

INVULNERABLE.

A Story of a Hero of Battles Told by an Old Russian Soldier.

Let me conjure his image before my mind once more. Let me recall him as he was when a child rolling in the sand with me; as he looked when a gun was placed in his hand and the command "Forward!" was given, and as he appeared when he grew old with me and left me far behind him. He was a General and I a private soldier.

Never had the Russian army possessed so brave a man, and it will never have his like again. Long will he be praised ere another comes who will make his name forgotten. Surely you can think of it. We were both youths when Muraviev's attack was repelled. But, hush! I've said nothing. Children, don't ask who this Muraviev was. You need not know. Enough that he lived, died, and was forgotten.

At that time a pestilence was raging throughout the vast kingdom of the Czar, more destructive than cholera, more contagious than typhus fever, but fortunately easier to cure, much easier. We, too, were attacked by the disease; we, too, were easily, very easily, cured of it. The sickness began with a strange condition of the mind; the blood seems heated and the breathing becomes oppressed; everything appears in a different light; one is dissatisfied with the existing order of things; longs for impossibilities, and has singular notions. Just think of it; our disease consisted in being discontented with the course of affairs in the Holy Russian Empire, and wanting all men to be equal, the master no better than his servant. Heaven protect us from such a malady!

When it began to appear in the country it spread through all the provinces in less than a month, for it flies more swiftly than any other pestilence, and had not the wise rulers of the country taken it in time, it would have swept the whole empire away. But they opposed it with power and wisdom. Whoever was too much affected by the disease was cured by fire and steel; others in whom the malady was less deeply seated were placed behind solid walls that they might not infect others and those in whom the sickness had not yet broken out, but—Nihilism is the disease I mean—merely showed special symptoms of it, were formed into special regiments and sent to Oran, to Astrachan, even to the icy coasts of Abi, and to cold Kamshatka. After they were transferred to these cold regions their pulses were felt to see if they yet throbbed regularly. In most cases the cure was effected.

But who can understand such diseases? After years, or even decades, it is liable to break out again; just as hydrophobia, may appear after nine days, nine weeks, or nine years, so this disease is hard to get rid of.

I know this by my own experience. My Paul and I were both assigned to the same battalion, and often guarded the lead mines, and when, in the cold, or in the furious snowstorms, the others complained how chilled they were, we whispered to each other: "What can it be that burns so in our hearts?" Of course this was a long time ago, and I feel no return of the malady.

It was very hard for the country to have a regiment infected by so dangerous an ailment. Wherever we went we could not remain in a village or in the open fields beyond them. There barricades were placed around our camp, which no stranger was allowed to pass. We were never permitted to write to our relatives or to receive letters from them. All our non-commissioned officers were assigned to us from other regiments, and they were compelled to report faithfully every morning and evening our conduct, words, and looks to their Captains, the Captains to the Colonel, and the Colonel to the Governor, who sent them directly to St. Petersburg, where they were read aloud. If I swore and my Paul sighed, they read in St. Petersburg: "Peter swears, Paul sighs."

But it is time to speak of my Paul. He belonged to highly respected parents; his father was Patriarch, and his mother was the daughter of a Greek Bishop, who possessed all sorts of secrets hidden from other mortals. She knew how to cure without medicines, to predict fair or foul weather, to destroy harmful creatures, and so on. When this son Paul was born—she never had any other—she took the wine which is left in the sacrament cup and washed the child's whole body with it. This made it impossible for any hostile weapon to wound Paul. He was always first in the battles and skirmishes and never received a scratch. But you all know him; why should I say more?

After we had served a long time together in the exiled regiment, news came one day that the Oran Regiment—that was our name—must prepare to march. We were to move southward from the far north; and it was doubly hot there from the rays of the sun and from the cannon. War was being waged against the heathen Turks. We rejoiced in the prospect of fighting; it was far better than the cold. Perhaps the destiny of many a man might change there to his advantage—and it did.

Weeks and months elapsed before we

reached the south. Once we halted on the top of a hill from which we could see a great river. We were told that it was the Danube. We exulted, with out knowing why. On the shore of the Danube was a fortress, with massive walls and huge red towers, whence rows of cannon looked peacefully down at us. Dear, beloved cannon!

Here, opposite the citadel, we stopped, and a stately, aristocratic man rode in front of us, doubtless a personage of exalted rank, for he had three stars on his breast. Pausing before us, he surveyed our ranks. It was a great honor to have him inspect us, but the speech he addressed to us was a still greater one.

"Children!" Yes, he called us despised, forsaken orphans, "children." "My Children! The mighty Czar bestows his favor upon you. The path to return is now open to those who have strayed into the ways of error. You whose names might not be spoken, whose memory was consigned to oblivion—you will receive back name and fame upon the field of glory and honor."

I remember every word of his speech as if I heard it this very moment. "Do you see those walls? They are the first gates through which to enter the domain of the enemy of the Czar. The Czar grants to you the first laurels of fame. You will be the first to march against those ramparts, and to-morrow your names will be recorded as glorious heroes; the first lady in the land will fashion the consecrated image upon your banner. Long live the Czar!"

We joined in the cheer with indescribable delight. Then, to the sound of inspiring music, we were marched, in the presence of all the regiments, to a large open space, where an altar was erected, at which the Bishop of Moscow officiated, gave us his blessing, and administered the sacrament of communion with his own hands.

Then the picture of the Archangel George was fastened upon our banner and twelve standard bearers were chosen from our number, that if one fell the other might raise the flag aloft.

Then all the strange officers, from corporals to Captains were summoned from our regiment and replaced by our own men; in this way some of our comrades suddenly became officers.

My Paul was made Major, because he was thoroughly educated, and belonged to a good family. I remained a private, because I can neither read nor command, I can only obey.

Then the order came: "Forward!" In a close column we marched toward the wall of the fortress, amid deep, ominous silence. Not one of us could have wished to remain behind; all resolutely pressed forward. The cannon looked gloomily down from the ramparts, as if amazed and uncertain what to say to us.

We had reached a point where the walls formed two projecting angles, and were wondering that no shot had yet been fired. Now a rocket hissed from one of the red towers, and at the same instant cannon thundered on the right, the left, and in front of us, and like a whirlwind sweeping over neatly arranged haystacks, shells and grape shot beat upon us from three sides at once. At the first discharge a twenty-four-pound ball felled my comrades in the rank in front of me to the ground, and buried me under their corpses. I could not move. A fragment of shell had torn my shoulder. I carry the scar to this day. For that reason I witnessed the spectacle.

One shot followed another, the balls from the cannon directed upon us from all directions at first raised a dense cloud of dust over the whole battlefield, amid which I could see nothing but our banner. Twelve times it fell, but twelve times it was raised again. When it floated aloft for the thirteenth time, the fire of the hostile cannon seemed to be turned exclusively upon it; the missiles rent it to tatters, but it did not fall.

Gradually the cloud of dust dispersed, the blood-soaked earth sent up no more, the cannon were silent, and, as I looked around me, I saw the whole Oran Regiment lying upon the battlefield in exactly the same order in which it had marched. It was like an uprooted forest, where one trunk lay on the right, the next on the left, but no two far apart. Here and there a dying man was still writhing, but most had been killed so quickly that they no longer moved. Arms and heads which had been torn from the dead bodies lay scattered around me.

The banner was still standing in the midst of the battle array, and among the standard bearers who had fallen at his right and left sat a hero holding it in his hand.

The whistling and buzzing of the bullets, telling me whence each one came and where it would go. One struck the staff, another pierced his hat, a third tore his overcoat, and remained in his pocket. Paul took it out and showed it to me.

"Do you see that the bullets cannot harm you?" I said to him. "I can't understand how your feet were torn off."

In the evening, when the fog and darkness began to gather, the sharpshooters on the wall stopped, and we remained alone. Even in Siberia the nights are not so long as that one. The stars moved through the sky at a snail's pace. At first the new moon was visible, then it disappeared. We had expected to be carried to the camp when darkness closed in, but no one came. Doubtless, they had more important things to do.

I lay there a long, long time, half awake, half asleep, tortured by thousands of horrible visions, until the horizon gradually began to grow lighter, and morning dawned.

My Paul was still sitting among the corpses, and when he saw that I could no longer raise myself, he turned toward me, saying: "The enemy has put out a white flag."

The Turks granted our people an armistice to bury their dead. The bearers appeared with their biers, accompanied by several officers and a surgeon, whom the soldiers dreaded more than the hostile cannon. He inspected the bodies in turn and said: "This man is dead; this one is dead, too."

They were buried. We were the only ones who gave any sign of life. I did not tell the surgeon that I was never hurt, or that I would have had my arm amputated at once; I pretended that it was only the weight of the corpses which had kept me prostrate, and as soon as they were removed I rushed to Paul. With the utmost caution we took him by the arms and lifted him from the earth, and behold! neither of his feet was injured; they were as mine or any one of the others'. Yet he had told himself that a bullet had carried them away. The surgeon explained this by saying that the ball had undoubtedly passed close beneath his feet and excavated the earth under them, so that he supposed his feet were torn away because he had sunk into the pit so suddenly made and could not discover his mistake.

The incident created the greatest astonishment. The soldiers carried my Paul on their shoulders back to the camp with the standard he had saved, and the officers examined in amazement his clothing, which was riddled with holes, while there was not even a scratch on his body.

The great General reported to St. Petersburg that the Oran regiment had done its duty.

Paul was made a Colonel, and afterward he pressed steadily on in the pathway of fame and the favor of the Czar. No matter how high he rose he never forgot me, but always managed to have me ordered wherever he went. Whenever he rode along the front he always spoke to me. When I was among the sentinels he often came to me, drank from my canteen, and kept me supplied with money. Every one knew by this time that he was invulnerable and that no hostile weapon could harm him. He moves through the world in leather gloves, just as a man with leather gloves thrusts his hand into a beehive. All good soldiers loved and honored him; only cowards and traitors bore him a grudge. To them he could be inexorable, and he never forgave anyone a neglect of duty—not even me.

Once I lost the bayonet from my gun and he ordered fifty lashes to be given me. But I deserved the punishment.

When he was sent to Sebastopol, where visions of fame allured every soldier, the enemy quickly discovered his presence, for the intrenchments which he defended could not be approached by the foe, but were constantly pushed forward toward them. He always led the attacking parties himself; he directed the work of constructing the fortifications, caring no more for bullets than I do for flies.

Sometimes he left his bed at midnight to inspect the cannon. During one of these rounds he found a young marine sleeping beside a mortar intrusted to his care. Paul furiously seized his pistol and shouted to the man to rise. He started up and his face blanched with terror at the sight of the dreaded commander.

"You have been asleep at your post!" said the General. "I haven't slept for four nights," stammered the young man, "and I could not keep my eyes open," and I could not keep my eyes open." This wretched excuse enraged my Paul, and he dealt the fellow such a blow in the face with the butt of his pistol that he knocked out one of his eyes.

"There, you scoundrel! Now your eyes won't shut again!" Then he did not vouchsafe him another glance, or he would have seen that the youth staggered to an old seaman, who caught him in his arms and wiped the blood from his face with his handkerchief.

It was the young marine's father. One night the enemy opened a tremendous fire upon the Korniloff redoubt. I was at my post, covered by my gabion, which was already half shattered by the balls. Hailstones do not fall so thickly as the projectiles sent by the foe. Every moment three or four shells exploded near me, and my comrades fell like flies. A shriek and another man died. In the midst of this terrific fire I saw the General walking over the bastions.

"Then more must be had," said Paul, and sent me at once to the bottom of the walls, whence, by means of ropes and pulleys, new cannon could be brought through the covered passages in five minutes.

"They must be placed in position," cried Paul, and twenty men sprang forward to push them to the loopholes. Before we could count ten, not a man remained alive. Twenty others leaped into their places; the guns moved forward. The enemy poured a shower of grape-shot upon them. The gabions were adjusted, sacks were heaped upon the breastwork. Of the second twenty only four men returned—but the cannon were in position.

"Who is the gunner here?" asked the General. "I replied the old marine. 'Look carefully in the direction from which you see the enemy firing,' said Paul. 'Notice the point and aim for it.' 'Very well,' replied the man, throwing himself down beside the cannon to be able to get a better sight over the breastwork."

The enemy were now firing without light-balls, so we went in such darkness that no one could see any other person's movements. "Do you know where you are to shoot?" asked the General. "Yes," said the gunner. "Have you aimed?" "Yes." "Then fire."

The order was executed. It was not a cannon but a pistol shot. Paul fell back against me as if the earth had opened under his feet, and, clutching my arm, gasped: "Peter, I am mortally wounded." "Impossible!" I cried in terror. "Yes," he answered faintly. "That was no enemy's bullet, so it struck me."

"Yes," cried the old marine with delight, "it was my bullet—for my son's eye. The soldiers threw themselves furiously upon the assassin, but ere they could seize him, he had vanished. Leaping upon the palisades below. He had chosen the shortest way to hell. My Paul breathed out his life in my arms. Hostile weapons could not harm him. Had he not fallen by the hand of a Russian assassin, he would be alive now. May God guard every nation from the weapons of its own sons."

THE WORLD'S WAY.

Uncle Si Hackett is Very Much Like Other Men. Uncle Si Hackett was behind his counter weighing some sugar for Mrs. Skinner's boy Bill when Ezra Rabb dropped in to get a new whetstone.

"I hear this mornin'," said Ezra, "that Pete Hodgkin died last night over on Willow creek."

"I want to know!" said Uncle Si. "Must of been powerful sudden. Poor Pete. He had his faults like the rest of us, but there wuz never a better hearted feller lived. And so Pete's gone! That there man never had half the credit he deserved. I doubt if he wuzn't lots better than the folks that used to run him down. He always had a kind word for everybody, and there never wuz the day he wouldn't drop his own neck to help a neighbor out. Poor Pete!"

"He used to drink right smart, didn't he?" asked Ezra as he reached down into the dried apple barrel. "Why, he took his dram," said Uncle Si, covering the barrel with a board and laying a subsoil plough on top of it, "but they wa'n't no better man altogether in the county than Pete. He was as fine a man as I ever saw. As I said, he had his faults, but outside of them, he wuz a shore enough gentleman and one of the high mindedest Christian citizens we had."

"Kinder lazy, I a'ways thought," said Ezra. "That he wuzn't," said Uncle Si, warmly. "Pete took things easy, but ef ever wuz a man tried to do his duty, and was good to his family and friends, it wuz Pete. I don't mind any man in the whole country we could have any wuss spared than Pete Hodgkin, and ef ther town wuz to do its duty it would call a meetin' and resolute some about the loss his death will be to the community."

"Here comes Jim Hoskins," said Ezra, "maybe he kin tell us what wuz the matter with Pete. Hello Jim, know what Pete Hodgkin did last night?" "It wuz Sam," said Jim, "it wuz Sam Hodgkin, his brother." "It wuz Sam wuz it?" said Uncle Si, taking off his spectacles and wiping them on a bolt of calico. "Well, now! Think on the ways of the Lord. He's taken off Sam, the best man for forty miles around, and left that lazy, triflin', drunken, low down, sheep-stealin' brother Pete of his for to cumber up the yearth!"

FOR CLERKS TO READ.

Here are some maxims for clerks that have been studied out in a long course of business:— "Never do to-day what you can shove off on a fellow-clerk to-morrow. Keep at the back end of the store as much as possible, so that the other boys will have to wait on customers. Always keep a novel under the counter to catch up when the old man is out. Keep your eye out for a soft snap. Don't do any more work than you are paid to do. Be the last one to come in the morning and the first to leave at night. Don't do a thing outside of your prescribed duties. Find fault with your place and salary. Show up the weak points of your establishment to the clerks of other houses. Be as snappy with your customers as you dare. Tell your fellow clerks all the things you hear against the boss. Threaten to leave whenever fault is found with you. Believe that the world owes you a living, and act on that belief. If the above rules are strictly followed you will be out looking for a job in about thirty days from date."

THE RETIRED BURGLAR.

An Ingenious Contrivance That Did Not Work Very Well in Actual Use.

"I always carried a set of climbing irons in my hand bag," said the retired burglar, "to go up veranda posts with, where there wasn't any railing around to stand on, but I had often felt the need of some contrivance which I could carry and which would enable me to go right up the side of a house to a second-story window in cases where there was no veranda, where the cellar windows were covered with gratings, or where, for any reason, I wanted to go in at such a window. So I set about rigging up an apparatus that should be light and strong, and easily portable, and that I could operate myself while I was standing on it."

"It was of a steel frame construction, the contrivance that I got up, with a little shelf on top to stand on, and it worked telescopically, the side rods rising in sections, carried up in guides and held by ratchets. I could stand on the top of this thing and by turning a wheel raise myself up, lifting a section at a time until it was all extended, if I wanted to go that high, which was about fourteen feet. I tried it on my own house before I took it out with me. I had a good deal of trouble with it at first and some pretty bad falls but I got it so finally that it worked all right, and then I started to put it to practical use."

"The first house I tried it on was in the country, a big comfortable-looking house that I might have got into almost anywhere, but I had the elevator along and I thought I might as well try it. So I set it down on the ground alongside the house and settled it down firmly and got on to it and started, turning on the wheel. It worked smoothly, and I raised myself gradually until the platform with me on it was about half way up the first story window; that brought my head about on a level with the sill of the window above. Then something happened. I don't know just what, but a ratchet slipped, or something, and the elevator just collapsed and settled down with more noise than I liked, but it didn't seem to attract anybody, and when I'd give 'em time and nobody come I tried it as well as I could under the circumstances, found it all right as near as I could tell and made another try. And it worked just beautiful until I was up with my feet not more than a foot below the second-story window sill, when all of a sudden the thing smashed down into about seventeen million pieces, flying in all directions and landing me about twenty feet away. "Say! You didn't do a thing but bust it, did you?" I heard somebody say, and looking up, I saw the man that said it throwing open the blinds and leaning out of the window next to the one I'd been trying for; he'd been looking at me all the time. "And you pretty near busted me laughin'," he says. "I ha'n't had so much fun in forty years. Now, you come right in, old Sportin' Blood and pick out anything you want in the house. It's worth it!"

"But I didn't go in; I went away, and left him to clear up the wreck of the elevator and I never built another one."

THE OLD MAN ASSERTED HIMSELF.

Did Not Want Any Dude Figuring on His House. It was Sunday afternoon, and the old gentleman responded in person when the doorbell rang. Furthermore, the old gentleman was not in the best of humor. However, of course, the young man didn't know that, or he would have been ready to dodge.

The young man, it may be explained, just to show that everything was in accordance with the rules of polite society, never had met the old gentleman, but he had met the old gentleman's wife and the old gentleman's daughter, and had been invited to call whenever he was in the city, and it so happened that he was in the city this lovely Sunday afternoon.

"Is—aw—Miss Brown in?" asked the young man. "Now, it so happened that the old gentleman had his opinion of any one who said "aw," and it was not a flattering one, either. Consequently, he growled out something to the effect that she was not in.

"So sorry, you know," said the young man. "The old gentleman didn't know, but he took it for granted and made no further comment. Then it seemed to dawn upon the young man, who was fumbling for a card, that perhaps he had made a mistake. "This is—aw—her house, isn't it?" he asked. "It is not," the old gentleman returned bluntly.

"Oh—aw—beg a thousand pardons," said the young man. "I thought it was your house. So sorry. My mistake." He was turning away when another thought occurred to him, and he quickly turned back again. "A—aw—tell me where she—aw—lives?" he asked. "Here," replied the old gentleman. "But you told me—"

"I told you it wasn't her house, and it isn't her house," interrupted the old gentleman. "It's my house. I don't count for much in it when she and her mother are both here, but it's mine just the same. She may get it some time, but I don't want any out-of-town dudes figuring on it just yet. There are enough in the neighborhood who are going to be disappointed." As usual, however, the young man was equal to the occasion. "He said, 'Aw!'"