

THE EXILES. A RUSSIAN STORY.

"At first," resumed Ladislav, "on turning around, I saw one—only one—which did not frighten me much. It trotted along, always maintaining the same distance, lessening or increasing its pace according to the speed of the sledges. But a second wolf that I noticed on the top of a small hill joined the first. A few minutes afterwards, on looking in their direction, I counted three of them. Then there were four, then five, then six, then eight, then ten, then twelve, then twenty. I dare not look again. I could no longer count them, so largely had their number increased! But I urged on my reindeer, exciting it by every possible means. At last, I saw from a long distance the fire of our encampment. I hoped to find before that fire—but, no matter! You have, indeed, saved my life, my friends, and I am very grateful to you!"

The young lad spoke with an assurance that delighted these fierce men, deprived of all family joys. They set before the child the best provisions they possessed—their dainties, so to speak.

"Where are you going?" asked Dimitri of him.

The chief of the brigands had a mild and intelligent countenance which pleased Ladislav.

Nevertheless, he hesitated to reply.

"You can speak," said Dimitri, taking the lad a little aside. "You have nothing to fear from me, despite my array of sabres and pistols. I belong to an honest family, and my father, who died but recently, left behind him a reputation for rectitude. At Moscow, everybody knows Yermac's worth."

This name struck the lad.

"I know, bearing that name," said he, "the chief of police of Yakoutsik."

"The chief of police? Well, child, he was my father."

"And he is dead?" cried Ladislav, alarmed for Nadego and Yegor. "But only three days ago he was still with us!"

"How!—with you!—with whom?"

"With my adopted sister and the man who is going to marry her—and with M. Lafleur. Do you not know M. Lafleur, the dancing-master?"

"I left my father for dead very far from here, near the forest of Ostrovoye, at the foot of the Verkho-Yansk Mountains," said the chief of the bandits.

"Well, it was just there we met him, revived him, disinterred him—how shall I express it?"

"Disinterred him, child?"

"Oh! it is a strange story! Look! this revolver belonged to him!"

"My father alive!" murmured Dimitri, overcome with surprise; and an irresistible desire to see him again in life and obtain his pardon took possession of him. "Do you know," resumed he, lowering his voice, "where we can rejoin him—as well as your friends?"

"Yes," said the lad; "in the vicinity of Nijni-Kolimsk, near the frontier of the country of the Tchouktschis."

"Not another word," said Yermac's son. "In a moment, when all are asleep, I will tell you what we will do to again see before long your friends—and my father!"

CHAPTER XXI.—AN ELK HUNT.

It was only after every effort had been fruitlessly made to recover the little Pole, that Yegor succeeded in inducing the weeping and inconsolable Nadego to consent to resume the journey.

The succeeding days were of the most sorrowful description. The fugitives decided that they must follow the left bank of the Kolima. Ladislav had been lost not far from the river. He knew that they were going towards the north to reach the Arctic Ocean. If he were still alive, he would, perhaps, perceive the fire that they would light on establishing each encampment and would keep up every night upon an elevated shore.

Besides these reasons, Yegor had others for not going too far from the banks of the river. The provisions brought in the sledges had greatly diminished during the forced journeys across the desert of snow. But there existed on the borders of the Kolima, between the Bolchoy-Anioy and the Mal-Anioy rivers which flow into it, plains sheltered by lofty mountains from the winds of the north. The vegetation there is incomparably more beautiful. One finds there the aspen, the poplar, the willow, and the cedar; after having crossed the icy and bare tundra, these plains are the oases of these solitudes. The forests which clothe the sides of the mountains are inhabited by herds of reindeer; elk, foxes, and brown and black bears are met there in large numbers.

Yegor thought that it would be easy to kill some of these animals, which would furnish them with food for several days.

Swift as the lightning, the two sledges, without leaving a trace, glided anew over the icy stretch. Nadego, her eyes red with weeping and her heart sad, silently and sorrowfully thought of her dear Ladislav. She could not believe him lost. A secret presentiment told her to hope and that she would, perhaps, see him again. M. Lafleur, usually so loquacious, was also silent. Plunged in his reflections, with lowered head and compressed lips, he internally consoled himself for the present by thinking of the future. He was busy making plans.

His mind, with the rapidity of the electric spark, sped from Yakoutsik to the ice of the pole, from the pole to Paris, upon the Place de la Bastille lighted up by that bright sun of Thermidor sung of by Beranger, and from Paris to Chateau-Thierry, in the little house he had inherited from his maternal uncle. It was in this house that M. Lafleur intended to found the museum which was to bear his name and attract, every summer, caravans of visitors to the town which gave birth to the great French fable-writer. The former dancing-master had definitively renounced his idea of seizing upon the first occasion that should present itself to return and solicit his pardon, that he might continue to teach country-dances and good manners to the daughters of the high Siberian functionaries. True, the affairs of his millinery shop remained to be settled, but that was not much. He willingly sacrificed his profits. Being a man of foresight, M. Lafleur had not lost his savings in a stocking in the depths of a drawer; neither had he entrusted them to the Jewish usurers of the country. Twice a year, at collection time, he had sent, by the hands of a reliable agent, his funds to Paris, to the address of a solid and honorable house—the house of Verne et Co.

M. Lafleur, so far as worldly wealth was concerned, was, therefore, exempt from care, and he was approaching an age when it is permitted to a man to repose and enjoy the fruit of his toil. He had yet a very long road to travel over to return to Paris and Chateau-Thierry; but, at the rate at which he was going, the distance was, so to speak, visibly diminishing.

At his side, Yermac, well wrapped in his

turs, kept his eyes closed and seemed asleep. He was as motionless and stiff as a frozen corpse.

Directed by Yegor, who took his eyes neither from his compass nor the little map sketched by him at the ostrog from a wall map, prepared by the Esoule in accordance with the most reliable information he had been able to gather, Tekel drove so admirably that the fugitives were enabled to follow the surest and shortest route.

The teams of dogs, furnished by the Esoule of Sredno-Kolimsk, did marvels in the hands of Tekel and Chort. The dogs of the north of Siberia have long and slender ears, always erect, and their tails are thick. Some have smooth hair and others curly hair of different shades.

At the head of each team was the most active and best disciplined dog. It kept the others, less intelligent or more stubborn, in the right direction, preventing them, especially, from turning aside from the road to follow the tracks of animals.

Once, Yegor's animals precipitated themselves on the footprints of a fox marked upon the snow; already, the dogs were howling with all their might and it seemed as if nothing could arrest them—when the leader, turning in the opposite direction, commenced to bark as if it had seen some animal worthy of pursuit.

Tekel and Chort encouraged their dogs by whistling and by cries peculiar to themselves, to which the intelligent creatures had soon become accustomed. They drove in the Siberian fashion, without using a whip. The whip is replaced by the castie, a stout rod four feet long, tipped with iron at its lower end. The drivers hurl the castie at lazy or disobedient dogs and pick it up very adroitly as they pass it.

Each dog of the teams belonging to the settled tribes of Siberia has a complete little set of harness, consisting of a wide belt across the chest, by means of which it pulls. This belt is kept in place by another strap, fastened to it and passing around the body of the animal. The whole is attached to the principal strap by a short trace. The sledges dogs are accustomed to utter a prolonged howl at the moment of setting out.

It was with an ample supply of dried fish that the fugitives fed their dogs. Their own food was neither more agreeable nor of better quality.

When the sledges stopped that day, Tekel sought for a suitable place in which to pass the rest of the day and the night. He soon returned, making a sign to Yegor to advance. The spot was perfectly sheltered. They felled several poplar trees to form a rampart. In the corner of this rampart was erected the peltoge intended for Nadego, the interior of which was promptly heated by means of a lamp. They broke the ice of the Kolima to obtain water; this ice was as yet but two feet thick. A great bivouac fire, fed with wood furnished by the neighboring trees, spread warmth about it. The most important thing now was to put something comforting and substantial on this fire.

Yegor and Tekel took each a gaz and, preceded by Wab, plunged cautiously, with watchful eyes, into the bushes and thickets in search of feathered or furred game. The Yakoute, with the instinct of the savage, examined the leaves of the bushes to see if they did not bear marks of the bites of deer or elk. Sometimes he paused and listened attentively, signing to Yegor to remain silent and motionless. Wab, like the docile and intelligent dog it was, held itself in readiness, its paws uplifted, interrogating with a look its master and the Yakoute.

Tekel suddenly dropped quickly and, hiding behind the trunk of a tree, remained motionless, squatting in the snow. He was evidently watching some animal. Yegor, his finger on the trigger of his gun, stood ready to act at the first signal.

After a minute had elapsed, the Yakout, arose and signed to his master to follow him.

They descended towards the river.

"Deer tracks!" said Yegor, in a whisper, pointing to imprints on the snow.

Tekel shook his head.

"These are elk tracks," answered he, in a low tone. "The hoofs are slender, straight, deeply cleft and united at the top by a membrane which permits the foot to spread and place itself, without sinking, on the fresh snow or the moist soil."

Yegor knew that elk, like stags, always go in herds of from fifteen to twenty. He ardently hoped that he and his companion might succeed in killing, at least, one of the agile and courageous animals. The male elk attains the size of an ox, and weighs as much as twelve hundred pounds. Its huge, elongated head, terminated by a thick and wide muzzle which gives it the face of an ass, is crowned with antlers which widen into a triangular top in the form of a shovel. The elk is, after the reindeer, the animal most useful to the tribes of the north. Its flesh is smoked and preserved, its firm and pliant skin serves to make garments, and its hard and brilliantly white bones are employed to manufacture different instruments.

Yegor and Tekel had reached a spot where the very abrupt bank towered perpendicularly above the river. A hundred yards from there, they saw through the scattered aspens and cedars a little glade invaded by blackberry bushes, thyme, red heath and heath with black berries called kichka and bordered with willows. Hidden behind some elegant bushes, the two hunters, who had noticed that all the footprints converged to this point, waited. Suddenly, Wab gave a start and was about to leap, but Yegor's hand restrained the animal in time. An elk, of huge proportions, came out from under the willows, followed by its family numbering seven—an old female without horns, two full-grown animals with hair already thick, two young animals and two fawns.

Yegor and Tekel heard the snow crack beneath their hoofs. The male advanced first; it stopped at the edge of the forest, bent down a birch tree with its antlers, broke off the top and ate the branches.

Yegor and the Yakoute, who were not in the direction of the wind, took advantage of this moment to aim their guns and fire simultaneously.

A flash lighted up the darkness beneath the branches, Wab bounded forward with a howl, and the female at which Tekel had aimed fell, uttering a hollow groan. The full-grown animals fled, followed by the fawns. As to the male which Yegor had wounded in the shoulder, it ran a short distance and then suddenly stopped to attack those who had attacked it.

But Wab leaped upon it.

Feeling the dog's teeth in its throat, the elk leaped among the thickest trees, hoping to make its adversary loosen its hold by dashing it against the trunks.

The brave Wab would certainly have been crushed, if Yegor, starting suddenly forward, had not fired a second ball into the head of the elk, which fell dead.

"The prize is ours!" cried Tekel, running up, armed with his knife.

"And a magnificent prize it is, too!" said Yegor, measuring the length of the animal with his eye.

"We will carry away only the best por-

tions," said the Yakoute, preparing to cut off the cartilaginous head, which, with the ears and tongue, is the part preferred by the people of the north.

This operation finished, Tekel skinned the animal and cut off its hind legs.

Yegor did the same for the female; and the two hunters returned joyously to the encampment, where their acquisitions were very highly appreciated.

M. Lafleur, who had never partaken of an elk's head roasted on the coals, promised himself that he would one day regale his friends with the dish, on his return to France.

CHAPTER XXII.—THE POLAR REGIONS.

Ladislav returned neither that day, nor the next, nor the succeeding days.

Yegor, M. Lafleur, and even Nadego, whose hope had held out the longest, now felt convinced that the child, lost amid the icy solitude, without food and exposed to the attacks of bears and wolves, could not have escaped death. Yegor's heart was filled with sadness whenever he thought of the little Pole.

He had nothing, however, with which to reproach himself. He had done all that lay in the power of a man to recover him. To-day further would have been to imperil not only his own life but also those of Nadego and M. Lafleur, for which he held himself responsible.

The fugitives encamped several times upon the banks of the Kolima, the course of which they were following like a conducting thread.

As they advanced towards the Arctic Ocean, the shores of the river, until then rocky and even steep, grew lower. The country became more and more level, and soon the glance embraced but a tundra stretching as far as the eye could reach towards the sea and traversed by a very great number of small rivers.

They kept along an arm of the Kolima, which does not unite with the principal course of the river until it has formed a low and marshy island, on the southern shore of which is situated the ostrog of Nijni-Kolimsk. Nearly a hundred miles further on the Kolima divides itself anew into two arms. The fugitives followed the right arm, which is over five miles wide, and which is called the Kamennaya-Kolima. A little further still is found a third arm which, with the two others, forms the mouth of the Kolima. This mouth of the huge Asiatic stream courses altogether a space more than sixty miles in width.

On the fourth day, Yegor saw a young deer that had lost its way. It was the season when these animals emigrate in herds from the frozen regions of the north to more temperate countries. The hair of the deer is of a reddish brown, but it is not rare to see white deer all the year round. Yegor, who had restrained Wab, always ready to leap forward, admired the graceful bearing and light step of the young deer. The deer is much more elegant than the stag. It is distinguished from the latter by having shorter and slenderer legs, a less robust body, and a less elongated neck. When it is alone and one is in the direction opposite to the wind, one can easily approach it, for these animals, always frisky and prone to play, are neither tricky nor wicked. The young fawns, which people raise on goat's milk, tame very quickly and follow their masters with the docility and docility of a dog.

As they were in need of provisions to continue the journey, Yegor shot the young deer and carried away the best parts of its flesh.

Some hours later, towards the middle of the day and amid terrible cold, the fugitives arrived at the mouth of the Kamennaya-Kolima.

"The sea! the sea!" cried the two natives, drawing themselves up and pointing towards an icy stretch which was lost to the north in the mists of the sky.

"The Arctic Ocean!" said M. Lafleur, shivering despite himself as if before something fearful and mysterious.

"They will not come here to search for us!" murmured Yegor.

The Arctic landscapes are but little varied. In the wan and misty atmosphere there are no shadows; the lines of the horizon are effaced and vanish. Height and distance do not exist; the land and the sea, equally white with snow, can scarcely be distinguished one from the other; the innumerable irregularities and windings of the coast seem, in these dead and desolate regions, not to have had the time to assume decided and precise shapes. One might believe himself in the midst of a universe still in process of formation.

The silence and immobility of nature, in the vicinity of the pole, have something grand and wild about them. Yegor, Nadego and M. Lafleur, all three, were seized with a secret terror, as if upon the threshold of an unknown world.

Yermac alone, inaccessible to every emotion, remained impassive and rigid. He comprehended that, with the cold and the continuous night which would shortly begin, the surveillance of which he was the object would necessarily be relaxed. Could he escape then? Should he strive to flee, or should he wait until some unforeseen event changed the face of things?

Around the fugitives ever, lying displayed the lugubrious imprint of polar lethargy. Not a sound, not a cry, not a breath. It was like an empty and depopulated planet destroyed by some horrible cataclysm. Afar, above mountains of ice—cylindrical masses—jutting out like promontories, white birds vague as shadows floated slowly, suggesting the wandering souls of those who are no more. The light was funereal and so feeble that objects had neither body nor color.

At last, the fugitives had reached the spot where they designed to conceal themselves during the winter. They would erect a stout hut, well sheltered from the winds of the north. It was only on the arrival of spring that they could risk traversing the country of the Tchouktschis, on their way to the Gulf of Anadyr.

On their hazardous journey sown with perils of every kind, they had lost all idea of time.

"I would like to know what part of the year it is," said M. Lafleur; "but we have kept no account of the days."

"This is the 20th of November," said the chief of police, in a tone of certainty.

"Indeed!" said Yegor. "This is the reason the days are so short. Day after tomorrow will commence a night of thirty-six days."

"A complete night!" asked Nadego, turning pale.

"Complete. The sun will reappear only on the 28th of December. I am fully informed on that point."

"But how shall we manage to live in the darkness?" demanded Nadego.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Earthquakes to the number of 558 have occurred in China in the last nine and one-half years, an average of about one a week.

Going One Better.

Little Dot (who doesn't like sleeping with her sister)—When we gets a new house I'm goin' to have a room to myself and a key to the door.

Little Sister—Huh! I is doin' to have a room to myself too—an' two keys to zee door.

Girls Not Wanted.

Mother—Why don't you want to take your little sister coasting with you?

Little Boy—Girls isn't any good at coasting. Every time they strikes the bumper an' gets thrown up in the air an' upset an' run into they cries.

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There is a 3-inch display advertisement in this paper this week which has no two words alike except one word. The same is true of each new one appearing each week from The Dr. Harter Medicine Co. This house places a "Crescent" on everything they make and publish. Look for it, send them the name of the word, and they will return you BOOK, BEAUTIFUL LITHOGRAPHS, or SAMPLE FREE.

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—The Druids held many plants sacred, as, for instance, vervain, selago, mistletoe, and, among trees, the oak and the rowan.

The Throat. — "BROWN'S BRONCHIAL TROCHES" act directly on the organs of the voice. They have an extraordinary effect in all disorders of the throat.

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PIKE'S TOOTHACHE DROPS cure in one minute.

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—A woodtick has been discovered in California that kills cattle and horses by sapping their blood.



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