When Bessie Died.

"If from your own the dimpled hands had
And slipped,
ne'er would nestle in your palm again,
If the white feet into the grave had tripped—"

When Bessie died—
We braided the brown hair, and tied
It just as her own little hands
Had fastened back the silken strands
A thousand times—the crimson bit
Of ribbon woven into it
That she had worn with childish pride—
Smoothed down the dainty bow; and cried
When Bessie died.

When Bessie died—
We drew the nursery blinds aside,
And, as the morning in the room
Burst like a primrose into bloom,
Her pet canary's cage we hung
Where she might hear him when he sung—
And yet not any note he tried,
Though she lay listening folded eyed!

When Bessie died—
We writhed in prayer unsatisfied!
We begged of God, and He did smile
In silence on us all the while;
And we did see Him, through our tears,
Enfolding that fair form of hers.
She laughing back against His love
The kisses we had nothing of,
And death to us He still denied—
When Bessie died—
When Bessie died!

PAULINE.

If I wished, the Governor of Tobolsk should be telegraphed or written to; but, as I was bound any way to go to that town, it would be just as well if I made my inquiries in person. To this I quite agreed, mistrusting the speed of the Russian post or the newly-opened telegraph. I was ready to start to-morrow.

So, after getting all the hints and information I could, I thanked the chief for his courtesy, and with my precious papers in my pocket, went to complete my preparations for my journey; a journey which might be a thousand or two thousand miles longer or shorter, according to where it had pleased the Governor of Tobolsk to bestow the wretched Ceneri.

Before I started I received a letter from Priscilla—one of those labored and rather misty epistles usually written by people of her station in life. It told me that Pauline was well; that she was willing to be guided by Priscilla's advice, and to remain with her until the return of her unknown relation or friend. "But, Master Gilbert," the letter went on, "I am sorry to say I believe she is not quite right at times. The poor young lady talks wildly about an awful crime; but she says she is content to wait for justice to be done, as some one she has seen in her dreams during her illness is working for her. She doesn't know who it is, but it is some one who knows everything."

This intelligence made me feel easier. Not only did it show me that Pauline would wait quietly until my return, but also that some glimmering of the immediate past might be dawning upon her. The closing lines of Priscilla's letter made my heart beat with hope.

"This afternoon, Master Gilbert, she seemed to discover for the first time that she had a wedding ring on her finger. She asked me how it came there. I told her I could not say. Then she sat for hours and hours twisting it round and round, thinking and thinking. I asked her, at last, what she was thinking of. 'Dreams I am trying to remember,' said she, with that pretty, quiet smile of hers. I was dying to tell the dear young lady that she was my own master's lawful wife. I was afraid she would take the ring off, but she didn't, thank God!"

Yes, thank God, she did not! As I read Priscilla's letter I yearned to turn homeward and fly back to my wife. But I conquered the inclination, although I felt more and more certain that my meeting with Ceneri would be a happy one for me; that I should return, and, if necessary, once more place that ring on her finger and claim her as my own, knowing that she was purer than the gold of which that shining circlet was made.

Pauline! my beautful Pauline! my wife, my love, we shall be happy yet!

The next day I started for Siberia.

CHAPTER XI.

A HELL UPON EARTH.

It was midsummer when I left St. Petersburg. The heat was oppressive and quite disturbed my idea of the Russian climate. I went by rail to Moscow, by the iron road which runs straight as a line from the one large city to the other. The Czar ordered it to be so made, without curves or deviations. When the engineers asked him what populous places they should take on their way, his Imperial Majesty took a ruler and on the map ruled a straight line from St. Petersburg to Moscow. "Make it so," were his commands, and so it was made, as rigid and careless of the convenience of other persons as his own despotism—a railway for some four hundred miles running simply to its destination, not daring, however much tempted, to swerve aside and disobey the autocrat's commands.

At Moscow, the colossal, I lingered a couple of days. It was there I had settled to engage a guide and interpreter. As I spoke two or three languages besides my own, I was able to pick and choose, and at last selected a pleasant mannered, sharp-looking young fellow who averred that he knew every inch of the great post road to the east. Then bidding farewell to the mighty Kremlin with its churches, watch towers and battlements, I started with my new companion for Nijni Novgorod; at which place we must bid adieu to the railway.

We passed the old picturesque but decaying town of Vladimir, and after duly admiring its five-domed cathedral I found nothing more to distract my attention until we reached Nijni. My companion was vary anxious that we should linger for a day or two at this city. The great fair was on, and he assured me it was a sight not to be missed. I had not come to Russia to look at fairs or festivities, so commanded him to make instant preparations for continuing the journey.

We now changed our mode of conveyance.

Being summer the rivers were open and navigation practicable. We took the steamer and went down the broad Volga till we passed Kasan and reached the river Kama. Up this tortuous stream we went until we landed at the large, important town of Perm.

We were five days on the water—I think the five longest days I ever spent. The winding river, the slow-going steamer, made me long for the land again; there one seemed to be making progress. The road there was straight, not running into a hundred bends.

We were now nearly at the end of Europe. A hundred miles further and we shall cross the Ural Mountains and be in Asiatic Russia.

At Perm we made our final preparations. From now we must depend on post horses. Ivan, my guide, after the proper amount of haggling, bought a tarantass—a sort of phaeton. The luggage was stowed into it; we took our seats; our first relay of horses were engaged—three in number and harnessed in the peculiar Russian fashion—the yemschik started them with the words of encouragement and endearment which in Russia are supposed to be more efficacious than the thong, and away we went on our long, long drive.

We crossed the Urals, which after all are not so very high. We passed the stone obelisk erected, Ivan told me, in honor of a Cossack chief named Yermak. We read the word "Europe" on the side which first met our eyes, and turning round we saw "Asia" written on the back. I spent my first night in Asia at Ekaterineburg; and lay awake the best part of it trying to calculate how many miles stretched between Pauline and myself. For days and days have passed since I left St. Petersburg and I have travelled at all possible speed; yet the journey seems scarcely begun. Indeed, I cannot even guess at its length until I get to Tobolsk.

A trifle of some four hundred miles from Ekaterineburg to Tiumen, another of two hundred from Tiumen to Tobolsk, and I shall await the pleasure of the Governor-General and what information he may choose to give me.

The carriage and ourselves are ferried across the broad yellow Irtuish—that river, the crossing of which by a Russian officer at once raises him a step in rank; for such is the inducement held out to serve in Siberia; and at the east bank of the Irtuish Siberia proper begins.

Tobolsk at last! The sight of my passports renders the Governor civility itself. He invited me to dine with him and, as for prudential reasons I thought it better to accept his invitation, treated me royally.

His register told me all I wanted to know about Ceneri. He had been sent to the very extreme of the Czar's dominions, as his was a case which called for special severity. Where he would finish his journey was not settled, but that made a little difference to me. As he would travel the greater part of the way on foot, and as there was but one road, I must overtake him, although he left Tobolsk months ago. The escort which accompanied that particular gang of prisoners was under the command of Captain Varlamoff, to whom his Excellency would write a few lines which I should take with me—he would also give me a supplementary passport signed by himself.

"Where do you think I shall overtake the party?" I asked.

The Governor made a calculation. "Somewhere about Irkutsk," he thought.

And Irkutsk two thousand miles, more or less, from Tobolsk!

I bade the great man a grateful adieu and spurred on at such speed that even the good-tempered Ivan began to grumble. Man, even a Russian, was but mortal, he said, and I could not expect to find Arab steeds among Government post horses which the postmasters were compelled to furnish at about two pence a mile a horse. I left the yemschik and himself no time for refreshment. Their tea had not grown cool enough to swallow before I was insisting on a fresh start. And as for a proper night's rest!

Tea! Until I made that journey I never knew the amount of tea a mortal stomach could hold. One and all they drank it by the gallon. They carried it about compressed into bricks, cemented, I heard with a shudder, by sheep's or some other animal's blood. They drank it morn, noon and night. Whenever there was a stoppage and boiling water could be obtained bucketeful of tea were made and poured down their throats.

The impressions I retain of that long journey are not very deep. I was not traversing the country for the sake of writing a book of travels, or to observe the manners and customs of the people. My great object was to overtake Ceneri as quickly as possible, and my endeavors were directed to passing from one posting station to another as swiftly as I could. We sped over vast steppes, wild marshes, through forests of birch, tall pines, oak, ash, and other trees; we were ferried over broad rivers. On and on we went as straight to our destination as the great post road would take us. When nature forced us to rest we had to put up with such pitiful accommodation as we could get. Unless the place at which we stopped was of some importance, inns were unknown. By dint of practice I at last contrived to obtain almost enough sleep, if not to satisfy me, to serve my needs, whilst jolting along in the tarantass.

It was a monotonous journey. I turned aside to visit no objects of interest spoken of by travellers. From morn to night and generally through the greater part of the night our wheels rolled along the road. And at every posting station I read on the wooden post which stands in front of it the number of miles we were from St. Petersburg, until, as the days and weeks passed, I began to feel appalled at the distance I had come and the distance I must return. Should I ever see Pauline again? Who can say what may have happened before I return to England? At times I grew quite dispirited.

I think what made me realize the length of the journey even more than days or measured miles was to see, as we went on, the country people gradually changing their costume and dialect. The yemschiks who drove us changed in appearance and in nationality; the very breed of the horses varied. But let man or cattle be of what kind they may, we were well and skilfully conducted.

The weather was glorious, almost too glorious. The cultivated country we passed through looked thriving and productive. Siberia was very different in appearance from what is usually associated with its name. The air when not too warm was simply delicious. Never have I breathed a more invigorating and bracing atmosphere. There were days when the breeze seemed to send new life through every vein.

The people I thought fairly honest, and whenever I found a need of producing my papers the word civility will scarcely express the treatment I received. How I should have been treated without these potent talismans I cannot say.

The whole country-side in most places was busy with the hay-harvest; a matter of such importance to the community at large that convicts are told off for some six weeks to assist in the work of saving the crops. The wild flowers, many of them very beautiful, grew freely; the people looked well and contented. Altogether my impressions of Siberia in summer were pleasant ones.

Yet I wished it had been the dead of winter. Then it is that, in spite of cold, one travels more pleasantly. Ivan assured me that when a good snow road is formed and a tarantass may be exchanged for a sledge, the amount of ground passed over in a day is something marvellous. I am afraid from memory to say how many miles may be covered in twenty-four hours when the smooth-going runners take the place of wheels.

We had of course, various small accidents and delays on the road. However strongly built a tarantass may be, it is but mortal. Wheels broke, axletrees gave way, shafts snapped, twice we were overturned, but as no evil except delay ensued I need not relate the history of these misfortunes.

Nor need I enumerate the towns and villages through which we passed unless I wished to make my story as interesting as a scriptural genealogy—Tara, Kiansk, Koliuvan, Tomsk, Achinsk, Krasnoyarsk, Nijni Udinsk, may or may not be familiar to the reader, according to the depth of his geographical studies; but most of the others, even if I knew how to spell their names, would be nothing more than vain sounds. Perhaps, when we trace the march of the Russian army destined to invade our Indian empire we may become better acquainted with the Czar's Asiatic dominions.

Yet at the entrance to each of these little towns or villages, the very names of which I have forgotten, so surely as you found the well-appointed posting station, you found also a gloomy square building, varying with the size of the place, surrounded by a tall palisade, the gates of which were barred, bolted and sentried—these buildings were the ostrogs, or prisons.

Here it was that the wretched convicts were housed as they halted on their long march. In these places they were packed like sardines in a box. Prisons built to hold two hundred were often called upon to accommodate at least twice that number of luckless wretches. I was told that when ice was breaking up in the rivers; when the floods were out; when in fact the progress must perforce be delayed, the scenes at these prisons or depots beggared description. Men, sometimes unsexed women with them, huddled into rooms reeking with filth, the floors throwing out poisonous emanations—rooms built to give but scanty space to a small number, crowded to suffocation. The mortality at times was fearful. The trials of the march were as nothing when compared to the horrors of the so-called rest. And it was in one of these ostrogs I should find Ceneri.

We passed many gangs of convicts plodding along to their fate. Ivan told me that most of them were in chains. This I should not have noticed, as the irons are only on the legs and worn under the trousers. Poor wretched beings, my heart ached for them! Felons though they were, I could never refuse the charity they invariably prayed for. So far as I could see they were not unkindly treated by the soldiers and officers, but terrible tales were told me about their sufferings at the hands of inhuman jailers and commandants of prisons. There, for the slightest infraction of rules, the rod, the dark cell and a variety of other punishments were called into play.

I always felt relieved when we had passed out of sight of a gang like this. The contrast between my own position and that of such a number of my fellowmen was too painful to contemplate—and yet if Ceneri did not clear away every shadow of doubt from my mind I might retrace my steps a more miserable wretch than either of those foot-sore convicts.

Some week or ten days after leaving Tobolsk I began to make inquiries at every ostrog as to when Captain Varlamoff's gang passed, and when I might expect to overtake it. The answers I received to the latter question corresponded with that given me by the Governor—all agreed, at Irkutsk, or just beyond. Day after day I found we were gaining rapidly upon the party, and when at last we reached the large, handsome town of Irkutsk, I rightly reckoned that I had reached the end or nearly the end of my journey.

On inquiry I found Captain Varlamoff had not yet arrived. At the place where I had last inquired I had been told he had passed through a day before, so it was evident we had overlooked and outstripped them. The best thing to be done was to wait in Irkutsk the arrival of the party.

I was not at all sorry to take a couple of days' rest after my fatigues. I was not sorry to indulge once more in the comforts of comparative civilization; yet nearly every hour I was sending down to inquire if the convicts had arrived. More ardently than I had longed to reach Irkutsk, I longed to turn the horses' heads westward and start on the return journey.

I had heard no news from home since I left St. Petersburg. Indeed I could not expect a letter, as, after my departure from Nijni Novgorod, I had positively outstripped the post. On the road home I hoped to find letters waiting me.

After I had kicked my heels in Irkutsk for two days I received the welcome news that Captain Varlamoff had marched his prisoners to the ostrog at 4 o'clock that afternoon. I rose from my dinner and went with all speed to the prison.

A man in plain clothes—a civilian—demanding to be conducted to the presence of a Russian captain who had just arrived from a long march, seemed almost too great a joke for the sentries to bear in a soldier-like manner. Their stolid faces broke into scornful smiles as they asked Ivan if "the little father" had gone quite mad. It required much firmness, much persuasion and a gratuity, which to the simple military mind represented an unlimited quantity of "vodka," and consequently many happy drinking bouts, before I was allowed to pass through the gates of the high palisade, and, with many misgivings on the part of my guide, was conducted to the presence of the captain.

A fine, fierce-looking young soldier, who glared at me for disturbing him; for having, by advice, adopted the Russian costume, which by now was stained and frayed by travel, there was nothing to show him I was not a civilian whom any soldier might kick at his pleasure.

It was delightful to see the change the perusal of the Tobolsk Governor's letter made in the captain's appearance. He rose, and with the greatest courtesy offered me a chair, and asked me in French if I spoke that language.

I assured him on that point, and finding I could dispense with Ivan's services sent him outside to wait for me.

Varlamoff would not hear of commencing business until wine and cigarettes made their appearance—then he was at my service in anything and everything.

I told him what I desired.

"To speak in private with one of my convicts. Certainly—this letter places me at your commands. But which convict?"

I gave him the true name. He shook his head.

"I know none of them by that name. Most of the names the political prisoners pass under are false ones. When they leave me they will become numbers, so it doesn't matter."

I suggested Ceneri. He shook his head again.

"I know the man I want is with you," I said. "How shall I find him?"

"You know him by sight?"

"Yes—well."

"Then you had better come with me and try and pick him out among my unfortunates. Light another cigarette—you will want it," he added with meaning.

He led the way, and soon we stood before a heavy door. At his command a jailer, armed with mighty keys, appeared. The grinding locks were turned, and the door was opened.

"Follow me," said Varlamoff, with a long pull at his cigarette. I obeyed, and standing on the threshold had much ado to keep from fainting.

From the stench which rushed through it, that open door might have been the entrance to some pestilential cavern, at the bottom of which all the impurities of the world were rotting and putrefying. As it passed you, you felt that the thick air was poisonous with disease and death.

I recovered myself as best I could, and followed my guide into the grim interior. The door closed behind us.

Had I the power to describe the sights I saw when my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, I should not be believed. The prison was spacious, but, when the number of the prisoners was considered, it should have been three times the size. It was thronged with wretched beings. They were standing, sitting and lying about. Men of all ages, and, it seemed, of all nationalities. Men with features of the lowest human type. They were huddled in groups—many were quarrelling, cursing and swearing. Moved by curiosity they pressed around us as closely as they dared, laughing and jabbering in their barbarous dialects. I was in hell, an obscene, unclean hell! a hell made by men for their fellow-men.

Filth! the place was one mass of it. Filth under foot—filth on the walls, the rafters and the beams—filth floating about in the hot, heavy, pestiferous air. Each man seemed to be a moving mass of filth. Zola would revel in a minute description of the horrors of that place, but I must leave them to the imagination, although I know and even trust that no one's imagination can come near the reality.

The only thing I could think of was this: Why did not these men rush out, overpower the guards, and escape from this reeking den? I put the question to Varlamoff.

"They never attempt to escape whilst on the march," he said. "It is a point of honor among them. If one escapes those left are treated with much greater severity."

"Do none ever get away?"

"Yes, many do when they are sent to the works. But it does them no good. They must pass through the towns on their flight or they would starve. Then they are always caught and sent back."

I was peering into all the faces about, trying to find the one I sought. My inspection was received with looks sullen, suspicious, defiant or careless. Remarks were made in undertones, but Varlamoff's dreaded presence kept me from insult. I examined many groups without success, then I made a tour of the prison.

All along the wall was a slanting platform upon which men lay in various attitudes. Being the most comfortable station every inch of it wes covered by recumbent forms. In the angle formed by the prison walls I saw a man reclining, as if utterly worn out. His head sank down upon his breast, his eyes were closed. There was something in his figure which struck me as familiar. I walked to him and laid my hand upon his shoulder. He opened his weary eyes and raised his sad face. It was Manuel Ceneri!

CHAPTER XII.

THE NAME OF THE MAN.

He looked at me with an expression in his eyes which passed at once from hopelessness to bewilderment. He seemed to be uncertain whether it was a phantom or a man he was looking at. He rose to his feet in a dazed, stupefied way, and stood face to face with me, whilst his wretched fellow-prisoners pressed curiously around us.

"Mr. Vaughan! Here! In Siberia!" he said, as one not believing his own senses.

"I have come from England to see you. This is the prisoner I am looking for," I said, turning to the officer who stood at my side, mitigating to some extent the noxiousness of the atmosphere by the cigarette he puffed vigorously.

"I am glad you have found him," he said politely. "Now the sooner we get outside the better; the air here is unhealthy."

Unhealthy! It was fetid! I was filled with wonder, as I looked at the bland French-speaking captain at my side, at the state of mind to which a man must bring himself before he could calmly stand in the midst of his fellow-creatures and see such misery unconcernedly—could even think he was but doing his duty. Perhaps he was. It may be the crimes of the prisoners forbade sympathy. But, oh! to stand there in the midst of those poor wretches, turned for the time into little more than animals! I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the jailer must have a harder heart than the worst of his captives!

"I can see him—talk to him alone?" I asked.

"Certainly; so you are authorized to do. I am a soldier; you in this matter are my superior officer."

"May I take him to the inn?"

"I think not. I will find you a room here. Please follow me. Phew! that is a relief."

We were now outside the prison door and breathing fresh air once more. The captain led me to a kind of office, dirty and furnished barely enough, but a paradise compared to the scene we had just quitted.

"Wait here; I will send the prisoner to you."

As he turned to leave me I thought of the miserable, dejected appearance Ceneri had presented. Let him be the greatest villain in the world, I could not keep from wishing to do some little thing to benefit him.

"I may give him food and drink?" I asked.

The captain shrugged his shoulders and laughed good temperedly.

"He ought not to be hungry. He has the rations which Government says are sufficient. But then you may be hungry and thirsty. If so, I do not see how I can stop you sending for wine and food—of course for yourself."

I thanked him and forthwith dispatched my guide in quest of the best wine and meat he could get. Wine, when ordered by a gentleman, means in Russia but one thing—champagne. At an inn of any standing champagne, or at least its substitute, wine of the Don, may be procured. My messenger soon returned with a bottle of the real beverage and a good supply of cold meat and white bread. As soon as it was placed on the rough table a tall soldier led in my expected guest.

I placed a chair for Ceneri, into which he sank wearily. As he did so I heard the jingle of the irons on his legs Then I told my interpreter to leave us. The soldier, who no doubt had received his orders, saluted me gravely and followed his example. The door closed behind him, and Ceneri and I were alone.

He had somewhat recovered from his stupefaction, and as he looked at me I saw an eager, wistful expression on his face. Drowning as he was, no doubt he caught at the straw of my unexpected appearance, thinking it might assist him to freedom. Perhaps it was to enjoy a moment or two brightened by the faintest or wildest gleam of hope, made him pause before he spoke to me.

"I have come a long, long way to see you, Dr. Ceneri," I began.

"If the way seemed long to you, what has it been to me? You at least can return when you like to freedom and happiness."

He spoke in the quiet tone of despair. I had been unable to prevent my words sounding cold and my voice being stern. If my coming had raised any hope in his heart, my manner now dispelled it. He knew I had not made the journey for his sake.

"Whether I can go back to happiness or not depends on what you tell me. You may imagine it is no light matter which has brought me so far to see you for a few minutes.

He looked at me curiously, but not suspiciously. I could do him no harm—for him the outer world was at an end. If I accused him of fifty murders, and brought each one home to him, his fate would be no worse. He was blotted out, erased; nothing now could matter to him, except more or less bodily discomfort. I shuddered as I realized what his sentence meant, and, in spite of myself, a compassionate feeling stole over me.

"I have much of importance to say, but first let me give you some wine and food."

"Thank you," he said, almost humbly. "You would scarcely believe, Mr. Vaughan, that a man may be reduced to such a state that he can hardly restrain himself at the sight of decent meat and drink."

I could believe anything after the interior of the ostrog. I opened the wine and placed it before him. As he ate and drank, I had leisure to observe him attentively.

His sufferings had wrought a great change in him. Every feature was sharpened, every limb seemed slighter—he looked at least ten years older. He wore the Russian peasants' ordinary garments, and these hung in rags about him. His feet, swathed in fragments of some woollen material, showed in places through his boots. The long, weary marches were telling their tale upon his frame. He had never given me the idea of being a robust man, and as I looked at him I thought that whatever work he might be put to, it would not pay the Russian Government for his sorry keep. But the probabilities were, they would not have to keep him long.

He ate, not voraciously, but with a keen appetite. The wine he used sparingly. His meal being finished, he glanced around as if in quest of something. I guessed what he wanted and passed him my cigarcase and a light. He thanked me and began to smoke with an air of enjoyment.

For a while I had not the heart to interrupt the poor wretch. When he left me it must be to return to that hell peopled by human beings. But time was slipping by. Outside the door I could hear the monotonous step of the sentry, and I did not know what period of grace the polite captain might allow to his prisoner.

(To be continued.)

What Troubled the Flock.

The salary of the Baptist pastor at Grantville, Neb., is $100 a year. The recipient does not try to live on it, but works at his old trade of shoemaking. His congregation do not object to this way of providing cheap ministry to them, but they have made a tremendous row because several Sundays, in making announcements from the pulpit, he included a notice that he would mend shoes better and cheaper than the opposition cobbler. Now we think that it is real mean. The man saw he could be useful in both channels and his congregation could not interfere.

One Effect of Convalescence.

"Why are you so thoughtful?" asked a wife of her convalescent husband. He had been very sick, and for several days his life was depaired of, but he was getting better very rapidly. "I am afraid," he said in response to his wife's question, "that I may have committed myself rather too strongly with the minister."

The school population of Vermont is 73,000.

The greatest depth so far discovered in the ocean is 26 850 feet, five miles, or about 2,200 feet less than the height of the world's loftiest mountain peak, Mount Everest, one of the Himalaya chain, which is found to be not less, and apparently a little more than 29,000 feet above the sea level.