

Little Nex Classics

THE DAUGHTER OF THE COMMANDANT

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Book III

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CHAPTER XI. THE REBEL CAMP.

I LEFT THE GENERAL AND made haste to return home.

Saveliitch greeted me with his usual remonstrances—

“What pleasure can you find, sir, in fighting with these drunken robbers? Is it the business of a *'boyar?'* The stars are not always propitious, and you will only get killed for naught. Now if you were making war with Turks or Swedes! But I'm ashamed even to talk of these fellows with whom you are fighting.”

I interrupted his speech.

“How much money have I in all?”

“Quite enough,” replied he, with a complacent and satisfied air. “It was all very well for the rascals to hunt everywhere, but I over-reached them.”

Thus saying he drew from his pocket a long knitted purse, all full of silver pieces.

“Very well, Saveliitch,” said I. “Give me half what you have there, and keep the rest for yourself. I am about to start for Fort Belogorsk.”

“Oh! my father, Petr' Andrejitch,” cried my good follower, in a tremulous voice; “do you not fear God? How do you mean to travel now that all the roads be blocked by the robbers? At



least, take pity on your parents if you have none on yourself. Where do you wish to go? Wherefore? Wait a bit, the troops will come and take all the robbers. Then you can go to the four winds.”

My resolution was fixed.

“It is too late to reflect,” I said to the old man. “I must go; it is impossible for me not to go. Do not make yourself wretched, Saveliitch. God is good; we shall perhaps meet again. Mind you be not ashamed to spend my money; do not be a miser. Buy all you have need of, even if you pay three times the value of things. I make you a present of the money if in three days' time I be not back.”

“What's that you're saying, sir?” broke in Saveliitch; “that I shall consent to let you go alone? Why, don't dream of asking me to do so. If you have resolved to go I will e'en go along with you, were it on foot; but I will not forsake you. That I should stay snugly behind a stone wall! Why, I should be mad! Do as you please, sir, but I do not leave you.”

I well knew it was not possible to contradict Saveliitch, and I allowed him to make ready for our departure.

In half-an-hour I was in the saddle on my horse, and Saveliitch on a thin and lame *garron*, which a townsman had given him for nothing, having no longer anything wherewith to feed it. We gained the town gates; the sentries let us pass, and at last we were out of Orenburg.



Night was beginning to fall. The road I had to follow passed before the little village of Berd, held by Pugatchef. This road was deep in snow, and nearly hidden; but across the steppe were to be seen tracks of horses each day renewed.

I was trotting. Saveliitch could hardly keep up with me, and cried to me every minute—

“Not so fast, sir, in heaven's name not so fast! My confounded *garron* cannot catch up your long-legged devil. Why are you in such a hurry? Are we bound to a feast? Rather have we our necks under the axe. Petr' Andrejitch! Oh! my father, Petr' Andrejitch! Oh, Lord! this *boyar's* child will die, and all for nothing!”

We soon saw twinkling the fires of Berd. We were approaching the deep ravines which served as natural fortifications to the little settlement. Saveliitch, though keeping up to me tolerably well, did not give over his lamentable supplications. I was hoping to pass safely by this unfriendly place, when all at once I made out in the dark five peasants, armed with big sticks.

It was an advance guard of Pugatchef's camp. They shouted to us—

“Who goes there?”

Not knowing the pass-word, I wanted to pass them without reply, but in the same moment they surrounded me, and one of them seized my horse by the bridle. I drew my sword, and struck the peasant on the head. His high cap saved his life; still,



he staggered, and let go the bridle. The others were frightened, and jumped aside. Taking advantage of their scare, I put spurs to my horse, and dashed off at full gallop.

The fast increasing darkness of the night might have saved me from any more difficulties, when, looking back, I discovered that Saveliitch was no longer with me. The poor old man with his lame horse had not been able to shake off the robbers. What was I to do?

After waiting a few minutes and becoming certain he had been stopped, I turned my horse's head to go to his help. As I approached the ravine I heard from afar confused shouts, and the voice of my Saveliitch. Quickening my pace, I soon came up with the peasants of the advance guard who had stopped me a few minutes previously. They had surrounded Saveliitch, and had obliged the poor old man to get off his horse, and were making ready to bind him.

The sight of me filled them with joy. They rushed upon me with shouts, and in a moment I was off my horse. One of them, who appeared to be the leader, told me they were going to take me before the Tzar.

“And our father,” added he, “will decide whether you are to be hung at once or if we are to wait for God's sunshine!”

I offered no resistance. Saveliitch followed my example, and the sentries led us away in triumph.

We crossed the ravine to enter the settlement. All the peasants' houses were lit up. All around arose shouts and noise.



I met a crowd of people in the street, but no one paid any attention to us, or recognized in me an officer of Orenburg. We were taken to a “*izba*,” built in the angle of two streets. Near the door were several barrels of wine and two cannons.

“Here is the palace!” said one of the peasants; “we will go and announce you.”

He entered the “*izba*.” I glanced at Saveliitch; the old man was making the sign of the cross, and muttering prayers. We waited a long time. At last the peasant reappeared, and said to me—

“Come, our father has given orders that the officer be brought in.”

I entered the “*izba*,” or the palace, as the peasant called it. It was lighted by two tallow candles, and the walls were hung with gold paper. All the rest of the furniture, the benches, the table, the little washstand jug hung to a cord, the towel on a nail, the oven fork standing up in a corner, the wooden shelf laden with earthen pots, all was just as in any other “*izba*.” Pugatchef sat beneath the holy pictures in a red caftan and high cap, his hand on his thigh. Around him stood several of his principal chiefs, with a forced expression of submission and respect. It was easy to see that the news of the arrival of an officer from Orenburg had aroused a great curiosity among the rebels, and that they were prepared to receive me in pomp. Pugatchef recognized me at the first glance. His feigned gravity disappeared at once.



“Ah! it is your lordship,” said he, with liveliness. “How are you? What in heaven's name brings you here?”

I replied that I had started on a journey on my own business, and that his people had stopped me.

“And on what business?” asked he.

I knew not what to say. Pugatchef, thinking I did not want to explain myself before witnesses, made a sign to his comrades to go away. All obeyed except two, who did not offer to stir.

“Speak boldly before these,” said Pugatchef; “hide nothing from them.”

I threw a side glance upon these two confederates of the usurper. One of them, a little old man, meagre and bent, with a scanty grey beard, had nothing remarkable about him, except a broad blue ribbon worn cross-ways over his caftan of thick grey cloth. But I shall never forget his companion. He was tall, powerfully built, and appeared to be about forty-five. A thick red beard, piercing grey eyes, a nose without nostrils, and marks of the hot iron on his forehead and on his cheeks, gave to his broad face, seamed with small-pox, a strange and indefinable expression. He wore a red shirt, a Kirghiz dress, and wide Cossack trousers. The first, as I afterwards learnt, was the deserter, Corporal Beloborodoff. The other, Athanasius Sokoloff, nicknamed Khlopusha, was a criminal condemned to the mines of Siberia, whence he had escaped three times. In spite of the feelings which then agitated me, this company



wherein I was thus unexpectedly thrown greatly impressed me. But Pugatchef soon recalled me to myself by his question.

“Speak! On what business did you leave Orenburg?”

A strange idea occurred to me. It seemed to me that Providence, in bringing me a second time before Pugatchef, opened to me a way of executing my project. I resolved to seize the opportunity, and, without considering any longer what course I should pursue, I replied to Pugatchef—

“I was going to Fort Belogorsk, to deliver there an orphan who is being oppressed.”

Pugatchef's eyes flashed.

“Who among my people would dare to harm an orphan?” cried he. “Were he ever so brazen-faced, he should never escape my vengeance! Speak, who is the guilty one?”

“Chvabrine,” replied I; “he keeps in durance the same young girl whom you saw with the priest's wife, and he wants to force her to become his wife.”

“I'll give him a lesson, Master Chvabrine!” cried Pugatchef, with a fierce air. “He shall learn what it is to do as he pleases under me, and to oppress my people. I'll hang him.”

“Bid me speak a word,” broke in Khlopusha, in a hoarse voice. “You were too hasty in giving Chvabrine command of the fort, and now you are too hasty in hanging him. You have already offended the Cossacks by giving them a gentleman as leader—do not, therefore, now affront the gentlemen by executing them on the first accusation.”



“They need neither be overwhelmed with favours nor be pitied,” the little old man with the blue ribbon now said, in his turn. “There would be no harm in hanging Chvabrine, neither would there be any harm in cross-examining this officer. Why has he deigned to pay us a visit? If he do not recognize you as Tzar, he needs not to ask justice of you; if, on the other hand, he do recognize you, wherefore, then, has he stayed in Orenburg until now, in the midst of your enemies. Will you order that he be tried by fire? It would appear that his lordship is sent to us by the Generals in Orenburg.”

The logic of the old rascal appeared plausible even to me. An involuntary shudder thrilled through me as I remembered in whose hands I was.

Pugatchef saw my disquiet.

“Eh, eh! your lordship,” said he, winking, “it appears to me my field-marshal is right. What do you think of it?”

The banter of Pugatchef in some measure restored me to myself.

I quietly replied that I was in his power, and that he could do with me as he listed.

“Very well,” said Pugatchef; “now tell me in what state is your town?”

“Thank God,” replied I, “all is in good order.”

“In good order!” repeated Pugatchef, “and the people are dying of hunger there.”



The usurper spoke truth; but, according to the duty imposed on me by my oath, I assured him it was a false report, and that Orenburg was amply victualled.

“You see,” cried the little old man, “that he is deceiving you. All the deserters are unanimous in declaring famine and plague are in Orenburg, that they are eating carrion there as a dish of honour. And his lordship assures us there is abundance of all. If you wish to hang Chvabrine, hang on the same gallows this lad, so that they need have naught wherewith to reproach each other.”

The words of the confounded old man seemed to have shaken Pugatchef.

Happily, Khlopusha began to contradict his companion.

“Hold your tongue, Naumitch,” said he; “you only think of hanging and strangling. It certainly suits you well to play the hero. Already you have one foot in the grave, and you want to kill others. Have you not enough blood on your conscience?”

“But are you a saint yourself?” retorted Beloborodoff.
“Wherefore, then, this pity?”

“Without doubt,” replied Khlopusha, “I am also a sinner, and this hand” (he closed his bony fist, and turning back his sleeve displayed his hairy arm), “and this hand is guilty of having shed Christian blood. But *I* killed my enemy, and not my host, on the free highway and in the dark wood, but not in the house, and behind the stove with axe and club, neither with old women's gossip.”



The old man averted his head, and muttered between his teeth—

“Branded!”

“What are you muttering there, old owl?” rejoined Khlopusha. “I’ll brand you! Wait a bit, your turn will come. By heaven, I hope some day you may smell the hot pincers, and till then have a care that I do not tear out your ugly beard.”

“Gentlemen,” said Pugatchef, with dignity, “stop quarrelling. It would not be a great misfortune if all the mangy curs of Orenburg dangled their legs beneath the same cross-bar, but it would be a pity if our good dogs took to biting each other.”

Khlopusha and Beloborodoff said nothing, and exchanged black looks.

I felt it was necessary to change the subject of the interview, which might end in a very disagreeable manner for me. Turning toward Pugatchef, I said to him, smiling—

“Ah! I had forgotten to thank you for your horse and *'touloup.'* Had it not been for you, I should never have reached the town, for I should have died of cold on the journey.”

My stratagem succeeded. Pugatchef became good-humoured.

“The beauty of a debt is the payment!” said he, with his usual wink. “Now, tell me the whole story. What have you to do with this young girl whom Chvabrine is persecuting? Has she not hooked your young affections, eh?”



“She is my betrothed,” I replied, as I observed the favourable change taking place in Pugatchef, and seeing no risk in telling him the truth.

“Your betrothed!” cried Pugatchef. “Why didn't you tell me before? We will marry you, and have a fine junket at your wedding.” Then, turning to Beloborodoff, “Listen, field-marshal,” said he, “we are old friends, his lordship and me; let us sit down to supper. To-morrow we will see what is to be done with him; one's brains are clearer in the morning than by night.”

I should willingly have refused the proposed honour, but I could not get out of it. Two young Cossack girls, children of the master of the “*izba*,” laid the table with a white cloth, brought bread, fish, soup, and big jugs of wine and beer.

Thus for the second time I found myself at the table of Pugatchef and his terrible companions. The orgy of which I became the involuntary witness went on till far into the night.

At last drunkenness overcame the guests; Pugatchef fell asleep in his place, and his companions rose, making me a sign to leave him.

I went out with them. By the order of Khlopusha the sentry took me to the lockup, where I found Saveliitch, and I was left alone with him under lock and key.

My retainer was so astounded by the turn affairs had taken that he did not address a single question to me. He lay down in the dark, and for a long while I heard him moan and lament. At last, however, he began to snore, and as for me, I gave myself up



to thoughts which did not allow me to close my eyes for a moment all night.

On the morrow morning Pugatchef sent someone to call me.

I went to his house. Before his door stood a “*kibitka*” with three Tartar horses. The crowd filled the street. Pugatchef, whom I met in the ante-room, was dressed in a travelling suit, a pelisse and Kirghiz cap. His guests of yesterday evening surrounded him, and wore a submissive air, which contrasted strongly with what I had witnessed the previous evening.

Pugatchef gaily bid me “good morning,” and ordered me to seat myself beside him in the “*kibitka*.” We took our places.

“To Fort Belogorsk!” said Pugatchef to the robust Tartar driver, who standing guided the team. My heart beat violently.

The horses dashed forward, the little bell tinkled, the “*kibitka*,” bounded across the snow.

“Stop! stop!” cried a voice which I knew but too well; and I saw Saveliitch running towards us. Pugatchef bid the man stop.

“Oh! my father, Petr’ Andrejitch,” cried my follower, “don't forsake me in my old age among the rob—”

“Aha! old owl!” said Pugatchef, “so God again brings us together. Here, seat yourself in front.”

“Thanks, Tzar, thanks my own father,” replied Saveliitch, taking his seat. “May God give you a hundred years of life for having reassured a poor old man. I shall pray God all my life for you, and I'll never talk about the hareskin '*touloup*.’”



This hareskin *touloup* might end at last by making Pugatchef seriously angry. But the usurper either did not hear or pretended not to hear this ill-judged remark. The horses again galloped.

The people stopped in the street, and each one saluted us, bowing low. Pugatchef bent his head right and left.

In a moment we were out of the village and were taking our course over a well-marked road. What I felt may be easily imagined. In a few hours I should see again her whom I had thought lost to me for ever. I imagined to myself the moment of our reunion, but I also thought of the man in whose hands lay my destiny, and whom a strange concourse of events bound to me by a mysterious link.

I recalled the rough cruelty and bloody habits of him who was disposed to prove the defender of my love. Pugatchef did not know she was the daughter of Captain Mironoff; Chvabrine, driven to bay, was capable of telling him all, and Pugatchef might learn the truth in other ways. Then, what would become of Marya? At this thought a shudder ran through my body, and my hair seemed to stand on end.

All at once Pugatchef broke upon my reflections.

“What does your lordship,” said he, “deign to think about?”

“How can you expect me to be thinking?” replied I. “I am an officer and a gentleman; but yesterday I was waging war with you, and now I am travelling with you in the same carriage, and the whole happiness of my life depends on you.”



“What,” said Pugatchef, “are you afraid?”

I made reply that having already received my life at his hands, I trusted not merely in his good nature but in his help.

“And you are right—'fore God, you are right,” resumed the usurper; “you saw that my merry men looked askance at you. Even to-day the little old man wanted to prove indubitably to me that you were a spy, and should be put to the torture and hung. But I would not agree,” added he, lowering his voice, lest Saveliitch and the Tartar should hear him, “because I bore in mind your glass of wine and your *touloup*.' You see clearly that I am not bloodthirsty, as your comrades would make out.”

Remembering the taking of Fort Belogorsk, I did not think wise to contradict him, and I said nothing.

“What do they say of me in Orenburg?” asked Pugatchef, after a short silence.

“Well, it is said that you are not easy to get the better of. You will agree we have had our hands full with you.”

The face of the usurper expressed the satisfaction of self-love.

“Yes,” said he, with a glorious air, “I am a great warrior. Do they know in Orenburg of the battle of Jouzeiff? Forty Generals were killed, four armies made prisoners. Do you think the King of Prussia is about my strength?”

This boasting of the robber rather amused me.

“What do you think yourself?” I said to him. “Could you beat Frederick?”



“Fedor Fedorovitch, eh! why not? I can beat your Generals, and your Generals have beaten him. Until now my arms have been victorious. Wait a bit—only wait a bit—you'll see something when I shall march on Moscow?”

“And you are thinking of marching on Moscow?”

The usurper appeared to reflect. Then he said, half-aloud—

“God knows my way is straight. I have little freedom of action. My fellows don't obey me—they are marauders. I have to keep a sharp look out—at the first reverse they would save their necks with my head.”

“Well,” I said to Pugatchef, “would it not be better to forsake them yourself, ere it be too late, and throw yourself on the mercy of the Tzarina?”

Pugatchef smiled bitterly.

“No,” said he, “the day of repentance is past and gone; they will not give me grace. I must go on as I have begun. Who knows? It may be. Grischka Otrepieff certainly became Tzar at Moscow.”

“But do you know his end? He was cast out of a window, he was massacred, burnt, and his ashes blown abroad at the cannon's mouth, to the four winds of heaven.”

The Tartar began to hum a plaintive song; Saveliitch, fast asleep, oscillated from one side to the other. Our “*kibitka*” was passing quickly over the wintry road. All at once I saw a little village I knew well, with a palisade and a belfry, on the rugged



bank of the Yaik. A quarter of an hour afterwards we were entering Fort Belogorsk.



CHAPTER XII. THE ORPHAN.

THE *KIBITKA* STOPPED BEFORE the door of the Commandant's house. The inhabitants had recognized the little bell of Pugatchef's team, and had assembled in a crowd. Chvabrine came to meet the usurper; he was dressed as a Cossack, and had allowed his beard to grow.

The traitor helped Pugatchef to get out of the carriage, expressing by obsequious words his zeal and joy.

Seeing me he became uneasy, but soon recovered himself.

“You are one of us,” said he; “it should have been long ago.”

I turned away my head without answering him. My heart failed me when we entered the little room I knew so well, where could still be seen on the wall the commission of the late deceased Commandant, as a sad memorial.

Pugatchef sat down on the same sofa where oft times Ivan Kouzmitch had dozed to the sound of his wife's scolding.

Chvabrine himself brought brandy to his chief. Pugatchef drank a glass of it, and said to him, pointing to me—

“Offer one to his lordship.”

Chvabrine approached me with his tray. I turned away my head for the second time. He seemed beside himself. With his usual sharpness he had doubtless guessed that Pugatchef was not pleased with me. He regarded him with alarm and me with mistrust. Pugatchef asked him some questions on the condition



of the fort, on what was said concerning the Tzarina's troops, and other similar subjects. Then suddenly and in an unexpected manner—

“Tell me, brother,” asked he, “who is this young girl you are keeping under watch and ward? Show me her.”

Chvabrine became pale as death.

“Tzar,” he said, in a trembling voice, “Tzar, she is not under restraint; she is in bed in her room.”

“Take me to her,” said the usurper, rising.

It was impossible to hesitate. Chvabrine led Pugatchef to Marya Ivanofna's room. I followed them. Chvabrine stopped on the stairs.

“Tzar,” said he, “you can constrain me to do as you list, but do not permit a stranger to enter my wife's room.”

“You are married!” cried I, ready to tear him in pieces.

“Hush!” interrupted Pugatchef, “it is my concern. And you,” continued he, turning towards Chvabrine, “do not swagger; whether she be your wife or no, I take whomsoever I please to see her. Your lordship, follow me.”

At the door of the room Chvabrine again stopped, and said, in a broken voice—

“Tzar, I warn you she is feverish, and for three days she has been delirious.”

“Open!” said Pugatchef.

Chvabrine began to fumble in his pockets, and ended by declaring he had forgotten the key.



Pugatchef gave a push to the door with his foot, the lock gave way, the door opened, and we went in. I cast a rapid glance round the room and nearly fainted. Upon the floor, in a coarse peasant's dress, sat Marya, pale and thin, with her hair unbound. Before her stood a jug of water and a bit of bread. At the sight of me she trembled and gave a piercing cry. I cannot say what I felt. Pugatchef looked sidelong at Chvabrine, and said to him with a bitter smile—

“Your hospital is well-ordered!” Then, approaching Marya, “Tell me, my little dove, why your husband punishes you thus?”

“My husband!” rejoined she; “he is not my husband. Never will I be his wife. I am resolved rather to die, and I shall die if I be not delivered.”

Pugatchef cast a furious glance upon Chvabrine.

“You dared deceive me,” cried he. “Do you know, villain, what you deserve?”

Chvabrine dropped on his knees. Then contempt overpowered in me all feelings of hatred and revenge. I looked with disgust upon a gentleman at the feet of a Cossack deserter. Pugatchef allowed himself to be moved.

“I pardon you this time,” he said, to Chvabrine; “but next offence I will remember this one.” Then, addressing Marya, he said to her, gently, “Come out, pretty one; I give you your liberty. I am the Tzar.”



Marya Ivanofna threw a quick look at him, and divined that the murderer of her parents was before her eyes. She covered her face with her hands, and fell unconscious.

I was rushing to help her, when my old acquaintance, Polashka, came very boldly into the room, and took charge of her mistress.

Pugatchef withdrew, and we all three returned to the parlour.

“Well, your lordship,” Pugatchef said to me, laughing, “we have delivered the pretty girl; what do you say to it? Ought we not to send for the pope and get him to marry his niece? If you like I will be your *marriage godfather*, Chvabrine best man; then we will set to and drink with closed doors.”

What I feared came to pass.

No sooner had he heard Pugatchef’s proposal than Chvabrine lost his head.

“Tzar,” said he, furiously, “I am guilty, I have lied to you; but Grineff also deceives you. This young girl is not the pope’s niece; she is the daughter of Ivan Mironoff, who was executed when the fort was taken.”

Pugatchef turned his flashing eyes on me.

“What does all this mean?” cried he, with indignant surprise.

But I made answer boldly—

“Chvabrine has told you the truth.”



“You had not told me that,” rejoined Pugatchef, whose brow had suddenly darkened.

“But judge yourself,” replied I; “could I declare before all your people that she was Mironoff's daughter? They would have torn her in pieces, nothing could have saved her.”

“Well, you are right,” said Pugatchef. “My drunkards would not have spared the poor girl; my gossip, the pope's wife, did right to deceive them.”

“Listen,” I resumed, seeing how well disposed he was towards me, “I do not know what to call you, nor do I seek to know. But God knows I stand ready to give my life for what you have done for me. Only do not ask of me anything opposed to my honour and my conscience as a Christian. You are my benefactor; end as you have begun. Let me go with the poor orphan whither God shall direct, and whatever befall and wherever you be we will pray God every day that He watch over the safety of your soul.”

I seemed to have touched Pugatchef's fierce heart.

“Be it even as you wish,” said he. “Either entirely punish or entirely pardon; that is my motto. Take your pretty one, take her away wherever you like, and may God grant you love and wisdom.”

He turned towards Chvabrine, and bid him write me a safe conduct pass for all the gates and forts under his command. Chvabrine remained still, and as if petrified.



Pugatchef went to inspect the fort; Chvabrine followed him, and I stayed behind under the pretext of packing up. I ran to Marya's room. The door was shut; I knocked.

“Who is there?” asked Polashka.

I gave my name. Marya's gentle voice was then heard through the door.

“Wait, Petr’ Andrejitch,” said she, “I am changing my dress. Go to Akoulina Pamphilovna's; I shall be there in a minute.”

I obeyed and went to Father Garasim's house.

The pope and his wife hastened to meet me. Saveliitch had already told them all that had happened.

“Good-day, Petr’ Andrejitch,” the pope's wife said to me; “here has God so ruled that we meet again. How are you? We have talked about you every day. And Marya Ivanofna, what has she not suffered anent you, my pigeon? But tell me, my father, how did you get out of the difficulty with Pugatchef? How was it that he did not kill you? Well, for *that*, thanks be to the villain.”

“There, hush, old woman,” interrupted Father Garasim; “don't gossip about all you know; too much talk, no salvation. Come in, Petr’ Andrejitch, and welcome. It is long since we have seen each other.”

The pope's wife did me honour with everything she had at hand, without ceasing a moment to talk.

She told me how Chvabrine had obliged them to deliver up Marya Ivanofna to him; how the poor girl cried, and would not be parted from them; how she had had continual intercourse



with them through the medium of Polashka, a resolute, sharp girl who made the *ouriadnik* himself dance (as they say) to the sound of her flageolet; how she had counselled Marya Ivanofna to write me a letter, etc. As for me, in a few words I told my story.

The pope and his wife crossed themselves when they heard that Pugatchef was aware they had deceived him.

“May the power of the cross be with us!” Akoulina Pamphilovna said. “May God turn aside this cloud. Very well, Alexey Ivanytch, we shall see! Oh! the sly fox!”

At this moment the door opened, and Marya Ivanofna appeared, with a smile on her pale face. She had changed her peasant dress, and was dressed as usual, simply and suitably. I seized her hand, and could not for a while say a single word. We were both silent, our hearts were too full.

Our hosts felt we had other things to do than to talk to them; they left us. We remained alone. Marya told me all that had befallen her since the taking of the fort; painted me the horrors of her position, all the torment the infamous Chvabrine had made her suffer. We recalled to each other the happy past, both of us shedding tears the while.

At last I could tell her my plans. It was impossible for her to stay in a fort which had submitted to Pugatchef, and where Chvabrine was in command. Neither could I dream of taking refuge with her in Orenburg, where at this juncture all the miseries of a siege were being undergone. Marya had no longer



a single relation in the world. Therefore I proposed to her that she should go to my parents' country house.

She was very much surprised at such a proposal. The displeasure my father had shown on her account frightened her. But I soothed her. I knew my father would deem it a duty and an honour to shelter in his house the daughter of a veteran who had died for his country.

“Dear Marya,” I said, at last, “I look upon you as my wife. These strange events have irrevocably united us. Nothing in the whole world can part us any more.”

Marya heard me in dignified silence, without misplaced affectation. She felt as I did, that her destiny was irrevocably linked with mine; still, she repeated that she would only be my wife with my parents' consent. I had nothing to answer. We fell in each other's arms, and my project became our mutual decision.

An hour afterwards the *ouriadnik* brought me my safe-conduct pass, with the scrawl which did duty as Pugatchef's signature, and told me the Tzar awaited me in his house.

I found him ready to start.

How express what I felt in the presence of this man, awful and cruel for all, myself only excepted? And why not tell the whole truth? At this moment I felt a strong sympathy with him. I wished earnestly to draw him from the band of robbers of which he was the chief, and save his head ere it should be too late.



The presence of Chvabrine and of the crowd around us prevented me from expressing to him all the feelings which filled my heart.

We parted friends.

Pugatchef saw in the crowd Akoulina Pamphilovna, and amicably threatened her with his finger, with a meaning wink. Then he seated himself in his "*kibitka*" and gave the word to return to Berd. When the horses started, he leaned out of his carriage and shouted to me—

"Farewell, your lordship; it may be we shall yet meet again!"

We did, indeed, see one another once again; but under what circumstances!

Pugatchef was gone.

I long watched the steppe over which his "*kibitka*" was rapidly gliding.

The crowd dwindled away; Chvabrine disappeared. I went back to the pope's house, where all was being made ready for our departure. Our little luggage had been put in the old vehicle of the Commandant. In a moment the horses were harnessed.

Marya went to bid a last farewell to the tomb of her parents, buried behind the church.

I wished to escort her there, but she begged me to let her go alone, and soon came back, weeping quiet tears.



Father Garasim and his wife came to the door to see us off. We took our seats, three abreast, inside the “*kibitka*,” and Saveliitch again perched in front.

“Good-bye, Marya Ivanofna, our dear dove; good-bye, Petr’ Andrejitch, our gay goshawk!” the pope’s wife cried to us. “A lucky journey to you, and may God give you abundant happiness!”

We started. At the Commandant’s window I saw Chvabrine standing, with a face of dark hatred.

I did not wish to triumph meanly over a humbled enemy, and looked away from him.

At last we passed the principal gate, and for ever left Fort Belogorsk.



CHAPTER XIII. THE ARREST.

REUNITED IN SO MARVELLOUS a manner to the young girl who, that very morning even, had caused me so much unhappy disquiet, I could not believe in my happiness, and I deemed all that had befallen me a dream.

Marya looked sometimes thoughtfully upon me and sometimes upon the road, and did not seem either to have recovered her senses. We kept silence—our hearts were too weary with emotion.

At the end of two hours we had already reached the neighbouring fort, which also belonged to Pugatchef. We changed horses there.

By the alertness with which we were served and the eager zeal of the bearded Cossack whom Pugatchef had appointed Commandant, I saw that, thanks to the talk of the postillion who had driven us, I was taken for a favourite of the master.

When we again set forth it was getting dark. We were approaching a little town where, according to the bearded Commandant, there ought to be a strong detachment on the march to join the usurper.

The sentries stopped us, and to the shout, “Who goes there?” our postillion replied aloud—

“The Tzar's gossip, travelling with his good woman.”



Immediately a party of Russian hussars surrounded us with awful oaths.

“Get out, devil's gossip!” a Quartermaster with thick moustachios said to me.

“We'll give you a bath, you and your good woman!”

I got out of the “*kibitka*,” and asked to be taken before the authorities.

Seeing I was an officer, the men ceased swearing, and the Quartermaster took me to the Major's.

Saveliitch followed me, grumbling—

“That's fun—gossip of the Tzar!—out of the frying-pan into the fire! Oh, Lord! how will it all end?”

The “*kibitka*” followed at a walk. In five minutes we reached a little house, brilliantly lit up. The Quartermaster left me under the guard, and went in to announce his capture.

He returned almost directly, and told me “his high mightiness,” had not time to see me, and that he had bid me be taken to prison, and that my good woman be brought before him.

“What does it all mean?” I cried, furiously; “is he gone mad?”

“I cannot say, your lordship,” replied the Quartermaster, “only his high mightiness has given orders that your lordship be taken to prison, and that her ladyship be taken before his high mightiness, your lordship.”



I ran up the steps. The sentries had not time to stop me, and I entered straightway the room, where six hussar officers were playing “*faro*.”

The Major held the bank.

What was my surprise when, in a momentary glance at him, I recognized in him that very Ivan Ivanovitch Zourine who had so well fleeced me in the Simbirsk inn!

“Is it possible?” cried I. “Ivan Ivanovitch, is it you?”

“Ah, bah! Petr’ Andrejitch! By what chance, and where do you drop from? Good day, brother, won't you punt a card?”

“Thanks—rather give me a lodging.”

“What, lodging do you want? Stay with me.”

“I cannot. I am not alone.”

“Well, bring your comrade too.”

“I am not with a comrade. I am—with a lady.”

“With a lady—where did you pick her up, brother?”

After saying which words Zourine began to whistle so slyly that all the others began to laugh, and I remained confused.

“Well,” continued Zourine, “then there is nothing to be done. I'll give you a lodging. But it is a pity; we would have had a spree like last time. Hullo! there, boy, why is not Pugatchef's gossip brought up? Is she refractory? Tell her she has nothing to fear, that the gentleman who wants her is very good, that he will not offend her in any way, and at the same time shove her along by the shoulder.”



“What are you talking about?” I said to Zourine; “of what gossip of Pugatchef’s are you speaking? It is the daughter of Captain Mironoff. I have delivered her from captivity, and I am taking her now to my father’s house, where I shall leave her.”

“What? So it’s you whom they came to announce a while ago? In heaven’s name, what does all this mean?”

“I’ll tell you all about it presently. But now I beg of you, do reassure the poor girl, whom your hussars have frightened dreadfully.”

Zourine directly settled matters. He went out himself into the street to make excuses to Marya for the involuntary misunderstanding, and ordered the Quartermaster to take her to the best lodging in the town. I stayed to sleep at Zourine’s house. We supped together, and as soon as I found myself alone with Zourine, I told him all my adventures.

He heard me with great attention, and when I had done, shaking his head—

“All that’s very well, brother,” said he, “but one thing is not well. Why the devil do you want to marry? As an honest officer, as a good fellow, I would not deceive you. Believe me, I implore you, marriage is but a folly. Is it wise of you to bother yourself with a wife and rock babies? Give up the idea. Listen to me; part with the Commandant’s daughter. I have cleared and made safe the road to Simbirsk; send her to-morrow to your parents alone, and you stay in my detachment. If you fall again into the hands



of the rebels it will not be easy for you to get off another time. In this way, your love fit will cure itself, and all will be for the best.”

Though I did not completely agree with him, I yet felt that duty and honour alike required my presence in the Tzarina's army; so I resolved to follow in part Zourine's advice, and send Marya to my parents, and stay in his troop.

Saveliitch came to help me to undress. I told him he would have to be ready to start on the morrow with Marya Ivanofna. He began by showing obstinacy.

“What are you saying, sir? How can you expect me to leave you? Who will serve you, and what will your parents say?”

Knowing the obstinacy of my retainer, I resolved to meet him with sincerity and coaxing.

“My friend, Arkhip Saveliitch,” I said to him, “do not refuse me. Be my benefactor. Here I have no need of a servant, and I should not be easy if Marya Ivanofna were to go without you. In serving her you serve me, for I have made up my mind to marry her without fail directly circumstances will permit.”

Saveliitch clasped his hands with a look of surprise and stupefaction impossible to describe.

“Marry!” repeated he, “the child wants to marry. But what will your father say? And your mother, what will she think?”

“They will doubtless consent,” replied I, “when they know Marya Ivanofna. I count on you. My father and mother have full confidence in you. You will intercede for us, won't you?”

The old fellow was touched.



“Oh! my father, Petr’ Andrejitch,” said he, “although you do want to marry too early, still Marya Ivanofna is such a good young lady it would be a sin to let slip so good a chance. I will do as you wish. I will take her, this angel of God, and I will tell your parents, with all due deference, that such a betrothal needs no dowry.”

I thanked Saveliitch, and went away to share Zourine's room.

In my emotion I again began to talk. At first Zourine willingly listened, then his words became fewer and more vague, and at last he replied to one of my questions by a vigorous snore, and I then followed his example.

On the morrow, when I told Marya my plans, she saw how reasonable they were, and agreed to them.

As Zourine's detachment was to leave the town that same day, and it was no longer possible to hesitate, I parted with Marya after entrusting her to Saveliitch, and giving him a letter for my parents. Marya bid me good-bye all forlorn; I could answer her nothing, not wishing to give way to the feelings of my heart before the bystanders.

I returned to Zourine's silent and thoughtful; he wished to cheer me. I hoped to raise my spirits; we passed the day noisily, and on the morrow we marched.

It was near the end of the month of February. The winter, which had rendered manoeuvres difficult, was drawing to a



close, and our Generals were making ready for a combined campaign.

Pugatchef had reassembled his troops, and was still to be found before Orenburg. At the approach of our forces the disaffected villages returned to their allegiance.

Soon Prince Galitsyn won a complete victory over Pugatchef, who had ventured near Fort Talitcheff; the victor relieved Orenburg, and appeared to have given the finishing stroke to the rebellion.

In the midst of all this Zourine had been detached against some mounted Bashkirs, who dispersed before we even set eyes on them.

Spring, which caused the rivers to overflow, and thus block the roads, surprised us in a little Tartar village, when we consoled ourselves for our forced inaction by the thought that this insignificant war of skirmishers with robbers would soon come to an end.

But Pugatchef had not been taken; he reappeared very soon in the mining country of the Ural, on the Siberian frontier. He reassembled new bands, and again began his robberies. We soon learnt the destruction of Siberian forts, then the fall of Khasan, and the audacious march of the usurper on Moscow.

Zourine received orders to cross the River Volga. I shall not stay to relate the events of the war.

I shall only say that misery reached its height. The gentry hid in the woods; the authorities had no longer any power



anywhere; the leaders of solitary detachments punished or pardoned without giving account of their conduct. All this extensive and beautiful country-side was laid waste with fire and sword.

May God grant we never see again so senseless and pitiless a revolt. At last Pugatchef was beaten by Michelson, and was obliged to fly again.

Zourine received soon afterwards the news that the robber had been taken and the order to halt.

The war was at an end.

It was at last possible for me to go home. The thought of embracing my parents and seeing Marya again, of whom I had no news, filled me with joy. I jumped like a child.

Zourine laughed, and said, shrugging his shoulders—
“Wait a bit, wait till you be married; you'll see all go to the devil then.”

And I must confess a strange feeling embittered my joy.

The recollection of the man covered with the blood of so many innocent victims, and the thought of the punishment awaiting him, never left me any peace.

“Emela,” I said to myself, in vexation, “why did you not cast yourself on the bayonets, or present your heart to the grapeshot. That had been best for you.”

(After advancing as far as the gates of Moscow, which he might perhaps have taken had not his bold heart failed him at the last moment, Pugatchef, beaten, had been delivered up by



his comrades for the sum of a hundred thousand roubles, shut up in an iron cage, and conveyed to Moscow. He was executed by order of Catherine II., in 1775.)

Zourine gave me leave.

A few days later I should have been in the bosom of my family, when an unforeseen thunderbolt struck me. The day of my departure, just as I was about to start, Zourine entered my room with a paper in his hand, looking anxious. I felt a pang at my heart; I was afraid, without knowing wherefore. The Major bade my servant leave us, and told me he wished to speak to me.

“What's the matter?” I asked, with disquietude.

“A little unpleasantness,” replied he, offering me the paper. “Read what I have just received.”

It was a secret dispatch, addressed to all Commanders of detachments, ordering them to arrest me wherever I should be found, and to send me under a strong escort to Khasan, to the Commission of Inquiry appointed to try Pugatchef and his accomplices.

The paper dropped from my hands.

“Come,” said Zourine, “it is my duty to execute the order. Probably the report of your journeys in Pugatchef's intimate company has reached headquarters. I hope sincerely the affair will not end badly, and that you will be able to justify yourself to the Commission. Don't be cast down, and start at once.”

I had a clear conscience, but the thought that our reunion was delayed for some months yet made my heart fail me.



After receiving Zourine's affectionate farewell I got into my “*telega*,” two hussars, with drawn swords, seated themselves, one on each side of me, and we took the road to Khasan.



CHAPTER XIV. THE TRIAL.

I DID NOT DOUBT THAT THE CAUSE of my arrest was my departure from Orenburg without leave. Thus I could easily exculpate myself, for not only had we not been forbidden to make sorties against the enemy, but were encouraged in so doing.

Still my friendly understanding with Pugatchef seemed to be proved by a crowd of witnesses, and must appear at least suspicious. All the way I pondered the questions I should be asked, and mentally resolved upon my answers. I determined to tell the judges the whole truth, convinced that it was at once the simplest and surest way of justifying myself.

I reached Khasan, a miserable town, which I found laid waste, and well-nigh reduced to ashes. All along the street, instead of houses, were to be seen heaps of charred plaster and rubbish, and walls without windows or roofs. These were the marks Pugatchef had left. I was taken to the fort, which had remained whole, and the hussars, my escort, handed me over to the officer of the guard.

He called a farrier, who coolly rivetted irons on my ankles.

Then I was led to the prison building, where I was left alone in a narrow, dark cell, which had but its four walls and a little skylight, with iron bars.

Such a beginning augured nothing good. Still I did not lose either hope or courage. I had recourse to the consolation of all



who suffer, and, after tasting for the first time the sweetness of a prayer from an innocent heart full of anguish, I peacefully fell asleep without giving a thought to what might befall me.

On the morrow the gaoler came to wake me, telling me that I was summoned before the Commission.

Two soldiers conducted me across a court to the Commandant's house, then, remaining in the ante-room, left me to enter alone the inner chamber. I entered a rather large reception room. Behind the table, covered with papers, were seated two persons, an elderly General, looking severe and cold, and a young officer of the Guard, looking, at most, about thirty, of easy and attractive demeanour; near the window at another table sat a secretary with a pen behind his ear, bending over his paper ready to take down my evidence.

The cross-examination began. They asked me my name and rank. The General inquired if I were not the son of Andrej Petrovitch Grineff, and on my affirmative answer, he exclaimed, severely—

“It is a great pity such an honourable man should have a son so very unworthy of him!”

I quietly made answer that, whatever might be the accusations lying heavily against me, I hoped to be able to explain them away by a candid avowal of the truth.

My coolness displeased him.

“You are a bold, barefaced rascal,” he said to me, frowning. “However, we have seen many of them.”



Then the young officer asked me by what chance and at what time I had entered Pugatchef's service, and on what affairs he had employed me.

I indignantly rejoined that, being an officer and a gentleman, I had not been able to enter Pugatchef's service, and that he had not employed me on any business whatsoever.

"How, then, does it happen," resumed my judge, "that the officer and gentleman be the only one pardoned by the usurper, while all his comrades are massacred in cold blood? How does it happen, also, that the same officer and gentleman could live snugly and pleasantly with the rebels, and receive from the ringleader presents of a '*pelisse*,' a horse, and a half rouble? What is the occasion of so strange a friendship? And upon what can it be founded if not on treason, or at the least be occasioned by criminal and unpardonable baseness?"

The words of the officer wounded me deeply, and I entered hotly on my vindication.

I related how my acquaintance with Pugatchef had begun, on the steppe, in the midst of a snowstorm; how he had recognized me and granted me my life at the taking of Fort Belogorsk. I admitted that, indeed, I had accepted from the usurper a *touloup* and a horse; but I had defended Fort Belogorsk against the rascal to the last gasp. Finally I appealed to the name of my General, who could testify to my zeal during the disastrous siege of Orenburg.



The severe old man took from the table an open letter, which he began to read aloud.

“In answer to your excellency on the score of Ensign Grineff, who is said to have been mixed up in the troubles, and to have entered into communication with the robber, communication contrary to the rules and regulations of the service, and opposed to all the duties imposed by his oath, I have the honour to inform you that the aforesaid Ensign Grineff served at Orenburg from the month of Oct., 1773, until Feb. 24th of the present year, upon which day he left the town, and has not been seen since. Still the enemy's deserters have been heard to declare that he went to Pugatchef's camp, and that he accompanied him to Fort Belogorsk, where he was formerly in garrison. On the other hand, in respect to his conduct I can—”

Here the General broke off, and said to me with harshness—

“Well, what have you to say now for yourself?”

I was about to continue as I had begun, and relate my connection with Marya as openly as the rest. But suddenly I felt an unconquerable disgust to tell such a story. It occurred to me that if I mentioned her, the Commission would oblige her to appear; and the idea of exposing her name to all the scandalous things said by the rascals under cross-examination, and the thought of even seeing her in their presence, was so repugnant to me that I became confused, stammered, and took refuge in silence.



My judges, who appeared to be listening to my answers with a certain good will, were again prejudiced against me by the sight of my confusion. The officer of the Guard requested that I should be confronted with the principal accuser. The General bade them bring in *yesterday's rascal*. I turned eagerly towards the door to look out for my accuser.

A few moments afterwards the clank of chains was heard, and there entered—Chvabrine. I was struck by the change that had come over him. He was pale and thin. His hair, formerly black as jet, had begun to turn grey. His long beard was unkempt. He repeated all his accusations in a feeble, but resolute tone. According to him, I had been sent by Pugatchef as a spy to Orenburg; I went out each day as far as the line of sharpshooters to transmit written news of all that was passing within the town; finally, I had definitely come over to the usurper's side, going with him from fort to fort, and trying, by all the means in my power, to do evil to my companions in treason, to supplant them in their posts, and profit more by the favours of the arch-rebel. I heard him to the end in silence, and felt glad of one thing; he had never pronounced Marya's name. Was it because his self-love was wounded by the thought of her who had disdainfully rejected him, or was it that still within his heart yet lingered a spark of the same feeling which kept me silent? Whatever it was, the Commission did not hear spoken the name of the daughter of the Commandant of Fort Belogorsk. I was still further confirmed in the resolution I had taken, and



when the judges asked me if I had aught to answer to Chvabrine's allegations, I contented myself with saying that I did abide by my first declaration, and that I had nothing more to show for my vindication.

The General bid them take us away. We went out together. I looked calmly at Chvabrine, and did not say one word to him. He smiled a smile of satisfied hatred, gathered up his fetters, and quickened his pace to pass before me. I was taken back to prison, and after that I underwent no further examination.

I was not witness to all that I have still to tell my readers, but I have heard the whole thing related so often that the least little details have remained graven in my memory, and it seems to me I was present myself.

Marya was received by my parents with the cordial kindness characteristic of people in old days. In the opportunity presented to them of giving a home to a poor orphan they saw a favour of God. Very soon they became truly attached to her, for one could not know her without loving her. My love no longer appeared a folly even to my father, and my mother thought only of the union of her Petrusha with the Commandant's daughter.

The news of my arrest electrified with horror my whole family. Still, Marya had so simply told my parents the origin of my strange friendship with Pugatchef that, not only were they not uneasy, but it even made them laugh heartily. My father could not believe it possible that I should be mixed up in a disgraceful revolt, of which the object was the downfall of the



throne and the extermination of the race of “*boyars*.” He cross-examined Saveliitch sharply, and my retainer confessed that I had been the guest of Pugatchef, and that the robber had certainly behaved generously towards me. But at the same time he solemnly averred upon oath that he had never heard me speak of any treason. My old parents' minds were relieved, and they impatiently awaited better news. But as to Marya, she was very uneasy, and only caution and modesty kept her silent.

Several weeks passed thus. All at once my father received from Petersburg a letter from our kinsman, Prince Banojik. After the usual compliments he announced to him that the suspicions which had arisen of my participation in the plots of the rebels had been proved to be but too well founded, adding that condign punishment as a deterrent should have overtaken me, but that the Tzarina, through consideration for the loyal service and white hairs of my father, had condescended to pardon the criminal son, and, remitting the disgrace-fraught execution, had condemned him to exile for life in the heart of Siberia.

This unexpected blow nearly killed my father. He lost his habitual firmness, and his sorrow, usually dumb, found vent in bitter lament.

“What!” he never ceased repeating, well-nigh beside himself, “What! my son mixed up in the plots of Pugatchef! Just God! what have I lived to see! The Tzarina grants him life, but does that make it easier for me to bear? It is not the execution



which is horrible. My ancestor perished on the scaffold for conscience sake, my father fell with the martyrs Volynski and Khuchtchhoff, but that a '*boyar*' should forswear his oath—that he should join with robbers, rascals, convicted felons, revolted slaves! Shame for ever—shame on our race!”

Frightened by his despair, my mother dared not weep before him, and endeavoured to give him courage by talking of the uncertainty and injustice of the verdict. But my father was inconsolable.

Marya was more miserable than anyone. Fully persuaded that I could have justified myself had I chosen, she suspected the motive which had kept me silent, and deemed herself the sole cause of my misfortune. She hid from all eyes her tears and her suffering, but never ceased thinking how she could save me.

One evening, seated on the sofa, my father was turning over the Court Calendar; but his thoughts were far away, and the book did not produce its usual effect on him. He was whistling an old march. My mother was silently knitting, and her tears were dropping from time to time on her work. Marya, who was working in the same room, all at once informed my parents that she was obliged to start for Petersburg, and begged them to give her the means to do so.

My mother was much affected by this declaration.

“Why,” said she, “do you want to go to Petersburg? You, too—do you also wish to forsake us?”



Marya made answer that her fate depended on the journey, and that she was going to seek help and countenance from people high in favour, as the daughter of a man who had fallen victim to his fidelity.

My father bowed his head. Each word which reminded him of the alleged crime of his son was to him a keen reproach.

“Go,” he said at last, with a sigh; “we do not wish to cast any obstacles between you and happiness. May God grant you an honest man as a husband, and not a disgraced and convicted traitor.”

He rose and left the room.

Left alone with my mother, Marya confided to her part of her plans. My mother kissed her with tears, and prayed God would grant her success.

A few days afterwards Marya set forth with Palashka and her faithful Saveliitch, who, necessarily, parted from me, consoled himself by remembering he was serving my betrothed.

Marya arrived safely at Sofia, and, learning that the court at this time was at the summer palace of Tzarskoe-Selo, she resolved to stop there. In the post-house she obtained a little dressing-room behind a partition.

The wife of the postmaster came at once to gossip with her, and announced to her pompously that she was the niece of a stove-warmer attached to the Palace, and, in a word, put her up to all the mysteries of the Palace. She told her at what hour the Tzarina rose, had her coffee, went to walk; what high lords there



were about her, what she had deigned to say the evening before at table, who she received in the evening, and, in a word, the conversation of Anna Vlassiefna might have been a leaf from any memoir of the day, and would be invaluable now. Marya Ivanofna heard her with great attention.

They went together to the Imperial Gardens, where Anna Vlassiefna told Marya the history of every walk and each little bridge. Both then returned home, charmed with one another.

On the morrow, very early, Marya dressed herself and went to the Imperial Gardens. The morning was lovely. The sun gilded with its beams the tops of the lindens, already yellowed by the keen breath of autumn. The large lake sparkled unruffled; the swans, just awake, were gravely quitting the bushes on the bank. Marya went to the edge of a beautiful lawn, where had lately been erected a monument in honour of the recent victories of Count Roumianzeff.

All at once a little dog of English breed ran towards her, barking. Marya stopped short, alarmed. At this moment a pleasant woman's voice said—

“Do not be afraid; he will not hurt you.”

Marya saw a lady seated on a little rustic bench opposite the monument, and she went and seated herself at the other end of the bench. The lady looked attentively at her, and Marya, who had stolen one glance at her, could now see her well. She wore a cap and a white morning gown and a little light cloak. She appeared about 50 years old; her face, full and high-coloured,



expressed repose and gravity, softened by the sweetness of her blue eyes and charming smile. She was the first to break the silence.

“Doubtless you are not of this place?” she asked.

“You are right, lady; I only arrived yesterday from the country.”

“You came with your parents?”

“No, lady, alone.”

“Alone! but you are very young to travel by yourself.”

“I have neither father nor mother.”

“You are here on business?”

“Yes, lady, I came to present a petition to the Tzarina.”

“You are an orphan; doubtless you have to complain of injustice or wrong.”

“No, lady, I came to ask grace, and not justice.”

“Allow me to ask a question: Who are you?”

“I am the daughter of Captain Mironoff.”

“Of Captain Mironoff? He who commanded one of the forts in the Orenburg district?”

“Yes, lady.”

The lady appeared moved.

“Forgive me,” she resumed, in a yet softer voice, “if I meddle in your affairs; but I am going to Court. Explain to me the object of your request; perhaps I may be able to help you.”

Marya rose, and respectfully saluted her. Everything in the unknown lady involuntarily attracted her, and inspired trust.



Marya took from her pocket a folded paper; she offered it to her protectress, who ran over it in a low voice.

When she began she looked kind and interested, but all at once her face changed, and Marya, who followed with her eyes her every movement, was alarmed by the hard expression of the face lately so calm and gracious.

“You plead for Grineff,” said the lady, in an icy tone. “The Tzarina cannot grant him grace. He passed over to the usurper, not as an ignorant and credulous man, but as a depraved and dangerous good-for-nothing.”

“It's not true!” cried Marya.

“What! it's not true?” retorted the lady, flushing up to her eyes.

“It is not true, before God it is not true,” exclaimed Marya. “I know all; I will tell you all. It is for me only that he exposed himself to all the misfortunes which have overtaken him. And if he did not vindicate himself before the judges, it is because he did not wish me to be mixed up in the affair.”

And Marya eagerly related all the reader already knows.

The lady listened with deep attention.

“Where do you lodge?” she asked, when the young girl concluded her story. And when she heard that it was with Anna Vlassiefna, she added, with a smile: “Ah! I know! Good-bye! Do not tell anyone of our meeting. I hope you will not have to wait long for an answer to your letter.”



Having said these words, she rose and went away by a covered walk.

Marya returned home full of joyful hope.

Her hostess scolded her for her early morning walk—bad, she said, in the autumn for the health of a young girl. She brought the “*samovar*,” and over a cup of tea she was about to resume her endless discussion of the Court, when a carriage with a coat-of-arms stopped before the door.

A lackey in the Imperial livery entered the room, announcing that the Tzarina deigned to call to her presence the daughter of Captain Mironoff.

Anna Vlassiefna was quite upset by this news.

“Oh, good heavens!” cried she; “the Tzarina summons you to Court! How did she know of your arrival? And how will you acquit yourself before the Tzarina, my little mother? I think you do not even know how to walk Court fashion. I ought to take you; or, stay, should I not send for the midwife, that she might lend you her yellow gown with flounces?”

But the lackey declared that the Tzarina wanted Marya Ivanofna to come alone, and in the dress she should happen to be wearing. There was nothing for it but to obey, and Marya Ivanofna started.

She foresaw that our fate was in the balance, and her heart beat violently. After a few moments the coach stopped before the Palace, and Marya, after crossing a long suite of empty and sumptuous rooms, was ushered at last into the boudoir of the



Tzarina. Some lords, who stood around there, respectfully opened a way for the young girl.

The Tzarina, in whom Marya recognized the lady of the garden, said to her, graciously—

“I am delighted to be able to accord you your prayer. I have had it all looked into. I am convinced of the innocence of your betrothed. Here is a letter which you will give your future father-in-law.” Marya, all in tears, fell at the feet of the Tzarina, who raised her, and kissed her forehead. “I know,” said she, “you are not rich, but I owe a debt to the daughter of Captain Mironoff. Be easy about your future.”

After overwhelming the poor orphan with caresses, the Tzarina dismissed her, and Marya started the same day for my father's country house, without having even had the curiosity to take a look at Petersburg.

Here end the memoirs of Petr' Andrejitch Grineff; but family tradition asserts that he was released from captivity at the end of the year 1774, that he was present at the execution of Pugatchef, and that the latter, recognizing him in the crowd, made him a farewell sign with the head which, a few moments later, was held up to the people, lifeless and bleeding.

Soon afterwards Petr' Andrejitch became the husband of Marya Ivanofna. Their descendants still live in the district of Simbirsk.

In the ancestral home in the village of — is still shown the autograph letter of Catherine II, framed and glazed. It is



THE DAUGHTER OF THE COMMANDANT

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addressed to the father of Petr' Andrejitch, and contains, with the acquittal of his son, praises of the intellect and good heart of the Commandant's daughter.

THE END.

