

Northern Messenger

W. Bronscombe's 30¢ 08

VOLUME XLIII. No. 2

MONTREAL, JANUARY 10, 1908.

40 Cts. Per An. Post-Paid

Dr. Alexaieff's Patient.

'Come in!' said Dr. Alexaieff, as a knock came at the door of the cosy warm room where he was sitting with his wife one afternoon, after a long country round which had begun at five o'clock that morning.

The manservant entered.

'Barin,' said he, 'a lad has just come, begging you to go to the inn at Kalinska, to see a sick traveller just arrived.'

'Dr. Köhler lives nearer Kalinska than I do,' replied the doctor; 'why was not he sent for?'

Kostia, the weather prophet, who reads the signs of heaven and earth like an open book, foretells a storm for this day or the morrow?'

'So much the more reason that I should be at thy side, my husband,' said Olga tenderly, and the doctor said no more.

'Who knows, Fedia! Perhaps I may be able to help thee with the patient. Thou knowest I am no novice at this kind of work,' said the doctor's wife, as they drove off.

'No, there sayest thou truly, my Olga. Never shall I forget thy devotion and skill

for all the landmarks to which he had been accustomed, had vanished under a white shroud.

The darkness had come, and the lamps were all lighted in Kalinska, when the sledge, which looked like a shapeless gliding snow-drift, drawn by panting, steaming horses, dashed up to the inn.

And when the yard-men sprang to take charge of the horses, the landlord himself came forward to greet the doctor.

'No one else would have braved such weather to see a stranger,' he said, in flattering tones; but Dr. Alexaieff did not seem to hear him. He only said, as the man relieved the passengers of their snow-laden fur-cloaks—

'Where is the patient? Show the way, please.' Then to his wife, 'Stay there, Olga, in the coffee-room; I will call thee if there be anything thou canst do.'

The doctor was a long time upstairs, and his wife wondered what could be keeping him. She had ordered tea, and the samovar was hissing and bubbling on its stand, ready for the tea-making; and the freshly-sliced lemon was spreading its fragrance through the room.

Suddenly the door opened, and the doctor appeared.

'Ach, dear, at last!' exclaimed Olga. 'Well, am I wanted?'

'Yes,' replied her husband. 'Yes, indeed, thou—'

'What is it, Fedia? How strange is thy face! What ails thee?' she cried.

'Come up with me and thou shalt know.'

And with glowing cheeks and eyes that shone through tears, the doctor led the way, and Olga followed. He threw open a door on the first landing, and they entered, Olga first. As she came forward, there was a cry of mingled pain and gladness, and a wan face on the pillow of the low bed was half lifted.

With an answering cry of pure joy, and a murmur of 'Ach, Vassili! God be praised, I see thee again! My brother! My poor dear!' Olga dropped on her knees by the bedside, while the sick man sobbed out a confession of his sin, and told of his true repentance, and of his resolve to begin a new life. With his softened, pleading face upturned to that of his sister, he begged for news of his wife and little ones.

'But that I am sick and may die,' said he sadly, 'I could speak with more confidence of the change that has come into my heart, and which I had hoped to show in a changed life; but now—' and his voice broke.

'Fear not, my brother Vassili,' said the doctor, taking his patient's hand in a firm warm clasp. 'Fear not. It is borne in upon my mind as I look at thee, that this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God. And when the dear Lord hath healed thy body, as I believe He hath already cured that sin-sick soul of thine, thy heart and life shall be consecrated to Him for ever.

'And as for thy sister and myself—I am assured that we shall never have cause to regret that we braved together the dangers of the winter storm and driving snow, to come to the aid of the sick stranger lying helpless and forlorn in the inn at Kalinska.'

—M. E. R., in the 'Child's Companion.'



I asked the same question, Barin, and was told that Dr. Köhler has been ill in bed since the day before yesterday.'

'All the same, go not, Fedia,' said Dr. Alexaieff's wife earnestly. 'Thou art so weary, and the weather is bad.'

The doctor did not at once reply. He was a conscientious Christian man, who always tried to do his duty; and now he endeavored to put aside his own feelings and inclinations, to forget how jaded and tired he was, and to ask himself honestly what was the right thing to do.

The silence did not last long. When he looked up again both the wife and the servant knew that his decision was made, and both loved and revered him the more for it.

'Go, Nicolai,' said the doctor, 'order the sledge and pair, and I will drive myself; I start at once.'

'Ach, Fedia,' exclaimed the doctor's wife, 'if go thou must, then take me with thee.'

'But bethink thee, Olga, what if the weather, that looks now so threatening, became worse! Knowest thou, wife, that old

when thou didst tend the wife of that scape-grace brother of thine, Vassili, when he ran away and left her penniless, sick, and with two little children to care for.'

'Ah, Fedia—and thou who rememberest the good deeds of others, but forgettest thine own—pray, who was it that gave the poor young mother a home, and sent her children to school, and found her employment when she was able to work?'

Dr. Alexaieff did not answer. But just then a sudden keen blast swept up behind them, and glancing over his shoulder, he saw a heavy cloud coming up before the wind.

'A snow-storm!' he said, 'and a bad one! See, Olga, the big trotter Kishka knows what is coming and is afraid.'

Then leaning forward, the doctor encouraged his horses with voice and rein, urging them to their utmost speed. The fast trot became a headlong gallop, and the sledge flew over the snow, the blizzard blinding and deafening the passengers. But happily the horses knew the way, having often been the same road; and their driver was fain to trust to them,