BY NYLVANUS COBB. JR.

"How much?" asked Paul, with a boy's curiosity. "It was a sum equal to about seven hun

dred ducats." "And yet he gave it away?"

"Aye-for its price was but imaginary, while its worth to him was only com surate with the good it did him. If he told the truth he loved me, and these he gave me as a parting gift, as the best patterns I could wish for when making such."

After this Ruric put up the small sword, and then he gave Paul a few directions about the work, promising to be back before night. The faithful boy shook his head dubiously as he heard this promise, but he said nothing, and shortly afterwards Ruric went into the house. Just then Alaric Orsa drove up to the door.

Ruric was all ready but putting on his bonnett and pelisse. His mother was in the kitchen. He went to her with a smile upon his face. He put his arms about her and drew her to his bosom.

"God bless you, my mother! I shall come back." He said this, and then killed

"God keep-and-"

It was all she could say.

Ruric gazed a moment into her face—then he kissed her again -- and again he said : "God bless you, my mother! I shall

come back." He dared not stop to speak more. Gently seating his fond mother upon a chair he turned and hurried from the place. In the hall he threw on his pelisse and bonnet, and then he opened the door and passed out. "Have you a good weapon ?" asked Orsa,

as the horse started on. "I have a fair one. I think it will not deceive me," returned Ruric.

"I asked." resumed Orsa, "because Damonoff prides himself upon the weapon he wears. It is a German blade, and he thinks he can cut in twain the blade of any other weapon in Moscow with it."

"I have a good weapon," Ruric said quietly; " and one which has stood more tests than most swords will bear." And after some further remarks he related the peculiar circumstances attending the making of the sword, and his possession of it. At length they struck upon the river, and in half an hour more they reached the ap-

pointed spot. The day was beautiful. The sun shone brightly upon the glistening snow, and the air was still and calm. The sharp frost of the atmosphere served only to brace the system up, and Ruric threw open his pelisse that he night breath more freely. He had been upon the ground but a few minutes when the other party came in sight around

the head of the river. As soon as the Count and his second arrived, and the horses had been secured, the lieutenant proposed that they should repair to This was a large open boat-house, which was unused and deserted in the winter, and it was proposed to go in there because the reflection of the strong sunlight from the bright snow was calculated to blind and blur

" Ha! what means that?" uttered Orsa, ac he saw a sledge just turning the bend of the fiver with an officer in it.

"It is only a surgeon," replied Damonoff. . I would not cut a man's flesh without giving him a fair chance to survive it." "And then you may find him serviceable

to vourself, eh?' suggested the lieutenant-"Of course. There is no telling what may In a moment more the new sledge came

up, and Rurie recognized its investe as an army surgeon whom he had seen before, though he knew not his name.

"Now for the old boat-house," cried Ur

"Aye," added Damonoff. "Let us have this business done, for I would be back to maiden awaits my coming."
"Notice him not," whispered Orsa, who

walked close by Ruric's side. "That is one of his chief points when engaged in an affair of this kind. He hopes to get you angry, and so unhi g . your nerves."

"Never fear," returned the gun-maker. "Be sure he only brings new danger to himself, for such efforts will find their point in the muscle of my arm."

The party halted when they reached the interior of the rough structure, and the Count threw off his pelisse and drew his sword. Ruric followed his example-

"Sir Count," the latter said, as he moved a step forward, "ere we commence this work I wish all present to understand distinctly how I stand. You have sought this quarrel from the first. Without the least provocation from me you have insulted me most grossly, and this is the climax. So, before God and man, be the result upon your own head."

"Out, lying knave-" "Hold," cried the surgeon, laying his hand heavily upon the Count's arm. "You have no right to speak thus, for you lower yourself when you do it. If you have come to fight, do so honorably."

An angry reply was upon Damonoff's lips, but he did not speak it. He turned to his antogonist and said:

"Will you measure weapons, sir? Mine may be a nite the longest. I seek no advantage; and I have one here of the same length and weight as my owu if you wish

"I am well satisfied as it is." replied Ruric.

"Then take your ground. Are you ready?" " I am !"

The two swords were crossed in an stant, with a clear, sharp clang.

There was some contrast between the two combatants, but not much apparently. The Count was a little the taller and Ruric was somewhat heavier. But to a close observer there was a peculiar contrast in the bearing of the two men. That breast swelling out so nobly, and those massive shoulders, made for the seat of physical power, were Ruric's alone to possess. Yet Conrad Damonoff was accounted a strong man. In the athletic sports of the court-club he had few superiors, and not many equals. But Ruric Nevel had never shown his strength there.

Now, for the first time, that contemptuous look passed from the Count's face. As his eye caught his antagonist's position—as he noticed the calm, dignified, quiet case of every limb; and as he caught the deep, mystic fire of those expressive eyes, he knew that he had no common amateur to dea

At length Conrad Damonoff started back, and a quick cry escaped his lips. His antagonist's point had touched his bosom it had pressed against his heart, and had not been driven home. Well he knew that his life was his no longer, for the gun-maker had

gained it, and-spared it. "You fence well," he gasped, struggling

to regain his composure. "You are not a novice," returned Rurie calmly, at the same time allowing his point

"Come on." the Count uttered, now gathering all his energies for another ef-

And again the weapons were crossed This time Damonoff was more guarded. Before he had been impelled by his own assurance; but now he was forced to regard his opponent's power. Ruric quickly found that the other was more careful than at first, and he carried his own point accordingly. At the twelfth stroke the Count made a feint to the left-then at the throat, and then, with a quick, lightning-like motion, he brought his point to his antagonist's heart. But his meaning had been read from the first by Ruric. The youth caught the motion of the eye, and he saw that his heart was the place looked to. His own movement was almost instinctive. He received his antagonist's sword midway upon his own blade-then moved his arm quickly forward and caught the point under his cross-guard-then, with all his power, he wrenched his arm upward and backward. and the Count's sword went flying across the building. It struck the opposite wall with a dull clang, and the next instant it

was half buried in the snow. "Fear not, sir," said Ruric, as the Count started back with both hands raised, "I never strike an unarmed nian."

Demonoff's arms fell to his side, and deep blush of shame mantled his face. "By St. Paul," cried the surgeon, "your life is forfeited, sir Count; and now you should be satisfied."

"Ne, no," the discomfited man exclaimed. starting up with rage and mortification. 'That was but a slip. 'Twas a false stepcowardly feint. I am not overcome.

"But, man of mortality, even now your life is Nevel's. He may run you through now if he chooses." "But he has not." the Count cried.

snatching it up. "Sir Count," here spoke Ruric, calmly, but with marked contempt, "you should not blame me for what I have done, for thrice have you tried to break my sword."

"Then try it again !" Damonoff returned. Take my sword again if you can." "Perhaps not," our hero retorted. "But se sure your sword shall be used no more

after this day." "Ha! Brag not, but strike. If you

The conclusion of the sentence drowned by the clash of steel. At the second stroke the Count made an-

other furious thrust at his antagonist's heart. Ruric sprang quickly aside, and with the whole power of his good right arm he struck Damonoff's blade close to the haft and broke it in twain.

"My other sword! my other sword!" the Count shouted, now blinded by absolute madness. "Oh, give me my other-" "Hold!" cried both the surgeon and Stephen Urzen in concert. "You are mad,

"Mad?-Oh, I shall be mad! Where is my sword!" the reckless man yelled, casting the bladeless pommel down. "But will you not listen one-"

"Away, I say! Shall I give up because my sword is broke? By the gods, the weapon deceived me. Where is the other?' "Deceived thee, Conrad?" repeated the surgeon, sarcastically. "By the holy Host! had thy head but received a hundredth dinner. I dine with Olga to-day, and a fair part of the blow, 'twould not be upon thy shoulders now."

But the Count was beyond all reason. In his madness he saw not that his sword had been broken on purpose. He did not see that he had been at his antagonist's recrey. But his friends saw it all.

"Ha! whom have we here?" cried Alaric, whose eye had caught a dark form at the entrance of the old building.

It was Valdimir the monk. "How now? What seek ye here?" asked Urzen, as the fat, burly monk waddled to-

"I heard the clash of arms, my son, as I rode by, and I stopped to see what it was Surely, where the work of death is going on a child of the holy church of God may

"Aye," cried the Count, "Come in and welcome, but meddle not. Now !-my sword !--where is it ?" Reluctantly Urzen brought forward the

second, but ere he gave it up he said : "Beware, Conrad. You had better-" "Peace, babbler !" the excited fool hissed, snatchi g the weapon, and then turning quickly upon the gun-maker. Thus far Ruric had remained silent, but he

felt it his duty to speak now. "Sir Count," he said, in a tone so stern and authoritative, and with a look so commanding, that the other was held in abey. ance by it, "I must speak on word. You have provoked a quarrel with me-and you have challenged me. I have no fear of death when duty cals for my life, but I would not die thus, nor would I slay a fellowbeing thus. Six separates times to-day, since our swords first crossed, have I spared

-"And twice have I had you before me unarmed," Ruric continued, without noticing the interruption. "I had hoped this would have shown you that I sought not | ere this?" harm to you; and, furthermore, that you

were no match for me at this kind of "Out, fool !" yelled Damonoff, now fairly frothing with rage. "If you dare not cross swords again, say so; but do not crawl off like a coward !"

"One word more," uttered Ruric, paling for an instant beneath the unmerciful insult of the senseless tongue that assailed him-and he stood proudly erect while he spoke— "before these men here assembled and before God, I swear that thus far I have spared

you: but my own life may be the forfeit if

Perhaps the Count really overlooked the facts of which Ruric had spoken. In his angovernable rage he may have fancied that 'twas only accident that had worked against him. However, he started forward once more, and made a furious lunge at his an-

"Now," he gasped, "play your best, for my sword's my own !"

But Ruric spoke not. He saw that the Count was stronger than before-for his rage seemed to give him a maniac's powerand that he was earnest only for life or death. He struck quickly and furiously, and his movements were strange and unprecedented. He threw up all rules of exercise, and cut and thrust only in wild madres. Twice Ruric came nigh being ruu through. He lost all run of his opponent's play, and quickly saw that he must put a stop to the conflict, or run the risk of leaving a childless mother in his home to see that day's sun sink.

"Will you give o'er?" he asked, as he

struck he Count's point down. "Never! Submit to such as you? Bah A few moments more the conflict lasted. One more opportunity he had at Damonoff's heart-and he spared him. All present saw it save the madman.

"Fool!" uttered the monk, who trembled from head to foot with excitement, his huge belly shaking like a bage of jelly, "will you throw away your own life, Ruric Nevel ? Shall I tell your mother you left her of your

This mention of his mother called the last lingering doubt from Rurie's mind. Again he struck the opposing point down, and then he pressed his own point upon the Count's bosom. He avoi ed the heart—he tried to avoid the vitals-but he threw his arm forward, and his glittering blade passed through the fool's body. With an expression of pain upon his features he started back, and rested his reeking point upon the trodden snow. The Count came furiously on again, but he struck wildly, and at random, Rurie merely warding off his blows, until finally his arm sank. On the next moment his sword fell from his nerveless grasp, and he sank fainting back into the arms of his attendants.

CHAPTER VL

"Is he dead?" asked Ruric, starting quickly forward.

"Hold, my son," uttered the monk, laying his hand upon the young man's arm. springing to where his sword had fallen, and "Surely you have nothing to fear. It was none of your work-no more than if you had run your sword to the heart of a wi.d beast that had attacked you."

"But I did not touch his heart," quickly returned the youth. "I was careful of that. would have struck him upon the head with the flat of my sword, but I feared I might break his skull."

"He is not dead yet," answered the surgeon, as Ruric pressed forward and asked second time. "He has only fainted from the shock of the blow, coupled with his own fears and passions."

"But will be die ?" Ruric asked kneeling down by the fallen man's side. "I can not yet tell," the doctor said, at the same time wiping the blood away.

which was flowing freely. "But why not probe the wound now?" suggested the monk. "Now is the best time, for the place is not yet inflamed; and while he is thus insensible he will be free

from pain." The surgeon at once saw the truth and propriety of this, and he proceeded to act upon the suggestion. Having selected a probe which appeared applicable, he examined the wound. Ruric watched him

eagerly, and with a painful expression. "I do not think this wound is mortal." the surgeon reported, as he carefully felt his way along the course the stoel had taken. It has passed below the right lung, and only severed some of the smaller bloodvessels. I think, with proper care, he may

"Thank God!" fervently ejaculated Ruric, with his hands clasped.

"But why so anxious?" asked Urzer. You were ready enough to accept his

"Aye-else you would have called me coward," returned the gun-maker with a flashing eye. "Had I refused to meet him that fatal word would have met me at every turn. I knew that such a man as he was no cope for me at any game where strength of arm and sleight of hand were required. So I meant to disarm him, and then give him up his life, believing that such a move would end the combat. You know how I labored to spare him. But I could not. Yet I would not have the life of a fellowbeing—a countryman upon my hands in such a quarrel. My father died fighting for his country-and so would I die if my death must come from the hand of man; but to die thus would be a curse upon my name, and to inflict such death upon another would

be a curse in my memory.' "I believe you, my son," the monk said. "Only if the Count dies you should not allow such feelings as you mention to over. come you. In no way are you to blame for

"True, father-you speak truly," added the surgeon. "The young man has acted most nobly, and no blame can be attached

Ruric seemed somewhat relieved by these assurances, and having seen the Count's wound dressed, and assisted in bearing the insensible form to the sledge, he took Alaric's proffered arm and proceeded to his own

"Who is that monk?" asked the lieutenant, as they entered their sledge.

"I only know that he is called Valdimir," returned Ruric. "I have only seen him once before. Have you ever seen him

"Yes-several times about our barracks. He has been there when some of our poor fellows have been sick and dying. He seems to be a good-hearted man, and, I should judge, quite intelligent."

"I agree with you there," our hero said. "I think he is a good man; but there is nevertheless a mystery about him which I cannot solve. His countenance is familiar to me, and yet I cannot tell where, nor when,

"Aye," added Aissic quickly and eagerly; "that is precisely the case with me. I

am very sure that I have seen that man I trifle with you more. So now—beware! under different circumstances. And others You have sufficient warning!" of our company have thought the same."

The two men watched the movements of the monk waile they thus spoke, and they noticed that he entered his sledge and drove off towards Borodino.

"Ruric," said the lieutenant, after they had ridden some little distance, and at the same time gazing wonderingly into his companion's face, "you handle the sword like a magician. By my soul, I'd give all I own at this present moment-my commission and all-if I could handle the sword as you

"I do understand the weapon passing well," returned the youth modestly; "but I have worked hard to gain the ssience." "Ah-'tis not all science," the efficer added. "That wondrous strength of yours

is a host in itself." "And yet," said Ruric, "I have seen weaker men than myself who would overcome me easily-or, at least, who might overcome me.

"But they were not in this city," sug. gested Orsa, with a peculiar shake of the

"True, Alaric. I am not in the habit of mentioning my own powers; but yet I may Say that there is no man in Moscow who is my superior in the use of any sort of offen-

The lieutenant readily admitted the truth of this, and then the conversation turned upon the subject of the Count, and the course he had pursued with respect to the event which had just transpired. This conversation lasted until they reached the door of Ruric's residence, and having thanked his friend for his kindness, and expressed the hope that at some time he might have opportunity to return some adequate favor. the gunmaker entered the house.

The widow sat in her great chair by the fire. She was pale and anxious. Her brow was supported by her hands, and at very sound from without she would start up with a trightened expression and listen. At length the sound of bells struck upon her ear-they came nearer and nearer-and they stopped at her door. She would have arisen, but she could not. With her hands clasped she bent eagerly forward, and listened with a frantic interest. Soon the door opened. Surely no one but he would enter without knocking. She started to her feet-the inner door opened-a male form stood before her.

" Mother !" "Ruric! My boy! Safe!"

She tot ered forward and sank upon the bosom of her noble son, and while she wound her arms tightly about him she murmured her thanks to God.

By and by the widow became more calm. but still there was an earnest, eager look of fear upon her face. Ruric saw it, and he knew well what it meant. "Mother," he said, "the Count is not

"Nor wounded?" she uttered, quickly and eagerly.

"Yes-badly. But listen: I could not the circumstances connected with the conflict. When he had concluded, his mother pondered a few moments, and then she said: "Surely, my son, I will try and suffer nothing from this, even should the wicked man die. In all you acted but upon the defensive. From the first he has only been

intent on attacking you; and on the battle-ground he would have killed you if he "More surely he would, mother. Ayee would not have hesitated to stab me in

the back could he have gained the opportunity. He was mad beyond all self-control, and his eagerness to kill me was only equaled by his chagrin at being overcome fly one whem he had hoped easily to son-

After this Ruric went to his shop, but Paul manifested no great emotion upon beolding him.

"You seem to take it as a matter of course that I should return alive and well," said the gun-maker with a smile. "Why-of course," returned the boy.

composedly. "What would a score of such men as he be to you? Conrad Damonoff hold a sword before Ruric Nevel? No, I only smiled when I heard his challenge. I should have as soon thought of being anxious about your return from a

marten hunt." Ruric smiled as his boy's peculiar eagerness of expression, but he felt a degree of

pride in his words, nevertheless. It was thought the latter part of the afternoon that Ruric was somewhat startled by seeing some of the imperial guard approaching his house; and ere long afterwards his mother came to him pale and trembling, and informed him that he was wanted by the Emperor's officers.

"Oh !" she groaned, with clasped hands, and tearful eyes, "they will take you from "Fear not, my mother," the youth con-

fidently returned. "The Emperor will not blame me when he knows all the particulars. But come-let us go in." Rurie found the officers-three of them-

in the kitchen, and he asked them if they sought him. "We seek Ruric Nevel, the gun-maker," replied the leader.

"I am the man, sir. May I know what is wanted ?" "Cannot you guess?" "Why-yes. I suppose it must be on account of the duel which was fought this

"And who wants me?" "Who should want you but the Em-

"Oh, they will not take my noble boy from me !" cried Claudia, catching the officer by the arm. "Tell our good Emperor that Russia has taken my husband from me -that he fell in his country's cause. Tell him my boy was not to blame-" "Hush, mother," interposed Ruric. "Fear

"Come," said the leader. "It is growing late, and Peter will not brook delay.' "But they will not harm him!" the mother frantically cried, clinging now to

"Now rest you easy, my dear mother"; and with these words Ruric gently set her him a mortal wound.

back into her chair, and then hastened out after the officers. In the entry he put on his bonnet and pelisse, and then followed his conductors out to the street, where stood a double sledge, with two horses at-

"You reem to look upon the killing of a Russian nobleman as a very small affair," said one of the officers, after they had started on their way.

"Is he dead, then ?" Ruric quickly asked. "The doctors think his case a critical one. But that is not the thing: you would have killed him if you could."

"No, no. By heavens, 'tis not so! All who were present will swear that I tried to spare him.

"Very well," returned the officer. "We shall see about that when we come to the palace. Perhaps you may go clear; but, upon my soul, I would not willingly occupy

your place." Ruric cared not to arge the point with those who knew nothing about the circumstances, so he remained silent during the rest of the ride. It was near sundown when they reached the imperial palace, and Ruric was conducted at once into the Em-

peror's presence.

The Emperor Peter was in one of the smaller audience chambers, sitting at a large table covered with purple velves heavily wrought with gold, and upon either hand stood some of his private attendants. He was a young man, not yet so old as Ruric by some three years, but his face already wore a mature look. His frame was solid, but not large-being rather slight than otherwise in physical bulk. His dress betraved negligence and carelessness, and was in marked contrast with the rich garbe of his attendants. Such was Peter of Russia -yet a youth-small in frame, and careless of those graces which go to make up the sum of court life; but still able to bear the affairs of a great nation upon his shoulders. Within that head worked a mighty brain, and in that bosom beat a heart thirsting more for the good of Russia than for self or

Ruric saw Stephen Urzen and the surgeon there; and he also saw the Duke of Tula there. He met the Duke's eye, and a eculiar sensation of fear ran through his mind as he saw the stern, threatening expression that rested upon Olga's face. "Sire," spoke the leader of those who had

conducted the prisoner thither, "Ruric Nevel stands before you." "Ab," uttered Peter, casting his eagle eye over the forms before him. "Nevel-ad-

With a bold, yet modest step, Rurie adranced to the table, and with a bow he swaited the Emperor's pleasure. There was a shudder perceptible in the frames of those who wished the prisoner well, for they well knew their mighty ruler's iron will and sternness of legal purpose.

CHAPTER VII.

In order to understand the circumstances ander which Ruric was brought before the few hours. The autograt had eccasion to send for the surgeon, Kopani, who had at-tended at the duel, and as he was some time in answering the summons he was puestioned, when he did come, conserning his tardiness. His answer was, that he had

"And what ails the Count ?" asked the impe or. "He was well yesterday." Yes -- but he met with an accident to

"Look, Kopani," the young ruler cried. who saw in an instant that something unisual had h ppened, "think not to conceal anything from me. What is it now?" "Sire. I meant not to hide anything from you. The Count has been engaged in s

"Ha!-was he challenged?" "No, sire-he was the challen "No, sire—he was the change of So, so. And who was the other sire."

"An humble gun-maker, sire;" Ruric Nevel." " Nevel-Nevel-" soliloquized Peter. The name is familiar."

"His father was a captain in the last war with the Turks. He arose from the ranks under Feeder, and was one of the bravest of the brave." "Captain Nevel-Ah, yes. I remember

now. He and Valdai were the two who first mounted the ramparts at Izium. So the old dispatches read." "Yes, sire. Poor Nevel was shot a month afterwards while leading his brave company against a whole squadron of Turkish infantry, while Valdai came home and

got a colonel's commission." "And afterwards received a title," addd Peter. "Yes, sire."

"And this gun-maker is this captain's "Yes, sire." "And methinks Valdai left a child."

"He did, sire-a daughter, who is now" with Olga-she is his ward." "Yes, yes. And the Count fought a due! rith young Nevel, and got beaten, eh?" Before the surgeon could answer a page intered the chamber and announced that

the Duke of Tula wished to see his imperial

The Emperor directed that he should be admitted; and ere long afterward the proud Duke entered the apartment. He was a tall, stout man, with light hair and blue eyes, and not far from five-and-forty years of age. His bearing was haughty, though he was forced to a show of respect now that

he was before his master. "Sire," spoke the Duke, after the usual salutations had passed, "I have come to demand justice at thy hands. My young friend, the Count Conrad Damonoff, has been most brutally murdered." "Ha! Say ye so, Olga ?"

"But how was it?" "Thus it was, sire : On the day before yesterday, I sent the Count with a message to one Ruric Nevel, who is a gun-maker in Sloboda. He went as I wished, and while there, the gun-maker who is a huge fellow, provoked a quarrel, and knocked the noble-

"Yes, sire.

man down. Of course the Count was offended, and as the ruffian threatened to repeat the offence, and as he furthermore "No, no, my mother. Rest you easy here until I return." And then turning to the guard he added, "Lead on, and I will follow."

peat the onence, and as he furthermore grossly is sulted a noble lady whom the Count held most dear, he could hardly help challenging him. The fellow accepted the challenge, and has succeeded, by the most cowardly maneuvering, in inflicting upon

[To be continued.]

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