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NARKA, THE NIHILIST.

BY KATHLEEN O'MEARA.

CHAPTER VIII. It was about 4 o'clock in the after noon of the sixth day after Basil's de-

parture; the lamps had just been lighted; M. de Beaucrillon, Sibyl, and Narka were in the drawing room Suddenly a loud barking of the dogs announced some arrival, and before was time to conjecture who it there might be, the door opened, and Basil walked in. Sibyl ran to embrace him, and the others greeted him with glad eagerness. After the excitement of

the meeting was over, Sibyl said : "And Father Christopher? Have

you succeeded ?" Yes ; the warrant for his release was signed the day I left.

An exclamation of deep thankful-

An exchange from all. "Did you see him on your way through X.?" asked Sibyl. "I did. But don't let us begin to talk about that yet," he said, letting himself fall into a chair. "I'm too dead beat

The light fell full on his face, and they were all struck by its haggard expression. The air of utter exhaustion pression. Ine air of utter exhaustion he wore was scarcely to be accounted for, at his age, by a hurried journey to and from St. Petersburg. Sibyl bent over him, and kissed his forshore

forehead.

"You must want some food, dear asil," she said. "What shall I Basil," she said. "What shall I order? Tea?" "Nonsense-tea!" said M. de Beau-

crillon. "Give him some strong bouillon and a bottle of good old Borleaux

"That would suit my condition better," said Basil, "though a cup of tea would not be amiss either, if it

were ready "It will be ready in a moment," said Sibyl. "Ring the Den, Unstein Then, as if too impatient to wait for Then, as if too be answered, she went quickly out of the room herself.

Beyond a mutual greeting when they clasped hands, Basil and Narka had not exchanged a word, and yet each was conscious of being intently observant of the other.

"How is Marguerite?" Basil in

quired, suddenly. "Oh, she is nearly all right," re plied M. de Beaucrillon.

I will go and tell the good news, said Narka. "She will be over joyed.

said Narka. "She will be overloyed." "Why should I not go and take it to her? I want to see how she is," said Basil. He stood up, but it seemed an effort to him. He looked like a man utterly spent with fatigue.

"Mon cher," said his brother in law, 'take my advice and go up to your own room and take a bath. That will own room and take a bath. refresh you more than anything, to begin with.

'M. de Beaucrillon is right," said Narka ; " you will have a better appe-tite too, when you are rested a bit." She said this to give Basil the chance of getting away and being alone with her for a moment. She had a terrible piece of news to communicate to him. and the sight of his weariness, which eemed as much mental as physical, pained her to the heart, and made what she had to say harder even than she had expected.

Basil consented to take his brother in-law's advice, and followed Narka leisurely out of the drawing room. She was on the landing at the head of the when he made a sign that he stairs.

wanted to speak to her. They both entered the study to-gether. Basil went straight to his desk, unlocked it, and took out a "I must be going," sh "I must be going," sh "I must be going," sh sh ened one arm round her. "Wait a moment. W

bundle of letters. "I want you to keep these for me,

he said ; "but I won't give them to

you unless you are certain that you

the Stanovoï there, and he announced which must change the whole aspect the good news to me." and current of his life. He had done the good news to me. "He told you about it? Then he offered you some alternative, some chance of escape?" it without a moment's premeditation, "He did; but I can't take advan-tage of it; I haven't got the money. Every available ruble has been raised tude? He was not calm enough to analyze his own heart at this crisis, or

for Father Christopher's ransom. called at Ivan's on my way here; but he is absent. That was my one chance, and I have missed it." "What is the sum?" Narka said, a

sudden hope making her heart leap. "Fifty thousand rubles. And to be paid by 9 o'clock to night."

"Basil, I have got the money. Listen!" Her face was flushed ; her great eyes shone; her voice trembled with the palpitating joy that filled her as she hurriedly told him about the legacy. And now she had only to go into X. and fetch it. "Oh, what a blessed mercy that it came just in time ! I will ride in at once; it is now half past four ; a good horse will take me there and back in two hours and half. There will be no delay ; I will be here again by 7 o'clock-in time for dinner. No one need know I have been absent. It will be quite easy ; there is plenty of

time. She was turning away in the tremo of excitement when Basil arrested her. "Narka," he said, laying his hand on her arm, "you are a noble-hearted friend ; but do you think I am such a pitiful dog as to take this money from

you ?" " What do you mean ?" she said, " What do you mean ?" fu looking at him in bewilderment. " [8 it because it is mine that you would refuse it? Oh, Basil !"

There was a cry of pain in her voice as from a wounded creature ; there was a confession too in it that betrayed the secret of her heart.

"I would take anything from you, he said, conscious of a slight shock and of a sudden burst of tendernes toward her ; "but you can't give it to me without sacrificing yourself and your mother. Heaven knows when I could repay it. No, I can't be such a brute as to rob Tante Nathalie !"

" And you think it will be less brutal to kill me? Yes, it will kill me if they arrest you, for I know, and so do you, what will happen, once you are in their hands. My mother knows noth-ing about this money ; she need never know until you can give it back to us. Oh, Basil! Basil! don't refuse me; it will kill me if you do!" Her voice broke, her eyes were raised to his, brimful of tears, and saying as plainly as ever eyes of woman spoke, " I love you !

Basil was moved to the core of his heart. He forgot that he was Prince Zorokoff, and that Narka was a low born Jewess ; he forgot everything ex cept that this beautiful girl loved him, and was offering her all to save him. He opened wide his arms. " Nar-

With a sob she sank into his em brace. For one long moment he held her clasped. Then lifting her head from his shoulder, "Yes, I will take this money from you," he said ; " but only on one condition : will you give me yourself with it ? Have you the courage to be my wife?"

" I should give my life for you," she answered. He kissed her on the lips.

difference

"Basil," she said, "I have loved you all my life." " Dearest, and so have I loved you." And he spoke the truth, but with a

"I must be going," she said, strug-gling away from him, but he tight-

"Wait a moment. We must pledge our betrothal first." Drawing her to-

balance nicely the conflicting forces which had moved him to ask Narka to be his wife. And what would Sibyl say? She loved Narka dearly, as dearly as if they had been sisters in flesh and blood ; but this personal fondness was quite compatible with invincible repugnance to Narka as a sister in law ; Sibyl's soft grace of manner was so entirely free from morgue as to lead her inferiors to be-

lieve she was altogether unconscious of any superiority toward them ; but beneath this outward suavity there ex isted a spirit of family pride that was hard as flint and strong to fanaticism. How would she take the announcemen that a Jewish trader's daughter was going to queen it over her as Princes Zorokoff, the head of the family?

This was not the only problem that was vexing Basil's soul while he ate his caviare and salad. The image of Marguerite kept forcing itself before his eyes with a persistency that was unwarrantably troublesome. He had long since recognized in his little French cousin a creature of a different mould from any that he had ever met : the charm of her brightness, her happy spirit, her child like freshness of heart, had been working on him like a spell. He had been aware of this, and had not attempted to resist the influence ; he knew that it was Sibyl's cherished dream that he should marry Marguerite, and he had been only held back from pursuing it by the fear that he had entagled himself in political engagements from which it would be cowardly and unfaithful to break loose. Still he had been in a dreamy, delicious way careesing possibilities, and it had struck him m ore than once that Marguerite would not have repulsed him. He was not vainer than most men, but he could not help seeing that she changed color sometimes under his glance, and that her saucy, wistful eyes took a softer, a more timid expression when they met his; he had noted these signs with a pleasant sense of power unchecked by any scruples or remorse, for he had the consciousness

of being quite willing, and he suspected able, to heal any wound he might make in her innocent young heart. But now he saw things differ His conscience smote him ; he ently. felt a pang at the thought of having perhaps involuntarily inflicted one on her. He longed to see her ; he must see her once again. It would be with very different feelings now from those with which he would have met her an hour ago ; but he thought of Narka, of her ripe, glowing beauty, her ten der, self-sacrificing love, and he would not let himself by so much as a passing sigh be unfaithful to the loyalty he had

sworn to her. Marguerite was in the drawing room when he returned there with Sibyl. The meeting was much less awkward than Basil had feared. It was natural that he should be affection ately interested in his cousin, who looked still pale enough to warrant Sibyl's reproach that she had been tir-

ing herself by writing letters. "You must let me put you lying down, chérie," Sibyl said, " and Basil will tell us all about his journey while you are resting."

But Basil protested regretfully that he could not enjoy this relief of sitting quietly and talking to them. He must go and tell Ivan Gorff the good news before he could enjoy anything.

were even still visible in certain details, notwithstanding Sibyl's presence and the reign of orderly splendor that

she brought with her. The interview with the Stanovoï was short. Basil had nothing else to do in the village, and nowhere else to go, and two hours must yet elapse before Narka returned, giving all chances favorable. He could not bring himself to go back to the house and spend the interval with Marguerite and the others. The effort of deceiving them, and keeping the secret that was hold ing his very life in suspense, was more than he felt equal to. In another hour he would go back and quietly put up the few things he wanted to take with him.

The night had closed in, and the moon had not risen, so it was nearly pitch dark. Basil paced along the road, ruminating in bitter perplexity of spirit. Suddenly Peter, his dog, gave a low growl, and then an angry bark, as if warning off an enemy close at hand. Basil had no doubt but that some agent of the Stanovoi's was watching him. He struck a match, and looked at his watch. Narka had been nearly an hour and a half gone. It was time he went home, and got ready to start, assuming that he was to do so. He turned back, walking quickly, for the air was frosty, and his breath made a cloud before him as he went. Suddenly the moon rose, and a few stars sprang out in attendance, and the road, black a moment before, was filled with light. On one side there was a copse, toward which Peter's ill will was directed, judging from the way he growled at it now and then. Basil, following the dog's indication, kept looking that way ; the outer trees threw a tracery of shadow and sheen on the ground, but farther back it was all a chaos of stems; presently his eyes, sharpened by presentiment, descried the figure of a man stealing along through the woods. Basil was quite certain that he had been watched since he left X., but the sight of this spy dogging him in the dark, made him realize the fact with a shock, and it seemed also to bring more vividly before him the nearness of the peril on the brink of which he stood. If Narka should be late, or fail in her errand-

How slowly the time dragged on ! He quickened his step; his foot-fall rang sharp and clear on the hard road. Peter trotted on, and ceased to growl Suddenly he stood, tail and ears up pricked ; then with a loud bark turned and dashed back down the road, Basil turned too, and listened. Was that the sound of galloping hoofs that he heard? Could it be Narka? He stopped smoking, he almost stopped beathing, as the sound drew nearer. Peter was barking violently, joyously. The horse came in sight. It was Narka. Bysil stepped into the middle of the road, where the brilliant moonlight shone unobstructed by a shadow, and waved his hand. She pulled up, and in a moment he was beside her.

"Here it is," she said, in a cautious tone, stooping over him. "I will ride on, and leave this poor beast at the stables, and wait for you in the court.' She unclasped the heavy bag that was fastened round her waist, and Basil took it, and walked on rapidly after her.

On entering the outer court he ordered a groom to get ready a car-riage with four stout horses. He then walked on into the second court ; he was about to enter the house when some one stepped forward and said, "Does your Excellency want to speak to me? "Ah! it is you. Yes, I want to speak to you," Basil replied, with a short laugh. "Very considerate of

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looks ! Gaston says he has grown five years older this last week. What a time he staid with Ivan ! He has only just come back, it seems.

" It has been a terrible week for all of us," Narka said, ignoring the last remarks. She was standing near a console, one hand resting on the porphyry slab; a large silver lamp high placed on a malachite pillar be. hind her threw its golden light over her soft white draperies, and made her hair shine like a nimbus. Perhaps the light of a deep and tender joy burning in her eyes and trembling on her full red lips touched her with its out. ward and visible glory, for Sibyl, who had been gazing in a comfortable ecstasy up at the gods and goddesses ceiling, glanced at her on the sudden. ly, and was struck by something in

her aspect. "Narka," she exclaimed, "you

look like an archangel !" "Never having seen an archangel," said M. de Beaucrillon, sauntering in. to the room, "I was mentally compar-ing mademoiselle to a vestal, or a

Greek bride." "Why Greek, mon cher?" said Sibyl.

Narka blushed, and turned her large liquid glance smilingly on M. de Beaucrillon. It was not often he took the trouble to be complimentary, and being a woman and beautiful, she was pleased. But it was not selfish coquetry that made her feel that sudden thrill of exultation in her own beauty. She was proud of it for Basil's sake now

Partly to escape from the embarrass ment of standing to be admired, and partly from her natural impulse to give vent to her overwrought feelings in song, she moved to the piano, and sat down and began to warble a bridal song in Russian. The words were unintelligible to M. de Beaucrillon, but the pathos of the melody and the penetrating sweetness of the voice moved him strangely. He said to himself, as he gazed and listened :

What can Zorokoff be made of, that he has not fallen under the spell of such a creature ?"

When the bridal song came to an end-quickly, for Narka was impatient to escape-he entreated her to sing it again. She could not refuse, and perhaps the impatience of her soul made her throw more fire of passion into the pathetic melody, for when it ceased M. de Beaucrillon was so overcome that he had not a word of thanks ready, but let her rise from the piano in silence.

"What can be keeping Marguerite so long, I wonder ?" Narka remarked. "I must go and see ;" and she walked slowly out of the room.

"And what can be keeping Basil?" said Sibyl. She was growing fidgety. "I think I must go and look after him

"He was taking a bath when I knocked just now, Vasili told me," replied Gaston

"Oh, then he will be here presently, no doubt ;" and she sat down. As she did so a valet came in with a letter, which he presented to her. was in Basil's writing. Sibyl opened it with a cry and a start, and drew out a sealed envelope addressed to Father Christopher, and then a note that she ead rapidly.

"Oh, my God ! This is too dread. ful !" she cried out.

M. de Beaucrillon snatched up the note. "Good heavens! Gone! Flod! Where have they taken him? To Siberia? My God! what a country to live in!" With a muttered expletive he threw down the letter, and proceeded to try and calm Sibyl, who had burst into hysterical grief.

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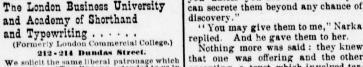
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replied. And he gave them to her. Nothing more was said : they knew that one was offering and the other accepting a trust which involved ter-

rible possibilities to both. "And now I have something else to tell you," Basil said. "They have trapped me ; a warrant is out for my

arrest." "Ah! you know!" Narka exclaimed. almost relieved at not having to break the news to him. "Ivan told me ; but pale they have not caught you yet. There

is time to escape." "Escape is out of the question. The house is watched, and I have been followed all the way from X. I met

DR. CHASE'S

minutes.

from one to three days.

and hear it," suggested Sibyl. "No. no : I must take it to him my

our betrothai nist. Distance a drawer ward a table, he unlocked a drawer and took out a diamond ring, a hoop of several heautiful stones. "This was ny mother's betrothal ring," he said, slipping it on her finger. "Wear it till you come back from X.; then let it hang as an amulet round your neck until I can place it on your finger before all the world.

" May Sibyl not know ?" she asked, with timid hesitation, "No; let it remain a secret between

ourselves until we meet. It will be another secret binding us together.' He was alluding to the ransom she was giving him; but Narka grew

"Yes," she said, almost under her breath, "it will be another bond between us.'

He kissed her again, and she hurried away, carrying with her the packet of letters he had intrusted to her.

Basil went to Marguerite's door and knocked : but getting no answer, he went down to the dining-room. Sibyl was there waiting for him, and sat with him while he partook of the meal that had been hastily ordered up. Basil was only four and twenty, and he was in rude health, and no amount of mental trouble could destroy his appetite, or take away the natural cravings of hunger.

Sibyl saw that he was too tired yet to care to talk much, so she busied herself helping him to good things, and kept up a lively flow of monologue. telling him all that had happened since his departure, the excitement in the village, Marguerite's illness, everything that could interest him and save him the trouble of answering further than by an occasional remark or ques tion

But while Basil was listening to Sibyl, his thoughts were elsewhere. He was in a strange state of mind and feeling. It seemed to him as if he had suddenly become another person, as if a new Basil had been added to the old

"We will send for him to come up

self," Basil replied, with a touch of im patience that silenced her. Ivan was a pretext for going to the Stanovoï, to inform him that the money would be forthcoming. Basil could not tell Sibyl that he was under warrant of arrest; he felt unequal to the effort of having to console her, and, besides, he was not yet certain of being able to ransom himself. Narka might have some delay, the notary might be out, the key of his strong box might not be forthcoming at once, an accident might have happened ; who could tell?

When luck is against a man, he must reckon with bad chances. M. de Beaucrillon offered to accom pany his brother-in-law, but Basil said that as Sophie was ill, Ivan might not be disposed to receive a visit. It was rather a lame excuse, but M. de Beau crillon understood, as Sibyl did, that he wished to see Ivan alone, and did not press his company upon him. It was natural enough, Gaston said to himself, that, under the circumstances, Basil should fight shy of a Frenchman. The latter rather admired him for being ashamed of having a foreigner witness the way his country was governed. Poor fellow, he looked piteously worn ! Gaston thought, as he noticed his sunken eyes and haggard, unkempt air, like that of a man who has not slept for nights.

Ivan was not at home, as Basil, who had met him at X., knew, but the Stanovoï was. He asked no questions. So long as he got his money, he did not care where it came from. He assumed that the French brother in law had come down with it : in fact, he had reckoned on this when he named so exorbitant a figure. The Zorokoffs were wealthy, but ready money was scarce at Yrakow; it all went to St. Petersburg, where the Prince made it fly as fast as he got it. The castle kept itself ; there was plenty on the property of all that was wanted, and

you to turn up just at the right moment. Come in here, will you ?'

The Stanovoi followed him into the house, and they entered a room close at hand. Basil struck a light. They were closeted for a few minutes-just

long enough to count the money. "Now, Excellency, depart with speed, and don't let the grass grow inder your feet till you have passed the frontier.'

The Stanovoï bowed low, and hugg ing his bag, went out. Narka was waiting in the entry

when Basil reappeared. The tawny flame of an oil lamp gave enough light to let them see each other. Basil caught her in his arms and kissed her again and again. Then, brusquely releasing her, he turned to ascend the stairs, and flew up to his room.

Narka, in a tumult of bliss and agitation, went up to hers. She was shaken to pieces by her mad ride but there was no time to rest ; there was no time to think. She must be ready to go to Basil before he went down stairs, and say good-by to him alone before going through the ceremony of doing so in the drawing-room. She divested herself quickly of her riding habit, and proceeded to attire herself in a dress of white cashmere that Basil admired : it was a fan tastic garment of her own contrivance made with much artistic effect, but uite regardless of fashion. She

clasped a dead-gold band round her waist, and fastened a crimson rose in her hair, and with a great joy and a great terror in her heart went to seek Basil, but as she reached the broad landing on which his room opened she saw M. de Beaucrillon standing at the door. It was a terrible contretemps; there was nothing to be done, but she must go down stairs, and trust to Basil managing to find a moment alone with her before he fled. She found

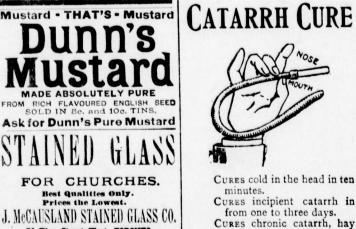
Sibyl in the drawing room. "Well, you have seen Tante Natha-lie?" exclaimed Sibyl, who had taken a new basil had been added to the old one. He hardly realized yet what he done, or what was to come of it. He had made a tremendous leap in the dark, and he was wondering where it had landed him. He had taken a step.

Meantime Narka had gone and

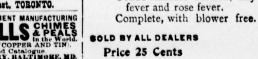
knocked at Basil's door, and getting no answer, opened it. The room was empty. She called his name, but there was no response. In a flash of light-ning she guessed the truth : he was gone. But where? Could the Stanovoi have played him false? She glanced round the rooms. The lights were burning, but there was nothing to give the least clew of why or how he had fled. Sick with terror, Narka took up a candle and went to her own room. Perhaps he was there waiting for her. The room was empty, but on the table -a little round table with a green velvet cover on which there was a solitary book-lay a letter. At a glance she saw it was from Basil.

"My Narka-I have not the courage to meet you again, since we have to part at once. Adieu, beloved. I will write when it is possible. I owe you my life. It is yours for all time. Basil.

Narka sank into a chair, clutching the note in her fingers. Gone ! With out one more embrace ! How could But the relief of knowing that he had escaped, that he had not been treacherously entrapped to his ruin, as she had feared for a moment, was so great that it helped her to forget the cruel disappointment. She recovered herself quickly, and remembered, with that strong sympathy for the suf-fering of others which was the noble side of her nature, that Sibyl and Marguerite would want to be sustained under this shock. Ah, Marguerite! Narka's heart went out to the child in a rush of purest pity. She rose and hurried to her room, but the news had got there before her. Marguerite was on her knees by the bed, her face buried in the eider-down, sobbing bitterly, so bitterly that she did not hear the door open, or Narka's step crossing the room; she was only made aware of her entrance when Narka knelt down and took her in her arms and drew her



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