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NARKA, THE NIHILIST.

By KATHLEEN O'MEARA.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the sixth day after Basil's departure; the lamps had just been lighted; M. de Beauverillon, Sibyl, and Narka were in the drawing-room.

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

Byond 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.

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 stairs, when he made a sign that he wanted to speak to her.

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

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the Stanovoi there, and he announced the good news to me." "He told you about it? Then he offered you some alternative, some chance of escape?"

"What is the sum?" Narka said, a sudden hope making her heart leap. "Fifty thousand rubles. And to be paid by 3 o'clock to-night."

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

Basil 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 except that this beautiful girl loved him, and was offering her all to save him.

"I should give my life for you," she answered. "He kissed her on the lips. 'Basil,' she said, 'I have loved you all my life.'"

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 one.

which must change the whole aspect and current of his life. He had done it without a moment's premeditation, on the spur of a sudden impulse of passion, was it? or generous gratitude? He was not calm enough to analyze his own heart at this crisis, or balance nicely the conflicting forces which had moved him to ask Narka to be his wife.

"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 persistence that was unwarrantably troublesome.

"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, tall 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 breathing, as the sound drew nearer. Peter was barking violently, joyously. The horse came in sight. It was Narka. Basil 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.

"No, no; I must take it to him myself," Basil replied, with a touch of impatience that silenced her. Ivan was a pretext for going to the Stanovoi, 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 Beauverillon offered to accompany 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 Beauverillon understood, as Sibyl did, and 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.

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 Stanovoi 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 holding 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.

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"Well, you have seen Tante Nathalie?" exclaimed Sibyl, who had taken for granted that Narka had gone out with the good news to her mother. "She will come out for a drive now, I hope? But oh, Narka, how ill Basil

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."

"Narka," she exclaimed, "you look like an archangel!" "Never having seen an archangel," said M. de Beauverillon, sauntering into the room, "I was mentally comparing madeoiseille to a vestal, or a Greek bride."

Partly to escape from the embarrassment 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 Beauverillon, 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 Beauverillon was so overcome that he had not a word of thanks ready, but let her rise from the piano in silence.

"Oh, my God! This is too dreadful!" she cried out. "M. de Beauverillon snatched up the note. 'Good heavens! Gone! Fled! 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."

"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."

Narka sank into a chair, clutching the note in her fingers. Gone! Without one more embrace! How could he? 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 suffering 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 head upon her breast. Marguerite gave herself up to the caress; it was pitiful and tender as ever one woman gave to another. Narka had guessed her secret, and it had fired her at first

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