The WIRELESS TELEGRAPH BOY

By

John Trowbridge

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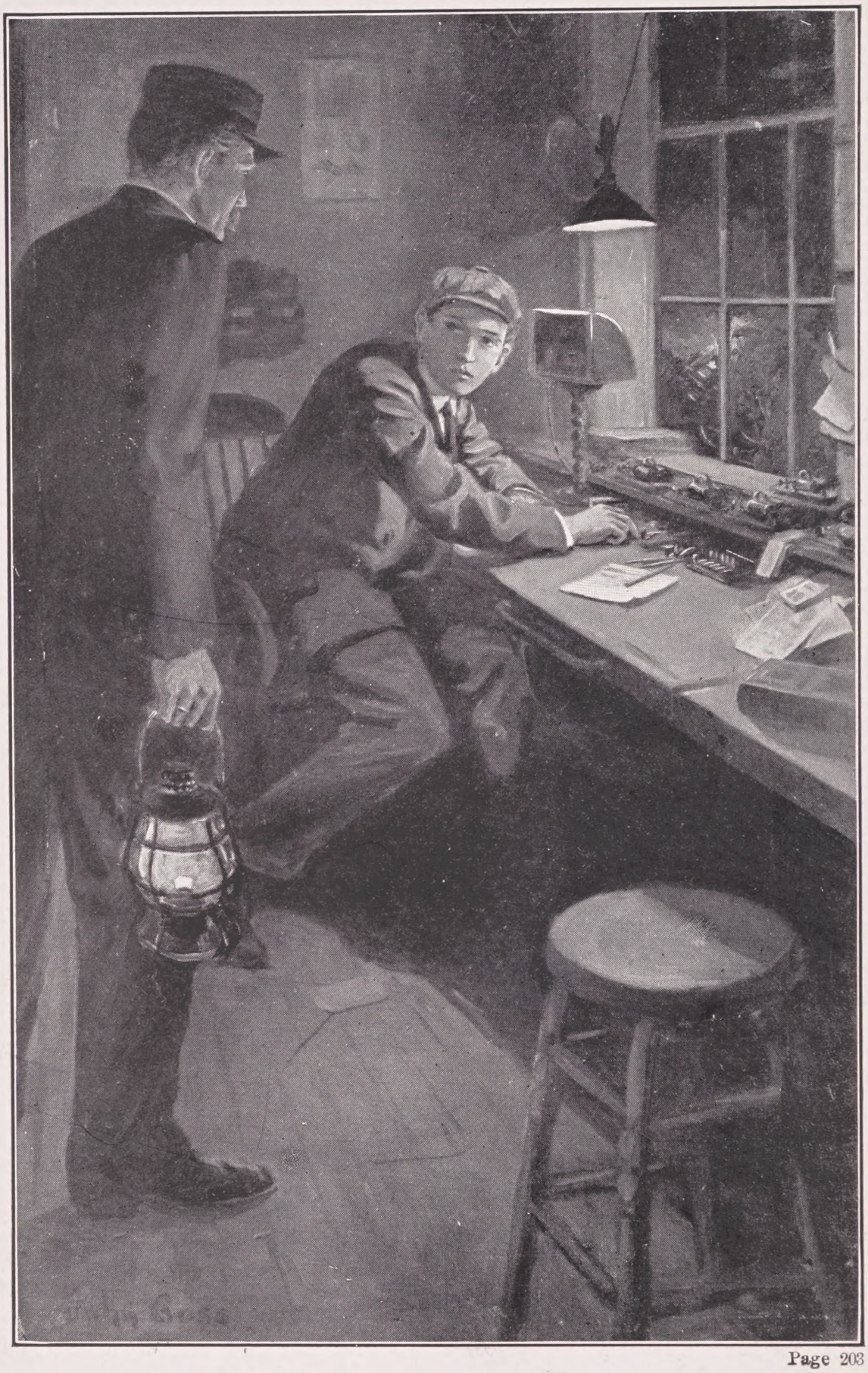

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DICTATED MESSAGES, WHICH ALEXIS RAPIDLY SENT

THE STORY OF A WIRELESS TELEGRAPH BOY

BY

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CHAPTER I

FOLLOWED BY SPIES

In a crowded street of a city on the Volga could be seen a number of people hurrying to the bank of the river, to embark on a steamer about to leave for ports down the stream. The prospective passengers were a motley crowd: merchants, with long beards flowing over their caftans; military officers returning to their commands; priests of the Greek church; moujiks in red or blue blouses, with balloon-like trousers tucked into their boots; peasant-women, with garments tied under their armpits; Tartars, with conical fur hats and faces like the profile of the half moon.

In the concourse there were four persons with whom this history is concerned: one an

old man walking with a stoop, accompanied by a tall boy of athletic build; and two singular-looking men, who followed the old man and the boy, keeping them always in view. These men separated when the old man looked behind, and sauntered along, gazing at the decorations of the shops or stopping to chaffer with the shopkeepers who appeared at their doors to advertise their goods. As soon as the old man's head was turned they followed like hounds tracking their prey. They were dressed as traveling musicians. One carried a violin; the other a zither. The one with the violin had a face resembling that of the white hyena which was lately dug out of the Siberian ice fields, where it had been preserved since the epoch when it roved with long-haired elephants and other animals now found in tropical climes. His eyebrows were bushy, and seemed like the black outstretched wings of a gull over a sharp beak. His eyes were close together, and a strag-

gling mustache barely concealed a coarse mouth, which was always so far opened as to show his eye teeth.

His companion was at least a foot shorter in stature; and what struck one most forcibly was his entire lack of eyebrows and his large rolling eyes. His countenance was like that of a certain fish which can be seen in the celebrated aquarium at Naples. This fish has a slow motion and a stupid glare in its protuberant eyes as it presses its mouth against the glass wall of the tank. Like the fish's, the man's mouth was constantly opening and shutting. The fish is not so stupid as it looks, for when a fly or a worm is lowered into the tank it darts at it with surprising quickness; and the man followed the movements of the old man and the boy even while he appeared to be gazing into shop windows.

The old man and the boy walked quietly on, yielding now and then to the pushing crowd, with the air of well-born people.

When the old man's feet were trodden upon he stood aside, and with a bow and a gracious sweep of his hand gave way to the rude pushers, causing them to look at him with surprise, and possibly with uneasy consciences. Once the throng was so great that the two turned into a side street. The men following turned into an alley leading to the same side street, where they were detained by a priest feeding a flock of doves in the presence of a crowd of peasants. The two musicians dared not put the pigeons to flight; for these birds are sacred objects in Russia, being emblematic of the *spiritus sanctus;* and they turned into another alley, hurrying on in order not to lose sight of the old man and the boy.

The latter at length reached the banks of the river, and went aboard a steamboat drawn up at one of the wharves. They immediately sought the part of the boat reserved for first-class passengers; and when the motley crowd waiting on the wharf had

embarked, with all their strange belongings, the boy, with the restless spirit of youth, wandered over the vessel, examining the machinery and looking at the passengers gathered on the lower deck; while the city, with its rambling dwellings overtopped by the great green and gold domes of the cathedral and citadel, was slowly receding. The colors of the bulb-like domes, seen against the glowing sunset, were presently merged in a luminous gray, like that of a charcoal drawing sifted over with gold powder; the clouds changed from orange to citron, then to tints of chrysoprase; and the sinuous wake of the steamboat disturbed the dark serenity of the shadows of the dwellings by its lines of light, colored by the hues of the sky.

The peaceful floating away from the city, with its clangor and its ever-present picture of the struggle for existence, made the crowd gathered on the lower deck of the boat long for music; and the two musicians

who had followed the old man and the boy were solicited to play. They chaffed those who asked them, and made many excuses. Two Bohemians, conscious of their own musical abilities, heard the excuses and smiled contemptuously.

"True musicians," said one, "never excuse themselves. The soul must express itself, like a song-bird, at the slightest chirrup."

"Perhaps you will play," said the man with the shaggy eyebrows, offering his violin. The Bohemian took the instrument and struck the strings with fingers which showed their deftness. A rude clangor, however, resulted, and the player with a grimace of disgust tuned the violin; and saying, "You must have taken too much brandy when you tuned this last," struck into one of those thrilling airs which awaken all the powers of imagination of the listeners; now it was an ecstatic dance, now a warlike passion, now a flood of

tears. The boy was drawn to the neighborhood of the player by the fascination of the music, and did not notice the close scrutiny of the discredited musicians.

Meanwhile, white moonlight had taken the place of the golden rays of sunset, and its glinting on the great globes of the cathedral showed the position of the city far in the distance. The waving reflections of lights along the banks, from the dwellings and the groups of moored fishing-vessels, seemed to spell in Hebrew characters the names of the ships and the hamlets. Distant music echoed the playing of the Bohemian, as if in rivalry. The boy wandered back to the old man, stumbling as he went over prostrate forms; for a Russian peasant falls asleep wherever he may chance to be on a steamboat; a coil of rope, a corner beside some baggage, a nook affording a support to the back, make sufficient beds.

The old man welcomed the boy with a

pleasant smile; and as they arranged their quarters for the night said, "Well, Alexis, to-morrow you will see your father after his nine long years of exile. I suppose you hardly remember him."

"I was only seven when he was sent to Siberia," replied Alexis, "yet I remember him perfectly."

"He will be delighted to see you grown to such a fine large lad," said the old man. "Good-night."

Alexis, as he lay in his narrow berth, thought of the coming meeting with his father. The night of their parting was vivid in his memory; his father had given him in charge to Professor Valdov, who was now bringing his charge back to him. Alexis saw his father descend the grand staircase of the castle, and as he reached the last step turn to take a last look at his son; that look had been indelibly impressed upon his mind. He had cried out with anguish, shaking his little fists at the

officers and rushing to the door, only to see a drosky disappear in a thick snow-storm.

Professor Valdov had endeavored to comfort him, and had taken him to Kasan, a city on the Volga. There he had educated him, and finally made him his assistant. The professor occupied the chair of physics in the university, and was especially interested in wireless telegraphy. His laboratory was a small room in the attic of one of the university buildings. It was very unlike the rooms of the professors of literature; the absence of books seemed to indicate a new turn to men's thoughts. The old tomes of the professors of Hebrew and Sanscrit, of Latin and Greek, had given place to a labyrinth of wires; and in place of busts of dead emperors and philosophers were glass globes and batteries. The room had no air of studious seclusion. Its charm resided in the infinite possibilities of its chunks of iron, its coils of wire, and its bottles of

chemicals. In the combination of these materials might lie some means of changing the face of the globe.

This room served not only as a place for investigation, but also as a meeting-place for the professor's many friends. Alexis noticed that he was always sent on some errand when certain of these friends paid the professor a visit; he was nothing loath to be relieved of his work at first, and spent his leisure in strolling about the city with his college friends; but after a time he longed to be one of the strange party in the laboratory, to listen to the learned discussions, which doubtless were held, on the strange phenomena of wireless telegraphy. He had become skilled in sending and receiving messages, but knew little of the science of electricity, and he desired to become the equal in knowledge of these bearded men who talked with Professor Valdov. The latter, during the year just closed, had grown extremely preoccupied,

and was often absent from the laboratory for long periods.

One day when Alexis was bending over the apparatus, adjusting its parts, two men entered the laboratory, and while they asked Alexis questions in regard to his work, cast keen glances about the room. When the professor returned Alexis described the men, and the professor seemed to grow suddenly young as he listened; his stoop disappeared, his eyes flashed, and his mouth assumed a set look under his gray mustache. On the following day he disappeared on one of his long absences.

One night, while the boy was listening to the wireless apparatus, he spelled the words, "Alexis, your father has returned; prepare to come to the castle." He instantly sent the reply, "I am Alexis. Who is this who speaks?" but no answer came.

The boy dropped the receiving instrument in a tumult of feeling, repeating to himself, "Your father has returned." He took up

the instrument and listened intently; but the depths of space seemed unmoved by his agitation. It was as if the howling wind outside had scattered the answering words like flying leaves; but the boy knew that wireless messages scorn all winds and storms. His own message must have flown to the castle, that castle which he had left so many years ago.

In a few days the professor returned, accompanied by the two men who had previously entered the laboratory. Alexis saw a warning look on the face of the professor as he explained the working of the apparatus to the visitors, who claimed to be professors from Moscow. The boy was astonished at the explanations of Professor Valdov, for they were certainly somewhat misleading. When the visitors bowed themselves out, with profuse thanks, Alexis, trembling with excitement, began to speak of the mysterious message he had received. "Hush!" whispered the professor; and,

opening the door of the laboratory, he listened intently. Apparently not satisfied, he lighted a candle and descended the stairway. Alexis could hear him talking with the old janitor on the lower landing, then he saw the flickering light of the candle throw a shadow of the professor as he ascended the staircase. On reaching the upper landing he closed the door of the laboratory, and whispered, "Speak only in a whisper!"

Alexis, as he fell asleep on the steamboat, recalled this night in the laboratory, and wondered at the strange actions of the professor; his frequent absences; the mysterious meetings of the bearded men; the coming of the two strangers, and their curious and ignorant inquiries; the professor's caution; his stealthy steps down the dark stairway; his wavering shadow on the wall, prefiguring a following spy. By a strange freak of fancy he connected the two repulsive musicians with the events of that night; and as he fell asleep he dreamed of being

pursued across the steppes by a white hyena, with strange streaks over its eyes, and when he plunged into a lake to escape, a great fish with protuberant eyes darted at him. He swam to the shore, — and awoke to find it morning, and, looking through the porthole, saw that the steamboat was approaching a landing.

CHAPTER II

REACHING THE CASTLE

In company with the professor he went ashore, where a drosky awaited them, and they were driven rapidly to Orloff Castle. The two musicians also landed, and endeavored to find a drosky, but were unsuccessful. The boy's heart beat rapidly as he neared the home of his childhood, and he pictured to himself the coming meeting with his father. The drosky bounded along at the breakneck speed so usual in Russia; and at length, after traversing broad plains, with here and there a poor hamlet, they entered a wood, and on emerging from it saw an expanse of water and an eminence beyond. The driver turned and pointed with his whip. There was the castle!

In a moment they had passed a grand gateway, and the horses, galloping along a

wide avenue, drew up at the door of the castle. There they were greeted by a tall, majestic man, who opened his arms and embraced Alexis. Count Orloff had changed greatly since the winter night nine years ago. Alexis remembered him as a young man, with a blond beard and brown hair, which stood upright in a horrent fashion above a smiling face; now the beard was gray and the hair white. The smooth ruddy face was seamed with deep lines; but there was still the forceful bearing, which long toil in the mines of Siberia could not destroy.

The father and son walked through the great hall which Alexis remembered so well, and stopped, as if by a common impulse, before a picture. It was a full-length portrait of a young woman, with features resembling those of Alexis. She was descending the grand staircase of the castle, clad in a rich fur coat, with a collar like the high ruff in vogue in the time of Queen

Elizabeth of England; and the girlish face, with the slender neck, seemed like a delicate flower emerging from a dark calyx. The head was uncovered, and the dark hair which grew low upon the forehead was raised in the pompadour fashion above the smiling eyes. Small ears, beautifully shaped, were disclosed by the parting of the fur collar; and the smiling lips, half-parted, showed a row of pearly teeth. The fur robe, thrown back, disclosed a ball dress, and was held together below the waist by an ungloved hand. A small foot peeped from the bottom of the coat, as if seeking the next step.

The count breathed deeply as he gazed, and, patting his son on the shoulder, left him, to join Professor Valdov. Alexis remembered that his father stood for a moment before that picture on the staircase on that memorable evening nine years ago, and said, "Alexandra, watch over this boy. Before I return he will be almost a man. When-

ever he sees a woman, lead his thoughts to his mother." The picture, the words of the father in the great hall of his ancestors, were destined to be ever fresh in the boy's memory.

He withdrew his eyes from long contemplation of his mother's face, and followed a servant to the suite of rooms which had been prepared for him. It was still early in the day, and he resolved to visit his old haunts. In the courtyard the old retainers greeted him, calling on the saints to preserve and bless him. He passed out of the courtyard and looked about him: the eminence on which the castle stood once seemed to him a mountain; it had now shrunk to a hill, and the trees seemed to have grown backward. The gardener took him into the greenhouses, and the men about the stables showed the foals he remembered, now grown to staid horses approaching old age.

He was followed by an old Russian

hound, which thrust its nose into his hand. As he patted the dog's head, he asked, "Where is my puppy?"

"That is the puppy," replied the man. Everything that the boy remembered was there; but the great had grown small, the small great, the young old.

On the way back to the castle Alexis saw a tall mast, with wires stretching from it to the ground, as if a giant spider had spun a cobweb between the top of the mast and a point on the earth. At the foot of the mast was a little house. He immediately recognized the combination as a wireless telegraph station, similar to the one Professor Valdov had instituted at the university.

"Who uses this wireless station?" he asked.

"Old Professor Valdov," answered the servant.

A sudden light dawned on the boy. This station was the source of the wireless messages he had received; and the professor's

long and frequent absences from the university were accounted for. Why had he never heard of this station, whence had been sent the mysterious words so eagerly received by the groups of bearded men who had made many visits to the laboratory in the professor's absences?

The night was coming on when Alexis returned to the castle, and the ravens and crows were coming in from their long flights on the plains and gathering in the trees of the avenues. As he entered the hall he saw a number of coats and hats; and the butler said that the count had visitors. Alexis, as he ascended the staircase, caught a glimpse of bearded men gathered about a table in his father's study, where Professor Valdov was reading a paper. The count sat at the head of the table with a strange grim look on his countenance. Alexis turned away and was about to spring up the stairs, when he thought that he saw a face peering into the study through a window. Could it be

the face of the old hound, with its hair strangely disheveled and with strongly marked streaks across its visage, caused perhaps by the window bars? He looked again; but the face had disappeared.

On the following day the agent to whom the count had intrusted the care of his estates during his long absence took Alexis out for a day's shooting, and when they returned, late in the afternoon, they saw the two musicians whom Alexis had noticed on the steamboat. They were seated on a bank eating lunch.

"Make a good show of your gun," said the agent, "as we pass those fellows. I saw them strolling about the castle last night and ordered them off. I don't like their looks."

Alexis told of their presence on the boat, and said that he thought he had seen the taller one with the strange eyebrows peering through the window. As they passed the musicians the latter gazed fixedly at

Alexis, who returned their gaze with the imperious look of his father; but at the same time he felt a strange apprehension. The presence of these strange men about the castle recalled the night on which his father was torn from him.

On the day of Professor Valdov's return to Kasan, he took Alexis to the wireless telegraph station and explained the connections, which were somewhat different from those in his own laboratory. The sending spark was inclosed in a glass globe to deaden the noise, and the receiver, a new invention of the professor, was simply a bit of crystal found by the count in Siberia. A wire connected to the cobweb of wires suspended from the mast was led to the ground; this was cut, and the bit of crystal was inserted in the cut. The wires leading to a telephone were connected on each side of the crystal, as if a human hand were the telephone, the telephone wires being the thumb and forefinger holding the crystal

against the portions of the ground wire. The waves in the ether, in their endeavor to take refuge in the earth, made a tick in the telephone.

"Something good at last from Siberia," said the professor, with an ironical laugh.

Every evening, during the hours assigned by the professor, Alexis listened and received wireless messages. At first they were merely affectionate inquiries; but soon they were in cipher, with an injunction to communicate them to the count. As Alexis listened to the strange taps which spelled out words in a language unknown to him, he felt strangely alone; the only two persons in the world whom he loved had left him out of their confidence. He wrote out the messages as he received them, and took them to the count, who scanned them with a stern look on his face, and then carefully burned them.

One night Alexis received a longer message than usual, and the count, after read-

ing it, stamped his foot angrily, then looked at his son with regret at having given way to an ebullition of temper. Struck by the proud, reserved look of Alexis, he gazed at him curiously.

"You cannot read the cipher in which this message is written?" he asked.

"No," replied Alexis; "I am treated as a mere machine by you and the professor; for I am apparently not worthy of your confidence."

A sudden look of remorse passed over the count's face, and he put both hands on his son's shoulders, saying: —

"You are the only being in the world whom I love: you shall know all in time."

The two made a striking picture as they confronted each other: the count with his great stature and noble bearing; the boy with his open face, his dark hair curling close to his head, and his youthful figure which promised to be the counterpart of his father's. He did not know that the moist-

ure in those haggard eyes was caused by the remembrance of his mother, quickened by the profile of her son.

"I can wait and serve," replied Alexis, with a feeling of remorse at having evoked such an evidence of great feeling.

His father's words, "you shall know all in time," recurred often to the boy as he speculated upon the strange actions which occurred daily in the castle. The count was engaged in disposing of the bulk of his great estates to certain Jews who came from Warsaw. He granted to the peasants on the estate sums sufficient to make them comfortable for life. The picture of the boy's mother was taken from the wall, boxed, and sent to the artist in Paris, who, the count observed, was having an exhibition of his pictures. As the Jews listened to Count Orloff's terms they cast quick glances at one another as if telegraphing by some sign language known only to themselves, a method of wireless telegraphy of great

antiquity. With oblique glances they estimated the value of the rich collections of armor and objects of art by which they were surrounded. The count did not brook the slightest attempt at bargaining, and the Jews cringed in the most deferential manner, fearing to be shown out of the castle at any moment. The count's agent was present at these business meetings, together with the lawyers, who read in monotonous voices the terms of sale, while the Jews protested only by the rise and fall of their clawlike hands.

Alexis wondered if it were possible that his father intended to sell the castle. He had the traditional pride of the Orloffs, and combined with it an intense love for the home of his childhood. He wandered over the great domain with his gun, followed by the hound, which seemed to have a premonition of some coming change. He visited the peasants in their hamlets, and accepted their obeisances as a prerogative of his

heirship of the estates; he studied in the library the genealogy of his ancestors, and asked the professor by wireless telegraphy to send him a watch with the arms of the Orloffs engraved on one of its faces. If he should be compelled to leave the castle, the homesickness would be terrible to bear.

He had joined his father in the autumn; but now the severe Russian winter was at hand, the bays in the river where he had shot ducks were frozen over, the fields were covered with snow, and great fires were necessary in the banqueting hall of the castle.

The little house where Alexis received the wireless messages was bitterly cold. One night he sat there, wrapped in furs, and received a message in cipher followed by the word "urgent." He immediately sought his father.

The count started as he read the message, looked into space for a moment, knitted his eyebrows, re-read it, and summoned his

agent. After a moment's consultation, the latter hurried from the castle, and the count, putting his arm through his son's, drew him into the library and closed the door.

"Put a few necessary articles in your traveling-bag,' said he; "we must take a long ride to-night. How soon can you be ready?"

"How long shall we be away?" asked Alexis, with a premonition of a coming struggle.

"I cannot tell," replied the father. The ever-present mystery was well expressed by those words, "I cannot tell."

Alexis ran to his apartments, followed by the great hound, which kept up a constant moaning. The boy paused for an instant in the operation of thrusting articles into his bag, and, taking the dog's head in both his hands, bent down and kissed him between the eyes, while the hound licked his face.

The count awaited his son's coming in the hall, enveloped in furs, and affec-

tionately assisted him to prepare himself for the severe cold of the night. His feet were clad in fur shoes, and were then thrust into fur boots which came to the knees. He then drew on a great coat of white bear-skin, with a high collar, put on a fur cap, and encased his hands in fur mittens, which separated only the thumbs. A servant then wrapped both father and son with many folds of stout cloth, to hold the furs close to their bodies, much as one might tie up a package with many windings of twine. The count took a rifle, and handed one to Alexis. The door of the castle was opened, and in the yellow light cast by the lamps of the hall a drosky could be seen. The breath of the horses seemed like the steam from a samovar; and the driver sat as immovable as a mummy. The count carefully placed a small casket in the drosky, gave his hand to his agent, who stood with the retainers, motioned to Alexis to take a seat in the vehicle, and after speaking in a low tone to

the agent, followed his son, and they were off. The horses dashed down the dark avenue as if anxious to dispel the benumbing cold by frantic endeavor. The runners made a noise like that of a diamond cutting glass, and Alexis saw the lights of the castle dodge behind the trees, now on this side, now on that, as if anxious to get a last look. The drosky rolled over the great expanse of snow upon which it entered after leaving the avenue, like a ship at sea. The moon was partly veiled by clouds; yet there was sufficient light to see the snowy plain, with here and there a dark grove of pines, a clump of straggling birches, or a hamlet of peasant houses. Often there was nothing to break the great expanse. In the bitter cold, with no living thing in sight, it seemed as if the travelers had been transported to the moon and were being conveyed over a dead world. The count was silent, and Alexis was too proud to ask for what was not vouchsafed.

On and on they flew; their breath congealed and froze the fur collars over their mouths, making silver clasps. They had reached a dark wood and had plunged into its depths, when Alexis saw a dark figure running on his side of the drosky; at first he thought that the faithful hound had followed them; but presently another figure appeared and an exclamation was heard from the driver. The count muttered, "Wolves!" and, half rising, he looked behind. Alexis also turned, and saw a group of black figures loping after them, and caught a glimpse of shining eyes close to the drosky. Two of the animals ran into each other. The stronger shook off the weaker with a growl, fought with it in the snow, and, leaving it prone on its back, with its feet in the air, sprang after the drosky. The horses flew on in terror, fairly lifting the drosky over inequalities in the track. The count raised his rifle and fired; a wolf rolled over; those that followed swerved

aside from their writhing companion, but did not stop. Alexis also fired, and killed the wolf that was running close to the heels of the horses. Father and son uttered not a word; but, actuated by a common impulse, took careful aim as best they could in the rolling sleigh, and as they emerged from the wood saw the animals pause and slink into its shelter. The count said a few words of encouragement to the terrified driver, while Alexis felt a proud sense of companionship with his father, a feeling of comradeship which only soldiers who have gone into battle shoulder to shoulder can feel.

At the edge of the wood that had sheltered the wolves the flying horses bolted at a dark object on the snow. The count called loudly to the driver to stop; he had seen something mysterious in the obstruction which the horses had narrowly missed. When the horses were reined in, he walked back to it. It was the carcass of

a horse attached to an overturned drosky. The horse was partially eaten by wolves, and its hind-legs were in the air as if paralyzed in a final kick.

As the count stood by the gruesome remains, he heard an outcry, and, striding to the edge of the wood, saw a Russian peasant, or moujik, in a tree. He recognized one of his people, and assisted the half-crazed man to descend. The moujik, still trembling, told of his wild flight from the wolves; of their dragging down his horse, and of his escape, and thanked the count in a reverential manner. The latter took him into his drosky, wrapped him in furs, and bade the driver hasten on.

The moon, as if content with the excitement of the early hours of the night, withdrew behind a thick veil of clouds; and the snowy plain, with here and there a black copse of trees, or a hamlet almost obliterated by snowdrifts, assumed the tone of gray cinders on a cold hearth.

Toward morning it began to glow feebly as if a hidden fire were beginning to reassert itself. The sun, still far below the horizon, colored the clouds, which in turn reflected a rosy light upon the snow. Far in the distance could be seen the globular dome of a church amid huddled dwellings; and the driver crossed himself, uttering a prayer of thanks for his escape from the perils of the night. The horses, which were black when they dashed from the door of the castle, were now gray with the frost; and long icicles hung from their mouths, making them look like tusked walruses of the far north.

CHAPTER III

THE NIGHT ATTACK

On the night following the flight of the count, a group of soldiers, headed by an officer, who was accompanied by the man with bushy eyebrows and the man with none, appeared at the castle. The count's agent opened the main door in answer to the clangor of the bell, and saw the company by the light of a lantern held by a retainer.

"You ordered me off," said the man with bushy eyebrows; "now I order you to admit me and my friends."

"Have you an order from Count Orloff?" asked the agent.

"I have an order for him," replied the man.

"He is not here," answered the agent.

"We will see for ourselves," said the

officer, pushing the agent aside and beckoning his men.

"Wait!" said the man with bushy eyebrows; "we must put a man at every door."

The officer glared at the interrupter, but followed his suggestion; and there was a sound of crunching snow as the soldiers filed about the castle. When sentinels had been placed at every point of egress, the officer returned with a file of soldiers. The man with bushy eyebrows and his companion had entered the castle and were rummaging among the papers in the library. The officer and soldiers, after a careful inspection of the interior of the castle, returned to the banqueting hall and ordered the terrified butler to prepare a dinner. The agent was commanded to set forth wine and to have a roaring fire built in the great fireplace. The servants were slow in bringing suitable kindlings, and the man with bushy eyebrows tore up a beautiful

book and thrust the leaves under the slow-burning logs.

The agent was apparently eager to answer the rough demands of the visitors, and attended personally to the bringing of wine and food; but he had whispered to one of the retainers while the officer was engaged in searching for the count. The retainer disappeared through a secret underground passage which led to the peasants' village.

The rude company in the banqueting hall grew hilarious under the effect of the warmth and the wine. The man with bushy eyebrows told stories of tracking men, which were corroborated by the man with no eyebrows; and the officer thumped on the table in approbation of his cleverness, while his sword jingled under the table as if stirred by the narrative of savage encounters. Unwilling to be left out, the agent occasionally appeared at a door, looking very meek and subservient. He

was ordered to bring the best the castle afforded.

"If we can't find the count," roared the officer, "we can find his wine."

The great staghound, apparently suspecting evil, had entered the banqueting hall, and passed from man to man, uttering low growls. The man with bushy eyebrows kicked the animal away, and the hound immediately fastened his teeth in the man's leg. With a cry of pain the victim sprang to his feet and beat the hound with a chair.

"Kill the beast!" he cried to a soldier.

The agent seized the hound, saying that he was a valuable animal, and that he would put him out.

"Kill him, I tell you; kill him!" cried the man in a paroxysm of rage. As the soldier drew a knife and stepped forward, the agent whispered to the hound, and the animal bounded out of the room and ran up the stairway. The soldier was about to follow, when a strange noise was heard out-

side. The officer rose unsteadily and drew his sword; his companions looked at each other, suddenly sobered, and the agent, who had run to a window, came back with a look of terror.

"What is all this?" demanded the officer, with an oath.

"The peasants!" replied the agent; "they have heard that you have come to take the count. They are a terrible lot to deal with when their blood is up. They do not distinguish friend from foe."

The officer commanded the soldiers to fire from the windows, and hastened to let in the sentries. A random shot sounded here and there, and was greeted with savage yells from a great throng outside. Fierce eyes, beneath tangled hair, peered through the windows.

"They have no guns!" shouted the officer to the soldiers, who were gathered in the banqueting hall. "Let them have a volley."

Sharp reports rang out, but had no effect in subduing the mob. They had apparently collected at the main door and were endeavoring to batter it down. The officer, now completely sobered, did his best to animate his men; but they were unnerved by the wild cries of the enraged crowd. These cries formed a strange composite roar, like that of the mob which beat down the massive door of the Tolbooth in Edinburgh on the night of the assault so vividly described by Scott in "The Heart of Midlothian," or like that of the mob which gathered at Versailles and took the unfortunate King and Queen to Paris. The roar seemed more like that of wild animals than like cries uttered by human beings.

The man with bushy eyebrows and his eyebrowless companion besought the agent to find them a hiding-place; for the door could not long sustain the battering, and they felt that they would be slaughtered by the crowd. The agent, to conceal his part

in exciting the mob, hurried the two along the dark passage through which the retainer had crept to arouse the peasants. Without a word of thanks, the terrified men followed his directions; and as they fled down the hill heard the crash of the falling door and the savage, exultant cries of the assailants.

A straggling soldier, worn with cold and fatigue, the only survivor of the wrath of the peasants, reached Kasan and told the story of the fearful night to the commandant of the citadel. The two spies, one with bushy eyebrows and the other without eyebrows, who were addressed by the commandant as "Bushy" and "Bare," were closeted with him when the soldier arrived and told his story. The commandant, in a rage, cried, "I will send a force to cover those wretches' hovels with petroleum, and order them to set a fire which will wipe them off the face of the earth." He gnashed his teeth as he spoke, walking up

and down, his sword pounding on the floor.

"That will never do," said an officer; "the entire province would be set on fire, for the peasants are on the edge of a revolt. We shall have our hands full yet in this very city. You," said he, turning to Bushy and Bare, "have failed to find the count?"

"We are on his track," replied Bushy significantly.

"Some one of the conspirators has turned informer?" asked the officer.

"No," replied the man; "Professor Valdov left Kasan last night, and we have learned his destination. He has gone to join the count, and we leave at midnight."

"Have you a list of the conspirators?" asked the commandant. In reply Bushy handed the latter a paper. The commandant hummed savagely as he read the document.

"How about the count's agent?" he asked.

"He can be trusted to help us," replied Bare; "without his aid we should not be here."

After receiving minute directions the two spies left the citadel.

When the count and Alexis reached Smolensk at the close of day, Alexis, leaving his father at an inn, strolled out, animated by the desire of youth to see a strange city. They had arrived in a dense snowstorm, but the sky had cleared in the evening, and the stars shone with great brilliancy. The Northern Lights threw a rosy light upon the new-fallen snow on the roofs and on the domes of the churches. The domes seemed like a council of Tartars in white hoods, seated before the faint, flickering embers of a hidden fire.

The shopkeepers had cleaned the snow away from the entrances to their shops; and the streets were filled with people. Alexis gazed into the shop windows, watched the arrival and departure of kibitkas and dros-

kies, and entered a church into which peasants were thronging. Overcome by the mystery of the flight from the castle, he felt that the solemn interior might give him strength to support what the future had in store; and, kneeling before a shrine of St. Sergius, he invoked the saint to protect his father and himself from evil. This evil was pictured in his mind as a pursuit by men who desired to tear his father from him and send him again to Siberia. Beside him knelt a peasant woman, who prayed that her child might be restored to health; and what saint could fail to be moved by such prayers and could refuse to act as an intercessor? As Alexis lifted his eyes they rested on the glittering shrine, with its wealth of jewels, as it were an intimation of the court of Heaven, where St. Sergius was waiting to present the boy's petition. The patriarchs stood in devotion before the shrine, and the swelling music seemed to usher the Holy Spirit into the solemn

place. Awaking suddenly from his mood of mysticism, Alexis bethought him of his father's anxiety at his prolonged absence, and, leaving the church, he hurried back to the inn.

On his way he passed a resort of travelers, and, gazing through the windows, started with apprehension as he saw the two men, one with bushy eyebrows, the other with none, drinking tea from a samovar. He felt that there was something ominous in the arrival of these men, whom he had seen loitering about the castle, and he resolved to communicate his suspicions to his father.

On arriving at the inn, he found the count in company with a gentleman to whom he did not introduce his son. The boy had a return of the proud impulse which rebelled against his father's apparent disinclination to take him into his confidence; and he gazed almost defiantly at the stranger, who was dressed like an Englishman. He had

gray side-whiskers, and wore an eyeglass. Alexis could not get a view of his full face, for he stood with his back half turned, while he listened to the count. Presently he gazed at the boy. The latter sprang toward him with outstretched arms; the visitor put his finger to his lips; and Alexis exclaimed, "Professor!" in a suppressed voice.

Count Orloff went to the door, which was ajar, and closed it. Then Alexis was told of the discovery of a plot in which the count and the professor, together with many prominent noblemen, were involved. At last the confidence had come; the boy seemed to grow to the stature of a man as he listened. He told of seeing the two strange men drinking at the travelers' inn, and spoke of his suspicions. The professor twirled his eyeglass and nodded his head.

"These men," said he to the count, "are on our track. One is known as the Hyena, and the other as the Octopus. It is neces-

sary to change our plans immediately. We must separate."

Alexis felt an ominous sinking of the heart as he heard the word "separate." After the long years of separation was he again to be torn from his father?

The professor rapidly outlined a plan of action: it was necessary for the count and himself to meet friends in Warsaw; they would take separate routes; and Alexis should go to Paris and wait there until they would join him. The spies were on the track of two men and a boy, and the separation would throw them completely off the track. While the count sat buried in thought, Alexis put his arms around his neck, and said, "Never fear for me, father; I have been to Paris with Professor Valdov, and can take care of myself. I am chiefly concerned for you."

"We must decide now," said the count, returning the caress; and he gave particular directions in regard to addresses, while

he quickly readjusted their baggage. The professor left the room to hire a kibitka; for it was decided to drive to a remote railway station at a junction, where they could separate for their different destinations.

The kibitka was soon at the door, and the three, entering it, were driven rapidly out of the city, the lights of which soon faded behind them, and only the stars and the Northern Lights illumined the snow. Straggling, mast-like poles indicated the roads; but so ineffectually that the driver often drove into the fields. All night the travelers fled, and early in the morning drew up at a small station. The waiting-room was filled with a motley crowd: Polish Jews, Cossacks, German merchants, and pilgrims. The different nationalities collected there seemed to represent the complicated pulsation of the heart of the great Russian Empire. When the train drew in, the count embraced his son and

said, "Remember Numéro —, Rue de Rivoli."

Alexis repeated the words, embraced his father, sprang into the train; and in another instant the station was receding; he caught a last view of the tall form of his father standing beside the professor. When should he see them again?

CHAPTER IV

WOLVES ON THE SCENT

THE two spies, having located the count at the inn, felt that they could make a night of it; for, said Bushy to Bare, "It will not be courteous to disturb the slumbers of the count and the professor."

"Sleep is a sure jailer," rejoined Bare.

The two ordered the best that the inn afforded, treated the soldiers who had been deputed to assist them in taking the fugitives back to Kasan, and went to the theatre.

In the early morning they sought the inn, fully expecting to take their men; and marched confidently into the courtyard, terrifying landlord and servants by their fierce looks and show of authority.

"Gone! last night!" ejaculated Bushy, looking at Bare. The latter cross-examined the landlord, and, learning that the driver

of the kibitka would return in the course of the day, told Bushy that there was nothing to do but to wait until his return; they could learn from him the destination of the count. The two spent the day in mutual recriminations. Bare with an ironical laugh recalled Bushy's remark in regard to courtesy, and Bushy retorted by Bare's remark on the virtue of sleep as a jailer. If Bushy had been of a generous nature, he would have confessed that he had been caught napping, and would have included Bare in the remark.

When the driver arrived, late in the day, he was closely interrogated. All they learned was the name of the station where he had left the travelers; and the two spies, hiring another conveyance, set out with speed to find at the station, if possible, some clue to the route taken by the count and his companions. They reflected savagely that the hunted had gained a day on them, and urged the driver to put his horses at

top speed, alternately swearing at him and cajoling him. This driver seemed a very stupid moujik; but he had learned from the presence of the soldiers in Smolensk, in company with these savage-looking men who were urging him on, that they were in pursuit of men in revolt. He had been in secret revolt all his life against the government; for his son had been sent to Siberia unjustly, and he was not moved from his stolidity when the harness, patched together with bits of rope, gave way and the occupants of the kibitka were deposited in a snowdrift. If there had been a bare place on the road Bushy and Bare would have executed a contradance of rage; but the snow was deep everywhere, and the emotion which might have been allayed by exercise of this sort exhibited itself in oaths. After a long delay the harness was tied together; but it was necessary to drive cautiously; and it was late in the forenoon when they reached the station.

The ticket-agent, on being interviewed, remembered a tall, imposing-looking man who bought two tickets for Minsk and one for a town on the frontier. There was such a crowd returning from a fair that he did not take particular notice of the man. Bushy and Bare strolled about the station interviewing every operative, but the desultory information they gained was of no assistance. Finally the telegraph operator said that he heard the words "Numéro —, Rue de Rivoli" uttered by a boy who sprang into a carriage of the train just as it started. The words had lingered in his mind, for his own stay in Paris was such a delightful memory that he envied the boy, who was, it might be, going there. The boy had been walking up and down with two men before the arrival of the train.

When Alexis arrived at the Gare du Nord, and was rapidly driven to Rue de Rivoli, he was surprised at the absence of

snow. The streets were filled with a gay crowd; men were sitting outside the cafés on the boulevards, smoking and drinking coffee. It was evening, and the electric signs high up on business houses and hotels winked, as if to inform the newcomer that there was much to see in Paris. The omnibus in which Alexis had taken a seat, after being driven through many narrow streets and out again upon apparently endless boulevards, entered Place Vendôme, which was comparatively empty. Passing through this square, solemnized by the great column surmounted by the statue of Napoleon, it entered upon the brilliantly lighted Rue de Rivoli, and was driven into a courtyard in which stood trees in great pots. Ladies in fine costumes, accompanied by gentlemen in evening dress, with coats upon their arms, crossed the courtyard, evidently on their way to evening entertainments.

Alexis, while he was being assigned to

a room, asked for letters or telegrams, and felt a pang when he received none. His apprehensions, however, were forgotten for the moment in the excitement of being in Paris. After dinner he walked out of the courtyard, now filled with groups of guests chatting gayly and listening to a Hungarian orchestra which was playing airs he had so often heard in Kasan. There is nothing which brings the heart to the lips so surely as the sound of familiar airs in a foreign city; especially if one is alone. He gazed up and down the street while the music played on. A row of lights stretched down to the majestic Palace of the Tuileries in one direction, and extended indefinitely in the other. He remembered that along that street a King and Queen were once dragged to captivity; and the thought of their agony caused him to reflect upon what his feelings would be if he and his father should be seized, and made to undergo some mysterious evil.

As he passed out of sound of the music and entered the Champs-Élysées the gayety of a Parisian night dispelled these sad thoughts and forebodings. Among the trees there were many brilliantly lighted *Cafés Chantants*, and he entered one of them. A young girl was spinning like a flounced top, pausing now and then to write invisible characters on the air with her flourishing feet. Men with black mustaches curled up at the ends bent forward, apparently eager to decipher those wireless messages. Some of the faces reminded Alexis of Bushy's face turned upside down. Old men seemed to find as much amusement in the gyrations of the flamboyant top on the stage as the young men who puffed cigarette smoke into the air and waved its modest veil away with impatient hands. Above the tinsel and glitter of the stage, with its ogling performer, the boy saw the picture of his mother pausing on the staircase. It was a strange vision to see in that place, filled

with an idle, pleasure-loving crowd, and perhaps arose from the knowledge that the picture was in Paris; this knowledge helped to dispel the feeling of loneliness which inevitably arises when one finds one's self alone in a crowd of foreigners. The vision made the painted face of the performer and the simpering and ogling looks of the young women who sat beside Alexis so abhorrent that he left the place, with all its glitter and its bizarre music, and returned to the hotel.

On the third day after his arrival in Paris he received a telegram from his father informing him of the arrival of himself and the professor in Warsaw. In a few days a long letter came, containing astonishing directions. On receipt of the letter he was to leave Paris for Liverpool, and go aboard the steamer Russia, bound for New York. The count and the professor would join him on the steamer. If they should be detained he was to sail, and

on landing was to present himself to Sergius Romanoff, No. —, 22d St., New York.

"If anything happens to detain us": these were the words of the letter; and Alexis repeated them to himself as he hurriedly made his preparations for departure.

The clerk of the hotel at Numéro —, Rue de Rivoli, looked up from his scheme of rooms on hearing an inquiry addressed to him; and saw a thickset man, with a large face and protuberant eyes, who seemed to be a German professor. The eyes shone out with a fishy look from behind gold-bowed spectacles, and the man's large head was surmounted by a black hat, underneath which straggling locks rested on the collar of a voluminous coat. The clerk stared at the inquirer as he replied: "Yes, Monsieur Alexis Orloff was here; but he has gone. He left last night."

"Do you know his destination?"

"No," replied the clerk, staring fixedly at the man, and touching at the same time

a push-button beneath the lid of his desk. The man, wondering at the strange manner and suspicious look of the clerk, turned away and walked up and down the corridor. A detective summoned by the clerk's bell walked to the desk, and, while he conversed with the clerk, watched the visitor. The latter presently left the hotel. It was night, and the Parisian crowds were hurrying to places of entertainment. The man passed into Rue Castiglione, then turned sharply into Rue Saint-Honoré, unconscious that the detective was following him closely. Having taken the number of the hotel, the detective entered, and made inquiries in his turn, concerning the name of the German professor, who had joined a man with a hairy face who also wore glasses and had remarkable eyebrows.

"Well," asked Bushy, "what success?"

"He left yesterday for an unknown destination," replied Bare, sinking into a chair and ordering a glass of brandy.

Bushy stared at Bare.

"Why do you glare at me like a hyena?" exclaimed Bare, striking the table with his fist as if to express his wrath at a defeated effort.

"You evidently worked hard," said Bushy. "For you lost an eyebrow in your zeal."

Bare passed his hand over his brow and removed the remaining eyebrow. It was plain why the clerk had stared. At that moment a gendarme appeared and ordered the men to accompany him before the Prefect of Police. The detective had hurried to the latter with his suspicions. Bushy gibed Bare as they accompanied the gendarme, saying that he had an unrecognized gift as a lightning transmogrifier. On reaching the Prefect's office Bushy calmly handed that official a paper. The latter immediately abandoned his savage official manner, and almost obsequiously offered the assistance of the government in their quest.

In the morning the two spies determined to interview the servants of the hotel where Alexis had lodged, in order to find some clue to his destination. Accordingly Bushy set out for the hotel; and began with the head porter. Meeting with no success, he turned to the clerk who had charge of letters and telegrams. There were no letters waiting. He then entered the elevator, and, waiting till the guests who had entered with him had disappeared to their apartments, made inquiries of the elevator attendant, describing Alexis minutely. The attendant remembered the boy perfectly.

"A large, handsome fellow," said he, "almost a man; Monsieur Orloff, a Russian. I am a Russian myself. He has gone to America, where I hope to be myself some day."

"Ah!" said Bushy. "Did he speak of the route he intended to take — the steamer?"

The attendant had not learned the route or the name of the steamer. Bushy left the

elevator and waited in his room for the return of Bare, who, in company with a detective, had gone to the steamship offices to ascertain if Alexis had booked in any of them. Bare returned in triumph. He had found the name of the steamer; and the Prefect had obtained at the hotel a letter addressed to Alexis Orloff and postmarked Warsaw.

CHAPTER V

PENNILESS IN A STRANGE CITY

ALEXIS, as the train drew out of Paris and the houses and the dome of the cathedral on the hill faded into the distance, took out his father's letter of directions and pondered over it. What had caused his delay in joining him? and why did he hint at a further possible detention? He put away the letter carefully, and gazed over the broad expanse of the French landscape, with its carefully marked division of ownership; its lines of poplar trees beside the rivers, on the banks of which sat fishermen.

There was only one other occupant of the carriage in which Alexis was seated, a young man, who pointed to the stray fishermen, and said with a smile, —

"If you should return to France next year at this time, you would see those

same fishermen seated there. I have never seen them catch anything. They should be painted as emblematic of hope."

He hoped that he had not offended a Frenchman by this remark. Alexis said that he was a Russian, and the young man, much interested, asked many questions in regard to that country and in regard to the city of Kasan. Alexis spoke of his studies, of the manner in which he had gained his wonderful knowledge of languages, at which the young man marveled greatly.

"Perhaps," said he, "you may judge from my volubility that I have not a command even of my own tongue."

The conversation turned to methods of education, particularly in science. Alexis spoke of his laboratory work in the subject of electricity. His companion immediately showed great interest, and said that he had been on a tour of inspection of wireless telegraph stations, having one himself in America.

"Do you know Professor Valdov?" asked Alexis. "He has done much in wireless telegraphy."

"Valdov? Valdov?" repeated the young man. "There's an article about him in a French paper this morning; 'Figaro' or 'Le Matin,'—let me see." Thus saying, he opened his dress-suit case and took out a bundle of papers.

"Yes, here it is, in 'Le Matin,'—'Complot par télégraphie sans fil' (A Conspiracy by Wireless Telegraphy). The Russian government has discovered that Count Orloff, who, it may be remembered, was sent to Siberia years ago, having been liberated, has been engaged in an extensive plot which has been planned by wireless telegraphy in connection with Professor Valdov of Kasan, a man well known by his researches in electricity. Both conspirators have fled from the country. Wireless telegraphy promises to play a prominent part in future revolutions; for no censorship

can be exercised over it,—it is as free as air."

Alexis leaned forward, eagerly listening, and read the article attentively when his companion, after reading the French with difficulty, handed him the paper.

"I should like to meet that Professor Valdov," said Alexis's companion. "He has made some interesting discoveries. I hope the Russian government won't get hold of him. If they do, I suppose it will go hard with him. Did you meet him at the university?"

Alexis parried the question, and they entered upon a discussion of transformers and sparks, which was carried on by Alexis almost mechanically, for he was greatly disturbed by the article. The train had now passed out of the more highly cultivated regions and had entered upon the tract of marshes and sand dunes, beyond which gleamed the sea. They were approaching Boulogne; Alexis's

companion gathered his hand baggage together.

"You are going on to London," said he; "and I shall stop over at Folkstone. I hope that when you arrive in New York you will look me up; for I want to show you my wireless telegraph station. Here is my card. I shall be in America in three weeks. You will arrive a little before me; but not much, for my ship is a six days' boat." Alexis took the card, and read, "Mr. Ray Brown." He handed his own card. In the hurry of the arrival, Brown did not read the name on the card, but put it carefully in his pocketbook.

"By the way," said he, "I took this route instead of that by Calais expressly to vent my spite on a rascally commissionaire who cheated me the last time I was here. If he appears again I shall be ready for him, for I have studied up enough French to settle him. I have you also to depend upon."

The train had now entered the station,

and Brown and Alexis left their compartment. Their exit was impeded by a German, who dropped his many bundles to embrace two of his hirsute countrymen, and by a great poodle held in leash by a Frenchwoman. The dog wound the leash around Brown's legs, and to prevent a fall he grasped the woman, who shrieked loudly. Brown's knowledge of French suddenly was unavailable, but Alexis came to his aid; the Frenchwoman smiled upon the handsome boy; he patted the dog, and they passed through the ticket-gatherer's gate. A squat Frenchman, in blue blouse and wearing what looked like a dilapidated yachting cap with a large label on the visor, seized Brown's dress-suit case.

Brown wrenched it away from the man, exclaiming, "Here is the rascal!" He forgot again his French and ejaculated something which resembled Hamlet's exclamation — "Ha! art thou there, true-penny!"

"Farther on! Va-t-en! Get out!" The commissionaire followed him to the sidewalk, where Brown gave his dress-suit case to a boy. The commissionaire again pounced upon it, saying, "Boy not allowed. It is not law." Brown recovered his luggage, gave it again to the boy, and shook his fist in the commissionaire's face, while Alexis, in excellent French, soothed the official.

When the steamboat arrived at Folkstone, Alexis bade his new acquaintance good-by and took the train for London, on reaching which he had hardly time to drive to the Northwestern Station in time to take the train for Liverpool. By dint of urging and giving an extra fare he gained the station, with but a moment to spare, and, hurrying through the crowd on the platforms, took his seat in a compartment. He was now alone, and he could dwell upon the possibility of not meeting his father on the steamer. What if the widespread

news of the plot and of his father's escape should lead to capture and a return to Siberia? The boy shuddered at the possibility and at the thought that he would soon be crossing the great ocean, each day increasing the separation. He sought his pocket-book to take out his father's letter giving him directions. It was not in his breast pocket, nor in his outer coat. He searched with shaking hands, burying them repeatedly in pockets that he had found empty on the first trial. The letter was gone, and all his money, together with his steamer tickets. He sank back in the compartment, while cold perspiration started upon his brow. He went over in his perturbed mind all the incidents of the journey. Could Brown have despoiled him? and was Brown a spy? It was certainly suspicious that he had been so much interested in the article in the French paper, and more so that he had left him at Folkstone.

What was to be done? Should he apply

to the Russian consul in Liverpool? No; information had probably been lodged with him of the flight of Count Orloff, together with a description of his son. To apply for aid would lead to questions which might result in ruin to his father. While he thought of his situation the train was drawing near Liverpool. The lights that danced by the train had a demoniacal look, cheerless as a flight of meteors to one lost in a wilderness. The happy meeting of families at the stations where the train stopped a moment before entering Liverpool awakened a pang in his heart. Perhaps an officer informed by telegraph was waiting for him at the station. This apprehensive thought drove out the consideration of how he should spend the night. He peered at the groups of people who were assembled on the platform as the train slowly came to a stop. A porter running alongside the train asked him if he should take his luggage. Alexis assented, and alighted, momentarily expecting to feel

a heavy hand on his shoulder; but no one looked at him, fortunately or unfortunately. He was alone in a strange city. The porter asked if he should summon a cab. Alexis ordered the man to convey his luggage to the baggage room, and after giving the porter a small fee found that he had only a franc left. He must sit up all night in the railway station, or endeavor to sell some article of apparel to gain a night's lodging.

He passed out of the station and saw the dark, solemn St. George's Hall loom across the street. He walked to the open space in front of the hall, and stood aimlessly beneath the statue of Queen Victoria. A wretchedly dressed woman, carrying a baby, thrust out a thin hand, soliciting alms with a sobbing voice. The electric light made the pallid face of the baby still more pallid. Alexis fingered his last piece of money; but he was as poor as the woman, perhaps poorer, for she probably had some place of shelter for the night.

To avoid seeing the woman he joined the throng on the sidewalk, and, entering a clothing store, asked where he could find a pawnbroker's shop. The clerk stared, and could not tell him. Alexis then asked where he could find a boarding-house or inn resorted to by sailors. The clerk's manner now became insolent, and he turned his back. A workingman who had heard the conversation followed Alexis from the shop, and gave him the address of a sailors' boarding-house. Alexis followed the directions, pondering over his situation. He probably could not dispose of any article of clothing at that hour of night, and he could not sing or play on any instrument for a lodging. As he thus thought he came to a picture store, entered, and bought a sketch-book with his last franc. He had a talent for caricature; perhaps he could make it available.

The directions of the workman led him into the squalid parts of the city, where he

jostled against drunken men who reeled out of beershops. Two loud-voiced girls, laughing immoderately and addressing him as "my Lord," asked him if they were on the right road to London; and he saw the woman with the baby, whom he had encountered under the statue of Queen Victoria, asleep in a doorway. As he passed one of the gin shops two men came out, talking loudly and shaking their fists at each other. They slowly walked apart; then one stopped, ran up to the other, and struck him in the face. The one who received the blow immediately closed with his assailant, and was knocked into the gutter by his large adversary. Alexis went to the assistance of the fallen man, who was being badly pummeled, and dragged off the burly fighter, who then struck out at Alexis. The latter might have obtained a night's lodging at a hospital if the appearance of a policeman had not caused the big ruffian to flee. The policeman, after making many inquiries,

recommended the man who had been overborne and was wiping the blood from his face to keep the peace, and went on his way.

"I am only too willing," muttered the man. "You are a good lad," said he to Alexis. "If that Bobby had not appeared, we could have finished that fellow."

Alexis handed him his hat, and asked if he could direct him to the sailors' boarding-house.

"That is where I am going," said the man. "Come on and have a glass of beer with me."

As they walked Alexis gazed closely at his companion. He was thickset, had a bronzed face, and rolled as he walked; but this roll was not that of a drunken man, for his voice showed that he was sober.

"I was a fool," he growled, "to get into a street fight with that scoundrel, seeing

that I must be in good trim for sailing to-morrow."

"On what ship do you sail?" asked Alexis.

"On the steamer Russia," responded the man. "I 'm the boatswain."

Alexis told of his intention to take that steamer, and of the robbery. The boatswain hit his fists together to express his warm sympathy, and also a desire to get at the thief and all other scoundrels; for his blood was still heated.

"What will you do, boy?" he asked, pausing beneath a street light and holding Alexis by the shoulder.

"If I do not meet my father I must work my way to New York. He gave me express orders to sail on the Russia."

"Express orders must be obeyed, coming from the captain of the family," said the boatswain, lighting his pipe. "Come in here, and let 's talk it over."

They entered the public room of a house

frequented by sailors. A bar extended along one side of the low room, in which were a number of rough-looking men smoking and drinking. A middle-aged, buxom woman, with a mass of frizzled hair, stood behind the bar. The floor was covered with sand, and a few prints hung on the walls, — foxhunters scurrying over downs, and engravings from the London "Graphic" representing a view of the English navy. The boatswain ordered beer, in a tone which made the sailors playing cards jump as if watch were called. The landlady bridled, but handed the beer to her subservient husband with the remark, "Bill has just come on deck."

The boatswain drank, filled his pipe afresh, and looked fixedly at Alexis. "You said that you must ship anyway, father or no father. It is either the cabin or the forecastle, hey?"

Alexis assented, and asked if the boatswain could ship him as a hand.

"Not with those clothes," replied his companion. "The officers would n't let you aboard."

"I have left a box at the station," said Alexis, "in which there is a fur coat. It is yours if you can provide me with a rough seaman's jacket."

"I am not an old-clothes man or a new-clothes man," replied the boatswain. "Can you see me in a fur coat? Bill in a fur coat!" He laughed at the thought. "No, man, keep your fur coat. I 'll lend you an old jacket. Be on hand at the landing stage to-morrow morning at six sharp. The ship lies out in the stream, and I 'll take you out with the stokers. I must see the old woman and the kids." Thus saying, he rolled out of the lodging-house.

Alexis felt that the plans for the next day had been arranged; but the night was unprovided for, and how could he get his box to the ship? He took his sketching blank and began to draw. The landlady

looked at him suspiciously and whispered to her husband, who walked behind Alexis and gazed over his shoulder. Have you not seen, gentle reader, a picture of Pan piping to the pigs, which are represented as charmed by his music? You have not seen, however, a picture of an artist holding human beings enthralled by the motions of his pencil; yet the artist has as great a power to rivet attention as the musician. The husband of the landlady was spellbound at the sight of the growth of a picture of the room, with the men seated at their tables, and was unconscious of the winks and the clawing in of the hands of his wife calling him back to report. His suppressed laughter and his strange contortion of delight, which consisted in drawing a foot of one leg up to the knee of the other leg, and ducking his head, attracted an audience.

"You are in it, Tom, as big as life," said one, looking from the drawing to a man

who sat with one leg on a table. Tom instantly withdrew his leg and adjusted his hair.

"You are as pretty as life, Sammy," laughed another.

Alexis tore off the sheet from his block and handed it to the husband, who carried it to his wife.

"Draw the missus," said Sammy, "now you are speaking of prettiness." Sammy had not paid his toll for several nights, and thought he knew the hearts of women.

"The missus draws, too," said a joker. "She draws the beer."

Shouts of laughter greeted this sally. The rapidity with which the boy drew and the cleverness of the sketches charmed the rough men. A sailor who had taken too much beer was aroused from slumber by the laughter, glared at the artist, and hiccoughed: "I'm for pulling down all the castles in England, and 'bolishing the House of Lords. Put that down."

"Sit up, Jim," said Sammy. "It 's your face he wants, and not your thoughts."

Jim relapsed into slumber with an inane smile, saying there was not a better-looking man in Liverpool.

The boatswain, on his way to his humble home, suddenly bethought him that the boy had no money and no place to spend the night. He determined to get some money from the "old woman" and to return to the lodging-house.

When he told his wife of the case of Alexis, she, who had had frequent experiences of her husband's flights of imagination when he had been drinking, advised him to go to bed to prepare for the morning work. The boatswain knew that it would be of no use to storm, for his helpmate had complete command of the family finances; so he asked her to accompany him to the lodging-house and see the boy, adding that he was like their boy who died destitute in a far-off city in India. The

good woman, with a look at her husband which expressed mingled doubt and sorrow, put on her bonnet and shawl and accompanied him to the lodging-house.

As they entered the landlady bristled, and said in loud tones: "Glad to see you, marm. Your husband gets his beer whenever he's got the money to pay for it; you need n't think you can stop the lawful business of this house."

"My woman has not come to complain," interposed the boatswain.

"She's come, perhaps, to have her picture taken," said the landlady sarcastically.

"Did you bring me here to be insulted by that 'ere woman?" said the boatswain's wife, clutching at her gown with her fingers.

"Here is the young man," quickly interposed the boatswain, well knowing the valor of his wife. The latter looked at Alexis, and was softened by his resemblance to her boy, lost so many years ago.

"Ye see, gentlemen," said the boatswain to the company, who were in pleasant expectancy of a war of words between an enraged wife and the landlady, who had often been commanded not to give the boatswain credit, "this 'ere lad has had his pocketbook stolen on his way up from Lunnon. He has lost his steamer tickets, and has no place to sleep to-night. To-morrow he ships with me on the Russia, to work his passage to America. I asked my wife to come round and give him a lift. She knows what it is to have had a boy stranded in a strange city with no place to lay his head."

"We don't need to apply to a woman to help," said the man who was called Tom. "Here, lads, pass the hat round"; and thus saying he grabbed off his cap, put a shilling in it, and handed it to Sam, who in turn deposited a shilling.

Alexis proudly stopped their kind action. "I 'm willing to work for a night's lodg-

ing," he exclaimed. "I appreciate with all my heart your kindness, but I can't take your money in this way. If any of you are willing to sit for a portrait for a shilling a head, I shall hope to make enough to satisfy kind madam, who no doubt will let me pay for a night's lodging."

"The young gentleman is welcome to a bed," responded the landlady, with a Parthian shaft directed to the boatswain's wife. "He has n't any wife."

The boatswain's wife settled her bonnet firmly on her head, gave a look of scorn at the woman, took out a sum of money, and put it down on the table before Alexis. "In memory of my boy," said she, with a sob, and, taking her husband by the coat-sleeve, led him away.

As Alexis sketched the portraits of the simple, rude men, he wondered if he would have had as hospitable a reception in any fashionable hotel where he might have sought a lodging. An aristocrat by birth,

he had often wondered at his father's interest in the rough-bearded men with whom both he and Professor Valdov seemed so intimate. Possibly in the desolate towns of Siberia the count had found kindness and hospitality among those the world calls the lower classes.

The landlady was so pleased by the sketch of herself, which emphasized the remnants of youthful beauty she was fully conscious of possessing, that she sent for her child, in order to get his "picter." The child toddled in and was lifted to the bar, and the group of men watched the growth of the sketch.

"He 's putting in the eyes," said one. "The nose is coming," cried another. "Don't laugh, sonny, he 's on your mug."

Notwithstanding such directions for posing, the child, like most children who sit for their portraits, became convulsively active.

"It 's like catching sheet lightning," said a sympathetic observer.

After a few more sketches had been made, the company lost their interest and went their different ways. The landlady assigned Alexis a room, and he fell asleep hearing the stumbling steps of lodgers as they ascended the stairs to their various quarters. This taste of life among the lowly might serve to enhance the life which was coming when his father would rejoin him. When? Ah! that was the question.

CHAPTER VI

AFLOAT WITH ENEMIES

In the early morning, after a simple breakfast, he left the lodging-house, thanking the landlady, who was hustling about mopping up the floors, arranging the bottles on the bar, and growling at "him who is asleep and ought to be up tending to his work." Alexis left his remembrances to the husband, — the "him," — leaving with the landlady the impression of a gentleman and an artist. He ordered a cab, proceeded to the station to get his luggage, and on being driven to the landing stage paid the driver out of the sum given him by the boatswain's wife, resolving to repay the boatswain speedily, and on his arrival in New York to send her a gift of remembrance, a gift with the Orloff arms imprinted on it.

The boatswain met him, and together with a number of sailors they were soon rowing out to a steamship which was lying in the stream waiting her turn to draw up to the landing stage, where a great ocean liner which had arrived from America was discharging her passengers. The early morning was chilly, and the air was heavy with coal smoke mixed with a beery smell remindful of the barroom of the lodging-house where Alexis had spent the night. The sun's place in the eastern sky just above the tall chimneys was indicated by a yellowish gleam framed by wreaths of black smoke. An artist painting the scene would have needed no colors save india ink and sepia, a touch of red for a flag, a tawny yellow for the wake of a bustling tug which seemed to be in danger of being submerged at the stern. A bit of charcoal, aided by rubbing of the thumb, would have been sufficient to represent the city. There were no green and gold

domes rising above red-tiled housetops; only church steeples, as dark and sombre as the houses which they overtopped. Along the street above the landing stage were groups of the unemployed gazing at the shipping, at the receding boat which was conveying Alexis to the steamer, and at the busy scene of landing passengers from the steamer at the stage. The ragged garments of these lookers-on was in tone with the general murkiness of the scene. There was a uniformity in felt hats with round low crowns, which were once black but now would require from our artist a touch of his tawny brown. Alexis had never seen such a row of tattered trousers. There were no blue blouses of moujiks, red coats of Cossacks, or white uniforms of officers.

Presently the boat reached the steamer's side, and the occupants were transferred on board. An officer looked sharply at Alexis, who had donned the pea-jacket

lent by the boatswain, but still had on his Parisian trousers and his French boots. If there had not been difficulty in securing a crew, he might have ordered Alexis ashore, with the remark, "We don't want dandies aboard"; but he hustled him below deck, with a loud command to a waiting tug.

The steamer at the landing stage was drawing out into the stream, making way for the Russia, which, assisted by the tug, sidled up to the stage and began to take on passengers' effects. Alexis, from a position on the lower deck, carefully scanned the waiting crowd. His father and the professor were not there; but there was yet time, for the seaman who was gazing over the rail near Alexis remarked that the train from "Lunnon" was not in. The steamer always waited for it. Loads of trunks were wheeled along the stage to points where they could be swung aboard. Anxious passengers followed these loads,

examining the labels. Men and women gesticulated; but slowly, as if partly overcome by the heavy atmosphere. There was no frantic embracing.

Alexis had not overcome his fear of detectives, and scrutinized the appearance of two men who had taken a position near the entrance to the stairs which probably led to a point to which the gangway would be swung when the ship should be ready for the passengers. These men looked like Germans; they wore soft black felt hats, which were pressed well down over their brows, and their eyes were concealed by spectacles. When the luggage was all aboard and the gangway in position, these men did not join the stream of boarding passengers, but remained at the foot of the stairs. Alexis's eyes ranged from a quick inspection of each passenger to these men.

Presently a distant shrill whistle was heard. "There 's the train from Lunnon," said Alexis's companion. In a moment a

stream of people came upon the landing stage; they had come by the train. Alexis's heart beat rapidly, and his gaze was withdrawn from a study of the two waiting men to a scrutiny of the new arrivals. What if he should see these waiting men walk up to the tall figure of his father and take him into custody! Was this apprehensive picture conjured up by anxiety, or had it some reason for impressing itself on his consciousness? Strange to say, he had a feeling of relief when he could not discover his father and Professor Valdov.

The stream of passengers coming aboard began to grow less, and the bell of the steamer sounded, warning those who did not intend to sail to go ashore. The friends of the passengers took positions on the landing stage to wave their last adieus, and the stream of people on the gangway was reversed in direction. The bell, instead of ringing continuously, sounded portentously at well-marked intervals, and the ship's

crew took their places to remove the gangway. Alexis saw the two men emerge from their corner and ascend the stairs to the gangway. As they made their way to the ship a sudden encounter with a young Englishman bounding ashore knocked off the hat of one of the men, and disclosed a large face without eyebrows. The boy shrank back from the rail with almost an exultant thought. They had not found his father. Perhaps they were going merely to Queenstown, thinking to intercept the fugitive there while the steamer took on another quota of passengers. As Alexis thought of this possibility, the exultant feeling died out. There was room for fresh anxiety.

The great steamer moved slowly from the stage, and a line of waving handkerchiefs brightened the sombre background. Little tugs steamed by the great hull of the steamship, like small boys anxious to show their possibilities of speed to a bulky police-

man. The steamship was not aroused to a contest with such insignificant competitors, and proceeded majestically, blowing out steam from orifices in her hull like sniffs of disdain. A flock of gulls began to circle about the vessel; instinctive aeroplanes destined forever to humiliate aspiring inventors of flying machines.

The boatswain gave Alexis another suit of clothes, and set him to work coiling ropes and cleaning brasses on the lower deck. As the day wore away and the night came on Alexis kept steadily at work, trying to forget his perplexities and subdue his apprehensions.

The steamer was proceeding at full speed, and the distant lights were those of ships, and not lights of the shore. While at work in the aft portion of the ship Alexis heard the familiar sound of crackling electric sparks, and spelled the words, "Russia proceeding to Queenstown." A seaman pointed to a small house raised above the

lower deck, and said, "Wireless station. The man in there is talking to yonder steamer."

Alexis looked in the direction the seaman pointed, and saw a row of lights. He wished that he might get a message from his father. The taps by sparks continued at intervals, but revealed nothing of interest. The operator on the Russia was evidently having a conversation with a friend on the distant steamer.

The boy reflected how his thoughts ran upon his father, and he believed that his father's mind was also occupied with thoughts of him; but the grosser senses appealed to through the ears and the eyes could not register a possible intercourse by means of some subtle influence of mind on mind.

Plato doubtless would not have given heed to a dream of wireless telegraphy; and shall we close our minds to the possibility of communion with friends by means

of some process of mental telegraphy yet to be discovered?

Alexis's watch at length was over, and he turned in, tired with the unusual efforts of the day. The steamer was late in arriving at Queenstown, and it was morning when the throbbing of the engines stopped. He looked out of a porthole and saw a long line of coast, surmounted here and there by martello towers seen through a flock of squeaking gulls. He quickly dressed and went on deck. In the distance a small tug was seen approaching the steamer. In front of the tug were a number of small sailboats, urged on both by sails and oars. One of these soon drew alongside. The men who were in it unshipped the sail, and a woman, looking up at the row of faces gazing down from the steamer's rail, held up a handful of apples.

"Throw me a rope, lad," said she to a young man. "You are a fine lad."

"My mother always said so," replied the latter.

"Faith, she must have been an Irishwoman," retorted the woman, pushing on her bonnet, which had fallen on her shoulders as she gazed upward. "Here's a bit of fine Irish lace for your girl."

"I haven't any girl," said the young man.

"It's lucky for the girl," said the woman. "Five apples for a shilling."

"They are cheaper in Liverpool," said a man.

"Go back and get thim!" cried the woman.

Alexis left the joking crowd and crossed to the opposite side of the steamer, where the tug would soon be. As it approached he eagerly scanned its group of passengers. Above him, on the upper deck, stood Bushy and Bare, among a group of first-class passengers who were watching the operation of transferring the people from

the tug to the steamer. Count Orloff and Professor Valdov were not among them. Alexis, unobserved, closely scrutinized Bushy and Bare. They were deeply occupied in conversation, and presently left their point of observation and disappeared from sight. Alexis thought that, not finding their prey, they were about to leave the steamer on the tug, which would soon return to Queenstown.

The cargo of the latter had all been transferred; a group of huckster women gathered at its bow were frantically holding up their wares, offering them at a great reduction of price, while a basket strung on a rope was passing up and down, carrying Irish shawls and fruit to the steamer and returning with shillings.

"Here's a shilling for an Irish snake!" cried a would-be funny man.

"Keep it!" shouted back a buxom woman. "You got one in your bosom."

The wheels of the tug began to revolve;

the basket had made its last journey; and the tug moved away, while its captain waved an adieu to the officers of the great steamship. Bushy and Bare were not on the tug. The small boats slipped astern and the bargaining women sat down, while the men, who had remained silent, trusting to the superior bartering powers of the women, now were active in lifting their sails.

The gulls which had been poised in the air, hardly moving their wings while they watched with quick turns of their heads, suddenly joined a cloud of companions and swooped with them upon a mass of refuse floating astern. The great ship swung about and started upon its long ocean voyage.

CHAPTER VII

WIRELESS MESSAGES OF FEAR AND HOPE

On the second day out from Queenstown the steamer ran into a storm, and during the night suddenly stopped. Many of the passengers left their staterooms, and, gathering in the saloon, eagerly interrogated every officer who appeared in regard to the cause of the stopping, but obtained little information.

One lady was especially importunate, and finally stood in the way of a young officer who was hurrying along a passageway.

"Do tell me, what is the reason of our stopping?" she asked.

The officer, who had been asked the same question twenty times, replied blandly, "The ship's doctor, madam, has lost a set of false teeth in the hold."

It was finally known that a man had

been lost overboard. The operator of the wireless telegraph, in endeavoring with the help of seamen to secure wires connected to his station which had been broken loose during the gale, had leaned too far over the ship's rail and had lost his balance. A boat had been lowered a short distance, but was raised again, for it was realized that it could not live in the heavy seas. The dark form of the steamship was dimly outlined as it rose and fell, like the thought of an artist, a mysterious phantom expressed in charcoal riding on mountainous seas. Who can imagine the terror of the unfortunate man as he struggled in that sea? That terror was succeeded by peace and quietude, much as the terror of the passengers gave way to joy when the new activity of the engines promised a continuance of life. Far above the shroud of clouds, and unseen, the stars were shining.

The life-preservers had been drawn aboard; the attempt at saving had been

abandoned, and the ship was on her way. An officer in company with the purser stood near Alexis, having quieted the fears of the steerage. The purser said, "I have a number of wireless messages which were to have been sent. Those singular-looking men I pointed out to you yesterday — Russians, I judge from their names; one with mustaches over his eyes instead of over his mouth, the other with an enormous baby face without eyebrows — have received a wireless which they are extremely anxious to answer. There is no one on the ship who can work the wireless apparatus."

Alexis was about to offer his services, stimulated to an intense eagerness by this remark; but he felt it would be courteous first to consult the boatswain, to whom he had been so much indebted. As he made his way along a dark passage to find the latter, he thought of the inkling he might obtain of the plans of the two mysterious men, and of the possibility that his father

might be endeavoring to get into communication with him. He met the boatswain hurrying aft to see how the boy had made fast the loose wire that had caused the disaster.

The boatswain was about to break forth into an oath, for he had ordered Alexis to stand by until relieved; but the gleam of a lamp revealed a look on Alexis's face which so strongly reminded him of his lost son that the oath died on his lips. Sorrow at the thought of losing one whom he had come to regard almost as his own mingled with wonder.

"You can send wireless messages? This time you 'll draw a good job instead of faces. A good seaman will be spoiled by being set to the work of a woman. I don't believe in filling the air with care. You 'll have enough of trouble when you land. There used to be peace in mid-Atlantic. The purser got a wireless last trip when we were one day out, which set him on edge the whole of the trip, when he might

have enjoyed his pipe; he was signaling every ship all the way across."

The boatswain growled this opinion on wireless telegraphy as he sought the officer of the deck. The latter took Alexis to the purser, who in turn took him to the captain. After a few interrogatories it was agreed that Alexis should take charge of the wireless station, and should have a stateroom in the portion of the ship devoted to second-class passengers, which had the advantage of being near his work. The purser took Alexis to his office, and handed him a number of messages to send. "Here is one," said he, picking over the messages, "which a passenger is very anxious to send as speedily as possible." Alexis took the message and read: —

To Stolpel, Russian Consulate, Liverpool. Orloff not on board. Shall watch Romanoff, New York.

PETROVICH.

"By the way," said the purser, "favor me with your name."

"Alexis Sergius Orloff," Alexis replied.

He took the messages and climbed to the wireless station. The arrangement of apparatus was similar to that in the professor's laboratory at Kasan.

He took up the receiver and listened. It was evident that some one was calling the ship. He listened intently and spelled out: —

Steamer Russia. To Petrovich. Have learned that Orloff's boy is aboard. Hold him on arrival, New York.

STOLPEL.

"How very interesting!" said Alexis. "I think the boy will hold this message."

He listened again, hoping that the depths of space would yet yield a message from his father. He caught a message from a steamer below the horizon, passing in the

night, which was intended for the wireless station on the Irish coast; another emanated from an English man-of-war; another was in cipher. It seemed as if the thunderstorm accompanied by wind and rain, which was passing, had given place to another commotion of electric waves.

The purser looked into the station with a countenance of distrust. It had occurred to him that it was easy for this boy to gain a comfortable passage by pretending that he could officiate as a wireless telegraph operator. He had framed a message to the steamship office in Liverpool which would test Alexis. The latter immediately sent it, and in a few moments handed the purser an answer.

"Wonderful, is n't it?" he remarked.

After Alexis had reported the answer, and after asking many questions in regard to the apparatus, the purser left the station, satisfied in regard to the honesty of the new operator.

Alexis then took up the receiver with a strong intuition that he would hear from his father. With a touch of superstition he willed with intensity that his father should speak to him; and by a strange coincidence, or, as he thought, by a mysterious effect of mind on mind, the longed-for message flying through space was entangled in the wires suspended from a spar of the steamship. It read: —

Steamer Russia. Alexis Orloff. Detained London. Must return to Paris. Will sail in two weeks. How are you? Send answer to Hotel Northumberland, London.

ORLOFF.

With an overjoyed heart, Alexis tapped a response. The fates had been more than kind.

What should he say if this Petrovich, who was undoubtedly one of the spies, should ask if a message had been received for him? Professor Valdov, as guardian of

the count's son, had inculcated a stern sense of morality. He repeatedly had said, "Do right, even if in doing it you must die." Alexis reflected that it was his duty to transmit all messages that were received; yet the delivery of the message to Petrovich might lead to a search of the steamship. Should a telegraph operator who had received a message which informed a would-be assassin where and when to kill him, deliver the message? The professor would undoubtedly answer, "Yes, it is your duty; and, having done it, draw your sword."

Alexis thought that not only was he threatened, but also his father. But he saw the face of the Professor before him, almost as if some system of wireless telegraphy had transmitted it, illumined by electric phosphorescence against the darkness of the night, with the lips formed to utter the word "Duty."

As the boy fingered the fateful message, a steward thrust his face into the station and

asked for messages; the purser had many inquiries for them. Alexis handed out the bundle, which included the one to Petrovich.

Bushy and Bare were standing at the window of the purser's office when the steward appeared with the messages, and drew apart from the throng of passengers to read the communication addressed to Petrovich. They gazed at each other like hounds which, having lost a scent, had suddenly regained it, and waited to see which would lead.

"His name is not on the list of first-class passengers," said Bushy.

"We will get a list of the second-class and the steerage," replied Bare.

He applied to the purser, who gave the list with an air of impatience; for these two Russians had aroused his antagonism, because they had continually grumbled at their accommodations. He was, moreover, nettled by the complaints of a lady who, hav-

ing changed her seat at the saloon table six times, was applying for a seventh change.

"He is not down on any of these lists," said Bare. "Perhaps Stolpel is mistaken."

"He may be among the crew," said Bushy.

Bare asked the purser for a list of the names of the crew. The purser by this time was irritated beyond measure.

"What are you, anyway?" he roared. "High cockalorum inspectors of the Atlantic Ocean? Guardians of weak-minded youth? Union labor leaders?"

"We are gentlemen," retorted Bushy.

"Keep so," replied the purser, hurrying away to show the lady a new seat.

"We must apply to the captain," said Bare, wrinkling his nose like a mastiff who regretted not to have fastened its teeth in a retreating dog.

"He would tell us to apply to the purser," replied Bushy. "Our method will be to watch at the time of landing."

It did not occur to them that the telegraph operator might be the boy they were in search of. If the thought had entered their minds, it would have been instantly dismissed; for the boy would have destroyed the message which informed against himself. Meanwhile Alexis rose with the dawn, taking a hand at the ropes with his friend the boatswain, to assure him that he was not forgotten; keeping close in the station during the day, having posted a sign, "No visitors allowed; danger of shocks." This notice proved very efficacious, for many inquisitive persons ascended the ladder which led to the station, and, hearing a fearful crackling of sparks, descended incontinent, and told their wives of the danger to which they had been subjected and of their valiant manner of escaping it. According to their account the very air about the station was heavily charged with electricity.

Alexis often saw through his window

Bushy and Bare. They had apparently made friends with the third officer, who conducted them through the steerage, and probably down to the engines and into the forecastle. The boy could appreciate the feelings of a fox who from a cover sees two hounds circling about its retreat. The remembrance of these feelings might make him less fond of hunting game in the years to come.

The steamship had passed out of wireless touch with land, and was restricted to communications with passing steamers. A chart covered with hundreds of intersecting lines was displayed, along with the daily run of the steamship, on the stairway leading to the dining saloon. It showed where the ship would be in communication with ships of other lines. If the wireless messages could be represented by flocks of gulls, the heavens would be darkened. The purser endeavored to explain this chart to the lady who changed her

seat so often; but in vain. She remarked that she had never felt well since the introduction of wireless telegraphy. Electricity made her nervous.

"Oh, indeed!" replied the purser, "it is electricity, is it, which makes you change your seat so often? You can't avoid it, madam, if it really makes up its mind to make for you."

The steamer had entered upon a calm sea, and Bushy and Bare, in common with the rest of the passengers, fell into that indolent mood which a steady keel, bright sunshine, and the monotonous clickety-click of the engines induce. The long wake, like a streamer waving adieu to the old continent, extended almost to the horizon, and the steerage passengers gathered at the bow and surmised about the new continent, which soon would rise above the level line of the ocean. Occasionally there was a rush to the rail to see a school of porpoises imitating ponderous wheels half out of water.

It was only six days since hundreds of ships had been passed in the channel, but the absence of all objects even during so short a time as six days can make the appearance of a floating log frantically interesting. The third officer, disregarding the notice which Alexis had pinned on the door of the wireless station, entered on one of these calm days, and, seating himself with an air of nonchalance on a piece of electrical apparatus, said that he had considerable knowledge of electricity, having attended lectures given at Woolwich; he never understood, however, how many volts there were in an ampere. Alexis was listening at the receiver, and bowed his head to indicate that after he had disentangled the jumble of messages in the air he might disentangle the jumble in the mind of the officer.

"Pretty tiresome, is n't it," remarked the officer, "to be a recording angel? I should think telephone girls would pray not to

receive wings." He laughed to himself, and, not receiving any hospitable remark from the absorbed operator, took out a note-book and jotted down his joke for further use.

"As I said," he continued, "I have paid much attention to electricity; but I've dropped it. Pope was about right when he said the proper study of man is man. You can get a broad view of things by studying literature, whereas you see only inch views in science. By the way, you are a German, I suppose? No; a Frenchman, perhaps. A Russian — What's the matter?"

Alexis had put out his hand, while he held the receiver to his ear, enjoining silence. Fortunately at that moment a messenger came for the officer. Did he suspect that Alexis was the boy that Bushy and Bare were seeking?

The calm weather had now given way to a southeasterly gale, and the great steamship pitched and rolled like a cockle

boat. Alexis from his elevated station could see in the gloom of the night the bow descend, as if the ship was about to dive like a porpoise, and then, changing its purpose, it rose and shook off a mass of foam. On the second day of the storm he noticed a redness far off on the horizon, and, putting the receiver to his ear, listened. The roar of the wind was such that he could not at first distinguish any decided taps. Presently, however, he distinguished words, and, seizing a blank, he rapidly wrote: —

"Steamer Victoria, on fire. Can't you stand by?"

He answered: —

"Message received, steamer Russia. Will try to help."

He descended from the station and sought the boatswain, who communicated with the officers.

It was realized that no boats could live in the raging sea; but it was determined to

steer for the light of the burning ship, in the hope that after the storm had lessened help might be rendered. At last the morning dawned, the clouds broke, and a stream of smoke was seen in the east; this undoubtedly came from the burning vessel, which was below the horizon. The course of the Russia was directed toward the smoke, and presently the flaming ship came into view. The fire seemed to be confined to the forward part of the vessel; for through glasses the crew were seen collected aft. Alexis could not see any mast or spar. The antennæ, or wires, by means of which the unfortunate men could receive messages, had gone by the board; and the crew were frantically signaling by flags. Their vessel was laden with oil and gasoline, and it was feared that the cargo might explode at any instant.

The sea was mountains high, and the captain did not dare to order boats launched; he signaled, however, to the burning ship

that he would stand by in hopes that the sea would go down. Every moment it was feared that the flames would reach the gasoline. Toward noon the captain called for volunteers to man the lifeboat; more offered than were sufficient. After great effort the boat was launched, and, cheered by cries from the passengers gathered on the upper deck, rowed for the distressed vessel. The third officer, who had interviewed Alexis, was in command of the lifeboat, and the boatswain was with him. The great waves every now and then shut out the view of the rescuers and of the burning vessel. As the Russia rose from the trough of the seas, the lifesavers were seen again, rowing lustily. Soon they were so distant that only those who had long-range glasses could watch their progress.

"Now," said an officer, "they have reached the vessel and are taking men aboard." He uttered an exclamation as he said this, and talked with a companion

officer who was also following the events at the distant vessel.

In a short while the lifeboat hove in sight, filled with a cowering number beside the rowers; and, coming alongside the pitching steamer, the rescued were transferred aboard. They were a sorry-looking lot, covered with burns. More volunteers were called for to take the place of the exhausted crew, and again the boat started for those that had been left. Toward night all the survivors had been taken from the burning vessel, and as the Russia proceeded on her way flames were seen to shoot up, apparently to the zenith; there was a muffled roar; the gasoline had exploded, and all trace of the doomed vessel disappeared.

The boatswain told Alexis of the rescue. The third officer was drowned, having been thrown out of the lifeboat by its sudden lurching on nearing the burning vessel. The boatswain, with a pistol, threatened to shoot any one who attempted to jump

into the lifeboat before the injured were transferred. He took on board on the first trip the captain of the burning ship, who had broken a leg, together with the men who had valiantly fought the flames for hours, and who were severely burned. As he rowed away, those that were left piteously asked if he would return. "Sure," he replied, and the answer was greeted by a faint cheer. On his last trip all were taken, and a dog anxiously ran up and down the portion of the deck free from flames.

"Can we take the dog?" asked the last survivors.

"Sure," replied the boatswain, patting his knees as an invitation; the dog gave a great leap and cuddled down in the bow of the lifeboat.

"I wish you had been with us," said the boatswain to Alexis. "It was work for a big lad like you. A woman can do your work with those sparks."

"If it had not been for wireless telegraphy," replied Alexis somewhat haughtily, "those poor seamen would have been blown up."

"True," remarked the boatswain; "but it is n't man's work for a well set-up lad like you. It 's woman's work, I tell ye. A man wants to feel his muscles at work; electricity is a thing of the nerves, just fit for women folks." The boatswain still had a dream of persuading the boy to ship with him and supply him with a constant remembrance of his lost son. "The third officer," he continued, "used to fool with sparks, and spend all his spare time in this station with the operator what was lost. He gave up your sort of work some time ago, and died like a man."

Alexis, at command of the captain, who said the ship was now six hundred miles from New York, sent a wireless message announcing her coming. The voyage was nearly over, and the passengers began to

arrange their baggage for the inspection at the custom house. On the day following the sending of the message land was seen, and in a few hours the city with its sky-scrapers was approached. Alexis looked for cathedral domes, but saw only a church between two enormously overshadowing buildings; both the church spire and the lofty buildings pointing to heaven, but the buildings devoted to business getting the start of the church fane.

Over all gleamed a sunshine which Alexis had never imagined. The harbor was full of crafts of every description, from ocean liners outward bound to tugs which were scurrying to and fro. Excursion steamboats passed, laden to the water's edge, while graphophones snarled, "There 'll be a hot time in the old town to-night." A dilapidated tug with an unmanageable whistle, which gave a cracked note followed by a bellow, and had a large sign on the smokestack, "No patent on

this whistle," crept by the Russia on one side; and on the other were two tugs tied together, a large one and a very small one. The large one had a sign "Father," and the small one "Son."

Alexis looked upon the busy scene, and felt that he was a man without a country. Henceforth his patriotism would be aroused by that country which promised to give him liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

There was an old woman who had strained her eyes at the steamer's bows for days, seated upon her poor bundle waiting to be received by her children, who had left her side so many years ago. They would not meet her, being afraid of an incumbrance; and the immigrant-inspectors, fearing that she would be a burden on the country, would refuse to allow her to land and she would be compelled to return to Ireland on the same ship which had borne her to a land of promise. There were jab-

bering Italians, morose-looking Poles, and light-hearted Irish. On the upper deck was a group of pleasure-loving people: a bridegroom and bride thinking of a joyous reception by their relatives, automobilists who were returning from successful trips on the Continent, business men who were confident from their study of opportunities of trade that "York" is the place. Bushy and Bare, from a well-chosen position, studied the steerage, expecting to see the appearance of a stowaway.

When the steamer docked, Alexis descended from his station and sought the boatswain. The latter told him of a humble lodging-house near the pier. He still had hopes that the boy would decide to reship with him.

"New York," said he, "is a homeless place, worse than Liverpool if you have n't a dollar in your pocket."

"And can't find boatswain Joe," smiled Alexis.

"You know where to find me," replied the boatswain, with a sudden hope. "This ship is right here every month."

CHAPTER VIII

FOES AND A FRIEND

ALEXIS waited until the throng of passengers had landed. From a recess he watched until he saw Bushy and Bare descend the gangway, and under pretense of readjusting the apparatus in the signal station stayed aboard until he felt confident that they had passed through the customs and had disappeared in the great city. An officer of the ship summoned him to the captain's room, where there was an agent of the wireless company in waiting. The captain introduced Alexis, and told of his services during the voyage. The agent, in remunerating him, asked him if he would return on the ship to Liverpool in the service of the company. Alexis thanked him and said that it was impossible, for he had other engagements. With the money he had earned

he settled with the purser for his voyage, and repaid the boatswain, who at first refused the money, for he saw that by freeing the boy from his obligation the prospect of binding him to himself grew more remote.

The great wooden structure in which the baggage was examined was nearly empty when Alexis stepped down the gangway, and in a few moments he was free to enter the city. His first thought was to go immediately to the house of Sergius Romanoff; but a moment's reflection told him that Bushy and Bare might have obtained the latter's address and might waylay him. He called a hack, had his trunk conveyed to it, and gave the driver the address of the boarding-house recommended by the boatswain. The driver rattled through a squalid street and stopped in a moment, glad to get a fare for such a short ride, for the house was but a step from the pier of the steamship.

Alexis had his trunk taken to the room assigned to him, and sat down on it to think. He had sufficient money for a few days; but after those days what should he do? It would be at least two weeks before he could expect his father. Perhaps the wireless telegraph company needed an operator in some land station. He resolved to find the office of this company in the morning, after he had found his father's friend, Sergius Romanoff, and had given him his address. It would be safe perhaps to go to the latter's house in broad daylight, when the streets were full of people; the chance of Bushy and Bare being constantly on the watch was small; moreover, what reason was there to suppose they were waiting for him?

Accordingly, he went to bed, and after listening for a time to the strange noises about him, — graphophones, organ-grinders, the roaring and grating of trains on a neighboring elevated railway, — fell sound

asleep, the room rising and falling like his room on the steamship. In the morning, after taking his breakfast with a number of sailors and longshoremen, he made his way to the more fashionable region of the city. The people were rushing hither and thither, running the moment they stepped from the street-cars, reminding him of an experiment of the professor in which a number of images placed between two electrified plates were maintained in agitated motions. He grew dizzy as he looked up at the skyscrapers, and was almost knocked over by the hurrying crowd.

Inquiring the way repeatedly to the address given by his father, and emerging from streets the sidewalks of which were encumbered with cases of goods, he entered Broadway. There he seemed to be in Paris. The shops were glittering, and the throng of people prevented to a limited extent the phenomenal haste, which nevertheless was desired by every one. He

walked an interminable distance, through cross streets, where the houses were all alike, built of freestone, with doors high above the sidewalks reached by long flights of steps, and came out upon a broad avenue filled with fine equipages and automobiles, and paused a moment before the house to which he had been directed. No one at that moment was near, save a huckster who was crying his wares. The servant who answered the bell said that Mr. Romanoff had gone to Europe.

Alexis was stunned by the announcement, and stood irresolute. The servant slowly closed the door. He arrested her movement and was about to give an address for his father, in order that the latter might find him; but he quickly thought that his father would not arrive for some time; and if Bushy and Bare were really on the watch for himself and should repeatedly obtain no information at the house, they might be thrown completely off the track. He

accordingly let the door close and walked away.

How different the world seemed from that of Kasan! There were no Polish Jews, with their straggling locks, fur caps, and long garments; no moujiks, with red or blue blouses and feet swathed in leather thongs; Cossacks in fur coats; merchants, with long beards; priests, with crosses dangling from their waists and wearing round hats; soldiers in gay uniforms. Here every man was clothed the same. All wore the same style of hat, and all were moving with great haste. The crowd was as uniform in appearance as a swarm of ants, and if seen from the top of one of the skyscrapers would have closely resembled those insects. The only color was in the attire of the women, and he was amazed at the number of them on the street; for in Kasan one rarely saw them on the thoroughfares. The color of the buildings was as uniform as that of the garments of the men.

Alexis resolved to find the office of the Wireless Telegraph Company; for he remembered the offer of their agent on the steamship. Perhaps employment might be obtained in some land station. Accordingly he made inquiries in the various stores he passed; but no one could direct him. All had heard of wireless telegraphy, but no one knew where messages could be sent or received. One jocular clerk hazarded the suggestion that its office was in the clouds. Finally a policeman intimated that the city directory might give the desired information, and told Alexis where he could find one.

Following the direction thus obtained, Alexis walked into a small office, where he found a man examining papers. He looked over his spectacles at the boy and shook his head; the company had all the assistance they needed. The telegraph companies, however, were in need of operators, for a strike was on. He advised Alexis

to apply at the Western Telegraph office, and gave its address.

Alexis easily found the number, and after waiting for some time stated his desire to be employed and his qualifications. The man who listened to him looked at him fixedly, and asked him if he belonged to a union. On being informed that he was not connected in any way with the strikers, the man turned to consult with another official, who took Alexis into an interior office, where he was examined in regard to his skill. He soon satisfied the official of his competency, and he was assigned to duty in an office in the lower part of the city, not far from the lodging-house where he had spent the night.

The telegraph office was a dingy affair, in great confusion. The official who installed him and showed him the wiring and connections said that the previous operator had joined the strikers, and had left the place in bad shape. There would probably

be a great press of business when it was known that the office was open. As he spoke, a number of telegraph boys appeared with messages, and Alexis was immediately occupied in keeping pace with his work, laboring steadily until lunch hour, and afterwards late into the night. A force of boys was sent forth with messages, and often he was left alone busily receiving and sending.

One night when thus absorbed Alexis did not notice men peering into the windows and consulting together on the sidewalk. Finally, one of these men stepped in and asked him questions in regard to his employment by the telegraph company. Alexis stared at the man and continued his work. On being asked if he was acquainted with the grievances of the strikers, Alexis shook his head. The man entered upon a long account of these grievances, and urged him to quit work, telling him that he would be taken care of. It was his duty to help

his oppressed fellows. On finding that he made no impression, the man left the office, muttering. Shortly after his disappearance a stone was thrown through the window, narrowly missing Alexis's head, and filling the room with broken glass. The messenger boys, who were half asleep, waiting to be sent with messages, ran out in terror. Alexis stepped to the door and looked up and down the dark street, but could see no one.

Bushy and Bare had been to the residence of Sergius Romanoff, and had made many inquiries, especially in regard to a young man by the name of Alexis Orloff, whom they had been informed could be found at Mr. Romanoff's; or, if he was not there, perhaps the servant could give them his address. The servant knew no one of that name. The two men returned to their lodgings to meditate.

"Stolpel must have been mistaken in supposing that the boy took the steamer," said

Bushy. "We were unable to find him even with the assistance of the third officer. It is true he might have been a stowaway; which is extremely unlikely, considering his birth and standing. In any event he would have gone upon landing to this Romanoff, and learning that the latter had gone to Europe, would have left his address, in order that his father might find him. Let me get that letter from the count which we intercepted in Paris."

Bare took the letter from his pocketbook and handed it to his companion.

Bushy pored over it for a while. "Yes," said he, handing it to Bare; "the boy was directed to make himself known to Romanoff immediately on landing. There was no other alternative. If we had found him, we could return with him to-morrow on the White Star steamer."

"Suppose," said Bare, "that in case we find the boy he should call in question the validity of our papers?"

"He is too inexperienced for that procedure," replied Bushy. "Once we get hold of him he is ours. And having him in our possession back in Russia, we are sure of the count, who will seek his son."

"If you had not failed in Warsaw," said Bare, "we should not have lost the trail of Orloff, and could have been saved the voyages and the risk of ultimate failure."

"Did n't I find the clue again?" retorted Bushy, looking more like a hyena than ever, as he smoked, exhaling hot breath. "All we have got to do is to sit down by the rat-hole and wait the coming of the rat. We shall be well paid for our trouble."

"We must make friends with Romanoff's servants," said Bare, reflectively.

The two men fell to discussing plans, and coming to an agreement, spent the night at a theatre, and afterwards at a restaurant.

Alexis had resolved to leave his address at the Romanoffs' at the end of the week. This would give plenty of time before the

probable coming of his father. The work at the office continued very pressing, and kept him to late hours. The attempt to intimidate him had apparently been given up, for no more stones had been thrown against the windows. One evening a young man entered the office, and taking a seat near the table which contained the telegraph apparatus, put his foot upon it, cocked his hat on one side, and proceeded to criticise Alexis's manner of sending messages.

Alexis politely asked him to remove his foot; but the fellow, ignoring the request, poked the instrument with his cane. Alexis then ordered him out of the office; and being answered only by an insolent laugh, picked up a dress suit case which was lying under the table, and swinging it around his head, swept the fellow's leg from the table. The force of the blow was such that the man tumbled from his chair upon the floor. Rising, he grappled with Alexis. The latter forced his opponent

toward the door; a shower of missiles thrown from the outside broke the incandescent light bulbs.

Alexis succeeded in driving his assailant into the street. There three men joined effort with the latter, and throwing Alexis down upon the pavement, beat him severely. A man passing in a neighboring street heard the noise of the combat, and came running to the scene. He was a powerfully built person; he knocked down one of the ruffians, flung another with great strength against the brick wall of the office, and choked a third, crying loudly, "Police, police!" A patrolman appeared, and the assailants, gathering themselves together, disappeared down a neighboring alley. The stranger helped Alexis to his feet, and with the aid of the policeman carried him into an apothecary store near by. The night clerk had heard the noise of the fight, but had not dared to leave the store. As the light shone upon the stranger's face Alexis

recognized Brown, the American whom he had suspected of relieving him of his pocketbook and letters during the journey from Paris to Boulogne.

"Glad to see you again," said Brown, while he helped the clerk bind up Alexis's bruises.

Alexis, in a dazed condition, held out his hand and tried to express his thanks for Brown's assistance.

"Don't try to talk," said Brown. "Although you will remember that I had but one tongue, don't try, however, to help me out. Just listen. Well, I asked at the wireless telegraph office for an operator to help me in an important trial of my new idea in wireless telephony: they had no one, but said that a boy had applied to them for a position; he had served on a steamer as an operator, the regular man having been lost overboard. They had advised him to apply to the Western Union Company as a telegrapher. With this faint

clue I started for the Western Union office; there I learned of the whereabouts of Alexis Sergius Orloff, and if it had not been for a wrong direction, I should have been here in good time to have got ahead of those ruffians."

"Why were you attracted by my name?" asked Alexis, noticing a significant tone of voice.

Brown put his hand in his breast-pocket and handed Alexis the pocketbook containing the steamer tickets and the letter which he had lost.

"How did you come into possession of this?" asked Alexis, forgetting his injuries, and gazing at Brown with amazement mingled with suspicion.

"It tumbled out of your coat into my bundle of wraps," replied Brown; "and when I discovered it, it was too late to send it to you, for the steamer had sailed. I telegraphed to the steamer at Queenstown. Did n't you get the telegram?"

Alexis remembered that he had given his name to the purser. Bushy and Bare had, perhaps, secured the telegram.

"I telegraphed also to the steamship authorities," continued Brown; "for I was afraid that you might have had all your money in that pocketbook, — and ordered them to give you a passage and charge it to me."

Alexis forgot his suspicions, and grasped Brown warmly by the hand.

"Come," said Brown, "don't let 's talk any more. You are coming home with me"; and he asked the clerk for the use of his telephone, in order to summon a carriage.

"I must not leave the office," said Alexis.

"I will arrange about the office," replied Brown, looking solicitously at the boy's pale face. Alexis sank back on the lounge and lost consciousness.

CHAPTER IX

REFUGE WITH A FRIEND

WHEN he recovered he found himself in a luxurious chamber. A white-capped nurse moved noiselessly about the room, arranging the curtains. He stirred as if intending to sit up; but she gently forced him back upon the pillows, saying, "You must be very quiet for a few days. Mr. Brown is coming to see you later."

It was morning, and the wonderful sunshine shone through a division of the curtains which had been overlooked by the nurse, making the fronds of a fern in a vase near the window glisten as if touched with snow. The chamber seemed to be furnished in recollection of foreign travel; there were Japanese screens and bronzes, Louis Quinze chairs and Roman lamps. It was evidently the chamber of a man; for there was a fes-

toon of pipes of various countries over the mantelpiece, and a movable telephone rested on a writing-desk, the pigeonholes of which bulged with papers. On the walls hung pictures of the French school. Alexis while in Paris had reveled in the Louvre and the Luxembourg, and he recognized a Rousseau, a Corot, and a Daubigny. Through a half-opened door he caught a glimpse of a bathroom with a Roman sarcophagus, richly sculptured, converted into a bathtub. Through another door was seen a hall hung with tapestry. Alexis felt that he was dreaming of sleeping in the Louvre, and with the strange inconsistency of dreams saw picture galleries, sculpture galleries, and gobelin tapestry rooms brought into one chamber.

He heard a voice in the hall speaking with the nurse, and presently Brown entered the chamber, and with a joyous tone said, "Glad to see you so fit, old fellow. I have recovered, too, from the blow I received in our fight." He sat down beside the bed

and put his hand affectionately on Alexis's hand.

"You have been very kind," said Alexis.

"I am selfish," replied Brown, "for I want your services in some remarkable experiments. You remember our talk in the train from Paris to Boulogne on wireless telegraphy? I thought then that I wished that I could retain you; and you thought that I had retained your pocketbook, — hey?"

Alexis asked his pardon for the suspicion, and told the story of the flight from Kasan and of the pursuit of the two spies.

Brown's eyes gleamed with interest. "In searching your pocketbook for some clue, in order to restore it to its owner," said he, "I read your father's letter. I hope you will forgive me; but perhaps my act was pardonable under the circumstances. As I read it I called to mind your sudden start and the eager look in your eyes when I read the articles in the French paper in

regard to Count Orloff. Then, too, I read in a subsequent issue of the same paper the announcement that the Russian government had offered a large reward for his capture. These two men who have followed you must hope to get some information from you; they cannot hold you. How they expect to get the information I cannot see, unless they will try to take you back to Russia and hold you as a hostage, in the hope of getting your father. Perhaps they have some papers which may lead the American authorities to give you up."

"You will help me to elude them?" said Alexis, with a sudden accession of fear as he recalled the faces of Bushy and Bare; and he thought of the certainty that if he were held in Russia, his father would give up all thought of flight and deliver himself up to free his son.

"You can count on me," replied Brown emphatically. "They have probably sailed for Europe, having been thrown com-

pletely off the scent. They could not have known your father's directions to you to apply to the house of Romanoff. By the way, I immediately, on landing, called at that house and inquired for you. The servants said that Mr. Romanoff had sailed for Europe, and I told them that I wished that you would call on me, and I gave them my address."

"I also called at Mr. Romanoff's," said Alexis, "according to my father's directions, and left no address ; for I feared that in some way these men had learned these directions, and I resolved to wait for some days before I left my address there, knowing that my father would not arrive for at least two weeks ; and if these men by any chance should apply at the house of the Romanoffs for my address, they would conclude that the wireless message which they received on board the Russia conveyed false information."

"You were a brave and conscientious

fellow to deliver that message," said Brown. "I don't believe I would have done it; nevertheless, it was your duty."

"Do you suppose," asked Alexis, "that the servants would give the men your address?"

A shade passed over Brown's face. "Don't worry about that," said he; "I will see those servants. Moreover, I am going to take you to my station at Long Beach, where the sea air will completely restore you, and where I can explain our experiments. It would puzzle those spies to find Long Beach; and, depend upon it, they have sailed for Europe, swearing at wireless telegraphy and New York."

In a few days Alexis had entirely recovered from his bruises, and Brown took him into his laboratory. On the way to the laboratory, which was at the top of the house, they passed through a room which contained many evidences of a fondness for athletics: there were trophy cups, oars with

painted blades, boxing gloves, photographs of polo encounters, stuffed heads of bears and mountain goats.

Brown smiled sardonically as he saw the eyes of his companion gaze upon these articles. "I call this my grub room," said he. "I smoke here and entertain some of my old, still strenuous friends; and while they tell stories of hunts and visits to unexplored lands, I feel like the butterfly that has cast off the covering of the grub. I have discovered that there is no delight equal to the discovery of a scientific fact; no travel that can compare with that into the new world of electricity. What pleasure can equal that of an inventor, who sits down before his machine and sees it work?" — he made a gesture which expressed a good-by to the pursuits of boyhood and an adoration for heights yet to be ascended.

They passed out of this room into a picture gallery, and Alexis would fain have lingered, but Brown hurried him on, saying,

"These pictures once enthralled me, but I am thinking of selling them and investing the proceeds in my experiments. Science, with its infinite possibilities, makes me think that the world would do well to study exactness instead of depicting vague sensations. The field is so large and there are so few workers! Poetry and art have had their day, and science is coming on. Indeed, I am inclined to agree with Benjamin Franklin, our great American explorer in our subject of electricity:—

> "What are the poets, take them as they fall,
> Good, bad, rich, poor, much read, not read at all?
> Them and their works in the same class you 'll find;
> They are the mere waste paper of mankind."

"I am tempted to parody," continued Brown, "Longfellow's 'Excelsior,' and to substitute Science on the young man's banner as he climbs to the rare heights of investigation. It would be poor poetry, but there would be an idea which is lacking in the original."

Alexis recalled the power of the pencil over the humble minds of those sailors in Liverpool, and could not agree with his host. He remembered also ascending a snow mountain in the Caucasus with Professor Valdov to establish a wireless station, in order to study the transmission of electric waves in a rarefied medium. They had left the smiling valley below them, and had passed the humble abodes of the peasants, who were tending their goats and cattle on the Alps. The professor sturdily led the way to the snow line, beyond the pastures dotted with flowers, unmindful of the gentians, the mountain roses, the field lilies which the boy longed to pick. He was like a monk ascending to some shrine far above the haunts of men, to an altar where he could worship undisturbed by human delusions and illusions. It was the call of the spirit of science, and Alexis's host had heard it, too.

When the two reached the laboratory

Brown gave an ecstatic sigh, and like a priest at the altar took out various pieces of apparatus, bent over them, and turning to his audience spread out his hands as a signal for worship.

"This," said he, "is my sender. It can make fifty thousand vibrations a second. You cannot hear its note, for the ear cannot detect more than forty thousand a second. I can, therefore, send a wireless message with this vibrator, which will not be heard unless one has a receiver which can be set in motion by these vibrations, and which will mechanically register them. It promises to solve the problem of making wireless messages secret. Here is a device for transmitting speech without wires."

Brown knelt down and adjusted the wires, absorbed in his devotion, while Alexis's eyes wandered over the roofs of the great city, roofs so different from those of the city of Kasan. There was no color; the scene reminded him of a rocky valley with vast

sinuosities, from which arose great aiguilles of stone.

Brown interrupted a homesick reverie by a description of an apparatus for measuring electric waves; but he cut it short, seeing a tired expression on Alexis's face.

"Come," said he, "let us descend; my friends say I put everybody to sleep, I am so full of ether and ethereal waves."

In the afternoon they started for Long Beach, Brown forgetting to warn the Romanoff servants not to give Alexis's address to any one but Count Orloff.

CHAPTER X

ESCAPE ON THE BEACH

LONG BEACH lies beyond a great extent of marshes intersected by a river, which makes many turns, as if loath to leave the quiet wooded recesses of the interior for the turbulent ocean. The traveler, unacquainted with the country, might think that the marshes extended like a prairie to the horizon, if it were not for a line of blue in the far distance, with a fluctuating band of white between the blue and the green of the marsh. Long before one saw the beach one heard the roar of this line of surf. The road to the beach skirts the marsh, being loath, like the river, to leave the straggling woods where the ground is hard and to struggle through the sand dunes where vehicles sink almost to their hubs.

At the edge of the last fringe of trees

stood the ancestral mansion of the Browns, on a slight eminence above the level of the great marsh. The lawn, which formerly extended to the beach, was now encroached upon sadly by the sand. Brown's forbears had fought successfully the attacks of the sea for generations; but the last of the name, our Brown, had given up the fight; had ceased to keep the place in order; and resorted to it at rare intervals after he came into his majority, visiting it occasionally, with sporting friends, to shoot over the marshes or to eat oysters, — for the oysters of Long Beach were renowned. He had been coming to the old place more frequently of late without his sporting friends, and doing mysterious things.

At a short distance from the old mansion was a straggling village of oystermen and fishermen, who held the family of Brown in great estimation; for they were granted generous privileges to plant and collect oysters in the river which ran through the

Brown domain. The old oystermen had seen young Brown — they still called him young, although he was in the forties — grow up from a baby. While a boy he had hunted and fished with them, and they held him in great esteem for his courage and endurance; and he was the companion of their boys.

When the elder Brown died they expected that his son would make the money fly; for he had been kept under, as they expressed it, by the "old man." To the astonishment of the wiseacres, Brown, the son, did nothing of the sort. When he visited the old homestead he hobnobbed with the fishermen, shot over the marshes as of yore, but did not open the mansion to great parties or race up and down the beach in an automobile. By means of this restrained living he kept the good opinion of the village. Old Timmy, however, his caretaker, who lived in an ell of the homestead, thought that young Brown was

letting slip the opportunities of youth and wealth.

"He 's going daft on machines," said he to Josephus Gunn, an old chum and comrade in the Sixteenth Infantry, who came every evening to smoke a pipe and talk over war times. "Come in here and see the traps he 's collecting." Thus saying, he led the way to a shed, where Brown did his experimenting in wireless telegraphy. Timmy cautioned his friend to look out for wires.

"I 'll jest start up a little," said he; "and don't you move unless you wish to be transplanted."

With a whiz the machinery started, and Josephus fell back as he heard loud crackling sparks.

"Have you got a thunderstorm in here?" he asked, sidling to the door.

"Jest abaout," replied Timmy, swelling with importance, as if playing the part of Jupiter. "It sounds like the rebel guns at Fredericksburg, don't it?"

As he said this he accidentally touched a wire; his arms crooked, and he made such a horrid grimace that Josephus, forgetting his rheumatism, fled from the shop.

"Come back!" cried Timmy; "there 's nothing to harm ye."

"What in thunder is he doing with it all?" asked Josephus, limping into the shop somewhat ashamed of his action under fire. "You looked like the old un."

"He 's sending messages up into the air," said Timmy. "When I send 'em, he catches 'em in New York."

"You send 'em?" said Josephus incredulously.

"Wall, yes. I 've taken the place of the man he called his operator, who left yesterday. He struck."

"What, that pigeon I 've seen hanging around here? Why did n't you speak of this thunder shop before?"

"It 's been kept a secret," answered Timmy.

"Is young Brown getting off his nut?" asked Josephus. "Seems to me I've hearn tell of a disarranged uncle."

"He's got a great invention," said Timmy. "It's going to make a noise in the world."

"I believe ye," replied Josephus, as they left the shop and sat about the stove in the kitchen, for a cold fog was coming in from the sea. "Young Brown ought to get married."

"It don't follow that he would be happy," said Timmy dubiously, poking the fire; "it's all a lottery."

"Wall," rejoined Josephus enigmatically, "there's more thet ain't thet is than is n't thet ain't."

At that moment a shout was heard and a carriage drew up to the house. Brown jumped out, accompanied by a young man. Josephus toddled out of the back door and disappeared in the direction of the village, while Timmy opened the front door for his master.

"Well, Timmy, how are you getting on?" asked Brown, shaking off the sand and dust.

"Wall, I'm so as to be abaout. We 've had some bad weather; the moon has n't been quartering to suit me. Then there 's been some rascals hanging round here."

"They have n't seen my apparatus?" asked Brown apprehensively.

"No, they gave your wires a wide berth, but they had a keen scent for your wines. They broke into the cellar and rummaged extensive."

"Where were you?" asked Brown.

"Wall, you see, your sparks hev kinder added to my deefness, and I did n't hear the rascals. The town is up in arms abaout the affair, — kinder take it personal. But no men or boys of this beach did it."

"Of course not," echoed Brown. "I know every man, woman, and child on Long Beach. It 's some roystering devils

from the interior; and if they are caught here, I pity them."

"The town is judge, jury, and hangman," said Timmy, shaking his head in an approving manner, and leading the way into the house.

Alexis entered a large hall, which had a pervading odor of the sea. On its walls was a pictorial paper representing the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. A flight of stairs ascended from the back of the hall to a landing, and then made a turn to an upper story. Beneath the stairs was a tall clock, the hands of which had stopped on the day that Brown senior had died. At its foot was a collection of shooting boots, nets, oilskin coats, and tarpaulin hats.

Brown led the way through a reception room to a dining-room. The reception room was furnished in a mixture of old Colonial and French style. There were chairs with high backs, which the elder

Brown always maintained had come over with Count Rochambeau, mahogany chairs with haircloth seats, a cabinet filled with shells collected by the captains of the clipper ships owned by Brown senior, who had made his fortune in the East India trade. The only sign of a past feminine occupancy was a bit of embroidery on the sofa, now crumpled by some drowsy sportsman, and a potted plant in a window-seat, long since denuded of leaves.

Brown, on entering the dining-room, sat down at the dining-table, while Timmy bustled into the kitchen to prepare tea. Heavy footsteps were heard clattering on the kitchen floor; and Brown, motioning to Alexis to follow, went into the kitchen. Two tall fishermen stood in the middle of the floor, carrying a huge basket of fish and oysters between them.

"Glad to see you, Shanks; glad to see you, Longshore," said Brown, taking both their left hands in his, while with an effort

of politeness they tried to relieve their right hands from their burden.

"We 've brought you some fish and oysters," said Shanks. "They are jest out of the water."

"We 'll have supper right here," said Brown; "and you must both sit down with us. We 'll talk over old times. You can show Timmy the best way to cook the fish and the oysters."

"Guess I hain't forgot," growled Timmy, "even if I hev turned to getting up thunder and lightning."

The men put down their basket near the stove, took out the fish, and placed them in a row on the kitchen table. There was a wonderful variety: black bass still quivering, silver-scaled squeteague, butterfish, and flounders. When the fish were taken from the basket a layer of odorous seaweed was removed, disclosing clams and oysters redolent of briny beds in the river which ran through the salt marshes.

"We'll have the oysters first," said Brown.

"Put 'em on the stove?" asked Shanks.

"Yes, that's the way you cooked them for me when I was a boy," replied Brown.

In a moment the low-ceilinged room was full of the wild rich odor of steaming oysters, and the men gathered about the table, while Timmy brought out bread and condiments.

"Nothing like this in the city," said Brown, drinking the liquor of the oysters from the shells. "It's good to see you both," he continued. "You remember that stormy night I put out with you and Emerson and Pelvey and Bob, to try to save the crew of the Sally Ann, which had struck the shoals? That was a dreadful night."

"It was," replied Longshore; "and you and Bob pulled a good oar."

"By the way," interrupted Brown, turning to Shanks, "where's Bob now?"

"He is in the village," answered Shanks;

and a shadow came over his countenance. Bob was his son, and a ne'er-do-well.

"Bob and I pulled all there was in us," said Brown. "Do you remember that as we tossed up and down beside the rolling vessel, having taken off at the risk of our lives all but one man, when we told him to jump he asked us to wait a minute and plunged into the forecastle, — we thought he had gone for a child or a woman that had been overlooked —"

"Yes," interrupted Longshore, "he came back with a dollar watch. I reckon my crown of glory wa'n't anyways dimmed by my remarks."

"I believe that the recording angels blotted them out," laughed Brown; and turning to Shanks, he said, "Tell Bob to come round to-night and see me."

Both fishermen suddenly became silent.

"I hear," continued Brown, "that some rascals have broken into the house, and have amused themselves drinking my wine."

"The village is feeling mighty bad about it," said Longshore, "for it knows there ain't a man or boy on this beach who would have done the thing."

"Of course," answered Brown; "it must have been the work of some rascals from the interior. Have some more bread. Those pickles go well with the oysters."

"If the village should catch the rascals," said Longshore, striking the table with his clenched fist, "it would go hard with 'em. Old Emerson's boat would have to go without tar, and I would contribute the feathers from my wife's pillow-cases. It 's the automobbles that bring these shucks to the beach. They are looking for a racing place, and the rag-tag which always hang round races are coming this way."

"There 's not going to be automobbles on this beach," joined in Shanks. "I played on this beach when a boy, and my children are going to play on it."

Timmy at this juncture brought on the

broiled fish, and the men told stories of their youth and of the dangers that middle age had brought, while Alexis heard the surf booming outside. After the repast the fishermen lighted their pipes and took their leave, their heavy boots sounding reluctantly through the corridor and the sound ceasing suddenly as they struck the sand.

"There's some in the village," said Timmy, in a low, cautious tone, "that suspects Bob Shanks had a share in this here break."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Brown; but he called to mind the morose look on Bob's father's face when the robbery was mentioned. He took Alexis into the shop, and explained the share he desired him to take in the important experiments about to be made. In the morning he would return to New York, to arrange his apparatus at that end. They were in consultation until a late hour, and when Brown bade Alexis goodnight Timmy lighted him to his room and

lingered while he took articles out of his dress-suit case for the night.

"The world ain't the peaceful place it used to be," said Timmy, snuffing the candle. "This electricity is making everybody seem like a jumping-jack. There is no rest; even the air is full of messages; and the earth must be stocking up, for they say that these wireless messages fall like shooting stars into the ground. Some inventor will draw 'em out some day, and the earth will keep up a drone like a grapherphone. Wall, I 'm growing deef; that 's one comfort. If you get up in the night, be sure and carry a lighted candle; for I 've loaded my pistol, and by gum, I intend to fire at any skulker. I was in the Sixteenth Regiment."

Alexis promised, and when the old caretaker disappeared, looked about the room he was to occupy. A high-posted bed stood in an alcove, with heavy curtains suspended from a ring in the ceiling. The floor was covered with straw matting. On the man-

telpiece above the fireplace hung a mirror in a frame, ornamented at the top with a figure of an eagle; above the mirror was a stuffed owl. A few chairs, with very straight backs, constituted the only remaining furniture in the chamber. The room was in strange contrast to the princely apartments the boy occupied in the castle of his ancestors; yet there was something in his present surroundings which gave him a joyous sense of freedom. He had escaped to a free country, and his father was on his way to join him. He opened the window to free the chamber from the musty smell engendered by the neighborhood of the sea, and breathed the fresh air laden with salt spray, and went to bed with the odors of the sea pervading the pillows and the curtains, — those wild odors which were destined in after years to recall the old mansion, — with the sound of the surf beating on the beach. He had passed out of dangers, and the sound of the turbulent sea

was no longer ominous of coming storms. He went to sleep hearing the booming of the surf, like the rolling of thunder; in answer to the prodding winds, the words of a giant.

CHAPTER XI

THE SECRET DISCLOSED

A MAN with a full gray beard rang the bell of the Romanoff mansion, and on the servant's answering, said that Count Orloff had sent him to deliver a package to Mr. Romanoff. He told the girl to be very careful of the package, for it was of great value. The count unfortunately had been taken to a hospital, having sustained severe injuries during a storm at sea. The count was anxious to ascertain whether his son, Mr. Alexis, was staying at Mr. Romanoff's; if he were not, he would like his address. The servant took the package and shook her head, a gesture which fortunately suited both questions.

"The count," continued the man, "wished to recompense the servants for their kindness to his son, and sent these little presents

to them; but since the son has not been here, I suppose I must return them." As he said this he displayed a gold bracelet and a necklace.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed the servant, calling the attention of another, who wondered at the lingering of her companion at the door. The two fingered the ornaments and whispered together.

"I suppose," said the man, "that you would have been most kind to the son if he had been here."

"Oh, most kind!" exclaimed both servants.

"I'm sure," continued the man, "that the count would wish me to give these articles to you. Poor man, he is feeling very miserable — painful operation! — and he greatly desires to see his son. I will leave these presents with you if you will give me the son's address."

The servant who had answered the doorbell said that Mr. Ray Brown, No. —,

5th Avenue, might give him some information. The man delivered the presents, and hurried away.

"I 've won!" said he, entering Bushy's room and tearing off his gray beard.

That night the Browns' telephone bell sounded, and the butler answering heard the inquiry, "Is Mr. Alexis Orloff at Mr. Brown's?"

"Yes," replied the butler. "He has gone to Long Beach with Mr. Brown. Who is this?"

The line was suddenly cut off.

Timmy and Josephus had spent their evenings together for thirty years; beginning them with mutual offerings of tobacco, and ending them in high dudgeon with each other on account of squabbles over differences in their remembrances of the battles in which they had been engaged during the Civil War. They had not been particularly valiant, and it seemed as if their consciences made them irritable as

they endeavored to explain their retreat from action on various occasions. The evening after the return of Brown to the city they fell to discussing Alexis, while the crackling noise of the sparks the latter was employing to send wireless messages sounded from the shop.

"He 's a well set-up lad," said Josephus. "What is he, — Frenchman, German, or dago?"

"Dunno," replied Timmy. "He speaks with a lingo. 'T ain't the pure English we hev bin brought up on."

Josephus's hand began to make passes up and down his back. Then he made a swoop like a mower about to use his scythe. "Hich!" said he, "how this rheumatism in my leg that got the bullet at Fredericksburg ketches me."

Timmy went to a cupboard and produced a flask of whiskey, which he kept for such "ketches." Josephus partook, and straightened himself.

Timmy, although hospitable, could not refrain from reminding Josephus that the last time he had a "ketch" he attributed it to a wound he received at Todd's Tavern.

"It's a combine of the two," replied Josephus. "That was a hot affair at Todd's Tavern. If I had n't been knocked down by you running agin me, I 'd 'a' got leftenant's straps. As it was, I was carried to the rear."

"If I," rejoined Timmy, "had n't had the wind knocked out of me and an ankle sprained by stumbling over you crouching down, I 'd 'a' joined the movement on Lee's flank."

"You mean the movement to the rear," interposed Josephus, pressing down the tobacco in his pipe.

"I never could see why you were on all fours," remarked Timmy.

"It was orders," said Josephus.

"All the officers had been killed in our company," replied Timmy. "You get muddled at times, Josephus."

"Wall, I ain't so muddled as not to see it 's time for honest folks to be abed." Thus saying he toddled out.

" You hed better stay up a little longer," called out Timmy in a hospitable tone tinged with sarcasm.

Alexis spent the time during his leisure hours in exploring his surroundings. In one direction the beach was limited by the river, or creek, as it was called by the fishermen. After winding for several miles through salt marshes, it made its entrance into the ocean, which at low tide received the waters of the river placidly; but when the tide turned, the temper of the sea seemed to alter, and a surging line of angry breakers tried to force it back. Crabs scurried away from the contest along the bed of the river, and old fishermen told of sharks which had entered the creek, as if the belligerent sea had sent them in as submarine destroyers.

At low tide the creek at its entrance into

the sea was a place of enchantment to the children of the fishing village. They waded into its shallows, finding strange fish caught in pools, or shells of various patterns borne in by the ocean and left as the waves receded. They knocked off the small oysters which clustered on the rocks with stones rolled smooth by the sea, and ate them with greater relish than the city child has for its dainties. Now and then they took involuntary baths, slipping on the seaweed. The fisher boys were living in a dream, which was an intimation of their future careers, — when they should grow to manhood. The sea was booming on the bar waiting for them. The embayed fish led them to dwell upon greater catches in yonder vast mysterious ocean; the oysters would demand stronger arms and muscles when they, too, were not clinging and must be sought in deeper waters; the shark that swam in the shallow water, making great whirls as it strove to escape,

suggested a world of peril into which wild and adventurous spirits longed to plunge. The creek was a realm of enchantment, and the sea-shells which the children carried to their homes filled their chambers with the wild odors of the sea, ever suggesting its mysteries.

Alexis stood on the edge of the creek, and was a boy with the wading boys for a moment; then turned and walked along the beach toward the village. He passed a number of fishermen who were pulling in a net, and he stopped to see the catch. Longshore and Shanks were there in their great fishing boots, while Timmy, the caretaker, was among the lookers-on. A great Newfoundland dog was joyously running around the men who were pulling in the net, and barking as if congratulating them on their luck. Alexis talked to the animal, patting him in remembrance of the great staghound left so far away in the castle.

"That 's a wonderful dog," said Timmy.

"It saved Longshore's boy from drowning."

"I would n't take a hundred dollars for that dog," remarked Longshore, as he lifted a quivering fish from the net and nodded to Alexis.

The latter passed on along the beach, which extended as far as the eye could see, broad and level as a floor. He came finally to a life-saving station. The great dog, which had followed him, was greeted with words of affection by the men, who were stretched out on the sand, reminding one of rough-coated bulbs or earthy cacti, which only needed the warmth of heroism to blossom into beautiful flowers and then to die.

Beside the men waiting for opportunity was another group engaged in repairing a boat. A cauldron of tar was smoking over a driftwood fire.

The men looked after Alexis, and one said, "That's the fellow who has taken the place of Brown's man that struck."

"The town is well rid of that chap," said another. "I'm thinking he had something to do with the breaking into Brown's house."

At that moment a large automobile was seen speeding along the beach. It had turned in from the sandy road near the Brown mansion, and was heading in the direction Alexis was walking. As it passed one of its occupants turned and looked at him. The man wore large goggles, and looked like an animal in spectacles. Great bushy eyebrows overhung the goggles, and two eye teeth appeared beneath a straggling mustache. Alexis was reminded of the face of Bushy, and was filled with thankfulness as he thought of his distance from Russia and of the peril that he and his father had escaped. For days and nights he had been haunted by the faces of the two spies, and it was not strange that he should shudder at a fancied resemblance of this man with the goggles to Bushy.

The automobile sped on, and Alexis

turned and retraced his steps to the village, for the time was approaching when he must prepare for the interchange of wireless messages with Brown. He had not proceeded far when he heard the noise of the automobile, which had also turned, and he resolved to have a good look at the man with the goggles; but as the machine sped by the two men behind the chauffeur had drawn a robe up to their eyes, as if to protect their faces from the wind, and it dashed through the group of fishermen gathering in the net and disappeared in the sandy road which led from the beach.

As Alexis approached the fishermen he saw them gather together, while women ran out from the houses and joined them. There was something singular in the movements of the crowd; and soon he saw a black object stretched on the sand. It was the great dog, lying on its back, moving its hind-legs convulsively, lifting its head, and whining piteously.

"They hev run over him," said a fisherman, looking at Alexis with a fierce glare in his eyes.

A woman carrying a child in her arms and leading a little boy stood looking mutely at the suffering animal.

"He saved that boy's life," said Longshore, addressing the group, "and those rascals hev killed him."

The dog tried to rise, as if in response to the words of praise, wagged its tail, fell back, and was quiet forever. The fishermen looked at one another with hard, set faces, and then two took the dog up by its legs, placed it in the sedge on the border of the beach, and silently resumed their work.

"They don't say anything," said Timmy, who had joined Alexis on his way to the Brown mansion, "but they keep up a devil of a thinking. The next automobble that comes on this beach will have more than its tires bust, and I pity the folks in it. These fishermen are a savage lot when

they are aroused. I seen 'em mob some fellows from the interior who tried to rake their oyster-beds, and the chaps escaped only with their lives. The town has a reputation to menten."

"Would n't it be well," replied Alexis, "to put up a sign on the road leading to the beach, 'No automobiles allowed'? otherwise innocent persons might suffer."

"It might prevent a little onpleasantness," said Timmy reflectively.

CHAPTER XII

MOBBING BUSHY AND BARE

THAT evening Alexis sat in the workshop, busily occupied with the work set by Brown. The wireless telephone was in operation, and seemed a marvelous success. He could hear the voice of Brown, and he fancied he also heard the roar of the great city. Bending low over the apparatus he listened intently, shutting out the noise of the surf. Timmy sat nodding by the fire, having finished his part in the experiments, and wondering how a young man with Brown's great opportunities could be so much interested in talking to the air, when he might get married and let his wife do it.

While the old man mused he heard a slight noise outside the shop, as if an animal was moving with stealthy tread, stopping for a moment after each accidental sound.

He kept up his nodding, although thoroughly aroused, and cast furtive glances at the window; for the light in the laboratory had seemed to be reflected back from its excursion into the darkness by something moving outside. His head nodded lower and lower upon his breast, rolled to this side and that, coming up like a ship in a seaway; his starboard eye — we are repeating his story of the night to his fishermen friends — swept over the window, and he saw a hyena-like face peering into the shop. He arose, yawned, and interrupting the listening of Alexis with the remark, which seemed unnecessarily loud, that he must get some driftwood, "for the fire was uncommon low," crept out into the passageway. As he did so a dark figure slid around the house. At that moment Josephus Gunn appeared at the back door; Timmy put up his hands with a warning gesture.

"Hush!" he whispered, "there 's going to be another break. There 's robbers!"

Josephus put up a hand also, saying, "Hush! I seen an automobble down in the hollow, jest where the road turns into the beach."

"Run to the village and get help!" said Timmy, "while I look to the house."

Josephus hobbled into the darkness, while Timmy closed and bolted the door and hastened back to alarm Alexis. To his astonishment the latter was not there.

Timmy stood irresolute for a moment, listening intently. He heard a strange noise like the crackling of wood; a cold sweat came out on his brow, and creeping through the dark hall, he stood for an instant at the foot of the stairs. There was a sound of the opening of a window; he stumbled upstairs and fled to Alexis's room. A light shone through the cracks of the door. The old man burst into the chamber, and rushed to Alexis, unable to articulate. He generally announced himself by a catastrophe.

"Has the machinery stopped?" asked

Alexis, starting up from a table where he had been consulting notes.

"If you mean my legs, they hev," answered Timmy, regaining the power of speech and sinking into a chair. "Did you see anything?"

"I was engaged in hearing, not in seeing," replied Alexis, annoyed at the man's leaving the shop.

"There 's robbers round," whispered Timmy. "They are getting into a window. I seen one, with great bushy eyebrows, looking into the shop window."

"Bushy eyebrows!" ejaculated Alexis, with a start.

"Hark!" said Timmy.

Both listened. There was the noise of many voices outside, and the sound of crackling sticks.

"The town is up," cried Timmy, in a loud, excited tone. "I hear Shanks's voice, and Longshore's, too. They got 'em," and forgetting the condition of his legs, he

tumbled down the stairs. Alexis followed, whispering to himself, "Bushy eyebrows!" He overtook Timmy in the hall, and the two looked out of the windows of the great dining-room. They could see dimly in the darkness a crowd of villagers holding two men; and opening the main door they joined the group.

"We 've got 'em this time," said Josephus, hobbling to the side of Timmy. "One of the rascals was half through a window. I did n't have to go far; for the men had found the automobble as they came down the road from the mainland. It will go hard with 'em this time."

Alexis saw two men in the grasp of the fishermen, one tall and the other short; and as he stepped nearer, impelled by a powerful feeling of curiosity, the fishermen hurried their prey in the direction of the village.

"What are they going to do with them?" he asked Josephus and Timmy.

"It will be sport to see," replied Josephus, his old blood tingling with recollections of the fights of his youth. "The town's blood is up. A cloud hez rested on Bob Shanks by reason of the break into this house; and now it is lifted, and the true rascals are going to feel the weight of the fisherman's hand. It's going to be judge, jury, and coroner. Timmy, come on! No need to lock up to-night."

Alexis felt that he must see these men, in order to dispel a horrible nightmare. Were they Bushy and Bare? and had they intended to kidnap him and convey him back to Russia in order to ensnare his father?

The straggling crowd of fishermen filed out of the old garden with their prisoners, and were joined by two stalwart fellows, who spoke to the ringleaders of the crowd.

"The shouffer has cut and run," said one of the fellows.

"Wall, you both go back and stand by

the automobble," said Longshore, "until we finish our job."

On reaching the beach the procession was joined by the women of the village, and it proceeded to the tar cauldron near the signal station. It was still smoking, for the work of caulking the boat had not been finished. The men of the station stood aloof, as if fearing to meddle in the affair. The red glare of the fire under the cauldron lighted up the stern faces of the fishermen gathered about it, while several added fuel.

Alexis stood on the outskirts of the crowd, on a sand dune, and recognized Bushy and Bare. They had the air of animals in a menagerie cage shrinking from a firebrand. Bushy was offering his watch and Bare was displaying a roll of bills, both gesticulating in the manner peculiar to Continental Europeans, which was in strange contrast to the immovable and restrained manner of those surrounding them. The tide was full, the waves hissed on the sands.

Presently Shanks ladled out the tar and poured it over the two men, and Longshore took the pillows handed to him by the women, cut them open with his fish knife, and shook the feathers over the prisoners. In a moment they looked like polar bears standing on their hind-legs and preparing to dance for the amusement of the spectators.

"Now they are fit for a menargerie," said a fisherman, with a jeer.

"No," said another, "they are going to perform as circus riders, and they ain't going to run down dogs this time."

As he said this, two men appeared carrying long rails; the two victims were hoisted on these, held on by young oystermen, and hustled along the beach attended by a laughing procession.

"We can't speed up," said one; "we hain't got rubber tires."

Alexis followed the crowd with a mixed feeling of pity and savage hope, — hope

that the experience would be sufficiently bitter to make the spies give up their mysterious pursuit of him. Presently the rabble turned into the sandy road leading from the beach, and set up a howl as they caught sight of the automobile.

"This machine is going to have a record," said a tall fisherman, striking the tires with an axe.

"Turn it turtle," cried another.

A number of stalwart men turned the machine over into the ditch.

"That 's a good signboard, — 'No automobble on this road,'" said Timmy, who like most timid men thoroughly enjoyed a fray in which he was not engaged.

"How far air ye going to toot the rascals?" cried a laggard.

"Up to Jenkins's store," was shouted back.

Jenkins kept a store at the cross-roads far up at the end of the salt marsh.

"They can get gasoline there; we 've

supplied them with tar," cried a squeaking voice.

A hoarse laugh responded, and the light of the flaring torches flickered on the sand dunes, while a small boy beat a tattoo on a tin pan.

Alexis watched the lights of the procession until they became indistinguishable from the fireflies, and returned to the laboratory, where he found Timmy and Josephus sitting before the fire comparing notes of the stirring event of the night. He resolved to inform Brown of the appearance of the two men who had tracked him and his father from Russia, for he was filled with apprehension; and he accordingly put the sending apparatus in action, tapping out or rather sparking the call arranged between him and Brown, and then listened intently.

The bosom of the air was full of conflicting messages. A steamer asked for a tug and a horse. He heard conversations between ironclads in regard to their coal-

ing: one officer congratulated another on the birth of a baby.

"How much does it weigh?" was asked.

"Seven hundred tons, delivered at seven P. M.," was answered.

"Report immediately to Washington and inform the President," was tapped out.

Then there was a jargon. "Give us the air for a moment, won't you?" said an evidently impatient listener.

"You want the earth," was the response.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TELEGRAM AND THE WIRELESS MESSAGE

ALEXIS was forced to give up the attempt to inform Brown, and concluded to wait until the evening of the following day. Putting aside the receiver, he heard the footsteps of the fishermen returning from the interior. Their voices were silent; and there was an air of dogged satisfaction expressed in the thud of their dragging steps, which merged into a swishing sound as they struck the sand, like the sound of a Russian knout descending on a victim.

Alexis went to bed, but could not sleep; the faces of Bushy and Bare glared at him out of the darkness. Rising and lighting a candle, he wrote a long letter to Brown, describing the mobbing of the spies, and giving his suspicions of their endeavor to

kidnap him. His mind was somewhat relieved after the letter was finished, and he went to sleep to dream of fierce encounters with Bushy and Bare, which caused him to cry out so loudly in his slumber that Timmy, who occupied a room not far distant, left his bed and took refuge in a closet, until silence and cold induced him to venture out, doubly bolt the door, and cover his head with the bedclothes.

The letter was sent by a special messenger early in the morning, and in the evening, apparently in answer to this letter, Alexis received a telegram directing him to take the train for New York which left the station at the Mills, five miles from the beach, at eight in the evening. The telegram was delivered by an old man, who usually brought supplies to the villagers from the store at the cross-roads.

Alexis closed the laboratory, after instructing Timmy to listen to signals at the hour appointed by Brown, and walked to

the station. A storm had been threatening since the morning, and as the night closed in the wind increased to a gale, shaking the doors and windows of the old mansion, — notes of discordance and clangor mingling with the deep roar of the surf; the overture of the storm.

As Alexis walked inland, the wail of the wind drowned the noise of the sea. The moon was occasionally disclosed by breaks in the scudding clouds; but only for an instant, as dragon-like masses of black mist flew over the breaks, showing uncouth and gigantic heads and claws, and shutting out all light by their advancing bodies. He was glad to gain the shelter of the trees beyond the wide expanse of marsh, and paused a moment for breath after his struggle with the gale. As he advanced along the road which led to the Mills he met no one. Apparently the dwellers in the solitary houses he passed had given up any plans they had formed of ven-

turing out, and had shut themselves in for fear of the stormy night. An occasional dog sniffed at Alexis's heels, shook off the raindrops, and having satisfied his conscience of surveillance ran back, with hair blown up in a tousle, to his kennel.

When Alexis had reached the more open road which led to the station, two men, one holding a lantern, came from behind a tree. Alexis, with a shudder, suddenly paused; for he recognized the two spies.

Bushy made a ceremonious bow, and said, "Mr. Alexis Orloff, I believe. You are just in time for the train."

Alexis scornfully looked the man up and down, and went on.

Bare stepped to his side, endeavoring to light a cigarette as he walked, while Bushy plodded on closely behind.

Alexis stopped, and with a wave of his hand motioned to the men to proceed, saying, "I have no need of your company, sirs."

"Yes," replied Bushy, "but we have need of yours."

"This is a free country and not Russia," retorted Alexis. "Go your way!"

"You are wanted by the Russian authorities," said Bare. "We have the necessary papers, young man."

Alexis thought over his situation intently, as, cowering before the driving rain, they entered the station. He could notify Brown by sending a telegram from the train, which was rapidly approaching. The great engine came to a stop, panting heavily, after its breasting the gale. The two or three persons beside Alexis and his pursuers hastily boarded the train. The conductor swung his lantern, and the locomotive began again its contest with the wind.

Alexis moved away from Bushy and Bare, and took a seat beside a man, who somewhat reluctantly drew in his legs, having been aroused from sleep. The two spies, secure of their prey, seated themselves

near Alexis, and when the conductor appeared, paid the boy's fare. Alexis asked for a telegraph blank. Bushy smiled and whispered to Bare, who tossed up his chin as if assenting. They evidently regarded the request as a good joke.

When Alexis received the blank he pondered deeply.

Was it clear that he was being carried to New York? The smiles of his two companions indicated that they felt sure of their plans, and perhaps they intended to stop at some intermediate station. In that case his telegram would not help him. While he thought his eyes ranged over the occupants of the car, to see where he could appeal for help. A woman with a careworn face was putting a cap on the head of a little boy, as if preparing to leave the train. Some young women were sticking pins through their hats and hair. Old gentlemen stood up and patted their pockets, as if making sure that the contents were safe;

and a venerable lady stopped the brakeman, who was hurrying through the car, to ask if the train was on time. There was no one who seemed likely to be of assistance. Bushy was standing in the aisle, and evidently saying to Bare, "You stay here while I go into the next car to smoke a cigarette."

Alexis's glance took but a second, yet the pondering over the difficulty in his mind seemed to take minutes. As he turned his eyes from the occupants of the car to the dark whirling landscape, the lights of a hamlet near the track seemed to fly in all directions, as if the hamlet had suddenly exploded, and the car stopped with a crash and a fearful grinding noise. The lights were extinguished, and cries and shrieks arose. Alexis was thrown from his seat and stunned for a moment; recovering his senses, he extricated his legs from fragments of the seat and from a heavy burden, which might have been the body of the man who occupied the seat with him, and

forced himself through a shattered window. People, half dazed, were staggering up and down beside the wreck, which had taken fire. Train-hands also ran up and down, waving lanterns and shouting orders.

Alexis endeavored to help those who were pinned in the mass of wreckage. He heard one of the train-hands stutter forth, for his lips were almost paralyzed with terror: "We must send for doctors and help; but there is no one who can telegraph at the station just beyond us. The operator has joined the strikers. This accident is due to his neglect of his work."

"*I* can telegraph," said Alexis, running beside the man.

"Come on, then!" replied the man, hurrying on.

The way was lighted by the burning cars behind, and the shadows of the two hastening on seemed demons of the conflagration, conscience-stricken, peering over the shoulders of the running men, and anxious to

make amends by aiding in the endeavor to get help.

On reaching the station Alexis elbowed his way through the crowd that had begun to collect from the neighboring houses, and unmindful of their frantic questions, followed the train-hand into the office where the telegraph instruments were kept. His companion dictated messages, which Alexis rapidly sent, and translated the replies.

When the most urgent messages had been transmitted, the man hurried back to the scene of the disaster, leaving Alexis to attend to the messages of those who had escaped from the collision. He began to feel overcome by the shock and the press of work forced upon him, and knowing that help was coming, struggled out of the close air of the office, made closer by the throng of passengers. As he stepped upon the platform he saw the woman who had been fitting the cap to the head of her little boy. She was holding the cap in her

hands, and entreating a rapidly passing brakeman to find her child. At the same instant a man with one shoe caught him by the arm, and asked him if he had seen his running mate. The train-hand uttered a muttered imprecation and dashed down the track.

Alexis, urged on by an almost demoniacal feeling, peered into the faces of the victims who were borne up the track by staggering brakemen, to see if those of Bushy and Bare were among them. He crept along the rough walk beside the rails to the burning cars. The flames had got beyond the control of the fighters, who were still pouring buckets of water on them, but they hissed at the ineffectual attempt.

"There 's no help for those pinned in the wreck," said a looker-on, fanning his hot face with his hat.

Bushy and Bare had not escaped, and the solution of Alexis's difficulty in regard to the telegram had been reached. Feeling

that a heavy burden had been lifted from his heart, he hurried back to the station, with the intention of sending a telegram to Brown; but as he ran he thought: "Why should I telegraph? Mr. Brown does not know that I have been in the accident; the telegram I received was probably sent by these two men who have perished." He remembered that he had promised to listen at midnight for Brown's wireless messages, in order to test the latter's great invention. Now that he was convinced that the telegram he received was a decoy message, he was anxious to get back as speedily as possible to Long Beach.

Overtaking a man who was also hastening away from the wreck, Alexis asked how far they were from Long Beach. The man answered that it was five miles to the cross-roads, and that he was about to drive there, and would be glad to have company. In times of such great calamities taciturn men become voluble, and Alexis's com-

panion was glad to have a human being beside him on his lonely drive. He was hurrying on to tell Widow Jones that her son, who was a brakeman on the train, was uninjured. As the old horse plashed along the road, for the rain was descending in torrents, the driver discussed the cause of the accident, ending his various exclamations with the remark, "Somebody guessed it was all right, and I guess they found out that they were mistaken."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST WIRELESS MESSAGE

WHEN they reached the cross-roads Alexis dismounted, thanked the old farmer, and set out for the beach. The storm was at its height, and as he emerged from the shelter of the trees the wind buffeted him and blew him back into the copses. Waiting for a lull he forged on, with the feeling that the winds might do their worst; they were kind and fought in the open, unlike the secret enemies of his father and himself who had so stealthily pursued him across the ocean. Soon he heard the pounding of the surf, and passing the upturned automobile, entered the avenue which led to the mansion.

There was no light to be seen, and reaching the front door he applied the knocker, standing in a recess to avoid the rain.

There was no response; he knocked more loudly, and listened intently for Timmy's footsteps in the hallway. The wind seemed to laugh and to imitate his knocking by shaking a loose blind. He passed around the house to the laboratory and tried its door. It was locked. He then endeavored to pry open a window. While he was thus occupied Timmy was sitting up in bed, irresolute, filled with terror, having heard the knocker. He had invited Josephus to spend the night with him, for he feared that the two men who had been ridden out of the village might return to wreak vengeance. He heard footsteps crunching about the house and the noise of the attempt to open the window; hesitating no longer, he quickly made his way to the room of Josephus, and feeling the form of the latter in bed, with a sudden impulse of protection he whispered in the ear of his sleeping friend, "Josephus!"

The latter also had heard the knocker and

the footsteps, and pretended to be asleep, snoring loudly.

Timmy shook him by the shoulders, saying in a hoarse whisper, "Wake up! There 's robbers trying to get in!"

Josephus yawned, feeling it impossible to counterfeit sleep any longer, and replied, all of a shiver, "It 's the storm, Timmy. Hear it roar in the chimney. There 's a blind loose."

"I tell ye it 's burglars. Hear that scraping and prying; they are trying to open a window."

"It 's the branches of the trees swooping agin the clapboards," insisted Josephus. "But if it would ease your mind, fire your pistol out of the window."

Timmy crept back to his room, and securing his weapon opened a window and fired a shot, which was echoed by a resounding slam of the blind. The smell of the powder aroused the martial spirit in Josephus, and impelled him to share the

perils of the night with his old comrade; moreover, the darkness and solitude of his room were too much for his nerves, and he crept after Timmy. The two listened intently. They heard a halloo, and shivered together.

"It was the wind," stuttered Josephus.

"Halloo!" resounded again.

"They want us to open the door," whispered Timmy. "It 's an old game, to pretend to have a telegram. They 'd bind us, and go through the house; put hot coals to our feet. We had better keep shady."

The two doubly locked the chamber door and bundled into bed.

Alexis in the tumult of the storm had not distinguished the shot from the noise of the swinging shutters, and succeeded finally in gaining an entrance into the laboratory. Lighting a candle, he put the receiving apparatus in adjustment according to Brown's instructions. It was approaching the hour of midnight, and he sat intently listening,

knowing that the storm could have no effect upon whatever message Brown might send. As he listened intently, he wondered if it would be possible some day to commune with absent ones by putting one's mind in tune. To have such a communion with his father on this night would indeed be a joy; for he could tell him that his enemies would trouble him no more, — Bushy and Bare had been swept into oblivion. While this thought filled his mind, he heard a ticking in the receiver. He quickly tuned the circuit so that it might respond more loudly, and then he spelled out the words, "Steamer on sand-bar. Notify life-saving station." He seized his cap, extinguished the lights, and rushed out into the storm.

The men of the life station had been on the watch for some unfortunate vessel during the entire afternoon and evening; but the hours had worn away without the sound of a cannon or the flash of a rocket

denoting distress. The noise, however, of the surf and the direction of the wind would have made it impossible to hear even the sound of a cannon, and the driving mist would have concealed the light of a rocket. The men had gathered in the room which held their boats, and having listened to the report of one of their number who had ventured out to see and listen, and who had reëntered with a rush, as if some demon of the storm was pursuing him, had settled down for a game of cards.

"It 's a bad night for the ship that strikes the sand-bar," said the grizzled leader, as he shuffled the cards, looking over his spectacles at the man who entered.

"As I came in," said the latter, mopping the rain from his beard, "I heard strange cries in the air."

"Did you see any lights?" asked the captain. "Ears are no good on a night like this, — the hissing wind like bumblebees in 'em. The pounding of the surf beats

the noise of our town cannon on the Fourth of July."

"I saw nothing except—" He looked from face to face of the closely huddled group with an expression in his eyes like that of Macbeth at the banquet.

The men knew that their companion was prone to see ghosts on stormy nights, and they cast furtive looks at one another under the brims of their sou'westers as they shuffled their cards. Suddenly they heard a tremendous pounding on the door. A little dog which was sleeping in front of the stove jumped into a seaman's bunk in a fit of terror, lifted a trembling paw, and peered out from its haven of safety. The captain's lips moved convulsively a moment before he could utter the words, "Who is there?"

"There 's a steamer on the sand-bar!" shouted a voice.

The man nearest the door drew the bolt, and Alexis was blown into the room by a

blast which extinguished the lights. The sailor's ghost had evidently arrived.

When the lamps were relit, the men recognized Brown's wireless telegraph boy.

"There 's a steamer on the bar!" repeated Alexis. "I have just received a wireless message from her."

The men threw down their cards and stood up. A supreme moment in their lives had come. The rough, inert exteriors were about to blossom like the night-blooming cereus. The captain told off the crew, and without hesitation the lifeboat was made ready.

At the word of command the doors were thrown open, and the boat was pushed along rollers to the edge of the surf. It did not seem possible that it could live in such a sea. The crew stood ready to float it when the waves turned back from their onslaught upon the beach. In a moment they tumbled in, seized their oars, and helped

by the pushing of those who were left in charge of the station, dashed the oars into the water, and mounted the crest of a great wave which threatened to throw the boat back upon the beach, while the wave, disappointed of its prey, showed a line of white like the teeth of a savage animal, bit the sands, and ran back as if in pursuit.

Alexis stood with the men left behind in a recess of the station, protected from the wind. They strained their eyes to see the progress of the lifeboat. It had faded quickly out of sight after mounting the wave and showing every thwart against which the oarsmen's feet had been rigidly pressed. The minutes seemed hours as the cowering men at the station waited and listened. Nobody spoke. One man lighted his pipe, and the wind threw the sparks of the lighted tobacco into the gloom and the rain drenched the pipe.

"There she is!" suddenly exclaimed one of the group.

"Where?" asked the others.

The eager man drew them to him, and pointed over their shoulders.

"That 's only the breaking of a wave," said one.

The white streak faded into the black mass of waters, and the observer let his arm fall to his side. The wind seemed to laugh in derision at the success of the appearance of the ghost it had evoked, and the men turned their backs to its gusts to regain their breaths. They started as they saw what seemed a wraith sweep by, and shivered at the sound of crashing glass. A swiftly flying flock of ducks had been attracted by the lights of the station, and had dashed themselves against the window.

Alexis swept his eyes over the dark expanse of the sea, which had no line of separation from the sky, and was distinguishable from the beach only by the line of foam. The tossing lifeboat had shown for an instant the convulsions of the ocean;

but now there was nothing to measure their magnitude except the roar of the fall of water as the breakers broke on the beach. He, too, was often ready to shout, "There! There!" when a streak of foam appeared on the blackness; but the streaks, like that seen by the coastman, faded into nothingness. The wish to see the return of the boat made these streaks of foam strangely like it: one could imagine that he saw oars rise and fall.

Some of these streaks were more persistent than others. None of the watchers would risk his reputation in proclaiming that one of those which disappeared in a great trough of the sea and came into view again nearer and nearer was the lifeboat; but one man crept into the station, and bringing out a Roman candle, lighted it. Then, as if by a common impulse, a hoarse shout went up, and all rushed to the edge of the water, waded into the line of foam, and caught the lifeboat as it swept in on

the breast of a wave, in order to prevent its being drawn back by the undertow.

Alexis counted the men in the boat. The crew were all there; besides, there were two strangers, one a man of large figure, and another crouching at his feet. The great figure, with face indistinguishable in the gloom, sat high above the rowers, as they bent for a last effort at their oars. The scene was like one from an opera representing the landing of a viking, while the orchestra of the storm played a great strain; the successive falling of the breakers representing the beating of the drums, the hissing and wail of the wind the violins.

A loud shout of triumph sounded as the boat was drawn out of the reach of the waves, and the tall figure stepped on the sands. A man held up a lantern, and Alexis with a bound clasped the figure around the waist, crying, "Father!"

The count seemed to be in a daze, like

a man landing after the turmoil of life on the shore of a new planet. He staggered, and with an ecstatic look gazed into the face of his son, muttered, "Alexandra!" and fell in a swoon.

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