

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

## LONGING.

(From the German of Schiller.)

## I.

If from this low, misty valley  
I could only make my way,  
How my fainting soul should rally,  
And my heart grow light and gay!

## II.

Beauteous uplands over yonder,  
Ever green and ever young,—  
Had I wings, I'd love to wander  
Thro' those bright, blessed hills among.

## III.

Harmonies of Heaven are sounding  
Through my spirit, sweet and calm,  
And the joyous winds are bounding  
Hither with their loads of balm.

## IV.

Golden fruits up there are glowing,  
Waving 'mong the sombre leaves,  
And the flowers which there are blowing  
No stern winter ever grieves.

## V.

Ah! how glorious there to wander  
In the endless, sunny light,  
Feeling the fresh air meander  
Round me on my chosen height!

## VI.

But the sullen-raging river  
Checks me with its furious roar,  
And its high waves foam for ever—  
Shrinks my soul from passing o'er!

## VII.

Lo! a boat is yonder tossing,  
But no boatman I perceive,—  
Quick! aboard! no fear—thou'rt crossing,  
And the canvas seems to live!

## VIII.

Thus thou must have faith and venture,  
Lend the gods no pledge in hand:—  
Wondrous faith alone can enter  
Yonder lovely Wonderland!

JOHN READE.

## THE KILLING PRINCESS.

When Catherine II. had safely deposited the crown of Poland, with the sixteen northern diadems which the industry and enterprise of her predecessors had collected in the jewel-chamber of the Winter Palace, her Imperial Majesty found it necessary to inquire after the revenues of certain domains which had always been considered its appendages. In the uncertainties of the Polish throne, they had been farmed and superintended by so many hands, that the accounts were in more than ordinary confusion. Moreover, Catherine the Great wanted money, and the Princess Prestovia Nicola Grodzoff had offered to purchase a large estate of the crown-lands situated on the Vistula, in order to build there a southern residence for herself and suite in severe winters.

The princess was one of the richest subjects in Russia. She owned forests in Livonia, fishing-towns on the White Sea, and mines in Siberia. Her family were among the oldest of the Russian nobility; the blood of the ancient czars flowed in their veins, and they claimed a left-handed descent from Ivan the Terrible. Her excellence was accustomed to boast of these honours, though rather in a private way, for Catherine had too much trouble in getting the throne to tolerate such imperial recollections; so the princess contented herself with publicly mentioning, when occasion served, that she was of the real old Muscovite race, unmingled with any Swedish or German cross. Spiteful people, who had not so pure a stock to boast—and there were many such in St. Petersburg—said as much might have been guessed from the Tatar features of her excellency, who, notwithstanding, went further in foreign fashions, follies, and luxuries than any of the court. Her balls, masks, and dinners *à la Française*, rivalled those of the czarina herself. She kept a French milliner in constant occupation in her palace, had three cooks and two hair-dressers duly imported from Paris every year, that period being as long as any of them could be induced to remain in the service of her excellency; kept a French secretary for conducting her correspondence, and talked occasionally of the verses she had written in imitation of Rousseau.

Princess Grodzoff was a widow of unknown years—for hoops, false hair, rouge, and patches rendered age in those days a matter rather difficult to make out—but it was said that her name-day had been celebrated before a stone was laid on the banks of the Neva, or a peasant perished in its marshes. In short, her excellency was older than the modern capital, yet she bade fair to employ the French milliner and her congeners for many a year to come, and keep a firm hold of her broad possessions. These had come partly by marriage and partly by inheritance; the princess was the heiress of her family, and, as sometimes happens to noble houses, all the rest impoverished their estates, and got into debt through vain endeavours to emulate her splendour. People said she did wonders for them all; brought out their daughters, found places for their sons, and kept them all on their estates, to guard against extravagance; while others sought after the motive for such benefactions, her highness not being the woman to part with a rouble easily. Her turn for hard bargaining-making was universally acknowledged; even Catherine was well aware of it, for the princess had bought crown-lands before; and the inquiry into the Polish accounts was accordingly instituted.

The czarina was too well acquainted with her faithful subjects to intrust that investigation to their hands. After the fashion of czars past and future, she looked out for a foreigner worthy of such confidential employment, and found one in the person of Count Thienville, a young *attaché* of the French embassy, and strongly recommended by her majesty's agents at Versailles. The powers that preside over the exigencies of princes seemed to have cut out Gaston de Thienville for his work. The son of a farmer-general, whose good fortune died with Madame de Pompadour, he had an early acquaintance with what might be called the more delicate details of business. Fortune had given him no estate but his wits. Nature had made him cool, keen, and clear-headed, always alive to his own interests, but true as steel where his honour was engaged, and as ardent as the best of his countrymen in either love or

war. Gaston was not very brilliant nor very handsome, but determined to be somebody; and finding himself unable to fulfil that resolution in France, he came to try the northern market, like other wares that would not sell at home. There was not a town from Berlin to St. Petersburg in which he had not looked out for his fortune in vain; the Russian capital had afforded him nothing but the empty title of *attaché*, which he had assumed after waiting three weeks in the ambassador's anteroom, and the hospitality of a poor state-councillor, to whom he had brought letters of introduction from a relative in the embassy at Paris.

This councillor was an old man nobly born, but very poor. His family had lost their fortune in building a palace to please Peter the Great, and ornament his new city; three inundations of the Neva had successively swept the building away; and at length, when their lands and roubles had been thus submerged, the noble proprietors were obliged to take up their residence in the only corner of the palace which the waters had spared, where they lived with great economy, and quite forgotten by court and czar—timber huts and dirty warehouses multiplying round them, as that quarter of the town went out of fashion and grew low. The councillor considered himself the last of his family; his wife was long dead; and he had but one daughter, Sophia, whose prospects, as frequently rehearsed by her father, were to sell the old house, with all it contained, pay the expenses of his funeral, and retire into the convent of Fasting Sisters, to which the ladies of her house had a hereditary right of admission. The family were distantly related to the Princess Grodzoff; but her good graces had been lost by the councillor thirty years before at a game of cards, and in consequence, Sophia and her father were left to their own resources. The old man had a winter asthma, and was seldom in good-humour. The house was poor and cold; they had no servant but a *mujuk*, who was never sober when he could get anything to drink. But the councillor welcomed the stranger to his stove and table as heartily as if both had been better furnished; and the stranger was glad to stay—first, because he could not find more comfortable quarters; and, secondly, because Sophia, one of the prettiest and best girls in St. Petersburg, kept that remnant of a palace habitable by her presence, doing not only all the household work, but all the good-humour and cheerfulness for the whole establishment.

Gaston had often wished to be rich; but he did so still more fervently after his admission to the state-councillor's home. Sophia had no fortune; her education had been so neglected, that she could speak nothing but Russ, and she never wore patches. But she put his laced waistcoat in repair, when he could not buy another, to appear at the embassy; always smiled when he came in; and he thought a court-dress would become her. His energy had been great in looking for place and employment all the way from France, now it became tremendous: he laid siege to the hearts of courtiers, and the hands of valets, though his munitions for the latter kind of warfare were growing extremely slender, and fortune rarely favours the importunate. Through some of these channels, however, his name came to the imperial ear, and Catherine fixed upon him as the man wanted to go quietly through her Polish accounts, and make a true report of the same. According to northern custom, he was not trusted so far without a check; her majesty's private secretary, who had been deputed to manage the business, assigned him a humble dependent of his own, named Michal Clozoff, by way of clerk and assistant.

Clozoff had been a merchant in his day, and supplied the court with furs; but his trade went out of fashion after the French architect heated the Hermitage, and nothing thicker than taffeta was allowed to be worn; so Clozoff gave up furselling, and, with his five sons, hung about the outskirts of the palace, living by small quiet jobs, and especially at the service of the private secretary, from whom they got more promises than pay. If the ex-merchant had been placed as a spy in that low dingy office behind the admiralty, where the two worked night and day at the Polish account-books—for the czarina was in haste—he had nothing to report, but that Gaston spared neither pen nor calculation to make out the subtractions from her majesty's new revenues, which at length were found so considerable, that it was expected there would be two or three villages in Siberia peopled by the delinquents. The estate on the Vistula was, however, most clear of such encumbrances, the discovery of which fact brought the private secretary to assure Gaston of her majesty's satisfaction, to pay him five hundred roubles for his work, and to receive fifty back as his own perquisite for allowing him to be employed. Perhaps it was the probability of imperial favour shining on the stranger, that induced his excellency to become condescending and chatty; discuss the opera, which had just been opened; and tell the news of the day, that the Princess Grodzoff intended to purchase the Polish estate without delay, and had signified her intention of taking a poor relative whom nobody knew, named Sophia Petrova, under her protection. In pursuing patronage, Gaston had acquired considerable command of countenance, and the secretary's news made it all requisite. The poor relation whom nobody knew was the very girl who had repaired his lace waistcoat, and smiled when he came; and a vision rose before his fancy, of Sophia declared heiress of all the princess's possessions, and himself invested with the most noble order of St. Nicolas. It was suddenly cut short by an exclamation from Clozoff, who had been industriously writing in the further corner of the room, as became an assistant-clerk, and was expected neither to talk nor hear; but he groaned out 'Poor Sophia,' so audibly, that Gaston started, and the secretary looked round. The observation must have escaped the honest Russian unawares; he cowered under the secretary's eye like a man detected in the act of a flagrant crime.

'Do you know the girl?' inquired his excellency with evident curiosity.

'Yes, my lord; her father is a state-councillor; but very poor. They live in the Moscow quarter, in the same street with me, behind St. Olga's Church, your excellency. She was the only person who would enter our house when we had the fever, of which my poor wife died three winters ago.'

'A good girl,' said the secretary. 'No doubt Providence means to reward her by the princess's kindness. It is a noble prospect for her. You know the princess has provided for most of her female relatives; in fact, I believe Sophia Petrova is the last of them; doubtless she will be provided for also.'

'No doubt, your excellency,' said Clozoff, but the looks of both speakers reversed their words. With the secretary, it was cold-blooded sarcasm; with Clozoff, it was a Russian's resignation to the things and powers that be; and after a few

more observations on the brilliant prospect of the state-councillor's daughter, wound up with congratulations to Gaston, whose face he had been attentively studying, his excellency took his leave.

The news he brought was true, however. Gaston found the old house in a general commotion of gladness and grandeur; the princess had astonished the whole street by coming there in her calash; a bag of roubles had been left for Sophia's outfit; the young girl's friends had assembled to advise her what she should buy; the *mujuk* had got very drunk on the occasion; and the state-councillor was so elated that he decidedly refused the considerable present which Gaston offered in return for his entertainment. 'No,' said the old man; 'you have not got much to spare yet, and my daughter is going to be provided for, taken to court, and made an heiress, perhaps. The saints guard my Sophia! I would not part with her, after what has happened to so many girls of our family; but there is nothing before the poor child but the convent of the Fasting Sisters, and that is a poor look-out for one's only daughter.' His last words tallied so strangely with Clozoff's groan, and the secretary's cynical look, that Gaston felt there was some Russian meaning in them; but no endeavour could bring the state-councillor to plainer speaking; on the contrary, he at once altered his tone, enlarged on the excellences of the princess, her liberality to her relations, and the certainty Sophia had of getting handsomely portioned and well married, if she only pleased her highness. The buying went on. Friends and relations who had not visited the house for years, crowded in to rejoice with father and daughter. There was good cheer, and even feasting in the old house; the *mujuk* said it never had been so much worth while to serve there before. Sophia was sorry to leave her father, and glad to be made a lady; besides, it was her belief she would see Gaston sometimes at court; but the Frenchman's heart misgave him: there was a dark background to her promotion, which he could not make out. Pumping Clozoff was of no avail; the ex-merchant had got his cue, and would talk of nothing but the great good-luck of Sophia Petrova, and how well she deserved it. Gaston had begun to know something of the country he was in; there was but one way of coming to a knowledge of the mystery, and being interested as well as curious, that way he determined to take, though it cost his entire exchequer. All the money he could command by this time amounted to four hundred roubles. Armed with this sum, he sought a common tea-shop, which Clozoff was accustomed to frequent when he had nothing better to do, because it was kept by his own son-in-law, and had very little custom. The old man could fortunately speak French, and was very proud of that accomplishment, as none of his neighbours in the Moscow quarter understood it. It gave Gaston an opportunity of dealing with him privately, where he found him alone in the back-room of the tea-shop, sitting as close as he could to the stove.

'Clozoff, you are a prudent man, and I want you to tell me something,' said Gaston, producing the silver, when their salutations were fairly over. 'Here are four hundred roubles, which shall be yours on the spot, if you will tell me plainly why you said "Poor Sophia" in the office three days ago, and what is the story about the Princess Grodzoff and the ladies of her family.'

Clozoff was a Russian, and going to be paid for his tale; he therefore made no prologue, but that he was a poor man, and would be ruined if it ever came to the princess's knowledge that he had told any report about her highness; on which Gaston assured him of his absolute safety, and chinked the four hundred roubles.

'Well,' said Clozoff, 'since you must be told, it is known to all St. Petersburg that for the last twenty years the princess has taken nieces, grand-nieces, and cousins of every degree, one after another, to bring out and provide for. She dressed them in the height of the fashion; she took them to all places of entertainment; she gave them everything that money could buy, or girls could wish for, but none of them ever lived a year after entering the palace. Seven-and-twenty girls of the Grodzoff line lie in the vaults of our Lady of Kazan. I must say she gave them handsome funerals; and her highness's family have scarcely a daughter left, though it was once the wonder where husbands would be found for them all. Count Vezkin, her nephew, has not one girl out of five. Alexia Paulova, her cousin's widow, sits alone in the house where she had three daughters to marry; and they say her old aunt at Smolenzki has lost her wits long ago with thinking of seven girls who went to the Grodzoff palace, one after another, to be made heiresses, and followed in the same order to the vaults of our Lady of Kazan.'

'Did so many deaths attract no attention? Was there no enquiry?' said Gaston.

'O yes, there was every enquiry that could be made about a house of such high rank,' said Clozoff. 'Some of them died of strange diseases, which no physician knew. Some of them met with still stranger accidents. There was one, I remember, who fell down stairs in the dark; another went to the German spas, and the water disagreed with her. In short, they went by all manner of ways; and I have heard say that the old aunt's youngest daughter, who died very suddenly, had a blue mark round her neck. The princess has taken no girl since, and that is three years ago. People thought she would not try it again, there was such a whisper. Her highness lamented sorely over the delicate constitution of her family, and all her friends sympathised with her; but now she is going to have another heiress. That is all I can tell you; and I would not say as much for a thousand roubles, only to yourself; it is putting my life in jeopardy—and Clozoff clutched the bag of silver with many additional groans over the risk he was running, and an intimation that his son-in-law knew there was money going, and would expect half of it. Had Gaston been possessed of a larger bag, he would have distributed its contents in ferreting out further details of her highness's domestic history. As it was, he determined that Sophia should not go to the palace without him. Her father was now restored to favour; and the worthy state-councillor looked rather astonished next day when his prosperous guest, fresh from a court employment, presented himself with a very long face—a penitent declaration that he had lost all his money at the gaming-table, and an earnest request that he would get him the humblest post in the princess's service. There was a liberal bestowment of sound rebuke and sage admonition. The councillor smoked two full pipes in its delivery, though he admitted there was some apology for Gaston, considering that he was neither a Russian nor brought up in the Greek Church. As to a post in the princess's household, there was none vacant just then, but that of second-valet, which could not be thought of for a man of his quality; but