of folly. If you persist in your attachment for the Jewess your future will be blighted, and between you and your father there will be unending conflict. Turn from Rachel, therefore, as you would from any other desire that is impossible of attainment. I will, when she is able to be removed, conduct her myself to the Chief Rabbi of Moscow, who will extend his protection to her, and in due time she will find her place again amongst her people. Thus do I advise, and I pray you let my advice prevail. The years are many before you, and soon you will find a mate amongst your own class who will bring you joy and contentment, and heal the breach that now exists between you and your family."

Ivan listened patiently, making no attempt to interrupt the speaker, and displaying no irritation ; but he said, when the other ceased :—

"You know me not, sir, if you think me capable of being turned from a purpose because danger may lie in my way. I am my father's son, and from my father I inherit persistency and determination. It is true I am youthful as you say, but youth is an error which time will correct. Time, however, cannot change my feeling for Rachel, except to strengthen it. If Rachel dies, a shadow will lie over my life for evermore. But while she lives I shall remain true to her, come what may."

"So be it," said Nekrassoff, shrugging his shoulders. "I have spoken words of wisdom, and you heed not my counsel. A wilful youth must take his way until his eyes are opened to his error. Out of the respect, however, you bear my family, I crave you come not here again, lest you bring down the wrath of the people on my house. I will keep you advised of Rachel's progress, and as soon as ever she is fit to undertake the journey, I will myself accompany her to Moscow, and place her in the safe keeping of the Rabbi."

"It shall be as you say," answered Ivan. "I will not compromise you. But when Rachel goes to Moscow, I go also."

Nekrassoff expressed surprise, and even displayed some show of irritation at what he considered the fatuous folly of a hot-headed youth whose infatuation rendered him utterly unamenable to reason. But nothing could come of any prolongation of the

discussion, so it was allowed to drop, and Ivan, full of a fixed purpose and thinking his own thoughts, went his way.

Slowly the weeks drifted by. The public excitement against the Jews had died down, and for the time being no more was heard of the dark threats and menaces. At length Rachel, after fluttering on the very brink of the grave, came back from the shadow of death, and then her host, who had been true to his pledged word, accompanied her to Moscow, and the Chief Rabbi of that city undertook to protect her until something could be done. She had greatly changed, and her chaste and unique beauty was tinged with a fixed look of sorrow. When the fever had left her and she had been able for the first time to recall all that had happened, her first thoughts were of her father, and she asked anxiously about him. The truth was withheld from her; but when she arrived in Moscow she heard all, and she realized then how deadly an enemy Peter Alexieff was. And when she had pondered deeply on the subject she came to a strange and startling resolution.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOUR OF RETALIATION.

BEFORE Rachel reached Moscow the Chief of the Police had so far recovered as to be able to resume his official duties. But he was terribly disfigured, and over his sightless eye he wore a closely-fitting, dark green shade. Although he did not know it then, a cabal had been formed against him during his illness with a view of ousting him from office. He was not considered a successful man, and in no country in the world is non-success regarded with such contempt as it is in Russia. But apart from this, as all people know who have ever been in Russia, every official, no matter what his position is, is bound to have a host of enemies, for the plums of office are so coveted, and there is so much cliquism and intriguing, that jealousy is rampant, and the man who is your sworn friend to-day will become your bitterest foe to-morrow if you are elected to office.

Peter Alexieff, however, might have lived down all this had it not been for the error he committed in spitting in Aaron Arama's face, an act that led to the retaliation which had deprived him of the sight of an

eye and disfigured him for life. This fact, which, in the first heat of passion and anger, had been rigorously suppressed, had gradually leaked out ; and the influential Jews got up an agitation, and made the wrong Aaron had suffered the subject of a petition to the Czar himself. In it they craved that the unfortunate man's punishment might be mitigated, and Peter Alexieff deposed from office.

Although the Czar of All the Russias is nominally an autocrat and ruler of the land, no more pitiable puppet exists. He is governed and ruled by his nobles, whose power he dreads ; for it is absolutely beyond doubt that by that power alone is the Russian Emperor kept upon his throne. When the petition reached him, which it did in due course, he was "advised," which was tantamount to a command, to ignore it. Nevertheless, it had an effect, for there were those about the Court who had relatives and friends they were anxious to provide for, and they availed themselves of the opportunity to enlarge on Alexieff's shortcomings, and to insist that he was so lacking in tact and discretion that he was unfitted for his office ; and that he could serve the State better by being appointed to the governorship of a prison in some far distant province of Siberia.

This suggestion was not lost upon the Czar's advisers, who saw in it a means of getting out of a dilemma ; and the seed thus sown was destined to fructify and bear fruit in the fulness of time. But

when that time would come it would have been hard to say, for things move slowly in Russia. It is a ponderous country, and everything in connection with its working and administration is ponderous, while hurry and speed, especially in judicial matters, are not only deprecated but unknown. Thus it comes about that prisoners charged with offences may languish for years in prison before being brought to trial.

But matters were precipitated in Alexieff's case by another act of folly and outrage which he was guilty of, and which alienated from him some of his warmest supporters. And this very act, strangely enough, by the keenest irony of fate, was the result of Rachel Arama's resolution which she made in Moscow. That resolution was nothing more nor less than to seek a personal interview with the Chief of the Police, and, throwing herself at his feet, plead to him for her father.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that if she had had more worldly knowledge, and had understood better what Alexieff's true position was, she would rather have suffered death than have begged a boon of him, and have placed herself in his power. But in her ignorance of all State matters, she accredited the Chief of the Police with an authority that was equal to the Chief of the Army, and only a little less than that of the Czar himself, whom she would have approached had she known how to have done so.

But no subject in Russia, unless he be of high rank and great influence, has the slightest possible chance of reaching His Majesty's private ear. For he is guarded about with a triple cordon, and the outside world is to him almost a *terra incognita*.

For one who had always been secluded as Rachel had, and who had scarcely ever known what it was to be dependent upon herself, it was a great undertaking, that of going to see the Chief of the Police. She had mentioned her project to her friend the Chief Rabbi of Moscow, who seemed disposed to discountenance it, but Rachel was inflexible. Beyond the Rabbi, however, she told no one, not even Ivan, who had secretly paid a visit to her in Moscow.

During the interview he had renewed his protestations of love, but she had emphatically declared that so long as he was the son of Peter Alexieff she could not listen to him if he sought her love, which was tantamount to saying that his suit was absolutely hopeless, for he would never be anybody else but the son of Peter; and so he had gone away somewhat disheartened, but still hopeful that by perseverance he would prevail over her in the end. When she arrived in St. Petersburg she went direct to the bureau of the Chief of the Police, and then her first difficulty began. The chief was guarded after the manner of the Czar himself, and no one who had not an official passport to his presence could gain the inner sanctum

where the chief wielded his tyrannical power and received the daily reports of his legion of spies.

When Rachel announced who she was, the understrappers laughed at her, and made coarse jokes and rude remarks until her face burned with the blushes of shame. But still she pressed her suit, for it was her father's life she was going to plead for; and still she was rebuffed, while, with a shameless cowardice, the menials and even the sub-officials jeered at her and taunted her, speaking mockingly of her as a "Jewess," and asking her what value she put upon her beauty.

Shrinking with horror from these ribald ruffians, she was almost induced to abandon her errand, but she remembered that her dear father was languishing in the dreadful Schlüsselburg Prison, about which she had heard the most fearful tales; so she renewed her pleadings with tears and moans, though it was all of no avail. She might as well have pleaded to the stones. But it so happened that while she stood there, beautiful and bewitching even in her distress, the slimy, sleek, and cunning Pavloff entered, and recognising Rachel, he inquired in astonishment what she required. Then, when he was informed, a curious smile came over his saturnine features, and, requesting that she might be detained for a little while, he made his way to the cabinet of his chief.

Peter Alexieff was much occupied, for he was dictating important despatches to his shorthand clerks, when his privileged creature entered. He did

not see so well now, for his single eye was still weak from the effects of the injury ; and, ever fearful of assassination, he turned quickly towards the intruder, exclaiming :—

“Who is that ?” Then recognising him : “Ah, Pavloff, you bring news ? You have something to communicate ?”

“Yes, your greatness,” and Pavloff looked at the clerks and then at the chief. The look was significant, and the chief understood it, for he led the way into a small inner apartment, where there were many telegraphic instruments and quite an armoury of weapons—two loaded revolvers lying on the desk within reach of Peter’s hand.

“What brings you, Pavloff ?” he asked.

“I have a surprise for you, Little Father.”

“Then must it be something wonderful, for I have ceased to be surprised at anything.”

“It is something wonderful.”

“Speak it, then.”

“Rachel, the daughter of your enemy, the Jew, is without, and craves an audience with you.”

As he heard these words, there leapt into Peter Alexieff’s face a look of devilish and malicious joy.

“Rachel here !” he exclaimed.

“Even so, your greatness.”

“And comes she of her own free will ?”

“She does. I found her here pleading for an interview when I entered the office.”

"She shall have the interview," remarked Peter, with wicked significance. "Pavloff, conduct her to my presence, and see that all the communicating doors are closed. And, Pavloff, you will remain here during the interview—and, stay, have you your revolver?"

"I have."

"Good, you may go." Then Peter went back to his cabinet and temporarily dismissed his clerks, and when he was alone the Chief of the Police rubbed his hands with fiendish glee, and he muttered to himself:—

"Aaron Arama, my hour of retaliation has come."

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAIR VICTIM.

WITH such a man as Alexieff revenge was almost a creed, and now that the daughter of his enemy had placed herself in his power he felt a joy that he could hardly conceal. His factotum, Pavloff, conducted her into his presence, and she, all unaware of the danger she had fallen into, was glad at heart that opportunity of pleading for her unfortunate father had been given her.

A moment before she came into his cabinet the Chief of Police scribbled a few hasty words on a slip of paper, and handed the slip to Pavloff as he entered. Pavloff read the words, and a cruel smile played about his harsh features.

For a little while Rachel stood, bashful, embarrassed, and veiled, as she found herself face to face with the Chief of the Police, of whom she had heard so much, and whom she had come to regard somewhat in the character of an ogre.

"Unveil yourself, woman," said Alexieff at last, sternly and imperiously.

Rachel tremblingly obeyed the command, for it

was a command, and she stood revealed before him in all her beauty, her cheeks encarmined, her bosom heaving with suppressed excitement and a sense of shrinking bashfulness. For be it remembered that a Jewish maiden of her social position was unused to addressing men save those with whom she was intimate, or those whom she might meet under her father's roof.

Alexieff stared at her for some moments. Then, with a sneer, he said :—

“Report belies you not. You have beauty, and, save for the accursed Jewish blood in your veins, I could have forgiven my son for paying you homage. But I would rather see him wedded to the poorest girl in St. Petersburg than wedded to you.”

Rachel shuddered. This dreadful man had now alarmed and horrified her. She had not anticipated such a reception as this. In her distress she turned as if contemplating flight ; but in the doorway she beheld Pavloff. He stood there silent, motionless, like a statue. Alexieff spoke again—this time in the brusque, harsh, official way which such as he throughout Russia adopt when addressing anyone who comes to them as a supplicant. Officialism in the land of the Czar is at once coarse, brutal, harsh, and unsympathetic ; and Peter Alexieff in his own proper person represented all that was bad in officialism. He wielded his power like a tyrant, and ruled by fear.

"What want you, woman, and why come you here?"

By this time Rachel's heart had sunk, and her courage had oozed away. But she managed to stammer out :—

"Oh, sir, I come to plead to you for my father."

"For your father?" laughed Alexieff, coarsely.

"For my father," she repeated, stretching her white hands towards him appealingly, while her eyes filled with tears. "He is a good man," she went on, "an upright man, and incapable of one wrong thought, or one illegal deed."

"You lie, woman!" exclaimed Alexieff, striking the desk with the palm of his hand. "I say again you lie. Behold me; look in my face. God gave me two eyes, and your father destroyed one of them. How say you now? Is that the act of an upright man?"

"Oh, Lord of Hosts!" murmured Rachel, overcome with agitation; and covering her face with her hands, she cowered before the man who, with the refinement of cruelty, was thus torturing her. But before he attempted to speak again she had recovered herself so far as to be able to say :—

"You must have wronged him grievously. You must have stung him into madness, for he was ever a gentle, peaceful man, whose heart strove at all times to do good."

A fresh accession of strength and resolution came to her as she thus referred to him and felt the truth

of her own words. For Arama *was* a peaceful man, whose love for his fellows seemed almost boundless; and once more stretching her hands towards the implacable being who sat and glared at her, and seemed to be deliberating how best he could wrench and tear her heart, she cried with moving pathos, though he was no more moved than would have been the wall had she appealed to it:—

“Oh, Greatness, oh, Little Father, steel not yourself against me and mine. Think how we have suffered and endured. Contumely, scorn, and wrong have been heaped upon us. Our blood has been shed, our homes destroyed, and we have been driven forth outcasts and shelterless.”

“It is your lot,” he growled; “you are Jews. A curse rests upon you, and the people hate you. The hate of the people is a powerful thing. Who can control it?”

“The hate of the people is encouraged and fostered in this land of little freedom,” she sobbed.

“Ah, you speak treason, woman; have a care,” he exclaimed, glancing the while at Pavloff, who wrote something in his note-book.

“I speak the sentiments of the whole of the Jewish race throughout Russia,” she answered, growing bolder as she remembered the wrongs that had been inflicted on the Jews through generations.

“Is that all you have to say?” demanded Alexieff truculently.

"Oh, no, Little Father. I have come to you in the name of the all-merciful God to crave you to restore my father to me."

"I am but a servant of the State," he answered.

"But you have power."

"Aye, and know how to use it." This significantly.

"Then use it in the interest of him who is dearer to me than my life. Think of what we have suffered. He who was to have been my husband has been taken from me; my mother is dead, my father for having attempted to defend his home and the honour of his child is a prisoner, while I am as a waif, drifting on a turbulent sea, and despair is stronger than hope."

She had grown eloquent, and looked beautiful in her grief, but he who sat there was a fanatic; he had a heart of steel on which was deeply engraven—"eternal hatred for the Jews." But she, being unaware of his implacability, and knowing not to what length his ferocious and cruel nature could carry him, stood almost breathless, hanging expectantly on what he would say, and her dark glowing eyes filled with a passionate yearning for pity, for sympathy, for friendship. She was a picture upon which no man not blinded by fanaticism and not imbruted could have gazed unmoved. But Peter Alexieff was without sentiment, without soul—in the worldly sense—and utterly impregnable to any appeal for pity for those whom he hated and despised.

"Woman," he began, then with an expression of intense loathing he added, "Jewess, you are either mad or a fool. You ask me to use my interest in the favour of a man who has mutilated and disfigured me. Firstly, I have no interest that would prevail in such a case. I am but a servant of the law. The law is stern, but just. This man, who is your father, has shed the blood of a subject of the Czar. Therefore the law must deal with him, for he is guilty of murder——"

Rachel shuddered, and exclaimed :—

"No, no ; it is false. He but defended his life and the lives of those who were dear to him. He was the attacked, not the attacker. And the law that would punish him for what he did would be barbarous."

"The law will punish him," sneered Alexieff ; "therefore the law is barbarous by the rule you lay down. Again, I repeat that your father is a murderer——" Rachel shrunk away, and, hiding her face with her hands, she sobbed. But the Chief of the Police was pitiless, and he went on : "Secondly, supposing that I had interest, upon what grounds and by what reason could you expect me to use it in his favour?"

Rachel drew herself up. The tear-wet face was pale now, and her eyes glowed with indignation and rising wrath. She spoke with emphasis and excitedly, thus :—

"I should expect you to use it on the grounds of

common humanity; and for the reason that he who shows not mercy here may expect none when, having passed the portals of the grave, he stands at the Great God's bar of judgment on high."

Alexieff laughed scornfully as these words fell from her lips, and he made answer:—

"Between the Jew and the Christian there is little in common. In Christ the Christian places his hopes, and Christ has said, 'He who believes not in Me cannot be saved.' Christ is the Son of God, and spoke in the name of God. The Jews deny Christ and believe not in Him. Therefore is the Jew damned. How then shall I, a Christian, be called to account for hating a Jew, who is an outcast from God's mercy?"

Alexieff seemed to think that his sophistry and false logic were unanswerable, for he paused and looked at her, and in his look he seemed to say: "There, that sets the whole matter at rest. You can make no reply to that."

But she did not attempt to reply. She had come there not to argue points of theology with him, but to plead for her father's happiness and life. She saw now, however, that she had made a mistake, and her racial pride caused her to feel that it were better that both she and her father died than that they should be under an obligation to such a heartless tyrant as Peter Alexieff. And so she remarked as she drew her veil about her face again:—

"Mercy is not in you. So be it. I will go, and in

Heaven's good time the wronged shall be righted, and mayhap your eyes will be opened to your errors."

She turned, and in the doorway still stood Pavloff, barring her exit.

"Stay," said Alexieff, commandingly, and with a low chuckle as of triumph. Rachel turned to him once more, and now for the first time a thrill of fear swept through her, for she realized that this man was her foe and her father's foe. "You say," he continued, "that some day mayhap my eyes may be opened to my errors. I claim not to be free from errors, but my eyes can see them not, for has not your father deprived me of part of my sight? That is a wrong that all your tears, all his repentance, and all the wealth he could command could not right. No, woman, I hate your father with a hate that not even his death could gratify. God forbid that he should die yet, for I would rend and crush his heart, and torture him as he has tortured me."

Rachel uttered a suppressed cry, and a rising sob choked something she would have said. Alexieff struck a bell that stood upon his desk. Pavloff moved on one side, and two gendarmes entered, their swords drawn.

"This woman," said Alexieff, "has uttered threats against me and used seditious language. She is your prisoner."

He had been writing as he spoke, and handing to one of the gendarmes an order of committal, which,

as Chief of the Police, he had full power to do under the despotic laws of Russia, he added: "You are responsible for her until you place her in the safe keeping of the governor of Litovskiy Zamok.* Go. You know your duty."

For some moments Rachel looked as though she had been suddenly turned to stone. But as the gendarmes laid their hands upon her shoulders she shuddered, and with that shudder a strange change seemed to come over her. She drew her veil on one side with a movement of passion, and with eyes of fire she looked at Alexieff until he quailed.

"You are a traitor and a dog," she hissed, excitedly. "But vengeance will overtake you, or Heaven itself will be unjust."

"Remove her," cried the Chief of the Police, hoarsely; and, obeying the order, the gendarmes led her out. Then, turning to Pavloff, who waited his chief's pleasure, Alexieff said: "My son is safe, any way; and if I can prevent it, it will be long ere the prison doors swing open to let her free."

One would have thought that with this daring move Peter Alexieff would have been satisfied, for he knew only too well that he could trump up information that would serve to keep Rachel in prison

* Litovskiy Zamok is the chief prison of St. Petersburg, used principally for common prisoners, male and female. It is a fearful place. The governor has an extraordinary amount of power placed in his hands, and refractory prisoners are flogged mercilessly. Very little provocation indeed is needed as an excuse for the flogging.—*Author*.

indefinitely. But that was not enough for him. He wished not only to humiliate, but crush the spirit of the unfortunate girl, and his position enabled him to do it very effectually.

Three days later he went to Litovskiy Zamok with his friend and patron Count Suvorof, who, amongst many other official duties he undertook, was that of inspector of prisons. The coward Peter Alexieff was determined that Rachel should be flogged, flogging being one of the commonest punishments in all the prisons, and resorted to on the slightest provocation. He had told the Count that Rachel had not only threatened him, but had used the most violent language in speaking of the Czar and of Russia. The Count was only too ready to believe anything that was said against the Jews, and, as his mind had been greatly inflamed against Arama, he rejoiced when he heard that Rachel had been incarcerated.

"What of your new prisoner, the Jewess?" he asked of the governor of the prison, who bore the reputation of being a particularly brutal person.

"She is refractory," answered the governor.

Now, it should be explained what was meant by being refractory. Rachel had been delicately nurtured and brought up, and her whole being revolted against the dirt, the filth, the coarse fare, and hardship of the prison. Suddenly called upon to do the most laborious and degrading work, not only was her strength unequal to it, but she protested

that it was an outrage to ask her to undertake it, since she had committed no crime. This was what the governor termed being refractory, and it afforded Alexieff the very excuse and opportunity he wanted ; so, turning to the Count, he said :—

“It seems almost difficult to teach these people a lesson, but surely there should be some means of giving this saucy Jewess to understand that, having broken the law, she must submit to the law.”

The Count was not obtuse. He comprehended, and took the hint.

“The rod should do it,” he answered.

“You hear,” exclaimed Alexieff, exultingly, to the governor. “Let the woman be beaten at once, and if it please his greatness, the Count, he and I will witness the punishment.”

“His greatness” signified that it would please him, and the governor gave orders that Rachel was to be prepared.

In ten minutes’ time they were notified that the prisoner was ready, and then they went forth to an enclosed courtyard, where in the centre the unhappy Rachel was fastened by her wrists and feet to a wooden triangle. Her shoulders were bare, and beside her stood a gaoler with a rod in his hand. This rod consisted of two lithe willows, fastened together from the middle upwards by thongs.

The victim was as pale as death, and seemed indeed to be almost in a state of stupor. But when she

beheld Alexieff the blood rushed into her face, dyeing it scarlet, and her bosom rose and fell rapidly by reason of the passion that surged through her. Then, in the presence of this man, who stood and gloated while the punishment was administered, she received twenty-four strokes with the rod, until her shoulders and the upper part of her breast—where the ends of the willows twisted round—were a mass of weals and blood. Quail she did, and flinch she did, for who would not have done so under that cruel torture? But no sound escaped her lips. She set her teeth and endured in silence. But when she was released, and a rug was thrown over her bleeding shoulders, she cast one look at Alexieff as she was being led away and that look ought to have haunted him to his dying day. But he was not a man who concerned himself much with thoughts about the future; though, whatever the future might have in store for him, the present had given him his revenge, and for the time he was satisfied.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR A WOMAN'S SAKE.

ORDINARY language could not depict Ivan Alexieff's sorrow and concern when he heard of Rachel's imprisonment, a concern that was rendered more poignant and harder to bear by the knowledge that it was impossible to aid her in any way as far as he was concerned. Nothing was easier than to imprison a person in Russia, and nothing harder than to obtain that person's freedom. Gentlewomen had been thrown into dungeons and brutally tortured for simply saying that it was "a shame that people should be condemned unheard." And men had been shot, hanged, or sent to Siberia for expressing a hope that the day might dawn when the groaning millions of Russia would be freed from bondage. How, then, could Ivan expect to get the woman to whom his heart had gone out released? He knew what his own fate would be if he showed any opposition to his father. Hitherto, in spite of his father, he had attempted to woo Rachel, but now an effectual barrier had been reared between him and her, and the chances were that they might never come together again.

Notwithstanding the risks, however, he could not remain inactive, and he took secret means to get up an agitation amongst the Jews, who, through the medium of certain papers which they were able to influence, demanded an investigation into the charges that had been made against Rachel, and this agitation spread even amongst the better class of Christians; for to the honour of the Christian community and of Russia itself, be it said, there are men and women in that benighted country who have no sympathy with the incessant persecution of the Jewish people, and who do not hesitate to deprecate the cruelties practised towards them.

Nor were Peter Alexieff's enemies slow to seize the occasion. Peter had never been popular, and the cry having been raised against him, there were plenty ready to keep it up. By-and-by it leaked out, as it was bound to do under the circumstances, that the beautiful and gentle Rachel had been flogged in gaol in the presence of the Chief of the Police and of Count Nicholas Suvorof; and it being so well known that the Count and Alexieff were fanatical haters of the Jews, the storm of indignation grew louder. The pendulum was swinging the other way now. It was the reaction after the fever of excitement and the passionate outburst of fury which had led to the massacres and burnings. The people, however, who were at present agitating had remained dumb and silent while the Jews were being harried and slain,

and despoiled of their property. Now it was the other way about, and the rioters held their peace.

Perhaps after all there would not have been such an outcry had the matter not reached the ears of those who were high above even the Count Suvorof; and the Minister of Justice was at last instructed to make some inquiries. Things move slowly in Russia, and these inquiries occupied six months. But the result was, much to the joy of Peter Alexieff's enemies, that he was deposed. Through having powerful friends at Court, he was immediately appointed to a governorship in Siberia. It was the ordinary way of getting rid of an official who had brought the authorities into bad odour, and the ex-Chief of the St. Petersburg Police was ordered to proceed at once to Sakhalin.

Most other men would have felt somewhat appalled at the journey to the far-distant and desolate region of Sakhalin. But Alexieff was rather elated at the prospect, for he knew that the pay was good, and the appointment could be made the stepping-stone to something better; while every governor in Siberia, and particularly those in the eastern provinces, had absolute power in their hands, the power of life and death. They became petty kings and autocrats, and could give unrestrained vent to their passions and their hates.

The consideration of these points could not fail to weigh with such a man as Peter Alexieff; and though for the time he would have to abandon the comforts

and gaiety of the great city, he felt that he would be compensated for that by the power that would be his. A fallen official in St. Petersburg would have to remain a nonentity, but in Siberia, where he was far removed from the seat of government, he could become a person of importance, and rule his subjects with a rod of iron, according to his caprice and his will.

And so Alexieff set off for his new sphere of action with a sense of delight, considerably enhanced by the knowledge that preceding him was the unfortunate victim of his hatred, Aaron Arama, who, without trial, and in accordance with the barbarous Russian law, had been condemned to exile, on the grounds that he was "suspected of subversive ideas" and had shown "revolutionary spirit against the authorities." The place of his exile was Sakhalin, whither Alexieff was going as governor.

Peter Alexieff would have liked to have taken his son with him, but Ivan was studying for the Civil Service, and he absolutely refused to accompany his father, who consoled himself with the thought that all danger of Ivan and Rachel ever coming together had now passed.

To those unacquainted with the ways and mysteries of legal procedure in Russia, which, more than any other country in the world, is hampered with red tape, and moves in a rut from which it seems as if no power on earth could lift it, it will appear strange

that Rachel Arama was not released immediately. But when once the Government, in the name of the law, gets its hold upon a person, it is singularly reluctant to let go that hold. To us, with our Western notions of the sacred rights of the subject, all this sounds almost incredible, and yet, alas, 'tis true. Russia is still ruled by the rod, and her people groan in chains. Some day they will rend these chains, and then woe to them who have kept them so long enthralled, until they have hardly been able to call their souls their own.

And so it came to pass that more than a year elapsed before Rachel Arama recovered her freedom, and then it was only bestowed upon her as an extreme favour, notwithstanding that it was proved that she had been committed on a groundless charge. When she emerged from the prison she was an utterly changed woman. The iron had ground itself into her very heart, and had empoisoned and embittered her. The recollection of all she had endured and suffered maddened her, and she was stirred and filled with a fierce desire for vengeance on him who had wrought all the wrong, and shattered her hopes and blighted her life and the lives of those so dear to her.

Those weary months she had passed as a prisoner had seemed to her like years. They had been fraught with a misery that had no words wherewith to express itself. No news ever came to her of the dear ones, and so suspense was added to her weighty burden of

woe. Was it surprising, therefore, that silver threads began to show themselves in her raven hair, and the brightness of her eyes grew dim? She had entered the prison as a tender, gentle, guileless girl. She came forth as a hard, stern woman, with only one aim, one object in life.

The Rachel of yore was dead, and a new Rachel had come to life. Her beauty still remained, though a little marred by the confinement, the fetid atmosphere peculiar to a Russian prison, and the vile and coarse fare. Her sorrow and shame might have prompted her—as many hundreds of unfortunates have been prompted—to end her broken life. But one hope sustained her, and she dreamed of a day when vengeance might be hers.

To understand how such a change could have been wrought in one so fair and gentle as she, you must go through what she went through ; you must have your dearest treasures torn ruthlessly from you ; you must every hour of the day and night feel that you are the victim of a barbarous wrong ; you must nurse this wrong until it takes possession of you, and slowly permeates you with the unquenchable desire to crush your wronger ; you must be bowed down with a knowledge that the sunshine taken out of your life can never, never be restored ; that the fires that have turned to grey ashes on your hearth can be relighted no more ; you must be shut off for months and months from the sound of loved voices and the look

of loving eyes ; you must become acquainted with human nature in its most debased and brutal forms ; oaths and curses must ring in your ears, alternating with groans, sighs, and wailing of those who have to bear the inhumanity of their fellow-men. Then, and not till then, could you properly comprehend the change that would come about ; for the human being is not born who could endure it and remain the same.

In Nekrassoff's house Rachel again found shelter and protection, and, of course, she learned that her father had been sent to Siberia, and was already many months on the journey ; and, further, that the deposed Chief of the Police (and her own and her father's enemy) had been appointed to the governorship of Sakhalin, whither her lover, Moshka, had been banished. Then did she determine to go eastward too, and she told her friend Nekrassoff that when she had regained her strength she would set out for Siberia. He endeavoured to dissuade her. He told her that she would be certain to perish on the way ; but, under any circumstances, it would be impossible for her to undertake the journey alone.

So vividly did he paint all the dangers and privations that she would have to encounter, that she wavered ; but then there came to her Ivan Alexieff, who heard with unbounded joy of her release, and hastened once more to renew his protestations of love. But she told him, as she had often told him before, that it was all useless, for she could not

reciprocate his feelings ; and for him to dream of making her his wife after all the suffering she and her father had endured at his father's hands was sheer madness.

"Besides," she added, "I am going away. Where my father is, there would I be ; and if my strength permits, I will follow him."

"This is a mad project !" exclaimed Ivan, in amazement, and realizing with acute painfulness that if she went he would see her no more.

"It may be so," she answered calmly. "But madder things than that have been done ere now."

"But it is impossible than an unprotected woman could accomplish such a perilous journey as that to Eastern Siberia," he urged, expressing his deep concern in the woe-begone look of his face, and the ineffable sadness that displayed itself in his eyes.

"Then will I attempt the impossible," she returned.

"Oh, Rachel," he cried, with the passion of despair, as he seized her hand, and retained it in spite of her efforts to free herself, "have you no pity for me ? Will nothing turn you from this mad purpose ?"

"Nothing," she answered, with strong emphasis.

"Then will I go, too," he exclaimed, "for I can at least perish with you, and since to live without you is impossible, I will die ; for what will life be to me if I am to see you no more ?"

She looked at him fixedly and strangely for a little, and then a new idea flashed upon her.

"This love of yours seems to be a very real thing," she observed.

"Can you doubt it? Neither time nor circumstances have subdued my passion, and to possess you there is no sacrifice I would not make."

"I will take you at your word," she cried, quickly and excitedly. "You shall accompany me. I will accept your escort and protection on condition that you make a sacrifice for me."

"What will the sacrifice be?" he asked.

"Nay, that shall remain my secret. If your love is as real as you say it is, you will question not."

"Nor will I do so. Command me as you will."

"And yet I would warn you that this sacrifice which I may expect from you is a terrible one, and may turn your love for me to hatred."

"Nothing can turn my love; nor am I appalled by what you say."

"But what guarantee have I that you will remain faithful to your promise?"

She looked almost fierce by reason of the earnestness that actuated her, and she was agitated in an extraordinary way.

"I will swear it by yon Ikon," he exclaimed, as he pointed to the sacred picture which is usually to be found in the guest chamber of every Russian house occupied by a Christian, together with the little white wooden cross that stands on a pedestal fixed to the wall. The cross is a symbol that is regarded with

extraordinary and superstitious reverence by the ordinary Russian, who always turns to it on entering and leaving the room, and makes the sign upon his own forehead.

"You shall swear deeper than that," said Rachel. "You are a Christian, and the cross is your symbol of faith. Give me your hand and swear as I shall tell you, unless even now at the last moment you would reconsider your determination."

For a few seconds he seemed to hesitate, then asked :—

"Will you not tell me what the sacrifice is to be?"

"No," she answered firmly. "You must accept my conditions without question, or we part for ever."

"I accept them. Do with me as you will."

He put forth his hand, and she took it, leading him to the cross, upon which she placed his hand. Then she uttered these words, he repeating them :—

"I, Ivan Alexieff, son of Peter Alexieff, formerly Chief of the Police of St. Petersburg, hereby solemnly vow and swear in the name of the Christ I adore, and by this sacred symbol of the Christian Church, that I will implicitly and obediently make a sacrifice, whatever it may be, wherever and whenever Rachel Arama shall call upon me so to do. So God witnesseth, and keep me true to this solemn vow, which again I swear to fulfil though it should cost me my life."

"'Tis well," said Rachel, as she released his hand,

and a smile that was altogether unnatural to her played about her mouth. "You are bound by this even at the peril of your immortal soul."

"I am," he answered, sadly. Then, with a laughless little laugh, he added, "But I am not the first man who has imperilled his soul for a woman's sake, and now nothing remains to be done but to make preparations for the journey. When shall we start?"

"In a week from now."

"Our departure must be made in secret," Ivan observed.

"True, but we shall require passports. How are they to be obtained?"

This had not struck Ivan before, and it caused a look of perplexity to come into his face. But after some reflection he told her there would be no difficulty as far as she was concerned, as permission to travel to the east would not be withheld from her. While as for himself, he would write his own passport if he could not procure one in the ordinary way.

As he left her he was overjoyed at the thought that he had won her at last; and he did not concern himself with any attempt to guess what the sacrifice might be that he had so solemnly vowed to make for her. The future, in fact, gave him no anxiety, for he believed he had triumphed, and was content.

CHAPTER XV.

A PROUD SPIRIT.

RACHEL ARAMA was the object of much sympathy amongst her own people, and when it became known that she had determined on undertaking the tremendous journey to Eastern Siberia in order that she might be with her father, her friends used every possible argument they could think of to try and dissuade her.

"You will die on the way," said some.

"What matters it? Death can only come to me once," she answered, philosophically.

"But, mayhap, long ere you can reach your father he may be dead," said others.

"He may," she returned; "but while I have reason to think he lives, my duty is to go to him."

"And yet we are sure that your father would not wish you to run such terrible peril for the sake of merely seeing him," urged these friends.

"I am my father's daughter, and know his thoughts and feelings better than any of you," said Rachel.

"But think of the exile."

"I have thought of everything."

"And then, can you forget that your enemy, Peter Alexieff, has been appointed Governor of Sakhalin, whither your father has been sent? If the Governor gets you both into his power there, what do you suppose will be your fate?"

Rachel broke into an awfully bitter laugh as she made reply :—

"Can I forget, you ask, that Peter Alexieff is there? I am a Jewish maiden, taught from the moment that I could lisp to honour my father. I do honour my father ; therefore, while memory lasts, it is impossible for me to forget that Peter Alexieff, my father's deadly enemy and mine own, has gone to Sakhalin, where my father is a prisoner."

Thus she spoke, and with a strange light in her eyes that was quite unusual ; while the words had a covert meaning which did not appear to those who heard them. Then she breathed a sigh that was pregnant with a world of significance. It seemed to say that for her life had lost its salt ; that those things that had erstwhile given her pleasure, pleased her no longer ; that the hopes of youth were dead, to be recalled to life no more. But though all this was so, yet had she fixed her eyes on a goal, towards which she would press, and ever press. It might be that the way thereto would be tortuous, that she would have to swerve now to the right and anon to the left ; but she would go on with a terrible earnestness, an inflexible purpose. Men might scoff at her, the rains

beat upon her, the wolves howl at her, the rivers bar her passage, and dangers of all kinds beset her—yet, unless she died by the way she would reach that goal, and then, and not till then, would the object of her life be fulfilled.

Thus it came to pass that advice, persuasion, pleadings, counsel were thrown away upon her. Her answer was always to this purpose :—

“I shall go.”

Poor thing! It was sad that the sunshine had been so early blotted out of her life, and the veil that had screened her eyes from the hollowness and wickedness of the world should have been torn away so suddenly and ruthlessly, revealing to her astonished gaze that behind the mask of roses there was everything that was vile and cruel. As we grow old with the fleeting years, and wrinkles and white hairs come to us, it is given us to understand that the world is a world of mutability, and things are not what they seem. To learn this, however, while the eye is still bright, the cheek fresh, and the blood hot, is to be arrested, as it were, on the threshold of what we supposed was a garden of glory, but which, to our horror, we see is a place of woe and sepulchres.

Thus was it with Rachel Arama, who—now that her lover, her father, and her mother had been taken from her, and she, though guilty of no crime, no wrong, had had to bear the burning disgrace of the lash on her white shoulders in the presence of brutal

and degraded men—might have wailed out a heart-broken prayer to the God of Israel that He would release her from the burden of living, had it not been that she was upheld by that one stern and relentless purpose which had been born of sorrow and fostered by wrong. It was this purpose that kept her from shrinking with horror from the prospects of the journey that lay before her.

To every Russian the very mention of Siberia conjures up pictures of appalling human suffering, and of wrong inflicted by brutal officials, and shame endured by delicately-nurtured women and high-souled men, and of a country pitiless in its sternness and severity. It is true that in the vast region included by Siberia (and which extends from the Urals in the west to the Pacific in the east, and from the Altai in the south to the silent and mysterious Arctic Ocean in the north) there are stretches of smiling country, and towns where a high standard of cultivation and civilization is to be found; but the curse of Russia is over it all—the curse of a brutal despotism, of a power that is wielded with a relentless and tyrannical cruelty, that rejoices in the clanking of chains, and laughs aloud with a fierce and fiendish joy as women wail and men groan under the torture inflicted upon them. God has turned His face from Siberia, which spells suffering and wrong such as have scarcely had their parallel in the world's history.

Before Rachel could start upon her journey it was

necessary that she should be provided with letters and Government papers setting forth that she was a free subject, and permitted to travel through the country to her father, who was a convict. Before these papers could be procured much formality had to be gone through, and the delay was enough to test the patience of Job himself.

But it happened that it came to Count Nicholas Suvorof's ears that Rachel Arama was desirous of journeying to her father, and it seemed to him as if Fate was working in the matter ; and in his fanatical zeal and bigotry he resolved to aid Fate, for thus he argued :—

“Peter Alexieff is appointed Governor of Sakhalin. To Sakhalin the Jews, Aaron Arama and Moshka Umanski, have been transported. Now, Rachel would go to them, and so it will come to pass that these three people, who have been the cause of so much trouble, will fall into the power of Alexieff nearly five thousand miles from here, and if any man knows how to use power it is Alexieff. He has a bitter wrong to wipe out ; he has served me well and faithfully, and so I will speed Rachel to him.”

With this charitable thought in his mind he caused a message to be conveyed to her saying that if she would attend at his bureau he would exert his influence in her behalf with a view to forwarding her interests so far as he could. Rachel had no personal knowledge of this man, for it is doubtful if she had

observed him on that day of bitter memory, when he was present and witnessed her shame and humiliation in the court-yard of the Litovskiy Zamok. But she knew by common report that he was a Jew-hater, and never lost an opportunity of displaying his antipathy and envy. When she received his message, she said to herself, "Report has belied him."

She had still but little knowledge of the craft and guile that men can practise, otherwise she would have suspected that this offer to be of service concealed some hidden motive. As it was, she went hastily to the Count's bureau, and, having stated her errand to the janitors, she was speedily ushered into Suvorof's presence. A dark, saturnine sort of man he was, with a large forehead, an aquiline nose, and the brooding, melancholy expression which is so often seen on the faces of Russians. She felt somewhat abashed and nervous as she came before him and noticed his dark eyes fixed upon her.

"You have sent for me, Count," she remarked, as he seemed to wait for her to speak.

"Yes. I wish to serve you."

"You are kind," she answered. Then, as a sudden impulse, it occurred to her to ask: "But why do you interest yourself in me?"

"Why?" he exclaimed, with a little jerky, cynical laugh. "Firstly, because you are a beautiful woman; secondly, because you are in distress, and I realize how keen must be your anxiety to see your father."

"Ah, truly, truly, it is so, Count," she sobbed.

"I understand it," he replied ; "therefore will I exercise such influence as I possess to speed you on your way. If you go through the usual routine of applying for a permit to go to your father, you, as the daughter of a convicted felon——" Rachel's face suddenly felt as if it was being scorched with fire, and the slight respect that had been raised up in her for the Count turned to loathing ; but, except he read her looks, he knew nothing of what was passing in her mind, and he continued his speech—"as the daughter of a convicted felon you will have to wait until your turn comes round, and a year may pass before your papers are handed to you. But armed with this letter which I have penned to my friend Prince Zernesky, Minister of the Interior, you may count upon the utmost expedition being used, and I think I can promise you that within a month from now you may, if you so desire, start upon your journey."

She took the letter which the Count offered her, and said coldly, and with studied dignity :—

"I shall avail myself of your letter, and present it to his high nobility Prince Zernesky with all speed."

She uttered no syllable of thanks, and certainly she looked none. How could she thank the man who had just spoken of her father as a convicted felon ? Had he not made use of those words she might have gone upon her knees and kissed his hand as a

token of the gratitude that filled her heart. But for anyone to speak of her father as a convicted felon was to incur her relentless hatred. To her—and it was a beautiful and poetical idea—Aaron appeared as a man perfect and without fault, in so far as perfection might be reached in this world. When he spoke she hung upon his words as words of wisdom; and when he looked at her she felt a fascination, and drawn towards him by that sense of ineffable love which a dutiful daughter should bear for her father. She knew how gentle, how kind, how noble of mind he was, and how he was ever ready to exclaim when subjected to annoyance and persecution on account of his faith:—

“Oh, Lord, the Great High Ruler of all men, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

There was something sublime in this resignation and charitableness—at least, to her it seemed sublime and an exhibition of that grand spirit displayed by the martyrs of old when subjected to torture that must have been the invention of fiends of the nether world. And, further than this, she knew that he had done no wrong that should have rendered him liable to be termed “a convicted felon.” It was no less opprobrious than it was undeserved, and the man who would so speak of him—even though it might be the Czar himself—would incur her hatred.

“Is that all you have to say?” asked the Count, with a scowl,

"That is all, your greatness," came the bold answer, as she met his look unflinchingly. "May I go?"

The Count frowned still more sternly. A man in his position was used to the most servile and fawning flattery. If he had knouted all his servants he would still have expected them to go down upon their knees and lick his hands. Throughout Russia, from time immemorial, the lower classes have been taught to display the most cringing devotion to those in power above them; and the belief has been ground into their souls that it is a deadly sin to resent even the stripes and kicks. And until they have emancipated themselves from this belief they will remain slaves, and there will be no light in the Czar's vast dominions.

Count Suvorof was a staunch upholder of this doctrine of servility; therefore it can be realized how wroth he was when "a despised Jewess" dared to address him and look at him as if she was his equal. It was not in his nature to let her depart without first giving her to understand how supreme was the contempt with which he regarded her.

"If I rendered a service to the mightiest man in all this land," he said, "that is, the Little Father, the Czar, he would thank me. But I render a service to you and you say nothing. But then you are a Jewess."

"For which I thank God," she answered fervently.

"And yet you are despised of God."

"So says Count Nicholas Suvorof," came the bold

response, which made the Count wince, and he regretted that he could not there and then have her stripped and knouted in his presence. Smarting with irritation, he said :—

“ The insolence you display is the insolence peculiar to your people, and which is the main cause of the hostility shown by the Christians towards you.”

“ Better for me to make no reply, Count,” she said. “ You have your opinions ; my thoughts are my own. May I go ? ”

“ Yes,” he said, angrily, and being thus dismissed she turned abruptly and left the room. And when the door had closed, he exclaimed : “ You insolent she-dog ! You shall pay for this.”

Then he took from his cabinet a sheet of his crested paper, and on it he wrote this :—

“ From Count Nicholas Suvorof.

“ To Peter Alexieff, Governor of the Convict Station, Sakhalin.

“ Greetings ! Rachel Arama, the daughter of the accursed Jew, is going to her father. The insolence of her race displays itself in her in a concentrated form. It must be crushed out of her. In Sakhalin you have absolute power. A man who has absolute power should know how to deal with an insolent Jewess. Humility she knows not ; you must teach it to her. Meekness of spirit is not hers ; bestow it upon her. Gratitude she is a stranger to ; make her acquainted with it. Why should I say more ? You are a man of wisdom. Do these things in the name of God and the Czar, and let it not be said that Peter Alexieff knew not how to humble a Jewess. Under the seal of privacy send me news. Greetings ! ”

He closed the letter and sealed it with his signet, then summoned his secretary.

"When does the next courier start for the Eastern provinces?" he asked.

"Within twelve days, your greatness," was the answer.

"See to it that this letter is conveyed by him. It is important."

The man took the letter, and bowing, withdrew. And Count Nicholas Suvorof thought to himself:—

"Rachel Arama, you will yet live to learn that the dog cannot taunt the lion with impunity."

CHAPTER XVI.

A CHECK.

WHEN Ivan Alexieff determined to accompany Rachel on her journey through Siberia, he was not indifferent to the difficulties that lay in the way. Everyone who wished to travel in the country that lay beyond the Urals was obliged to be furnished with the necessary passports and official letters; otherwise he would be liable to arrest as a suspicious character whose object was to convey information to the convicts, or obtain information from them. Under any other conditions than those which now existed, he would have had no difficulty whatever, because he was legitimately entitled to go out to his father. But it was pretty well known that he had refused to accompany his father, and it was also known that he had displayed a liking for Rachel Arama. Therefore, if he had applied through the ordinary channels for the necessary papers, it would at once have been suspected that he simply wished to accompany Rachel; consequently permission would have been withheld. He knew this, and from the fact of his father having occupied the important position of Chief of the Police, he was well acquainted with all

the routine that had to be gone through, and also with the nature and form of the documents that were given to the applicants.

Although he fully recognised all the obstacles that opposed themselves to his desire to accompany her on the journey, they did not seem insuperable. For if love blinds a man to many things, it quickens his faculties in other respects, and makes him bold to rashness; and the plan he resolved upon was nothing more nor less than that of forging his own passport and papers. Indeed, there was no other plan to be pursued. It was that or nothing; for if his friends and relatives had got an inkling of his purpose they would, without doubt, have taken steps to frustrate his intentions. As it was, he had to admit to his confidence a friend who was employed in the bureau of the Minister of the Interior, and through this friend, and by means of a *douceur*—which in Russia has the power to buy the highest official in the land—he procured a passport form.

There is a saying that every man has his price, but nowhere does it receive such a startling exemplification as it does in the Czar's kingdom. Bid high enough and you can buy the Czar's most confidential and trusted adviser.

Having got this document the main difficulty was overcome. Ivan filled in the required particulars, and described himself as Paul Turnigieff, a merchant of Moscow, travelling on legitimate business to the east

to purchase furs. As regards ways and means he was in possession of about fifteen hundred roubles. He did not pause to consider what he would do when he had expended that. In his case sufficient for the day was the evil thereof. He was too impulsive, too erratic to sit calmly down and plan out the future. He was quite content to live in the present. In order to throw his friends off the scent, he gave them to understand that he had made up his mind to go to Paris, where, as he had been informed, Russians did well and readily obtained employment.

Thus did he pave the way for his departure ; and having arranged a rendezvous with Rachel, he went to Moscow, there to await her coming. It was some weeks, however, before she arrived, and he found it hard to restrain his impatience. When they came together once more she asked him if he was still as determined as ever to go eastward.

"Aye, more determined," he answered, emphatically ; "unless you were going westward. Then would I go westward, too, for where you are, there would I be."

"But remember, you are under oath to render me a service, and to make a sacrifice for my sake."

"I do not forget it," he replied. "But I would once more ask what the sacrifice is to be. Why should you refuse to tell me?"

"You have given yourself to my cause, therefore you must serve me blindly," she said. "My secrets are my own. You shall not wrest them from me ; but

now, on the eve of our starting, I ask you whether you wish to withdraw?"

"I have spoken," he said, doggedly. "Where you go, I go."

"And yet it may be only to die," she urged.

"If I die with you, let it be so, since I cannot live without you. Even now you seem to doubt my love. And yet I tell you, Rachel Arama, no man ever loved woman more truly than I love you."

She turned her head away, evidently affected with some emotion. Then suddenly she faced him once more. There were tears in her eyes. She was strangely moved.

"Ivan," she said, with unusual tenderness, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, "Ivan, I would save you from yourself. I believe your love is firm and true, but it may prove a phantom to lure you to your destruction."

"What mean you?" he asked, with every manifestation of agitation, if not alarm.

"Think of what I am," she replied, with an expression of infinite sadness.

"You are a woman, and a beautiful one."

"I am a Jewess, and a Jewess in this unhappy country is accounted a little inferior to the dogs."

"Love has no creed," he replied. "I love you."

"A fatal love, a fatal love," she moaned, obviously enduring some great struggle with herself.

"You speak a riddle," he said, as he nursed her

hand and looked with a great yearning into her distressful face.

"It must remain a riddle. I have no answer. But do you forget that you are the son of Peter Alexieff?"

"I do not forget."

"And Peter Alexieff is an uncompromising foe of my people."

"That do I remember also."

"And Peter Alexieff has ruined and crushed my father."

"Would to God I knew it not," he murmured, hanging his head as if in shame.

"And on my shoulders I still bear the marks of the beating which was administered to me by Peter Alexieff's orders."

"Rachel! Rachel!" exclaimed Ivan, unable longer to keep his feelings under check, "I am not accountable for my father's deeds. Nature has made me his son, but Nature has not given me his disposition. I have served you. In the hour of danger I proved my devotion. Shall I curse my father and swear in the name of Heaven that I will acknowledge him no more? Bid me how you will, for I am your slave, and the slave must obey. You have blinded me. Give me your hand and lead me where you will, even though it be to eternal destruction."

"Destruction may await us both," she answered, sadly.

"Let it be so. The prospect appals me not."

"We will go forward then together, and yet never forget that I tried to dissuade you, and warned you of what might happen."

"I shall forget nothing."

"Not even your oath?" she said, significantly.

"Not even my oath."

It was the day after this conversation that he said to her:—

"Rachel, is it not possible that you can become my wife before we set forward on our journey?"

"No, it is *not* possible," she answered, with unusual emphasis.

"When may I hope?" he asked, with a sigh.

"I know not. Certainly not before you have made the sacrifice you have sworn to make at my command."

He had come by this time to understand that her will was inflexible, and that she could not be persuaded out of a purpose and argued into a course against which she had turned her face; and so he resigned himself to what was now inevitable, and remarked with a sort of moan:—

"Let us go then. For when once we have started it will seem to me as if every step brought me nearer to the consummation of my hopes."

"And yet hope may turn to despair," she remarked.

"Let us go," was his only answer, and that answer revealed his frame of mind, and told how powerful was the influence she wielded over him.

And so it came to pass that two days later they were travelling by rail to Nizhni Nóvgorod. It was the early summer, so that they would be well on their journey across Siberia before the winter snows came down.

The briefest possible stay was made at the renowned Fair City on the banks of the Volga. Rachel felt as if she could not restrain her impatience, which prompted her to move on and on and on until her goal was reached and her great purpose accomplished. And the first steamer leaving after they arrived bore them down the stately Volga and up the lonely Káma, with its wild and savage scenery, until, after a voyage of 1,000 miles, they reached Perm, at the foot of the Ural Mountains. Thus far the journey had been without incident, but at Perm their passports were demanded and their papers examined. In Rachel's passport she was described as:—

"The daughter of Aaron Arama, a Jew, and convict felon, transported to Sakhalin."

The chief of the police, a young man of about thirty-four, read this out aloud. Then he looked at her with a leering glance, and said contemptuously:—

"A Jewess! Umph! Nature wasted beauty when she made you, and yet, woman, if you name your price, I may buy you."

Burning scarlet went her face, and words trembled on her lips; but ere she could reply Ivan thrust himself forward, and flourishing his fist in the chief's

face, and carried away by the passion of the moment, he exclaimed :—

“Insolent dog ! Apologize, or, in honour’s name, I’ll beat you into a jelly.”

The official started back, and, drawing his revolver, he was about to take aim, when Rachel threw herself between them, and, stretching out her hands towards the chief, she cried :—

“Hold, man, if you be a man, or if you spill his blood a curse will rest upon you, and the spirit of the murdered man—whose only offence is rebuking you for your insult to me—will haunt you night and day, and drive you into raving madness.”

These passionate words, evoked by the desperate-ness of the situation, had their effect on the ignorant and superstitious official, who said with severe sternness :—

“Woman, his life shall be saved. But know that it is a crime to threaten an official of the police.” As he spoke he struck a bell and a messenger appeared :—
“Send the officer of the guard here with four gendarmes.” The messenger retired. Ivan looked at Rachel with a look of despair, and she turned appealingly to the chief and said :—

“What does this mean ?”

“It means that this ruffian shall find a lodging in our convict prison here until I have found out more about him, and received orders concerning him.”

“Are you pitiless ?” moaned out Rachel. “He is

an honest man. We have travelled from Moscow together, and he has pledged himself to escort me to my destination."

"I am pitiless," answered the chief of the police, with a coarse laugh; "your beauty makes me so."

Before Rachel could say aught to this the doors opened, and an officer entered with drawn sword and revolver in his hand, and at his heels were four men, also heavily armed.

"This person," said the chief, pointing to Ivan, whose pale face wore a look of the most pitiable hopelessness, "who is described in his passport as Paul Turnigieff, a fur merchant of Moscow, has insulted me and threatens to beat me into a jelly. Conduct him, therefore, to the prison, and see that he is safely guarded. Even a Moscow fur merchant must be taught that he cannot obstruct a servant of the Czar in his duty with impunity."

Ivan knew the utter uselessness of resistance or remonstrance, and so, yielding to the force of circumstances which he could not control, he obeyed the brusque order of the officer to fall in, and, surrounded by the four gendarmes, he was marched out of the building and conducted to the convict prison; and as Rachel saw him go her heart sank, for she felt as if her great purpose had thus early been nipped in the bud, and that she must now go forward on the great journey alone, always pursuing a phantom, so to speak—a phantom that was probably leading her to a

cruel death. But though she knew this she dare not halt, dare not turn back, dare not pause, because over and above everything she heard a voice that called "DUTY"; and blazing out before her anxious eyes, that gazed so intently and with such sad earnestness towards the dark future, *Duty* was writ in characters of fire, and towards that she was drawn as by some great magnetic influence that could not be resisted.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE GREAT SIBERIAN ROAD.

THE difficulties which surrounded her, and the trying circumstances under which she was endeavouring to carry out her self-appointed mission, did not daunt or crush Rachel. On the contrary, the innate qualities of nobleness and self-reliance of her nature were called into play, and she rose equal to the occasion. She had already learnt too much of the hard, cruel officialism of Russia to expect or hope for a moment that she would meet with sympathy or assistance from the strangers amongst whom she found herself.

Moreover, she was only too painfully aware that her faith caused the hand of every man not of her own persuasion to be against her, while Christian women regarded her with contempt and dislike, and steeled their hearts against any appeal for help or consolation she might have felt disposed to make. But she asked not for help. She was proud, and neither suffering nor persecution could break her pride. Nevertheless she suffered anguish and great distress when she found herself separated from Ivan Alexieff, upon whom she had relied to carry out her purpose.

She did not love him ; she could never love him ; but she believed that he truly loved her, and the wrongs she had suffered had prompted her to use him. Her love had been given to Moshka, and though she had not the faintest shadow of a hope that he and she would ever come together again, she had resolved to be true to him. It may seem somewhat singular that, in conceiving her project of journeying to Siberia, it was no thought of Moshka that prompted her. She regarded him as one dead, and she had resigned herself to her fate. But she viewed the position of her father from a different standpoint.

Filial duty is ever very strong in a Jewess, and Rachel Arama was one of the most attached, most devoted, most affectionate of daughters. And when she remembered how her father had been broken and ruined, and treated worse than the deepest stained criminal, her very blood curdled with indignation. To have sat still with folded hands, and have held her peace as she thought of the malicious persecution her father and she had suffered at the hands of Peter Alexieff, and how with fierce and unrelenting cruelty Peter had pursued her father to his ruin, was an impossibility. All her gentle womanhood was transformed as she dwelt upon it. Her sweetness was turned to gall, and she had changed to a hard, stern woman, thirsting for the downfall of the persecutor.

To the chief of the police at Perm she made an eloquent appeal on behalf of her travelling companion.

But the man, like all his class throughout Russia, with few exceptions, was brutal and unsympathetic. The constant and almost daily scenes of suffering and misery he witnessed as the exile parties passed through the city on their way to their destination had hardened him, and he was utterly without any pity for the wretched convicts.

Indeed, it may be said that the clanking chains, the groans of suffering men, the sighs of anguish-wrung women, and the affrighted cries of young children were music to his ears. At any rate they did not affect him, and in common with his kind he had a most exalted and exaggerated notion of his own importance. He was an official, a chief of the police, and he wore the Czar's uniform, therefore he considered that everyone who was not of equal rank with him should show him homage and pay him deference ; while as for the convicts with whom he came in contact, they should do nothing less than bow down and worship him. Let it not be supposed he was singular in this respect. Out of the many thousands of officials scattered through Siberia, or for the matter of that throughout the Russian empire, there are but very few who are not possessed of the same spirit of self-importance.

Rachel's appeal was, as might have been expected, not only useless, but was met by coarse insult, and cruel and heartless reference to her being the daughter of a Jew convict. So she passed from the presence

of this ill-conditioned man with a heavy and sore heart, while with a sense of loneliness and desolation she set her face once more to the east.

She had by this time learnt the necessity of throwing off all reserve, and displaying self-assurance. For on herself she must depend: she could expect no help, no encouragement from anyone. She was the daughter of a convict. It mattered not that her father was a wronged and persecuted man. That was never taken into consideration. He was an exile. Therefore, by the inexorable logic of the official mind, he was a criminal, and being a criminal, he and those belonging to him were deserving of no sympathy, no indulgence. And so Rachel, being the daughter of a convict, and being so described in her passport, could expect nothing but contumely and scorn. But she hardened herself against it, and the springs of her tears dried up.

From Perm her journey forward as far as Ekaterin-burgh was by rail, which carried her over the Ural Mountains to their eastern slope. At this point the rail ends, and henceforth her way should be by *tarantas*, drawn by post horses, along the great Siberian road, which extends for nearly four thousand miles. It was a journey that might well have appalled a woman who was actuated by a less powerful motive than that which stirred Rachel. But she shrank not from her task, and soon she was speeding as fast as horses would take her towards the Siberian Steppes.

She passed the famous boundary post—the square, stone-built pillar—which marks the frontier line of Siberia. This post has witnessed for ages the heart-rending scenes that take place when the sternly-guarded exile parties reach it as they travel east. Here they are allowed to halt for a brief space, and then there are wringing of hands, and weeping and wailing as the unhappy convicts bid farewell to the land of their birth, the land they have loved in spite of its drawbacks and the barbarity of its rulers. And often with frantic sobs the poor people kiss and embrace the cold stones of the pillar, until the order is given to fall in, and with many a backward glance and sigh of sorrow they march away to misery, suffering, and death.

From this point Rachel would, if she could have done so, have continued her journey by the lonely northern route that would have carried her over the weird, desolate wastes of the *tundras*, which are swept by the pitiless Arctic blasts, and frozen into a world of white death by the intense cold. In these wild and pitiless regions, almost entirely deserted alike by man and beast, she would at least have been free from insult and molestation. But as one travelling on sufferance, as the daughter of a convict, she was compelled by the law to keep to the main exile road. Therefore she had no alternative, and so forth she went ; but a little while before reaching the town of Tiumen she was seized with sudden illness,

and was compelled to seek shelter and care in a lonely village. For several days she lay in a state bordering on unconsciousness. But at last she began to recover, only to find that she had been robbed of nearly all her money. It was an awful blow.

To travel alone and travel quickly money was imperative, and without money there was but one alternative, and that was to seek permission to go forward with an exile party ; though that necessitated prison fare, prison regulations, and conforming to all the stern and rigorous rules by which the convicts are bound. The prospect was truly appalling. But love is a strong passion ; and revenge is even a stronger one. To remain there was out of the question. To turn back was impossible, and so Rachel went forward and reached the important town of Tiumen ; important from the fact that it contains the chief forwarding prison in Siberia, and is the seat of the Chief Bureau of Exile Administration in Siberia. From St. Petersburg it is about seventeen hundred miles to the east, and it is in this place really that the machinery of the gigantic exile system works.

To Tiumen Rachel came weary and out of health, but not disheartened, dark as the prospects were she had to face, and boldly she presented herself before the high and mighty official of the bureau, and told her story ; and when the chief, bedizened in a gorgeous blue and gold uniform, had heard her tale and

read her passport, he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, puffed a great volume of smoke from the cigarette he was smoking, and muttered :—

“Umph, a Jewess, and daughter of a convict.”

Rachel shuddered as she always did when she heard her father spoken of as a convict, and her face reddened and her eyes brightened with anger, but she held her peace, for she had come to understand how important it was that she should be cautious lest her scheme be thwarted. Then coarsely the Chief addressed her :—

“Why do you wish to go to your father, Jewess?”

“Why?” she asked, looking at him in surprise. “Because the Great God, our Heavenly Father, has planted in my heart a powerful affection for my earthly father; and I fain would comfort him in his misery, tend him in his old age, and when he dies, die with him.”

“Ah, a pretty sentiment,” remarked the official, with a sneer. “Your father has been exiled to Sakhalin, has he not?”

“Yes.”

The Chief of the Exile Bureau was evidently interested in Rachel's story.

“Know you, then, that you will not be allowed to live upon the island?” he inquired.

“So I was given to understand. But occasionally I can visit my father. And some day, mayhap, he will be allowed freedom as an exile colonist. Then he can come to the mainland, and I shall be with him.”

“What crime was he condemned for?”

"He was guilty of no crime," answered Rachel, her indignation showing itself in her eyes and tone. For some moments the Chief looked at her sternly and threateningly. Then he struck a bell, and an attendant appeared. He told this man to bring a certain book, which he designated by a number and a letter. The man retired, and the official turned his attention to some government documents that lay before him, and he seemed to ignore Rachel's presence altogether. She had up to this moment stood before this great man, but being weary and exhausted, she seated herself on a form that was placed against the wall. Then did the great one look up from his papers and thunder forth:—

"Woman, know you not that you are guilty of an offence in sitting in my presence? Have you no respect for the uniform I wear and for my position as a representative of our Little Father—the Czar?"

Rachel rose slowly. The words she would have uttered—the words that would have expressed her disgust and contempt for this arrogant fool—she restrained from finding expression, though with great difficulty. And, trying to appear meek and to speak meekly, she said:—

"Forgive me, your nobleness, I am almost ignorant of the ways of the great world. At least, I was so up to a comparatively short time ago. I am my father's only daughter. I was nurtured tenderly, guarded jealously, and those who loved me paid

homage to me, and tried to anticipate my wants. But, alas! times and things have changed. I am a suppliant for your favours. I will sit in your presence no more."

The official regarded her with some curiosity, not unmingled with anger begotten of wounded pride, for he was not indifferent to the irony of the latter part of her little speech; and in his overbearing arrogance he considered it little short of a crime that anyone—especially a Jewess—should treat him with what he was pleased to think was disrespect. But now there re-entered the attendant with a huge tome, and his entry diverted the current of the great man's thoughts, and so put an end to the strained relations between him and his visitor.

The tome was laid upon the desk. It was an official record of every exile who had been sent to Siberia for that year. It contained the most exhaustive description of the exile; stated whether he had been tried by a court or simply condemned by an order of the Minister of the Interior, the nature of his offence, where he had been imprisoned before being sent to Siberia, and so forth. The Chief ran his finger down the index, then turned over the ponderous pages until he found what he wanted, and he read out slowly:—

"Aaron Arama, Jew. Born in Russia. Age sixty-two. A dangerous political; a conspirator and revolutionist——"

"'Tis false!" cried Rachel, in choking tones, feeling that she must give the lie to that false record.

"Silence, woman," roared the Chief, bristling with anger; and though Rachel hated him, and would have liked to have spoken her mind freely, she remembered the object that had brought her to Siberia, and she said no more. So the official continued his reading, repeating as if on purpose to still further wound her:—

"A conspirator and revolutionist, condemned for slaying a moujik. Imprisoned first in St. Peter and Paul, afterwards in Schlüsselburg. Transported thence to Siberia. Destination, Sakhalin. Sentence, life. Condition, hard labour. Reached Tiumen on the 28th of October. Forwarded with an exile party of a hundred and ten on 20th of December same year. Medical report, health feeble. Police report, conduct good."

He closed the book as he ceased reading the particulars, which were pitiless in their circumstantiality. Rachel had listened with a bursting heart. She tried hard, very hard, to keep back the tears, which would flow, however, in spite of her efforts. Indeed, she would have been an entirely different woman to what she was had she been enabled to listen with dry eyes to that cruel record, especially to the part that described his health as feeble.

"Perhaps," she thought, "he is already dead." Then she closed her eyes and set her teeth, and her

face seemed to change. The sweet, womanly softness faded out of it, and an expression of subdued fierceness took its place.

The Chief was not affected by the tears. He was used to tears. They were a woman's weapons, but he had hardened himself against them. He had been stationed in Tiumen for six or seven years, and during that time he had seen thousands of exiles—men, women, and children—pass through on their way to their living graves, and the tears he had seen shed would almost have floated a frigate. Therefore a Jewess in tears was not in the least likely to disturb his serenity of mind.

"Now, tell me, woman," he said, sternly and brusquely, "are you still desirous of going forward?"

She drew herself up. She wiped her face with her handkerchief with a gesture of anger, that is, anger with herself for the exhibition of weakness, and she said, with emphasis:—

"I am."

"But this Jew—I mean your father—may be dead."

"Still will I go."

"Why?"

"In order that I may be buried somewhere near him."

"Pajoúst Batinska" (as you please), answered the Chief, with a sort of snarl, and shrugging his shoulders. "Retire to the outer apartment and wait

until the necessary papers are prepared. Then betake yourself to the prison, where you will come under the surveillance of the police and have to submit to the rules and regulations which apply to the convicts."

"Which I will do," answered Rachel, with strong emphasis, which implied much, and feeling more determined than ever to accomplish the purpose that had prompted her to set out upon the journey.

"The next exile party," continued the Chief, referring to a book, "starts for the eastern provinces in three weeks' time. You will accompany them."

"Thank you, Little Father," answered Rachel, coldly, as she turned and left the great man's presence. And that night found her an inmate of the terrible Tiumen prison.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A COMMON BOND OF UNION.

How she shrank within herself; how she shuddered as she realized the horrors of that house of woe and pestilence. The barracks for the women were utterly without comfort of any kind, and more than twice the number of occupants were there than should have been according to the cubic space. The result was that the air was pestiferous. Rachel felt as if she would die of suffocation, and, in order to get some relief, she crept into the strongly stockaded yard, where armed sentries paced to and fro; but at least the air of heaven blew there uncontaminated, and above, in the ebony sky, the bright stars shone.

Rachel gazed up to them, and somehow she seemed to draw hope and courage from them. All night she crouched down in the yard, dozing occasionally, and feeling very lonely, very desolate, very unhappy. But still her purpose sustained her, and, looking at the stars of heaven, she thought:—

“They shine over Sakhalin. My father languishes in Sakhalin. I must go to him, and He who holds the stars in His hand and created man will support

me in this my hour of trial. I am but a weak woman, but women ere now have done great deeds for love's sake."

After that first night she became more reconciled to the situation ; although it was impossible to conquer the repugnance and loathing she felt for the awful place. There were nearly two hundred women and children crowded into the horrible den. Some of the women were political exiles ; some had been condemned for criminal offences, while the rest were simply accompanying their male relations to the land of their exile.

But on the faces of all was a settled look of melancholy. How could it be otherwise ? For everything that could make life worth living had been taken from them. They were going to the land of desolation, where harsh treatment and cruel laws prevailed, and where neither suffering nor sorrow could soften the stony hearts of those who, with inflexible determination, carried out their orders in the name of God and the Czar.

For some days Rachel was an object of curiosity to the women. They wondered who she was, where she had come from, and whither she was going ; and when they discovered she was a Jewess, as of course they speedily did, some of them reviled and mocked her, and called her harsh names. But there were others less bigoted and stupid, who displayed a desire to be friendly, and showed her sympathy. For her

beauty prevailed with them, and her gentle nature won their hearts.

Amongst these was a young woman about her own age, named Catherine Petrovna, who was accompanying her husband to Eastern Siberia. Catherine was coarse and vulgar as compared with Rachel, but still she was a woman of intense feeling, and of great power of will. Her husband Paul was a Nihilist. Compromising documents had been found in his possession, and he had been condemned after trial to hard labour for life ; first at Sakhalin, afterwards at the Kara Mines, with prospects of being allowed to settle as a colonist when he had served twenty years of his sentence.

By profession Paul was an architect, and had had excellent prospects ; but having managed to offend a noble for whom he had been doing some work, the grand personage struck him. Paul struck back with interest, and for that he was fined heavily and imprisoned.

The injustice—for injustice it was—made a Nihilist of Paul, and when he came out of prison he allied himself with a conspiracy which had for its object a general revolution. The conspirators, however, were betrayed by one of their own number. They were all arrested. Two were sent to Schlüsselburg and were heard of no more ; the rest were banished to Siberia.

Such was the story that Catherine poured into

Rachel's ear ; and in telling it she displayed a fierceness that made it evident she could be dangerous. She regarded her husband as a deeply-injured man, and she spoke of the authorities in terms of unmeasured hatred. In whispered invective she abused the Czar, his advisers, the rulers generally, and declared that Russia was rotten to the core.

So full was she of her wrongs and her woes, and so bitter was her hatred against everyone in authority—for she made no distinction, she drew no line of demarcation—that she was unable to reflect that possibly she might be betraying herself into the hands of the enemy in thus freely unburdening her mind to a stranger. But, after all, there is a certain magnetic influence exercised by some people which at once begets our confidence and trust. Possibly it was so in this case, and the woman Petrovna was insensibly drawn to Rachel, and led to disclose her feelings even against her will. Rachel listened patiently, with a deep and absorbing interest, and remarked at last, when the other had nothing more to tell :—

“ You are going with your husband of your own free will ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Have you been married long ? ”

“ But a year ; and my Paul is the world to me. They have ruined him ; but perhaps our day will come.”

“ Hush,” said Rachel. “ It is necessary to be

careful. Spies are everywhere. The very walls have ears."

"True, true," murmured Catherine. "The land is cursed; and there is no freedom for the common people. Even one's thoughts are not one's own."

"There is all the more reason, then, why we should be careful," said Rachel, regarding Catherine with a fresh interest, as she realized that there was a good deal in common between them. They had both been wronged; they had both suffered; they had both been rudely forced by circumstances from their homes, their friends, and both of their own free will were journeying to the land of desolation for the sake of those they loved.

"You are right," answered Catherine, a little tartly. "Perhaps I am a fool in telling you my secrets."

"I don't think so," replied Rachel. "Of course, you are aware," she added, "that you will not be allowed to accompany your husband to Sakhalin?"

"Yes, they told me so. But I can see him every three months. That is a small mercy, though one must be thankful for it." Then she exclaimed, as if she had only just thought of it, "But you have not told me who you are."

"I am a voluntary exile," answered Rachel, sadly.

"Married?"

"No."

"A lover is with you, perhaps?"

"No. My lover is already there, as is my father,

unless it be that the good God has taken them to their rest."

"Why have they been banished?" asked Catherine.

"They are Jews," answered Rachel, significantly.

"Ah! that in itself is a crime. The Little Father and his people hate the Jews."

"Do you hate them?" Rachel asked.

Catherine shrugged her shoulders as she made reply: "I don't know much about them. They've never done me any harm. I don't know why I should hate people who have not injured me."

This answer, spoken flippantly, and with a certain brusqueness, touched Rachel, so that her dark eyes filled with tears, and her soft, white hand grasped the harder, coarser hand of her sister in sorrow.

"We shall be friends," she said.

"Yes," returned Catherine. "I don't see why we shouldn't. It doesn't matter to me what you believe. God made us all, and God will do something with us, I suppose, when we're dead. That's my creed, and I don't want any other."

This answer made it clear to Rachel that Catherine was no ordinary woman, and might prove to her a valuable ally. And so she fostered the friendship. Little by little she came to understand more and more of Catherine Petrovna's character, and the more she saw of her the more she felt confident that she had the rugged force of character necessary with one who would accomplish great and daring deeds. And

one day—it was on the eve of the exile party setting out once more in continuation of its journey eastward—she said to her :—

“Catherine, would you, if you could, take any means to liberate your Paul?”

Catherine’s face reddened. Her eyes blazed up, and setting her white, even teeth firmly together, she hissed in an undertone :—

“Would I? Only give me the chance, and see what I would do. If I saw a way of getting Paul free, the man who would try to stop me would hold his life cheaply. A revengeful woman is dangerous. And the demon of revenge sits here and knaws my heart.” She beat her breast with her hands, and ground her teeth with the rage which she could not conceal.

“Calm and control yourself, sister,” said Rachel. “We may be of use to each other, but we must be careful. It is dangerous to give the reins to one’s feelings.”

“That is so,” replied Catherine, recovering herself and, shrugging her shoulders as an expression of disgust.

The morrow dawned, gloomy and wintry in its aspects, and at seven o’clock the great bell of the prison clanged harshly as a signal that those who were to go forward were to muster in the court-yard. Then for two hours or more the clanking of chains and the hubbub of voices were deafening, until at

last the commander of the soldiers who were to form the escort called out in a hoarse voice: "Silence." Instantly the voices grew dumb, and the rattling of the chains ceased. Then the muster roll was called. Many of those who had entered the prison a month ago would answer no more to an earthly call, for typhoid, typhus, and other malignant diseases had been busy amongst them.

When the muster was complete, the feeble, the sickly, and the aged were told to fall out, and gather in a group in a corner of the yard, as they would leave last and be carried in *telagas*. And, all being ready, the word "march" rang out. The great gates of the prison swung open, and two abreast the convicts moved forward, the women following the men, and the *telagas* with the baggage, the sick and infirm bringing up the rear.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BONDS ARE STRENGTHENED.

BETWEEN Catherine Petrovna and Rachel Arama the intimacy grew and strengthened ; it became a knit-friendship, begotten of a common sorrow and fostered by a common hope. What that hope was neither would have cared to have shaped into definite words. But when Catherine watched with hungry, anxious eyes the pale, melancholy face of her husband, as wearily he marched along with his fellow-subjects, that dark hope—dark as yet, for it was so uncertain—gave her courage ; and when she listened to the clanking of his chains, her heart beat madly with a fierce desire—a desire to make a desperate bid for liberty. But how it was to be done and where it was to be done she could form no idea. She could only watch silently and patiently for the opportunity, should it ever arise. And then—well, then it would be liberty or death. But she cared not for death if she could die with Paul.

Such were her thoughts ; they came and went like phantoms, at times filling her with a feeling that all would be well, that all would come to pass as she

hoped, and then anon, hope was changed to despair, until she felt as if her heart was bursting and her brain was on fire, and she was tempted to "Curse God and die." So these fits of hope and despair alternated, and days wore on. The weeks grew into months, and the terrible journey was coming to an end.

Two women could hardly have been more dissimilar than Catherine and Rachel. The one was rugged, coarse, rough by nature, lacking the finer sentiments and the high intellectual qualities which subdue, and, in some cases, almost entirely crush out the mere animal faculties. And yet Catherine loved Paul with a love that was capable of swaying her to do the most desperate deeds, to dare danger and defy death for his sake. There was no poetry in her love—that is, there were none of those fine and subtle shades of sentiment in it which characterized the love of Evangeline as she wandered through the primeval forests in search of her lost Gabriel.

Catherine's love was a passion—the passion of the tigress for her lord—and this passion was daily kept alive by the sight of Paul and the presence of Paul; and by the occasional pressure of his hand and lips. For at the halting-places the female relatives of the male convicts were allowed to mingle with them for a brief time.

How different was it with Rachel—the delicate, gentle, refined woman whose life, up to a little while ago, had been as a dream of roses. But, alas! the

roses had faded, and the dream had become a reality of thorns ; a sense of unutterable loneliness tortured her, while the suspense she had to endure was almost maddening. For, after all, might it not be when the weary thousands of miles had been traversed, and the desolate region of the far east was revealed—might it not be that she would find herself still lonelier in the world, if the sorrows of those she loved were ended in the grave? But still, mingling with suspense was a hope that grew strong and feeble by turns, and her great wrong upheld her ; and in the rough friendship of Catherine she found a measure of consolation that tended to make her sense of loneliness less keen.

As there was a striking contrast between Catherine and Rachel, so there was between Catherine and her husband. Paul was a physically weak man, though a strongly intellectual one. He had had ambition, but his ambition had been killed ; he had looked upward to the stars, but had been beaten down to the earth, and the hopes he had cherished had turned to a bitter and vain regret. He brooded on his wrongs ; a dark melancholy had taken possession of him, and he seemed incapable of shaking it off. He appreciated the devotion of his wife. He found comfort in her presence, and the sound of her voice often lifted him out of the gloom that enwrapped him. But no such thought and hope as that which sustained her upheld him. She dreamed of

liberty again ; but he believed that the only freedom he would know would be that which death would bring.

At first he showed no disposition to be friendly with, or even courteous to, Rachel. He had been imbued with the dislike, so general amongst his countrymen, for people of the Jewish persuasion. His dislike, however, had been rather of a passive character. If it found expression at all, it was in a silent and contemptuous bearing towards them. Perhaps his prejudice, like that of a good many more, was unreasoning ; that is, he never troubled himself to inquire why he disliked the Jews. In so far as Rachel was concerned, however, his prejudice gave way. He had found an opportunity to ask his wife who Rachel was, and Catherine had answered him thus :—

“She is going to her father and her lover. They are in Sakhalin. She is a voluntary exile. She may help us.”

“Help us ! How ?” Paul had asked in surprise.

“I am a woman and she is a woman,” was Catherine’s strange answer. “Two desperate women may do much.” As Catherine uttered this little speech, Paul saw in the future some great possibilities. “Two desperate women may do much.” They will dare much and suffer much, and for sweet love’s sake they may finally conquer.

He pondered on these words. They afforded him

food for reflection for many and many a day. And he shaped them this way, and he shaped them that ; and, finally, he came to the conclusion that two desperate women, actuated by a common cause, might find a means to circumvent even the vigilance of mercenary sentries, and if they did—there was an “if” in the case—who could tell what might happen ? In that “if” he found a something that encouraged him to foster a faint hope.

Except in the winter months, when snow and ice render navigation impossible, the convict route from Tiumen is by convict barge down the great river Irtysh, and then up the river Ob, to the town of Tomsk, a distance of seven hundred miles.

During the day the exiles, who are never freed from their chains, are allowed to promenade about on the upper deck in a sort of huge cage, which is subdivided by a wire partition separating the men from the women, though through the meshes of the wire they can converse with each other. But as sentries are constantly patrolling up and down, conversation has to be guarded. Nevertheless Catherine did occasionally find opportunity to speak cheering words to her husband ; she told him as much as she had learnt of Rachel, and spoke highly of her, and by the time Tomsk was reached he looked on the Jewess with considerably less prejudice.

Now, up to this point Paul had in a certain sense been sullenly indifferent to his future fate. Possibly,

if it had not been for his wife's devotion, he would have courted death by breaking from the ranks on the first opportunity, knowing that before he had got many yards away he would fall riddled with bullets from the rifles of the convoy guards. But at Tomsk an incident occurred that brought about a great change in him. He was talking to his wife one day in the court-yard of the forwarding prison where the convicts are kept until the time comes for resuming the journey to Eastern Siberia, which is still over two thousand miles away, the road being traversed on foot, except by the sick and infirm. As he so talked an officer of the convoy guard came along, and as Catherine happened to be standing in his direct line of walk, he, instead of swerving a little to the right or left, pushed her roughly and rudely out of his way, so that she reeled and nearly fell to the ground. The blood leaped into Paul's white face, and with his lips quivering with passion he exclaimed :—

“Beast and fool. Such an insult as that offered to my wife, under any other circumstances than those in which I am now placed, should cost you your life.”

“You threaten, do you?” cried the officer, stopping suddenly in his course and turning round like a fierce hyena that was making ready to spring upon his prey.

“Aye, I threaten, and may even carry out my threat if you be not more polite.”

"Ho, guard!" called the officer, and two gendarmes stepped forward; "seize this man and take him to the punishment ground."

With a great scream of agonizing despair Catherine sprang to her husband and threw her arms about his neck. But she was dragged ruthlessly away and hurled to the earth, where she lay stunned. Paul, knowing the uselessness of resistance, made none, but walked with sullen mien and compressed lips between the guard to what was known as the punishment ground. There his ragged shirt was stripped from his back and he was mercilessly beaten with the knout, the officer who had ordered the whipping administering several blows himself.

After that terrible and cruel punishment Paul was no longer the same man. When his wife got a chance of speaking to him she was almost frenzied with anger.

"There shall be a day of reckoning for this," she said, fiercely.

"Dai Bogh" (God grant it), answered Paul, with his teeth closely clenched, his eyes blazing forth fire, thereby indicating how dangerous he had become. "But hush," he continued, "not a word. Let us be like cats that watch in the dark for their prey, silent and unheard."

"Trust me, dear one," returned Catherine, with significant emphasis.

A week later Rachel passed a word with him.

"They have flogged you," she said in a tone of strong sympathy.

"Yes," he answered.

"They flogged me once in St. Petersburg," she continued, her face reddening with shame at the bare thought of that outrage. "I had committed no crime, done no wrong," she continued, "and yet they flogged me."

"Ah," sighed Paul. "It is easy to taunt and insult the caged lion. But sometimes the lion breaks his bars, and then—well, then sometimes he is shot. But sometimes the lion tears his keepers."

He took Rachel's hand, pressed it, and said in a whisper: "Go. Let us not be seen conversing together."

It was thus that another strong bond was forged between these three people—Catherine, Rachel, and Paul. The two women were drawn much closer together, but by a tacit understanding they ignored for the time being the subject of their wrongs.

At length the party went upon the road again, and orders were given to the convoy guard to closely watch Paul, who was described as "a violent and dangerous prisoner." The winter was setting in now, and over the northern *tundras* the pitiless Arctic blasts swept and brought with them fierce storms of snow. And yet the winter winds and the polar snow were not more pitiless than the men who drove the

exile party over the dreary steppes at such a time of year.

At Tomsk Rachel had met a co-religionist in the person of a fur trader, to whom she had told her sad story, and he had given her a fur travelling dress, so that she might, as far as possible, be protected from the cold ; and he had also supplied her with a considerable sum of money, on her placing in his hands an order for repayment from some of her father's relatives in St. Petersburg. This money she treasured and secretly guarded with almost miserly care, for she knew how necessary money would be in helping her to carry her great purpose into effect.

And so under more favourable circumstances she began that long and trying part of the journey. After many a long and wearying march, Irkutsk, on the shores of the Angara, which flows from the great lake Baikal, was reached. During all the time Paul Petrovna and his wife had not been allowed to speak to each other, by way of punishment for his "refractory conduct" in Tomsk. It was a terrible trial to both of them. But they made no murmur, they uttered no complaint. They knew that if they did complain the only result would be a further infliction of punishment.

A sojourn of a fortnight was spent in Irkutsk ; then such of the party as were going forward through the Trans-Baikal to the east by way of the Kara Mines, where a large number of the convicts were to be left,

once more got in motion. It is forty odd miles from Irkutsk to the Great Lake, which has a length of over four hundred miles. This lake was crossed upon the ice, and then commenced the march through the awful, desolate Trans-Baikal Provinces. Several of the convicts perished here from cold, hunger, fatigue, and disease. But Paul and Catherine and Rachel endured the misery and the rigours of the climate. They were sustained by something which their wretched fellow-travellers had not. That something in each case might have been a shadowy, vague thing as shadowy and unsubstantial and phantom-like as a film of breath upon a polished glass. But whatever it was it kept them up.

The great region which lies to the east and north is a desolate, dreary region, sparsely populated, with wretched roads, if they can be called roads, and with no proper accommodation for travellers. In summer it is bad ; in winter its awfulness cannot be overstated. Yet, through these inhospitable wilds the civilized and Christian Government of Russia allows its subjects to be driven like dumb cattle being taken to the slaughter. It matters not that the snows sweep down from the Arctic regions, and that the cold at times makes life well-nigh insupportable.

On the wretched people must go ; people who, under the fostering care of good government, would become an honour and credit to their country. But the man who even looks angrily at the Czar's cat

is liable to be at once sent into exile, and so, noble and peasant, pauper and prince are constantly passing in streams over the Siberian steppes and sub-Arctic wilderness to the living grave of the Kara Mines, or the horrors and purgatory of Sakhalin ; while brutal, ignorant, and stupid officials and soldiers treat the manacled prisoners worse than the Arab slave-hunters of Equatorial Africa treat their slaves. But while Christian countries combine to put down the African slave trade, no Government raises a protesting voice against the barbarities of inhuman Russia.

As the exile party pushed on their way through the terrible region, some died in the poisonous *étapes*, where every log, every stone, and every grain of earth is saturated with the contagion of deadly disease ; others fell by the way, and were buried in the snow ; and those who lived strained their eyes wearily in searching the snow-covered wastes for some signs of the end of their journey ; and in their hearts they cried out :—

“ Oh ! Lord, how long is this misery to last ? ”

It was the cry of a sorrow-stricken people to whom their fellow-men were crueller than the wolves that hung upon their flanks ; crueller than the ice-born winds from the frozen north.

In spite of all their misery and the suffering, Paul Petrovna, Catherine, and Rachel held their way. Sometimes, although neither confessed it to the other, each felt a sinking of the heart as they gazed away

across the wild, lonely regions, as a wrecked mariner on a raft gazes over the wild wastes of waters for the sail that will give him hope of life and succour. At last, as a bitter winter day was fading to its close, and the northern heavens were lighted with a brilliant display of the Aurora, a joyful cry went up simultaneously from the little band of worn-out exiles as they came in sight of the Lower Kara Diggings.

In order that the reader may gather some general idea of the topography of the remarkable Kara region, where the private mines of the Czar of Russia are situated, it may be briefly stated that it lies in a desolate valley that is watered by the River Kara, which has a length of something like a hundred miles. In this sterile, desolate region, which has to endure an Arctic winter, there is a series of gold mines, which are worked by convicts for the special benefit of his Imperial Majesty the Czar of all the Russias.

The mines are classified into districts, and in what is known as the Lower Diggings district the Administration is situated. The Governor resides there, with his administrative officers, and there is a settlement of several hundred convicts, together with the necessary soldiers as guards.

In the winter time, however, the vigilance that is usually exercised is very considerably relaxed, and a relative measure of freedom is allowed to the prisoners; for the rigours of the climate and the perils that would have to be encountered in the wilderness

of ice and snow render all attempts at escape out of the question. Consequently, the exiles are allowed to live in huts, and make themselves as comfortable as they can. They mingle together, and during the long Arctic nights they get up little amusements and endeavour to cheer their lonely lives as best they may. These details will render the succeeding incidents of the story more intelligible.

CHAPTER XX.

AT THE KARA MINES.

AS soon as Kara was reached, Paul Petrovna—against whom a black report was presented, owing to the incident at Tomsk, when he threatened a brutal officer who had insulted Catherine—was ordered into close confinement in the jealously-guarded prison, while Catherine and Rachel were quartered in the houses of some so-called free convicts—that is, convicts who were allowed to build huts for themselves and live a comparatively free life, free from the irksome restraint of the prisons. The onward journey still further to the east for those who were destined for the lower Amoor and Sakhalin would not be commenced until the spring had opened the roads again, so that those who had not yet reached their final destination had many months to get over before doing so.

Catherine's separation from the husband she so much adored was a great blow, but just before parting he had managed to say to her :—

“Be of good cheer, my Catherine. We shall meet again, for I cannot think that God has forgotten

us ; and do not desert Rachel. She is lonely and friendless."

Even without this expressed wish of her husband that she should not desert Rachel, she would not have done so ; for they were more closely and firmly knit than ever by the suffering and the sorrow they had endured.

Rachel had borne up bravely through it all, but it was with an inexpressible sense of thankfulness that she found herself at last freed from the horrors and the restraint of the *étapes* and the forwarding prisons ; and yet the accommodation of the hut in which she now obtained shelter in Kara was of the most meagre kind. The hut was built of driftwood, the interstices of the logs being stuffed with dried moss to keep out the wind and the cold. There was no other bed than that which some dirty skins and rugs on the floor afforded, and warmth was obtained by logs burnt in a hole in one corner of the hut, the smoke finding its way out through an opening in the roof. If Rachel had come suddenly to this place from her once luxurious home in St. Petersburg she would have shrunk with loathing from her surroundings, but what she had gone through during the long journey through Siberia made this wretched place seem almost like a little palace.

It was still a terrible trial to have to wait there inactive amidst the Arctic snow during the long, long weeks that must elapse before the first

welcome notes of the cuckoo would proclaim that the roads were open again. And then the suspense was well-nigh maddening. There was scarcely a minute of her waking hours but what she thought of her loved ones, and when she slept she dreamed of them. She wondered what they were doing, how they lived, if they thought as much of her as she thought of them.

And sometimes there was a wordless prayer in her heart that if God had not already taken Moshka to his rest He would do so ; for ruthlessly torn from her as he had been, and transported to one of the most inhospitable corners of the earth, his life could only be one of unutterable torment. Better, far better, therefore, that he should die. Never in her wildest dreaming did she deem it probable that she would meet Moshka again on earth. And as he could have no hope of freedom, it seemed to her but charity to wish him dead.

In the case of her father it was somewhat different. She had got permission to go to him ; and her journey had been undertaken with that specific purpose. But let not going to him be understood as implying that she was free to live with him and be with him always. The stern and cruel Government regulations did not permit of women and children residing with their relatives on the bleak Island of Sakhalin.

In sending convicts to that inhospitable place it seemed as if the authorities, with devilish ingenuity,

had aimed at rendering the lives of the men as utterly wretched as it was possible to render them. The only modification to that was that such relatives as chose of their own free will to make their homes at Nikolaevsk, at the mouth of the Amoor, immediately opposite the northern end of Sakhalin, from which it is separated by a narrow strait known as the Gulf of Tartary, would be allowed at stated intervals to pay a brief visit to those belonging to them who were imprisoned on the island.

For the sake of this miserable concession a few devoted women, with their children, did repair to that lonely and out-of-the-world spot, where they were deprived of all the comforts of civilization, and isolated from everything that could make life enjoyable.

But love takes no count of cost and suffering. For the loved one's sake it will face danger and privation. Shame and death cannot deter it. For love's sake women have become giants in their powers of endurance. Obstacles that would have daunted the bravest of men they have overcome, and, when called upon to do so, they have sacrificed themselves without a moan for those who were dear to them.

It was hardly to be expected that one whose beauty was so conspicuous as was Rachel's should, in a place like Kara, escape the attention of the men. It soon spread amongst the officials that a young and beautiful Jewess had arrived on her way to the east

with a Government permit. She was no longer the blushing girl, shrinking with maiden timidity and bashfulness from the gaze of the curious, as we knew her in her father's house at St. Petersburg.

Sorrow, trial, privation, wrong, and suffering had placed their indelible stamp upon her face, but she was beautiful still. And thus it came about that she attracted the notice of a young sub-officer named Peter Balakhin, who was attached to the police staff. He began to secretly press his attentions upon her. She repulsed him. Then he was cowardly enough to say that he would get up a charge against her, and she would be thrown into the prison, and perhaps kept at the mines for years.

Horried at this prospect, and knowing now by bitter experience how easily a charge could be trumped up, and how utterly powerless the victim was to resist it or obtain redress, especially if the victim happened to be of the Jewish persuasion, she turned in her distress to her friend and fellow-sufferer Catherine for advice.

"The God of Jacob pity me, Catherine," she cried, when she had told her story; "what shall I do?"

For some moments Catherine was silent. She saw the danger, but she rose to the situation, and, laying her hands on Rachel's shoulders, she said:—

"You are a woman, with a woman's wit. Circumvent this man. Play with him; twist him about your finger; deceive him to his own fall. He may be o'

use to you—to us. Use him. But as Delilah betrayed Samson, so you can betray this dog Peter Balakhin when the right moment comes. Have I said enough?"

"Yes," answered Rachel, sorrowfully, and though every sense she possessed revolted against the deception she would have to practise, she knew there was no other course, and she braced herself up for it.

But there was another man in the settlement who had been attracted to her. He was a convict, who by good conduct had earned the right to live as a "free convict." When he heard that a Jewess by the name of Rachel Arama had come there his heart almost stood still with a great shock of surprise. Then a wild joy thrilled his nerves, and sent the blood coursing madly through his veins. But he controlled himself. He kept his head. He watched her without being seen. He allowed weeks to elapse, and he made no attempt to let her know the effect her presence had upon him.

He discovered that Peter Balakhin was persecuting her with his attentions. But he remained silent. He heard his fellow-convicts comment freely on the fact that "Balakhin was smitten with the handsome Jewess." Still he remained silent, and yet he watched and watched and watched; gazed after her with a passionate longing; and murmured dark threats against Balakhin.

And the name of this convict upon whom Rachel exerted such a strange effect was Moshka Umanski.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHO CAN AVERT HIS DESTINY?

How came it about that Moshka Umanski was at Kara? it will be asked. It was Fate, and who can avert his Destiny? Thus it happened. When Moshka was condemned his sentence was Sakhalin; but as was often the case with those who were sent so far east, he was to spend the first twelve months of his sentence at the mines of Kara. Afterwards, when Aaron Arama was banished to the convict island, a message was despatched to the Governor at Kara, to say that Umanski was to be detained there pending further orders. No reasons were given for this, but probably somebody in power deemed, in his supreme wisdom, that there was danger in bringing Umanski and Arama together in Sakhalin; for the Russian official mind is haunted ever with fear of conspiracy.

If an official were to see a peasant whispering confidently into the ear of his donkey, ten to one but what that peasant would be placed under arrest on a charge of an attempt to overthrow the Government. This is scarcely an exaggeration, and it serves to illustrate the rottenness of the Russian Government.

One of the greatest bogies that frighten the official is the belief that the Jews aim at governing the country.

To some wiseacre it seemed likely that the young Jew and the old Jew would concert a plan even in far-off Sakhalin for the Czar's downfall. This is a suggestion, not a statement. It might or might not have been so. But whatever the cause, there was the fact. Moshka Umanski was at Kara when Rachel arrived, and therein was plainly discernible, to all who are not blind, the mysterious workings of Fate.

Now it has already been shown that Rachel had banished Moshka from her dreams. Let there be no misinterpretation of this. It does not in any way imply that she had ceased to love him. But can one love the dead? She regarded him as dead to her; and out of the charity of her heart she had hoped that actual death might, like a kindly friend who comforts us in our trouble, and croons us to sleep when we are weary, save him from the humiliation and degradation of his bondage, and give him the peace which passeth understanding.

Yet though she deemed him dead to her, comes she now to Kara—and, behold, he is there! Was not *that* Fate? Now touching and concerning him. It is not necessary to dwell in detail on all he had passed through, all he had suffered and endured since with ruthless barbarity he had been torn from her upon whom he had built his hopes; who was the life of his life, and who seemed to him, viewing her with a

lover's eyes, to be touched with the radiance of heaven, and only one degree removed from the angels of God.

If you drag from the wall to which it clings an ivy plant, tearing out its delicate tendrils and wounding the thousand and one fibres with which it has identified itself with the structure whereon it has grown and thrived, do you not destroy its life? It does not die suddenly, but gradually. Every day it withers a little, as its life oozes away through the wounded tendrils. Thus was it with Moshka. He was like the ivy. He seemed wounded unto death; not outwardly wounded, mind you, but in the heart. It was there where the wrenched tendrils were bleeding, and as he marched away in his fetters to the land of sorrow and tears, he breathed a silent prayer almost hourly that he might fall by the wayside and die, for why should he cling to life now that the essence of his life was destroyed? Such were his thoughts, such his wishes. But, after all, hope dies hard in the human heart, especially when the heart is young.

When the first effects of the storm that had beaten him to the earth had passed, Moshka began to look skyward again, and there was born in his brain a thought that he might yet clasp Rachel to his breast once more and call her his own. It was a wild, perhaps a delusive, thought, but it had a good effect, since it aroused in him a desire to hold on to life.

Men had escaped even from the remotest regions of Siberia. Why should not he do what other men had done? The question shaped itself to him. It rang in his ears night and day. In far-off England he had relatives. England was a free country. There Jew and Gentile, Infidel and Turk, might be found living in unity. There were no persecutions, no massacres. The scales of Justice were held fairly, and the Jew and Gentile were ruled by the same law.

To Moshka, therefore, England was as the promised land, under the circumstances of his exile and misery; and could he but succeed in getting clear of Siberia, might he not in England enjoy that peace and happiness that were denied him in his native country? For could not Rachel join him? And then, ah! then, what a life of bliss would be his!

So that from a mere flitting phantom that came and went at first, and seemed to mock him, the idea grew and strengthened until it was his one absorbing thought. It brought back vigour to his muscles, strength to his failing limbs. His dimmed eyes grew brighter, his pale cheeks took on colour, and that thought was like a star, that shone out ever brightly before him, and led him on; cheering him when he was sad, encouraging him when he faltered.

It need scarcely be said, perhaps, that at this time he was not aware of the terrible evil that had fallen upon Rachel and her father. He remembered with a vividness that nothing could dim that dramatic

scene in the court when he was being tried, when Rachel and Arama pleaded for him. And if he had ever for a moment doubted the strength of her love—though as a matter of fact he never had—that act of hers must have built up a great faith within him which nothing could destroy.

“She loves me,” he thought, “with a great love that is as enduring as triple brass; and when I am free, that love shall weld our lives in a perfect whole.”

And so he marched on, and so he thought and hoped and dreamed. But there came a day when Kara was reached, and another day when he learned from some newly-arrived prisoners that one Aaron Arama, a Jew from St. Petersburg, was on his way to Sakhalin, and with that piece of information the poor youth's heart-cord seemed to snap again, for he knew then that the persecution was being pushed to a degree of inhuman barbarity, when an old man like Arama could be sent into exile. Then did hope wither within him; and blank despair filled its place, and he wailed within himself:—

“Never again, never again shall I behold Rachel.”

But the inscrutable laws of Fate were working to a different end, and once more he looked upon her face. But how changed she was. Trial, hardship, and sorrow had left their impress on her features, and in her eyes was an expression that he could not read, could not understand. The soft, dreamy, languid look that used to be theirs was theirs no longer; it

was supplanted by a restless, watchful expression ; while about her mouth were indications of some stern purpose.

He noted these things, but he was not surprised at the change. Nor had he any difficulty in determining that she was journeying to her father, and then he endured a conflict with himself on the question whether he should reveal himself to her or not.

"Shall I," he reasoned with himself, "disturb her, and add another pang to the many she is enduring, by reviving all the memories of those bright and peaceful and happy days, now so far off, when life for us was a dream, and the world a garden of flowers?"

No man of good and unselfish principles could put such an argument as that before him without coming to the conclusion that it was nothing short of a duty to sink all thoughts of self, to practise self-abnegation even to a degree of torture, rather than make old wounds bleed afresh ; and that was Moshka's conclusion. It were better that that dear woman should be ignorant of his presence, of his existence, rather than renew the acquaintance under such circumstances of unutterable misery. His identity could be easily concealed. He was one of many convicts there. They were all clothed alike in a hideous, grey, loose-fitting coat, with a large yellow diamond in the back, this being the badge of shame and degradation which Russia imposes upon all her children whom

she sends into exile and slavery. It was not likely, therefore, that she would recognise him.

But, quite apart from his dress, his appearance had greatly altered. A very short period of the misery and suffering which exile to Siberia entails suffices to alter a man. With few exceptions, the face takes on an expression of profound melancholy, which is the result of hopelessness. Then the extremes of climate—the heat of summer and the intense rigours of winter—set up a premature look of age. But, added to these things, Moshka had allowed his beard to grow, so that even if he and Rachel had suddenly come face to face it is extremely probable she would have quite failed to recognise him. And so, when he had thrashed the subject out with himself, his decision was that she should remain in ignorance of his presence there.

Thus the days came and went. Whenever he saw her he would gaze after her like one who was held in spell by some strange power of fascination that deprived him of all volition ; and when she had passed away out of his sight, the tears would gather in his eyes, and a great rifting sob would well up from his heart as if the love which he kept bound there was struggling to break its bonds and cry out “Rachel, Rachel, beloved one, come to me.”

And during all this time Peter Balakhin was pressing his odious attentions on Rachel, and, as already stated, Moshka was aware of it. He would

have been a strange man indeed if he had not experienced some pangs of jealousy, notwithstanding that he was a convict. But what could he do? He could have done this. He could have brained Balakhin with one of the working tools—a crowbar, a pickaxe, a shovel, or something of the kind—and then have dashed out his own life or have rushed upon the rifles of the sentries. But what then? Would it not be entailing a bitter legacy of misery and woe to Rachel? She would learn the story. She would know its cause, and her feelings would be outraged, her heart rent in twain. And so, hard as it was, the poor fellow fought with himself; he tried to subdue the pangs—to deaden them altogether.

But, oh, it was so hard, but still he prayed ceaselessly for strength to endure and suffer, and yet be silent. Herein did he display his nobility of nature, for the man who conquers himself gains a great victory.

Ah, if Rachel had only known that her lover was there, how she might have comforted him, how they might have comforted each other, and have lightened their misery. But he saw fit to hide himself from her and her thoughts were constantly turned to the lonely island where she believed her lover and her father were. And every day that was swept into the past she felt thankful for; though it was a day of life gone, it brought her nearer to the spring, when the Arctic cold and the winter snows would loose their hold of the earth, and the birds would sing and the

flowers bloom again. Then would the journey be resumed, and the wearying period of suspense would give way to certainty, even though it might be the certainty of death.

It was hard, very hard, to have to wait there inactive, and witness the daily scenes of human suffering which she was bound to witness, and to see men treat their fellow-men as they might have treated the wild beasts of the jungle, by chaining them, and lashing them into subjection, and exercising a sleepless vigilance over them, ready on the instant to shoot them down if they showed the slightest disposition to be refractory or to rend their bonds.

One day poor Rachel did actually see a young man barbarously shot because, his outraged pride getting the better of his discretion, he resented with a blow some dastardly insult of a petty officer. On the instant, at the officer's command, the rifles of the sentries were raised, and the hapless and chained victim was shot with no more compunction than they would have shot a mad dog.

Rachel saw this inhuman—no, this very human—scene with her own eyes; and she wept, and, weeping, she thought:—

“Oh! Lord God, in Thy wisdom Thou hast made all men; but Thine enemy, the arch-fiend, has put a demon into their hearts that they may outrage Thy glory and insult Thine own image.”

Slowly, slowly, the winter passed. The days began

to lengthen, and the Arctic Frost King's hold upon the land grew feeble. In the sheltered spots the snow disappeared, and the blades of grass were seen pushing their way up towards the light and heaven. Rachel rejoiced, for another phase of her misery was drawing to a close.

She had allowed Peter Balakhin to suppose that he was winning her affections, although her senses revolted against the deception she had had to practise. But the end justified the means. Through that deception her own position and the position of her friend Catherine had been rendered much more endurable, for Peter had supplied them with many things that they could never otherwise have got ; and through his influence Catherine had been enabled to frequently see and converse with her husband Paul ; and during those interviews they plotted and planned many things for the future, so that Peter was fooled to the top of his bent, though he knew it not. Truly "two desperate women may indeed do much for those they love."

As the spring approached, Peter began to press his attentions more assiduously upon Rachel, and when she met him with the argument that she was a Jewess and he a Christian, and that he, wearing the Czar's uniform as he did, would bring himself into bad odour with his superiors if he married her, he answered that love could exist without marriage. Then did she feel that she hated him with a hate beyond words, but

still it was important that she should still continue to deceive him for yet a little while longer.

One afternoon she had been to the prison with Catherine, who had received a permit to see Paul. As they returned the day was closing, and Balakhin met them on their way. He told Catherine that two were company, three were none, and she, taking the hint, proceeded alone, and Balakhin and Rachel walked round by the free convict settlement. Overhead the stars shone with dazzling clearness, and away to the north the Aurora burned with a splendour that was like the splendour of heaven.

Balakhin began to speak in impassioned language of the "love," as he called it, that he bore for his companion. He alluded to the near date when she and those who were to be forwarded on would take their departure for the east, and he tried to persuade her to remain behind with him; and at last, carried away by his feelings, he seized her in his arms and tried to kiss her. But at that moment, out of the deep shadow of a hut, a man rose up as if he were a phantom and had sprung out of the earth, and with a terrific blow he felled Balakhin to the ground, where he lay stunned like an ox that is smitten with the slaughterer's axe. Rachel would have cried out in alarm, but the man seized her by the wrist and hissed into her ear:—

"Hush; be silent as death. I am Moshka Umanski."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MEETING AND THE PARTING.

IF a voice from beyond the stars that shone so brightly over the scene had suddenly addressed her, Rachel could hardly have stood more statue-like, have been more amazed, have felt more spellbound with a sense of nameless emotion, than she did as it was thus strangely revealed to her that once again she stood face to face with Umanski, and that she was clasping her lover by the hand. Indeed, for some moments she did really think that she was the victim of some strange hallucination ; that she was dreaming, that she was in a trance ; for the startling suddenness of the revelation seemed to fling the ordinary reason from its throne, and to beget a state of bewilderment in which the brain was capable of imagining anything.

But there in the north burned the wonder lights of the mystic Arctic regions ; overhead the silent stars watched ; the scattered huts stood out in boldly defined silhouettes against the clear sky ; the surrounding hills were still white with the winter snows, and over everything was the stillness as of death. And yet all this might be the *mise-en-scène* of

a dream, and the man before her simply a phantasm. But she saw the gleam of the stars in his eyes, she felt his warm breath in her face, she was conscious of the pressure of his hand ; nevertheless might not even these things be the details of a dream ?

Then she heard him speak.

"Rachel, Rachel, for the good Lord's love, say something to me lest I go mad. I am Moshka, he whom you loved, and who loved you in the happy days."

And with those words she knew that it was no dream, but a strange reality. So altered was his face that she would not have recognised him by that. But the voice was the old familiar music, for the voice never changes. And, with an inarticulate cry, she fell into his arms, murmuring :—

"Moshka, Moshka !"

He held her to his throbbing breast ; he kissed her white face again and again, and still again. Ah, those kisses ! God often makes Himself felt in little things ; and she prayed thus in her heart :—

"God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, this is Thy handiwork. Thou has brought us together, and in Thine own good time deliver us, I beseech Thee, into a land where there is justice and liberty and joy."

It was the prayer of an agonized mind and stricken heart ; and perhaps some listening angel flew with it beyond the stars and recorded it in the Book of Life.

Moshka's story was soon told. He had carried his endurance of silence to a limit beyond which it would not go. He had seen the meeting that night between Rachel and Balakhin. He had followed them silently as the shadow of grim Death, and it was for a time in his heart to kill them both and himself, for he had cried out dumbly in his agony :—

“Wherefore should I live when life has lost its savour?”

But he was too nobly constituted to give harbourage to such thoughts long, though when he saw Balakhin attempt to imprint his foul kisses on Rachel's sweet face he felt that he must slay him, come what might.

How much can be said in a brief space under such circumstances as those. In a few minutes this persecuted man and woman had imparted to each other the essence of the knowledge of long weary months; and then they realized that, dark as the present was, the future apparently was infinitely darker, for the outcome of that night's work must be terrible. Balakhin still lay motionless on the ground. Moshka had but struck him with his fist, but in the blow was the strength begotten of a desperate and fierce jealousy.

Moshka glanced down at the still form of his enemy. Then, with anguished appeal, he turned to Rachel, saying :—

“Let us go. We must not remain here. No human

eye has seen what has happened save our own, and the eye of God will surely regard us with pity."

"Oh, Moshka, Moshka," sobbed Rachel, "where shall we go to? what shall we do?"

"Make a desperate bid for liberty," he answered.

"How can that be done?"

"The cuckoo has already been heard in the woods," he answered. "It tells that to the south the land is clear of snow. Come with me. Let us go forth into the wilderness, and if it is to be that we are to die, we will die together."

With those words there began in her a desperate struggle: a struggle between her love for this man, affection for her father, and that stern purpose with which she had set out upon the long and trying journey. It was as if her heartstrings were being dragged with cruel force this way and that, and hot irons were being seared into her brain. But her purpose and her filial affection were stronger even than her love for 'Moshka, and she answered him:—

"That cannot be, my beloved. I must go on. My way is to the east, yours to the south. We must part, mayhap never to meet again in this vale of tears. But when in the good time of Him who made us we shall be gathered to our fathers, we shall come together again there beyond where the stars burn."

Moshka pressed his hands to his head and groaned.

"That is your decision?" he asked, sternly.

"It is."

"Will nothing induce you to change it?"

"Nothing."

"So be it," he gasped. "Farewell!"

He was turning away, but she caught him, seized his hand, and gazed into his sorrow-blanchèd face with a passionate, yearning, pleading look of love.

"Oh, Moshka, what would you do?" she wailed.

"Die," he answered, with a grim smile.

"Moshka!"

"Aye, die. Why should I live?"

"Would you dare to outrage God's laws, which forbid man to take his own life?" she exclaimed, speaking with all the anger she was capable of showing to him who had been and who was still so dear to her.

"No," he replied calmly, "I would not."

"What mean you then?" This in a tone of great anxiety.

"Behold this man at my feet," he said; and as he spoke he spurned the body with his foot. "He wears the Czar's uniform. He is my officer. I have stricken him down. The penalty for that is death. I will deliver myself into the hands of the Governor. I shall be tortured and then shot. They can do no more than inflict death; but God gives after-life."

She flung her arms about his neck. She kissed him on the lips, the cheeks, the eyes, the forehead; kissed him with the passionate kisses of a woman

who loves with a lover's love. And thus she moaned out the words that came to her :—

“ Oh ! my beloved, it must not, shall not be. The Lord will not desert us. I must still go forward ; but you shall go south. For my sake you will do it. I, who love you, implore you to do it. Save yourself. Before the dawn of day you can be well clear of the settlement. God will lead you through the wilderness as He led the children of Israel. Seek to reach England. You have kinsmen in London. Go to them, and they will succour you. If you perish by the way, you will find heaven. If you reach your destination, you will yet know earthly joy ; and if I live, when I have accomplished my purpose, I swear solemnly by those watching stars, that I will go to you. I have money. You shall take it. You can carry food enough to last you for a few days. As for the rest, leave the future in the hands of the Lord.”

Moshka seemed to hesitate for some minutes. But she still urged him, still pleaded to him. She pointed out that every moment's delay now lessened his chances of escape. The sentries would patrol that quarter soon. Balakhin would be found, and then through the settlement the alarm would ring, and all channels of escape would be shut off.

She triumphed. He yielded. In one long, fervent embrace they bade each other adieu. She gave him the greater portion of her money, which she had

carried sewn up in the bosom of her dress. Then she hurried with him to his hut, where he gathered up a few things, thrust what food he had into a bag, which he girt about him, and then once more they embraced. The parting was terrible, the wrench was cruel, for each knew that their chances of meeting again were remote indeed. A thousand dangers would beset him; he would be a hunted fugitive, and every man's hand would be against him until he had crossed the frontier. And quite apart from that, it was doubtful if he could survive the hardships he would be called upon to endure. But the die was cast; they must abide by the hazard of the throw.

And so they tore themselves asunder, and running ever and keeping in the shadows, the fugitive went southward, striking for the hills at first in order to avoid the sentries. Circumstances were in his favour in some respects, for the extra precautions that were taken to prevent escapes when the snows had gone had not yet been put in force.

Rachel watched him until he was lost to sight. Then she hurried to her abode, but had scarcely gained it when her heart stood still with a deadly fear, for she heard the warning bugles of the patrol ring out the alarm on the still night air, and she moaned:—

“Akh, Bozhemoi! Bozhemoi!” (Oh, my God! My God!)

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE UNKNOWN.

FROM point to point the bugles pealed as the alarm spread, and then the drums beat a tattoo as the soldiers were summoned to muster and prepare for any contingency. For always uppermost in the official mind was the probability of a general revolt of the convicts ; therefore a bugle warning at night seemed suggestive of something serious.

In the terrible distress which this alarm occasioned her, Rachel confided in her friend Catherine, telling her all that had happened ; and Rachel derived comfort from what her friend said in reply, which was this :—

“Concern not yourself though Balakhin be dead. You did not slay him. And how could they blame you for it? I told you at first that you should play with him until the hour was ripe to shake yourself free of him. He has been of use to us ; but he was one of the enemy, and why should we trouble about him?”

“It is not about him I trouble,” moaned Rachel, wringing her hands in her distress, “it is of Moshka.”

"Ah! And yet perchance, if he has succeeded in getting beyond the lines, he may escape entirely. But let not your heart droop. Chance has favoured us so far. Chance may favour us still."

For the next hour or two Rachel's feelings underwent many changes. Now she hoped; anon she despaired. And then she had to endure the agony of suspense, for she dare not venture out to ascertain what was being done, as there was a rigid rule in the settlement that when an alarm was sounded every convict must keep within his hut on pain of death, and so cheaply was convict life held in the settlement that the soldiers would have shot down anyone without compunction who ventured to disobey the order. It would not have mattered to them that the person was a woman. Their argument would have been:—

"We are ordered to shoot, and we will shoot. Prikaz—it is the command."

The Russian soldier in a convict station of Siberia carries out his orders with a brutish unreasoning, and in the present instance he would not have hesitated to put a bullet into a child of tender years if it had gone forth into the open at that moment.

Now let us see how the alarm came to be raised. It has already been pointed out that during the winter the settlement was scarcely guarded at all by sentries, for it was well known that no convict, ill provided as he would be with clothes and provisions,

could possibly live in the woods during the Arctic cold, when the thermometer continued for weeks far below zero ; but when the temperature rose and the snows were melting, and the harbinger of spring, the cuckoo, proclaimed that southward the iron rule of the Frost King was over for the year, attempts at escape became frequent, and extra precautions were taken by the authorities.

At the time of Moshka's flight, although the snows were melting, the weather was still severe, and so the outlying sentries had not been placed ; but at certain hours during the darkness a patrol went through the village, and this practice was kept up all through the winter. Thus it came about that Balakhin was found lying on the ground perfectly insensible. It seemed clear to the officer of the patrol that an outrage had been committed, and he had sounded the well-known notes of alarm on his bugle.

In a very short time thereafter a strong body of soldiers filed out of the barracks, and were posted by their officers at various commanding points, where they were ordered to stand on guard with their rifles at the ready. That done, steps were taken to find out the cause of the alarm, and, as soon as it was ascertained, the insensible Balakhin was borne rapidly to the barracks, and the surgeon summoned ; and then once more the silence of the night was broken by the beating of drums and the peal of the bugles as all the convicts in the free settlement were ordered to come

forth to muster-roll. At this command every man and woman had to turn out instantly, not even waiting to put on their clothes if they happened to be undressed, and repair to the square, where a cordon of soldiers was drawn.

By this means it was ascertained that Moshka Umanski was missing. Where was he? No one could answer, and at once scouts were sent off in all directions through the village. Then every person was questioned as to what he knew of the "outrage," as it was termed.

Rachel suffered many pangs during this ordeal. But she had now gone through so many ordeals that she comported herself with outward composure, though as it was known that Balakhin had been paying her attention, she was questioned closely. She declared, however, that she had had no hand in the outrage, which was true; and all the questioning and all the scrutiny she was subjected to could bring nothing to light as far as she was concerned.

To the officials, therefore, the affair was a mystery, but necessarily they connected the injury from which Balakhin was suffering with Moshka's escape, and it was thought that the officer, having detected the convict in his preparations for flight, had attempted to stop him, and been overcome. Fortunately for Rachel, no one had seen her and Balakhin together that evening except Catherine, and she was staunch.

So much having been ascertained by the officials,

orders were at once given to retake the fugitive dead or alive. But it was all in his favour that night had fallen. To pursue a runaway through the forest at night was a useless proceeding. At least, so it seemed to those concerned. But the pursuit was to be commenced with the very first gleam of daylight.

If, however, Moshka made good use of his opportunities, the chances were decidedly on his side. He could press on all night, lie *perdu* during the day, and resume his journey again when darkness set in. The difficulties in the way of pursuit were the immense extent of trackless forests, which afforded safe cover to a fugitive, and the uncertainty as to the way he would take. It was well known that he would not go to the north, but he might go east, west, or south.

In most cases a runaway was not pursued far, for there was a common saying amongst the officers of the garrisons and stations when a man had got away, that Nature would bring back the escaped prisoner, which meant that, owing to the difficulties he would experience in traversing the inhospitable country, and the hunted-animal sort of life he would have to lead, inasmuch as every man's hand would be against him, he would give himself up at the first station he could reach.

Like all such sayings, this one had to be taken with qualifications. It was quite true many runaways gave themselves up. The horrible hardships they were compelled to face appalled them, and they soon came

to believe that the slavery and wretchedness of convict life were preferable to the torture of mind and body that had to be endured in trying to get free. Nevertheless, a great number who escape never give themselves up again. Many perish by the way. Some are killed by the wolves, which in the early spring are particularly ravenous ; others die of hunger and cold ; others fall from exhaustion, and die a lingering and horrible death. But others, again, on the principle of the survival of the fittest, surmount every obstacle, every hardship, every danger, and live to reach their destination. If, however, they return to Russia—and so strong is the love of their native land in every Russian breast that ninety per cent. of the fugitives aim for Russia—they are certain sooner or later to be detected and sent back to exile. On the other hand, those who do succeed in crossing the frontier may ultimately regain absolute freedom in some less barbarous country than their own.

In Umanski's case there was a very strong determination on the part of the authorities that he should be retaken, for his offence in injuring an officer was considered a very grave one, and it was aggravated immensely by the fact of his being a Jew. For a Jew to beat and maltreat a Christian was a serious business under any circumstances for the Jew, but when the Jew was a convict and the person maltreated an officer of guard, the heinousness of the crime could not be exaggerated, and death was the penalty, and

in such a case the wretched offender would probably be beaten with the knout every day for many days before his sufferings were finally ended by the rope or the bullet.

If Rachel had not been acquainted with all this she soon learnt it from the common gossip in the settlement, and she prayed in her heart that her lover, failing to reach a place of safety, might perish in the forests, for she shuddered to think what he would suffer if caught.

When morning dawned a report spread through the settlement that Balakhin still remained insensible, and that the doctors expressed doubts as to his recovery. It appeared that the blow had been delivered with such force on the temple as to produce serious concussion of the brain, and the officer not being a strong man, his chances of rallying were looked upon as poor. Throughout that day and night he remained insensible, and though every means possible were used to restore him, all efforts failed, and a sudden failure of the heart's action soon put an end to his life.

When Catherine heard the news she laughed and said to Rachel :—

“Heaven works in our favour, and there is one enemy of the people less.”

This was not very logical, but she had come to regard all soldiers and their officers—that is, all in Siberia—with an intense hatred ; therefore she could

not be expected to sorrow when one of them died.

As for Rachel, she was full of lamentation. Not for Balakhin's sake, for how was it possible that she could have respect or sorrow for him? but for Moshka, because, if he were captured now, there would not be the slightest hope for him. Her lamentations, however, gave no outward sign, save in the pensive face and tearful eye. But as day after day went by and no word came of the fugitive's recapture her feelings were relieved, and she thought to herself:—

“He has found peace at last, the peace of death in the wilderness. But though his grave I know not, and my tears will never fall upon it, yet in the fulness of time we shall meet again where there shall be no more weeping, and the just and the unjust shall be judged according to their merits.”

The little parties that had been sent out in different directions to hunt for the runaway gradually returned, but brought no tidings. The telegraph had also been freely used, to give warning to the different villages along the road. But as the telegraph wire only followed the post road, it was hardly likely to avail much; for no man seeking his freedom would have been mad enough to traverse the telegraph route. His only hope was the wilderness; but though that might enable him to elude the human bloodhounds, there were so many other dangers to be faced that

death was always near, and hope was only like a sickly glimmering star that seemed to mock the fainting heart and weary eyes, and to lure one on to madness.

When the soldiers reported themselves there was a general feeling of exasperation among the officials that Umanski should have eluded—what they would have termed—Justice. But with many an execration on their lips they said one to another, “Ah, he rots anyway, for it is certain he is dead.”

Of course, the wish was father to the thought.

As was always the case when a prisoner succeeded in getting away, extra vigilance was exercised, and increased severity was shown to the other prisoners; for, as it seemed, the officers could not resist the temptation to resent their spleen upon someone. It was tyranny, but every Russian officer, or official of any kind, no matter what his grade may be, whether high or low, is, generally speaking, a tyrant; and he seems to take a strange, half-fiendish delight in exercising his tyranny upon those who are unable to resent it.

Throughout the whole of Siberia this is particularly the case; perhaps it is because they are made callous by the suffering and wretchedness surrounding them. And then the power that is placed in their hands is so great, and they are so far removed from central control, that the brute nature—inherent in all men—is allowed to gain the ascendancy.

The increased stringency of the regulations imposed

after Umanski's flight and Balakhin's death affected the wives, friends, and children of the convicts, as well as the convicts themselves. Rachel was ordered to keep to her hut, with the exception of a short time devoted to exercise each day. Paul Petrovna, who had been promised more freedom, was now informed that he would be kept a close prisoner, and the privilege his wife had enjoyed of seeing him at stated intervals was taken away.

Of course, there was no reason or even common sense in all this ; but it was quite in accord with the usual practice followed at the Kara Mines at least, if not all over Siberia, under similar circumstances. The idea that was uppermost was, perhaps, that the increased harshness and severity would induce the convicts themselves to use their endeavours to prevent the escape of any more of their number. But it had no such effect, and when a prisoner made a break for liberty he generally carried the good wishes of his fellows with him.

As regards Rachel, the deprivation of the small measure of freedom she enjoyed did not cause her much concern ; but Catherine was furious. Hers was too rough and fierce a nature to be tamed even by means of bars and chains. She fretted and fumed and vowed vows. Nevertheless, she had cunning enough to fight with herself and subdue herself ; for during that long and fearful journey across Siberia she had learnt enough of the power of those in

command to know that though she had been endowed with the strength of Samson, the might of Hercules, and the fierceness of the tigress robbed of her young, she could not have hoped to prevail against the numbers who represented the law, such as it was, and she found a measure of consolation in the thought—

“The day will come.”

She meant, of course, the day of vengeance. But when it would come and how it would come she could form no idea. Yet was the thought hope to her, and she waited and was silent.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WAS IT A PHANTOM THAT LURED HIM?

SIX weeks had passed since Umanski's flight, but no word of his capture had been received. Balakhin had been laid in his grave, and already the grass was waving green above him ; for when once the snows have departed, vegetation in that region grows with astonishing rapidity. And now the news circulated that in a few days the eastward-bound party would recommence their dreary march.

To two at least that was joyful news, for the awful monotony, to say nothing of the suspense, was maddening. Those two were Rachel and Catherine. During all those weeks the latter had not been allowed to see her husband, and she hailed the day of starting with irrepressible joy, for once more she would look upon Paul, hear his voice, and feel the pressure of his hand. Was not that something to feel joyful for when one had pined and fretted and yearned as she had done? During those slow-passing weeks she had dreamed dreams and plotted plots, and what these were was best indicated by a remark she made one night to Rachel as they lay in their wretched hovel

together. This was the remark, and it seemed to burst from her with the force of a long-pent-up passion that could be pent up no longer :—

“Upward to God go my thanks that we are to leave this accursed spot at last.”

“I thank God, too,” answered Rachel, speaking in a more subdued way, and yet with something of fierceness in her tone.

“Aye, and hark ye, Rachel,” cried Catherine, seizing her companion’s wrist in a paroxysm of nervous excitement, and marking the flesh with the pressure of her nails, “before my Paul shall suffer again as he has suffered, I will find means to kill him and then kill myself. They have made me mad, but a mad woman’s vengeance is a thing to be dreaded ; let them beware.”

“Be not rash,” counselled Rachel.

“Rash !” echoed her friend, with a strange laugh, and mistaking the other’s meaning. “Is it rash to long for freedom ? Is’it rash to yearn for vengeance on those who have robbed you of every joy, who for months and months have tortured you and your loved one, who have crushed your heart and broken your hopes, and made life a curse instead of a blessing ? If you think so I will hate you.”

She ground her teeth and spoke with a fierceness that she had never before displayed, although she had felt it.

“Catherine,” answered Rachel, calmly, “I do *not*

think so. For months I have thought as you have thought, dreamed as you have dreamed, hoped as you have hoped. I, too, have been robbed of every joy ; my loved ones have been tortured, my heart has been crushed—ah ! the God of Israel knows how cruelly—my hopes have been broken, and my life has felt like a curse instead of a blessing. Even the lamb will endeavour to turn upon the wolf that rends it. Your wrongs are great, but mine are greater still. My home has been destroyed. He who was to have been my husband moulders somewhere in the unknown wilderness ; and my father, a man of good birth and gentle breeding, a man of refined tastes and high intellectual attainments, a man to whom I was everything that could make his life worth living, has mayhap succumbed to his wrongs and woes and the brutality of him who has wrought all this misery. Am I less than you, weaker than you, duller of feeling than you, that I should have no desire to wreak vengeance upon the wronger ? And yet I am, alas ! only a lonely woman, while you still have your husband.”

Catherine’s paroxysm of fury had passed, and though the female nature is capable of outbursts of passion which even the man’s nature cannot surpass, and not often equal, she can alternate these outbursts with a softness and gentleness which it is next to impossible for a man to display. And when a woman has reached the maximum of her fury she finds relief

in tears. So it was with Catherine, and though her heart had hardened there was still a tender spot in it, and that spot had been touched by Rachel's words, so that, throwing her arms about the neck of her sister-in-sorrow, she sobbed pitiably; their tears mingled; and she moaned between her sobs:—

“Forgive me, I have wronged you.”

After all, Rachel's nature was the stronger one, and she had made her power and influence felt.

“You have not wronged me,” she answered; “I have nothing to forgive. We have a common cause. Let us be true to it and ourselves. Even he who waits may win; and patience that endureth triumphs in the end.”

“I learn from you, I learn from you,” sighed the weeping Catherine, thereby showing how thoroughly she felt the influence of her companion.

Now must we turn for a while to another character who plays no unimportant part in this history, and who has been and still is a link—an indispensable link—without which the chain would be broken.

Through those dreary months of snow and ice during which the two women were suffering and weeping, a man was travelling with special *padarózh-naya*—that is a permit to travel by post road, and with post-horses—across Siberia. He was a young man, with white, haggard, careworn face, on which was stamped a marked and accentuated expression of anxiety. His mode of travelling was by *tarantas*,

a large, hooded vehicle, in which the traveller eats, drinks, and sleeps when he can sleep. Being winter, the tarantas was on runners, not on wheels, and was drawn by a *troika* (three) of horses.

This man was provided with what is known as "a crown padarózhnaya," which is a permit of the second class. That of the first class is a courier's permit, which takes precedence over all others, the courier being a Government messenger. At every post-station the courier's demand for horses takes priority, and if there be none at the post, private individuals must furnish them under pain of a heavy fine. It doesn't matter where they come from or how they are got, but got they must be. The crown permit gives way to the courier, but takes priority over the ordinary traveller's permit, and anyone travelling with a crown padarózhnaya can demand horses and Yamshtchik (driver), no matter how many ordinary travellers are waiting for horses to push on to their destinations.

To travel through Siberia in the depth of winter in the cumbersome, springless vehicle peculiar to the country, to live on coarse food and be compelled to take brief snatches of rest in the fetid, dirty, and disease-infested post-houses, to endure the awful cold, the pitiless snow-storms, the incessant jolting, the swinging—pendulum fashion—of the tarantas as it is dragged by the powerful horses over the frozen hummocks, now plunging madly into a ravine, and anon going almost vertically up a snow mound, then

sweeping wildly round a curve until the brain grows dizzy, or gliding with fearful swiftness over a frozen river or lake with the boom and roar of the ice thundering in one's ears, requires powers of physical endurance which not many men possess.

The young man with the white, haggard face did not seem strong, but the face clearly indicated a fixed purpose, a stern, determined purpose, that enabled him to overcome the drawback of physical weakness.

The Lake of Baikal was reached, and over it he whirled, while an Arctic blizzard almost turned his blood into solid ice. A brief rest; a dream-haunted sleep in a lonely post station, then on again through the wild and weird Trans-Baikal Provinces, which were frozen into maddening stillness, and where white death reigned. But this man was not daunted; he held on his way. He halted not.

Was he pursuing a phantom?

Yes!

He did not know it, did not think so. If anyone had told him it was so he would have laughed him to scorn. But through the mists and the snows he saw it ever. It gave him strength. It encouraged him in his purpose. It kept him awake when he ought to have slept; it filled his sleep with dreams when he did sleep. It kept his blood circulating when otherwise it would have frozen. It *was* a phantom. But if he had been asked to give it a name he would have called it Love. Others might have given it

harsher terms—Passion, Infatuation, Madness. But if his own tutelary genius could and would have spoken, he or it might have spelt the phantom's name as Death.

For the traveller who thus pushed on through snow and ice, and set Nature at defiance, as it were, was none other than Ivan Alexieff, and he was pursuing Rachel, the Jewess, who moaned and wept in Kara.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRIUMPH OF IVAN ALEXIEFF.

THAT Ivan Alexieff, by travelling almost incessantly night and day, was able to overtake Rachel Arama before she departed from Kara came about in this way. We left him a prisoner in Perm, where, under the name of Paul Turnigieff—a supposed fur trader—he had threatened the Chief of the Police with violence for insult offered to the beautiful Jewess.

Now, in Russia it is a very serious business to threaten anyone wearing the uniform of the “mighty” Czar ; but to threaten a Chief of Police in Siberia is an offence so grave that very heavy punishment is the penalty. Indeed, many a poor fellow has been done to death for it ; that is, he has been flogged so severely that he has died under the affliction.

In Siberia even the petty officials have more individual power than their superiors in St. Petersburg or Moscow, and they use it like tyrants. In this respect they do but copy their master, the Little Father—that is, the Czar ; and all they do, and all the cruelty they practise, they do “ For God and the

Czar," which is a parrot cry heard from one end of the country to the other.

The persecution of the Jews, the wholesale arrests that periodically take place of young men and women who claim the right to speak the thoughts of their minds, the sufferings caused to the wretched exiles—everything is done "For God and the Czar." What the Czar, clothed in purple and fine linen, thinks, as he sits in his gorgeous palace, wilfully deaf to the wailings and moans of his subjects in chains, no man knoweth. But it would be blasphemy for anyone professing reverence for the God on high to suppose that He looks favourably on the barbarities that are carried out in His name. And yet "For God and the Czar" comes trippingly off the tongue of every Russian who wears the uniform, and who in the execution of his duty is called upon to torture and break the hearts of his fellow-men.

Ivan Alexieff, being a son of the Chief of Police, had a fair knowledge of the power which officials possessed; and when his excitement had passed away, and he found himself an inmate of a cell in the Perm prison, he began to reflect seriously upon his position. And the more he reflected the more it became a conviction with him that he was in a dilemma from which he would not by any means find it easy to extricate himself.

He learned, too, before he had been many hours there, how supreme was the power of the petty

Governor, whose pride had been so wounded by the threat of beating him to a jelly that it seemed as if nothing short of the threatener's blood would appease him. Placed in a dark, damp cell, fed on the coarsest of food, subjected to all sorts of indignities, including that of having to wear the galling leg fetters, Ivan realized that for his hastily uttered words a weighty penalty was to be exacted. But these things—the punishment and indignities—affected him not a jot as compared with the anguish he suffered in being separated from Rachel.

The influence that she had exercised over him all unwittingly was so enormous that he was irresistibly swayed this way and that as the needle is swayed by the magnet. He could not shut her out of his dreams; could not exclude her from his waking thoughts. Her face of exquisite beauty was as an effulgent star that, shining full into his eyes, so dazzled him that he was blind to all else. For her sake he had sacrificed much, risked much; for her sake he would have gone through fire and water—to use a homely phrase—at her command. Therefore, it was doubly hard now, when he had disguised his own identity, to find himself a prisoner in a Siberian prison on a charge that might end in his being sent an exile to one of the lonely stations in the Arctic Tundra. And every day that passed brought him the agonizing thought that she was farther from him. It was like a hot searing iron burning into his brain, while his heart seemed to be

gripped with a hand of ice. He fretted and fumed until he felt tempted to burst his chains and make a furious break for liberty.

But when the first heat of his anger and passion had burned itself out and he was enabled to reason calmly, he could not fail to recognise that his only hope of escape was by the exercise of cunning, by patience, by watchfulness, by waiting without complaint for the opportune moment ; and even then there were thousands of chances against his success. For the Perm prison is one of the best guarded prisons on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains ; and so stern and rigid are the rules that a prisoner once shut up there might abandon hope entirely.

But Ivan was not aware of all this, and instead of abandoning hope, he fed upon it. It nourished him. It brought him sleep at night ; it comforted him by day. It kept him, in short, from going raving mad. And yet, as the days began to stretch into weeks, this hope flickered and grew dim, for he was forced to the conclusion that the chance he yearned for was not likely to come. When he did fully realize this, he almost broke down with despair, and it was while in that condition that he bethought him of a course that would probably free him from his chains and open his prison door. It was a desperate venture ; but as the losing gambler stakes his last coin on the hazard of the throw that is to decide his fate, so did Ivan stake his whole on this hazard. And having made up his

mind, he sent a short note to the Governor, in which he said :—

“I crave that your great nobility will grant me an interview. I can make a revelation, for my name is not Paul Turnigieff, and I am not a fur merchant.”

In such a country of treason and plotting as Russia is, a note of that kind was bound to attract attention, and Ivan had not miscalculated its power, for the Governor sent for him almost immediately.

During the interview the prisoner made known who he was. That is, that he was Ivan Alexieff, son of Peter Alexieff, formerly Chief of Police of St. Petersburg, now Governor of Sakhalin.

This story very naturally caused the Governor of Perm to open his eyes in astonishment, for he knew Peter Alexieff very well, having formerly held a subordinate position in the secret police of St. Petersburg, and to some extent he was beholden to Peter for little services rendered. Therefore, having satisfied himself that Ivan really was the person he represented himself to be, he was disposed to deal leniently and kindly with him. But he questioned him closely as to his reasons for travelling under an assumed name, and in company with a Jewess.

It had been Ivan's intention to conceal, if possible, the true motives that had prompted him to take the journey ; but he saw clearly enough now that any attempt at concealment could only result in still

further complicating matters, and that an apparent frank and open avowal was likely to advantage him more than anything else could under the circumstances. But still, he so framed this avowal as to avoid conveying the impression that he was actuated by any serious feelings of love for Rachel, and the gist of his statement was this :—

He had quarrelled with his father before his father had left St. Petersburg. That now, repenting him of his folly, he was anxious to join his father, but fearing that he might experience great difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission to travel, as the strained relations between himself and his father were well known, he had bethought him of taking the name of a friend with whom he was well acquainted. As for his travelling in company with a Jewess—well, that was easily explained. Rachel was a woman ; she had beauty of no ordinary kind ; he was a man, and a young one, and had felt the fascination of that beauty. As she was travelling the same route as himself he saw no reason why he should not take her under his protection.

His artful argument, artfully contrived to convey a false impression, was so far effective, although it drew from the Governor a homily on the duty of every Christian to worry and spurn the Jews, whom he referred to with uncompromising contempt, and he took upon himself to express an opinion that every true Russian attached to the Russo-Greek Church was

simply carrying out the wishes of "The Great White Czar" when he subjected the Jews to persecution.

Outrageous as it may seem, this ignorant Governor of the Perm prison, in thus giving expression to his views, did but echo the sentiments of a vast majority of his countrymen. If they harry a Jew to death, they do it "For God and the Czar." According to their idea, a Jew is not as other men. He has not the same feelings. He is possessed of no heart, in the sentimental sense, and it is contrary to the Divine laws that he should enjoy the same rights and privileges as a Christian. Whenever a Jewish child is born, it is born to a heritage of kicks and blows, and for it to utter one word of complaint, or to attempt to retaliate, is absolutely monstrous.

This is a pernicious doctrine, but throughout Russia it obtains; and what is more strange than all is that it is not confined to the lower classes. The high born and the educated share it with the ignorant and the lowly. To be a Jew in Russia is to be despised, to be hated, to be ever conscious of your insecurity; to know that if you have property it may at any moment be filched from you; that your children will be insulted and reviled; that the law as administered to you is not the same as that administered to the Christians; that you have not the same civil rights nor the same means of redress, while the military regulations press more harshly upon you; and should a Jew be murdered by a

Christian, the chances are the Christian will escape punishment; on the other hand, if a Jew injures a Christian, the Jew can hope for no leniency, no mercy.

All this was conspicuous enough and accentuated enough in the so-called dark ages; but we are at the end of the nineteenth century; education has spread and is still spreading its light through the world; and yet, notwithstanding this, that which disgraced the dark ages still disgraces Russia at the present day.

The Perm Governor having forcibly expressed his views to Ivan, and as it seemed to him with good result, made it known to the youth that he had no wish to press the charge against him. He pointed out that he had been guilty of great folly, and had rendered himself liable to heavy punishment, but for his father's sake he would forgive him, and would speed him to his father with blessings and good wishes.

In thus serving the son of a man who had power and influence at Court, the Governor had an eye to serving himself at the same time; he was casting his bread upon the waters. It might be returned to him increased manifold. So he provided young Alexieff with all the necessary papers to facilitate his journey; he lent him money on the security of bills bearing good interest; he gave him a special padarózhnaya, and also a letter of recommendation

to the Commandant at Kara. And, thus equipped, Ivan set out with the full intention of overtaking Rachel. Jewess she was, and she might be all that the Governor of Perm tried to make her out; but Ivan cared not, to him she was verily his star, and he would follow her though he perished.

In addition to the assistance he thus rendered the youth, the Governor penned a long letter to Peter Alexieff, in which he told him the story of Ivan, and suggested that means should be taken to prevent him being swayed and influenced by the "accursed Jewess." The Governor felt that he was doing a very meritorious thing in thus bringing Ivan's conduct under the notice of his father; and in order that the letter should not run the risk of miscarriage, it was consigned to the care of the next Government courier who passed Perm on his way east. And, all unconscious of what had been done, Ivan Alexieff set out in pursuit of his phantom.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST MARCH.

HE reached Kara in broken health, and worn with the hardships of the fearful journey; but he had accomplished his purpose, and once more he was with Rachel. When he had presented his letter to the Commandant, and had allowed himself some rest, he took the first opportunity of seeking an interview with Rachel. She was amazed and sorry that he had come: sorry because she could not fail to be impressed by his devotion, and she would have preferred never to have looked upon his face again; and she expressed this when she said:—

“You must have been mad. You ought not to have followed me. Better for you if you had never come a verst this side of Perm. You are rushing on your fate. This journey will be your undoing, and since I bear you no ill-will I would save you from your fate.”

In response to this, Ivan, in impassioned language, reproached her for being hard and cruel to him. He told her all he had suffered for her sake; how he had

thought of her night and day. How in spite of snow, of cold, of hardship and misery he had pushed on in order that he might overtake her and endeavour to dissuade her from continuing the journey to the bitter end. He pointed out that she was still free to turn back or turn aside as she inclined, and with all the force of eloquence begotten of his fervid passion he urged her, pleaded to her, to fly with him south. The spring had come, the roads were open; and they could make their way to some country where they would be free to unite their destinies, and thenceforward be all in all to each other.

His argument had no such effect as he hoped it would have. On the contrary, its tendency was to harden her in her purpose. To love him was out of the question, and yet she pitied him; though in this case pity was not akin to love. It was impossible for her to be indifferent to the sacrifices he had made and the devotion he had displayed for her. But she had not asked for these sacrifices; she had done nothing to win his devotion; she had, in fact, tried to turn him from her, to impress him with the hopelessness of his passion, as she did now. But she might as well have tried to control the elements, to have kept the Polar winds from blowing, or the stars from shining at night. He was in that frame of mind when reasoning was utterly lost upon him; and when she said:—

“Ivan Alexieff, nothing you have spoken, and nothing you can speak, will move me from my

purpose, and prevent my going forward," he raised his hand to Heaven, and said fiercely :—

"Then, in God's name, let it be so. What care I now what becomes of me? I know that my father will not receive me, for he would be a fool indeed if he failed to understand that I am there only because you are there; his bitterness against you and yours will extend itself to me; and if he treats me with harshness, Heaven knows what may happen. I may be driven into killing him."

Rachel turned deadly pale and shuddered, and looking at him fixedly for some moments, she asked this question :—

"Is there anything you can think of that would really drive you to such a desperate course?"

"Yes!" he exclaimed. "I tell you I am desperate, and you have made me so. I am no longer a boy, and I shall revolt against my father's control if he makes that control tyrannical, and whatever happens as between me and him will be laid to your door. So be it. The die is cast. I will accept my fate. I cannot live apart from you; and if you go forward, I go forward too."

"I shall go forward," said Rachel, placing great emphasis on the words.

"Then we will go together," answered Ivan, scarcely less emphatically. "I shall at least be able to breathe the same air as you, and look upon your face sometimes," and then he added with

a concealed meaning, and shrugging his shoulders with a nonchalant air, "and who knows, since we cannot live together, we may die together."

"Perhaps," was Rachel's only answer.

And so, when the time came, they resumed their journey eastward. It was a bright and glorious morning when the bugles warned those who were on the roll for the further march to fall in, so that they might be mustered in the prison square.

It was not a pleasant scene, when Nature was full of promise, and hope seemed to fill the air, to see that ragged, starved-looking, white-faced crew gathered together in the square, and to hear the harsh clanking of their chains whenever they moved; and the extended double cordon of soldiers with loaded rifles keeping vigilant watch and ward, and ready on the instant to speed a bullet after any man who might be tempted in his despair to make a bid for the freedom that the birds sang of. Nature herself was singing a pæan of praise to the Creator, but men made after God's own image were treating their fellow-men worse than they would have treated the beasts of the fields.

When all were mustered, and the women and children who were to go forward had been placed in one corner of the square, with sentries guarding them, though Heaven knows why, the prison doctor and the convoy officer began to weed out the sick and infirm in order that they might be conveyed in the telagas.

One man, who looked wretchedly ill and woe-begone, pleaded that he was unable to walk, and begged to be allowed to ride. This man was Paul Petrovna. But his prayer was unheeded, and when he became more importunate, the officer, with an oath, bade him hold his noise, threatening him with the knout if he did not. Then, unable to endure the agony of her outraged feelings, Catherine rushed from amongst the women, and, darting past the sentries, she flung herself at the officer's feet, and exclaimed :—

“Be good to my Paul. In God's name I plead. Behold him. He is sick and ill. Look on his white face and his sunken eyes. If you make him walk you will kill him, and then, ah ! then, may God curse you.”

The officer, as he looked at the kneeling, weeping woman, half drew his sword. But, thrusting it back in its scabbard again, he called out fiercely to his soldiers :—

“Take this raving idiot away.”

And at the stern command two soldiers hurried forward, and, without the slightest ceremony or compunction, they seized her, dragged her up, and with brutal roughness thrust her back amongst the women. For a moment Paul looked like a wild, fierce animal driven to bay and about to fly at the hunters. But his eye caught Catherine's eye, and there was something in her expression that restrained him. If the officer of the convoy, however, had not been obtuse,

he must have recognised that she was a potent factor that would have to be reckoned with, for the convulsive working of her hands, her closely-set teeth, and the tearless, flashing eyes spoke too surely of a fierceness that sooner or later would burst out and commit havoc. And presently she whispered savagely to Rachel :—

“God forget me if I forget this wrong.”

And now, all being ready, every man having answered to his name, the telagas filled with their loads of suffering humanity, and the soldiers drawn up in marching order, the officer called out hoarsely to the convicts :—

“Stroisa” (form up). “Ready ; march.”

Then the chained convicts moved in close column, flanked on either side by the soldiers. The women who were able to walk followed ; then came the telagas, and bringing up the rear were more soldiers. Paul Petrovna did not ride, nor did his wife Catherine. But occasionally as they halted on the road for rest they were enabled to exchange a few words, and Catherine bade him be of good cheer, for an *artel** would be formed, and then the hour of vengeance would strike. Paul smiled grimly at this, and he muttered in response—

“Yes ; there shall be a day of reckoning.”

* An *artel* is a secret union, formed with the avowed object of carrying out some act of vengeance. It will be explained more fully later on.

Of course, Ivan Alexieff accompanied the party ; and as he was under no restrictions save such as applied to every individual who formed one of a marching party, he found ample opportunity to converse with Rachel, and he renewed his protestations of love. She no longer checked him, no longer told him there could be no reciprocity. She knew how useless it was to do so. He would not be influenced by anything she said. One day, when he had tried in vain to draw from her some expression that he might construe in his favour, he exclaimed :—

“ Ah, how cruel you are ! What sacrifices would I not make for you, and yet you give me no sign that I may hope.”

As she turned and looked at him she laid her hand upon his arm and said :—

“ Ivan, I am not cruel, unless all that I have suffered has made me so. You say you would make any sacrifice for me. Do you remember your oath in St. Petersburg ? ”

“ I do.”

“ You promised to make a sacrifice should I demand one.”

“ I did.”

She turned away from him for a few moments as if some passing emotion had overcome her. And when she looked at him again her eyes were moist, and, in a solemn tone, she said this to him :—

“ Ivan Alexieff, we are approaching the end of our

long and trying journey, and about to enter upon another act of the stirring drama in which we have both taken part. Before it is too late, I would beseech you to accompany me no farther. I cannot be indifferent to your feelings, insensible to your future happiness ; therefore it is that I ask you now, plead to you, to leave me, lest the sacrifice I may demand of you brings a curse upon both of us. Therefore, instead of sailing with us down the Amoor to Nikolaevsk, strike south, and in a few days you can reach Vladivostock, and thence proceed to any part you like."

"I should, indeed, be a poor fool," he exclaimed, "if, after all I have gone through and endured on your account, I turned craven now at the last hour and deserted you. No, Rachel, I go on even though Death, with uplifted spear, stands in my pathway I know not, care not, what the end is so long as I am with you. Perhaps this is madness ; but if it is I prefer to remain mad rather than become sane again."

"It must be so ; it must be so, then," she murmured rather to herself than as if addressing him, and sighing deeply. Then she added, "It is fate, and fate is not our own making."

And now, after another day's march the last stage of the weary journey was entered upon. The party reached a place on the Amoor River, called Kasa-kevich, where they embarked on board the convict

barge that was to convey them to their destination. And two days later, when the east was grey and gloomy and the west was dyed with crimson and gold as the sun sank, the barge anchored at the lonely station of Nikolaevsk, at the mouth of the Amoor, and across the narrow Gulf of Tartary the dreary and desolate Island of Sakhalin loomed grimly in the fading light.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN UNEXPECTED DENOUEMENT.

AMONGST the convicts of Siberia an artel, or secret society, is often formed for the protection of themselves against the brutality of the officers and soldiers. This union elects a chief, who is known as a *starosta*, who has an extraordinary amount of power placed in his hands, and his ruling is implicitly obeyed. A code of secret signs and signals is drawn up, and every man belonging to the union has to contribute a mite from his miserable Government allowance towards a general fund, of which the *starosta* is the treasurer. This fund is employed to buy extra food and tobacco for the members of the union, and as much as possible of it would be given to any member who had planned an escape and saw a chance of carrying it out.

If an officer or any other individual has made himself particularly obnoxious to the convicts his death is decided upon, and the members of the artel draw lots as to who shall kill him, and very rarely indeed does the man whose lot it is to do this shirk it. These secret societies sometimes have most

extensive ramifications, and a man proving false to the confidence and trust reposed in him would be killed, though it might not be until years after the offence was committed. It is seldom indeed a traitor to the artel can escape its vengeance.

Of course the authorities are not ignorant of the existence of these secret societies, but they cannot suppress them, although they try; and it is so very rarely that a member of the artel turns traitor that the authorities can get no information. Although a union of this kind cannot effect the release of all its members, it can and does aid individual escapes, and it has power to ameliorate the condition to a large extent of an exile party.

When the party from Kara, of which Catherine and Paul Petrovna were members, had reached Nikolaevsk, an artel had been formed. Catherine, as may be supposed, was the prime mover in this. Silently and surely she had worked until she had secured the co-operation of nearly the whole of the convicts. Paul had been chosen starosta, and though he was ill and weak, and his energy and hope alike were gone, he was encouraged and supported by his wife. She whispered to him of liberty. She talked of the near time when they would effect their escape, and, reaching some land where there were just laws and a humane Government, would yet know happiness.

He had no faith that this would ever come to pass; but still he longed for vengeance against those who

had tortured him and subjected his wife to indignity and insult. She, like Rachel, nursed and fostered an intense hatred against those who had been responsible for the misery brought upon those each loved.

But in Rachel's case the circumstances were somewhat different. Her grievance was against a particular individual, who at that moment was in power there. But to Catherine this man was a stranger. She knew him not, and he was in no way responsible for her misfortunes. She had, however, come to regard everyone in authority as her deadly enemy, and against them all she was embittered.

During the terrible journey, and those long, dreary months in Kara, Rachel had found a consoling companion in Catherine, and she had never lost sight of the possibilities of this woman proving of valuable assistance to her in carrying out that purpose which from the moment of leaving St. Petersburg to her arrival at Nikolaevsk she had never once wavered in. It had supported her through all her difficulties; it had given her strength when she would have broken down, and it seemed at times that but for that purpose she must have gone mad. What that purpose was she had carefully kept from Ivan Alexieff, and she also kept from him the knowledge of the artel that had been formed and of her connection with it.

And now we must explain here that Nikolaevsk is a desolate and isolated station at the mouth of

the River Amoor, which flows into the Gulf of Tartary, and separates the mainland from the remarkable Island of Sakhalin. The nearest point of the island from Nikolaevsk is a little under six miles, and in winter that part of the strait is frozen over, and from this may be gathered how severe the climate is. In the summer communication is kept up with the island from Nikolaevsk by means of a small steamer.

As the relatives of the convicts are not allowed to live on the island itself, they have to do the best they can in Nikolaevsk, where the Government has erected a barrack, in which they have to herd like cattle. At fixed intervals they are allowed to cross over to the island and pay a brief visit to their friends, but this is always done under the strictest regulations, and the utmost vigilance is exercised by those in command.

Nikolaevsk itself is shut off from the rest of the world, and the inhabitants know nothing of what is going on elsewhere. The original settlers in the place are a low type of people, who, during the summer, spend their time in fishing, and hibernate during the winter, when the climate is so severe and the snowstorms so terrible that life is well-nigh insupportable.

On arriving at this place Rachel felt that her journey was practically ended, and a feverish anxiety to get news of her father took possession of her; but she could hear nothing, and when she applied at the

bureau for information she was told she must wait. The convicts who were destined for transportation to the island were rigorously confined to the barracks provided for them, pending their embarkation on the little steamer that was to convey them across the strait ; while the " free exiles " were relegated to their quarters and warned that they must strictly obey the regulations in force for the government and well-ordering of the colony.

In the free quarter Ivan Alexieff found lodgings for the first few days, and he embraced every opportunity to renew his avowals of love for Rachel, and to solicit her to become his wife. But she bade him wait ; bade him be patient ; bade him see what the future would bring forth. At the end of the week, however, after their arrival there came a sudden and startling *dénouement* which neither had anticipated, Ivan was made a prisoner by order of the Governor, his own father, and he was informed that the instructions were that he was to be conveyed at once to the island.

Ivan was furious when he heard this, but he had to recognise how powerless he was to resist the order, which was owing to the letter sent by the Governor of Perm. Peter Alexieff had heard with amazement and fierce anger that his son was actually travelling through Siberia with Rachel the Jewess. Long previous to that he had received the letter from his patron, Count Suvorof, which informed him of

Rachel's intention to journey to the east, and that had caused him to rejoice; for he had thought to himself, "I have the father in my power, and soon I shall have the daughter. Her father deprived me of an eye and disfigured me for life. For that I will crush both father and daughter, and ere their unbelieving bodies are given to the worms they shall know how terrible the revenge of a Christian can be."

This determination was quite in keeping with the man's character and disposition. He had neither charity nor mercy, and with him it was a creed that a wrong should never be forgiven; though how he had suffered wrong at the hands of the unfortunate people he had so shamefully persecuted it is difficult to say. The injury which his victim Aaron Arama had inflicted upon him was well deserved; and considering how it had been provoked, it could hardly be termed a wrong except from his point of view.

When the Governor of Perm's letter reached him it intensified his feelings of hatred for the whole Jewish race, and such Jews as he had under his control on the island were made to feel his hatred by increased severity, increased harshness, increased brutality. As soon as he heard that the party had arrived from Kara, and that his son was amongst them, he at once issued an order that the young man was to be arrested and brought before him.

The carrying out of that order caused Ivan to realize for the first time his true position. He saw

now that he had been pursuing a phantom, and that it had led him into a trap from which apparently there was not the faintest hope of escape. Here in this wild region he was completely in his father's power ; and he knew his father too well to suppose that he would either listen to his pleadings, even if he had been disposed to plead, or show the slightest mercy to Rachel. It seemed now that all was ended. All his sufferings and the sacrifices he had made had been productive of nothing but this ; and here, in that desolate and storm-beaten corner of the world, he was rudely awakened from his dream of love to learn that he had dreamed of impossible things, and the fair fruit he had hoped to pluck had turned to ashes even before he had grasped it.

In a brief interview he had with Rachel as soon as it was made known to him that he was to consider himself a prisoner, he said with emotion that almost choked him:—

“Rachel, my heart is torn out of me, and the wound will never heal. I go from you now, perhaps never to see you again. He whom I am ashamed to call my father wills it so. We seem to have been the sport of a cruel destiny, and I have been mocked and tortured by a delusion. Your beauty has beguiled me to my ruin. Had you been less headstrong, less self-willed, all this might have been avoided. But now what your fate will be I shudder even to think of ; as for my own, well, all I wish is to die.”

Rachel was much touched, and for the first time she felt drawn towards him by a feeling that she had not before experienced. It was not exactly love, but it was admiration for his courage and gratitude for his staunchness to her.

"Farewell," she answered, sadly. "As regards yourself you need have no fear. Your father's severity will be but temporary. But what of me? Think you he will show pity for me? No. He will blame me for your being here, and therefore what have I to hope for?" She paused for some moments, and then, fiercely, she added: "Let him beware, however, for the day of vengeance draws nigh." She checked herself, and said with a forced laugh: "Tut, how foolish I talk! How can I, a weak and lonely woman, expect to revenge my wrongs against one so powerful as your father?"

"Who knows?" murmured Ivan, gloomily and thoughtfully, as if some new-born idea was passing through his brain.

But he made no further remark, and he was compelled to leave her. So they separated, muttering farewells, and he was taken down to the steamer, and conveyed to the island.

A week passed—a week of suspense and misery to poor Rachel. No news came to her of her father. She could not get the slightest information. Then the order was issued that the convicts were to embark on board the vessel for their destination, and Rachel

was told that she must accompany them, that it was the Governor's command. She did not question why this should be so, for she thought that at last she would once again behold her father.

Catherine Petrovna was not allowed to go, and the parting between her and her husband was heart-rending ; but he whispered in her ear :—

“ Courage, beloved ; be strong. For your sake I will watch and wait for the moment when I can burst my shackles and rejoin you.”

She tried to think that the moment would come ; but hope fluttered and fell ; and, as she saw him go from her, it seemed to die altogether, and she sank down with a moan and a cry of pain.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE COMPACT.

AS Rachel set her foot upon the dread island of Sakhalin she felt that at last two things were about to come to pass, two things for which she had suffered so much and travelled so far. She would see her father; she would accomplish her purpose; and now it may be stated what that purpose was. It was revenge; revenge on the man who had wrought such misery and ruin in her family—the hateful and hated Peter Alexieff.

Such a man, so she thought, was but an outrage on Nature, an excrescence on the earth, and she had resolved that he should die. The mode of accomplishing his death she had not yet thought of; what she did think was, that once she was in Sakhalin some means and some opportunity would present themselves. And though she was now on the island by the Governor's express command and as his prisoner, she was not downcast, not disheartened. The end, as it seemed to her, was in view, and the end would crown her work.

As the exiles landed on the desolate, barren shore,

they could scarcely repress a shudder. Great masses of ice were still piled up there, and the whole island seemed wrapped in a dripping mist.

A strong convoy waited on shore to escort the prisoners to their destination, and as soon as all were landed, the march inland began, for the settlement was many miles away towards the east. The route was through a narrow, dreary valley, the bottom of which was a marsh, and made travelling exceedingly disagreeable and difficult. There was no road, only a track worn by the feet of the passing soldiers and convicts. Anything more melancholy, more desolate and saddening than the whole valley presented it would be no easy matter to imagine, and the clanking chains of the poor convicts seemed suited to the scene. Cultivation there was none; the vegetation consisted of a coarse marsh grass and bog cotton. Nowhere was there a sign of human habitation, and the slopes of the mountains that hemmed in the valley were mere stony wastes.

Through this awful region, where the air was bitterly cold, and the wind sometimes moaned like a thing in pain, and anon screeched as if in fierce delight that more victims had come to that living grave, the people toiled onwards for hours, until the day began to close. Then they reached a large wooden barrack erected at the edge of a swamp, and which was used as a temporary shelter for convict parties marching to the settlement.

At this place they halted for the night. It was dirty in the extreme, and devoid of everything that might have conduced to even the most barren of comforts. For beds there were only bare, greasy planks. Such ventilation as there was came through the cranks and crannies of the half-rotten boards ; but from time to time many of these crannies had been stopped with moss in order to keep out the draught, with the inevitable result of causing the inside air to become pestiferous and fetid when a party of convicts had been congregated there for a short time.

In short, the accommodation afforded for the wretched beings who were at once the objects of the Russian Government's hate and revenge was such that in any civilized country a man would have hesitated to put his dogs in such a place.

As soon as the muster-roll had been called the convicts were informed that they could do as they liked until reveille in the morning, when the march would be resumed.

Rachel was the only woman in the gang, and it can well be imagined how her whole being revolted against the misery she was called upon to endure ; and feeling faint and sick she went forth into the open air, and in a few minutes a soldier of the guard came up and spoke to her. Women were not often seen on the island, and that fact made her conspicuous, and apart from this her beauty had attracted this man.

"How comes it, woman, that you are here?" he asked, not unkindly.

"I am a prisoner," she answered.

"That I know, but wherefore are you so?"

"It is due to the caprice of your master, the Governor."

"Ah! he has many caprices; but why have you been sent to this part of the country?"

"I have not been sent. I came voluntarily."

"You speak a riddle. You are a prisoner, and yet you came voluntarily. How reconcile you the two things?"

"I journeyed across Siberia to see my father."

"Your father?"

"Yes. He is exiled to this place. But when I arrived at Nikolaevsk I was made a prisoner by order of the Governor."

"That is strange," muttered the soldier.

"Why strange? Would anything be strange that Peter Alexieff did?" The soldier, in answer to this, simply shrugged his shoulders, either as a sign of indifference to the subject or of contempt to the Governor. "Know you the Governor well?" asked Rachel.

"No. I have been here but four months. I was sent from Tobolsk. Do you know him well?"

"Would to the God of Abraham I did not."

"You are a Jewess?" asked the man.

"I am."

"And you come to see your father?"

"Yes."

"What is his name?"

"Aaron Arama."

For a moment or two the soldier looked at her pityingly and sadly, and then he remarked:—

"Know you not that Aaron Arama is dead?"

"Dead!" echoed Rachel, in a strange, hollow tone, as if she were a mechanical figure rather than a living, breathing woman, and, reeling a little, she supported herself against the wooden wall of the barrack. "Dead," she repeated, with a gasp, while every particle of colour fled from her face.

"Yes," said the man sympathetically, and failing to recognise altogether how terrible was the shock he had imparted to his listener, whose eyes were tearless, and almost stony, her breath laboured and stertorous, and her whole manner that of one who was partially stunned. But suddenly she seemed to recover herself, and laying her hand on the soldier's arm she exclaimed:

"Did you say he was dead?"

"I did," returned the man.

"When died he?" she asked, hoarsely.

"Well, it must have been about three months before I came!"

"You did not know him, then?"

"No, but his death was much talked about amongst the soldiers and the exiles, for it was said that he was flogged to death by the Governor."

Rachel groaned. Then setting her lips firmly she drew a long breath through her nostrils after the manner of one whose passion and bitterness could find no outlet in words ; but, after a little while, the softer womanly nature asserted itself, and staggering to a wooden bench near the door, she fell upon it, and sobbed with a passionate sobbing.

The soldier spoke some kindly words, but they were unheeded, and he went his way. He was not unused to scenes of this kind, and, necessarily, his feelings were blunted ; but to Rachel the information he had imparted had blotted out her last hope, and crushed her heart.

Through the long and weary night she wept out her wordless grief, and when the day came and the bugles sounded, she dried her tears, and it verily seemed as if her face had undergone during those hours of darkness some actual physical transformation.

There was a certain fierceness in the eyes that was foreign to them, and the lines of beauty had hardened, the soft, rounded lips being drawn, and the white, smooth brow indented with two deep, vertical furrows, so that she no longer had the girlish, gentle appearance of old, but conveyed the impression that she was a stern, implacable, cruel woman.

She was no longer the Rachel as we first knew her in St. Petersburg. Then life seemed full of promise, and Hope smiled. But the promises had not been realized ; Hope was dead, and her heart—in which

love's flowers once bloomed—had turned to stone. Death had no terrors for her, and the aim and substance of her life now were all summed up in the one terrible word—*vengeance*. What else had she to live for? What else was there that could now give her life zest?

The day was done before the party reached their destination, the main convict settlement of Sakhalin. It is a gloomy, weird region, where the ground is so swampy and boggy that cultivation is impossible.

Here in this sterile spot are two huge barracks, or prisons. There are also a few wooden houses for the accommodation of the soldiers and officers, and all beyond is wilderness. On Sakhalin God seems to have set His curse, but to Sakhalin the mighty Czar of Russia sends many of his subjects with a refinement of cruelty that might be the invention of the common enemy of mankind. And there they rot while yet alive, there they go mad, there they die, there they are buried, and in a little while no man knoweth their grave.

The next morning Rachel was brought before the Commandant by his orders, and once more she and Peter Alexieff were face to face. He had changed materially since they last met. Climate and rough living had aged him. His hair had grown white, his one eye was sunken, and the miasma of the swamps had withered his skin and turned it yellow.

"So, Jewess, we meet again," he said, as he fixed

his sinister eye upon her, and evinced surprise as he noted the change that had taken place in her.

"We do," she answered, with a suppressed fierceness that increased the habitual frown her face wore.

"You have come to see your father?" he remarked with a cruel, callous smile.

"I set out from St. Petersburg with that object. But as he is dead I shall see him no more in this world."

"How know you that he is dead?" cried Alexieff, with a sharpness that seemed to conceal a menace.

"I learned it," she answered with a sneer.

"From whom?"

"I will tell you not."

"Have a care, woman."

"Oh, do not threaten me. I am here in your power. I know it, and you may torture me and flay me as it so pleases you. But, Peter Alexieff, in the name of the Great God on high, the God of Jew and Gentile alike, I say beware. Human life is but a span, and the Lord has said, 'Vengeance is Mine.' Even if you escape human vengeance, rest assured that at the given hour the Lord's vengeance will smite you."

She spoke so solemnly and strangely that his cowardly, superstitious nature caused him to shrink within himself, but raising his voice, which was harsh and discordant, he exclaimed:—

"Woman, I brought you not here to bandy words with you, but to speak of my son. Through your

accursed face he has lost his reason, and he has followed you across Siberia. You have bewitched him. I do not say that you have done this purposely, but it is so, and he is powerless to resist you. The end of this has come. The infatuation that has held him so long in thrall will pass when the object that provoked it is far away. Then will his reason return, then will he be my son again, and will come to hate your race as I hate them. Now, mark you this. You are a prisoner here. Your life is in my hands ; but I will give you that life, I will give you liberty on condition that in my presence you tell my son that under no circumstances will you accept his attentions further, and that henceforth your paths will be widely asunder. When you have done that I will give you facilities for leaving this place and reaching Vladivostock on condition that you swear to leave Russia and go to France or England, or anywhere you like. Say, do you accept the condition?"

"I do," she answered, with a disguised sneer.

Peter Alexieff smiled to himself as he rang his bell and gave the attendant who came some instructions. And a few minutes after that Ivan was brought into his father's presence, guarded by two soldiers.

"Boy," said the Governor sternly, "behold this Jewess, whom like one distraught you have followed so many thousands of miles. Hear now from her own lips that the passion you have for her is a hopeless one. Speak, Jewess, is that so?"

"It is."

"And nothing on earth would induce you to accept him for your husband?"

"Nothing."

"You hear that, boy. This Jewess despises you, and yet you, a Christian, have pursued her across Siberia. Now then, shake off your madness and be a man. Let this infatuation influence you no longer. Surely you have more ambition than to be despised by a Jewess! Go, and when you next see me let me know that you have come to your senses."

Ivan spake no word, made no answer, gave no sign that he was influenced by what he had heard, save it was in a downcast look, and a pitiable, pleading, despairing expression in his eyes. When he had retired in company with the soldiers, Peter once more struck his bell, and told his clerk to make out a passport for Rachel Arama which would not only entitle her to travel to Vladivostock, but give her the right when once there to ship without let or hindrance to any port she might be disposed to go to.

The passport ready, he handed it to her, saying: "In two or three days' time a convoy will be going down to the coast and thence to the mainland. You shall go with them. And ere you go I will give you money enough for your immediate needs."

Rachel took the passport, and as she folded it up

and placed it in the bosom of her dress she merely remarked :—

“For the present your greatness has done with me?”

“Yes. You may go,” he said, angrily, for he was conscious that he was the object of her scorn and hate.

Without another word she turned and left the room, and then Peter Alexieff laughed to himself, as he thought that he had done a very clever thing, for he believed that he had played the last trump card, and that the game was assuredly his. His deadly and cowardly work had been carried out. His enemy, Aaron Arama, whom he had hated with a hatred that was hardly human, was dead; and now his enemy's daughter was in his hands, and he had broken for ever the spell which she had unwittingly exercised over his son. Truly for the injury Arama had deservedly inflicted upon him he had taken a full measure of retaliation, and his brutal nature was gladdened thereby, for in his obtuseness he saw not the handwriting on the wall, and he heard not the mutterings of the rising storm.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE REVOLT.

AS these thoughts ran through his mind, Peter Alexieff laughed as he had often laughed before when he saw that his cunning had enabled him to gain a triumph ; but, like all men of his stamp and temperament, he seemed to forget that cunning could be met with cunning, and that forces might be ranged against him that not all his cunning, not all his caution, not all his watchfulness would enable him to avert. But now he chuckled and chuckled again, as he took from his desk the letter which he had received from his patron, Count Suvorof, wherein the Count said :—" In Sakhalin you have absolute power. A man who has absolute power should know how to deal with an insolent Jewess. Humility she knows not ; you must teach it to her. Gratitude she is a stranger to ; make her acquainted with it."

For months Alexieff had kept that letter in his mind, and he had looked forward to Rachel's coming with a sort of ferocious joy even while doing the father to death with unrelenting cruelty, for his thirst for vengeance would not be satisfied until he had tortured

and slain the daughter as he tortured and slew the father. But when he heard, to his amazement, that his son was actually travelling through Siberia with Rachel, his plan had to be changed, and his giving her a passport to take her to Vladivostock was only part of the changed plan. Presently he sent for his creature Pavloff, who had accompanied him to Sakhalin, and was still with him, and thus addressed him:—

“Pavloff, you are aware that Rachel Arama is here?”

“I am, your nobleness.”

“And you are aware that my son has followed her across Siberia?”

“I am aware of that, also.”

“You are invaluable, Pavloff. Now, hearken. I have given her a passport to frank her to Vladivostock, and have counselled her to take ship there for England or France.”

“In God’s name, your mightiness, you have surely never done this thing?” cried Pavloff, in the profoundest amazement.

“I have done this thing, Pavloff, my faithful one.”

“Then are you changed indeed. Having her in your power, I thought you would have flayed her instead of giving her life and liberty.”

Alexieff smiled.

“You are growing dull-witted, Pavloff,” he remarked. “The air of Sakhalin evidently does not tend to

brighten you. Do you forget that I have my son to reckon with here? While he is detained Rachel will go on her journey, but, Pavloff, my true and trusted friend, you will take care that she does not live to reach Vladivostock. Do I make myself clear?"

Pavloff was silent for some moments, as if overcome by this exhibition of his chief's superior cunning. Then he answered, and there was a world of meaning in his answer,

"You make yourself quite clear, nobleness."

"And I can depend upon you in the matter?"

"You can ;" and as the creature said this there came into his eyes a light that told all too clearly of the wickedness that was in his heart. Pavloff was a human demon, and aiming at power and the riches that power would bring, he would stick at nothing. Such men as he seem imbued with an idea that they are immortal, and that for them there is no reckoning. But in the present instance both he and his master were dealing with unknown quantities. They forgot, or perhaps they had never remembered it, that a woman driven to desperation by wrong and cruelty cannot be looked upon with indifference.

In Nikolaevsk was Catherine Petrovna, and in Sakhalin were Rachel Arama and Paul Petrovna. The Governor had told Rachel that she would have to leave in two or three days, but in order to gain time she feigned illness and declined to leave, and the journey to the coast was postponed.

It chanced at this time that in Nikolaevsk there was an exceedingly small garrison, altogether not more than twenty soldiers ; and the garrison of Sakhalin was much below even its winter strength, while the convicts numbered nearly three thousand. Amongst these the artel brought its influence to bear, and with such success that the plot gathered strength, and men bound themselves by solemn oaths not to betray each other, but to make a bold fight for liberty when the hour came. Day by day additions were made by the unhappy prisoners, who, detesting the Governor and his brutal officers, secretly rejoiced at the prospect of being able to get them in their power.

Paul, having money, managed by means of a bribe to get a message, which he wrote in a pre-arranged cipher, conveyed to his wife that at a given hour on a given day the inhabitants of Nikolaevsk, or such of them as could be trusted, were to rise, and, seizing the steamer, proceed to the island and wait events there. It was a desperate venture, but what will people not do when situated as the unhappy convicts of Sakhalin were? To utter the word "Freedom" to them was to at once arouse in them the fierce desire for it, and that being done, nothing would seem impossible.

Furious as Catherine was at being separated from her husband, and at the treatment he had been subjected to, she was a host in herself, and she inspired others with her feeling. Silently, steadily, and secretly she matured her plans, and one evening she and a num-

ber of other women whose relatives pined and laboured on Sakhalin lured a large proportion of the garrison of Nikolaevsk to the one drinking-place there was in the town, and when these men were more or less dazed with vodka, and utterly without any suspicion of danger, they were suddenly set upon by the women and their male friends, and being deprived of their arms, some were slain and others were bound hand and foot, and thus rendered helpless.

Then the whole town was roused by the rioters, and the excitement spreading, a rush was made for the barrack, which readily fell into their hands before any defence could be made, though some of them paid for their temerity with their lives. But in the course of an hour from the outbreak the little place was entirely in the hands of the mob, and at the head of them was Catherine, who, having whetted her fangs, so to speak, was not likely to be easily restrained. The armoury was forced, and a quantity of arms and ammunition seized, and then the desperate venturers rushed on board the steamer and steered her for the island.

So far then the revolt had been successful. But this was only the initial stage, and there was yet much to be done, and unless similar success attended the attempt that was to be made on the island, the rising would collapse, and terrible would be the penalty that would be exacted.

At the station on the island most of the convicts

were employed at some coal-mines, though what the coal was extracted for no one seemed to know. It could not be shipped away, it could not be used ; but if the exiles had not done this they could not have done anything else, for coal—and a very inferior quality it is—is the only mineral the island produces. The coal is largely got out by blasting, and for some time the miners had been secreting small quantities of the blasting powder until the amount became formidable.

At night-time very little watch and ward was kept over the prisoners, for the authorities never dreamed of revolt, and escape seemed out of the question. Isolated escapes were, comparatively speaking, frequent, but the convict was generally brought back, or killed by the natives, who were encouraged thereto by rewards. And so it came to pass that a night was chosen that corresponded with the rising in Nikolaevsk, and a little band of desperate and despairing men collected the powder they had saved, and aggregating it, they filled a large empty oil-can, to which they attached a fuse, and then, lighting the fuse, they placed the can against the barracks occupied by some of the garrison, and in such a position that the explosion could not fail to work incalculable mischief.

The explosion was terrific. The building was shattered and wrecked, and nearly all who were occupying it at the time were killed or maimed. Then in the panic that ensued the successful rebels possessed

themselves of arms, and those who could not get fire-arms got stones, sticks, iron bars, anything, in fact, that would answer the purpose of a weapon, either of defence or attack.

A fight, fierce and sanguinary, ensued, and the weird wilderness resounded with cries and oaths, and the desperate struggling of men, some who fought for freedom, others to restrain them from regaining their freedom. But the spirit of revolt had seized like a fever upon all the convicts, young and old alike; and led and encouraged by Paul Petrovna, who seemed for the nonce to be endowed with superhuman strength and energy, they hurled themselves against the soldiers again and again.

But though the soldiers fared badly, and numbers of their comrades, dead and dying, strewed the ground, they were encouraged to persevere by Peter Alexieff, who showed that, bad and infamous as he was, he was not lacking in courage of a kind, and, though he seemed to take care not to expose himself to the storm of passion that raged, he kept his men to their posts by threats or promises of reward.

For hours the battle raged. At one time fortune seemed to favour the rebels, and at another it was on the side of the garrison. It was a terrible scene, and the pale-faced moon looked tearfully through a veil of mist.

For many days Rachel Arama had been an inmate of the hospital—a wooden building that stood

apart from the others. But she had not been inactive, though she had but one hope, one object. She hoped for the death of Peter Alexieff ; and her object was to accomplish his death. And she had asked of Paul Petrovna that, should the rising be successful, he would make an effort to have the Governor seized and bound, and, that done, that she might be informed of it.

As the fight progressed, she waited with anxiously-beating heart for news of the result, and when she heard how the Governor was inspiring his men to deeds of extraordinary valour while he himself kept out of harm's way, she grew sick with a fear that after all the purpose of her long journey would be unaccomplished, and all she had endured, and all those she loved had suffered and endured, would go unavenged. The suspense was fearful, the strain upon the mind all but unendurable. But suddenly a voice exclaimed in her ears :—

“ Rachel, my beloved ! ”

And the next moment she was clasped in the arms of Ivan Alexieff.

CHAPTER XXX.

OUT OF TRIBULATION.

ALTHOUGH Ivan had not been kept a close prisoner by his father—in fact, hardly a prisoner at all—he had been jealously watched, and he was aware of that, so that he made no attempt to hold communication with the woman whose influence had exerted such an extraordinary fascination over him, and which he was as powerless to resist then as he had been powerless to resist it in St. Petersburg.

He was perfectly well aware, however, that, unless by stratagem, there was little chance of his being able to hold communication with her. But he made a desperate resolve that when she had taken her departure he would make a break for his freedom and follow her again at the peril of his life.

The outbreak of the revolt opened up a way for him that he had not dreamed of, and the vigilance that had been exercised over him being relaxed, he rushed to her and clasped her in his arms, and, as he did so, she uttered a laugh that was almost like the laugh of one of sense bereft, and pushing him from her she cried:—

“Surely the hand of Providence is working in this.

Now shall you render me the sacrifice that you swore so solemnly to render when I should call upon you to do so."

"What mean you?" he asked, with alarm showing itself in his face and tone.

"You are Ivan Alexieff, son of Peter Alexieff, who has pursued me and mine to our ruin with the unrelenting cruelty of a fiend. Now the moment has come when I demand from you the sacrifice. You shall be the instrument of my vengeance; yours shall be the hand that shall revenge me. Ivan Alexieff, in virtue of your oath, I demand from you the sacrifice of your father."

He reeled from her, and stretched out both his hands before him as if he would ward her off.

"Are you mad?" he gasped, hoarsely.

"Perhaps I am, but you dare not break your oath. Remember how you swore it. Remember how often you have vowed you loved me."

He covered his face now with his hands, and shuddered.

"But this man is my father," he murmured.

"And my deadly enemy," she answered.

"Release me from my oath," he pleaded, as he now stretched his hands towards her, and looked at her with a look of despairing appeal.

"No," she answered, sternly.

"Are you pitiless?"

"Yes, as pitiless as your father."

"Rachel, Rachel, spare me. I have loved you, do love you, and will die for you if you demand it, but save me from this sacrifice you now ask."

"Why should I?"

"Because I love you."

"Think of all I have suffered at the hands of your father."

"I forget nothing. Would to Heaven I could. But let us fly from here. Escape may be impossible, but at least we can die together."

She laughed again like one bereft of reason, and said passionately:—

"Think you I can forget my father's wrongs, my father's sufferings, and his cruel death? When you volunteered to accompany me across Siberia, I saw in you an instrument of vengeance, and I exacted from you a solemn oath that you would render me a service. Now, after long, weary months of waiting and painful suspense, and in this supreme moment, when the lives of so many of these wretched exiles are at stake, I call upon you to fulfil your vow, sworn on the Ikon and sworn on the Cross, the sacred emblem of your Church. Dare you break that vow?"

"No," he moaned, "if you will not release me."

"I will not release you. I demand the sacrifice."

For some moments he seemed to endure a terrible struggle with himself; then a change came over him, an unnatural calmness; and, approaching her, he said:—

"So be it. You are pitiless in your hour of triumph.

I cannot blame you. My father has inflicted upon you and yours irreparable wrong ; and, though he be father of mine, I confess that he deserves death. But I, at least, who have loved you, who have been faithful and true to you, who have endured hardship and made sacrifices for your sake, am surely worthy of a better fate than that you reserve for me. But like a moth that flutters around the flame, dazzled and bewildered by its brilliancy, so have I been dazzled and bewildered by your beauty, and now, like the burnt moth, I can only writhe and die. Farewell, Rachel Arama, we shall meet no more, but so long as you draw the breath of life think of me with some pity, some kindly thought, for I have been true to you to death."

He could say no more. Emotion choked him, and turning from her he hurried away. She made a movement as if she would follow and recall him, but checking herself she murmured :—

"No, it is Fate."

On he went out into the darkness of the night, and made his way to where the struggle still raged, and where the heap of slain and wounded—friend and foe mingled together—showed how fierce and pitiless the struggle had been. He quickened his pace until with a rush he came between the cross-fire of the contending parties, and fell riddled with bullets. The phantom that had lured him so far and so long had completed its work, and Ivan Alexieff, rather than become a parricide, courted and found death. But even if he

had been inclined to make the sacrifice Rachel demanded of him he would have been too late, for a little while before Peter Alexieff had been smitten to death by Paul Petrovna, who had watched and watched for his opportunity. He managed at last to get near him, and he struck him to the earth with the butt end of a gun ; but for some time the brutal Governor writhed in agony before death put an end to his sufferings. And in that supreme hour, when the shadows of the grave closed about him, there was no one there to give him a word of comfort or hope. It was a fitting death for such a man ; and as he drifted into the darkness he must have shrunk with horror as he thought of his many victims, and the suffering he had caused, the cruelties he had inflicted.

Peter's fall disheartened his followers, although they still endeavoured to overcome the rebels. But so far Petrovna had accomplished his purpose, and he made good his escape, but not alone, for, as he had promised his wife he would do, he took Rachel with him, though, now that her enemy was dead, it seemed to her that she had nothing further to live for ; but he encouraged her, persuaded her, and she went with him. About two dozen others got away at the same time, and travelling with all speed they reached the spot on the coast where it was arranged the steamer should be in waiting, and there they found her.

Catherine welcomed her husband with delirious joy,

and when all were embarked the frail craft was headed for the open sea, and, after a terribly stormy and perilous passage, during which she was often in danger of foundering, she reached the coast of Japan. There the escaped exiles dispersed, but Catherine, Paul, and Rachel made their way to Yokohama, where Rachel got financial assistance from one of her race in business there, and she and her companions took passage in an English steamer bound for London.

But Paul Petrovna was not destined to reach his destination. Naturally a delicate man, the suffering and hardship he had gone through had so undermined his constitution that he gradually faded away and died at sea, and his faithful wife, unable to endure his loss, threw herself overboard and followed him even into the darkness of the grave, which had no bitterness, no terrors for her now that the man who had been her idol, and whom she had worshipped, had passed the portals of death. Vulgar she might have been, and commonplace, but her all-absorbing passion for Paul transfigured her, so to speak, and caused the light of Heaven to fall upon her, for human love comes from God.

For Rachel Arama a better fate was in store, for on reaching London and presenting herself to the Rabbi there she heard, to her joy, that Moshka Umanski, who had verily walked through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, still lived, and was in London, although seriously ill. As may be imagined, it was

not long before once more they were face to face; once more they were clasped in each other's arms. He had managed to effect his escape from Siberia, though the suffering he had endured had well-nigh driven him mad, and he had reached London a wreck.

Rachel nursed him through a long illness, until at last she was enabled to lay her head upon his breast and murmur "Husband."

Seldom have men and women—pledged to each other as lovers—been called upon to endure for Faith's sake what they had endured, and yet in the end been rewarded with fruition of their hopes. They had been persecuted, but they had found their reward; and from a land of darkness and cruelty they had been delivered into a land of light and freedom. They had suffered for faith's sake as others had suffered before them; but they could exclaim with their race throughout the world:—

"Our bodies die, but our faith lives."

Post nubila Phœbus!

