

be summoned to his trial; but he waited in vain. He asked the gaoler various questions, hoping to find out from him what his fate was likely to be, but he received no answer. Only once the man spoke to him, and told him that he was strictly forbidden to talk with the prisoners; he might not even wish them 'Good-morning,' or answer the simplest questions.

That was the last time for many years that Batinkov heard the sound of any human voice except his own, for the expected trial and release did not come. Days and weeks, and months passed, then hope and expectancy changed to despair bordering on madness.

At last Batinkov felt that he must make up his mind to spend his life in prison. When he thought of it, he felt as if he was going to lose his reason. Nothing could be drearier than the cell in which he was all alone. Scarcely a sound from the outer world could reach his ear, for his prison was one of the so-called 'casemattes'—small cells built right into the River Neva, partly under the level of the water. Only a small opening at the top of the wall let a little light into the scantily furnished, dismal room!

Batinkov felt that the only thing that could keep him from losing his reason would be to find something to occupy his thoughts. He had not been allowed to take anything with him except a calendar, which happened to be in his pocket, but in a corner of his prison he found three books, probably left there by another prisoner. They were a German bible, a German book of sermons, an old German calendar.

Three German books, and Batinkov only knew the German alphabet! Nothing daunted, he decided to learn German; that would occupy his thoughts, and in time enable him to understand the books.

He began by comparing his Russian calendar with the old German one, and gradually he was able by the help of these books to understand some German words and sentences. Incredible as it may seem he actually learned German in this way, so that after a while he could read and understand the bible quite well.

It was an unknown book to him, for up to that time he had never given much thought to religious matters; they did not interest him, and like most of his friends, he was a freethinker. Even now he only studied the bible because he had nothing else to do. The old book fascinated him with its wonderful history of the Jewish people, with its grand poetry, and its deep words of wisdom. He read it again and again, but without realizing that it had been written for him.

Three years went by in this way and the Holy Ghost began his work in the prisoner's heart. At last the truth of the bible began to be clear and real to him. He knew now that he was a sinner, that God was just and holy and would judge him. The lonely man in his dark prison cell felt himself face to face with God, and he knew that he was not fit to stand in the divine presence. The fight against Satan, against his own doubts and fears, had to be fought all alone, without the help and counsel of any human being, till at last the light shone into Batinkov's soul, and he knew that Jesus was his Saviour. He read those golden words (John iii, 16), that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' And these words (Matt. xi, 28), 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' And again (John i, 12), 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' And in this new relation, having entered the family of the redeemed by faith in Christ, God was no

longer his judge to condemn him, but his loving Father to bless him. From that day a new life began for Batinkov. His cell seemed no longer dark and dismal to him, for it was the place where he had met his Saviour; it had become the gate of heaven to him. He read and re-read his old bible, and it was like a new book, full of wonderful promises and words of comfort.

The days and weeks passed, and grew to months and years; but the prisoner did not long for freedom now, for in his cell he had found the true freedom, and that was enough for him.

At last, when he had given up expecting release, it came. Twenty-nine years Batinkov had spent in the 'casemattes,' when one day he was told that he might leave his cell. An amnesty had been granted to a large number of prisoners. But he had to leave St. Petersburg, by order of the government, and was sent to a town in Central Russia.

It was with regret that he said good-bye to the place where he had first seen Jesus. He had no relations; and his friends, he thought, must all either be dead or in exile; so it did not very much matter to him where he went.

The persons he met after leaving his prison, were kind to him, but took him for a harmless lunatic, for during his imprisonment he had learned the habit of speaking his thoughts aloud, in order to hear at least one human voice. This the people naturally thought strange, and so he lived his own life apart from the rest.

One day he happened to glance at a newspaper and there he read the name of a man who had been his friend in those days long gone by, before his imprisonment.

This friend had not been involved in the political plot, and had been absent from Russia at the time of its discovery; so he had escaped suspicion, had risen in his profession, and was now an admiral, and at the head of the Russian navy.

When Batinkov read the name of his friend he felt an ardent desire to see once more this man whom he had known in his youth. He wrote a petition to the Emperor asking permission to go to St. Petersburg to see a friend. This was granted, and great was the admiral's joyful surprise when he saw his old friend again. He had always thought that Batinkov had died long ago, and it was with great interest that he listened to the strange story, which had begun so sadly and had ended so well.

'What was it that kept you from losing your reason?' asked the Admiral.

'It was this,' quietly answered his friend, pointing to the bible; 'this is my greatest treasure.'

'It is also my most precious possession,' said the admiral, who in the midst of his prosperity had been taught the same blessed truths which his friend had learned in the dark prison cell.

It was a very happy meeting, after so many years, and later on Batinkov had the joy of seeing two or three other friends of his youth who were still alive and not in exile.

When the story was made known, the Emperor granted Batinkov full liberty, and his friends made inquiries in order to find out the reason of his long imprisonment. It was discovered that Batinkov had been forgotten by the government authorities. That was the reason why he had never been summoned to his trial, and why he had only been released after so many years.

But Batinkov did not regret it. His life had not been spent in vain, for God had not forgotten him. He had met his Saviour in the prison, and he was happy. God had led him, 'by a way he knew not,' into 'the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

The remaining years of his life were chiefly spent in the house of his friend, the admiral, until God called him up higher.

Thus it was that the reading of God's word, without any human help, was the means of a soul's conversion.

A Missionary at Home.

There are home mission fields for every person who desires to be actively employed in doing good. One of these is in Christian homes, in which young women are employed to do housework. It is one of the incredible features of our modern Christianity, that such girls are so little influenced by the Christian homes in which they live.

A lady who had acquired a wide influence by her strength of character, sympathy, and moral sense, came from the the country to the city to spend the winter in a quiet lodging-house.

A young woman from the provinces came into the house as servant. The lady was late at the table one evening, and so was left alone with this girl. She noticed a shade of sadness in her face and said:

'Mary, have you friends in the city?'

'No, not one. My father and mother are dead. My sisters are married, but poor, and I have come to London to make my way alone. I have friends in the old church at home. The pastor there was very kind to me.'

'Were you a member of that church?'

'Yes, and I have a letter from it. I would like to show it to you.'

The girl produced the letter.

'I am a member of a church of the same denomination,' said the lady; 'so we are sisters.'

Sisters! At that word the thought of her mission came to the good woman.

'Mary,' she said, after a moment's silence, 'what is your evening out?'

'Friday; but I have nowhere to go.'

'I go to church on that evening. I would like company. Will you go with me?'

'It would make me happy all the week if you would only let me,' said the girl.

The other members of the quiet household were somewhat surprised on the next Friday night to hear the lady say:

'Mary and I are going to week night service.'

But the friendly relations did not end here. The lady lent Mary her books, and selected for her a course of useful reading. Occasionally she gave her a ticket to a concert or lecture, and obtained consent from the landlady that the girl might attend them. She guided her by wise and good advice.

More than this, she gave her personal regard with her favors, and the girl came to love her as she loved her mother.

The lady fell seriously ill. The girl was as true and faithful to her as her own daughter could have been.

When the lady recovered, she felt that she owed for the tender service done in the sickroom more than she could ever repay.

There was a missionary training-school in the church to which they went, and the lady sent the girl there. She is now in the foreign field, working faithfully as a missionary.—'Sunday Companion.'

The Christian.

'If we are to have increased interest in foreign missions or home missions either, there is only one way to obtain it, that is by getting people personally acquainted with, and interested in God, his plans, his purposes, his gospel, his church, his kingdom. To some extent every child of God is interested in his Father in heaven, or he could not be a child indeed, but he needs to have this interest deepened.'