MC2289

POOR DOCUMENT

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—ON—

FRIDAY, Dec. 15th.

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"Going to keep it?"

"Hope not. Can't seem to get rid of it though"

"Cough too?"

"Bad. All night"

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Barlasch of the Guard

By HENRY SETON MERRIMAN

"Bah!" he said, with a gesture dismissing the subject, "I cannot tell you more. It is a woman's secret, monsieur, not mine. Will you deliver a letter for me in Dantzig, that is all I ask?"

"I will give it to Madame Darragon to give to Mademoiselle Mathilde, if you like; I am not returning to Dantzig," replied Louis. But de Casimir shook his head.

"I am afraid that will not do," he said, doubtfully. "Between sisters, you understand——"

And he was no doubt right; this man of quick perception. Is it not from our nearest relative that our dearest secret is usually withheld?

"You cannot find another messenger?" asked de Casimir, and the anxiety in his face was genuine enough.

"I can—if you wish it."

"Ah, monsieur, I shall not forget it! I shall never forget it," said the sick man quickly and eagerly. "The letter is there, beneath that sabretash. It is sealed and addressed."

Louis found the letter, and went toward the door, as he placed it in his pocket.

"Monsieur," said de Casimir, stopping him again. "Your name, if I may ask it, so that I may remember a countryman who has done me so great a service."

"I am not a countryman; I am an Englishman," replied Louis. "My name is Louis d'Arragon."

"Ah! I know. Charles has told me. Monsieur le——"

But d'Arragon heard no more, for he had closed the door behind him.

He found Desiree awaiting him in the entrance hall of the inn, where a fire of pine-logs burnt in an open chimney. The walls and low ceiling were black with smoke, the little windows were covered with ice an inch thick. It was twilight in this quiet room, and would have been dark but for the leaping flames of fire.

"You will go back to Dantzig," he asked, "at once?"

He carefully avoided looking at her, though he need not have feared that she would have allowed her eyes to meet his. And thus they stood, looking downward to the fire—alone in a world that heeded them not, and would forget them in a week—and made their choice of a life.

"Yes," she answered.

He stood thinking for a moment. He was quite practical and matter-of-fact; and had the air of a man of action rather than one who deals in thoughts, and twists them hither and thither so that good is made to look ridiculous, and bad is tricked out with a fine new name. He frowned as he looked at the fire with eyes that flitted from one object to another, as men's eyes do who think of action and not of thought. This was the sailor—second to none in the shallow northern sea, where all marks had been removed, and every light extinguished—accustomed to facing danger and avoiding it, to forsee remote contingencies and provide against them, day and night, week in, week out, a sailor, careful and intrepid. He had the air of being capable of that concentration without which no man can hope to steer a clear course at all.

"The horses that brought you from Marienweder will not be fit for the road till tomorrow morning," he said. "I will take you back to Thorn at once and—leave you there with Barlasch."

He glanced toward her, and she nodded, as if acknowledging the sureness and steadiness of the hand at the helm.

"You can start early to-morrow morning, and be at Dantzig to-morrow night."

They stood side by side in silence for some minutes. He was still thinking of her journey—of the dangers and the difficulties of that longer journey through life, without landmark or light to guide her.

"And you?" she asked, curtly.

He did not reply at once, but busied himself with his ponderous fur coat, which he buttoned, as if bracing himself for the start. Beneath her lashes she looked sideways at the deliberate hands and the lean, strong face, burnt to a red-brown by snow and sun, half hidden in the great fur collar of his worn and weather-beaten coat.

"Konigsberg," he answered, "and Riga."

A light passed through her watching eyes, usually so kind and gay; like the gleam of jealousy.

"Your ship?" she asked, sharply.

"Yes," he answered, as the inn-keeper came to tell them that their sleigh awaited them.

It was showing now, and a whistling, fitful wind swept down the valley of the Vistula from Poland and the far Carpathians, which made the travellers crouch low in the sleigh, and rendered talk impossible, had there been anything to say. But there was nothing.

They found Barlasch asleep where they had left him in the inn at Thorn, on the floor against the stove. He roused himself with the quickness and completeness of one accustomed to brief and broken rest, and stood up shaking himself in his clothes, like a dog with a heavy coat. He took no notice of d'Arragon, but he looked at Desiree with questioning eyes.

"It was not the Captain?" he asked.

And Desiree shook her head. Louis was standing near the door giving orders to the landlady of the inn—a kindly Pomeranian, clean and slow—for Desiree's comfort till the next morning.

Barlasch went close to Desiree, and, nudging her arm with exaggerated cunning, whispered:

"Who was it?"

"Colonel de Casimir."

"With the two carriages and the treasure from Moscow?" asked Barlasch, watching Louis out of the corner of one eye to make sure that he did not hear. It did not matter whether he heard or not, but Barlasch came of a peasant stock that always speaks of money in a whisper. And when Desiree nodded, he cut short the conversation.

The hostess came forward to tell Desiree that her room was ready; kindly suggesting that the "gnadiges Fraulein" must need sleep and rest. Desiree knew that Louis would go on to Konigsberg at once. She wondered whether she should ever see him again—long afterward, perhaps, when all this would seem like a dream. Barlasch, breathing noisily on his frost-bitten fingers, was watching them. Desiree shook hands with Louis in an odd silence, and, turning on her heel, followed the woman out of the room without looking back.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Against the Stream.

Wo viel Licht ist, ist starker Schatten.

In the meantime, the last of the great army had reached the Niemen, that narrow, winding river in its ditch-like bed sunk below the level of the table-land, to which, six months earlier, the greatest captain this world has ever seen, rode alone, and, coming back to his officers, said:

"Here we cross."

Four hundred thousand men had crossed—a bare eighty thousand lived to pass the bridge again. Twelve hundred cannon had been left behind, nearly a thousand in the hands of the enemy, and the remainder buried, or thrown into those dull rivers whose slow waters flow over them to this day. One hundred and twenty-five thousand officers and men had been killed in battle, another hundred thousand had perished by cold and disaster at the Beresina, or other rivers where panic seized the fugitives.

Forty-eight generals had been captured by the Russians, three thousand officers, one hundred and ninety thousand men, swallowed by the silent white Empire of the North and no more seen.

As the retreat neared Vilna the cold had increased, killing men as the first cold of an English winter kills flies. And when the French quitted Vilna, the Russians were glad enough to seek its shelter, Kutusoff creeping in with forty thousand men, all that remained to him of two hundred thousand. He could not carry on the pursuit, but sent forward a handful of Cossacks to harry the hare-brained few who called themselves the rear-guard. He was an old man, nearly worn out, with only three months more to live—but he had done his work.

Ney—the bravest of the brave—left alone in Russia at the last with seven hundred foreign recruits, men picked from here and there, called in from the highways and hedges to share the glory of the only marshal who came back from Moscow with a name untarnished—Ney and Girard, musket in hand, were the last to cross the bridge, shouting defiance at their Cossack foes, who, when they had hounded the last of the French across the frontier, flung themselves down on the blood-stained snow to rest.

All along the banks of the Vistula, from Konigsberg and Dantzig up to Warsaw—that slow river which at the last call shall assuredly give up more dead than any other—the fugitives straggled homeward. For the Russians paused at their own frontier, and Prussia was still nominally the friend of France. She had still to wear the mask for three long months, when she should at last openly side with Russia, only to be beaten again by Napoleon.

Murat was at Konigsberg with the Imperial staff, left in supreme command by the Emperor, and already thinking of his own sunny kingdom of the Mediterranean, and the ease and the glory of it. In a few weeks he, too, must tarnish his name.

"I make over the command to you," he said to Prince Eugene; and Napoleon's step-son made an answer which shows as Eugene showed again and again, that contact with a great man makes for greatness.

"You cannot make it over to me," he replied. "Only the Emperor can do that. You can run away in the night, and the supreme command will devolve on me the next morning."

And what Murat did is no doubt known to the learned reader. Let us, at all events, pretend that it is, and be true to our generation.

Macdonald, abandoned by Yorck with the Prussian contingent, in great peril, alone in the north, was retreating with the remains of the Tenth Army Corps, wondering whether Konigsberg or Dantzig would still be French when he reached them. On his heels was Wittgenstein, in touch with St. Petersburg and the Emperor Alexander, communicating with Kutusoff at Vilna. And Macdonald, like the Scotchman and the Frenchman that he was, turned at a critical moment and rent Wittgenstein. Here was another bull-dog in that panic-stricken pack, who turned and snarled and fought while his companions slunk homeward with their tails between their legs. There were three of such breed—Ney, and Macdonald, and Prince Eugene de Beauharnais.

Napoleon was in Paris getting together in wild haste the new army with which he was yet to frighten Europe into fits. And Rapp, doggedly fortifying his frozen city, knew that he was to hold Dantzig at any cost—a remote, far-thrown outpost on the northern sea, cut off from all help, hundreds of miles from the French frontier, nearly a thousand miles from Paris.

At Marienwerder, Barlasch and Desiree found themselves in the midst of that bustle and confusion which attends the arrival or departure of an army corps. The majority of the men were young and of a dark skin. They seemed gay and called out salutations to which Barlasch replied curtly enough.

"They are Italians," said he to his companion; "I know their talk and their manners. To you and me who come from the north, they are like children. See that one who is dancing. It is some fete. What is today?"

"It is New Year's day," replied Desiree.

"New Year's day," echoed Barlasch. "Good. And we have been on the road since six o'clock; and I, who have forgotten to wish you—" He paused and called cherrily to the horses, which had covered more than forty miles since leaving their stable at Thorn. "Bon Dieu" he said, in a lower tone, glancing at her beneath the ice-bound rim of his fur cap. "Bon Dieu—what am I to wish you, I wonder?"

Desiree did not answer, but smiled a little and looked straight in front of her.

Barlasch made a movement of the shoulders and eyebrows indicative of a hidden anger.

"We are friends," he asked, suddenly, "you and I?"

"Yes."

"We have been friends since—that day—when you were married?"

"Yes," answered Desiree.

"Then between friends," said Barlasch, gruffly, "it is not necessary to smile—like that—when it is tears that are there."

Desiree laughed.

"Would you have me weep?" she asked.

"It would hurt one less," said Barlasch, attending to his horses. They were in the town now and the narrow streets were crowded. Many sick and wounded were dragging themselves wearily along. A few carts, drawn by starving horses, went slowly down the hill. But there was some semblance of order, and these men had the air and carriage of soldiers under discipline. Barlasch was quick to see it.

"It is the Fourth Corps—the Viceroy's army. They have done well. He is a soldier who commands them. Ah! There is one I know."

He threw the reins to Desiree, and in a moment he was out on the snow. A man, as old, it would seem, as himself, in uniform and carrying a musket, was marching past with a few men who seemed to be under orders, though his uniform was long past recognition. He did not perceive, for some minutes, that Barlasch was coming toward him, and then the process of recognition was slow. Finally, he laid aside his musket, and the two old men gravely kissed each other.

Quite forgetful of Desiree, they stood talking together for twenty minutes. Then they gravely embraced once more, and Barlasch returned to the sleigh. He took the reins and urged the horses up the hill without commenting on his encounter, but Desiree could see that he had heard news.

The inn was outside the town, on the road that follows the Vistula northward to Dirschau and Dantzig. The horses were tired and stumbled on the powdery snow, which was heavy, like sand, and of a sandy color. Here and there, by the side of the road, were great stains of blood and the remains of a horse that had been killed, and eaten raw. The faces of many of the men were smeared with blood, which had dried on their cheeks and caked there. Nearly all were smoke-grimed and had sore eyes.

At last Barlasch spoke, with the decisive air of one who has finally drawn up a course of action in a difficult position.

"He comes from my country, that man. You heard us? We spoke together in our patois. I shall not see him again. He has a catarrh. When he coughs there is blood. Alas!"

Desiree glanced at the rugged face half-turned away from her. She was not naturally heartless; but she quite forgot to sympathise with the elderly soldier who had caught a cold on the retreat from Moscow; for his friend's grief lacked conviction. Barlasch had heard news which he had decided to keep to himself.

"Has he come from Vilna?" asked Desiree.

"From Vilna—oh, yes. They are all from Vilna."

"And he had no news," persisted she, "of—Captain Darragon?"

(To be continued.)

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without knife, plaster or pain. Send 6 cents (stamps) and get particulars of this wonderful painless treatment, that is used in your own home. Stott & Jury, Bowmanville, Ont.

TRACKMEN GET HIGHER WAGES

C. P. R. Advances Schedule to An Equality With the I. C. R.

Montreal, Dec. 27—(Special)—Trackmen on the C. P. R. lines from Fort William to St. John (N. B.) have been granted an increase in wages. The advance means that the sectionmen will receive from $1.40 to $1.55 per day, and the track foremen from $1.90 to $3.10, and the bridge foremen from $2.60 to $3.25.

These increases apply to all the lines from Fort William to the Atlantic coast. They bring the pay of the trackmen up to the level of the Intercolonial wage rate for trackmen.

The increases were granted after several days of conference between a committe of the men, headed by President Wilson, of the trackmen's brotherhood, and the company's engineer of maintenance of way, F. P. Gutelius. The concessions will add $125,000 a year, it is estimated, to the company's expenditures.

FERRY DOES NOT PAY

New York, Dec. 27—For the privilege of owning its own ferry to Staten Island, the city of New York is paying more than $500 a day, that being the daily excess of expenses over receipts in the seven weeks since the city took control. From Oct. 23 to Dec. 18 the city lost $28,938.

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PUBLIC NOTICE.

THE UNDERSIGNED, having been appointed by the Common Council of the City of St. John, a committee of the said Council for conducting the sale of the Fisheries on the eastern side of the Bay, River and Harbor of St. John, and of the Fisheries on the western side of the harbor, in the City of St. John, for the ensuing year, pursuant to law, hereby give notice that the Fishery lots along the east side of the Bay, River and Harbor, and all the Fisheries heretofore enjoyed and possessed by the inhabitants on the east side of the harbor, with those in and surrounding Navy Island, and also the Fishery lots on the western side of the harbor, will be sold at Public Auction on TUESDAY, THE SECOND DAY OF JANUARY NEXT, at ten o'clock in the forenoon, at the old City Court Room (so called), in the Court House, in the City of St. John, for the fishing season of the ensuing year, to end on the 15th day of December, 1906.

Dated the 14th Day of December, 1905.

JAMES H. FRINK,
CHARLES P. TILLEY,
JOHN McGOLDRICK,
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Between all Stations on Atlantic Division, and Eastern Division to and including Montreal.

Also, from and to Stations on D. A. R. and I. C. R.

To Stations West of Montreal.

LOWEST ONE-WAY FIRST-CLASS FARE.

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Feb. 13	LAKE CHAMPLAIN	Mar. 3
Feb. 27	LAKE ERIE	Mar. 17
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FIRST CABIN.—To Liverpool, $47.50 and $50 and upwards, according to steamer.

Round Trip Tickets at reduced rates.

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INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY

ON AND AFTER SUNDAY, OCT. 15th, 1905, trains will run daily (Sunday excepted), as follows:

TRAINS LEAVE ST. JOHN.

No. 2—Express for Halifax, Sydney and Campbellton 7.00
No. 6—Mixed train to Moncton 7.30
No. 26—Express for Point du Chene, Halifax and Pictou 12.25
No. 8—Express for Sussex 17.10
No. 134—Express for Quebec and Montreal 19.00
No. 10—Express for Moncton, Sydney and Halifax 23.25

TRAINS ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN.

No. 9—From Halifax and Sydney 6.20
No. 7—Express from Sussex 9.00
No. 133—Express from Montreal and Quebec 12.45
No. 5—Mixed from Moncton 16.00
No. 25—Express from Halifax, Pictou, Pt. du Chene and Campbellton 17.40
No. 1—Express from Moncton 21.20
No. 11—Mixed from Moncton (daily) .. 4.00

All trains run by Atlantic Standard Time. 24.00 o'clock is midnight.

D. POTTINGER, General Manager.
Moncton, N. B., Oct. 12, 1905.

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