

## ESCAPE OF PETER THE GREAT.

LIKE all malcontents, the Strelitz believed that discontent was universal. It was this belief which, in Moscow itself, and a few days before the departure of their sovereign, emboldened Tsilker and Sukanim, two of their leaders, to plot a nocturnal conflagration. They knew that Peter would be the first to hasten to it; and in the midst of the tumult and confusion common to such accidents, they meant to murder him without mercy, and then to massacre all the foreigners who had been set over them as masters. Such was the infamous scheme. The hour which they had fixed for its accomplishment was at hand. They had accomplices, but no impeachers; and, when assembled at a banquet, they all sought in intoxicating liquors the courage which was required for so dreadful an execution. But like all other intoxications, this produced various effects, according to difference of constitution in those by whom it was felt. Two of these villains lost in it their boldness; they infected each other, not with just remorse, but with a dastardly fear; and, escaping from one crime by another, they left the company under a specious pretext, promising to their accomplices to return in time, and hurried to the Czar to disclose the plot.

At midnight, the blow was to have been struck; and Peter gave orders that, exactly at eleven, the abode of the conspirators should be closely surrounded. Shortly after, thinking that the hour was come, he went singly to the haunt of these ruffians; he entered boldly, certain that he should find nothing but trembling criminals, already fettered by his guards. But his impatience had anticipated the time, and he found himself, single and unarmed, in the midst of their unshackled, daring, well armed band, at the instant when they were vociferating the last words of an oath that they would achieve his destruction.

At his unexpected appearance, however, they all rose in confusion. Peter, on his side, comprehending the full extent of his danger, exasperated at the supposed disobedience of his guards, and furious at having thrown himself into peril, suppressed, nevertheless, the violence of his emotions. Having gone too far to recede, he did not lose his presence of mind: he unhesitatingly advanced among this throng of traitors, greeted them familiarly, and in a calm and natural tone said, that, "as he was passing by their house, he saw a light in it; that supposing they were amusing themselves, he had entered in order to share their pleasures." He then seated himself and drank to his assassins, who, standing up around him, could not avoid putting the glass about, and drinking his health.

But soon they began to consult each other by their numerous signs, and to grow more daring: one of them even leaned over to Sukanim, and said in a low voice, "Brother, it is time!" The latter re-

plied, "Not yet," when Peter, who heard him, and who also heard at last the footsteps of his guards, started from his seat, knocked him down by a blow in the face, and exclaimed, "if it is not time for you, scoundrel, it is for me!" This blow and the sight of the guards, threw the assassins into consternation; they fell on their knees, and implored forgiveness. "Chain them!" replied the Czar. Then turning to the officer of the guards, he struck him, and reproached him with his want of punctuality; but the latter showed him his order, and the Czar perceiving his mistake, clasped him in his arms, kissed him on the forehead, and intrusted him with the custody of the traitors.

His vengeance was terrible, the punishment was more ferocious than the crime. First the rack, then the successive mutilation of each member; then death, when not enough of blood and life was left to allow of the sense of suffering. To close the whole, the heads were exposed on the summit of a column, the members being symmetrically arranged around them as ornaments.

## BEAUTIES OF CREATION.

WHEN we sit at an open window in the still of the afternoon, and look out upon the fragrant lilacs, the blossoming trees, the clambering honeysuckles, the long green grass, half burying the bashful violet from our view, and hear the singing of the joyous birds near at hand, and the roar of the city afar off, we can hardly persuade ourselves that there is such a strife and bickering among the inhabitants of this fair earth. O, ungrateful, after all that heaven has done! Was this harmonious scene spoken into existence, this perfect world created thus, and covered with all that is lovely and sweet, to be made the arena of unnatural contention? Was such perfect order established in the creation that its noblest tenants should continually jostle each other, during their stay with the fair works of God? Bright red rose, that inclines toward me on thy deep-green stem, thy fragrance is an offering of mercy from the hand of thy Creator. I see nothing in thee that speaks of wrath, of revenge, or of envy. Pure and innocent, there is a harmlessness in the very look which thou wearst. Thou speakest not of care, of sorrow, or of strife. Why art thou left joyous and without blemish, while man is but a guilty mourner on the face of the earth, subject to grief, and disappointment, and corruption? Were the flowers of Eden fairer than thou? Alas! even they proved as fragile. But though dead and in decay, thy perfume is never lost. The man who loves not flowers must have a bad heart; and the reason that women love them so, is because they are the connecting link between men and angels.