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THE JOURNAL.

BEFORE THE RAIN.

AMELIA RIVES.

The blackcap pipe among the reeds,
And there'll be rain to follow:
There is a murmur as of wind
In every oign and hollow.
The wrens do chatter of their fears
While swinging on the barley ears
Come, hurry, while there yet is time,
Pull up the scarlet bonnet,
Now, sweetheart, as my love is thine,
There is a drop upon it.
So trip it ere the storm-hag weirs,
Doth pluck the barley by the beard.
Lo! not a whit toosoon we're housed
The storm—with yells above us,
The branches rapping on the panes
Seem not in truth to love us.
And look where through the clover bush
The nimble footed rain doth rush.

A Peasant's Adventure.

When Peter the Great was reigning in Moscow, and St. Petersburg was not yet built, a Russian peasant in a tattered sheepskin frock was cutting turf in a lonely spot on one of the great plains of central Russia. It was a burning summer day and his work had made him very hot and tired, but one could see by his downcast face and hanging head that some great trouble was pressing harder upon him than even this fatiguing labor.

Looking up in one of the pauses of this work, turf-cutter saw a tall young man coming slowly over the plain to meet him. The new comer wore the green, gold laced uniform of the palace guards; but the lace was so faded and the coat itself so threadbare that one would have judged the officer to be either a very careless man or a very poor one.

"He looks as if he had lost his way," muttered the peasant as the stranger halted and glanced dubiously around him. "I must see if I can't put him right; it's always a comfort when one's in trouble one's self, to help somebody else out of it."

The young officer did not look like a man who would need much help from any one. He was taller by far than any whom the peasant had yet seen, and his broad chest and sinewy limbs showed signs of enormous strength. His smooth handsome face wore a rather sad look, as he walked slowly, as if either tired or in deep thought, but there was an air of conscious power in his upright bearing and the firm set of his head, as if he felt himself to be a match, and more than a match, for anything he might meet. Although he seemed to be the sort of a man whom one would much rather have for a friend than for an enemy.

"Hello, brother," said the stranger, in a deep strong voice. "Am I far from the village of Volkhoff? I think I must have gone wrong somehow."

"Your honor has gone wrong in deed," answered the peasant, shaking his head; "it's a long way from Volkhoff. You go eastward to a big tree standing by itself, and then you must turn southward to a small lake. Then after that you'll make a big bend to the right, and—"

"Oh, I shall never be able to remember all that," said the officer laughing. "Suppose you come along with me and show me the way yourself."

"I would do it gladly, your honor," said the peasant hesitatingly. "But if I lose the day's work then—"

"You shall lose nothing by helping me, be assured of that," said the young man, gravely. "How much do you earn in a day?"

"Twenty kopecks," (15 cents.)

"Twenty kopecks," echoed the stranger, looking down pityingly at the poor, tired man, who worked so hard for such a scanty pay. "Here is half a rouble (37 cents) for you, and now come along. By the by, if we pass near your house you might carry your turf home at the same time."

"It would need two journeys to do that, your honor."

"Two?" Why those four baskets would surely hold it all."

"There's not a man in Russia, your honor, who can carry all four at once when they are full. The two smallest are enough for me."

"Not a man in Russia, eh?" said the young officer. "We'll try that. Sling those four baskets over my shoulders, and then fill them."

The laborer hesitated, but the young man spoke like one accustomed to be obeyed. As he stooped to receive the baskets, the peasant slung them over his shoulders, two before and two behind, and then piled the turf till all four were piled to the top. Then it was a sight to see the great towering figure rise slowly to its full height under the load and strode away so briskly that the amazed peasant had hard work to keep up.

A short walk brought them to a wretched hovel that was the poor turf-cutter's only home, and while the latter was emptying the baskets the stranger's bold eyes were penetrating the miserable and poverty-stricken place. A few kind words spoken as they started off again went straight to the poor peasant's over-burdened heart, and the whole story of his grief came out. Some

years before he had bought at a high price from a rich neighbor a small tract of ground that had proved to be hardly worth having at all. Moreover, not being able to pay for it at the time, he had got in debt, and the debt kept growing larger from the high rate of interest charged upon it, till he was almost driven to despair.

"It don't seem fair, does it?" he concluded; "but what can I do? He is rich and I am poor and friendless."

"Can such things be done in Russia?" muttered the officer. "It is time for a change!"

His great black eyes lighted as he spoke, with a flash of such terrible anger as he spoke that the peasant shrank in dismay. But the young man asked as quietly as ever.

"Why don't you complain to the Czar?"

"The Czar? What does that care for a poor peasant?"

"It is worth trying, though," said the young man earnestly. "For yours is truly a very hard case. Come, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm going to Volkhoff to meet the Czar and his officers, who will be there today, and I can get you a chance of speaking to him, for I belong to his body guard."

"Me speak to the Czar?"

"Why not? He's only a man like you and me. I've spoken to him myself, and I'm none the worse."

"But how shall I know him from the rest of the officers?"

"All the rest will have their hats off, but the Czar will keep his on."

Half an hour later, just as they came in sight of Volkhoff, a group of richly dressed horsemen rode up, who, the moment they saw the tall officer, they sprang from their horses and took off their hats.

The peasant's sunburned face turned white as a sheet, and he glanced with a bewildered air from the officers to the queer smile.

"Well, brother," he added, "have you found out the Czar yet?"

"Well," said the peasant, staring as if his eyes would start from his head. "It must be either you or I, for all the rest have their hats off!"

"So it seems," laughed Peter the Great. "Well my lad, Prince Mentshikoff here will see you righted and theascal who elevated you punished as he deserves; and I hope you will never again think the Czar unmerciful of the troubles of his people."

A Sound Legal Opinion

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