

LIFE OF VLADISLAV REMM

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It would be difficult to find a nation with a history as tragic and checkered as that of Poland. Its people have ever been an interesting study, and especially so at the present time, when the eyes of all are turned upon Central Europe. Francis Haffkina Snow chooses for his characters in this work, Warsaw University students in league with the revolutionists striving to throw off the Russian yoke. It is a strong story graphically told, full of intense feeling and conflicting emotions, the whole beautified by the love and loyalty of a true woman.

CHAPTER I.

IT was still early evening.

The large square student's room, where the Sud Honoru was congregated, was almost bare of furniture. There was a desk, at which three students were seated, in all their dignity of judges; a bed, crowded with student auditors; a few chairs, each of which held its occupant. Many sat upon the floor. On the discolored green walls hung three cheap prints: one of Adam Mickiewicz, one of Mazzini, one of Carl Marx. The air was hot, and heavy with the curling wreaths of bluish smoke.

Before the presiding Three stood a single student. Tall and slender, with wavy, dark-gold hair; even, regular features, lit up by two wonderful, blue-black eyes, and hands and feet of remarkable smallness, even for a Pole, he paced restlessly back and forth in the narrow space at his disposal, as he answered, one by one, the questions put to him, and awaited the formal pronouncement of the sentence which he knew inevitable.

Finally the interrogatory ceased; the three student-judges conferred for a few moments in whispers; then the middle one of the three arose.

"Vladislav Remm," he said, in a clear, distinct, inexorable voice, "publicly this evening it has been proved, by your own lips, that the funds placed in your hands, as Prezydent of the Society for our stipendiaries abroad, were squandered by you in betting at the public races. This, it is hardly necessary to point out here, was a gross perversion of your exalted office, all the more criminal in the case of a society organized for the ends for which this Society was created. You have pled extenuating circumstances, but this Committee rules that for your action there can be no extenuation. We therefore pronounce upon you the judgment of expulsion from the University; removal from your high office of Prezydent; exclusion from our Society of the 'Fraternal Help,' and prohibition, under penalty, to return to the University Precincts or to communicate with any of the Kollegi."

He paused, gazed, for a moment, at the now motionless figure before him, then sat down. A low murmur swept around the crowded room. The man upon whom judgment had been pronounced flushed deeply, and nervously bit his closely compressed lips as he stood there, silent, before his judges. His lips opened, as though he were about to speak, then closed, and he started to leave the room, without a word. After a few steps, however, he turned, and standing in the middle of the room, gazed slowly around at the scores of faces, curious, hostile, contemptuous, in a few rare cases compassionate, by which he was surrounded. The expression upon his own face was hard to read.

"My former Kollegi," he began, in a low voice, "you have judged and sentenced me for misappropriating—"

"Stealing!" corrected a loud, brutal voice from behind.

Remm flushed again, but did not look around.

"For misappropriating the funds of the Society," he continued obstinately, "and squandering them at the race-course. I did it, and I freely admitted it as soon as the letters arrived from abroad complaining that the stipendiary monies had not been received. I disclosed everything, glad at last that the strain was over, and asked for leniency, pleading extenuating circumstances. You have seen fit to deny my request, to disgrace me and totally ruin my career. I should like to express to you, as I go, my single wish,—that you will never have occasion to regret the action which you have decided upon this night."

"Shall we take that as a threat?" cried out a voice—the same voice as before. In an instant, the room was in an uproar; angry voices were raised all around the room; several of the more excitable rose and advanced towards Remm menacingly.

"You may take it," replied Vladislav Remm, drawing himself up haughtily, "any way you please." He retreated not a step, and stood there silent, with the same strange look upon his face as before—before the rain of oburgations that fell upon his head. In vain the Presiding Officer thumped upon the desk with a heavy book, and cried, with a penetrating, high-pitched voice: "Gentlemen!" The students, thoroughly incensed with Remm, threatened him bodily injury.

Three shrill, warning whistles sounded from beneath the opened windows.

"The Police!" went up the cry. In a moment the hubbub ceased, as though by magic. The room was as silent as death. Suddenly a voice cried:

"The papers! The papers!"

Even as its owner spoke, the door flew open; a young girl rushed in, and running to the desk, snatched up the papers, and ran out with them through the same door, which she closed and locked behind her. It was Marinka Yolenta, the sister of the student in whose rooms they had met, the Presiding Officer of the Committee of Three. All breathed a sigh of relief as the bolt clicked in the lock. They knew, as well as though they had accompanied her, what she would do: through the long hallway



"Then you refuse to go on with this work—you have fully counted the cost?"

to the end of the apartment she would go; she would stuff the papers through the drain pipe which ran down the back of the house into the dyor; at the bottom, as they fell, they would be snatched up by a student guard, and made away with by him. Nor were these precautions idle—in these papers full details of the plot to assassinate the Governor-General of Warsaw were given.

Heavy feet resounded on the stairs. In a moment the police would be upon them.

"Vladislav Remm," cried rapidly, in a voice tense with repressed excitement, Boris Yolenta, "some of us will be arrested; if you are among the number, beware, on penalty, not to disclose our secrets!"

Remm's face grew white. He took a sudden, instinctive step toward Yolenta.

"You dare—" he cried, his voice trembling with almost frantic rage, his dilated eyes two coals of blue-black fire.

Outside the door a great scurry and tramp of feet was heard; a sword-hilt was struck against the panels.

"In the name of the law!" vociferated in Russian a brutal voice. One of the students near the door pushed back the bolt; a dozen gendarmes, with pistols and drawn swords, burst into the room, prepared for all emergencies. Resistance would have been suicide.

Remm left the place with Yolenta and eight others; the remainder, after having had their names and addresses taken, were allowed to disperse to their various homes.

CHAPTER II.

"HAVE you heard the news?" was the question on everyone's lips, three months later, among the Warsaw University students. Like a running fuse throwing off multiple sparks, it sputtered and crackled its way among all Faculties, Jura, Medicine, Philosophy, even Theology.

"Vladislav Remm has been set free! Vladislav Remm has been set free!" The dark corridors, thronged with students, alternately buzzed with excited comment and rang with enthusiastic cheers. Remm's past transgressions were entirely forgotten; his dishonorable action, if mentioned at all, was mentioned to receive extenuation. *Au fond*, it was a mere youthful indiscretion; he had meant no harm; the sentence of the "Tribunal of Honour" had been unnecessarily severe. His imprisonment and release from the gloomy cells of the Warsaw Citadel

had made of him, to their mercurial minds, a hero. Especially now were they glad to have him back, for their numbers had been depleted of several strong men by fresh arrests, and of the nine important members arrested with Remm, not one had been set free; there they were, rotting in the damp and cold, and months, perhaps years, would elapse, in the normal course of Russian "Justice," before they would be brought before the Tribunal for trial.

From the babel and confusion, finally, a definite plan was at last evolved. They would go that night to Remm's rooms, congratulate, cheer him; they would take him back, like an errant prodigal, to their hearts; he should go on with his studies; he should again become an honored member of the "Fraternal Help." So they decided, and proceeded to carry out their plans.

The short, narrow *periulka* where Remm lived—near the Saxon Garden it was—was black with the gathered throng of students. All faculties were represented. There they stood, a thousand strong, jamming the narrow street from end to end, lustily cheering as they waited the return of the deputation which they had sent up to his rooms to welcome and confer with him.

"Remm! Remm! Remm!" they vociferated with the curious multitude madness of which, in like proportions, only a Polish crowd is capable. At first low, then, gaining volume, loud and triumphant, they began to sing the *Varsh-evanka*. An ocean of harmony, ever increasing in tone and intensity, the wild song soared to the skies like a mighty eagle screaming out defiance of its enemies.

Curiously enough, they were not disturbed by the police. At first the more timid among them had been apprehensive; then, as they saw that no interference came, their sanguine Polish minds at once jumped to the conclusion that the discovery of the latest plot against the Governor-General had intimidated the authorities, and that they

were now afraid of dispersing them, according to the time-honored custom, by force and violence. . . . At the corner of the street there even stood two gendarmes; but they remained there as rigid and immovable as statues, watching impassively, and made no attempt to remonstrate or interfere.

After some ten or fifteen minutes the deputation reappeared. At once the enthusiastic cries broke out anew.

"Remm! Remm! Long live Remm!" they howled in mad enthusiasm again and again, until their leaders, standing at the top of the steps of Remm's dwelling, called imperatively, by means of frantic gestures, for silence.

Little by little the shouts, the noise and hubbub subsided like a raging sea into which oil has been poured. . . . Soon the street was hushed and silent.

"What says our Kollega, Remm, to our message of welcome and rehabilitation?" asked the spokesman.

The deputation consisted of three men. All three seemed excited and perturbed, with flushed and angry faces, as though they had been engaged in some violent discussion. Each of the three, when the question came, looked at the others. Finally one of them took the word for the rest, and announced the result of the mission in a voice too low to be heard by all.

"What does he say?—What does he say?" ran through the unquiet throng.

Suddenly groans and hisses; shouts of anger and derision; even threats rose like a surging wave from the front of the densely packed throng. Like wildfire the news ran through the serried ranks and files.

"Remm refuses to see us—to speak to us!—He refuses the banquet! He refuses the rehabilitation! He refuses to come back to the University!"

Half-incredulous, wildly excited, the crowd formed itself into groups, arguing, vociferating, quarrelling; some, even, came to blows. In a moment all was utter confusion. Little by little a movement began at the end of the narrow street; the crowd began to disperse, in quest of a wider field of discussion. Shouting, gesticulating, angrily disputing, they poured out in multiple streams into the main avenues of communication. Many went through the quiet confines of the *Sad*, which was soon black with them; they quarrelled and disputed even in the presence of the gendarmes.

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