

slightly with nervousness as he looked his prisoner in the face—the fox he had hunted so long and tracked to earth at last—but no other sign of emotion was visible anywhere on those austere features. He looked the very picture of an official martinet, as he stood there, staring hard at Ruric Brassoﬀ. But he bowed a polite bow, none the less, as he muttered calmly, ‘Good-morning, Prince,’ with soldier-like politeness.

And Ruric Brassoﬀ answered in the self-same tone :
‘Good-morning, Excellency.’

A lady was seated in a chair at the further end of the room. As Ruric Brassoﬀ entered, she rose, and gazed at him full in the face. It was Olga Mireﬀ. Once, and once only, her bosom heaved tumultuously. Neither said a word, but their eyes met : that was enough. In a moment, Ruric Brassoﬀ knew his follower was true as steel. Her look was a look of the purest womanly devotion. But it smote him to the heart. For the eyes meant supreme faith. It repented him that he had mistrusted her—that great-hearted, single-minded, noble patriot Olga !

Alexis Selistoff was the first to break the long dramatic pause. He scanned his man close.

‘You’ve disguised yourself wonderfully,’ he said at last
‘They told me you were altered. But still, I should have known you. I should have known you anywhere. There’s Brassoﬀ in those eyes even now, and in the firm set of that head. All the rest has changed, Prince : all the rest has turned traitor.’

‘To the tyrant, not to Russia,’ Ruric Brassoﬀ answered, undaunted.

Alexis Selistoff sniffed the air.

‘Give me that envelope, Nikita,’ he said, turning round ; and Nikita gave it him.

The General, moving forward a step, laid it down on the desk that occupied the chief place in the room.

‘Undo those irons !’ he went on coldly, with military brevity. And the soldiers undid them. ‘Leave us,’ the General murmured, with an authoritative wave of the hand, as Ruric Brassoﬀ shook himself free with a natural gesture of satisfaction at the removal of the handcuffs.