

PART I.

"187," shouted the moujik in charge of the division "Now then, there, 187, why don't you come when you are called?"

A young man, who had been crouching in a corner by himself, apart from the group of other prisoners, looked up wearily, as the moujik shook him roughly by the shoulder. He was a very young man, almost a boy, not a trace yet of moustache over his finely-cut mouth, his great blue eyes staring straight in front of him, despair—hopeless, abject despair,—written on every feature of the young face. The boy rose, and with weary steps followed the moujik across the wide hall, where some fourscore or so men of all ages, and apparently all conditions, were huddled together.

They had all stood their trial—a mockery—and had been condemned wholesale to the mercury mines in Eastern Siberia,—the capital punishment practically, but a punishment that sometimes takes three years to complete; a daily, hourly torture, a fight against privations, disease, ignominy, with a felon's grave, as ultimate goal. They were all leaving Moscow on the following day, to begin their weary trudge across miles of arid plains, scantily fed, scantily clothed, perishing by dozens on the wayside through cold and hunger.

And young Count Wladimir Rostopchine was one of those poor wretches. Wealthy, high-born, the idol of St. Petersburg society, he saw himself transformed, after three months imprisonment, into No. 187, one of gang No. 2, en route for Irkutsk on the morrow.

Eh! What would you? He had conspired, at any rate had been sadly mixed up in that last attempt against the life of the Tsar, therefore, he must die. Oh, yes! that is inevitable, but not for three years, Count Wladimir not till you have brought to the surface enough mercury to pay for this gracious prolongation of your existence; after that you may pay your debt to Nature; your death will lie at her door, not at that of the paternal Government of your country.

The moujik, having reached the entrance of the hall, handed over 187 to four cosques, who, having secured the young man's wrists with handcuffs, led him through interminable stone passages, dimly lighted by occasional paraffin lamps, to a massive oak door, over which hung a fine wrought-iron bracket that bore the sign: "His Excellency the Governor's Office." Hardly had they led their prisoner before this door, when it was opened from the inside, and a voice said:

"Have you brought 187, sergeant?"  
"Yes, your Excellency."  
"Bring him in, then, and wait outside with your men, till you are required again."

The sergeant of cosques pushed the young man within the room, and left him standing there, while he himself retired, closing the massive doors with a loud bang.

Count Wladimir Rostopchine, whom all these proceedings did not appear to interest in the least, waited patiently to hear what his Excellency wished to say to him. No doubt more examinations, more questions to answer; he was used to these by now, and had ceased to fear or hope for them.

"Count Wladimir Rostopchine!" said his Excellency, after a slight pause, during which he had been contemplating the young man with more curiosity than compassion.

The boy started. It was three months since he had heard his name, since he had ceased to be a man and had become a number.

"As you are fully aware," added his Excellency, "you have been tried for high treason and lese-majeste, and condemned to the mercury mines of Eastern Siberia—that is to say, to death."

"I am aware of that fact, your Excellency," and need not be reminded," said the boy bitterly.

"To-morrow," resumed the Governor, "Count Wladimir Rostopchine will cease to exist. His goods and moneys become the property of the Crown, his name is erased from the list of His Majesty's subjects."

The young man gave a slight shudder as the old Governor paused for one moment, and, if possible, a look of still greater despair overspread his haggard features, but this time he said nothing.

"And to-morrow," continued his Excellency imperturbably, "No. 187 will start from Moscow, together with two hundred more felons, on their way

to Irkutsk, their ultimate destination there."

"You need not tell me more, your Excellency," interrupted the young man impetuously. "I know what awaits me there; I know of the horrors, the privations, the agonies of a Siberian living tomb. Is it to tell me of them you have summoned me here?"

"I merely wished to assure myself," said his Excellency, blandly, "that you are fully aware of what awaits you to-morrow, unless—"

"Unless?" said Count Wladimir, in amazement. "Is there an unless?"

His Excellency paused for some time. He was studying the young man's wan-looking face through his gold-rimmed spectacles. Evidently, experienced man of the world as he was, he was somewhat at a loss as to the best way of wording what he was about to say.

"Count Wladimir," he said at last, "it is in my power to offer you an alternative. Through your rebellion against the authority of the Tsar, your crime against his sacred person, you have forfeited your liberty, your great wealth, your illustrious name. I am prepared to offer you, in the name of His Most Excellent Majesty, whom may God continue to save, a new name, wealth that will place you beyond ordinary needs, and the right to go freely among your fellowmen, if—"

The effect of his Excellency's last words on Count Wladimir Rostopchine was startling in its intensity; hope that refused to be crushed struggled for mastery over the now vanishing look of despair; all the young man's faculties seemed centred in the one urging intreaty to the Governor to proceed.

"If," resumed his Excellency, "you will agree to the one condition, His Most Excellent Majesty the Tsar will ask you to fulfil in exchange."

"And that condition?" asked Count Wladimir breathlessly.

"Is, that you will freely give that name, over which after to-day you will have no further right, to such person as His Majesty will designate."

"And that person?"

"Is a lady."

"You mean that the Tsar wishes me to marry some—"

"His Majesty offers you any name you might choose, and complete liberty outside the frontier of Russia, together with a substantial portion of your confiscated wealth, if you will undertake to go through the ceremony of marriage with a lady whose reputation is spotless and will always remain so."

"And is that all?" asked Count Wladimir, not daring to trust his senses.

"No, not quite all," said the Governor, "but practically so; you must remember that henceforth Count Wladimir Rostopchine is dead; that after the ceremony is performed there will be a widowed Countess Rostopchine, who will go into society, to Court. That lady you must never approach, she must never see or know him by whose side she will stand at the altar. To her you will be as dead as to the rest of the world."

"Outside Russia you will be free to begin life anew, under whichever name or nationality, you may wish to select. You are young; all Europe is open to you; you will still be comparatively wealthy; you have to the best of my belief no near kinsfolk, and your friends will mourn you, as they are already doing, as one practically dead. Do you accept?"

"Yes, I accept," said the young man with a tinge of bitterness. "You have shown me hell, hideous, terrible, and now you give me a glimpse of earth again; I would be a fool not to accept the alternative. I am ready to fulfil His Majesty's conditions."

"It is well," said the Governor; "but remember one thing," and his Excellency's manner became solemn and emphatic; he was pronouncing sentence of death: "Count Wladimir Rostopchine is condemned for high treason and as such doomed to torture and death; if at any time in the future, anyone—he or she who they may—should know that he has so far escaped that doom, then the Russian police, whose arm is long, and whose eye is far-seeing, will know how to reach and punish him, even if he have built an empire, and set himself upon a throne. Once more, do you accept?"

Count Wladimir, who could not repress a shudder and was choking with emotion, dropped his head on his breast and whispered:

"I do."

That same night, at the hour of midnight, the gloomy prison chapel presented a curious appearance. The candles on the high altar threw an intermittent and flickering light on two young forms kneeling devoutly on a double prie-Dieu, their heads bent under the benediction of an old bearded pope who had just passed a gold ring on the third finger of the right hand of each:

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." There were no flowers, no music, no incense, and there was no joy. There was one broken heart—a young man's, almost a boy's, who at the foot of the throne of God bade adieu to home, kindred, name. The other figure—an enigma—swathed in white, her face concealed beneath a white satin mask, through which a pair of dark eyes looked somewhat compassionately from time to time at the bent figure by her side. Once the eyes of the two met, as the pope having given the last benediction, their hands were joined for the first and only time. A look of inquiry was answered by one of pity, and the mouth beneath the mask, smiled a trifle contemptuously. He who had been Count Wladimir Rostopchine looked at that mouth; it was finely chiselled, as that of the Medici Venus, and on the left side, just above the upper lip, a little mole gave it an arch and childlike expression.

The next moment the white figure had disappeared.

His Excellency the Governor, who had assisted at the marriage ceremony in the capacity of witness, now touched the young man on the shoulder. He pulled himself together as if waking from a dream.

"The blessing of God be with thee, my son," said the old pope.

"Amen," said the young man fervently, and followed Count Gulhoff through the dark chapel, at the door of which four cosques stood in readiness to escort him out of Moscow, and then beyond the frontier.

Count Wladimir Rostopchine was dead.

PART II.

The year 1889 was, without doubt, the most brilliant that that gay little city Budapest had known for some time. The exhibition was an unqualified success, and the town was thronged with visitors of all nationalities, thus realising the dreams of the worthy town councillors, which was to make Budapest the Paris of the East.

As for the "Hotel Hungaria," it certainly became dazzling in its cosmopolitan magnificence, when, after seven o'clock, the czigany band of Racz Pali began playing in the dining-room, and a brilliant medley of notabilities of every clime and country assembled to enjoy the best cuisine and finest music in the world. Russians, Turks, French and English, Germans and Chinese, Roumanians, and Albanians, elbowed each other to secure good tables, and till, past midnight, conversation in every civilised and most barbaric tongues nearly drowned the lively csardas and pathetic love songs.

His Excellency Prince Radovitch, the Transbalkanian ambassador, himself attracted by the gay crowds, mostly dined downstairs. He knew so many people, and was constantly exchanging handshakes and greeting with his various diplomatic friends, while his secretary, M. Andre Zaika, silent and taciturn, as usual, would sit and gaze absently round, a sad, almost yearning, expression in his eyes.

His Excellency Prince Radovitch, his kindness, would from time to time attempt to drag him into conversation, or offer to introduce him to some of his younger friends, but M. Zaika appeared to be almost morbidly sensitive, and to shrink from intercourse with his fellow-men; and yet his Excellency held him in great esteem, gave him his fullest confidence, and consulted him in most matters, both political and otherwise, for he knew Zaika's judgment was clear, and his counsels well worth following.

It was now nearly ten years since Andre came to him in Belgrade, without friends, without introductions, but possessed of a face and bearing that invited confidence, and a nature that was worthy of keeping it. He seldom spoke, and never smiled; true he never frowned either, emotion seemed to have died in him. Once only did His Excellency see him start, and that was a day or two ago, when merry laughter sounded in the hall of the "Hungaria," and the dining-room door being thrown open, there walked in a beautiful woman. She was a Russian apparently, for she spoke in that language to her companions, whom his Excellency knew well, for they were diplomats mostly. Her face was peculiarly lovely, her expression sweet, almost childlike, and at the corner of her mouth, just above the upper lip, there was a little mole that gave the face the most piquant expression imaginable.

Zaika certainly turned pale then, and the glass he was holding smashed to pieces in his hand. The next moment he had recovered himself, and his Excellency, with the discretion peculiar to his office, made no remark on the subject.

"I am going to Her Majesty's little soiree to-night, Andre," said his Excellency on the following day; "the hotel seems more crowded than ever, and I must impress upon you that His Majesty's draft of the secret treaty will remain in my bureau. I should be afraid to take it about with me at night."

"Your Excellency need have no fear," answered Andre Zaika; "I shall in all probability, sit and read in the room until your return."

"Ah, that will be very kind of you. Good-night, Andre!"

And his Excellency stepped into his carriage, en route for Buda, leaving Zaika standing in the hall. It was a lovely, clear frosty night, with a brilliant moon shining overhead. The young man watched the ambassador's carriage out of sight, then turned to go in again, but the keen air tempted him. A walk along the embankment seemed most enticing, and at this early hour of the evening—it was not more than ten o'clock—with the keys of the rooms in his pocket, all within was quite safe.

To be Continued.

EXCESS OF RESPECT.

Office Boy. Say, that new typewriter girl puts on a heap o' airs! Elevator Boy. What does she do? Office Boy. Even when the boss ain't nowhere around she calls her Master Jones.

Dyspepsia's Victims.

THE CAUSE OF THE TROUBLE AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT.

It Frequently Produces Headache, Heartburn, Dizziness and Other Distressing Symptoms—A Victim Tells of Her Release.

From the Telegraph, Quebec. The primary cause of indigestion or dyspepsia is lack of vitality; the absence of nerve force; the loss of the life-sustaining elements in the blood. No organ can properly perform its functions when the source of nutriment fails. When the stomach is robbed of the nutriment demanded by nature, assimilation ceases, unnatural gases are generated and the entire system responds to the discord.

A practical illustration of the symptoms and torture of dyspepsia is furnished by the case of Mrs. A. Labonte, who lives in the village of Stadacona, Que. When interviewed by a reporter of the Quebec Telegraph, Mrs. Labonte looked the picture of vigorous health, showing no traces of the malady that had made her life for the time miserable. Speaking of her illness, Mrs. Labonte said: "For about two years I suffered dreadfully. My digestive organs were impaired and the food I ate did not assimilate and left me with a feeling of flatulency, pain and acidity of the stomach, and frequently heartburn. This condition of affairs soon told on my system in other ways, with the result that I had frequent headaches, dizziness, and at times a dimness of vision with spots apparently dancing before my eyes. I became so much run down that it was with difficulty I could do my household work, and at all times I felt weak, depressed and nervous. While I was at my worst, one of my friends, seeing that the doctor was not helping me, urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. My husband then got me half a dozen boxes and I began taking them. After I had used two boxes I began to enjoy my meals and the various symptoms of my trouble began to disappear. I continued the pills until I had used the half dozen boxes, and I again felt perfectly well. My stomach was as healthy as ever it had been. I could sleep well and my head was clear and free from the dizziness and aches that so long helped make me miserable. It is more than a year since I stopped taking the pills, and health has continued better than it was for years before."

Mrs. Labonte added that she will always feel grateful to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for the misery they have released her from, and she always advises friends who are ailing to use them. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure by going to the root of the disease. They renew and build up the blood, and strengthen the nerves, thus driving disease from the system. Avoid imitations by insisting that every box you purchase is enclosed in a wrapper bearing the full trade mark. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People. If your dealer does not keep them they will be sent postpaid at 50 cents a box, or six boxes for \$2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

NATURAL LIGHTHOUSE

A Volcano Island is Visible for More Than 100 Miles.

Stromboli, one of the Lipari Islands, has constantly and usefully performed the function of a lighthouse for at least 2,000 years. Circular in outline, the island culminates in a conical shaped elevation due to past volcanic agency, which rises to the height of 3,090 feet above sea level, and is visible over an area having a radius of more than 100 miles. During the day masses of vapor are seen issuing from a point high up the mountain side, and at night successive displays of red light, varying in duration and intensity, somewhat resemble those of a gigantic flashlight on the coast. The flashes last from under one to over twenty minutes, gradually increasing to a ruddy glow, and as gradually fading away. This island is referred to by several very ancient writers as the great natural Pharos of the Western Mediterranean. Now it serves the same purpose, for the constant stream of traffic passing to and from the French and Italian ports in the Gulfs of Genoa and of Lyons, through the Straits of Messina, for which Stromboli acts as a "leading" light. To such an extent is this the case that, although the other principal islands of the Lipari archipelago are marked by lighthouses, nothing of the kind is placed upon Stromboli.

Remarkable Cures of Itching Piles

By the Use of Dr. Chase's Ointment, the Only Positive, Thorough and Guaranteed Cure for Every Form of Piles.

If there is one single reader of this paper who is at all skeptical regarding the value of Dr. Chase's Ointment as a cure for any kind of piles, the following statements by well known business men of Western Ontario should be sufficient to convince him that his belief has no foundation.

The only better or more convincing evidence you can possibly get is to be had by a personal trial of this marvelous cure. By using Dr. Chase's Ointment regularly you are certain to be cured of this dreadfully annoying affliction, and will be just as enthusiastic as thousands of others in praising this ointment, the only actual and absolute cure for piles.

Here is the evidence. Weigh it carefully and if a sufferer, as these men have been, profit by their experience, which they have related for the benefit of just such persons. You need not suffer for fifteen years, or even for three years, as these men have done. In a week or two you can be thoroughly and permanently cured by using Dr. Chase's Ointment.

Mr. George Thompson, a leading merchant of Blenheim, Ont., states:—"I was troubled with itching piles for fifteen years, and at times they were so bad I could scarcely walk. I tried

a great many remedies, but never found anything like Dr. Chase's Ointment.

"After the third application I obtained relief, and was completely cured by using one box."

Mr. C. Hayes, Bridgen, Ont., says: "I have been troubled with blind and bleeding piles for twenty years; tried everything I heard of, and got treatment from best physicians, but nothing did me any good. Sent to New York for medicines, but they did me no good. I was advised to try Dr. Chase's Ointment. I got a box and used it, and never have been troubled since, and that is three years ago. It has been a great boon to me."

Mr. C. Harnacher, of Berlin, Ont., states: "For three years I was a victim of itching and bleeding piles, and tried nearly everything, never obtaining more than slight temporary relief. A druggist recommended Dr. Chase's Ointment, and less than one box completely cured me. The itching stopped at once, the bleeding soon quit, and I have never since been troubled with piles."

Dr. Chase's Ointment is sold at 60 cents a box, or by mail, postpaid, on receipt of price, by Edmansons, Bates & Co.