

(CONTINUED FROM SECOND PAGE)



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way into the already overcrowded room. "Come in! Come in!" cried the orator. "The more the better. You are all welcome. All we require, then, little fathers, is organization. There are 900 souls in Osterno. Are you going to bow down before one man? All men are equal—moujik and prince. Why do you not go up to the castle that frowns down upon the village and tell the man there that you are starving; that he must feed you; that you are not going to work from dawn till eve while he sits on his velvet couch and smokes his gold tipped cigarettes? Why do you not go and tell him that you are not going to starve and die while he eats caviare and peaches from gold plates and dishes?"

Again the interrogative unwashed fist. As the orator's wild and frenzied eye traveled round the room it lighted on a form near the door, a man standing a head and shoulders above any one in the room, a man enveloped in an old brown coat with a wollen shawl round his throat hiding half his face. "Who is that?" cried the orator, with an unsteady, pointing finger. "He is no moujik. Has he come here to our meeting to spy upon us?" "You may ask them who I am," replied the giant. "They know; they will tell you. It is not the first time that I tell them they are fools. I tell them again now. They are fools and worse to listen to such windbags as you." "Who is it?" cried the paid agitator. "Who is this man?" "It is the Moscow doctor," said a man beside him, "the Moscow doctor." "Then I say he is no doctor!" shouted the orator. "He is a spy, a government spy, a technician! He has heard all we have said. He has seen you all. Brothers, that man must not leave this room alive. If he does, you are lost men!"

Some few of the more violent spirits rose and pressed tumultuously toward the door. The agitator shouted and screamed, urging them on, taking good care to remain in the safe background himself. Every man in the room rose to his feet. They were full of vodka and fury and ignorance. Spirit and tall talk taken on an empty stomach are dangerous stimulants. Paul stood with his back to the door and never moved.

"Sit down, fools!" he cried. "Sit down! Listen to me. You dare not touch me; you know that." It seemed that he was right, for they stopped, with staring, stupid eyes and idle hands.

"Will you listen to me, whom you have known for years, or to this talker from the town? Choose now. I am tired of you. I have been patient with you for years. You are sheep. Are you fools also to be dazzled by the words of an idle talker who promises all and gives nothing?"

There was a sullen silence. Paul had lost his power over them, and he knew it. He was quite cool and watchful. He knew that he was in danger. These men were wild and ignorant. They were mad with drink and the brave words of the agitator.

"Choose now!" he shouted, feeling for the handle of the door behind his back. "If I go now, I never come again!" He opened the door. The men whom he had nursed and clothed and fed, whose lives he had saved again and again, stood sullen and silent.

Paul passed slowly out and closed the door behind him. Without it was dark and still. There would be a moon presently, and in the meantime it was preparing to freeze harder than ever.

Paul walked slowly up the village street, while two men emerged separately from the darkness of by-lanes and followed him. He did not heed them. He was not aware that the thermometer stood somewhere below zero. He did not even trouble to draw on his fur gloves.

He felt like a man whose own dogs have turned against him. The place that these peasants had occupied in his heart had been precisely that vacancy which is filled by dogs and horses in the hearts of many men.

Paul walked slowly through the village of Osterno and realized in his un-



"That man must not leave this room alive!"

compromising honesty that of the 900 men who lived therein there were not three upon whom he could rely. He had upheld his peasants for years against the cynic truths of Karl Steinmetz. He had resolutely refused to admit even to himself that they were as devoid of gratitude as they were of wisdom. And this was the end of all! One of the men following him hurried on and caught him up. "Excellency," he gasped, breathless with haste, "you must not come here alone any longer. I am afraid of them. I have no control." Paul paused and suited his pace to the shorter legs of his companion.

"Starosta," he said, "is that you?" "Yes, excellency. I saw you go into the inn, so I waited outside and watched. I did not dare to go inside. They will not allow me there. They are afraid that I should give information."

"How long have these meetings been going on?" "The last three nights, excellency, in Osterno, but it is the same all over the estate."

"Only on the estate?" "Yes, excellency."

Paul walked on in silence for some paces. The third man followed them without catching them up.

"I do not understand, excellency," said the starosta anxiously. "It is not the nihilists."

"No, it is not the nihilists." "And they do not want money, excellency; that seems strange."

"Very," admitted Paul ironically. "And they give vodka."

This seemed to be the chief stumbling block in the starosta's road to a solution of the mystery. "Find out for me," said Paul after a pause, "who this man is, where he comes from and how much he is paid to open his mouth. We will pay him more to shut it. Find out as much as you can and let me know tomorrow."

"I will try, excellency, but I have little hope of succeeding. They distrust me. They send the children to my shop for what they want, and the little ones have evidently been told not to chatter. The moujiks avoid me when they meet me. What can I do?"

"You can show them that you are not afraid of them," answered Paul. "That goes a long way with the moujik."

At the great gates of the park they paused, and Paul gave the mayor of Osterno a few last words of advice. While they were standing there the other man who had been following joined them.

"Is that you, Steinmetz?" asked Paul, his hand thrust with suspicious speed into his jacket pocket. "Yes."

"What are you doing here?" "Watching you," answered Karl Steinmetz in his mild way. "It is no longer safe for either of us to go about alone. It was mere foolery, your going to that inn."

CHAPTER XXXII. OF all the rooms in the great castle Etta liked the morning room best. Persons of a troubled mind usually love to look upon a wide prospect. The great drawing room was only used after dinner. Until that time the ladies spent the day either in their own boudoirs or in the morning room looking over the cliff. Here while the cold weather lasted Etta had tea served, and thither the gentlemen usually repaired at the hour set apart for the homely meal. They had come regularly the last few evenings. Paul and Steinmetz had suddenly given up their long drives to distant parts of the estate.

Here the whole party was assembled on the Sunday afternoon following Paul's visit to the village inn, and to them came an unexpected guest. The door was thrown open, and Claude de Chauville, pale, but self possessed and quiet, came into the room. The perfect ease of his manner bespoke a practiced familiarity with the difficult position. His last parting with Paul and Steinmetz had been, to say the least of it, strained. Maggie, he knew, disliked and distrusted him. Etta hated and feared him.

He was in riding costume—a short fur jacket, fur gloves, a cap in his hand and a silver mounted crop—a fine figure of a man, smart, well turned out, well groomed—a gentleman.

"Prince," he said frankly, "I have come to throw myself upon your generosity. Will you lend me a horse? I was riding in the forest when my horse fell over a root and lamed himself. I found I was only three miles from Osterno, so I came. My misfortune must be my excuse for this intrusion."

Paul performed graciously enough that which charity and politeness demanded of him.

He ignored the probability that De Chauville had lamed his horse on purpose, and offered him refreshment while his saddle was being transferred to the back of a fresh mount. Further than that he did not go. He did not consider himself called upon to offer a night's hospitality to the man who had attempted to murder him a week before.

With engaging frankness De Chauville accepted everything. It is an art soon acquired and soon abused. There is something honest in an ungracious acceptance of favors. Steinmetz suggested that perhaps M. de Chauville had lunched sparsely, and the Frenchman admitted that such was the case, but that he loved afternoon tea above all meals.

"It is so innocent and simple—I know. I have the same feeling myself," concurred Steinmetz courteously. "Do you ride about the country much alone?" asked Paul while the servants were setting before this uninvited guest a few more substantial delicacies.

"Ah, no, prince! This is my first attempt, and if it had not procured me this pleasure I should say that it will be my last."

"It is easy to lose yourself," said Paul; "besides"—and the two friends watched the Frenchman's face closely—"besides, the country is disturbed at present."

De Chauville was helping himself daintily to pate de foie gras. "Ah, indeed! Is that so?" he answered. "But they would not hurt me, a stranger in the land."

The center of attention himself diverted that attention. He inaugurated an argument over the best cross country route from Osterno to Thors, which sent Steinmetz out of the room for a map. During the absence of the watchful German he admired the view from the window, and this strategic movement enabled him to say to Etta aside: "I must see you before I leave the house; it is absolutely necessary."

Not long after the return of Steinmetz and the final decision respecting the road to Thors, Etta left the room, and a few minutes later the servant announced that the baron's horse was at the door.

De Chauville took his leave at once, with many assurances of lasting gratitude.

"Kindly," he added, "make my adieux to the princess. I will not trouble her."

Quite by accident he met Etta at the head of the state staircase and expressed such admiration for the castle that she opened the door of the large drawing room and took him to see that apartment.

"What I arranged for Thursday is for the day after tomorrow—Tuesday," said De Chauville as soon as they were alone. "We cannot keep them back any longer. You understand—the side door to be opened at 7 o'clock. Ah, who is this?"

They both turned. Steinmetz was standing behind them, but he could not have heard De Chauville's words. He closed the door carefully and came forward with his grim smile.

"Just we three!" repeated Steinmetz. "De Chauville, you love an epigram. The man who overestimates the foolishness of others is himself the biggest fool concerned. A lame horse—the prince's generosity—making your adieux. You should know me better than that after all these years. No; you need not look at the door. No one will interrupt us. I have seen to that."

He turned to the princess with the grave courtesy that always marked his attitude toward her.

"Madame," he said, "I fully recognize your cleverness in raising yourself to the position you now occupy, but I would remind you that that position carries with it certain obligations. It is hardly dignified for a princess to engage herself in a vulgar love intrigue in her own house."

"It is not a vulgar love intrigue!" cried Etta, with blazing eyes. "I will not allow you to say that! Where is your boasted friendship? Is this a sample of it?"

Karl Steinmetz bowed gravely, with outspread hands. "Madame, that friendship is at your service, now as always."

De Chauville gave a scornful little laugh. He was biting the end of his mustache as he watched Etta's face. For a moment the woman stood—not the first woman to stand thus—between two fears, then she turned to Steinmetz. The victory was his, the greatest he had ever torn from the grasp of Claude de Chauville.

"You know," she said, "that this man has me in his power."

"You alone, but not both of us together," answered Steinmetz. De Chauville looked uneasy. He gave a careless little laugh.

"My good Steinmetz, you allow your imagination to run away with you. You interfere in what does not concern you."

"My very dear De Chauville, I think not. At all events, I am going to continue to interfere."

Etta looked from one to the other. She had at the first impulse gone over to Steinmetz. She was now meditating, drawing back. If De Chauville kept cool all might yet be well—the dread secret of the probability of Sydney Bamforth being alive might still be withheld from Steinmetz.

She had to decide quickly. She decided to assume the role of peace-maker.

"M. de Chauville was on the point of going," she said. "Let him go."

"M. de Chauville is not going until I have finished with him, madame. This may be the last time we meet. I hope it is."

De Chauville looked uneasy. His was a ready wit, and fear was the only feeling that paralyzed it. Etta looked at him. Was his wit going to desert him now when he most needed it? He had ridden boldly into the lion's den. Such a proceeding requires a certain courage, but a higher form of intrepidity is required to face the lion standing before the exit.

Steinmetz turned to Etta. "Princess," he said, "will you now, in my presence, forbid this man to come to this or any other house of yours? Will you forbid him to address himself either by speech or letter to you again?"

"You know I cannot do that," replied Etta.

"Why not?" Etta made no answer. "Because," replied De Chauville for her, "the princess is too wise to make an enemy of me. In that respect she is wiser than you. She knows that I could send you and your prince to Siberia."

Steinmetz laughed. "Nonsense!" he said. "Princess," he went on, "if you think that the fact of De Chauville numbering among his friends a few obscure police spies gives him the right to persecute you, you are mistaken. Our friend is very clever, but he can do no harm with the little that he knows of the Charity league."

"Without going into affairs which do not concern you," said the Frenchman, answering for her, "I think you will recognize that the secret of the Charity league was quite sufficient excuse for me to request a few minutes alone with the princess."

"Princess," said Steinmetz, "answer me before it is too late. Has De Chauville any other hold over you?" Etta nodded, and the little action

(CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE)

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SCHOOL NOTES.

School closed Wednesday evening for the Thanksgiving recess.

Coy Burnett witnessed the Nebraska-Illinois foot ball game at Lincoln on Thanksgiving day.

The annual Thanksgiving offering was distributed on Wednesday afternoon and brought welcome cheer to many homes. The work was in charge of the Twelfth grade.

The December meeting of the county reading circle for the McCook division will be held one week from next Saturday, the 9th, at the east ward school house. There should be a large attendance.

Many of the teachers are spending the Thanksgiving vacation out of town. Miss Celia A. Gorby went to Lincoln, Miss Gertrude Storer to Nelson, and Miss Mary Powers to Trenton. Sup't and Mrs. G. H. Thomas, Miss Effie Abbott and Miss Carrie Budlong are guests of Mr. Thomas's parents at Harvard.

Special exercises were held in many of the grade rooms, Wednesday afternoon, appropriate to Thanksgiving season. The little people in the east side kindergarten, with their teacher, Miss Kenagy, were guests of the west side kindergartners under Miss Abbott. Pop corn and games made the occasion one long to be remembered by these beginners.

Rev. Edward J. Mullaly, in company with Father Loughran, visited the high school, Wednesday morning. Father Mullaly gave an excellent talk to the boys and girls at the assembly exercise, in which he made reference to his public school days in Nevada and his experiences in the University of Nevada, at Reno, of which he is a graduate. It was an address well worth while.

The Red Willow county teachers' association held a delightfully profitable, and well-attended meeting at Indianola, last Saturday afternoon. A large party of the city teachers drove down. Miss Gertrude Storer presented a splendid paper on "The Relation of Library Books to a Teacher in Her Work," and Miss Effie Abbott entertained the audience with a pleasing reading. Miss Anna Hannan of McCook is secretary of the association. It is understood that the next meeting will be held here in the spring.

On last Friday morning a school pianist's music program was rendered at the assembly hour, which pleased in an entertaining way. Only those who have held the position of school pianist took part. Besides school songs, Mrs. W. B. Mills rendered an artistic piano solo, Mrs. G. H. Thomas sang "Spring Tide," and Misses Bessie Peterson and Lillian Campbell very sweetly played a piano duet. Miss Cora Garvey, the present pianist, arranged the program in a way that happily united past traditions with existing endeavors.

PUBLIC LIBRARY NOTES.

The books have been re-classified, subdivided and renumbered. The following is the new system used: 000 General Works. 100 Philosophy. 200 Religion. 300 Sociology. 400 Philology. 500 Natural Science. 600 Useful Arts. 700 Fine Arts. 800 Literature. 900 History.

Fiction has no class number, just the author number and the initial letter of the title of the book. Juvenile has no class number but a J above the author number. B above the author number stands for Biography. If a book is numbered 800 and something you know it belongs to Literature for the 8 indicates that, and the rest of the number is the subdivision, for instance "David Copperfield" by Charles Dickens is numbered "823 D55D"; the 8 shows it belongs to Literature, and Dickens being an English novelist the number 23 shows it belongs to English Fiction. D stands for Dickens, 55 is his author number and D for David Copperfield.

We have received quite a number of the December magazines, among them is "The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature"; this is on the same order as "Pool's Index" only more up to date, being published monthly. It refers to sixty-eight (68) different magazines.

Library hours: Mornings from 10:30 to 12 o'clock, afternoons from 1:30 to 6 o'clock, evenings from 7 to 9 o'clock, Sunday afternoon, 2 to 5 o'clock. IDA McCARL, Librarian.

During 1905 the subscription price of the Nebraska Farmer has been cut by the new management of that paper to 50 cents per year. It was the idea of the new management that twelve months ought to be devoted to pushing the circulation of their paper at a half price rate. The first of next January the old price of \$1 per year will be restored. The Nebraska Farmer has been greatly changed and improved in all departments during this year and it is the kind of a farm paper that Nebraska ought to have and that our readers ought to subscribe for. Subscriptions at 50 per year will be taken at THE McCOOK TRIBUNE.

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