

BARLASCH OF THE GUARD

By Henry Seton Merriman

CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)

They both rose and groped their way toward Sebastian. Desree found the flint and struck it. The sulphur burned blue for interminable moments and then flared to meet the wick of the candle. Barlasch watched Desree as she held the light down to her father's face. Sebastian's waiting was over. Barlasch had not needed a candle to recognize death.

From Desree, his bright and restless eyes turned slowly toward the dead man's face—and he stepped back. "Ah!" he said, with a hoarse cry of surprise, "now I remember. I was always sure that I had seen his face before. And when I saw it, it was like this—like the face of a dead man. It was on the Place de la Nation, on a tumbril—going to the guillotine. He must have escaped, as many did, by some accident or mistake."

He went slowly to the window, holding his shaggy head between his two clenched hands, as if to spur his memory to an effort. Then he turned and pointed to the silent form on the bed. "That is a noble of France," he said, "one of the greatest. And all France thinks him dead this twenty years. And I cannot remember his name—because of God—I cannot remember his name."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vilna. It is our trust That there is yet another world to mend All error and mischance.

Louis d'Arragon knew the road well enough from Königsberg to the Niemem. It runs across a plain, flat as a table, through which many small streams seek their rivers in winding beds. This country was not thinly inhabited, though the villages had been stripped, as foliage is stripped by a cloud of locusts. Each cottage had its ring of silver birch-trees to protect it from the winds which sweep from the Baltic and the steeps. These had been torn and broken down by the retreating army, in a vain hope of making fire with green wood.

It was quite easy to keep in the steps of the retreating army, for the road was marked by recumbent forms huddled on either side. Few vehicles had come so far, for the broken country near to Vilna and around Kowno presented slopes up which the starving horses were unable to drag their load.

D'Arragon reached Kowno without mishap, and there found a Russian colonel of Cossacks who proved friendly enough, and not only appreciated the value of his passport and such letters of recommendation as he had been able to procure at Königsberg, but showed him others and forwarded him on his journey.

He still nourished a lingering belief in the Casimir's story. He had not been left behind at Vilna to recover from his exhaustion. He would undoubtedly, make his way westward as soon as possible. He might have got to the south, any road, but he had huddled human landmarks might, however, be Charles Darragon.

Louis was essentially a thorough man. The sea is a mistress demanding a whole and constant attention. Concentration soon becomes a habit. Louis did not travel at night for fear of passing Charles on the road, alive or dead. He knew his name better than any in the Fraungasse had learned to know this gay and inconsequent Frenchman. A certain cunning lay behind the happy laugh—a great capacity was hidden by the careless manner. If ready wit could bring man through the dangers of the retreat, Charles had as good a chance of surviving as any.

Nevertheless, Louis rarely passed a dead man on the road, but drew up, and quitting his sleigh, turned over the body, which was almost invariably huddled with its back offered to the deadly, prevailing north wind. Against each thin wind had piled a sloping bank of that fine snow which, even in the lightest breeze, drifts over the surface of the land like an ivory mist, waist-high, and cakes the clothes. In a high wind it will rise twenty feet in the air and blind any who try to face it.

As often as not a mere glance sufficed to show that this was not Charles, for few of the bodies were clad. Many, for fear of being stripped, still living, by their half-frozen comrades. But sometimes Louis had to dust the snow from strange, bearded faces before he could pass on with a quick sigh of relief.

Beyond Kowno, the country is thinly populated, and indefatigable English com-missioners. At Vilna we took twenty thousand prisoners—poor devils who came and asked us for food—and I don't know how many others. And you see Wilson there, remember me to him. If Napoleon has need to hate one man more than another for this business, it is that frebrand, Wilson. Yes, you will assuredly find your cousin at Vilna, among the prisoners. But you must not linger by the walls for they are being sent back to Moscow to rebuild that which they have caused to be destroyed.

He laughed and waved his gloved hand as d'Arragon drove on. After the broken land and low, abrupt hills at Kowno, the country was flat again until the valley of the Vilna opened out. And here, almost without sight of Vilna, d'Arragon drove down a short hill which must ever be historic. He drove slowly, for on either side were gun-carriages, deep sunk in the snow where the French had left them. This hill marked the final demergeration of the Emperor's army into

a shapeless rabble, hopelessly flying before an exhausted enemy.

Half on the road and half in the ditch were hundreds of carriages which had been hurriedly smashed up to provide firewood. Carts, still laden with the booty of Moscow, stood among the trees. Some of them contained small, square boxes of silver coin, brought by Napoleon to pay his army, and here abandoned. Silver coin was too heavy to carry. The rate of exchange had long been slaty francs in silver for a gold napoleon or a louis. The cloth coverings of the cushions had been torn off to shape into rough garments; the straw stuffing had been eaten by the horses.

Inside the carriages were crouching on the floor—the frozen bodies of fugitives too badly wounded or too ill to attempt to walk. They had sat there, till death came to them. Many were women. In one carriage, four women, in silks and fine linen, were huddled together. Their furs had been dragged from them either before or after death. Louis stepped after the bottom and looked back. De Casimir, at all events, had succeeded in surmounting this obstacle, which had proved fatal to so many. He was in the grave of so many hopes—God's rubbish heap, where gold and precious stones, silks and priceless furs, all that greedy men had schemed and striven and fought to get, fell from their hands at last.

Vilna lies all down a slope—a city built upon several hills—and the Vilna runs at the bottom. The Way of St. Row, the Smolensk Road, runs eastward by the river-bank, and here the rear-guard held the Cossacks in check while Murat hastily decamped, after the King of Naples, to whom Napoleon gave the command of his broken army gaily—"a vous, Roi de Naples," he is reported to have said, as he hurried to his carriage—Murat abandoned his sick and wounded; did not even warn the stragglers.

D'Arragon entered the city by the narrow gate known as the Town Gate, through which, as through that great portal of Moscow, every man must pass bareheaded.

The Emperor is here," were the first words spoken to him by the officer on guard.

But the streets were quiet enough, and the winner in this great game of war, remained the same quiet, unostentatious silence to victory as that which, in the hour of humiliation, had baffled Napoleon.

It was almost night, and d'Arragon had to hasten, as he hurried to his lodgings, he found no lights at all, for the starving soldiers had climbed to the lamps for the sake of the oil, which they had greedily drunk. It was a full meal of kitchen, leaving the streets of the street corners were willing to give such information as they could. They were, however, strangers to Vilna, like Louis himself, and not without suspicion; for this was a city which had hidden the French welcome. There had been dancing and revelry on the outward march. The citizens themselves were afraid of the strange, wild-eyed men who returned to them from Moscow.

(To be Continued.)

At last, in the Episcopal Palace, where headquarters had been hurriedly established, Louis found the man he sought, the officer in charge of the arrangements for despatching prisoners into Russia and Siberia. He was a grizzled warrior of the middle school, speaking only French and Russian. He was tired out and hungry, but he listened to Louis's story.

"There is the list," he said, "it is more or less complete. Many have called themselves officers who never held a commission from the Emperor Napoleon. But we have done what we can to keep them out. Many have been picked up as often as not the men were plucky sitting on a frozen corpse, as on a seat—and stopped to say a few words and gather news. "You will find your friend at Vilna," said one young officer who had been attached to General Wilson's staff, and had many stories to tell of the energetic and indefatigable English commissioner. "At Vilna we took twenty thousand prisoners—poor devils who came and asked us for food—and I don't know how many others. And you see Wilson there, remember me to him. If Napoleon has need to hate one man more than another for this business, it is that frebrand, Wilson. Yes, you will assuredly find your cousin at Vilna, among the prisoners. But you must not linger by the walls for they are being sent back to Moscow to rebuild that which they have caused to be destroyed."

"You understand," said the Russian, returning to his work. "I cannot afford the time to help you. We have twenty-five thousand prisoners to feed and keep alive."

"Yes—I understand," answered Louis, who had the seaman's way of making himself a part of his surroundings. The old colonel glanced at him across the table with a grim smile. "The Emperor," he said, "was sitting in that chair an hour ago. He may come back at any moment."

"Ah!" said Louis, following the written lines with a pencil. But no interruption came, and at last the list was finished. Charles was not among the officers taken prisoner at Vilna.

"Well?" inquired the Russian, without looking up. "Not there."

The old officer took a sheet of paper and hurriedly wrote a few words on it. "Try the Basile Hospital to-morrow morning," he said. "That will gain you nothing. It is to be cleared out by the Emperor's orders. You remember, twenty thousand dead to dispose of as well—but we are in no hurry."

He laughed grimly, and bade Louis good-night. He had just come from the business in hand, and he had been prepared by the Duc de Bassano under Napoleon's orders, when Vilna was selected as the base of the great army. When the Rus-

sians entered Vilna after the retreating remnants of Murat's rabble, they found the dead and the dying in the streets and the market-place. Some had made fires and had lain themselves down around them—to die. Others were without food or firing, almost without clothes. Many were barefoot. All officers and men alike, were in rags. It was a pitiful sight; for half of these men were no longer human. Some were gnawing at their own limbs. Many were blind; others had lost their speech or hearing. Nearly all were maddened by some delirium—some terrible sore, the result of a frozen wound, of frost-bite, of scurvy, of gangrene.

The Cossacks, half-civilized as they were, wild with the excitement of killing, and the chase of the human quarry, stood agape in the streets of Vilna.

When the Emperor arrived, he set to work to clear the streets first, to get these piteous men indoors. There was no question yet of succoring them. It was not even possible to feed them all. The only thought was to find some protection against the ruthless cold.

The first thought was, of course, directed to the hospitals. They looked in and saw a store-house of the dead. The dead could wait; but the living must be housed.

So the dead waited, and it was their turn now at the St. Basile Hospital. There Louis presented himself at dawn.

"Looking for someone?" asked a man in uniform, who must have been inside the hospital, for he had been dragged from them either before or after death. Louis stepped after the bottom and looked back. De Casimir, at all events, had succeeded in surmounting this obstacle, which had proved fatal to so many.

Some attempt seemed to have been made to clear the wards, but these whose task it had been had not had time to do more than drag the dead out of the passages.

The soldiers were now at work in the lower passage. Carts began to arrive. An officer told off to this dread duty came up hurriedly, smoking a cigarette, his high fur collar about his neck. He glanced at Louis and bowed to him.

"Looking for someone?" he asked. "Then stand here," he said. "It is I who have to keep count. They say there are eight thousand in here. They will be carried past here to the carts. Have a cigarette."

It is hard to talk when the thermometer registers more than twenty degrees of frost, for the lips stiffen and contract into wrinkles, like the lips of a very old woman. Perhaps neither of the watchers was in the humor to begin an acquaintance.

They stood side by side, stamping their feet to keep the blood going, without speaking. Or, if Louis stepped forward, and at a sign from the officer, the bearers stopped. But Louis shook his head, and they passed on. At mid-day the officer was recalled to his place, however, he was reckless, and Desree could hear him searching in his secret hiding place beneath the floor for concealed condiments.

"There," he said, when he set the dish before her, "eat it with an easy mind. There is nothing unclean in it. It is not rat or cat or the liver of a horse, but as we others eat and ask no better. It is all clean stuff."

He poured out wine, and stood in the darkened doorway watching her drink it. Then he went away to his own meal in the kitchen, leaving the waiter to serve the dinner. He was not without a certain pride in the matter that she was doing full honor to St. Matthias. When she had finished he came into the room.

"That strengthens, eh?—that strengthens. We others, who lead a rough life, eat a little food and a glass of wine, and we are no better. And Desree knew in a flash of comprehension that the food and the wine and the glass of wine were nothing but preliminaries to bad news.

"What is it?" she asked a second time. "Is it—bombardment?"

"Bombardment," he laughed, "they cannot shoot, those Cossacks. It is only the French who understand artillery."

"Then what is it?"—for you have something to tell me, I know," he replied, a shock-herd of white hair, with a grimace of despair.

"Yes," he admitted, "it is news."

"From outside?" cried Desree, with a sudden break in her voice. "From Vilna," answered Barlasch. He came into the room and went past her toward the fire, where he put the logs together carefully.

There was an unusual vigor in his voice. Of late, since the death of Sebastian, Barlasch seemed to have fallen victim to the settled apathy which lives within a prison wall and broods over a besieged city. It is a sort of silent mourning worn by the soul for a lost liberty. Dantzig had soon succumbed to the apathy, but he had not even the satisfaction of being quite sure that they were deserving of the world's sympathy. It soon spread to the soldiers who were defending a Prussian city for a French Emperor who seemed to have forgotten them.

But to-night Barlasch seemed to be more energetic. Desree looked round about her, as if he had not laid on the table any contribution to a bare larder; and yet his manner was that of one who had prepared a surprise and is waiting to enjoy its effect. He was restless, as if he were waiting for another, rubbing together his crooked fingers and darting sidelong glances at her face.

"What is it?" she asked, suddenly, and Barlasch gave a start, as if he had been detected in some deceit. He hurried forward to the smouldering fire and held his hands over it.

"It is," he answered, with that exaggerated ease of manner with which the young and simple seek to conceal embarrassment. "Tell me, mademoiselle, what have you for supper to-night? It is I who will cook it. To-night we will keep a fete. There is that piece of beef for you. I know a way to make it appetizing. For me, there is my portion of horse. It is the friend of man—the horse."

He laughed, and made an effort to be gay, which had a poignant pathos in it that made Desree bite her lip. "What fete is it that we are to keep?" she asked, with a wan smile. Her kind eyes had that glitter in them which is caused by a constant and continuing sorrow. Six months ago they had only been gay and kind, now they saw the world as it is, as it always must be so long as the human heart is in pain.

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"The fete of St. Matthias—my fete, mademoiselle."

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CIVIL SERVANTS TO UNITE

ASSOCIATION WILL COVER ENTIRE WEST

Report of Committee Which Waited on Commission at Ottawa Is Presented.

Winnipeg, Man., Nov. 11.—The report of the committee of the civil service association of western Canada who recently waited upon the commission at Ottawa was presented last week at a meeting of the Western Civil Service Association at which were present about two hundred and fifty civil servants. The committee who interviewed the commission at Ottawa consisted of Dr. Barrett, J. Obed Smith, J. J. McKenna and Col. Steit.

Consideration was also made with respect to including all the territory between the Great Lakes and the Pacific coast in the Western Canada Association, and action was taken in drafting by-laws with this in view. This would include about 3,500 civil servants in the west. All the different provinces will be represented on the executive, and in addition steps will be taken to form provincial associations, with the headquarters of the federal executive in Winnipeg. The following is the report.

"The civil service commission not having been able to certify the request of the executive to visit Winnipeg and offering to receive representations through delegates, the undersigned were appointed to appear before the commission and present the claims of the public officials of the west for increased remuneration and the other claims set forth in the memorial filed with the commission by the executive."

"The commission fixed Wednesday the 26th ult., as the day for having your representatives. Certain of the undersigned were, on account of official engagements, unable to attend at that time. The president, however, at once proceeded to Ottawa, appeared before the commission, and secured an adjournment to Wednesday, the 22nd on which day your delegates were all in attendance. They were received most courteously and given every opportunity to elaborate the case set forth in the memorial and to express their views upon the organization of the service generally. The commission devoted the whole day to hearing and questioning the delegation. A full report was made of the evidence, and it will doubtless appear with the report and the minutes of the meeting of the association which will have an opportunity of reading it."

"The undersigned do not consider that it would be proper for them to express any conclusions which they may have drawn from the conference, as to the probable nature and scope of the findings of the commission. But they do feel warranted in stating their conviction that the interest of the service, both inside and outside, will be safeguarded by the commission, who are a detailed knowledge of departmental organization and a sympathetic regard for the condition of the public employes in the west."

"The meeting of the undersigned with the commission, convinced them that the association acted wisely in providing for the sending of delegates to Ottawa when it was found impossible for the commission to visit the west."

"The undersigned may add that the commission met all the expenses of the delegation."

Ottawa, Nov. 11.—An arrangement has been made between the militia and the government of Nova Scotia for the introduction into the public schools of that province of a system of physical exercises and military training which will go into effect on the first of January next. School teachers will undergo a special course to qualify them for imparting physical training and military drill to scholars. Certificates will not be granted to teachers in Nova Scotia until they qualify for this purpose. Rifle shooting will be introduced for male students. Certificates for physical training and military drill will be issued to teachers of either sex.

For school cadet corps the military department will provide instruction belts and caps, a proportion of arms and ammunition, and drill barns. Sir F. Borden is a strong believer that every lad before he reaches manhood should be able to handle the rifle. The minister is in communication with other provinces, and it is believed they will follow the example of Nova Scotia.

Portland, Ore., Nov. 9.—J. Thorburn Ross, president; G. H. Hill, vice-president; and T. T. Berkhart, treasurer, of the Title Guaranty and Trust Co., which went into the hands of a receiver last Wednesday, were arrested to-day, and a warrant is out for John E. Atchison, Atchison is now in New York.

The defendants who have been arrested were released this afternoon on furnishing \$2,500 bail each. The charge against them is accepting deposits while knowing the bank was insolvent. Under the laws of Oregon, this is a felony punishable by the maximum imprisonment for two years, or by fine and imprisonment.

The arrest was made on the complaint of C. F. Elman, who alleges that on October 23rd, the day before the present day-to-day holiday period began, he deposited \$250. Elman alleges that the officials of the bank knew on that day, and had for some time previously known, that the bank was insolvent.

The Cottage City Has Lost Its Proprietor Near Bella Bella. (From Monday's Daily.) Word was brought to Vancouver, this morning by the C. P. R. steamship Princess May that the Pacific Coast Steamship Company's Alaskan steamship Cottage City is at Bella Bella minus her propeller. It is understood that tugs will be sent to her assistance. The May is due in port to-night.

The Cottage City was due in Seattle on Saturday, but will probably be several days late. A Canadian tug will be sent to her aid.

The tug Lorne is reported to be taking the injured steamer Tampico to Seattle from Bilkinnop Bay. The Tampico is well down by the head, but is keeping the water out with her pumps.

Buttens appear to have first come into use in Great Britain in the reign of Edward I. The first were made of wood.

BLANKETS

White, Gray, Colored All Grades and Weights

J. Piercy & Co. Wholesale Dry Goods, Victoria, B. C.

HOTEL GUTTED AT NICOLA
TWO GUESTS INJURED WHILE ESCAPING

Nicola, B. C., Nov. 11.—Fire broke out at 7:15 this morning at Hillars house. The fire was caused by a stove pipe in the dining room igniting the room above. It had obtained a firm hold before it was noticed, it was impossible to save anything in the dry frame building. Ten minutes after the start it was all ablaze.

An addition which was being built was also destroyed. All the guests escaped safely except J. M. Turner, of the Bank of Montreal's staff, who was severely burnt about the shoulders and hands in attempting to get out of the building; also A. B. Lawson, who when sliding off the veranda injuring his feet.

The damage done was considerable. Furniture, fixings and stock were a total loss. The house was only opened recently as a hotel by George Hillars. It was owned by Wm. Riley and partially covered by insurance.

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MILITARY TRAINING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Arrangements Between Minister of Militia and Government of Nova Scotia.

(Special to the Times.) Ottawa, Nov. 11.—An arrangement has been made between the militia and the government of Nova Scotia for the introduction into the public schools of that province of a system of physical exercises and military training which will go into effect on the first of January next. School teachers will undergo a special course to qualify them for imparting physical training and military drill to scholars. Certificates will not be granted to teachers in Nova Scotia until they qualify for this purpose. Rifle shooting will be introduced for male students. Certificates for physical training and military drill will be issued to teachers of either sex.

For school cadet corps the military department will provide instruction belts and caps, a proportion of arms and ammunition, and drill barns. Sir F. Borden is a strong believer that every lad before he reaches manhood should be able to handle the rifle. The minister is in communication with other provinces, and it is believed they will follow the example of Nova Scotia.

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OAKLAND BANK CLOSES ITS DOORS

(Special to the Times.)

San Francisco, Nov. 11.—The Union National bank, the oldest bank in Oakland, closed to-day. No statement of the assets or liabilities were available up to 11:20 o'clock.

SHADOW OF BLACK HAND. Members of Medicine Hat Attempt to Intimidate Wealthy Residents in Ontario.

Saulte Ste. Marie, Ont., Nov. 9.—The entire community is excited over particulars of attempts of the Black Hand, which have become public. Some weeks ago Capt. Letcher, a wealthy Englishman, residing here, received letters from Medicine Hat demanding money which was to be placed on the porch of his house on Wednesday night. The provincial secretary sent secret service men to investigate there, and learned that John McKay, a well-to-do lawyer, and John Dunsea, a merchant, also received letters demanding money which was to be placed on the porch on Wednesday night. Capt. Letcher's house was watched, and a dummy parcel was placed in the spot mentioned in the letter, but no person came, and the detectives departed the next day. A Canadian tug will be sent to her aid.

DRAGGED TO DEATH. Mosoomin, Sask., Nov. 9.—A fatal runaway accident occurred on the farm of Mr. Rodney Lesette, twelve miles south of here, yesterday, in which John Wilkes lost his life. He was ploughing with a four-horse team when they ran away. He became caught in the lines and was dragged to death.

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