and she was sick, and her mother came up to our room and took her home. Our teacher, she went down and dismissed the first readers."

"I don't care if she did," retorted the small boy. "I reckon I saw Emmy Lou settin' there when we come away."

Aunt Cordelia, pale and tearful, clutched Uncle Charlie's arm. "Then she's there, Brother Charlie, locked up in that dreadful place—my precious baby—"

"Pshaw!" said Uncle Charlie.

But Aunt Cordelia was wringing her hands. "You don't know Emmy Lou, Charlie. If she was told to stay, she has stayed. She's locked up in that dreadful place. What shall we do, my baby, my precious baby—"

Aunt Katie was in tears, Aunt Louise was in tears, the cook in loud lamentation, Aunt Cordelia fast verging upon hysteria.

The small boy from the first reader, legs apart, hands in knickerbocker pockets, gazed at the crowd of irresolute elders with scornful wonder. "What you wanter do," stated the small boy, "is to find Uncle Michael; he keeps the keys. He went past my house a while ago, going home. He lives in Rose Lane alley. 'Tain't much outer my way," condescendingly; "I'll take you there." And meekly they followed in his footsteps.

It was dark when a motley throng of uncle, aunties, visiting lady, neighbors and children went climbing the cavernous, echoing stairway of the dark school building behind the toiling figure of the skeptical Uncle Michael, lantern in hand.

"Ain't I swept over every inch of this here schoolhouse myself and carried the trash outten a dust pant?" grumbled Uncle Michael, with what inference nobody just then stopped to inquire. Then, with the air of a mistreated, aggrieved person who feels himself a victim, he paused before a certain door on the second floor and fitted a key in its lock. "Here it is then, No. 9, to satisfy the lady," and he flung open the door. The light of Uncle Michael's lantern fell full upon the wide-eyed, terror-smitten person of Emmy Lou, in her desk, awaiting, her miserable little heart knew not what horror.

"She—she told me to stay," sobbed Emmy Lou in Aunt Cordelia's arms, "and I stayed; and the man came, and I hid in the coal box!"

And Aunt Cordelia, holding her close, sobbed too, and Aunt Katie cried, and Aunt Louise and the lady visitor cried and Uncle Charlie passed his plump white hand over his eyes and said "Pshaw!" And the teacher of the first reader, when she heard about it next day, cried hardest of them all, so hard that not even Aunt Cordelia could cherish a feeling against her.

UNDER THE BLACK EAGLE

Stories of Russia---By Robert L. Jefferson---Each a Complete Story.

IV.—THE STARISTA'S DAUGHTER.

THE postmaster of the Nijni Alexandrovsk station had just seen the post thru. Six troikas, for the post bags were heavy with New Year's gifts to people on the other side of the Ural range.

Vladimir Viatkin—for such was the name of the postmaster of Nijni Alexandrovsk—was tired; the day, indeed, had been a busy one. The limited number of horses at his disposal had been taxed to the utmost; and now that the post had gone, if any traveler arrived and wanted horses, he would be compelled, willy-nilly, to wait till the morning, for the horses carrying the post would not return for at least four hours. That would mean seven hours for the traveler, unless he possessed a white paper signed by the governor general of a province.

Under these circumstances Vladimir felt assured of a night's rest free from thos annoying interruptions which had kept him up nearly every night during the past week. Still, it was his duty; he was not a man to grumble, low tho his position was in the service of his imperial majestey; therefore, when the last tinkle of the sledge bells died away in the distance, he re-entered the low door of the post-station, breaking the icicles from his beard as he went, and stamping his thick felt overshoes free of the snow which had gathered on them.

"My supper, daughter," he cried, as he entered the small apartment close to the common room. "The stche is ready, surely, by this time, and the bottle from the little cupboard. A rimki of vodka, my daughter, for a good night's sleep. Pah! It is cold; you do not put enough wood in the stove, and you opened it too soon; there is a great deal of sulphur in the room."

Elizabeth bustled to her father's call. The stche, or cabbage soup, was boiling in the oven of the little kitchen. She brought it out, as it was, in its earthenware pot, and placed it before her father. She brought a wooden spoon and wooden bowl; a bottle containing a white spirit called vodki, and a small glass. Vladimir settled down to his hearty meal, gulped down the fiery soup and stuffed quantities of coarse rye bread into his mouth. The girl put a few sticks into the samovar, and soon the hot water for the tea was bubbling merrily.

When Vladimir left the table he reeled slightly, for he had drunk nearly the whole bottle of vodki; he went, however, to the kitchen, and met his daughter, who was just then bringing the samovar.

"I want no tea to-night," he hiccoughed. "Drink some yourself, but be careful of the sugar—there is not twenty zolotniks left." He paused for a moment, leaning unsteadily against the door-post while his light blue eyes gazed into those of his daughter.

"You have heard nothing of that German, I suppose?" he asked. "You know whom I mean, the man who came thru here to the gold mines; let me see—how many times? How these foreigners make fortunes in Russia, while we poor moujiks are compelled to work for stche and black bread! He was a likely fellow, Elizabeth, and you are a likely girl! But then, you are only the daughter of a starista; and, tho your face is comely enough, your hands are big and red, your feet are splayed, and you have dirt on them. Look at your waist, and your awful hair!" He howled with laughter, left her, and, dexterously passing the steaming samovar, reeled into bed.

Elizabeth put down the samovar. She was in no mood for tea drinking, the hour was late, and she was tired; but the last words of her father had roused her memory, so that she sat at the little table in the common room, her hands clasped, her eyebrows puckered, the while she thought of one frosty day when a gallant troika had galloped up and a "Panemerski" barin, or German gentleman, came to ask for horses. That was the third time she had seen him, and she remembered now how he had charmed her with his broken Russian. How he had told her of his great gold mines in the Urals beyond the Siberian border. It was not often that passengers deigned to speak to the daughter of Vladimir; and in the lonely hours of the post-station—and there were many of them—Elizabeth frequently thought of this one.

But it was late, she retired to the little couch by the side of the hot stove, but somehow she could not sleep. The little clock above her ticked on monotonously; once, twice, thrice, its silvery tinkle announced the departure of the hours; still she could not sleep. At length, with the chime of the little bell announcing that four o'clock had arrived, she heard the familiar thud of horses' hoofs in the snow; and soon after there came a violent battering at the door.

"Ho, ho, starista!" cried a voice. "Ho, ho!"

Elizabeth made haste to dress herself, but her father was before her. He slouched out of the room, rubbing his eyes, and reeling—for the vodki effects had not yet left him. He did not notice his daughter, but passed tnru into the common room, and began to unbolt the double doors of the station.

"Thank heaven, Vladimir!" growled a voice presently. "I am bitten by the frost, I fear, but I have things of importance to tell you. A glass of tea, good Vladimir, or maybe you have a drop of vodki."

Elizabeth recognized the voice. It was that of one of the yemshiks; and she marveled at the familiarity with which he addressed his master.

"Vodki you can have," muttered Vladimir, "but the samovar is cold these three hours. What is it that you have to tell me? But first the vodki!"

Elizabeth lay still as her father staggered for the now nearly empty bottle. She heard the clink of the glass and then the gulp, gulp, gulp, as the fiery spirit went down the throat of the yemshik. Then there was whispering, but she could distinguish nothing; and in her woman's curiosity she got up and crept on tip-toe to the thin partition, and put her ear to a crack.

"How much do you say he has got?" the starista was asking.

"Twenty thousand roubles, Vladimir," replied the yemshik, "and all in hundred-rouble notes. That I can swear. I heard him telling Ivan at the station how he had waited a month to get the last minister at Ekaterinburg to sanction the payment at the Imperial bank. He is going straight to Petersburg as fast as he can go without a crown paper."

"You think it could be done?"

"Of a surety; you have your own gun. I have nothing but my stick; but these are weapons enough for one man; we can meet him where the road dips before the long swamps. You know the spot between the cliffs; there's no time to be lost; the horses at the last station will be ready in two hours."

Vladimir crept thru the little chamber where his daughter lay, apparently soundly sleeping. He came out from his own apartment in his thick felt boots, his shuba and his big fur cap. He carried in his hand a gun, but this he took into the common room, returning a moment afterwards to shake his daughter roughly by the shoulder.

"Listen!" he said. "The horses will be returning very soon, and you will see if any passengers arrive. Unless there is a white paper amongst them, the horses will have three hours' rest, and their food. I am going out."

He left her then; she heard the muffled thud as the heavy felt-clothed door was brought to, and she was left a prey to the most terrible thoughts.

Murder! That was the word which rang thru her brain.

For an hour or more she paced the room in an agony of mind, and her heart seemed to stop when at length she heard the faint tinkling of sledge bells in the distance. Then came the beat of horses' hoofs on the hard snow, the crunch of runners, and the cracking of a whip. The sledge stopped outside the post-station, and the yemshik burst into the common room, followed by the passenger who, muffled in his great shuba, looked more like a huge barrel than a man. He undid the lapels of his fur cap, threw open his shuba, and then Elizabeth saw that it was the German mine owner, and she almost reeled when she thought of the two men waiting in the road to slay him.

"Ah! Elizabeth," he cried, boisterously, and he stretched out his hands to grasp hers. "You are not asleep; and your father—where is he? I must have horses; I want to get forward."

"There are no horses, your excellency. The post has been here to-day. We only keep eighteen horses in the station, and now they are all out but three, and they cannot go for at least two hours."

"Donnerwetter!" cried the German. "Come, come, you can let me have the horses if you like—it is so important."

She shook her head; she could say no word.

He pleaded long and earnestly. He told her of the importance of his mission; how necessary it was for him to get to Petersburg in a given time; that he had a large sum of money with him; that the loss of two hours was of vital importance. But all his pleadings were in vain. Elizabeth's heart was as ice; she heard him, her eyes filled with tears; but before her brain floated the vision of her father and the yemshik, one with a gun, and the other with a bludgeon.

"I cannot, I cannot!" she cried, and she ran from the room to throw herself on her couch; meanwhile the Germán kicked savagely at the table, and swore deeply beneath his breath.

Two hours had nearly passed when there came once more the noise of bells. A troika drove up, and a fat chinovnik, smothered in furs, came hastily into the common room.

'Horses at once!" he cried, and from the pouch at his belt he plucked forth a white paper and threw it on the table.

The German sprang up.

"Your pardon, Gospodin," he cried. "I was here first; the horses are mine."

"Your paper?" demanded the chinovnik.

"I have no paper, but I have been waiting here two hours."

"Wait ten million hours!" was the reply; and the functionary brushed rudely past the German. "You are a foreigner. Pah!" and he spat thrice upon the floor. "Horses, my girl, at once; a white paper, a crown padorojnaia."

Elizabeth sprang to the door and called to the yemshik, her heart beating tumultuously, her brain on fire. With all haste the horses were put into the chinovnik's sledge, that functionary took his ticket, lumbered to his seat, and, with a loud clattering of the bells, was off into the black night. Elizabeth came back into the station feeling like one bereft of reason. She saw the German sitting morosely at the table, his arms folded, a scowl on his face.

"You can have the next troika," she said, tremulously. "I can do no more."

"Pah!" he retorted. "You let that pig of a chinovnik have horses."

"He had a paper!" she ventured.

"Bah! Go away, I am sick of the sight of you!" as he waved his hand towards the door, and she went without another word.

Then came the time when on the arrival of horses she went out and prepared the German's ticket. He snatched rather than took it from her, and threw the money carelessly on the table so that a few kopecks rolled on the floor. He left the station and climbed into the sledge, and noticed not that, just before the yemshik ascended to his box, Elizabeth had crept to the side of the equipage and had kissed the hem of the long rug which trailed in the snow.

A moment later the sledge was gone, swallowed up in the black night. The station was deserted even of the starista's daughter, who, as fast as her heavy clothing would permit her, was speeding along the road.

On and on she went, slipping and sliding on the frosted snow; but soon she came in sight of a belt of trees looming blacker than the dark night. She went off the road here, and plunged nearly to her waist in the soft snow; but she struggled on, and came to where a cliff jutted out on the road. She paused and listened intently. There was not a sound to be heard; so she crept forward out of the shadow of the cliff and commenced to look eagerly around.

What she sought was soon discovered. Several black objects lay in the snow on one side of the highway. She went on towards them; she recognized a sledge overturned; she saw two bundles and a box; she saw two figures in the shape of human beings. To these she crept, and recognized one as the yemshik of the first troika. She crawled to the other, and looked into its face—it was that of the burly chinovnik. Both men were dead.

Then there came a great sob from Elizabeth, and she struggled as if she would make for the road again. She was laughing, crying, frenzied, but her knees gave under her, her brain reeled, she fainted, and fell with her face in the snow, to become in less than an hour frozen stiff.

"AMULETS" WORN BY WOMEN.

New York Sun.

That many women habitually wear amulets to bring good luck is well known to the bathhouse keepers, to whom patrons turn over their valuables before taking a dip. According to these authorities, the belief in charms is widespread. Stones and bits of metals stamped with quaint markings, little strips of sheepskin or leather bearing a couplet or the symbol of a heavenly body are deposited along with money and keys and other valuables, to say nothing of rabbits' feet four-leaf clover, wishbones and other witcheries in one guise or another. And the wearing of these averters of evil is not confined to any one class or nationality. The well-to-do woman and the well-instructed is as apt to have the quaint goods upon her as the untutored.

More mascots in the form of ornaments, gems and precious metals are being mounted by the jewelers all the time, and more symbols of occult meaning are ordered by customers to be set in such shape and fashion that they can be worn handily. The summer girl has her prized piece of jade or magic moonstone locked on a bracelet that cannot slip over her hand and be washed off by the waves, as a ring might be. This sort of bangle charm is worn openely, even boastfully, as betokening a careful and cautious young person, but dozens of charms are worn secretly safe within the waist front unsuspected until injury or accident betrays their presence. The use of charms and amulets has been stimulated lately b ythe interest taken in psyschological topics and the fad for consulting fortune tellers and clairvoyants.

"I've got a mole directly on the back of my neck, an omen of successful fortune, also threatening sudden accident of one sort or another," said a girl student the other day as she fingered the charm that hung at her wrist. "This is an old Persian stone celebrated as potent in averting evil and imparting security and self-possession to the wearer. The symbols upon it all have their meaning. I got it from the professor who read my character thru three different mediums and observed this menace of sudden disaster darkening what was otherwise a most auspicious fortune."

It is held that persons born under the two extremes of planetary influence are most addicted to mascots. Those born under the gloomy spell of Saturn wear charms to neutralize the malignity that ever threatens to encompass them and those born under the beneficent influences of Jupiter and Venus carry amulets to insure their continued run of good fortune.

The Italians of both high and low degree are inveterate believers in the efficacy of charms to ward off evil and invite good. The old spell of the mediaeval mysteries still holds them in thrall. People of Spanish and Austrian descent are likewise given to charm wearing. Many Americans have of late caught the infection, purchasing birthstones and ancient talismans with avidity, and paying more and more attention to personal characteristics and their meanings as demonstrated by students of the occult. Even the department stores now sell charms.

WORTH BUT LITTLE.

A London visitor at the Lambs Club recounted a new version of the notable enmity which followed the friendship that had existed between the late J. McNeil Whistler and Oscar Wilde. The latter one day asked the artist's opinion upon a poem which he had written, presenting a copy to be read. Whistler read it, and was handing it back without comment.

"Well?" queried Wilde, "do you perceive any worth?"

"It's worth its weight in gold," replied Whistler.

The poem was written on the very thinnest tissue paper weighing practically nothing. The coolness between the two men is said to have dated from that moment.

BEST OF REASONS.

During the yacht races a crowd was standing in front of a newspaper office waiting to hear which boat won the race. Then came the news, "The race is declared off." But an argument arose in the audience, and an Englishman became very noisy, and he declared that the Americans put something in the water to make the Shamrock lose.

"Yes," said a tall Philadelphia who was standing near, "the Reliance."