

MENZIKOFF

OR THE
DANGER OF RICHES

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Alexander Menzikoff ;

OR, THE

DANGER OF RICHES.

A TRUE HISTORY.

SPECIALLY INTENDED FOR THE BENEFIT
OF FAMILY CIRCLES.

BY

GUSTAV NIERITZ.

TRANSLATED FROM THE NINTH GERMAN EDITION

BY

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P R E F A C E .

VERY few prefatory words are needed to introduce this little volume. The deeply interesting story of the Menzikoff family will speak for itself. In several continental countries it is extensively circulated in the different languages, and has long been a special favourite both with old and young. In our country the little book is scarcely known. None of the booksellers in Edinburgh or elsewhere, with whom I have communicated, know of any translation, at least they know of none at present to be had. This translation, made from the original German work, will I trust be deemed worthy of some approbation. Several friends, acquainted with German, and competent to judge both of the merits of the story, and of the correctness of the translation, urged me to offer it to the publisher, assuring me that it would attract and gratify not a few readers. I trust the fact that the only time I had to devote to the study of German and to the translation of this little history, being a spare hour now and then after business, will induce the critical and fastidious to allow me a large share of their indulgence.

G. M.

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CHAPTER I.

THE PASTRY BAKER'S BOY.

"BUY! buy! fine pastry! warm pastry! buy the new Parisian pastry! Who buys? who buys, ere it grows cold?"

So cried, or rather sang, with a pleasant loud ringing voice a boy of fifteen or sixteen years of age in the streets of Moscow—the capital of the Russian empire, at the same time glancing around, with uplifted eyes, towards the windows of the stately palaces, as if he expected to see a buyer in one of these beckoning him. Accordingly it was not astonishing that he should stumble against some Strelitzes or Life-Guards, who were coming in an opposite direction, and who had been indulging so freely in "Brantwein," that the better to hide their staggering walk they had slung themselves together arm in arm.

"Oho!" cried these, with stammering tongues. "Boy, pray see who are before you! you drive against us with your basket. What good things then have you therein? Come, let us see.

Forthwith four or five hands seized the basket, and endeavoured to remove the cover which was spread over the wares; but the pastry baker's boy opposed this design with all his strength. He might well suppose that, should they accomplish their purpose, his pastry would find its way, without payment, into the stomachs of the drunken soldiers.

"Let be!" cried he; "that is nothing of yours. It is pastry for the Czar Peter. It is Peter's pastry, I tell you, whereof every piece costs a ruble."

"It may be pastry for the Princess Sophia, the Czars Iwan or Peter, for my part," laughed one of the Strelitzes. "It shall cause me no bellyache on that

account ; and we also wish to know how suchlike wares taste."

The youth continued to defend his basket with great adroitness against the staggering soldiers, at the same time shouting without intermission that it was Peter's pastry, and that the Czar only dare eat it ; but he might have been at length overpowered by numbers, had not his cry for help brought a passing officer of no mean rank to his assistance. "What's ado here?" demanded he sharply of the soldiers, who, at the sight of his glittering gold laced uniform, started back and took themselves off as quickly as possible.

"Well, what kind of trade have you had with the Strelitzes?" the officer now asked the youth, who, perspiring and panting, lifted the cover in order to see if his pastry had suffered in the fight.

He was so absorbed in doing this that he did not look up to the officer, but only on his wares, as he answered—"Why, the rascals wished to rob me of my pastry."

"But why did you mix up the Czar Peter with your combat, and always exclaim that it was Peter's pastry?" enquired the officer.

"That was only a little stratagem," returned the youth, laughingly lifting his sparkling eye to his rescuer. "I only wished thereby to induce them to have respect for my pastry ; but, besides, the Czar Peter is in reality my favourite, having bought from me several times already."

"Do not be so rash as to tell every one so," said the officer, admonishingly, "The Princess Sophia might misinterpret it for you, and fancy that you love the Czar Peter better than her or the Czar Iwan. In such matters she allows no jesting, therefore take heed."

"Ah!" said the youth, "whose bread I eat, his song I'll sing. If the Princess Sophia also bought from me, and spake as kindly to me, a poor boy, as the good Czar Peter, then would I love her dearly also."

"Well," said the officer, "remain ever of the same mind—truly loving the Czar Peter, perhaps he may buy of you again. He dines to-day with the Prince Lolopin ; but who knows whether the Prince's cook understands

as well how to bake such excellent pastry as your French master. You may at least enquire and see" and with this the officer left him.

This hint was sufficient for the youth. He proceeded straightway towards the Prince's palace, under the windows of which he loudly cried his wares in the hope of receiving a gracious sign of encouragement. His exertions, however, remained without success, and he therefore bethought himself of going up to the Prince's spacious kitchen. He did so, and pushing his head half in at the open door, gently asked, "Will you buy any pastry for the Czar Peter—pastry that he likes so well."

The master cook surrounded by cooks and assistants, answered sulkily, "No! we will bake some ourselves."

But the Prince's valet, who had just then entered the kitchen, and had heard the boy's question, addressing the latter, asked him, "Who is it from, and how do you know that the Czar Peter likes it so well?"

"The pastry," answered the youth, "is from the world renowned pastry baker Legrain, from Paris, and the Czar has bought from me on several occasions."

"Then wait a little," returned the valet, "I will mention it to my master. Be seated, meanwhile, on that stool, until I fetch an answer."

He went away, and the boy sat down on the offered seat. The valet returned shortly and said to the boy,

"You must have patience, my master is just now in conversation with the Czar, and I dare not disturb him."

He went away again. The boy had great patience. The strong sweet odour of the rich food which they were preparing in the kitchen was very agreeable to him. He had wandered about the streets the whole forenoon, with which, and the fight with the soldiers, he felt himself very tired. The little place in the corner of the kitchen was so temptingly convenient—he fell into a gentle slumber, his eyelids closed themselves, his arms, which clasped the basket, sank down; the basket sat on his knees, supported only by the belt slung over his shoulder. In this position he was

found by the valet on his return, who immediately made a secret sign to the master cook, and, turning to all those who were working there, exclaimed,

"Haste,—go and help to carry up three hundred bottles of wine out of the cellar. The other servants cannot accomplish it themselves."

The kitchen was immediately deserted, and on the valet whispering something into the ear of the master cook the latter nodded approvingly, and said softly,

"But were it not better to take away the basket from the boy and do our business in the next room."

"Most certainly not," returned the valet. "That would require too much time ; besides you might arouse him."

"Yet there is no necessity for bestrewing all the pastry," the master cook again said.

"Certainly all !" the valet eagerly answered, "otherwise we might immediately be betrayed, if only the pastry that was intended for the Czar was poisoned, and the remainder found to be harmless. The suspicion must fall on the youth, and his master, and we must take care that the boy does not leave this until shortly before the time when the Czar will use the pastry, and thereby prevent the affair getting wind too soon."

Thereupon both softly approached the sleeper, cautiously lifted the wax-cloth cover from the pastry, and strewed a white powder over it. After they had accomplished their criminal object, the valet left the kitchen, and the master allowed one of the empty copper vessels to fall in his industry on the floor, so that when the cooks and their assistants returned, they found the youth fully awake. They now began to serve up the innumerable dishes for the table of the Prince. Just then the kitchen swarmed with people, as the valet again returned, and in a very loud tone said,

"Now, boy, show us your wares, the master will take some of your pastry, in case the Czar might wish to have some of it."

The youth gladly complied, handed the desired pastry out of his basket, and, on receiving payment,

was desired to go on his way. The pastry baker's boy obeyed, but at the very next corner of the street he made a halt, where he set down his basket on a curbstone, and began well pleased to count his money. One rouble, two, three, four roubles, five copecks, ten copecks, twenty——

“Ha! you scoundrel! get off! hold! my pastry!”

With these exclamations the youth interrupted his reckoning, and sprang up after a large dog which, enticed by the sweet smell of his pastry, had managed, unnoticed by the boy, to steal some out of his basket. The dog had dropped the pastry, and in falling it had broken into two or three pieces, while he stood over it growling fiercely, and showing his teeth, awaiting the attack of the boy, who, when the mischief was done, took his basket under his arm and sat down sorrowfully on the curbstone, to reflect over his misfortune.

“The pastry,” lamented he, “I must replace to my master, and so my whole gain, by my late sale, is lost. What will my poor mother say when I return home empty handed? You naughty brute, was not bread good enough for your dog's stomach, that you must fill it with pastry, which I myself have not even yet tasted? And there the animal stands, aggravating me as if he would laugh at me, or much rather as if he expected to carry off more of such like dainties. You will wait long. I wish the last had choked you.”

The unchristian-like wish of the excited youth seemed on the point of being fulfilled. The butcher's dog, which had not moved from the spot, began to choke, twine its body, and howl, so that even the robbed youth really had sympathy for him. The howling, whimpering, and convulsions of the dog became ever more hideous, drawing the attention and concern of several of the passengers. No one could comprehend what could have happened to him, while his sufferings appeared to become ever more frightful.”

“Do you not see, poor dog,” said the pastry boy, with tears in his eyes, “that ‘I'll gotten wealth does not prosper.’ My pastry agrees badly with you.”

“The dog has taken poison,” said one of the on-

lookers, who seemed to understand the affair better than the others.

A fearful thought now took possession of the boy. Indeed he had slept very soundly in the Prince's kitchen, but not so soundly as not to observe the sudden stillness which followed when the cooks and their assistants left it to carry up the wine from the cellar. He heard, but only as in a dream, the whispering of the valet and the master of the kitchen; and although he did not yet understand all that they said, still a word or two had come to his ear which, after consideration, now made him suspect their movements. Besides, it was not unknown to him that the Princess Sophia could not endure her half-brother, the young Czar Peter, because she had to fear a restriction to her authority from his noble spirit, and therefore would have rather seen his weaker brother Iwan alone Czar of Russia. Many of the nobility were also of the same way of thinking as Sophia, and therefore it was not improbable that some one might attempt, through poison, to get quit of the young Czar—an example not altogether unheard of in those barbarous times of which we write. These thoughts now filled the boy's soul with fear, and he trembled for the life of the Czar—for the dog was already completely dead, and showed in the deformation which had been wrought upon his form, how fearfully he had suffered in dying. With trembling lips the boy related to the surrounding crowd how that this frightful accident had happened to the dog after he had eaten some of the pastry out of his basket; also, that before his going into the kitchen of Prince Lolopin his pastry was good, and must have been poisoned there,—that it also was intended to set some of it before the Czar Peter, who might ere this be already dead. With tears he conjured the onlookers to warn the Czar, to help to save him if it were yet possible.

A tremendous tumult arose. Like an avalanche, the multitude increased in size as it rolled on with the speed of wind, towards the palace of the Prince. Two strong Russians, seizing the pastry boy, lifted him along with his basket on their shoulders, and in this manner

led the way, the others arming themselves with stones and all kinds of instruments, swore not to leave one stone upon another, nor to spare a single person, if it were so that their beloved Peter had been sacrificed. But over him the hand of God had watched. Entirely against his usual custom, he had entered into an absorbing conversation with the person who sat next him at table. The plate containing the poisoned pastry had stood long before him. The hypocritical host had several times reminded him that the pastry would be entirely cold, as often had the Czar reached out his hand, when some new turn in the conversation had induced him to withdraw it again. At length, to the great but secret delight of the Prince, the Czar took up some of the pastry, and was in the act of carrying it to his lips, as the boisterous crowd arrived under the windows of the palace.

"Czar Peter!" roared many hundreds of rough voices, "where are you? Show yourself that we may see if you yet live. Come out here! Come out here, beloved Czar! Death to the traitors." Lolopin became pale as death. The Czar sprang up and went to the window, followed by all the guests. An indescribable shout of joy arose as the Russians saw their beloved Czar open the window.

"Hurra! Hurra! Czar Peter! Hurra! Death and destruction to the poisoners."

The Czar waived his hand for silence and immediately all were quiet.

"What's ado? What would you?" he cried down.

All screamed, related, and threatened at once—so that the Czar could be no wiser by the uproar. At the same time all hands were pointed to the boy with the basket, who united his voice with the others. Smiling, the Czar turned himself to his adjutant,

"Lefort," said he, "pray go down and learn the cause of this tumult. It is as certainly a confusion of languages, as that which took place at the building of Babel. One cries 'Hurra!' a second 'Pastry!' a third 'Poison!' a fourth 'Destruction!' It might well make one anxious and afraid."

The officer, the same who had previously released the pastry boy out of the hands of the drunken soldiers, went and was immediately surrounded by the thronging multitude on the broad stairs of the palace with the boy in their midst. He informed himself minutely of all the particulars, assured the people that the Czar had not yet tasted the pastry, and advised the crowd to disperse itself quietly. But they refused to do this until the Czar himself passed through their midst on his way to his own dwelling, and had given them the assurance that he would make strict enquiries concerning the affair, and rigorously punish the guilty.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF GOOD FORTUNE.

FOR many considerations this whole occurrence was suppressed. The people were deluded and given to understand that it might have been an error, caused by the rashness of the pastry boy. The master cook, and valet of the Prince disappeared. The Prince himself was despatched out of the country as ambassador, in order that he might escape the arbitrary vengeance of the people, who murmured loudly, and clung to the suspicion of poisoning more than ever. In reality the guilty parties had only to thank the Princess Sophia for her indulgence in not punishing their guilt, against whose powerful influence the young Czar Peter was not in a position to strive, and therefore was obliged to allow things to take their course. On the contrary, the fortune of the pastry boy seemed to be made. He called himself Alexander Menzikoff, and was the son of a peasant in the neighbourhood of Moscow. Lefort, the Czar's Adjutant, or rather his bosom friend, had discovered no inconsider-

able talents in the boy; and on account of these took him into his service, where everything went well with him. As soon as this occurred, Alexander hastened joyfully out into the country to his mother (for his father was already dead), in order to astonish her with the important change in his profession.

"Oh, Mother!" he cried, "only think of my good fortune,—just look at this splendid coat which I now wear, how the gold lace glances upon it, and these sparkling new buttons. But yet far more handsome coats, vests, and trowsers pass through my hands which I receive to brush and dust; and what a delightful perfume they do give out, almost better than the pastry of my former master, even when it was fresh from the oven. I also receive far better food and drink than formerly. Your sour cabbage soup is nothing compared with it, but the best is yet to come. I meet the most gracious Czar every day, not to mention other distinguished noblemen. With these all is of silver and gold; the plates and other dishes, candlesticks, snuffers, knives, forks, spoons, even—only think of it—the fire irons and washhand basin."

Astonished over this relation, the good peasant woman held up her hands

"I am not yet finished," continued her son. "Our good Czar is very gracious towards me, because I warned him against the poisoned pastry; but lately he entrusted me to fetch his robe of State, because none of his own servants were at hand at the moment. I really trembled with rapture when I was allowed to carry the splendid garment with the glittering stars in my mean hands. What would you think if I told you that a single stone out of such a star is of more value than this whole village, with all its houses, fields, and crops. How happy must that man be who dares to wear such a star upon his breast. But since that affair of the pastry, the Czar has become far more circumspect. He does not now eat as formerly everything that is set before him. Lately his half-sister, the Princess Sophia, sent him some splendid pastry, and a quantity of tarts. Think you he ate them or even touched them? Never.

We servants received the whole present, and on that occasion I ate so voraciously that I felt the worse of it. The Czar sent me to the first baker in the city to buy a loaf, which he used instead of the pastry and tarts. On the whole, the nobility lead a very strange life. When you rise in the morning to commence your labour, they are only thinking of going to sleep. They breakfast when you dine :— towards evening they sit down to table, and remain sitting far into the night, eating and drinking so much that one might think their stomachs would burst. Then they play at cards until morning dawns. Such is the order in high life ; but neither my master nor the Czar really like it, and conform to custom only when they cannot avoid doing so.— It is not intended that I shall remain always a servant, therefore my good master has engaged a number of teachers who instruct me in reading, writing, arithmetic, and French, and other things with which you are unacquainted. These are far more difficult for me than the pastry business. I perform my part willingly, however, because my doing so gives pleasure to my master, and because they may be very useful to me afterwards." Thereupon Alexander threw down a quantity of gold pieces, for which he had partly to thank the gracious Czar, partly his master and other distinguished guests. " Here, dear mother," said he, " I will repay a small part of my great debt to you. Your patience and love which you have shewn me from my birth until now, it is impossible for me to repay ; yet I will try to make your happiness as great as it lies in my power."

The delighted peasant mother wept, she was so transported over her grateful son. She gave him her best blessing, and inwardly prayed to God for his future welfare ; and her prayer was heard. He continued to strengthen himself in the favour of his master and of the Czar, and in reality showed an uncommon industry, the greatest zeal in their service, an invincible faithfulness towards both ; and, on account of these virtues, he rose higher and higher in offices and honours. When he had attained the age of manhood, and acquired the

office of secretary, he married a pretty modest maiden, who, although only the daughter of a peasant of his own rank, yet had a soul of the very highest order. He thought himself very happy when he brought his young bride into a small wooden house in Moscow, which he had been able to purchase out of the savings of his income. He considered himself richer than a king, and his mother was even more delighted. He had brought her to live with them, and the most delicate attention to her wants was shown by the newly married pair. In this way some years of unclouded happiness flew past. Matinka, the careful housewife, presented her husband with two children, of whom the oldest was a boy, and the youngest a girl—a new source of joy to the fortunate Alexander Menzikoff. In the morning when he arose, at midday before he sat down to dinner, in the evening on returning from his labours, his first act was to fondle his children. He took them up in his arms into his bosom, danced round about the little chamber with them, and led them by the hand, while they were yet unable to walk by themselves. All trouble with them was a pleasure to him. Scarcely a day passed without his bringing home sweetmeats, a doll, or some other plaything to them; and therefore the little ones loved him dearly. If the little Helene happened to be in her mother's arms as her father entered, she stretched out both her little hands towards him and crowed. The older Florin would climb up, seize him round the neck, and cover his face with kisses; while hard by stood the good Matinka, her face radiant with joy, and beside her the smiling grandmother—a touching picture of homely happiness. If it so happened that one of the children was indisposed, or had become really ill, how alarmed he was about it. He would leave his bed many times of a night in order to see if the little sick one had uncovered itself, or whether there were any symptoms of improvement or otherwise. Whole nights he even watched by their bedside, giving them their medicine and soothing them to sleep. On holidays it was the highest pleasure of this happy family to take a trip into the country on a

visit to their dear friends there, Matinka, carrying the little Helene, Menzikoff leading Florin, while their old grandmother brought up the rear. It never occurred to them to envy the wealthy nobility who rolled past them in their handsome carriages.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHANGE.

THIS happiness endured for several years, until the Czar appointed Menzikoff as one of his ministers. This new and, to all appearance, fortunate event, which brought with it a considerable addition to his income, was the source of many sorrowful hours to the good Matinka. As Menzikoff returned home for the first time, dressed in his robe of office from the Czar, Florin sprang forward as usual to meet him, and attempted to climb up on his father ; but he pushed away the poor boy impetuously from him.

"Awkward boy," cried he, displeased. "Would you immediately destroy my expensive dress with your dirty boots?"

"I cannot take you," he next said to Helene, somewhat more mildly, who stretched her little hands beseechingly toward him,—“ You would bruise my shirt frills, and sully the shining buttons.”

"Then, I am afraid I must not think of giving you a kiss either?" Matinka sorrowfully asked her husband.

"Not just now, at least," answered he, "while I have on this fine article. Have only patience until I get on my every day's coat."

But still after this had taken place, the children remained standing frightened at a distance, and even their mother could not embrace her husband with the

same heartfelt pleasure as formerly, when her love was of more value to him than a fine garment. Alexander remarked nothing of this—his soul was filled with other thoughts. He gazed mutely around his dwelling.

“Here all must be otherwise,” said he at length. “These miserable chairs, that old sofa, these slender wooden drawers, that cupboard, and that puny thing of a mirror—all these worm-eaten lumber boxes must go, and be replaced by new furnishings; also, henceforth we cannot eat out of earthen dishes nor drink out of earthen cups, pots, or mugs. These do not become our station,—maple, china, and silver are more suitable for one of the Czar’s ministers.”

“And yet we have been so very happy in the possession of these things,” returned Matinka, in a slightly reproachful manner. “Shall we be more so when pomp and splendour surround us?”

“That may be as it will,” said Menzikoff. “Just now we must not enquire as to our happiness; but what fashion requires in our new position.”

He gazed fixedly before him, and seemed lost in thought; at last he appeared to have formed some strong resolution. He lifted the window hastily, and shouted to a Jew who was passing.

“Ho! Jew! here! here! come here a minute.”

The Jew, however, paid no attention to his call but quietly proceeded on his way.

“Look at the fellow,” said the angry minister. “He will not listen to my call. And certainly he would sooner suppose this wooden booth to be the dwelling of a cheesemonger than of one of the Emperor’s ministers, otherwise he would not dare to pass so insolently. Things must not remain so. What person of importance would think of clambering up these narrow steps, or of entering this humble closet, where one must be afraid of breaking one’s head on the ceiling. We cannot bring any chandeliers here, nor can we have curtains for these windows, which look more like those of a cabin; therefore we must seek out some other dwelling.”

“Dear son,” said Menzikoff’s mother, listen to me,

and remain where you have been so happy. Happiness does not always dwell in palaces, but more frequently treachery and death, as you might well learn from the affair of the pastry. I felt myself most fortunate in my peasant hut, and only forsook it out of love for you to take up my abode in this handsome house ; and now that I have become accustomed to it, through years of residence, and feel myself at home, must I again leave it? Exchange it for the lofty cold chambers of a palace? It would be my death—the end of all the happiness of my life.”

“And how dear all these things are to me,” said Matinka continuing the conversation. “These dumb witnesses of our happiness! Do you not remember, dear husband! how, at our wedding feast, we drank to one another out of that blue earthen mug? how that kitchen rack, with its plates, dishes, and wooden spoons, was a wedding present from my playmates? How that curiously painted chest, entwined with flowers, was so handsomely presented by your friends?”

Alexander had been walking meditatively to and fro in the little room. He now turned himself to his old mother and said,

“You are right, dear mother. It were cruel to think of removing you from this dwelling, which has become so dear to you, therefore you may remain here. The little house belongs to you from henceforth ; and, dear Matinka, these old things will also remind us of the bygone joyful days when we visit our old grandmother. Not a stick of them shall be sold.”

“And so you really intend to leave me?” asked the old grandmother, in a grieved tone. “Will you forsake me thus in my old age? Shall I no more see my little grandchildren around me? Oh dear! You will surely not yet be utterly ashamed of me in your new exalted position?”

“How can you speak in that strange manner,” returned her son. “It was only out of love for you that I made the proposition. If it does not please you, well, be comforted, and go with us. We may expect that at first the lofty large rooms, with their polished slippery

floors, and the strange furniture, will appear somewhat foreign to you ; only we may be able to remedy that also. A quiet private little room would require to be provided, into which you might retire, if our family circle should be broken in upon by anything like distinguished visitors. I leave it to your own choice. If you prefer to remain here, the children might easily visit you daily, also I could engage a servant for you to the bargain, who could attend you, so that you would have nothing to disturb you."

The scalding tears streamed over the cheeks of the old woman. "Ah!" said she, sobbing, "hired hands will never feel so soft as those of a child. I would not have entrusted you, while a baby, to a strange nurse, for any price the world could offer ; but day and night these now trembling arms bore you, and therefore I hoped that my own son's hand would close my infirm eyes in death, but so ——"

Sorrow made her speechless. All were silent, even Menzikoff was overcome.

"But so," continued the grandmother, after collecting herself a little, "my trembling lips will call in vain on the name of my son in the struggle of death—in vain will I stretch out my palsied hands towards him,—no pleasant hand will show me that last service."

"Hold, dear mother," exclaimed Menzikoff, beside himself. "You break my heart. Miserable greatness that has thus caused the tears of my beloved mother to flow. Away from me ! Be comforted, dear mother. I shall entreat the Emperor to take back from me my new honour, so that I may still remain, as formerly, your fond son. . Oh ! and I at first believed that you would be so delighted with the intelligence of my advancement."

His mother wiped away her tears. "No," said she, "I do not wish—I do not require that. Obey your good Czar. Receive thankfully whatever he so graciously offers you. It is the will of God. If we cannot do otherwise, I will suit myself to my lot. Death may not surprise me, perhaps, so quickly as to prevent me from muttering my last farewell to you and yours, and

from giving you my last maternal blessing. Obey, my son. Do you hear."

Undecided Menzikoff sat wringing his hands.

"It is impossible," he exclaimed. "If I remain Minister, I must have a dwelling in the neighbourhood of the Czar's palace in which I could have apartments for myself, in order that I might work without being disturbed; therefore it were better that I declined the honour."

"No! no!" said his mother, eagerly, "I was too hasty, too alarmed. Think no more of it, my son. Forget my complaints—do all that your office requires."

"As you will, good mother," said he, well pleased. "In reality you looked only on the dark side of things. Forget your grief. We will indeed be much happier, and spend our days most joyfully. Here is gold, Matinka. Do you procure some wine of the best that it may cheer your hearts. Long live the gracious Czar! We must drink his health at table."

It was procured; but yet a new source of sorrow awaited Matinka at the dinner table. She had cooked her husband's food in the hope of seeing him enjoy it, and of earning his praise. Instead of this, he stirred about among the good things with his fork, and appeared to expect something additional.

"Is your food not to your taste?" asked his anxious spouse. "Are you not well that you have no appetite?"

"Hm! Hm! not that," said Menzikoff, confusedly. "Do not take it ill of me, dear wife; our food has always tasted well to me, only just now it seems too simple, too—country like. I wished something more in accordance with our new position. From henceforth we must have a greater choice—four or five dishes daily, I suppose. Of course, it is not suitable for the wife of a minister to stand burning before the hearth in the kitchen, shoving pots here and there. I will engage a cook, in order that you may have more leisure."

This speech was like a clap of thunder to the good Matinka. She held it to be one of the greatest virtues which a good housewife could possess to be able adroitly to execute, that of all others, the most important duty

—the preparation of food. Henceforth Matinka could no more prepare her husband's meals to his satisfaction ! He despised her attempt, and preferred that of hirelings. She sat quietly drinking her wine, which ought to have cheered her spirits, while she mingled it with her hot burning tears, and felt very much downcast. From this day the quiet homely happiness disappeared more and more from Menzikoff's family, and made way for a vain ostentation, the glimmer of which only served to dazzle the eyes of the foolish for a short time. The following week saw Menzikoff the owner of a suit of splendidly furnished apartments in the neighbourhood of the Czar's palace, to which he removed his wife and children, but, which, however, his mother looked upon with an air of indifference, and rather preferred remaining in the wooden cottage. Two men-servants, a coachman, a cook, a kitchen and chamber maid, were taken into service. Horses were procured. If Matinka formerly had been highly displeased with the childish naughtiness of her children, she must now daily vex herself with the laziness and faithlessness of her servants, who thoughtlessly abused whatever was entrusted to their care—who stole money, food, ale, lights, corn, and other things, gossiped and taught the children vicious habits. At first Menzikoff visited his mother regularly every day, but these visits became ever more rare, while he excused himself on account of numerous engagements. At length they ceased entirely, only Matinka, together with their children, kept their promise, and sought to compensate the forlorn grandmother for the loss of her son. The joyful hours when Menzikoff lived only for his family—when he danced about the room with his children, and related anecdotes for their amusement, became shorter and shorter, until they diminished to moments. Often he returned home in very fretful humours, for the Czar was hot and passionate, and sometimes scolded his minister severely. That which the servant, the clerk, and even the secretary had hitherto born with willing patience, now filled the minister with fury, but which he was obliged to hide in his own breast, or to pour out

at home on his servants and family. When he entered the house in such angry moods the children crept tremblingly out of his way. Matinka would anxiously come forward to meet him, in vain exerting herself through cheerful words and caresses to prevent the outbreak of the storm. Half days he would shut himself up in his room, where no one, not even his wife, dared to disturb him, although the occasion for so doing was ever so urgent. He spent many of his evenings at parties given by the nobility, from which it was always long past midnight before he returned home, generally intoxicated. Such was also the case when any of his new acquaintances assembled in his dwelling, where large sums were lost in gambling, and the dissolute hubbub resounded even into Matinka's quiet bed chamber, who, sleepless with the hot burning tears moistening her lonely pillow, gazed with anxiety on her sleeping infants. The country trips to the residence of Matinka's parents had wholly ceased, and only stealthily dared she to see them when Menzikoff chanced not to be surly. A formal round of visiting, where she met none but hollow hearted fashionables, was the indemnification.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTENING DAY.

THIS day—the anniversary of one's baptism—is greatly celebrated among the Russians. Such had also always been the case with Menzikoff. Matinka had yearly striven to prepare some pleasure for her husband on this day. Wherewith might she astonish him this year, now that his mind was estranged from the former quiet domestic happiness, and only bent on high things? He

himself lifted her out of her uncertainty. As many as fourteen days previous to the event, he spoke about it to his wife.

"Dear Matinka," said he, in a flattering tone, "You might prepare me a very great pleasure on my christening-day."

"Speak, dear husband," returned Matinka, eagerly; "I will do anything to please you."

"Well," said Menzikoff, "we cannot delay the invitation of a numerous company to an entertainment any longer. They already speak of us as miserly. I have feared this long, and now at last a beginning must be made. What I would like you to do is this, that you make all necessary preparations for entertaining a brilliant company on my name-day; also, for my sake, you must attire yourself as becomes a lady of your rank. I shall provide all that is required and then ——" He stopped.

"What more, dear husband?"

"You are an excellent wife, so beautiful, so good." — Matinka blushed and looked down. "You are," continued Menzikoff, "a faithful fond mother, a careful hostess. Only——only——."

"Speak, dear husband," said Matinka, anxiously.

"Nothing is wanting in you," answered Menzikoff, "but those accomplishments, and that high breeding, without which you may possess the noblest heart and clearest understanding, and yet be laughed at and despised. Smooth words and false flatteries pass better with the nobility than good morals and unvarnished truth. You are a costly gem, but in your unassuming modesty you appear only as an unpolished pebble. It cuts me to the very soul to be forced to see that others mistake you so, but a little practice might make all right."

"Only tell me, dear husband, what I must do to please you," said Matinka.

"Listen to me," answered Menzikoff, "I will engage the French dancing-master, Genou, to practise our Florin in bowing, and to attend to the carriage of his body, as also the customary method of expressing

himself, and other suchlike necessaries. You will be in attendance, and mark all well, and then practise it afterwards in your chamber. Some days before the feast we will have a little rehearsal amongst us, in order to see how the affair progresses."

Sighing Matinka promised to follow his counsel, and the spindle-shanked dancing-master soon appeared, to impart his instructions.

Poor Florin was obliged to allow himself to be sorely tumbled about by him. He must walk up and down the room as stiff as a stick a hundred times. A thousand times must he bow on all sides, and waste compliments on the empty chairs, while Genou commanded.

"Keep in your stomach! Through out your breast! Hold up your head! O fie!—do not scratch out your leg behind you so! Do not turn your foot inwards! Do not allow your arms to dangle like clubs! Now, once more, make a little obeisance. Oh! not so deep. Do not strike the floor with your nose."

At first these efforts were but jokes to the little one, then chagrin and weariness, and at length he began to weep very bitterly; but it was of no avail, his martyrdom continued.

Next time the dancing-master brought a small board with him, on which two channels were formed, wherein Florin must place his feet, in order that they might be inclined outwards. This was a real torment to him. The poor boy lost his balance in this painful position, and several times tumbled on the floor.

But yet far more severe were these practisings to the good Matinka, to whom her husband supplied the place of dancing-master, and roundly blamed and scolded when she did not perform her part well. How ardently did she long for the return of former times, when a hearty greeting and kiss were dearer to her husband than all this empty complimenting and bowing.

Milliners and dressmakers now appeared with their fashionable wares. They bestrewed all the tables and chairs with silken stuffs, veils, laces, ostrich feathers, and innumerable other articles of finery, from among

which Matinka had to select. Tailors and shoemakers took measures. Jewellers displayed their glittering ornaments. Matinka did not know where her head was. A sum of gold, which would have before-time been sufficient for a whole year's expenses, was barely enough for the supply of all the meats and drinks for that one day.

"Must I show myself in this shameless attire?" Matinka asked her husband, when the tailor had fitted on her new garment, and a deep crimson overspread her chaste countenance.

Menzikoff shrugged his shoulders. "You will soon be accustomed to it," he said. "Fashion will have it so."

Matinka was silent, and deeply cast down; but when the newly-engaged lady'smaid put on the bodice with steel ribs, and began to press her body without mercy, she cried out in anguish—

"Ah! I suffocate! I cannot draw breath! All the ribs hurt me!"

"This is affectation," said Menzikoff, harshly; "otherwise must thousands of ladies have been suffocated."

Matinka patiently allowed her body to be squeezed together. They next engirded her slender waist with an immense hooped petticoat, which looked like two inverted kettle-drums, one over the other.

"Would you transform me into a monster?" asked she. "I shall certainly not be able to pass through the wide folding doors."

"You may go side ways," said Menzikoff, who had an answer always ready.

Lastly, her feet were squeezed into a pair of tight shoes, with uncommonly high tapered heels, in which she could scarcely make one secure step. Menzikoff remarked how much it cost his wife to suppress her complaints over this new oppression, and comforted her with the words,—

"Exercise your patience. This is only an experiment, and when the banquet is over, you may lay aside these uncomfortable things again for ever."

"I would like much to know," said Matinka, "what senseless person invented all this foolery, which looks like as if it was only intended for deforming and mocking the works of God."

"That I will willingly reveal," said Menzikoff, laughing. "One short dame, who would yet appear tall, invented the high heeled shoes, and the tower-like head-dress; one too lean or too stout, or, far more likely, a shameless dame, pressed her body together by means of the bodice, in order that the fullness across the chest might be more apparent; a third concealed her crooked shanks under the hooped petticoat; a fourth, her grey hairs with white powder; a fifth, her pale face by means of rouge."

"But why then must I imitate all this foolishness, being neither little, nor crooked shanked, neither too lean, nor too stout, having neither gray hairs nor pale cheeks."

"Fashion will have it so, as I have already told you," said Menzikoff.

"Then who or what is fashion that it can issue such cruel commands?" asked Matinka.

Menzikoff was silent and embarrassed. Even he himself did not know what fashion might be—that blind rage of imitation with mankind.

At length, all was in readiness for the feast. The guests were invited, the rooms adorned, the cellar, the kitchen, and store rooms were replenished. The evening before the feast was set apart for Matinka's final rehearsal of her newly acquired accomplishments. Could any one believe that a man like Menzikoff, at one time so prudent, would ever enter into such childish nonsense? and yet he did so. The man who previously had scarcely a moment to spare for his wife and children, could now daily amuse himself several hours with instructing his wife in worthless courtly compliments and expressions.

"Just fancy," said he to Matinka, "that I am a noble lady who has been invited to the banquet. I enter the door, and approach to pay my respects to you. You return the same, rejoice to make my ae-

quaintance—have longed exceedingly after this happiness.”

“But all this is not truth,” interrupted Matinka.

“I must lie if I say so.”

“That you must certainly do,” said Menzikoff. “Thus it ever happens in parties given by the nobility. There one expresses himself happy to see another whom he would rather wish a thousand miles off. There one overwhelms another with flatteries, whose eyes he could scratch out at the same time. Therein consists high breeding.”

Matinka’s upright heart was unable to comprehend this. The rehearsal began. Menzikoff found much to blame. Sometimes Matinka made her obeisance too deeply, sometimes too slightly, sometimes her voice sounded too frightenedly, sometimes too loudly, and sometimes too heartily. She stood as if on burning coals, and Menzikoff ended the farce ill at ease. Previously with what pleasure had Matinka looked forward to the name-day of her husband; contrasted with her uneasiness on this occasion, in what a state of anxiety did she spend the whole of the previous night. In the morning came the hair dresser, who burned, frizzled, and cut unmercifully amongst Matinka’s beautiful hair, and then combed and toused long,—oh, how long, Matinka thought. Then he stuck a whole mountain of calf and horse hair, swine’s bristles, hair pins, and pomade on her head, so that it was half an ell higher than usual. Lastly, he covered the whole building with a cloud of white powder. Her beautiful natural complexion must yet be glossed with white and red paint, and thus was the whole figure perfect. In addition to the severe headache, caused by the racking and tousing which she had endured for several hours, came the frightful squeezing of the bodice, and the painful tightness of the shoes. Nevertheless the poor tortured creature must stand with cheerful smiling mien, while the carriages with their guests came rumbling to the door, increasing the anguish of her heart. The folding doors were now thrown open, and Menzikoff likewise festively appareled, cast an anxious look full

of meaning on his wife, whose deadly paleness no one could remark on account of her rouge.

The exchange of greetings on both sides commenced, and things went even better than Menzikoff had hoped. Matinka's unmistakeable heartiness and natural sagacity compensated for the want of many an empty compliment; but Menzikoff, nevertheless, overheard one of their guests remarking in French to her neighbour "The hostess seems to me, to be truly a little goose," which induced Menzikoff to cast a withering look, not on the impudent woman who had spoken, but on his innocent wife that made her tremble. It was most fortunate that the entrance of both their children interrupted that disagreeable conversation. Florin was attired exactly like his father. He looked like the childish image of a full grown man. How droll the little figure appeared in the many curled peruke and hair-bag, with the richly laced blue velvet coat, white vest, knee breeches, silk stockings, and shoes with glittering buckles; even a small sword, with a golden handle and white lacquered sheath, was not forgotten, while the dress of the four-year-old Helene was also after the same fashion as her mother's. All the guests surrounded the tiny pair, and vied with each other in their praises and flatteries, which allayed the irritation of Menzikoff's spirit. He did not in his vanity consider that all these speeches and caresses were just as hypocritical as he had but lately described them to his wife. They now seated themselves at the lordly laid out table. Innumerable dishes were despatched, healths were drunk, and the company became ever more licentious. In the midst of the continued uproar the door opened and a simple but cleanly dressed aged woman—Menzikoff's mother—entered, and remained standing abashed before the company, whose eyes were all directed towards her.

"I seek my son," said she, at length with trembling voice. "Pardon my boldness. Does my Alexander no longer dwell here? Possibly I may have mistaken the house."

Her eyes wandered anxiously round the assembly in

search of her son. Menzikoff had become very pale on her entrance, but he had now, however, recovered a little from his affright, and sprang up from his seat.

"My good woman," said he, advancing towards his mother with forced cheerfulness, "here am I. Well, I am heartily glad, my dear little mother, that you have again visited me. Come, we will have a quiet chat together."

With these words he urged his mother, who several times attempted to speak, but was always interrupted by her son, towards the door of a side chamber; before leaving the room, however, he turned him to the company with the words—

"Excuse my short absence, the good little woman is worthy of the interruption," and then disappeared after her.

"It has yet failed," muttered he, bitterly between his teeth, as he led the old woman towards a seat. He could not entirely banish displeasure from his countenance as he said—"Welcome, dear mother, this is kind of you to give me the pleasure of seeing you by me."

"My dear son," returned his mother, "my legs will scarcely bear me longer; but I have succeeded to-day, being your feast-day (name-day) and am come heartily to wish you joy and to give you my maternal blessing. It is indeed true that I come empty handed, but nevertheless is my heart all the fuller. My son, it is long, long since I saw you, therefore forgive me for disturbing you just now. Who knows whether and when it may again happen? However, had I but known that you had so many visitors——"

"Good Mother," said Menzikoff, "I thank you for your love. I would certainly have been glad to have invited you to this little entertainment, only I knew so well your repugnance to such like assemblies. Yet have not my servants brought you the wine and dishes correctly; if not, they ought——"

"Dear Alexander," said his mother, interrupting him, "I did not come here on that account. My old stomach cannot bear all these dainties, but only to see you, and to enjoy your society."

"And yet," said Menzikoff, embarrassed, "I must leave you soon. The guests—my duties as host—pardon me—require that I should return to them, nevertheless I will send my wife and children to you, and take care that you have refreshments."

"Your guests have possibly been here a considerable time?" asked his mother.

"Oh, yes; about four hours, perhaps," said he.

"And purely kind old acquaintances to whom you are under great obligations?" his mother farther enquired.

"Well," he replied, "I have known many of them perhaps for six months, and possibly have been invited by them ten times to their assemblies. From that you will surely see that I owe them many obligations."

"If you have already spent four hours with six months old acquaintances, who have ten times invited you to their tables, then you may well spare one quarter of an hour of your presence for your old mother, who for two and thirty years has been your best acquaintance, and who for fifteen years supported you daily," said his mother, very earnestly.

Menzikoff felt his ingratitude right well, but instead of immediately making good his fault, he looked hurt, and answered, in a peevish tone,—

"Mother, you are too much for me. You know not my intentions. I go to send hither my wife and children—they will be better able to chat with you than I. However, I yet hope to speak with you before you return home."

He departed quickly. The old woman remained sitting, bathed in tears; but soon the door again opened, and a strange richly dressed lady entered as hastily as the high heeled shoes which she wore permitted her, followed by two in like manner unknown children. Menzikoff's mother rose respectfully from her seat, and Matinka, weeping loudly, flung herself on her breast, and covered the venerable face with kisses.

"Grandmother! grandmother!" shouted Florin and Helene, attempting to climb up upon her.

Matinka had previously observed the entrance of

Menzikoff's mother into the dining room, and had been on the point of springing up and flying towards her, but a peculiar look from Menzikoff had prevented her. Since then she had been sitting as if on needles, and now he had returned and requested her to spend a few moments with his good little mother. He was immediately stormed by his guests with the question,—“ Was the old woman really your mother ? ” “ No—most certainly not,” answered Menzikoff, with the greatest composure, as he laughingly surveyed their inquisitive faces. “ My good mother is dead long ago ; but that good old woman was my nurse, and considers me always as her foster son ; acting towards me as such. Why ought I to grudge the brave old woman this little pleasure ? I am certain you will all agree with me that I ought not.”

“ Yes, yes,” cried the guests, honestly or assumed, according as they were convinced or not. His old mother and her appearance were soon forgotten, but the son had been ashamed of his own mother, without whose tender care while a little child he had been irretrievably lost. All the more hearty did the rejoicing of Matinka and her grand-children over her visit seem to her ; for the former forgot the presence of the guests and the warning of her husband to return as soon as possible. The good old grandmother shook her head as she gazed on her daughter-in-law.

“ I certainly did not recognise you again,” she said ; “ but the old Matinka was dearer to me in her simple homely dress than the minister's stately lady. I can scarcely trust myself to come near you, to press your hand, far less to give you a kiss.”

“ And to me,” returned Matinka, with a sob, “ my old clothing is also dearer than this whalebone petticoat, which, as I just see, I have entirely destroyed on the door in my rapid entrance. What a burden do I bear on my head ! how the narrow high heeled shoes pinch me ! what pain does this frightful bodice cause me ! how I loathe myself with my painted face ! ”

The poor children burst forth in similar complaints.

“ Only look,” cried Florin, with comic sorrow,

what a sack I carry, tossing on my back." With these words he shook the hair-bag with the speed of lightning hither and thither, so that a whole cloud of white powder was dashed out of the peruke, and covered his blue velvet coat.

"How then have you come into possession of so many curls?" asked his grandmother, turning towards him.

"Oh, they are all false," cried Florin, lifting with one grasp the peruke and hair-bag from his head, and reaching them to his astonished grandmother on the point of his sword.

"I would be satisfied," said he, "if only the sword was real; but it is a mere sheath with a handle, wherewith one can neither fight nor cut."

He dashed the peruke on the floor and ran fencing after his little sister, whose wide whalebone skirts he stoutly belaboured with the false sword. She would not bear this, and scoured round the room with Florin at her heels, but slipping her foot on the glassy boards she fell, and Florin tumbled over her, so that the complete destruction of both their dresses was accomplished.

Menzikoff entered at this moment to inform himself as to the reason for his wife's long absence. He found the children struggling on the floor, one of his wife's whalebone hoops broken, the other hanging down. A part of her rouge still clung to his mother's cheeks, and part of it had run down with her tears on her own lace frills. This sight aroused his passion so much that it was only with difficulty that he was able to restrain its complete outburst on account of the presence of his mother. But the children did not escape thus easily. Without mercy he flung them right and left, into a corner, dealing them several cuffs as they stood there. Then, with lips trembling with passion, he said to his wife—

"It is a true saying, 'That which has been once coined into a penny never becomes a shilling.' It is even so with you, who being born a peasant will ever remain so. You now stay in this chamber, and on no

account shew yourself again before the company, for your appearance in that condition would show too clearly the mistake which I committed that day when I took you for a wife."

Without taking leave of his mother, who was striving to appease him, he ran out. Sleekfaced, he returned to his guests. No trace of his wrath could be found on his countenance as he said—

"My wife begs a thousand times to be excused, that she can no longer enjoy the pleasure of your company—a severe headache which attacks her suddenly, and to which she is sometimes liable, has robbed her of the happiness which she certainly knows well how to value."

The nobility resort only too frequently to such like untruths, in order to escape a troublesome visitor or an unwelcome suppliant, not considering them at all sinful; and as Menzikoff's guests were wholly of the same way of thinking and acting, so it never struck them that there was anything extraordinary in their host's lie. They said a few words in hypocritical condolence over the indisposition of his lady, and immediately the gentlemen returned to their wine flask and the ladies to their gossiping.

But Menzikoff had left his Matinka in the deepest distress. Such hard words, such relentless reproaches as those, he had never before used towards her. So this was her reward for her bitterly played part of a noble lady, and for the loss of her earlier innocent enjoyments. In a word, she felt how unmistakeably the band which she believed she had drawn around her Alexander strove to loosen itself. So he regretted having taken her to wife, dreadful word! His old mother, herself in need of comfort, offered all her motherly eloquence to compose her afflicted daughter-in-law. They mutually wept and lamented together over their sorrows, while the children sobbed under the smarting of the blows which they had received. At length Matinka laid aside her finery, and clothing herself in more unassuming garments, conducted the old grandmother back to her dwelling, and thereafter sought her

own bed chamber, to which peace must for a long time be a stranger.

CHAPTER V.

THE JOURNEY.

AN event which has often restored the tender sympathy that is at times interrupted between married people, seemed also to be the means of again uniting Menzikoff more securely than ever to his Matinka. This was a journey on which he was about to enter with his Czar, and which was to continue over a lengthened period. This young and noble prince felt, as Solomon once did, that he was as yet deficient in many of those talents requisite for the wise and successful governing of a great people ; therefore he determined, with the most praise-worthy zeal, to undertake a great journey through Europe, in order that, through familiar intercourse with good and wise rulers, he might cultivate the needful qualifications and virtues of a father of his people. At the same time he would investigate the means by which the arts and sciences, the trade and commerce of his country might be improved, and thus convince himself by personal observation. The Czar Peter carried out this happy design with the most faithful perseverance, and thereby right well merited his surname The Great. He, the governor of the largest kingdom in Europe, did not consider it below his dignity to wield the heavy axe as a carpenter, to forge iron as a blacksmith, or to stand sentry as a simple soldier, in order to set an example to his subjects. He has laid the foundation of Russia's greatness and prosperity, and generations to come will always make mention of his name with the greatest veneration.

Menzikoff, formerly the pastry baker's boy, had

gained the favour of his Emperor through certain praise worthy qualities which he possessed. Therefore he had been appointed by him as one of his ministers, and selected as one of the numerous suite which was destined to accompany him. This impending separation made all the members of his family dear to him. He again treated his mother, wife, and children with his former love and tenderness. He took the greatest care, that they should be provided with all the necessaries and comforts of life during his absence, and the leave-taking between the weeping mother, wife, and children, and the kind son, husband, and father was touching in the extreme. He promised never to forget them, and also that they should have intelligence from him very often. At first he really kept faith with those he left behind, who regularly rejoiced over a letter from him. Was it on account of the increasing distance, or the dissipations which robbed him of his time? or what other hindrance could he plead as a reason why his letters came less frequently, and at length ceased entirely? Matinka, immediately after the departure of her husband, had forsaken her showy dwelling, and again returned to the lowly little house of her mother-in-law, on whom she waited with the most delicate tenderness; at the same time not omitting to give both her children a good education, finding teachers for them, and accustoming them to all useful activity.

"How your father will rejoice on his return," said she often to them, "if you learn much during his absence."

The children were obedient, and guarded themselves carefully from giving their mother or grand-mother occasion for displeasure. The latter felt her strength declining from day to day.

"I shall no more see my son Alexander again," she said, with anticipation of the near approach of death. "This thought would leave me entirely comfortless, did I not know for certain that I shall be reunited to him in eternity. I have lived long enough. God has permitted me to enjoy much happiness. I were ungrateful did I not acknowledge it; but truly mankind is

never wholly satisfied. It was indeed my latest wish that my son might close my eyes, but God's will be done."

God willed it not. Menzikoff was scarcely gone three months when she entered her everlasting rest. She died in full consciousness, after that she had called her daughter-in-law, and grand children to her bedside, and imparted to them, as well as to her absent son, her maternal blessing. As the old grandmother was lying in her coffin, and her relatives, after the custom of the Russians, kissed the body before it was committed to the tomb, Matinka addressed her two children with these words—

"With what reproaches would you have now loaded yourselves, if you had been the occasion of your blessed grandmother's death, or even had offended her while she lived. All the tears of the most bitter repentance would not again awaken her."

The children felt how much their mother was right, and they solemnly promised to give her no occasion of dissatisfaction with them, in order that they might never be tortured with remorse by the side of her deathbed.

After the good old woman had been committed to the dust, and the lonely family had returned from the funeral, and were sitting in the deepest sorrow, thinking of the absent father, the door of their chamber opened suddenly, and a non-commissioned officer of the Strelitzes hastily entered. Astonished at this unexpected visit, Matinka arose, and was not a little amazed when the bearded man clasped her in his arms.

"I verily believe Matinka," cried he, as soon as he saw how he had frightened the good woman, "that you do not know your own brother again. Only look well at me—I am really he."

Matinka flung her arms joyfully round his neck, and answered,

"Ah dear Simonow, you are truly become strange to me ; but speak, how comes it that I see you here ? I believed that I never would see you again. What happiness !"

"I have been enrolled among the Strelitzes," returned Simonow, and I rejoice on that account, because, dear Matinka, I am now near you; but where is your husband?"

Matinka related to him the reason of his absence, and during the relation, Simonow's face darkened while he nodded dubiously with his head and said—

"Dear Matinka, you are not the only one that has cause to complain of the long delay of the Czar in returning home; but rather the whole people, from the highest, down to the lowest. Instead of advancing the prosperity of his kingdom, he leaves the government in the hands of unfaithful ministers, travels over the wide world for his own pleasure, and in the meantime the administrators may do as they please. His faithful Russians are worth nothing in his eyes; on the contrary, the foreigners who surround him on all sides are everything. What they advise he does, and in the end he will also become apostate from our holy faith; and exchange it for that which the foreign heretics bring here and seek secretly to cultivate. Yet this shall not prosper with him long, while a single Strelitze can lift an arm."

As Simonow said this, he clashed his side arms so loudly that the children crept more closely together at the clatter.

"Brother, brother," exclaimed Matinka, anxiously, "you have scarcely joined the Strelitzes, and their revolutionary spirit has already taken possession of you. Will you never become wise? Of what use has been the frequent disturbances of your comrades? They have brought them to the gibbet, and to banishment. You will never rest until you have been all destroyed in a body. Dear brother, I beseech you, by all that is holy, do not lend so willing an ear to the whisperings of evil men, rather leave the welfare of the people in the hands of a holy God. If the Czar reigns not after His will, He will quickly depose him, but you ought to render to 'Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.'"

"You understand nothing of this," said Simonow.

" You women are destined to suffer, but we men to act ; therefore you wait patiently for the issue.

But Matinka could not compose herself, her brother's outspoken thoughts were the cause of the greatest anxiety to her, and it proved itself in truth to be only too well founded.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INSURRECTION.

ONE evening as Matinka, along with her children were at prayers before a consecrated image, in her quiet home, her worship was disturbed by an uproar on the street, which always increased. Many persons ran hastily along the streets, house doors were opened and shut, and from a distance a wild outcry resounded. Matinka's disquiet had become the greatest anxiety, just as a loud thundering shot fell upon her ear, followed immediately by a multitude of others.

" Oh, God, the Strelitzes," she cried out forbodingly, and she had only too good reason for fear.

The Strelitzes, who were over seven thousand strong, had revolted—would have nothing more to do with Peter's government, but would raise the Princess Sophia to the throne. The uproar soon raged through all the streets of the large city—shots rebounded more and more frequently, and the cry of anguish from the wounded fugitives became ever more frightful. Like wild tigers the Strelitzes, for the most part intoxicated, sought in their delirium to butcher all Peter's supporters. Matinka also, trembled, not so much for her own life, as for that of her children — for was not her husband generally known as the Czar's favourite ; and might they not recompense it on

his wife and children, as the husband and father was not at hand. In the deepest anguish Matinka threw herself on the floor of her little chamber, and implored her heavenly father to grant them His gracious protection. She had had the presence of mind to extinguish the light, and the blood-red flames of the blazing houses shone all the more fearfully into the little chamber, and cast the shadows of the praying family on the illuminated wall. How well was it that she had exchanged her pompous dwelling for the humble little house. In the former nothing now remained—all was entirely destroyed, and dispersed, and she herself would not have been spared, but ignominiously murdered, had they found her there. Even here her last hour seemed to have now come, for a little troop of raging Strelitzes, led on probably by some wicked traitor, approached Matinka's dwelling, vociferating from a distance as they neared it, "Down with Menzikoff's brood."

There was nothing for Matinka but hastily to barricade the door as securely as possible, which she did with great precision, although with trembling hands. She then hid her sobbing children in a corner under a lot of old rubbish, but she herself went cautiously to one of the windows to watch the further proceedings of the enemy, and to shape her measures accordingly.

The Strelitzes now thundered with the butts of their muskets on the house-door, and on the closed shutters of the ground-floor, but as these resisted their efforts several musket balls came popping through the window of the upper room, and passed close to poor Matinka, who believed she would die with agony. The tumult reached its height, however, just when rough voices roared—"Burn down the wooden nest. Fire here;" and the space around the little house was quickly illuminated by the firebrands which had been collected for that purpose.

Matinka had already commended herself and her poor children to the all-merciful God, and prayed only for a quick and painless death, when a deliverer yet appeared in her dire necessity. A single Strelitze came running

with the speed of wind and addressing the crowd of incendiaries harshly, said,

"What, would you here. Have you nothing better to do than to plunder a miserable hut which scarcely contains the value of a rouble."

"We know better than that, sergeant," screamed the Strelitzes. "Menzikoff, the favourite's family, dwells here, whom we must root out."

"Stupid nonsense," returned Simonow, who had hastened to his sister's deliverance. "My own sister has rented this house since Menzikoff's mother died in it. We have already cleaned out Menzikoff's real quarters. Sister, he shouted. Where have you hid yourself?"

"Here," said Matinka, opening the window. "Many thanks for your assistance in my need."

"Now you are satisfied," said Simonow to his comrades. "Come, we will wend our way to some other place, where there is more to be found than with my poor sister."

The Strelitzes followed him willingly, and Matinka saw herself and children rescued. How she acknowledged and praised the merciful providence of God which had just at that time brought her brother to Moscow. But the danger was in reality not wholly over, for soon the tumult grew even still worse than before;—renewed and oftener repeated cannonading was heard,—the war-cry and tumult of battle resounded horribly through the streets, and made this night the most frightful on record.

Those regiments which had remained faithful to Peter had now hastened to the scene of war, and under the leadership of General Gordon compelled the rebellious Strelitzes to return to their barracks. These would not willingly obey, and much blood was therefore shed on both sides. The battle was not yet over, when Matinka heard a gentle knocking on the yet bolted door of her house. She slipped gently down, and prudently enquired what was wanted.

"Open quickly, dear Matinka," said a faint voice, which Matinka, with fear, recognised to be her brother's.

She quickly undid all the fastenings, and on opening the door, the little lamp nearly fell from her hands, when she saw her beloved brother, her deliverer, totter feebly into the apartment covered over and over with blood, and deadly pale.

"Let me die with you in peace," he besought in fainting accents, and clung to his sister with both his hands, so that the blood which was before welling out of his wounds over his person streamed over her garments. "All is lost," said he. "A ball or the gallows is my fate, if I am discovered."

Matinka's prophecy was correct. The wounded man was scarcely able to mount the stairs with the help of his sister, so that Matinka found herself reduced to a new and terrible extremity—for her brother's case pressingly required professional assistance, and at the same time she durst not call a physician, through fear that her brother's hiding place might thereby be betrayed. She must, therefore, make up her mind to examine his wounds, wash them out, and bandage them herself—of all things a difficult task to an inexperienced woman, who fears the sight of blood, and for which the tender love of a sister alone could give her the needful courage.

After she had accomplished all this, she put her children to bed and watched through the remainder of this fearful night by the suffering bed of her brother, who, fevered by his wounds, was entirely bereft of his reason, and, therefore, required her uninterrupted attention.

On the following morning Matinka took both her children and commanded them to preserve the strictest silence about their sick uncle, giving them to understand, how they might be the means of bringing him to a most ignominious death by untimely gossiping, and shewing them what fearful remorse they would then lie under. The children acknowledged the truth of what she said, and promised to maintain the most inviolable silence towards every one; and they kept their word, which was all the more necessary as on the following day, an order was issued to all the inhabitants of Moscow to discover and deliver up to the autho-

rities, all and sundry Strelitzes to whom they had given shelter, under the threat of banishment to Siberia. Ought Matinka to obey this command? To hand over her brother, her own and her children's preserver, to certain death? No, that she could never do. She relied on her husband's mighty influence, and did not betray her brother. He improved from day to day, and both brother and sister had already discussed how Simonow might be placed beyond the reach of danger, and how they might for that purpose contrive a secret flight, when that was made impossible by the unexpected arrival of the Czar, who issued the strictest orders to search out those Strelitzes who were yet amissing. Peter had been just on the point of proceeding from England to Italy, when the intelligence of this renewed uprising of the Strelitzes reached him. It transfixed him with an indescribable passion, and he straightway gave up his intended journey, hastening back with utmost despatch to Moscow, with the determination to exercise the most severe punishment upon the guilty parties. The houses in all quarters of the city were searched, and as Matinka's neighbours had often seen her brother going out and in, they would not fail to search her house also, and might discover the unfortunate Simonow. He already fancied himself taken prisoner and dragged away; also his sister, who, having acted illegally, ran the risk of sharing the same fate, if they did not spare her for the sake of her husband. Matinka was beside herself when she was informed of the fate which awaited the rebels. With real anguish of heart she saw the gallows erected in all the embrasures of the kremlin (Czar's castle), destined for those Strelitzes who were most guilty. Most probably Simonow would also be sentenced to die, as he had been a non-commissioned officer, and the wounds which he had received would prove that he had been especially active in the revolt. Matinka knew not how to advise or help. She wished to learn whether her husband had returned along with the Czar, and, with this view, hastened to her late dwelling, where she only found destroyed and empty rooms.

She hastily retraced her steps in great disquietude, but, while hurrying home, she was met by a troop of soldiers with a number of hand-cuffed Strelitzes in their midst, amongst whom her searching eye discovered with fear poor Simonow, who was scarcely able to stagger along under his heavy irons. He looked indeed pale, but very collected.

"Simonow, my dearest brother," screamed Matinka, stretching out her arms towards him. His chains clattered terribly as if he would have embraced her.

"Back," cried the soldiers, levelling their muskets at Matinka, who now ran along side in the midst of the multitude, bewailing her brother's fate.

Suddenly the Czar appeared on horseback, accompanied by a numerous suite, which, to the poor Matinka, seemed to be a signal from God encouraging her to attempt the rescue of her brother. With outstretched arms she threw herself on the ground before the Czar supplicatingly.

"Great Czar," cried she. "Mercy, Mercy! for my unfortunate brother."

The Czar looked on her uplifted countenance, which showed how heartfelt her anguish was, and said mildly—"Who is your brother, and what is his crime that he requires my mercy?"

Encouraged and rejoiced by the gentle tone in which these words were uttered, Matinka pointed towards the prisoners and said,

"There they lead him to death. He is a Strelitze, but the best and tenderest of brothers."

"And the worst subject," added Peter, passionately, as his countenance suddenly darkened. "They are all villains, who would have destroyed me, they are unworthy of my mercy, and shall now receive their merited reward."

He reined aside his horse, in order to pass the place where she lay, and only then did Matinka perceive her husband close to the person of the Czar. Her hopes, which a moment before had been dashed to the ground, again quickly revived.

"Husband," she cried, with joyful surprise, "Dear

husband, supplicate for your unhappy brother-in-law. He is innocent. He saved my life, and that of your children, therefore unite your entreaties with mine."

"How?" cried the Czar, turning himself to his favourite. "Is the sister of a rebel really your wife?"

Menzikoff quickly comprehended that he might at once lose the favour of his monarch, if he should acknowledge the truth, and to that loss he would on no account consent. The fear of man was stronger with him than the fear of God; and therefore, as Peter once denied his lord and master, so he also denied his brave and faithful wife.

"My most gracious lord," he returned, with a confident look, "the woman must be insane, or have lost the use of her senses, through anxiety on her brother's account. I see her just now for the first time in my life. Lift the unfortunate woman aside,"—he commanded his servants who were in attendance.

He rode on with the Czar, without even casting a look on the good Matinka, who was carried away entirely senseless. On recovering a little, she sometimes believed herself to be lying in a distressing dream, at other times, that she was truly insane. What a meeting after such a long separation! What pain to see a husband, acting thus towards her, for whom she would willingly have sacrificed her life! With difficulty and in utter misery she slipped back to her dwelling, where she continued in a desponding state, brooding over the past, and unfitting herself for any further undertaking. Death had carried away her good mother-in-law—her brother was on his way to the scaffold, if not already executed—her husband—horrible fate—lost to her. The happiness of her quiet life, blasted by a poisonous breath, had withered away. Only the children and her dear heavenly Father now remained to her; but far poorer must Menzikoff feel himself. He had laid his good conscience, his wife, and children, and the favour of an infinitely rich and Almighty God in the balance with the favour of a weak and changeable mortal. He had cast all behind him for the sake of a phantom, and already a messenger of vengeance, a secret

but rarely inactive reprover had gone forth, to torment him.

It was this lively disquietude which drove him up and down his chamber with rapid steps. Ought he to pursue the path on which he had now entered, and entirely repudiate his wife, or forsake the splendid career of fortune and sink back into his former nothingness? He wavered in his purpose, but at last, as is only too often the case, evil prevailed; and he resolved to loosen the band of wedlock which threatened to destroy the favour of the Czar for him, or at least to hinder his speedy promotion. He did not, however, feel himself strong enough for the personal execution of this business. He feared lest the prayers of Matinka and the children might possibly shake his resolution, and stir up the former love within him. He therefore sent his valet, a clever, crafty fellow, as negociator between him and Matinka. She was sitting sunk in the deepest distress in her room, while the children were labouring quietly at their tasks by the light of a little lamp, often looking up to their weeping mother with tearful eyes, when a knock came to the room door and a man entered. The belief in her husband's faithfulness was not yet entirely extinguished in Matinka's breast; she yet hoped every moment to see him stepping into their midst, and therefore she could scarcely suppress a scream on the entrance of the stranger; but she found herself bitterly deceived. It was not her yet beloved Menzikoff, but only his valet.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DIVORCE.

AFTER a slight greeting, Menzikoff's ambassador thus addressed Matinka—

“My gracious master might with justice bitterly reproach you for the unadvised step which you have this

day taken, and which has exposed him to the most imminent danger ; but he excuses you, as you have without doubt already been sufficiently punished for it. Through your thoughtlessness in concealing your rebellious brother you have incurred the punishment of being transported to Siberia. It would not have been difficult for your husband, however, to have saved you from this, aye, and even your brother's life, if you had not brought the whole of this vexatious affair before the enraged Emperor himself. By that step you have bound your husband's hands ; and, further, if the Czar learns that you are really Menzikoff's wife, and that your husband deceived him when he denied you, then the Czar's vengeance will also fall on him. Thus, misfortune would overtake you all, and your children would be orphans indeed."

The valet here was silent, while Matinka speechlessly wrung her hands.

"There is only one expedient," continued he again, "by which you may all be saved, and to which only, from love to you and the children, he would resort."

"Oh, speak!" Matinka hastily exclaimed.

"It is painful to my master to be obliged to make this proposal, only the most pressing necessity—the greatest danger compels him."

"For God's sake, only speak," prayed Matinka, in great distress.

"If you consent to this proposal, continued the valet, impressively, "then you save your husband from the just anger of the Czar, release your brother from death, and yourself from banishment to Siberia. If you really love your husband, your brother, your children, or yourself, then you will surely seize, with both hands, the only remedy which presents itself?"

"Yes, yes," cried Matinka, eagerly. "Yet what is that remedy?"

"It is," said the valet, slowly, "the dissolution of your marriage with Menzikoff."

Matinka staggered, and pressed both her hands to her face.

"Choose, Matinka," urged the go-between. "Speak out your thoughts."

But she was unable directly to give him an answer. At length she said, with trembling lips,—

"And how can the severing of a peaceful, happy wedlock be the only means of deliverance?"

"That is easily explained," returned the valet. "Because then your husband retains all his powerful influence with the Czar, and without bringing on himself any suspicion of partiality, he can work in secret for you."

"I will do all else," cried Matinka, "only not this. Go and tell my husband, dear man! that I will willingly pinch my body with a bodice, and my feet into narrow high-heeled shoes. I will allow my hair to be burned and frizzled, and will not murmur although he shuts himself up in his library whole days, or although he remain out whole nights—that I will even learn to dance if he wish it."

"That is nothing to the purpose," returned the valet. "We must arrange just now about the separation."

"Then I will withdraw myself and children into the farthest corner of the empire," said Matinka, weeping, "inform no one who my husband is, and forbid my children from ever mentioning their father's name—that my husband may not wholly cast me off."

"All avails not," said the valet. "Are you willing for the separation or not?"

"If it were to cost me my life, I cannot," returned Matinka.

"Good," said the valet. "Your husband leaves it entirely to yourself. Then go out and you proclaim loudly through all the street, 'My husband has told lies to his Emperor. I am really Menzikoff's wife.' Then you will indeed see where your rashness will lead you."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Matinka. "Then tell my husband that he may do whatever he may find good and right. I submit myself entirely to his pleasure."

“But he will not have this. He rather leaves the will to you, so that you may never be able to reproach him with it. If you wish it, he will allow himself to be separated from you ; if you do not, then he will just surrender himself patiently to the anger of the Czar.”

“Must I myself drive the knife into my own heart ?” said Matinka, sobbing. “Must I myself urge on this separation, which will be my death ?”

“Yes,” returned the valet. “Yours must be the decision. Menzikoff’s love for you leaves your joint fate in your hands.”

Matinka bowed her head and folded her hands. She seemed to pray silently. After awhile she said gently to the waiting valet,—

“Menzikoff’s love shall not be greater than mine, Of love for him I would willingly die ; but far more than this can I do out of love for him. I will allow myself to be separated from him. Let him remain noble and happy—me poor and forsaken—only let him save my brother from death.”

“Good,” said the negociator, pleased with the success of his efforts.

“One word, cried Matinka, pointing to her children. “Will Menzikoff be willing to leave me my only comfort ?”

“He has not revealed his will to me on that point,” the valet answered. “Possibly a division might suit, which is certainly very easy with two children.”

“No, no,” cried Matinka, passionately. “No division, for then you would tear my heart asunder, and thereby deprive me of life.”

“That matter can be arranged,” said the valet as he departed.

One evening in the month of November 1697 Matinka, accompanied and supported by both her little children, stole slowly along towards St. Andrew’s church in Moscow. She found a little side door open, and passed into the large church which was only dimly lighted up by a burning lamp, in the neighbourhood of the altar. Matinka looked very pale and emaciated,

and felt very fatigued by her short walk ; she therefore seated herself and her two children in one of the nearest pews. There she sat, sunk in the deepest distress, and the children dared not disturb their poor mother, even by a gentle word. After a while the pope or priest approached the altar, a few silvery locks garnished his bald aged head, a long snow-white beard adorned his chin, and flowed down on his dark raiment on which sparkled a golden crucifix. He knelt in silent prayer before the elevated crucifix, until at length the ninth hour toned in loud strokes from the church tower. Matinka now became very uneasy, and threw a melancholy look timidly around her. Shortly after, the sound of a rapidly approaching carriage was heard without, which stopped at the church door. A slight trembling stole over Matinka, and she seized the hands of her children, as if she was in need of something to support her. Loud footsteps now sounded on the stone pavement of the church and a tall man, wrapped from head to foot in a large cloak, came and placed himself before the steps of the altar. It was Menzikoff. Poor Matinka rose from her seat, but again sank powerlessly back, when the venerable priest, pitying her, came and led her with his strong arm to the side of her husband, who studiously remained rigidly silent, while Matinka could not speak for sorrow. Bowed and submissive she stood by the side of her yet, oh how warmly beloved ! husband, and in her timidity dared not so much as touch the hem of his garment.

The priest now commenced the service in an earnest impressive tone—"What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. But because of the hardness of your hearts—as Christ our Lord saith—Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement, in order that greater misery between married people who are at variance may be guarded against. Alexander Menzikoff and you also Matinka Natuschkin, are you yet willing that the tie of marriage into which you entered in the presence of God, should be dissolved."

Menzikoff's "Yes" sounded clearly enough, but Matinka's like the last breath from a death-bed.

“Well then,” the priest commanded, “join hands.”

Matinka's icy cold death-like hand was now laid in Menzikoff's warm, strong, healthy grasp, while Matinka's right hand trembled so violently that Menzikoff seized it also.

As Matinka knew for certain that this was the last time their hands would be united, need we wonder that she trembled.

“Ten years ago,” continued the priest, “I joined your hands together at this same holy altar. Now I separate them—absolve you from your oaths, which you then took, from the duties which you pledged yourselves to fulfil to one another, and divorce you in the name of the three-one God. May you never be compelled to regret this step. Go in peace.”

Menzikoff went, but Matinka broke down under the burden of her sorrows. The loud noise caused by the sobbing children attracted Menzikoff's attention, and when he saw Helene's little white hood and Florin's golden locks glancing above the church pew he stopped. “Will you go and live with me?” he said, in a gentle tone, going towards them.

“No, no,” cried both at once, hastening to their mother, whom they caressingly clasped in their arms, and strove to raise up, while Menzikoff glanced irresolutely towards the group. At length he left, and henceforth nothing more was heard of the unhappy Matinka and her children.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SUMMIT OF FORTUNE.

NOTHING now prevented the ambitious Menzikoff from mounting ever higher and higher on the ladder of earthly fortune. In a few years he became Count,

Prince, Prime Minister, and General-Field-Marshal. The Emperor had presented him with large estates, on which were nearly a hundred thousand serfs, nominated him Duke of Inkerman, and covered his breast with the stars of various orders; as did also the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, and other monarchs, in order to gain the favour of the powerful favourite. The great wealth, for which he had to thank the favour of his Emperor, he yet sought to enlarge through unjust means—for avarice is a root of all evil. He embezzled large sums which were intended for his country's good, sold lucrative situations for money, and allowed himself to be bribed by foreign princes to work in opposition to the views of his Czar. His wealth, in ready cash, amounted to three million dollars. He also contracted a fresh marriage with the daughter of a distinguished Russian Prince, by whom he had one son and two daughters. All honoured, every one feared the powerful Menzikoff. The most noble families in the land courted his favour, exhausted their means of flattery in order to please him; and, when bedecked with orders, he drove out of his splendid palace, in his gilded carriage of state, drawn by six beautiful horses, all the sentries presented arms, while the highest general, as well as the meanest soldier, reverently bared his head. Who could have conceived him to have been at one time the poor pastry baker's boy, rambling through the streets shouting his wares?

My young reader, do not envy him his happiness, for "all is not gold that glitters." Above him hung a pointed sword, suspended by a single hair, threatening every moment to pierce him through the head. No one could imagine, moreover, the cares, the anxieties, the remorse which secretly filled his heart. Consider now with me his daily course of life, and then say if he is worthy of envy. He sought his bed chamber late in the night, or rather early in the morning. Formerly he had no need of any one to help him to undress, now his valet gently and silently brought out his white night clothes piece by piece and helped to put them on, while he allowed himself to be handled like a lifeless doll. When he had no further commands, his

servant retired with a deep obeisance, after that he had folded down the silken bed-cover. Menzikoff then generally paced up and down his bedroom with wide steps, considering how he had spent the by-gone day, whether his exertions after the augmentation of his power or riches had been successful, whether he had accomplished the ruin of any of his numerous enemies, or whether he still retained the favour of the Czar. He brooded over new projects for maintaining and increasing his authority, over expedients by which he might cover his base dealings from the eyes of the Emperor, how he might render his enemies innoxious. He determined to deprive this one of his office, and to banish that one to Siberia. A thousand schemes crossed through his brain, heavy with spirituous liquors; and when he at length laid himself down to sleep, no prayer of gratitude welled up from his heart, no thought of the good providence of God entered his mind. At the most, he thoughtlessly made the sign of the cross before his face. Now he did not enjoy the sweet repose of a refreshing slumber, as did the laborious peasant. True, the body lay to all appearance sunk in deep sleep; but the mind laboured in disorderly and unpleasant dreams. At one time his enemies triumphed, at another he had fallen into disfavour, then banishment, and death threatened him. Again he laboured with his hands to extricate himself from the depths of some abyss into which he had been tossed, and he would groan with anguish. But his never resting phantasy also painted pleasant images before him. He saw himself on the long eagerly desired highest pinnacle of power, his enemies chained at his feet, expecting their sentence of death from him. Then he would laugh with a wild mischievous joy, so loud as to be overheard by the servant, who watched in the anti-chamber. He awoke late in the day, little refreshed; no exulting children, no cheerful spouse received him, with a hearty morning greeting as he left his bedroom. A servant brought him in a silver service, his breakfast which he despatched by himself. Often while engaged with disagreeable business, he would then go to the other wing

of the castle, where the apartments of his lady and children were—the latter with reverence timidly kissed his hand, the former he saluted on the cheek with cold formality. No trace of the good natured tenderness, as formerly, when Matinka and her children joyfully received the father on his return home.

The affairs of the empire next claimed his earnest attention. What perplexities there awaited him—on what abuses did he stumble—what long-prescribed laws had he to master. He dined either with the Emperor, or at home, or with some of the great ones of the empire, but always with a numerous company; yet nowhere were the dishes seasoned with the true cordiality of a happy mind. Flatteries, news of the city, gossiping, and back-bitings were the common topics of conversation. Menzikoff saw himself over-run the whole day by supplicants for situations, pensions, and other assistance, who persecuted him even while in church with their solicitations. With what painful precision was he obliged to suit himself to the humours of the Emperor, and learn to know his weaknesses, in order to preserve his favour; yet he did not always succeed in this. His enemies laboured unceasingly to destroy him in the eyes of the Czar, to whom all his treacheries and embezzlements were whispered with the most hateful exaggerations. In vain did Menzikoff let them feel his vengeance in banishing them to Siberia. New enemies always arose. He seemed to stand on the summit of a volcano, which might blow him up at any moment. Three times his fall appeared to be certain; on three occasions he had been accused of the most heinous practices, for which he was obliged to submit himself to the strictest examinations, out of which he in no wise escaped guiltless, but on the contrary covered with infamy. What mortifications was he obliged to submit to! To what base expedients was he obliged to have recourse! in order to regain the favour of his enraged Emperor. Who can tell the sleepless nights through which he watched, or the days of despair in which he tasted no food? He did indeed remain on

the pinnacle of power, but many were the bitter and painful hours which fell to his lot.

Peter the Great was building a city on the banks of the Neva, which he destined to be his future residence. Thousands of busy hands laboured unceasingly in transforming the marshy neighbourhood of St Petersburg into dry and fruitful soil—the earth for that purpose being conveyed from places leagues distant, in cloths and sacks, while Peter animated them without intermission with his presence. Once it so happened that Menzikoff drove out by the Emperor's side, through the newly laid out streets of this city. Every where the people, noble and peasant, deeply humbled themselves before the eyes of the Czar and his favourite. The carriage of the Czar shortly reached a wooden bridge which led over a marshy pool, and which was not just in the best condition. It contained plenty of rotten planks and dangerous holes, and as Peter's eagle eye took in every defect at a glance, he roared a thundering "Halt" to the coachman. Immediately the horses stood as if chained to the spot.

"Fellow," said he, turning himself to Menzikoff, in a passionate manner, "have I not appointed you general inspector of all the bridges of the empire? Do you not as such draw a salary of several thousand rubles yearly? and is this the way you fulfil the requirements of your office? Step out, knave."

The Czar sprang out of the carriage, while the trembling Menzikoff crawled after him; and as he stood on the ground, Peter seized the cane which served him as a walking stick and therewith energetically belaboured the back of the Prince. What a strangely astonishing scene for the onlookers! There stood a nobleman, covered with orders, cringing, and just as quiet as a little mouse, patiently allowing himself to be cudgelled by a man in simple clothing. After Peter's chastening arm had tired itself out, and his passion had evaporated, addressing him whom he had just so soundly chastised in a cheerful tone he said,

"Now, dear Menzikoff, we will proceed on our route."

Menzikoff obsequiously obeyed, and the Czar spoke with him in as affable a manner, as if really nothing had taken place, while Menzikoff dared not so much as rub his smarting back, nor show by a look how much pain he was suffering; but was even obliged to join in the laugh and jest with the Czar.

On another occasion, when a new case of treachery on the part of Meuzikoff had come to the Czar's knowledge, Menzikoff immediately received intelligence of it through his spies, and had already taken counsel with himself in what way he might be able to weaken the accusation, when he received an invitation from the Czar to appear at dinner with him. A ghastly paleness overspread his countenance—only with difficulty could he prevent a severe fit of trembling over all his members, as his valet arrayed him in his robe of state, in which he should proceed to court. He sighed inwardly as he glanced down on the glittering stars which lay on his breast, and which just then he would willingly have bartered for a good conscience. With a heavy heart he passed through the swarms of courtiers, officers, counsellors, ministers, and ambassadors, who all cringed before him; but in their hearts deeply hated or envied the powerful favourite. Forboding his awaiting humiliation, after submissively saluting the Emperor and Empress, he sat down to the long princely table right over against his monarch. The latter looked grave, but in no wise angry. Trumpets and drums resounded and the meal began; yet Menzikoff tasted nothing. From time to time he threw a beseeching look toward the monarch and his partner, but Peter's countenance remained unchanged. All at once the music ceased, and all eyes were directed toward the Czar, who had just then turned himself to the chamberlain who stood behind him and said,—

“Be good enough to bring me the folded paper out of my desk, which you will find on the little marble table under the mirror.”

The chamberlain quickly obeyed. Menzikoff was overpowered with terror and affright. His throat was parched—the chair whereon he sat glowed like burning

coals, and his legs shook terribly. The chamberlain soon returned with the required paper, and the Czar commanded him to read its contents loudly and distinctly. Every shade of colour disappeared from Menzikoff's countenance. Peter looked at him sternly, raised his fore-finger, and Menzikoff silently rose from his seat the deplorable image of a poor sinner. The chamberlain gave Menzikoff a look which seemed to entreat his pardon, at the same time making him a silent obeisance, then, in embarrassment, cleared his throat, and began in a somewhat unsteady tone:—

“Alexander Menzikoff, the son of a common peasant, was raised by the favour of his monarch, from the position of a pastry baker's boy, to the highest honours of the Empire. Praiseworthy qualities which his Emperor remarked in him, an intellect of no mean order, and an indefatigable activity, gained him the good will of his sovereign, who over-loaded him with riches. Yet his actions did not always correspond with the Czar's just expectations, but rather the reverse. He often abused the goodness of his master in the most ungrateful manner; whole volumes might be filled with the relation of the culpably unjust transactions of which he has already been guilty. He still trifles with the forbearance of his monarch, who has already chastised and warned him against his audacious misdemeanours on several occasions, and punished him by publishing his offences, yet he has just now again increased the multitude of his misdeeds by putting into his insatiable pocket, for the space of two years, the pay of a whole regiment, the regiment in question only having its existence on paper.”

The chamberlain ceased, folded the paper, and waited the further commands of the Emperor.

During the reading of this crushing accusation, Menzikoff had stealthily glanced round his companions at table to see whether he might catch a satisfied look or a mischievous smile amongst them; but these guarded themselves most wisely, from drawing down upon them the implacable vengeance of the humbled favourite. They gazed with lowered eyelids on their

plates, as did also the Imperial pair; albeit they had left off eating, because they dared not disturb the reading with the clatter of knives and forks.

Peter's stern eye was now fixed upon Prince Menzikoff as he said with emphasis,—

“ You have brought this humiliation upon yourself. You have long known the kind and manner of the punishment, which you have drawn upon yourself by your every base act. I shall keep my promise which I gave you, not to punish you by death, only take heed that no new infamy recall the scene of to-day, otherwise my cane may come in unpleasant contact with your back.”

Thereupon the affair was at an end, the meal was finished, card tables took its place, and Menzikoff played at cards with the Empress and two other of the most distinguished ladies, as if nothing had happened; but the young reader may conceive what was passing in his heart. He was, however, punished in another manner for his unfaithfulness, by being made to disburse a fine of several thousand roubles—for Peter the Great was a just monarch.

At length Peter's death released Menzikoff from his severe judge, and Catherine, Peter's Empress, being specially indebted to Menzikoff's exertions for her seat on the throne, confided the government entirely to him after her husband's death. As administrator of the empire he could do what he pleased, and therefore his accusers stoned for their temerity in Siberia's icy plains—nothing stood in his way. After two years the Empress died also, leaving the throne to her grandson, Peter the II., who was then thirteen years of age, and Menzikoff took the place of the young Emperor in governing Russia. He had not yet reached the summit of his ambition. He would become the Emperor's father-in-law, and thus fortify himself for ever in his authority. To further these designs, he affianced his eldest daughter with the young Czar, and the marriage ceremony was intended to take place shortly afterwards; but God, who had long born with the Prince's ambitious exertions, said, “ Thus far shalt thou come, but no further.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE GOOD SERVANT.

ONE night, a few years previous to the before-mentioned important event, Menzikoff recollected, as he was on the point of falling asleep, that he had forgotten to send off an imperial order, for the execution of which there was an absolute necessity. He immediately pulled the bell-rope by his bed-side, to call the servant who watched in the anti-chamber. He rang several times, and yet no one appeared. Enraged at this carelessness, the Prince rose from his bed and gently opened the door into the anti-chamber. There he saw the servant, who had the night watch, sitting at a little table writing, with his back towards him. He might have slumbered over this employment, and have been awakened by the sound of the bell, although through drowsiness he might not have perceived the real cause of his awakening. Only in this way could his non-appearance be explained. Suspicion was, however, immediately aroused in Menzikoff's evil-thinking soul.

"What things of such importance could he have to write that he has paid no attention to my repeated call? Perhaps a traitor, who reports all that takes place in my house to my enemies?"

He slipped on tip-toe behind his servant's back, who continued busily writing.

"Ha! what is this," he cried, suddenly, as looking over the young man's shoulder he saw his own name just then written.

The servant sprang up from his seat, terribly frightened. Terrified he did not at the moment know whether to fall down at his master's feet, or to run away from his anger, while his trembling lips sought in vain to stutter an excuse.

"Have I caught you in the act, villain," said Menzi-

koff, taking possession of the writing, in which he hoped to discover the whole treachery. "What must I read," said he, running over the paper with eager eyes.

As he read, however, his countenance brightened, while the servant so far recovered himself from his fear as to wait with great composure his master's pleasure. Here is the letter :—

"DEAR MOTHER,—

"You will have long expected tidings from me ; but do not believe that I have forgotten you because I have not written sooner. It was impossible to accomplish it, but to make up for it, I am now able to impart all the more agreeable intelligence to you, namely, that I have been so fortunate as to have been engaged as one of the servants of the great Prince Menzikoff, of whom you have always related so much to us children. Oh, with what sensations did I enter the house of this nobleman, who is so rich and highly honoured ! People frightened me not a little at him by telling me that he was so very proud, passionate, and base. Now, if he is not just an angel from heaven, yet he certainly has some good qualities. For myself, I have not yet been able to accuse him of anything. I believe also when we execute his business quietly and orderly, and are faithful and honourable, that he has then no objection against any of us. But really there are many men, noble as well as humble, who molest and annoy him, and who will ever have from him, that it comes to be truly a torment ; therefore, is it no wonder that my master's patience is at length exhausted, and that he gives the reins to his fury amongst them, as the strong Sampson did amongst the wicked Philistines. But, my dear mother, my princely master has two little daughters, gentle, beautiful, and good as angels ; also, my young master, his son, who already looks so brave, that he must become as distinguished a personage as he who once entirely by himself burst through a whole regiment of Swedish hussars. I can also praise my lady, the Princess. She has already twice called me 'dear Michaelow,' and handed me a

rouble when I fetched her something. Dear Mother, I herewith send you thirty silver roubles, which I have saved—for my master gives excellent wages, and we now and then receive drink-money in addition ; besides, the night watching by Menzikoff which I undertake, in the place of my lazy comrades, brings me many a rouble. This night is the third that I have not slept——.”

Here the prince had interrupted the writer. He felt in no wise offended, however, by the delineation which his servant had given of him. He rather found himself in a manner flattered by the boy's naive speech, which had certainly come from the heart. He could be really magnanimous ; he took the young man into his chamber, and handed him the forgotten order, that he might deliver it to the officer of the watch below, for farther expedition. He then thrust his hand into a purse filled with glittering gold pieces, brought out a full handful, and presented them to his disconcerted servant, who did not understand what had happened to him.

“This,” said the Prince, “is intended for your mother, because she has brought up her son so well. Such a son will also, I hope, continue to be a faithful servant to his master. Do not allow yourself to be led astray, and I will not give the reins to my fury towards you, as Samson did amongst the Philistines, or as the Czar Peter amongst the Swedes near Pultowa. I have great need of some one on whose fidelity I can rely, for I know very well that I have many serpents amongst my people. These you can discover and render harmless, by imparting to me in secret whatever falls from your comrades, that seems suspicious to you ; then you shall have in me a grateful master. But should I at any time scold you without cause before your companions, then you will remark that I am not in earnest. Now go.”

Michaelow, thanked his gracious master, with deep feeling and pleasure, and continued to be a faithful servant to him, but in doing so he in no way acted the spy, who betrays every thoughtless word and every

little mistake of his comrades. Meanwhile, Menzikoff did not seem to pay any regard to him, but rather acted towards him with more than ordinary contempt—yet only in presence of others. When they were by themselves, he spoke all the more kindly to him.

Sometime after, however, Menzikoff did the faithful Michaelow a most grievous injustice. Wholly on pretence, he found occasion for quarrel. He threatened the poor boy with the knout, to throw him into the Guard House, or to send him to Siberia. He would not listen to any proof of Michaelow's obvious innocence, and left the poor boy standing completely crushed in the midst of the other servants, when he at length repaired to his chamber.

Oh, how this unjust treatment wounded the feelings of the rebuked youth! Menzikoff's anger seemed to have been so natural, that dissimulation in this case was not to be thought of. The faithful youth, deeply grieved and cast down, seated himself in a corner of the servants room with his sorrowful head supported by his right hand, and the pearly tears trickling over his cheeks. He would have given the whole handful of gold with which the prince had lately presented him to be able to recall the mistake which had occurred. In his sadness, he did not observe that all his comrades but one had left the room. The name of this one was Karpakan.

"Come, Michaelow," said he, "let us have a bottle of wine to drive away the thoughts of this fright out of your head."

He brought the wine, and toasted Michaelow with one glass after another.

"Our master is a strange fellow," said Karpakan. "One can do nothing to please him. I also have learned to sing a little song of his injustice. Too frequently one cannot advance himself in the world now-a-days by means of a virtuous mind. The hypocrite and flatterer have the best of it. What can we do? We must whine with the whelps if we will not crawl at the stirrup. True, all masters are not so spiteful as Menzikoff. There, for example, is young

Prince Dolgorucki. The servants are much better treated with him, although he is not so rich as our master. They say that for a very small favour, for an insignificant piece of news out of Menzikoff's palace, he would give handfuls of gold. If I only knew anything to speak of I would not hesitate to earn a pretty little sum. You require only to give the young Dolgorucki indistinctly to understand that you will satisfy his curiosity when, hush! and he lets a pretty sum of earnest money slip into your hand, saying, 'I give you this, purely out of friendship. Keep it to yourself otherwise you might have far too many competitors.'"

Michaelow gave but little heed to this chattering; but, when several days afterwards, on receiving a letter from the Prince, with the injunction to give it only to the Chancellor, Karpakan stopped him with the enquiry, to whom the letter which he had in his hand was addressed. Michaelow was startled. Karpakan's behaviour appeared remarkable to him, and he became yet more dubious when he offered to deliver the letter for him.

"That would never do," answered Michaelow to this request; "my master might with justice reprimand me if I should act thus, directly contrary to his express instructions."

"Listen," said Karpakan, confidentially; "if you will entrust me with the letter, only for ten minutes, I venture to say that for every minute you shall receive a ruble; also you shall have it again, without damage, and may carry it yourself to its destination."

"Do not hinder me," returned Michaelow, angrily. "You only wish to prove me whether I be faithful or not to my master."

"Brave Michaelow," cried Karpakan; "you have fortunately withstood the temptation. Know that our master tests every one of his servants in this way, and the trial is always entrusted to one of his most approved servants. Yours was appointed for me, and I go to carry the intelligence of your unimpeachable faithfulness to him. Your fortune is now made, honest Michaelow."

Karpakan spake these words with flattering friendliness, but looked after the departing youth with gnashing teeth.

"Mischief take him that I should waste a bottle of wine upon the blockhead. Well! your faithfulness shall surely be rewarded," said he, laughing right scornfully.

But Michaelow, after all, believed that he dared not conceal Karpakan's temptation from the Prince.

"It is well, my son," answered Menzikoff, after hearing Michaelow's story. "For the rest keep your own counsel, and do not trouble yourself."

A few weeks afterwards, however, he was very much troubled. Four silver candlesticks were amissing, having disappeared immediately after a large banquet given by the Prince. An unheard of shameless theft. Menzikoff's steward raised a terrible outcry about them. They searched everywhere, from the cellar to the garret of the meanest domestic, and they were found carefully wrapt up amongst the straw in Michaelow's bed. What a fright for the poor youth! It seemed to fall on him from the clouds, when they showed him the lost candlesticks and took him prisoner.

They could not conceal this circumstance from the Prince, who assembled all his domestics, in the midst of whom was also Michaelow, on whom all eyes were directed, and especially malicious was Karpakan's gaze. After all were assembled, Menzikoff entered the circle; his eye sought of all others Karpakan, on whom he passionately broke forth,

"Scoundrel," cried he, in a terrible voice, "you stole the candlesticks, and hid them underneath Michaelow's bed, in order to destroy the poor youth, who would not do your evil pleasure. For this purpose you availed yourself of a false key to Michaelow's chamber, which you ordered from the locksmith Trozskoff, and which you keep in your breast, concealed in a bag. Miserable wretch, I know all that happens in my house, and know that you are in compact with my enemies; but they shall just as surely

receive their reward as you shall now receive yours. Search him," he commanded his servants.

Karpakan, pale as death, standing trembling and annihilated, was unable to utter a word in his own defence. They found on him the false key, exactly as Menzikoff had described it, and the villain, not being able to deny his guilt, was led away for banishment to Siberia.

"Take heed," said Menzikoff, turning himself to his astonished servants, in a threatening tone, "how you attempt to betray or deceive me. I know you all most intimately, and if the traitor who is yet hidden amongst you has hitherto escaped my vengeance, let him be convinced that it only thus happens until he has filled up the measure of his iniquity; but, as for you, Michaelow, here is the value of the four candlesticks, as smart-money for the fright which you have sustained. Thus do fidelity and honesty steadily receive from me their reward."

It was quite a natural thing for Menzikoff to know accurately all the circumstances of the theft which had been committed. Michaelow's relation had attracted his attention to Karpakan, and through his spies, who had watched his every step and proceeding, he learnt the progress of the affair. He very wisely, as men of the world would think, embraced the opportunity to make his people believe that he was acquainted with everything that took place, and the event really did make a deep impression. Michaelow was the gainer. A goodly number of gold pieces found their way into his pocket by the business, and it made him even more precious to his generous master.

"People accuse Menzikoff of evil actions," thought Michaelow to himself, "and it may be that all that he does is not quite right; yet it is not my duty to act as his judge, but rather to be a faithful servant to him, and this I'll do."

He had just received the value of the stolen candlesticks, when a boy entered the servants room and asked for the servant Michaelow.

"A woman," said he, "and a grown up maiden, wish

to speak with him, and await him before the palace of the Prince."

"How!" muttered Michaelow, "any one that has as few acquaintances as I have in St Petersburg, should be able to judge who has anything to say to him."

He hastened down and found as he had been told, a simply-dressed woman, along with a grown-up maiden in like apparel.

"My mother," exclaimed Michaelow, transported with joy, after that he had viewed her more attentively, clasping both her and his sister to his heart. "What a miracle it is to see you here," said he.

"That miracle you have been the means of bringing about," returned his mother, after the first greeting. "We believed we could not turn the many roubles which you sent us to better account than by visiting you, and likewise the new city St Petersburg, which we had not yet seen."

"In that you did well, dear mother," said her overjoyed son. "But I must bear the expenses of your journey. Here—," (He struck his pocket which swelled with gold)—"is provision enough."

"I am really afraid," returned his mother, "that just actions do not accompany so much money. Your master must have gold like chaff, if he pays every one of his numerous servants as well as you."

Thereupon Michaelow related the affair of the candlesticks with great energy, and the good woman, seemingly touched with the Prince's liberality, wiped a tear from her eye, as she said,—

"Ah, is he so kind toward his meanest servant, and yet could he be so naughty towards—."

She was silent.

"Towards others who are often distinguished people, you would say," continued her son. "But let that alone; it does not concern us."

"You do not know what I mean, dear son," said his mother. "Yet say, how does he conduct himself towards—his wife, or rather his lady and children?"

"Very well, I assure you," answered her son. "If

they but express their wish by a look, he complies with it."

His mother sighed and sought to hide her tearful eyes by looking down.

"How could we by any means get to see him," continued she; "yet only from a distance, so that he might not observe us."

"Very easily," returned Michaelow. "The anti-chamber is full of people every day, who wait on the prince to present their petitions; but generally he passes through their midst without taking any notice of them, so that you may have an opportunity of seeing him distinctly."

"Dear Florin," said his sister, impulsively——

His mother started, gave her daughter a gentle push, and timidly looked around.

"Oh," said her daughter laughing, "I had forgotten that you were called Michaelow here, and yet Florin is not an ugly name. However, as our mother will have it so, I will take care to call you Michaelow. In short, dear brother, might we not be allowed to see the Prince's apartments? I would like well to have an idea how such a distinguished person lives, and how he disposes of himself."

"That you may," answered her brother. "If my master dines out, I am perfectly convinced that I have only to ask the steward and he will allow you."

"Yes do," said his mother and sister, in one breath.

Michaelow nodded and had opened his mouth to answer, when a showy carriage flew past, while Michaelow bared his head with lightening speed.

"That was my master, the Prince," he hurriedly said, "replacing his hat again, "so I must away. I am his attendant to-day; but at four o'clock I shall be at liberty. Tell me where you lodge, so that I may then be able to find you."

His mother did not hear these words. She had grown pale, and stood fixedly gazing after the departing carriage, until it disappeared at the gate of the palace. The daughter, however, answered her brother's question, who then quickly bade them adieu, and ran off.

The Prince might either have received some new promotion that day, or some other agreeable news, for he was in excellent spirits as Michaelow assisted him to undress.

"Michaelow," he began, "you were so deeply lost in conversation a minute ago with that handsome maiden that you had almost entirely forgotten me."

"Oh, no, most gracious Prince," returned Michaelow "But, indeed, I was beside myself with joy. It was my good mother and sister, who have unexpectedly come to visit me."

"Ah, I see," said the Prince. "Then I can fully sympathise with your joy. Does your mother dwell far from here?"

"Yes, in the neighbourhood of Moscow, in the village of Semenowsky," returned Michaelow.

The Prince changed colour a little, became reflective, and silently absent, but at length he said,

"And how do you intend to heighten the pleasure of their visit?"

"My mother and sister wish nothing better," Michaelow quickly answered, "than to see my most gracious master and—and—if it were the pleasure of your highness—the inside of your palace."

"Truly a cheap enjoyment," returned the flattered Prince, "and one which even to day they may experience, "for I and my family intend to drive out, and then you may shew them through the rooms, as they have a mind; only do not forget to request the master cook, in my name, to prepare a little meal for you, in order that at least your mother and sister may not leave my house with empty stomachs."

Moved by the Prince's generosity, Michaelow gratefully kissed the edge of his garment, and some hours afterwards hastened as host to conduct his visitors to the palace of the Prince. His sister was astonished at the splendour of the rooms, and their furnishings; but his mother seemed to be more engaged with herself than with surrounding objects.

"Oh," exclaimed the former, "how smooth and glassy the floor is, just like polished walnut."

"Yes," said her mother, gloomily ; "as smooth as the tongues of the nobility."

"It cost me not a little anxiety," replied the son, "before I was accustomed with it. I trembled the first time I brought a whole tray full of dishes to the table. If you slip, thought I. Yet now, I can laugh at my former fears."

"So do the great at the dangers which surround them on all sides," remarked his mother.

"Oh, mother, see the large, large, mirror," cried Helene, placing herself before it, and with quiet gratification, viewing her form, reflected from head to foot in the mirror, which reached the ceiling.

"If only mankind would allow themselves to see their own faults and failings thus," said her mother.

"Oh, mother," exclaimed her son, "You see things in a very dark light. Instead of the sight of these beautiful things filling you with pleasure, it rather makes you melancholy."

"You are right, my son," his mother answered. "In short it is only a fit of envy which makes me speak so, and from which, I ought to beseech God to preserve me."

"Just look here a minute," said her son. "Here is as handsome a time-piece as any king has. This man, with the scythe and hour glass, is the God of time. He is said to have devoured his own children, because it was prophesied that his own son would cast him from the throne, and the prophecy has in reality been fulfilled, namely, when his wife again bare him a son, she hid the child, took a stone, rolled it in a goatskin, and gave it, instead of the new-born infant, to her blind husband, who, without remarking the deceit, straightway swallowed it. But when this son, who had been reared in seclusion, had attained the age of manhood, he deposed his father from the throne of heaven, and seated himself thereon. So says the fable. The wings which you see on the old man's shoulders betoken that time flies quickly, mowing mankind down as with a scythe, and the place which knew them, knows them no more."

"A fine company of gods," said his mother, half angrily. "A father who devours his children. Faagh! What a base example! Now, I do not wonder any more that a human father should cast off wife and children who may stand in the way of his ambition and covetousness. A mother could not do this. And what a wicked son who could thus abuse his old blind father. It is rightly said of the heathen gods, 'Wherewith men sin, therewith are they punished.' And blind was he—a god and blind! No, go to with such a detestable story. How good is our God in comparison, who is neither blind, nor can he be deceived, although hypocrites think it possible. And how good is also the beloved Son of our God, who instead of dethroning his father, left the throne of heaven, took upon him our nature, and died in obedience to God, and out of love to men."

The old woman had spoken very warmly, and thereby exhausted herself. She now remained a short time silent, quietly and very attentively observing the golden god with the scythe and hour glass.

"I only wonder," she again began "that the nobility can suffer such an image, which cannot but remind them of death, to remain in their houses. As a rule they will not otherwise hear of the man with the scythe, for the angel of death who is rather a comfort to us common people, is always a bugbear to them."

"Mother," said Michaelow, "you are bent upon being melancholy to-day. Come, speaking of images, I will show you another. He opened the door of a splendid apartment, on entering which, the full length portrait of Menzikoff, streamed full in their faces."

"Ha," cried Michaelow's mother, hastening up to the portrait quickly, "Yes, that is him. He certainly looks a little older than formerly, but it is so like himself."

"Do you then know the Prince already so accurately, mother?" asked her astonished son. "I thought you had never yet seen him."

"Child," said his mother, while her voice trembled, "you do not understand me, Helene! Michaelow! Just so looked your father, only you must fancy him without

the stars on his coat, and with a more cheerful and friendly smile. What a likeness. Helene, do you not see that Michaelow resembles him ?”

“I did indeed think so,” answered her daughter, laughing, but their mother continued to gaze with brightening eyes, first on the portrait, and then on her son, comparing the one with the other. Then she gently touched the hand of the portrait with hers, and a tear escaped her eye as she said very sadly—

“Good husband, good father. Oh, it is many, many years since you forsook us. Are you then happy now ?”

“Certainly,” returned both her children at once. “How can you doubt it, when our father is in heaven, where it is much better with him than it could possibly be here on earth.”

Their mother sighed deeply, and was unable to satisfy herself with looking on the portrait, turning round again and again to look, as Michaelow led them away.

“Here is the Prince’s study,” exclaimed Michaelow, “this is his writing-table—that is his arm-chair.”

“Children,” said their mother, with a faint smile, “you will chide me, when I tell you that I would really like much to know how one would feel while sitting in such a chair, belonging to a prince. Michaelow, dare I seat myself on it for a moment ; I am really pretty well tired out after seeing so much ; I will take very great care not to break anything.”

“Surely, mother, sit down,” said Michaelow. “The Prince cannot know of it. He has other meditations when he seats himself here.”

His good mother sat down, laid her head comfortably back on the cushion, and closed her eyes. When her son saw her sitting thus he cried anxiously—

“Mother, is anything the matter with you, that you appear so extremely pale ?”

“Oh, no,” returned his mother, looking up with a pleasant smile. “On the contrary, I am quite well. I feel myself at this moment so happy that I would even like to—die here.”

She laid her right hand on the arm of the chair, and smoothing the cushion said—

“Most likely your master’s hand has often lain here. What an honour for me that I dare to touch it ! Now I have yet one great wish. I would like much to carry away with me some little thing as a remembrance out of this chamber ; but it must be something that the Prince himself has used.”

Her good son glanced enquiringly around to fulfil his mother’s wish. He took up an old worn out quill pen from the inkstand beside him.

“Here,” said he, “is something which the Prince has had many times in his hand, and which I might venture to give away. True, he often prizes useless things more highly than valuable. His diamond stars, for example, his boxes, rings, and other ornaments, he entrusts to me ; but then he has a simple little ring which in general he only takes out of a sealskin case on special occasions to gaze on it, and shut it up again. That he never allows any one to touch, and I have only once by chance seen it, when I was obliged to call him abruptly without his having time to put it away.”

“A little ring—a sealskin case, said you,” his mother exclaimed, confusedly, looking down on her finger.

“Yes,” continued her son, without constraint, although he observed how his mother was engaged. “Just such a ring as that which you have on your finger.”

His mother withdrew to one of the windows, in order to conceal the strong agitation which her son’s speech had caused her from her children. She pressed both her hands in ecstasy to her bosom, and said to herself very softly—

“So my Alexander has not yet been able to forget his poor Matinka !”

“Lastly here is yet my master’s bedroom,” said Michaelow, opening a door. “Look at the splendid carpet on the floor, the silver water ewer and basin, and crystal night lamp.”

“But I see only one bed,” remarked his astonished mother. “Where are those of his lady and children ?”

“ Yes,” said her son. “ With the nobility it is entirely otherwise than with poor people—the princess has her separate apartments; both the princesses have each their separate rooms, and the young prince dwells also by himself. I would willingly shew you through them also, only they lie so near to that wing of the palace in which the young Emperor dwells, and there are always so many people in that quarter, that you would feel yourself uncomfortable—for you must know that the young Czar lives with his future father-in-law, in order to be very near his affianced bride, and likewise that he may not undertake anything without the Prince’s knowledge. And now, dear mother and sister, I have shown you all; however, the best is yet to come. The Prince has given orders to prepare a noble repast for you, so we will now drink his health in champagne, and to-morrow forenoon you will be in the anti-chamber, where you will get a distinct view of my kind master.”

“ No,” said his mother, uneasily. “ I would not like that; the Prince might address us.”

“ Well, what although he did,” replied her son.

“ No, on no account,” said his mother, quickly. “ Come let us leave the palace, the Prince may surprise us.”

“ There is no occasion for this anxiety,” said her son.

But she was no more to be detained, she scarcely dared to enjoy a very little of the nice meal which had been prepared for them, and did not recover from her uneasiness until she had reached her humble lodging.

After a four days residence in St Petersburg, she and her daughter departed to visit her brother, who had been banished to a little town in Siberia. Painfully heartrending was the leave-taking from her son, whom she commanded to be ever most faithful to his master, and Michaelow gazed after the receding forms of his mother and sister with streaming eyes.

CHAPTER X.

THE FALL.

MENZIKOFF had run his course. The time for his punishment had arrived: his enemies, and those who envied him, had never rested, but were secretly preparing his destruction. One of these—a prince Dolgorucki, chamberlain to the young monarch—had insinuated himself into the favour of the Czar, and rendered himself indispensably necessary to him. He had, at the same time, very cunningly undermined Menzikoff's reputation thoroughly; and a renewed act of treachery of this insatiable prince, gave Dolgorucki the opportunity of entirely destroying him. The young Czar had assigned a large sum of money for the benefit of his sister, and Menzikoff was appointed to pay it over to her; but he intercepted the money, and kept it for his own purposes. The crafty Dolgorucki was immediately instructed of this villany by his agents, and informed the Czar of it; at the same time fanning his rage to the utmost by the most bitter instigations.

Foreboding nothing of the storm which awaited him, Menzikoff went one morning, as usual, towards the apartments of the Czar in order to pay his respects to him. To his great terror he found them deserted and empty—not even a servant was there to be seen. He sent out some of his people to make enquiries as to the whereabouts of the Czar. With what consternation did he learn, on their return, that the Czar had secretly left the house of his former host without a word of adieu, and returned to his own palace.

The confounded Menzikoff saw plainly that this transaction was the work of his enemies, so, in order to extract the venom from their calumnies, and win back the favour of his monarch, he quickly seated himself in his carriage and hastened to court; but after a

short time, the carriage was seen slowly returning, and Menzikoff stepping out deadly pale, ascended the spacious stairs of the palace. The Czar would on no account grant him an audience—him, his future father-in-law, the father of his affianced bride. His lady and children surrounded him anxiously and enquiringly, but he only stared at them with an unmeaning look, and fastened his hand convulsively in the hair of his head, already gray with age and care.

“ Oh, my poor daughter !” sobbed he, at length, looking tenderly on his eldest child. “ What a bridegroom you have ! Go, my children, Go, dear wife. Leave me alone. I require time for the mature consideration of our position.”

They obeyed, and Menzikoff now strode up and down his chamber with hasty steps ; anon he received an imperial writing, and quickly mastering himself of its contents, the paper escaped his trembling hands, as he slid half-fainting on the nearest seat. He had not expected this message. It made known to him the deprivation of all his high offices and honours, and commanded him to leave the city in which the Emperor resided that same day, and to betake himself to the Castle of Oranienbaum as his place of banishment. Menzikoff was annihilated—completely deprived of strength ; at length he again collected his scattered faculties, sprang up and trode the Imperial document under foot.

“ Ha,” cried he, “ therefore the rabble of courtiers and flatterers did not bend their catlike backs to-day as I passed amongst them. Therefore did they look upon me with crafty malicious smiles. And that I should have been so blind as not to interpret this weather-glass of court favour. How ? I could rule to please a Peter the Great, or an Empress Catherine ; but not to suit a weakling of a boy fourteen years of age. Therefore I have been openly humiliated. Therefore I have wasted thirty years of my life—have crawled, have allowed vexation to gnaw my very soul—have laboured, sorrowed, watched, trembled, and outraged my God. Therefore have I, Oh, heavens ! cast off a faith-

ful wife and loving children, in order that I might see the fruit of all my efforts demolished by the stroke of a mere boy's pen. Never." He rang the bell sharply. "Command the attendance of all the officers of my faithful regiment," he passionately shouted to the servant who entered.

His lady, having apprehended this order, now burst into the room.

"For God's sake," cried she, to her husband, "what would you do?"

"Preserve and defend my daughter's rights," returned Menzikoff vehemently. "The Imperial boy shall not presume to insult the daughter of a Prince, as he would a peasant girl."

"My dear husband," besought the Princess, "refrain from your intention. You will utterly ruin us all in your passion."

"How?" said Menzikoff. "Am I not commander-in-chief of all the troops in Russia? Three hundred thousand men are under my command, and with these I will bid defiance to the anger of this boyish Emperor."

"You were commander-in-chief, dear husband," said the Princess; "but that same voice which appointed you has also deprived you of the office; and if you still persist in your obstinacy, you will not only bring yourself, but also us to the scaffold."

The Prince listened to this objection with great attention, and was reflecting over it as the servant opened the door to report the execution of the Prince's order, when a strange mixed tumultuous noise resounded from without.

"Your Highness," he said. "All the officers of the Inkerman regiment await the pleasure of your highness."

"Shed no innocent blood," the Princess supplicated, wringing her hands as her husband took up his sword and went towards the room where the officers awaited him.

The Prince strode into their midst with a sorrowful but collected demeanour.

"Dear, faithful followers," said he softly, "you will already be aware of the fate which has befallen me—of my

being deprived of all my offices and honours ; but before my departure to the place of banishment which has been assigned me, I wished once more to see you, who were so dearly and faithfully devoted to me. Receive, along with my last farewell, the assurance that your memory shall never be extinguished in my grateful heart. This sword, a precious gift of my deceased Emperor, cannot be better preserved than in your valiant hands ; therefore receive it as a faint token of my lively gratitude."

He delivered the weapon, ornamented with glittering diamonds set in gold, to the senior officer of the regiment, and, deeply moved, clasped him to his breast. All the officers were terribly affected. They unsheathed their swords, swore to remain faithful to him, and assured him that they were ready to defend his rights with their lives.

"Place yourself at our head, General," they cried.

"We will follow you wherever you may lead us."

"No," returned Menzikoff. "How could I ever justify myself for risking the lives of so many noble men, and that only for the sake of an old man, of whom the world has become wearied. Farewell ! Honour your Czar with that fidelity which you owe him, and forget Alexander Menzikoff, who retires from his splendid career covered with disgrace."

The officers unwillingly obeyed—the bearded men wept like children, in taking their leave of the Prince, shaking him by the hand and kissing his offered cheek. When all had departed, Menzikoff, exhausted by the scene, flung himself on a seat,

"Now, have I acted right ?" asked he of his lady, who just then entered the room.

"Oh, my husband," she answered "now are you really great. You have won your greatest battle—for you have conquered yourself. Now you belong wholly to your wife and children. Now you are free from all outwardly oppressing circumstances, and only now will we be truly happy. Your large estates, immense fortune, and your children are still yours. You have made Russia great—advanced its prosperity ; and you

now willingly retire, after a long praise-worthy service, from the theatre of your fame."

The Princess sought in this way to comfort her husband, who had after all only outwardly composed himself. In his heart mortified ambition yet raged with terrible ferocity. But how could these strugglings help him? He must decide upon his departure, and that quickly. They packed up only that which was most necessary for their wants; but every male as well as female servant had their hands full of work. What a quantity of bales, chests, trunks, boxes, and bags, full of goods, were despatched in the long train of carriages which were to accompany the Prince and his family.

An enormous multitude of people looked on as they drove off, waiting with impatience to see the humiliated Menzikoff, and the forsaken Imperial bride depart; at the same time murmuring insultingly that such a scoundrel of a minister, who had impoverished the country, should yet dare to carry away so much wealth with him.

"He ought to be stoned out of the land," said they. "Nothing ought to be left him of all his stolen riches, except the basket in which he formerly carried his pastry."

But when Menzikoff, dressed in a simple coat, without star or cross, entered the carriage with downcast eyes, a still more tremendous shower of insults and invectives was hurled at him. His lady followed composedly; after her the two young Princesses, who covered their faces with their handkerchiefs, and the young Prince, who threw a scornful glance around on the malicious rabble, brought up the rear.

"Might one not rather think that some king was entering upon a journey," cried some one loudly to his companions, "than that such a thorough rascal was now taking his departure!"

All admitted that the speaker was right, and broke out into a threatening murmur, while Menzikoff pressed himself into a corner of the carriage, and said bitterly to his wife,

"Are not these the same people to whom, only a few

days ago, I gave food and fire, and who loudly blessed me for my liberality?"

"Yes, my husband," she returned. "They are ever the same who, on the entrance of our Redeemer to Jerusalem, brought branches of palm trees, and even spread their clothes on the way, while they sang Hosannah; but who after a few days, cried out 'crucify him! crucify him!' and nailed the Saviour of the world to the tree. Do you deserve to be better treated than Christ, in whose face they spat, and whom they smote on the cheek with their hands?"

The Princess endeavoured to comfort her husband in this manner, but Menzikoff was not thus to be comforted; for, thought he to himself, "have I not merited all this by my misdeeds; not so our Saviour, who was therefore also able to be of good courage."

Their carriage was now nearing the main guard. Yesterday and even early that same morning, how quickly had the officers and soldiers of the watch presented arms, in order to shew proper respect to their superior officer; but what a change had a couple of hours, and the word of a mere boy, been able to accomplish? The officers walked leisurely to and fro with folded arms, and carefully turned their backs to the Prince as he drove past, while the sentries did not change the careless position of their firelocks one inch—rather gazing sullenly in at the windows of the carriage; but the remainder of the soldiers broke out into mocking-laughter, which embittered still more the departure of the mortified Prince. Yet many more such humiliations awaited him ere he at length left the city.

When we consider how great an effect the word of a weak mortal can produce on this earth, and how immeasurably greater the effect of the Word of God must be, might it not teach the despisers of His Word to pause, meditate, and lay it to heart. The derided family breathed a little more freely when they found themselves in the open country and released from their tormentors.

"Courage," said the Princess, again addressing her husband, who sat absorbed in his own thoughts.

"Oranienbaum is not a bad place of residence—not so barren, marshy, and raw as this northern St Petersburg; but especially, when we walk out together, shall we enjoy nature in all its blooming loveliness, and we shall soon learn to spend the tedious winter pleasantly, with instructive reading, general conversation, and music."

"Yes, father," broke in one of the Princesses; "Alexander blows the flute, I play the pianoforte, sister Nina sings. We shall surely be able to pass away the time."

"Before we dine, father," said the son, "we shall fence together, after dining we can play at billiards. In the evenings, you will relate something of your travels and battles with the Great Czar Peter to us."

"On the castle pond," added the forsaken Imperial bride, "we can skate and drive in sledges; we might also erect an iceberg."

"We will have blooming winter flowers in all the windows," the Princess again began.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BANISHMENT.

AFTER having proceeded some distance, the Prince's carriage came to a halt, and immediately making enquiries as to the cause of stoppage, they heard the loud resounding call of "Halt! Halt!" An officer was seen hastily advancing towards them, holding up a paper, meanwhile continuing the cry of "Halt."

What might this new apparition mean? Possibly the Czar had repented of his severity! Did that paper contain the complete pardon of the Prince? Was he to return in order that he might again be re-instated

in his former honourable position? How quickly do the feelings of a child undergo a change! With what other intention could this messenger have been sent after them? Hope again began to revive in the hearts of the downcast family. True, they dared not allow their thoughts to take the form of words; but the sprightlier glance of the eyes, and throbbing heavings of the breast, revealed the favourable change which this event had wrought in the mind of each. The officer had now reached Menzikoff's carriage, and opening the paper, prepared to make known its contents to the Prince, whose family listened with the most intense attention. He first read a long list of misdeeds, by the perpetration of which Menzikoff had rendered himself unworthy of the Emperor's clemency; but as yet the conclusion was to come, and as the Prince's family were quietly flattering themselves that the Czar, notwithstanding all this, would exercise mercy rather than justice, and remit the punishment of his old minister, these words of thunder resounded:—

“In respect of all these unpardonable offences, our just Emperor hereby orders the confiscation of all estates and wealth belonging to the Prince, and banishes both him and his whole family to Siberia during the term of their natural lives.”

Dear readers, suppose the case of a beloved child, on whom a severe sickness has laid its withering hand, raving wildly with fluttering breath, in a strong fever—the despairing parents kneeling beside their darling, watching with inexpressible anguish for its last sob—the sympathising physician shrugging his shoulders informs them that his skill is of no avail, and that the little sick one is a child of death, when the child once more brightly opens its little eyes. “Father! Mother!” it cheerfully pronounces, stretching out its little hand towards them. In unutterable ecstasy the mother flings herself on her husband's breast.

“Husband,” she shouts, her voice trembling with joy, “our child lives. We have received it atew from God!”

Both then turn themselves in loving haste to this

precious gift, which has thus been restored to them, when, alas! its eyes, a minute ago glancing so sprightly, are dim; its lips, which had just pronounced its beloved ones' names, are benumbed; the paleness and coldness of death are upon the little loved one; the bloom, so shortly before upon its cheeks, has entirely faded. It was only the last fluttering of the extinguishing lamp which had deceived the hopeful hearts of the fond parents.

Such was the position in which Menzikoff and his family found themselves, after the messenger of misfortune had executed his commission. Covering his face the Prince sank speechlessly back into the corner of the carriage; the Princess strove to bear up against a fit of unconsciousness which she felt was gradually creeping over her; the young Prince, pale as death, stared with flashing eyes after the officer, as the latter quickly departed; while the two young Princesses burst forth into a torrent of tears which, in their case, did not fail to have a soothing effect. On the reception of this mournful intelligence, all the servants sprang down from the carriages, and with loud lamentations surrounded the family of the Prince; but the latter, having no comfort to give them, only remained in silence, when shortly all again betook themselves to their places looking on one another disconcertedly. The train of carriages was now turned about, leaving the southern and making its way towards the raw northern regions.

"Do you go with them to Siberia?" asked one servant of another.

"I have precious little intention of doing so," answered he. "They tell me that there the wind blows ten times colder under men's noses than in St Petersburg; also that there is not so much as one place of amusement, but only bears, wolves, sable, and such like vermin, which make the neighbourhood dangerous. Banquets and balls where drink-money abounds, fall away of themselves, and niggardliness must reign henceforth in the Prince's family."

"There you are quite right," a third interposed; "for

our master is now as poor as a church mouse ; only that which is most necessitous will be left him, therefore I do not see of what use so many servants can be to him, when he can in no wise pay them, and on that account I take my leave of him."

"And I do the same," said a fourth, "and thus spare both myself and him the pain of separation."

"Well said," cried a fifth. "I also will do likewise."

When therefore the superfluous carriages were sent back by the officer of the Cossacks, who were to accompany the Prince, all the male and female servants returned to St Petersburg in a body, and forsook in this way their master, who had often treated them very liberally. Thus does ingratitude show itself. Only Michaelow remained behind on the Prince's carriage. His comrades sought in vain to entice him to follow their example, but he vouchsafed no answer to the selfish people but gazed fixedly before him. They then insulted him, called him a blockhead, an ass, who stood in his own light. This, however, did not harm him ; but it moved his very soul to think how painful this new and bitter experience of the working of ingratitude must be to his master and mistress. And he was truly right, for when the Prince's carriage stopped at a small hamlet, in order that the horses might be changed, Menzikoff who, until then, had not spoken a single word, now called his valet by name, and Michaelow appearing in his stead, and asking what his pleasure might be, he commanded him to call all his servants, adding,

"It is impossible that they can be expected to share my hard fate and accompany me to Siberia. I will therefore dismiss them, only retaining those who are most necessary."

Michaelow stood embarrassed.

"Most gracious Prince," he at length began, seeking a palliating excuse for their ingratitude, "the servants have just seen that it would come to this, and have, in order not to remind your Highness anew of your misfortune, already returned to St Petersburg."

But Menzikoff did not believe his ears or Michaelow's

word. He looked back out of the carriage, to see the rest of the carriages, all of which, as well as his servants, had disappeared. With a bitter smile he turned to his lady and said,

"Oh! just think how faithful and feeling-hearted our people are. They have secretly left us in a body in order to spare us the pain of separation. What do you want yet here?" continued he, addressing Michaelow. "Follow your comrades."

"I will never forsake your highness," answered Michaelow.

"Go," cried Menzikoff, passionately. "I wish to have nothing more to do with any of you. You are a parcel of hypocrites, eye-servants, who only court my money-bag. I possess nothing more now worth clutching. Go to Dolgorucki; he is now rich while I am poor."

"I remain with your highness," returned Michaelow, firmly.

"Ha," shouted the Prince. "How deeply indeed am I sunk, when even my meanest servant pays no attention to my orders. Will you not immediately leave my sight, scoundrel?"

The Princess and her children gave Michaelow a beseeching look, and he obeyed; but yet only to go and take his old seat behind on the carriage, and thus the journey continued, while the country became always lonelier, and the north wind colder, the Prince and his family sitting mutely in the carriage reflecting over their misfortune, in which Michaelow fully sympathised.

The tremendous howling of hungry wolves resounded in the distance, and as it became ever colder in the carriage, the farther they proceeded on their way, the Princess and her children muffled themselves more closely in their mantles attempting to sleep—in vain. Oh, how slowly the time slipped past, ere morning dawned; and with the rising sun the wind blew more fiercely—the gray sharp leaves of the trees trembling at its breath, as did also the Prince's family, who had tasted nothing since their departure. A halt was made at the tavern of a little village for breakfast, where the

Prince was obliged to open the door of the carriage himself, and to step out without the wouted help of his servant. How difficult did this trifle seem, and how very helplessly did he reach out his arm to his wife's assistance, undertaking the duty of valet. The young Prince sprang out briskly, but fell to the ground, both his legs being benumbed by the continued journey. The case of the two young Princesses was not much better, who, as well as their mother, were seized with a severe fit of shivering—their trembling limbs being scarcely able to carry them from the spot. Michaelow had disappeared, for whose presence the Princess, as also her daughters, had yet in silence hoped. The Prince and his family staggered towards the peasant's house, where an oppressing heat, accompanied, however, at the same time, with a not altogether agreeable smell, met them on their entering the common room. They would willingly have retraced their steps to the threshold, only their necessity for warmth was too pressing; therefore, sighing, each took a seat on the hard wooden bench, looking on one another in silent sadness. Menzikoff only kept his eyes gloomily fixed on the floor. The general wish was for something warm. But what? The bearded host had indeed brought a kind of soup, made of rye meal, in a large wooden dish; but host, dishes, and spoons looked so excessively dirty that those present, only accustomed to eat out of silver and porcelain, turned away in disgust from the offered meal.

“We must have both chocolate and tea amongst our luggage,” remarked the Princess; “but who knows where they are to be found—they who packed it having disappeared?”

The young Prince immediately ran out to the carriage and tumbled long amongst the trunks and boxes, until he luckily found that which he sought. But now a fresh dilemma presented itself. Who was to prepare the tea or chocolate? They could and would not entrust them to the hostess, as much on account of her revolting appearance, as also because most likely she had never heard of such a thing as tea or chocolate,

far less understood their preparation. The two young Princesses, therefore, resolved to undertake the office of cooks, and the young Prince likewise offered his assistance. Certainly, if the Prince's family had not merited pity, on account of their misfortune, the unbiassed onlooker must have laughed heartily over their awkward attempt. The Princesses had never once in their lifetime so much as dreamed that they would ever be obliged to busy themselves in preparing any kind of food, and from this cause had remained entirely ignorant of the art of cookery.

Good heavens! they neither knew how to use the tea nor the chocolate; and how awkwardly they handled everything—how they burnt their delicate little fingers. A glowing coal started out of the fire, and singed several large holes in the costly dress of the eldest, while the youngest bore traces of her unwonted toil in the shape of large sooty marks over her handsome little face. If they had trembled before with cold, so now they glowed with heat and anxiety to gain a little honour by their cookery. At length they believed the chocolate so far ready as that they ought to remove it from the fire. On examination, however, it did not seem, at least to the present cooks, to be thick enough; and when the Princesses had informed their hostess of their wants, who, with shaking head and silent laughter, had looked on during the whole proceedings, she brought meal and a twirling stick, and placed them at the disposal of her noble guests. They put half a handful into the thin chocolate, and the young Prince prepared himself with a twirling stick in hand to give it the last finishing touch. He stirred with all his might when—plash. The vessel had been overturned by the violent movement, and the whole chocolate was streaming down on the hearth, and over the floor; and, adding to their mortification, the parcel with the remainder of the chocolate was immersed in the flood. Nothing now remained but the vessel of green tea, which tasted barbarously, terribly smoked, and discoloured by the coals which had fallen amongst it. The maidens wept with vexation, but could make no

better of it. How much rather would they have sung an Italian air, performed a difficult piece on the pianoforte, drawn a bouquet of flowers, or stitched in satin and gold ; and they would have certainly gained more honour by so doing than by this awkward mess.

People will maintain that there are even now-a-days such like ladies and maidens, who understand everything else much better than how to cook soup, or prepare a dish of meat. At the same moment, as the Princesses, their eyes red with weeping, left the kitchen and entered the room, taking with them the discoloured tea, the other door opened and Michaelow, whom they had believed lost to them, entered, bearing a handsome tea tray, on which stood a large pot with steaming chocolate ; another with tea, several cups, and a plate of tempting newly baked bread. How clean and bright were the dishes, in comparison with those of their hostess ! How fragrant was the smell of this beverage to the exhausted family, and how quickly did the sorrowful countenances of Menzikoff's children brighten ! A weight, a very great one, was removed from their hearts. Yes, faithful servants are truly very precious, and people are generally never more ready to acknowledge their value, than when they are in a position to require their services, yet find that they must serve themselves ; and therefore ought masters and mistresses to treat their male and female servants more kindly than they generally do. People surely cannot believe that everything may be procured with gold, for if Menzikoff had offered fifty roubles for savourily prepared chocolate, yet without the intervention of the active Michaelow he must have gone without it.

Michaelow could see no better way of regaining the favour of the enraged Prince than by the preparation of this breakfast, which was sure to be welcome, and for which he had himself carefully packed up all the ingredients. With these he had betaken himself to a house which lay right opposite, where he had executed his business more cleverly than the Princesses, and also attained the object which he aimed at.

“ Oh, good, faithful Michaelow,” they all exclaimed ;

and if the Prince did not also join in this expression of praise, yet a more than grateful glance of the eye showed at once the change in his feelings towards his servant who stood blushing for joy.

How salutary was that warm refreshing beverage, and that delicious food to the empty stomachs of the poor travellers! but common necessity also humbles pride and makes the noble more disposed to draw nearer the lowly, and to acknowledge in them their neighbours, so also here the grateful Princess would not rest until she had obliged Michaelow, however much the bashful youth excused himself from receiving the entirely unexpected favour, to drink a cup of tea and chocolate which the youngest Princess herself handed to him, and even the young Prince, who had always lorded it pretty strongly over his father's dependants, now diligently endeavoured to assume a more mild and kindly tone towards their faithful servant.

After a short delay they were obliged to proceed on their journey, which was and remained monotonous and sorrowful enough. Menzikoff again quickly relapsed into his former melancholy and silence, and the others also reflected with distress on their former exalted position, as well as on their present sorrowful fate, the dreadfulness of which was ever increasing. The hardships of their journey were ever becoming more unbearable,—even although their carriage rested on springs and had its windows well protected with glass; but after the travelling had continued uninterruptedly for several days and nights at a rapid rate, the weary family were permitted to enjoy their first long-wished for night's lodging in a little town. How many conveniences to which they had been accustomed did they here feel the want of—no beds of down, no silken bed-covers, no night-lamps—everything coarse, filthy, and unaired. Michaelow, lulled by an approving conscience, slept excellently in a yet more miserable lodging. Menzikoff, loading himself with many silent but severe reproaches for having been the sole cause of this misfortune to his innocent family, was unable to close his eyes; his children, however, slept soundly—their

mother, on the contrary, very little. Next morning she felt in no wise refreshed, looking very pale, with deep blue lines round her weary eyes. She had caught a severe cold, which repeatedly made her shiver all over. Formerly, when far less indisposed, the family physician was immediately in attendance, exercising all his skill for her recovery, but now everything was wanting. Their physician had disappeared with the medicine chest, along with the other attendants, and not one was to be found in the whole place. If the brave Michaelow had not prepared a strong cup of tea and brought two warm bottles for the poor suffering Princess, she must have remained entirely without help. At break of day she was obliged again to enter the carriage and to commence anew the endless journey.

At length they neared the eastern boundary of Europe. Siberia, in all its immensity, lay before them, in extent larger than the whole of Europe with its many kingdoms, but with only very few inhabitants. One seldom meets with a human dwelling on its immeasurable, deserted plains; and as the little town of Beresow, which had been appointed as the place of Menzikoff's residence, lay deep in this wilderness, they had a prodigious journey yet to accomplish. The condition of the suffering Princess was in no wise improved when they had reached the boundaries of Europe. Although they had been allowed several times to lodge by the way, yet she derived not the least refreshment from it. The children surrounded their beloved mother with tender care, forgetting on her account their own condition, on which, especially that of the young Princesses, a powerful change had been wrought. Having no maid servant, or any kind of female assistance, their attire had fallen into considerable disorder; their hair, formerly so smoothly and neatly arranged, hung in tangled masses round their shoulders, while their dresses were crumpled and partly in rags. The Princesses would willingly have repaired these disasters, but they had been entirely unaccustomed to this duty, and therefore did not know

how to go about it, but they were shortly to be relieved of this trouble.

The commandant of the little frontier town—a rude misanthropical man, harshly informed the banished family that they must now exchange their costly dress for the peculiar garb worn by convicts. He brought a Russian along with him, bearing a whole arm-full of clothing, made of coarse brown woolsey, which he threw down on the floor. The commandant tumbled them over, seized hold of a pair of trowsers, as also a kind of smock-frock or coat, and held them out to the Prince with the words,

“There, Menzikoff, take these; they are whole, keep them so. Here, woman. There, girls. That which remains is for the youth.”

So spake this man to this princely family, whose favour had been only shortly before courted by the most powerful of the Empire. Menzikoff silently took his new garment and held it outspread before him, as if he would measure its width, but in reality only to conceal the bitter tears of sorrow from his family. The Princess and her daughters, however, betook themselves without murmuring into a little neighbouring chamber, and after a short time, on the door again opening, a little elderly peasant woman tripped in, supported by two young damsels. The dainty feet of the females were encased in clumsy but warm shoes of untanned leather, and looked like shaggy bears paws, while out of the long sleeves of the coarse garments the delicate little fingers of the Princess and her daughters peeped. Their heads were thrust into thick unshapely hoods, so that scarcely one half of their faces were visible, while fastened to their shoulders by a hempen cord hung large rough fox-skin gloves. Only after earnest entreaty had the poor banished ones obtained the favour of being allowed to wash themselves, otherwise the coarse material would have certainly torn their delicate skin.

On their entrance they were received by a young and an old peasant, dressed in a similar manner. These were the Prince and his son,

“Do I please you so, my husband?” asked the noble sufferer, attempting to laugh, while the two young Princesses also concealed the true sensations of their hearts that they might not wound yet more their unfortunate father, and said, with assumed gaiety,

“Father, we are going to the masquerade. Have we not chosen our dress well, that we may not be recognised?”

Menzikoff, at the sight and on hearing this speech of his family, almost broke his heart. If his wife and children had overwhelmed him with reproaches, and cursed him as being the author of their misfortune, he would have born it more tranquilly than this unmerited kindness. When the Princess—as Princess born—entered, dressed in her miserable clothing, with a death-like smile on her pallid countenance, accompanied by his children, once the ornaments of youthful nobility in St Petersburg, his long and painfully pent up sorrow irresistably broke forth. He threw himself on his knees before his lady, unable to utter one word—he could only sob bitterly; and when the Princess and her children saw the powerful heart-breaking sorrow of the Prince, they could no longer restrain their tears, but sympathetically wept and sobbed in company. Their faithful servant Michaelow, who was a witness of this touching scene, which might have moved the heart of a stone, also wept like a child.

“Oh Emperor!” exclaimed the young Prince, with the hot glistening tears in his eyes, “could you but witness just now the misery which your anger has occasioned, you would surely permit the sun of your favour again to shine on us?” but the Princess likewise bathed in tears made answer,

“It is well to put our trust in the Lord, and not to rely on men. It is well to put our trust in the Lord, and not to rely on Princes. Formerly we have only done the latter. Well, let us repair our neglect and turn to our all merciful God.”

“Alas,” cried Menzikoff, now recovering his speech, “I have plunged my noble wife into destruction through my insatiable covetousness and ambition.”

"Be composed, my husband," the Princess comforted him. "We will bear the blame in common, so that the burden may not press any one too hard, but if by our misfortune we are lead nearer to God, we shall have gained by the exchange; for what else is our life on this earth than a short dream—a drama which only lasts for a few hours, in which sometimes we are princes, sometimes beggars. But I feel this," added she, with heavenly composure, "that my course will soon be at an end, therefore my soul longs after the true fatherland, where no pain—only an eternal joy is to be found."

Her eyes were directed prayerfully towards heaven, and her children perceived with fear in their mother's suffering face, that she might have spoken the truth. On this account they sacredly endeavoured not to disturb in the slightest degree the last days of their good mother, and they also resolved not to hurt their afflicted father by any murmurings over their sorrowful position; but ratherto appear very cheerful, to prove to him also by the most attentive obedience that they in no wise despised him. And Michaelow, who yet wept silently, vowed to himself, although he was now wealthier and better clothed than his master, to serve him with redoubled reverence, and in all allowable things to be obedient unto the seeming peasant.

A rough voice from without had already called twice for the Prince and his family to proceed on their journey; in their distress, however, they had not overheard the warning. Michaelow, therefore, took opportunity of the first little pause in the discourse, and turning himself to his master said,

"Pardon me, your highness, the commandant—."

At the word "highness" the Prince awakened as if from a dream.

"Whom do you mean, fellow?" demanded he sharply. "There is no more any 'highness' here—merely a family of unfortunates. You only mock us—you now, are the most important personage amongst us."

"Master," Michaelow now stuttered, but this was also not well said.

"You alone are master here," the Prince again exclaimed, "for you can go wherever you will; but we are prisoners, undergoing debasing correction."

The Princess had compassion on Michaelow's embarrassment.

"Call my husband father," said she, softly; "me mother, and these my children, brother and sisters. Have you not earned the right by your unwavering faithfulness?"

Deeply moved, Michaelow would as formerly have kissed the hem of her coarse garment which she, however, resisted with all her might. A hand now knocked violently on the little window of the lowly chamber, and a rude voice cried,

"Will you never stir out of that? Ought we to be frozen to death for the sake of your chattering?"

The unfortunate family quickly made preparation for setting out on their journey, but when they reached the door they found that the travelling carriage had disappeared, and in its stead were six small wooden sledges, called there Kibiks. They were open, with only one horse to each, with barely room for one person to sit, besides the driver, and entirely destitute of convenience. No cushion made the hard seat more comfortable—nor was there any cover to protect the traveller from the severe influence of the atmosphere. At this sight Menzikoff stood as if petrified; he did not believe his eyes.

"Must my poor sick wife make the journey in such a miserable box?" asked he at length.

"Certainly," returned the commandant, laughing. "Did you really believe, Menzikoff, that something better would be provided for you than for the other convicts? or did you trouble yourself about procuring comfortable conveyances for those distinguished people who were sent here by your cruelty? eh!"

This speech came like a clap of thunder to Menzikoff. Yes, there is a recompense. He had in cold blood banished hundreds to Siberia by the stroke of his pen—he had remained deaf to the supplicating entreaties of the women and children who were being left behind.

Yes, and they themselves, although innocent, had often been obliged to share the fate of their husbands and fathers. The same clothing and the same Kibiks had awaited them, however noble or distinguished they might happen to be, and frequently were. Now his turn was come.

"Master, you are right," he gently answered, asking forgiveness of his innocent lady for having involved her in his sorrowful, but well merited fate, by a silent pressure of the hand, while his heart bled under nameless torments, when he saw his children, accustomed to revel in luxury, take their places with resignation in these miserable conveyances.

He sought anxiously to procure at least a softer seat for his lady, and Michaelow willingly gave him his mantle to cover the trembling Princess from the piercing cold—a grateful pressure of Menzikoff's hand was his reward for this service of love. At the request of Menzikoff, his children took the lead, he himself followed next, behind him the princess, while Michaelow brought up the rear, and in this way, under their light burdens, the horses trotted smartly over the crisping snow, galloping away over the endless plains of Siberia. When at length the Kibiks halted to allow the horses to feed, Menzikoff sprung out of his conveyance, and approached his lady, from whom he had never removed his eyes.

"How are you?" he asked anxiously.

"Well," she answered from under her wrapper.

"Will you eat or drink anything?" he again enquired.

"I thank you," she replied, "I am neither hungry nor thirsty."

"Will you not step out and warm yourself by a little exercise?" he then proposed.

"No, leave me so," she returned. "I have wrapped myself up so beautifully."

"Well, at least reach me your hand, dear wife," he said tenderly.

The Princess stretched out her right hand out of the Kibik, complaining that she could not draw off the glove.

"Oh, leave it alone," cried Menzikoff, tenderly pressing her hand through the thick fox-skin. "Your hand is as hard as a stone," said he, gazing frightenedly on the enshrouded countenance of the Princess, which appeared to him to resemble that of a corpse.

She endeavoured to smile as she answered,

"It only seems to you, dear husband; do not trouble yourself."

But Menzikoff anxiously sought by rubbing to restore the torpid member, until the driver called him away from this occupation. The Prince passed the day under a thousand pining apprehensions, and the long night set in with a sharp cutting wind, blowing over the fields of ice right in the face of the travellers. Menzikoff suffered two or rather fivefold. A fine drift pricked the cheeks like as with needle points, while the cold became ever more intense, making itself first felt in the feet upwards, until it pervaded and thoroughly shook the whole body. What might not the delicate Princess and children, accustomed to luxurious habits feel, when the Prince's members, hardened by travels and campaigns, had already suffered so much. The night, dimly illuminated by the snow, wore away under incessant travelling when a cold mist came on, and over it the blood red sun, which did indeed send its enlightening rays down upon the poor travellers, yet not its warmth.

As silent as a funeral procession they continued on their way, the cold killing all pleasure, and stiffening the tongues which would have willingly spoken. At every stoppage the husband and children surrounded the sledge of the Princess, who remained even as laconic as during the previous day, neither desiring to eat nor drink. Several times she appeared to slumber, and not to hear the words which were addressed to her. On such occasions the enquirers would always retire, embarrassed, however, with tormenting conjectures. In this way the second night of this journey, set in for which none but Russian horses could be capable of holding out. A faint brightness now began to illuminate the dark heavens, which by degrees spread itself farther

and farther, assuming a fearfully beautiful aspect of a blood red colour. The firmament seemed to be on fire, while dazzling rays shot up out of what looked like a dark flaming furnace, towards the immeasurable vault of heaven, as if an immense battle was being fought by the powers above, or as if a thousand throats of flame belched forth their lightnings, and set the westerly universe in a blaze. Thus did this inexplicable event of nature appear, and how horrible, how spectral did the fight seem to all on account of the terrible silence which prevailed. No thunder, no clash of weapons, no battle cry, no death shriek was to be heard; but spirits alone appeared to fight against spirits. Such is the impression generally made on the mind of the astonished onlooker by the northern lights (*Aurora Borealis*.) Even the horses had become restive, so much so as to make a halt necessary, and all eyes were directed to this appearance of the heavens which is so often to be seen in the far north. It had also awakened the Princess out of her drowsy condition, who sitting upright in her Kibik, her mantle having fallen from her shoulders, while the ghastly hue of her wasted countenance glanced in the red reflection of the northern lights, gazed fixedly towards the blazing sky. She would not utter a word to her husband or children, but at length, as if speaking to herself in a low voice, she began,—

“Sun and moon are darkened, the stars fall from the sky, the powers of heaven are shaken. Do you not hear,” continued she, more loudly, “how all the kindreds of the earth howl because they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory?”

Undoubtedly they did now hear a howling, yet only that of the frightened wolves, who sought to fly from the dazzling brightness.

“Do you not hear the pealing of the trumpets, whereby the angel assembles God’s elected ones?” she again exclaimed.

Menzikoff had listened with uneasiness to what his lady uttered. Did she dream or did she rave?

“Dear wife,” said he trembling, “collect yourself.

It is only the northern lights that you see, and has no farther signification."

The Princess gazed unsteadily round the circle of her family.

"Do you not see," she said, pointing towards heaven, "that Christ sits there, holding judgment, and like a shepherd is placing the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left? Oh, dear Saviour," she exclaimed, raising her hand beseechingly, "I pray thee, take me also into thy beautiful warm heaven. Hu! Hu! for I freeze excessively on this cold earth. Do not cast me into the uttermost darkness, where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Who can describe the misery of the unhappy family now? They could not conceal from themselves the danger which threatened their dear mother. Menzikoff cast his tearful eyes around the immense waste, vainly seeking for help. Nowhere did a shelter offer itself, where the sick one might find a peaceful death-bed.

"How far is it to Tobolsk?" asked he of the accompanying officer.

"By sunrise we may reach it," the latter returned, himself deeply moved by the suffering condition of the Princess.

"Well then," urged Menzikoff, "let us hasten, ere it be too late."

The Princess quietly allowed herself to be wrapped up in her mantle, and proceeding quickly on their journey, by day break the long anxiously looked for Tobolsk, the capital of Siberia, lay in reality before them. At that time the place was only small and insignificant, but for Menzikoff it had become the eagerly desired haven of repose. As soon as they had reached the first houses, Menzikoff sprang out of his Kibik and implored the officer to allow the sufferer to be conveyed immediately into a warm room. On receiving permission, and when they were looking around them for a suitable dwelling, Michaelow, approaching the Prince, gladdened him with the intelligence that he had an uncle in the place with whom he hoped to meet his mother and sister.

"With them," added he, "the sick Princess will be lodged in the best manner, and find the most active attention."

"Then seek out the dwelling of your kinsfolks as quickly as possible," besought Menzikoff; "every moment's delay may be fraught with the deadliest consequences."

The arrival of the Kibiks had aroused the curiosity of the inhabitants—the slightest unusual occurrence making an impression in a place so remote from the bustle of the busy world. A crowd of people had therefore already gathered around them, examining them with an offensive stare. Michaelow now turned himself to these, and asked them to show him the house of the commissary, Simonow Natuschkin.

"There, there it is," they answered, pointing to the next corner of the street, while a boy cried,

"There goes Natuschkin's niece. Do you not see?"

"Ha, my sister," Michaelow joyfully exclaimed, bounding up to Helene, who, from affright at the unexpected appearance of her brother, had almost fallen, and after tenderly embracing her, he said, hastily, "go, hasten to our mother, and tell her to get a well warmed bed prepared for one who is seriously ill."

"But, dear brother," exclaimed Helene, "how came you so suddenly here, and that also with one who is sick? Are you then no more with the Prince?"

"Only do not ask me just now, dear affectionate sister," Michaelow besought her. "You shall learn all afterwards. The sick one is even the Princess my mistress. Do you only hasten and carry out well my instructions."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CUP OF SUFFERING.

PUZZLED at this mysterious intelligence, the possibility of which she could in no wise comprehend, Helene hastened home and astonished her mother not a little by its relation; yet even greater was the amazement of her uncle Simonow.

Which of my young readers will not have had a presentiment that Michaelow and Helene's mother was no other than the poor rejected Matinka—the first spouse of Menzikoff? And it really was so. Her only compensation for the loss of her husband had been in the possession of both her children, whom she had brought up in obscurity and in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. To spare herself and them from bitter recollections, and also possible paroxysms of discontent and envy, she had concealed from her children the true connection of their whole history, adopting on this account also the name of her father Natuschkin. She never allowed them even to suppose that the exalted and absolute ruler of the Russian Empire, Prince Menzikoff, was their father; but rather gave them to understand that her husband had gone out into the wide world and died (to them) in a far country. Yet was she utterly unable to root out her love for her husband from her heart; and ever, even when farthest removed from his vicinity, she took the most lively interest in his welfare or misfortune, catching with the greatest avidity at every intelligence of the Prince which reached her. When her children were grown up, and when she was embarrassed about the choice of a profession for her son, a happy thought struck her. She determined to get her son installed as a faithful servant in the Prince's neighbourhood, in order

that he might be able immediately to give his father timely warning of any treacherous snare which any of the numerous enemies of the latter might lay for him. With this object in view, she often related to her children stories about Prince Menzikoff, doing ample justice to his merits in the prosperity of Russia, lamenting only that such masters seldom had a single faithful servant.

Enough. Florin with pleasure obeyed, when his mother requested him to seek Menzikoff's service, changing at the same time his name to Michaelow, and promising never to communicate to any one in the vicinity of the Prince anything regarding the circumstances of his family. In this way she hoped to be able constantly to receive an account of all that happened to her husband.

At length, after a period of more than twenty years, she could no longer deny herself the pleasure of seeing him again, and therefore undertook the journey, already related, along with her daughter, to St Petersburg. We have seen what a struggle it cost her to conceal the sensations of her heart before her children. Thereafter they travelled to her beloved brother Simonow, whose life his sister's self-imposed sacrifice had indeed saved; but nevertheless Siberia was appointed to him as his future residence. Here, however, he in no wise lived the life of a convict, but as a non-commissioned officer executed his ordinary duties in the garrison of Tobolsk. Subsequently he rose in office, and, during the course of a little over twenty years, was advanced step by step to his present lucrative post. He received his sister and her daughter with the greatest tenderness, but always spake very bitterly of Menzikoff, who had been so hardhearted as to repudiate his faithful wife. Matinka, on this account, concealed from him that Florin was in the Prince's service; but now she was obliged to reveal the truth, because she required his permission to receive the sick Princess into his house.

"How?" exclaimed he, with uplifted hands, and the most lively astonishment. "You would receive your arch enemy who has displaced you, robbed you of a



husband, and nurse her. On your own account I dare not allow it. I, for my part, will take no farther notice that Menzikoff was the means of my being thrust into Siberia, for excepting a little cold I do not find myself so badly off here ; but you—you who have been more injured by him than that you can ever forgive it."

"Dear brother," Matinka answered, "how can you speak so strangely? How is the Princess my arch enemy? I do not know how that can be possible. I am entirely unknown to her. She has never yet seen me. Think of the beautiful traits of her character, which Florin has described to me. If only all people were as good as she. Yes, and even suppose that she has wronged, injured, and persecuted me. Do you not know that Christ has commanded us to love our enemies,—to bless them who curse us,—to do good to those who hate us,—to pray for them who despitcfully use and persecute us? Are we not to heap coals of fire on their heads?—to be like our Saviour, who, even while on the cross, prayed for his murderers? Do we not pray God daily to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us? No, dear brother, you were not in earnest; therefore let us make the best preparations for receiving the poor sufferer, but do not betray me by any inconsiderate word. God will yet lend me strength to bear this new trial."

Simonow was ashamed of his severe expressions, and said, in a softening tone,

"But I cannot comprehend what brings the Princess here to Tobolsk at this rough season. The tables are surely not already turned, and the high and mighty ruler served out in like manner as he has done to others? I must inquire about the matter."

He went out and reached the place where the Prince and his family were, in time to witness a scene equally revolting as it was scandalous. The Kibiks had halted near his house door. Menzikoff, together with his son and Michaelow (or Florin), had lifted the sick Princess and were carefully bearing her towards the house, while the two Princesses followed this group, weeping, when a fellow, in like manner clothed in the

coarse convict dress, pushed himself through the crowd, and gazing impudently into the face of the Prince, broke out into a withering scornful laugh,—

“Ho ! Ho !” cried he, with an obscene malicious joy. “Great Prince Menzikoff ! Base villain ! Bloodhound ! have you at length received your reward ? Do you now come with your brood to share that fate which you procured for us ? Welcome, my beautiful Princesses ; Welcome to Siberia.”

With these words the miserable wretch spat in the sorrowful faces of both Menzikoff’s daughters. The Prince had followed with his eye the movements of this madman, and had almost allowed his sick wife’s head to fall, when he saw this revolting illusage. He was beside himself, as if a thousand daggers had pierced his heart. His hands were occupied, for they bore his dying lady, and he, therefore, could only use his voice to protect his trembling beloved daughters. In a most fearfully heartrending tone of anguish he shouted to the vindictive scoundrel,

“Hold barbarian ! On me, —vent your rage on me ; but not on these innocent ones,” while a torrent of the bitterest tears streamed over his pale countenance.

Impelled by the maddening sorrow of the unfortunate father, the other onlookers prevented a repetition of this shameful abuse, which the blackguard would have perpetrated, if he had not been forcibly removed, while Simonow silently thought within himself, Matinka was right. Faugh ! How hateful is vindictiveness. No, a revengeful person can neither please God nor man ; and stepping up to the Prince he thus addressed him, in a gentle tone,

“My poor friend, welcome to my house—consider it as your own ;” and, turning to the Princesses, he added, “My children, recover from your fright. Only one amongst all the inhabitants of Tobolsk was capable of acting so disgracefully. Be welcome ! Be welcome to me !”

How pleasantly did this speech sound to the humiliated family. The contrite Menzikoff gratefully lifted his eyes, swimming with tears, to Simonow.

"God's blessings on you, noble man," his pale lips feebly uttered, and he again turned the whole of his attention to his sick wife, who just then was being laid on a well-warmed bed.

Excepting a gentle shivering which pervaded her whole body, the Princess lay there without motion, her half-opened eyes gazing fixedly. A physician who had been called declared her condition to be very doubtful. They washed her icy-cold skin, according to his instructions, with vinegar, rubbing her marble members, and surrounding her on all sides with warm stones and bottles ; but their joint efforts remained long without success. Menzikoff, meanwhile, watched his suffering wife with indescribable anxiety, and the weeping children assisted in nursing the sick one.

"Oh," sobbed Matinka, as she indefatigably exerted herself to lend a helping hand, "how much he loves his lady! he has not one look for his poor Matinka."

Her tearful eyes often rested on the Prince, when she believed herself unnoticed, and then she would unwillingly turn her looks away—thus the night set in. A rose-coloured red now overspread the temples of the Princess, the first sign of returning consciousness. True, the deadly paleness of the face remained ever the same, contrasting all the more deeply with the sharply defined redness of the temples. Yet even there a symptom of improvement became visible, the whole countenance shone as a heavy sweat broke out, running down over the brow in large drops. This condition gradually spread itself over her whole body—the bed steamed with it, and seemed as if it had been dipped in water. Menzikoff, the children, and the others present, remarked this appearance with rising satisfaction.

"God be praised," cried he joyfully to the physician, who had entered. "A salutary crisis has appeared. The patient has fallen into a violent sweat."

The physician followed him incredulously to the sick bed, where he eagerly scrutinized the white face of the Princess—laid his hand examiningly on her damp brow, —took her hand and held it long, counting the beatings of the pulse. All eyes rested inmoveably on the

physician's lips, impatiently expecting from them the confirmation of their joyful hopes. At length speaking with great deliberation, he said,

"The present condition of the sufferer can by no means be interpreted as a salutary crisis. This sweat is nothing else than the breaking forth of the juices of the body, when the skin can no longer perform its office. It is too unnaturally strong, and also accompanied by a remarkable coldness. It is, in a word, the sweat of rapidly approaching death."

This unexpected decision suddenly transformed the joyously budding hope of the family of the Princess into unbounded sorrow. A universal sobbing ensued. Menzikoff mournfully covered his head, and knelt beside the bed of his sick lady, whose features now began to work very nervously. The half-opened eyelids moved, the mouth writhed backwards and forwards, the lips now opened and again shut. At length she softly gasped the scarcely perceptible words,

"My Alexander ; my husband."

Her outstretched hand appeared to seek that of the Prince. How awfully terrified was he when his wife laid her deadly cold hand into his warm, healthy grasp. Was not this the same cold hand which Matinka reached him for the last time at their divorce? The spirits of vengeance and recompense pierced his very soul.

"My children," again uttered the dying one yet more faintly.

They threw themselves sobbing on their knees beside their father, each seeking once more to press the dear hand. A happy smile now illuminated the countenance of the Princess. She attempted once more to speak. Deep down in her chest the sound seemed seeking to work its way upward, but death surprised it by the way. The inexorable angel of death touched the poor sufferer with his bony fingers, ere yet the words could find their way to the pale lips. The weeping children of the deceased, with loud lamentations, threw themselves over the cold corpse and kissed its benumbed lips. But no salutary tears filled the eyes of the Prince. He raised himself straight up, tremblingly lifted his right hand, and,

pointing to the body, said, in a terrible voice to those present,

"See there. That is the second wife whom I have inhumanly destroyed. Matinka," screamed he, beside himself, casting his rolling eyes towards heaven, "I have deserved this on your account. You have been fearfully avenged. If I had not cast you off, all these sufferings would not have broken loose upon me, and my poor family."

Matinka nearly sank to the ground on hearing these words ; but, with a voice almost suffocated with anguish, she exclaimed,

"Matinka has forgiven you. She forgives you now."

"Has she truly, my good woman?" returned Menzikoff, half unconsciously, and again turned himself immediately to his deceased lady.

Poor Matinka was also silent, now humbly abandoning her fondest hopes. Oh, how strong had been her belief that Menzikoff would acknowledge and draw her to his heart, allowing her to return to her old place, and granting again her former rights. And then, had she not two loving children to present him with as a consolation for the loss which he had but just sustained in the decease of his lady.

"No," she said to herself. "He loves you no more. It was only a passing fitful thought which recalled to him the remembrance of his forsaken Matinka."

Persevering, notwithstanding, in her kind activity, she in company with her brother, assisted in providing everything necessary for the funeral of the Princess, which was doleful enough. They were obliged first to thaw the frozen soil of the churchyard with fire before the silent little chamber of death could be prepared, and only after great exertions did the hard clods give way under the repeated strokes of the pick-axe. Then the Princess, who only a month previously had been mistress over a hundred thousand bond serfs and millions of gold, was carried out, wrapped up in her coarse convict dress, enclosed in a miserable coffin. The Prince and his children, in like manner meanly clothed, followed,

accompanied by a single faithful servant and his relatives.

The numerous onlookers sincerely acknowledged the frailty of earthly happiness and splendour, while the hearts of the mourners sobbed heavily as the frozen lumps of earth thundered down upon the silent tomb of the Princess. Only an unhewn rock marks out her unadorned grave, placed there by the united efforts of the men who attended her funeral. The innumerable tears shed thereon form the sole inscription of her tombstone only legible to the sympathising reader.

Early next morning after the funeral, Menzikoff took leave of the hospitable Simonow and his sister. He did this with few words and downcast looks. Matinka would willingly have thrown herself on his breast, and made herself known to him, as Simonow had spoken to her of doing.

"No," she had answered him; "just now is not the proper time for doing so—his heart has only room for the one just deceased spouse. A man does not momentarily comfort himself over the loss of a loving wife, who has been his faithful partner in happiness and misfortune for the space of twenty years. It is impossible for him to be able immediately to transfer his love from her to me, even although I may have old claims upon him; and then his indifference would wound me more severely, pain me more deeply, make me far more unhappy than I am now, when he is not aware of my presence. Just now it is my lot to suffer and be silent."

But Matinka very lovingly embraced Menzikoff's children when they came to thank her and to say farewell. Yet were they not also her children? She had also entrusted Florin with the secret of his birth ere he departed for Beresow with his father, whom he all the more gladly and willingly accompanied, pronouncing now far more tenderly the word "Father," which he had used ever since the deceased Princess had requested him, when addressing Menzikoff.

The latter did not observe the change in Michaelow's behaviour, or, if he did notice the evident affection

which his conduct betrayed, he attributed it to the interest which Michaelow took in his mournful fate. The young Prince had likewise become more familiar with Michaelow. Misfortune had made him more mildly disposed, and completely broken his pride, while the two Princesses considered and treated the faithful servant as a member of their family. The bounty of Simonow and his sister had supplied the poor banished ones with many sorts of conveniences and necessaries, which were most useful, partly on their journey, and partly at their place of destination.

The journey continued without intermission, while the air became ever colder, and the days shorter, as they proceeded farther and farther north. All natural life appeared to have died, and only rarely did they meet a traveller who would gallop past in his sledge drawn by dogs or reindeer. The sun seeming to have lost all its brightness—for without dazzling their eyes they could intently gaze on its blood-red disc—was only visible a few hours above the horizon, while sometimes several suns were to be seen beside one another. Such like false suns (parhelion) as also false moons, (paraselene) frequently form themselves by the air becoming so condensed by cold that it receives and reflects like a mirror the image of the real sun or moon. This is one of the most fearfully beautiful spectacles to be seen in nature.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

THE convicts reached the little town of Beresow in the very depth of winter. It was wonderful that at least some of their members were not frost-bitten on

their long journey, from the intense cold. There lay the low wooden houses, on the extensive plain, lonely and still as death; at long intervals a person, masked in the skins of wild beasts, was seen skipping quickly over the snow. The Prince and his family were roughly received by the commandant of the place, who assigned them a kind of wooden hut, as their dwelling, in which on entering they found nothing but a small slab whereon stood the fire place, representing accordingly the kitchen.

There was but a single room, where a large stove, built of clay and bricks, which might at the same time serve as a comfortable bed, took up a great part of the space. This, with a few wooden forms, a roughly made table, and bare wooden walls, was all that they met with in their little house. A few small windows with panes of isinglass, through which only half the daylight could pierce, diffused a dim twilight at full noon day, and made the kindling of a miserable tallow candle or pine torch always needful. Here, of course, no tapestry, mirrors, chandeliers, curtains, easy chairs, nor sofas were to be found. No handsomely wrought comfortable carpet covered the dirty floor. Here each member of the family had not a separate apartment, but the one room served all, both for eating and sleeping. Instead of comfortable beds of down, they found only a few woollen bed covers and shaggy bear skins. Even the most necessary utensils, as plates, spoons, pots, and such like needful house-furnishings, were wanting.

True, the Prince received ten roubles daily for his own and his family's sustenance; but of what use was the money to him in a place where there was really no tradesmen, not even a baker. The land, on account of the short summer, not being capable of producing grain, meal and flour were conveyed from hundreds of miles distance; therefore every family provided themselves with the necessary supplies before winter set in, and then baked their own bread. Here was neither beer nor wine, for both would have been congealed into ice, even in the casks. If they wished to drink water,

or cook soup, they had first to fill a pot with snow or pieces of ice, and melt it over the fire. For money they could procure spirits, smoked, dried, or frozen fish; but delicate grocery wares, and nourishing herbs were troublesome to acquire—for the Jew who dealt in them demanded the very highest price, because they could only be obtained from him. In summer the inhabitants were able to supply themselves much more easily with such like necessaries, from the ships that ply on the river running between Tobolsk and Beresow, and because everything is to be procured much more easily and quickly than in winter, when the frightful cold almost cuts off every communication between the two places. It was a great blessing, therefore, that the banished family had been so generously and abundantly supplied with these same necessaries by Michaelow's mother and uncle, and it was a pleasure to observe with what zeal the good Michaelow attended to their humble housekeeping. He was always the first out of bed, one which he had erected for himself in the farthest corner of the room. His first act was to kindle the fire in the kitchen, having purchased the required firewood directly on the first day of their arrival, and which, with the help of the young Prince, he had split and carried into the house. If the fire burned brightly, he lifted a tolerably large pot filled with pieces of ice thereon, in preparation for breakfast. While he was doing this, the Princesses, his sisters, rose and sliced bread into a dish, and when the soup was prepared, they sat down together, after family worship, and despatched their simple meal. On Sundays only, they allowed themselves the luxury of tea and chocolate in place of the bread soup. After breakfast, both the young men left the hut in order to make excursions into the surrounding country, to hunt wild animals for the sake of their skins, or to provide flesh for dinner; while the maidens put their little apartment in order, and then commenced either to wash and repair, or make new clothing for themselves or the men. Menzikoff, however, remained immoveably sitting on his wooden bench, gazing gloomily before him. At

times his eyes would fill with bitter tears when he directed them towards his industrious daughters, as they stitched about amongst the coarse shaggy materials with their delicate fingers, straining their eyes in the continually prevailing twilight. After several hours' absence, the youths would return, their breath frozen and hanging in icicles round their hair and fur caps, their hands, which held their hunting weapons or fish which they had bought, thrust into large fist gloves, while their backs were frequently laden with booty, generally composed of foxes, sables, or ermines. They were joyfully welcomed by the sisters, to whom they cheerfully related their adventures; but their father did not mingle in the conversation. He obeyed patiently as a child when invited to meals, but in general his mouth remained dumb. After dinner the maidens also went out, at their father's request, to take the air, in company with the young men; and when they returned home with blooming cheeks, they always found their father on his knees engaged in the most earnest prayer. They could overhear his voice on entering the kitchen as he cried to God, and humbled himself before Him for the forgiveness of his many and grievous sins, supplicating only for the welfare of his children, while bathed in tears and sobbing so violently that the sound penetrated through the thin partition, filling the listeners with inward sadness. This protracted grief, unmitigated by any pleasure, threatened to gnaw the germ of life—for his strength, by neglecting to preserve it by any exercise in the open bracing air, was perceptibly disappearing. When Alexander, his son, in order to infuse other reflections into his mind, asked him to relate something of his travels or campaigns during the long winter evenings, he always shook his head unwillingly.

"Excuse me, my son," he would answer, "the repetition of the foolishness of which I have been guilty. If I could but recall the time I would most certainly use it better for my real welfare."

Of nothing had he more desire to converse than of the grave, death, eternal life, and a blessed re-union

with his lost dear ones. In this manner the winter slipped away, with its gloomy days, long nights, fiery northern lights, false suns, and false moons. Higher did the sun ascend, and brighter did it shine, and larger became the arch which it described in the blue heavens. A tepid wind licked up the snow from the plain, and caused the icy covering of the river to burst. The little green grass tops looked up cheerily out of the black soil, and overspread its surface as with a wonderful robe of green velvet. The brown rings of the birch trees budded gaily, quickly wrapping themselves up in tender leaves. The swollen waters of the Ob, Irtisch, and Soswa came thundering down, bearing towards the ocean their icy coverings by which they had been so long shut up. A joyful vivacity awoke amongst the inhabitants. They exultingly forsook their smoky huts to enliven the newly reanimated land by their industry. Even Menzikoff could no longer withstand the calls of re-awakened nature, and the entreaties of his children. One fine evening he wandered down to the banks of the Soswa with them, when improving as much as possible the long summer day, during which, the sun scarcely ever disappeared entirely from the nocturnal heavens, all were bestirring themselves with cheerful diligence in providing the necessaries of life for the whole year. Numerous ships came sailing down the blue river, the eagerly desired cargoes of which were being brought ashore with exultation, amidst the joyous shouts of the sailors. Long rafts composed of the large trunks of trees, bound together, laden with firewood and boards, were arriving from the woody regions of the empire, and quickly found willing buyers. To the latter Menzikoff especially directed his meditative gaze; he seemed so entirely engrossed with some object which appeared to him to be specially important, that he remained deaf to all. Whole flocks of returning birds of passage flew screaming high over his head, precipitating themselves down on the newly blooming bushes, and the now open water. The young people amused themselves with the feathered wanderers, and attracted their father's attention

to their sport; but he heard as if he heard not. He had remained standing in the open space of the little town, but, with unusual energy, he now turned himself to his children, and said,—

“Here, in this place, will I build a house to the Lord of Lords. My soul languishes after the holy tranquillity of the house of God, wherein I hope to find repose for my poor soul. Have I been able to labour these many years, in order to acquire only perishable riches and empty greatness? Wherefore then should I not employ the few remaining days of my life in erecting a faint memorial of my adoration to an eternal all-merciful Jehovah? Did my Emperor once wield the heavy axe, many months long, in building a fragile ship—a water house, which threatened destruction to men? and shall I, a poor convict, then be ashamed to lift the axe to provide a church for my companions in misfortune, wherein they, with the assistance of a devoted pastor, may be able to attain to that peace which in their misery they require so much? My whole past life has been a chain of wicked actions. May my future at least be a good one.”

His children willingly assented to this proposal. They yet hoped by means of this projected labour to see him rescued from his melancholy, and fresh life infused into him. This newly formed resolution was energetically carried into execution. The Prince purchased the wood required for the building early next morning, and stinted himself in the necessaries of life in saving the money for that purpose. Provided with a leatheren apron and axe he commenced his labours, faithfully assisted by Alexander and Michaelow. The enormous trunks resounded under the rapid strokes of their instruments; while the Princesses shaped the costly materials for the hangings of the altar, and interwove them with gold and silver embroidery. Menzikoff never rested for refreshment, scarcely allowing himself a few hours sleep; and this too hasty change from complete inactivity to unceasing exertion was far from healthy, consuming his strength more and more. He continued his labours, however, in spite of

his children's entreaties, and the little church rose rapidly, and with it Menzikoff's zeal became yet more intense; but before the completion of the building winter again returned, the wood yet required for finishing it failed, and Menzikoff was compelled to discontinue his labours. He relapsed more deeply than ever into his former melancholy, delighting only in his intercourse with God, and seldom spoke a word to his children. At length the second summer, which had been ardently longed for, approached, bringing with it the completion of their holy labours. He then called Michaelow to him.

"My son," said he, addressing him gently, but earnestly, "amongst much drifting sand, you have been the only grain of gold. I comprehend the great sacrifice which you have made, but I have not deserved it. It were the most bitter ingratitude if I or my children should wish any longer to deprive you of your life's enjoyment, to which you can lay so just claims. Therefore leave this place of punishment, and us to our fate. Thanks to your love and faithfulness, my children have become accustomed to labour and privations of all kinds, have learned to suit themselves to their mournful fate, and made sufficient arrangements. On this account, your loss will be less perceptible to us than it might have been at the commencement of our residence in this place. But you have yet a dear mother and sister, and it is your most sacred duty in this life to dedicate yourself to them. Return, therefore, and enjoy with them the sweet reward which a pure conscience never fails to impart."

Michaelow endeavoured to object, and repeated his former promise never to forsake the Prince, but the latter would not receive it.

"I will by no means involve any one farther in my unhappy fate," said he. "Is it not had enough that my poor children must bear a share of their father's guilt?"

The Prince remained inflexible in his resolution, and his language was likewise so earnest, that Michaelow was outwardly obliged to submit; he only besought

the Prince to permit him to remain with him until he had advised his mother of the Prince's pleasure and received her answer. This was granted him. Menzikoff's children could only think with sorrow of their separation from the faithful Michaelow, while Menzikoff now almost daily asked him whether he had yet received any answer from his mother. Four weeks had nearly elapsed when Michaelow informed him, in reply to this oft repeated question, that he had received intelligence from his mother. He did this with downcast looks and a sorrowful air, and the Prince immediately urged his departure. While the tears flowed freely, Michaelow, with the help of his sobbing sisters, packed up his few possessions; and when he had finished doing this, Menzikoff, deeply moved, thus addressed him,—

“Go, my son, make use of what still remains of the summer for your journey, and may the Lord be pleased to prosper you.”

“My father,” said Michaelow, with trembling voice, kneeling before the Prince. “Be pleased to bless me. I am Florin, your and Matinka's son.”

The Prince did not believe his ears. Like a statue his upraised hands remained outstretched as in blessing. His eyes sought with evident anxiety to read in Florin's features the confirmation of what he had heard.

“How?” stammered he at length. “You were——”

“I am Florin, your and Matinka's son. If I must leave you, I would at least carry away with me your blessing as my only paternal inheritance.”

Florin's voice became ever fainter as he uttered these words.

“You break my old heart,” returned Menzikoff. “Your only paternal inheritance! Truly you are right, my poor son. You have had a false father. Oh, wretch that I am!”

His legs shook beneath him; so exhausted was he that his children were obliged to carry him to a seat.

“My father,” Florin again began, with unutterable anguish, “have you no friendly word for your son?”

Will you not even embrace me, so that I may for once feel your heart beating against mine?"

"Dare I then do so, my dear afflicted son? Can then a barbarian like me be worthy of possessing so good a child?"

He opened his trembling arms, and Florin flung himself on his panting breast. The two men became like children. They mutually held each other in their embrace, their eyes streaming with tears, while the other children mingled their gentle weeping with their impetuous sobs.

"Hold, my children," besought Menzikoff, "my poor heart breaks with rapture and sorrow. Excuse an old feeble man."

He laid his aged head, exhausted, on Florin's shoulder; but suddenly lifted it again.

"And Matinka," he exclaimed. "And my daughter Helene. Where are they? Yet it strikes me as if I had seen them both in Tobolsk."

"You are right, my dear father," returned Florin.

"And yet they did not make themselves known to me," continued the Prince sorrowfully. "Have they been able to allow me to go comfortless into banishment. But truly I deserved it at their hands? Yet it would have been balm to my bleeding heart."

"How willingly would my mother and sister have accompanied you here, my father!" returned Michelow, "sharing your lot, and seeking also to enliven it; but they dared not, doing violence, therefore, to their hearts by their silence, because they knew not your mind towards them."

"They were right," said Menzikoff. "I have, indeed, been cruel towards them; but I had neither forgotten you nor them. Often I thought of you, even while I stood by the side of the Czar, and more frequently, more longingly, in my solitude. Oh, now, I remember well your mother's voice, when she exclaimed to me in Tobolsk, 'Matinka has forgiven you!' but fool that I was to be so blinded, and to deprive myself of the happiness of embracing my noble wife and my beloved Helene."

"Father," Florin again answered, this is not yet impossible. My mother and sister are here. If you wish they will be with you immediately."

Menzikoff rose up hastily.

"Where are they?" he cried impatiently. "I will go and meet them, I will seek them out, and on my knees supplicate your mother's forgiveness."

He staggered towards the door, but Florin had already slipped out before him, and returned leading Matinka and Helene by the hand.

The re-union of the long separated husband and wife was truly affecting. Menzikoff held Matinka's right hand long in his grasp, gazing speechlessly in her loving eyes; but when he saw these fill with tears, and how strongly the old love shone forth upon him, he sank joyfully into her opening arms.

"Yes, you have indeed forgiven me, dear wife," sobbed he. "Oh God, thou hast deprived me of an angel, and in her room thou hast again presented me, an unworthy mortal, with two."

And Menzikoff's children—the Princess' and Matinka's children—kissed and embraced each other and the old couple.

After the first storm of meeting was a little abated, Menzikoff led his Matinka away towards the church. None dared to accompany them, for they wished, unseen by human eye, to return thanks unto the Lord of all Lords, who had brought them again together. The sheltering roof of the little church was not yet completed; but, as a compensation, the eternal sun looked down from his high heavenly dome, sending his rays of blessings down upon the kneeling husband and wife.

Henceforth nothing more was said of separation; but the whole scene had very much affected the old Prince. He felt himself extremely weak, yet unspeakably happy. He only cherished one wish, and this was also to be granted him. The roof of the little church was finished before the commencement of winter, and a priest was also found to conduct the worship of God. When the last stroke of the axe and hammer—the last sound of

the instruments used in its construction had scarcely died away, the little bell in its turret called the inhabitants of Beresow to engage in the solemn consecration of the house of God. Those employed amongst the wood threw aside their axes, joining themselves with the hastily united assembly of the faithful. The lights sparkled in the now darkened church, beaming upon the beautifully painted picture of the virgin, with the golden halo round the head, and the richly embroidered hangings of the altar, all prepared by Menzikoff's daughters. The song of praise arose devoutly as the service of God began ; and after the sacred consecration was concluded, the crowd of believers arranged themselves in two rows, opening a passage through which a festively attired elderly couple, followed closely by three maidens, beautiful as angels, and these again by two young men, walked up to the altar. They were Menzikoff and Matinka, together with their children. The priest blessed anew the tie of wedlock which ambition and covetousness had many years previous to this destroyed ; and, as before, in the solemn hour of separation, three times three strokes of the clock resounded from the turret, yet on this occasion, not as a token of separation, but of blessing.

Like the plate of steel, which newly from the forge glows so splendidly in pure vital air, but quickly grows dim as it cools, so it was with Menzikoff's strength in his present happy condition. He saw himself reconciled to God, to his fate, to his repudiated wife, and to his conscience. Could he wish more ? He was happy. Yet far happier, in the contemplation of eternity, the entrance to which his Saviour had so kindly revealed to him. Henceforth he divided his time solely between God and those he loved. His whole life had been a series of storms and battles, its decline was therefore all the more peaceful. Feeling his faculties vanishing, with great composure and pleasant resignation he laid himself down on his deathbed, from which he was never again to rise ; while, with his wife and children, he always conversed of a joyful reunion in eternity. He died also in this happy belief

without struggle or pain. Death was unable to remove even the pleasant smile which constantly rested on the patient's countenance ; the intense cold held it fast, and thus was he laid in his cold grave.

Those whom he had left behind spent the winter in mourning for the departed, and ere the heralds of spring returned, intelligence of the sudden death of the Czar reached Breesow. The small pox had put an end to his life, and all his power. Elizabeth, a granddaughter of Peter the Great, was seated on the Russian throne, one of the first of whose acts was the pardoning of the unfortunate Menzikoff, returning him again the treasures of which he had been deprived. But he had no more need of mercy from man—infinite mercy had already been sufficient for him. Yet the goodness of the Empress was of use to his children. They were now again suddenly rich, and distinguished ; Matinka's, on the contrary, again poor and humble. Misfortune had, however, made all wiser.

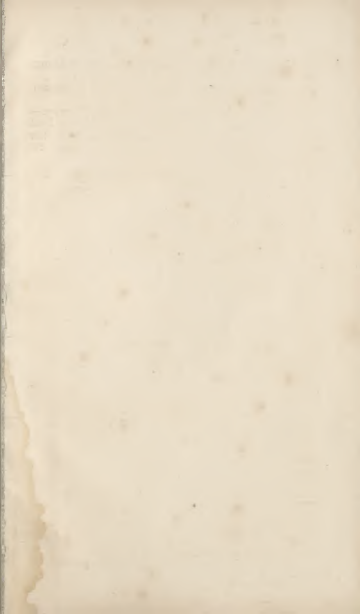
“My brother,” said Prince Alexander to Florin, embracing him, “that which is mine belongs also to you ; let us ever continue faithfully united as brothers.”

He also spake after the same manner to Matinka and Helene, as did likewise both the Princesses ; and they kept their word. Unitedly they all entered upon the return journey home. United they remained during their lives. Good uncle Simonow also entered their mournful family circle. Although the Princesses were subsequently espoused to nobles of the empire, and Alexander gradually rose step by step, yet the bond of friendship remained ever as secure, as when misfortune and fidelity had newly bound it firmly around them. But Matinka and her children enjoyed the most unalloyed happiness, for they remained in their humble position, accepting no more of Menzikoff's offered wealth than what with industry and frugality they required for their subsistence. When Alexander or his sisters visited their relatives and former companions in misfortune, and were eye witnesses of their homely happiness, they never left their circle without giving utterance to this lively conviction,—

“ You are happier than we, for you are contented, but we are only rich.”

Deep in the north of Siberia lies Menzikoff's grave—far removed from it lies that of his second lady, and yet farther removed by Moscow rests Matinka with her children, but the great day of the Lord will again reunite them all, for

WITH GOD IS NOTHING IMPOSSIBLE.





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