

"Oh, I was like the good dog Tray, who associated with questionable company, I suppose, and thus got into trouble."

"I'm sorry."

"You ought to be glad. I'm going to get out of this place, and I don't believe you could break jail, unassisted, in twenty years. Here is where science confronts brutality. I say, Drummond, bring your table over to the corner, and mount it, then we can talk without shouting. Not much chance of any one outside hearing us, even if we do clamor, but this is a damp situation, and loud talk is bad for the throat. Cut a slice of that brown bread and lunch with me. You'll find it not half bad, as you say in England, especially when you are hungry. Now," continued Jack, as his friend stood opposite him, and they found by experiment that their combined reach was not long enough to enable them to shake hands thru the bars, "now, while you are luxuriating in the menu of the Trogzmundoff, I'll give you a sketch of my plan for escape."

"Do," said Drummond.

"I happen to have with me a pair of bottles containing a substance which, if dissolved in water, and sprinkled on this rock, will disintegrate it. It proves rather slow work, I must admit, but I intend to float in to you one of the bottles, and the apparatus, so that you may help me on your side which plan has the advantage of giving you useful occupation and allowing us to complete our task in half the time like the engineers on each side of the Simpson tunnel."

"If there are bars in the lower water course," objected Drummond, "won't you run a risk of breaking your bottle against them?"

"Not the slightest. I have just sent that much thinner electric lamp thru, but in this case I'll just tie up the bottle and squirtgun in my stocking, attach that to the wire, and the current will do the rest. You can unload, and I'll pull my stocking back again. If I dared wrench off a table leg I could perhaps shove bottle and syringe thru to you from here, but the material would come to a dead center in the middle of this tunnel, unless I had a stick to push it within your reach."

"Very well; we'll work away until our excavation connects, and we have made it of sufficient diameter for you to squeeze thru. You are then in my cell. We put out our lights and you conceal yourself behind the door. Jailer and man with the lantern come in. You must be very careful not to close the door, because if you once shove it shut we can't open it from this side, even tho it is unlocked and the bolts drawn. It fits like wax, and almost hermetically seals the room. You spring forward and deal the jailer with your fist one of your justly celebrated English knock-down blows, immediately after felling the man with the lantern. Knowing something of the weight of your blow, I take it that neither of the two men will recover consciousness until we have taken off their outer garments, secured revolvers and keys. Then we lock them in, you and I on the outside."

"My dear Jack, we don't need any tunnel to accomplish that. The first time these two men come into my room, I can knock them down as easily here as there."

"I thought of that, and perhaps you could, but you must remember we have only one shot. If you made a mistake; if the lantern man bolted and fired his pistol, and once closed the door—he would not need to pause to lock it—why, we are done for. I should be perfectly helpless in the next room, and after the attempt they'd either drown us, or put us into worse cells as far apart as possible."

"I don't think I should miss fire," said Drummond, confidently, "still, I see the point, and will obey orders."

"My official position on the rock, ever since I arrived, has been that of electrical tutor-in-chief to the governor. I have started his dynamo working, and have wired such portions of the place as were not already wired before. During these lessons I have kept my eyes open. So far as the prison is concerned there is the governor, a sort of head clerk, the jailer and his assistant; four men, and that is all. The jailer's assistant appears to be the cook of the place, altho the cooking done is of the most limited description. The black bread is brought from St. Petersburg, I think, as also tinned meat and stoup; so the cuisine is on a somewhat limited scale."

"Do you mean to say that only these four men are in charge of the prison?"

"Practically so, but there is the garrison as well. The soldiers live in a suite of rooms directly above us, and as near as I can form an opinion, there are fourteen men and two officers. When a steamer arrives, they draft as many soldiers as are necessary, unload the boat; then the Tommies go upstairs again. The military section apparently holds little intercourse with the officials, whom they look upon as jailers. I should judge that the military officer is chief of the rock, because when he found the governor's room lit by electricity, he demanded the same for his quarters. That's how I came to get upstairs. Now, these stairs are hewn in the rock, are circular, guarded by heavy oaken doors top and bottom, and these doors possess steel bolts on both sides of them. It is thus possible for either the military authorities, or the civil authorities, to iso-

late themselves from the others. In a case of revolt among the soldiers, the governor could bolt them into their attic, and they would find great difficulty in getting out. Now, my plan of procedure is this. We will disarm the jailer and assistant, take their keys, outside garments and caps. The jailer's toggery will fit you, and the other fellow's may do for me. Then we will lock them in here, and if we meet clerk or governor in the passages we will have time to overcome either or both before they are aware of the change. I'll go up the circular stair, bolt from the inside the upper door, and afterward bolt the lower door. Then we open all the cells, and release the other prisoners, descend from the rock, get into the Finnish fishing boat, keep clear of the two cannon that are up above us, and sail for the Swedish coast. We can't miss it; we have only to travel west, and ultimately we are safe. There is only one danger, which is that we may make our attempt when the steamer is here, but we must chance that."

"Isn't there any way of finding out? Couldn't you pump the governor?"

"He is always very much on his guard, and is a taciturn man. The moment the tunnel is finished I shall question him about some further electrical material, and then perhaps I may get a hint about the steamer. I imagine she comes irregularly, so the only safe plan would be for us to make our attempt just after she had departed."

"Would there be any chance of our finding a number of the military downstairs?"

"I don't think so. Now that they have their electric light they spend their time playing cards and drinking vodka."

"Very well, Jack, that scheme seems reasonably feasible. Now, get thru your material to me, and issue your instructions."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Stone Walls Do Not a Prison Make."

In a very short time Drummond became an expert at the rock dissolving as was his friend. He called it pifling slow work, but was nevertheless extremely industrious at it, altho days and weeks and, as they suspected, months passed before the hands of the two friends met in the center of the rock. One lucky circumstance that favored them was the habit of the jailer in visiting Drummond only once every four days.

The lieutenant made his difficult passage, squeezing thru the newly completed tunnel half an hour after a loaf had been set upon his table. Jack knew that the steamer had recently departed, because two days before, the governor had sent for him, and had exhibited a quantity of material recently landed, among other things a number of electric bells and telephones which the governor was going to have set up between himself and the officers, and also between his room and that of the clerk and jailer. There were dry batteries, and primary batteries, and many odds and ends, which made Jack almost sorry he was leaving the place.

Heavy steps, muffled by the thickness of the door, sounded along the outer passage.

"Ready?" whispered Jack. "Here they come. Remember, if you miss your first blow we're gone, you and I."

Drummond made no reply, for the steps had come perilously near, and he feared to be heard. Noiselessly he crossed the cell and took up his position against the wall, just clear of the space that would be covered by the opening of the door.

At the same moment Jack switched off the light, leaving the room black. Each of the two waiting prisoners could hear the other's short breathing thru the darkness.

On came the shuffling footsteps of the jailer and lantern bearer. They had reached the door of No. 1, had paused, had passed on and stopped in front of No. 2.

"Your cell?" whispered Jack, panic stricken.

"And they weren't due to look in on you for four days. It's all up. They'll discover the cell is empty and give the—Where are you going, man?" he broke off, as Drummond, leaving his place near the door, groped his way hurriedly along the wall.

"To squeeze my way back and make a fight for it. It's better than—"

"Wait!"

Lamont's hand was on his shoulder and he whispered a sharp command for silence. The two attendants had halted in front of No. 2 and while the lantern bearer fumbled with the awkward bolt, his companion was saying:

"Hold on! After all, I'll bring the other his food first, I think."

"But," remonstrated the lantern bearer, "the governor said we were to bring the Englishman to him at once."

"What if he did? How will he know we stole a half minute to give the prince his dinner? If we bring the Englishman upstairs first, the prince may have to wait an hour before we can get back with the Englishman."

"With his pocket full of robles? Not I. He may decide to give no more of his gold pieces to a jailer who lets him go hungry too long."

"I've got the door unfastened now and—"

"Then fasten it again and come back with me to No. 1."

Faint as were the words, deadened by intervening walls, their purpose reached Jack.

"Back to your place," he whispered, "they're coming."

The rattle of bolts followed close on his words. The great door of No. 1 swung ponderously inward. The lantern-bearer, holding his light high in front of him, entered; then stepped to one side to admit the jailer, who came close after, the tray of food in his outstretched hands.

Unluckily for the captives' plan, it was to the side of the cell opposite to that where Alan crouched that the lantern-bearer had taken his stand. There was no way of reaching him at a moment's notice. The door stood between them. Were the jailer to be attacked next, the fellow attendant could readily be out of the cell and halfway up the corridor before Alan might hope to reach him.

The friends had counted on both men entering the room together and crossing as usual to the table. This change of plan disconcerted them. Already the jailer had set down his tray and was turning toward the door. Alan, helpless, stood immovably in the shadow, biting his blond mustache with hissing rage. In another second their cherished opportunity would vanish. And as the jailer's next visit was to be to No. 2, discovery stared them in the eyes.

It was Jack who broke the momentary spell of apathy. He was standing at the far end of the cell, near the stream.

"Here," he called sharply to the lantern-bearer, "bring your light. My electric apparatus is out of order, and I've mislaid my matches. I want to light—"

The lantern-bearer, obediently, had advanced

into the room. He was half-way across it while Lamont was still speaking. Then, from the corner of his eye, he spied Alan crouching in the angle behind the door, now fully exposed to the rays of the lantern.

The man whirled about in alarm just as Alan sprang. In consequence the Englishman's mighty fist whizzed past his head, missing it by a full inch.

The jailer, recovering from his amaze, whipped out one of the revolvers he wore in his belt. But Jack, leaping forward, knocked it from his hand before he could fire; and, with one hand clapped across the fellow's bearded lips, wound his other arm about the stalwart body so as to prevent for the instant the drawing of the second pistol.

Alan's first blow had missed clean; but his second did not. Following up his right-hand blow with all a trained boxer's swift dexterity, he sent a straight left-hander flush on the angle of the light-bearer's jaw. The man dropped his lantern and collapsed into a senseless heap on the floor, while Alan, with no further delay, rushed toward the jailer.

The fall of the lantern extinguished the light. The cell was again plunged in dense blackness, thru which could be heard the panting and scuffling of the prince and the jailer.

Barely a second of time had elapsed since first Jack had seized the man, but that second had sufficed for the latter to summon his great brute strength and shake off his less gigantic opponent and to draw his pistol.

"Quick, Alan," gasped Jack. "He's got away from me. He'll—"

Drummond, guided by his friend's voice, darted forward thru the darkness, caught his foot against the sprawling body of the lantern-bearer and fell heavily, his arms thrown out in an instinctive gesture of self-preservation. Even as he lost his balance he heard a sharp click directly in front of him. The jailer had pulled the trigger and his pistol—contract-made and out of order, like many of the weapons of common soldiers in Russia's frontier posts—had missed fire.

To that luckiest of mishaps, the failure of a defective cartridge to explode, the friends owed their momentary safety.

As Alan pitched forward one of his outflung arms struck against an obstacle. It was a human figure, and from the feel of the leather straps which his fingers touched in the impact, he knew it was the jailer and not Lamont.

Old football tactics coming to memory, Alan clung to the man his arm had chanced upon, and bore him along to the ground; Jack, who had pressed forward in the darkness, being carried down as well by the other's fall.

Jailer, prince and Englishman thus struggled on the stone floor in one indistinguishable heap. It was no ordinary combat of two to one, for neither of the prisoners could say which was the jailer and which his friend. The jailer, troubled by no such doubts, laid about him lustily, and was only prevented from crying out the fact that his heavy fur cap had, in the fall, become jammed down over his face as far as the chin and could not for the moment be dislodged.

He reached for and drew his sword-bayonet that hung at his side (for his second pistol had become lost in the scuffle), and thrust blindly about him. Once, twice his blade met resistance and struck into flesh.

"Jack," panted Alan, "the beast's stabbing. Get yourself loose and find the electric light!"

As he spoke, Alan's hand fond the jailer's throat. He knew it was not Alan's from the rough beard that covered it. The jailer, maddened by the pressure, stabbed with fresh fury; most of his blows, fortunately, going wild in the darkness.

Alan's free hand reached for and located the arm that was wielding the bayonet, and for a moment the two wrestled desperately for its possession.

Then a key clicked, and the room was flooded with incandescent light, just as Alan, releasing his grip on the Russian's throat, dealt him a short-arm blow on the chin with all the power of his practiced muscles. The jailer relaxed his tense limbs and lay still, while Alan, bleeding and exhausted, struggled to his feet.

"Hot work, eh?" he panted. "Hard position to land a knockout from. But I caught him just right. He'll trouble us no more for a few minutes, I fancy. You're bleeding! Did he wound you?"

"Only a scratch along my cheek. And you?"

"A cut on the wrist and another on the shoulder, I think. Neither of them bad, thanks to the lack of aim in the dark. Close call, that! Now to tie them up. Not a movement from either yet."

"You must have come close to killing them with those sledge-hammer blows of yours!"

"It doesn't much matter," said the imperturbable pugilist, "they'll be all right in half an hour. It's knowing where to hit. If there are only four men downstairs, we don't need to wear the clothes of these beasts. Let us take only the bunch of keys and the revolvers."

Securing these the two stepped out into the passage, locked and bolted the door; and then Jack, who knew his way, proceeded along the passage to the stairway, leaped nimbly up the steps, bolted the door leading to the military quarters, then descended and bolted the bottom door.

"Now for the clerk and then for the governor."

The clerk's room connected with the armory, which was reached by passing thru the apartment that held turbine and dynamo, which they found purring away merrily.

Covering the frightened clerk with four revolvers, Jack told him in Russian that if he made a sound it would be his last. They took him, opened cell No. 3, which was empty, and thrust him in.

Jangling the keys, the two entered the governor's room. The ancient man looked up, but not a muscle of his face changed; even his fishy eyes showed no signs of emotion or surprise.

"Governor," said Jack with deference, "altho you are under the muzzles of a quartet of revolvers, no harm is intended you. However, you must not leave your place until you accompany us down to the boat, when I shall hand the keys over to you, and in cell No. 1 you will find the jailer and lantern man a little worse for wear, perhaps, but still in the air. I hope so."

"No. 3 your clerk is awaiting you. I go now to release your prisoners. All communication between yourself and the military is barred. I leave my friend on guard until I return from the cells. You must not attempt to summon assistance or cry out or move from your chair. My friend does not understand either Russian or German, so there is no use in making any appeal to him, and, much as I like you personally and admire your assiduity in silence, one case is so desperate that if you make any motion whatever he will be compelled to shoot you dead."

The governor bowed.

"May I continue my waiting?" he asked.

Jack laughed heartily.

"Certainly," and with that he departed to the cells, which he unlocked one by one, only to find them all empty.

"Returning," he said to the governor.

"Why did you not tell me that we were your only prisoners?"

"I feared," replied the governor mildly, "that you might not believe me."

"After all, I don't know that I should," said Jack, holding out his hand, which the other shook rather unresponsively.

"I want to thank you," the governor said slowly, "for all you have told me about electricity. That knowledge, I expect, will be of many useful purposes in the future, and the exercise of it will also make the hours drag less slowly than they did before you came."

"Oh, thank all right," cried Jack with en-

thusiasm. "I am sure you are very welcome to what teaching I have been able to give you, and no teacher could have wished a more apt pupil."

"It pleases me to hear you say that, highness, altho I fear I have been lax in my duties, and perhaps the knowledge of this place which you have got thru my negligence, has assisted you in making an escape which I had not thought possible."

Jack laughed good-naturedly.

"All's fair in love and war," he said. "Imprisonment is a section of war. I must admit that electricity has been a powerful aid to us. But you cannot blame yourself, governor, for you always took every precaution, and the jailer was eternally at my heels. You can never pretend to do my duty, you know."

"I tried to do my duty," said the old man mournfully, "and if electricity has been your helper, it has not been with my sanction. However, there is one point about electricity which you impressed upon me, which is that altho it goes quickly, there is always a return current."

"What do you mean by that, governor?"

"Is it not so? It goes by a wire, and returns thru the earth. I thought you told me that."

"Yes, but I don't quite see why you mention that feature of the case at this particular moment."

"I wanted to be sure what I have stated is true. You see, when you are gone there will be nobody I can ask."

All this time the aged governor was holding Jack's hand rather limply. Drummond showed signs of impatience.

"Jack," he cried at last, "that conversation may be very interesting, but it's like smoking on a powder mine. One never knows what may happen. I shan't feel safe until we're well out at sea, and not even then. Get thru with your farewells as soon as possible, and let us be off."

"Right you are, Alan, my boy. Well, governor, I'm reluctantly compelled to bid you a final goodbye, but here's wishing you all sorts of luck."

The old man seemed reluctant to part with him, and still clung to his hand.

"I wanted to tell you," he said, "of another incident, almost as startling as your coming into this room a while since, that happened six or eight months ago. As perhaps you know, we keep a Finland fishing boat down in the cove below."

"Yes, yes," said Jack impatiently, drawing away his hand.

"Well, six or eight months ago that boat disappeared, and has never been heard of since. None of our prisoners was missing; none of the garrison was missing; my three assistants were still here, yet in the night the boat was taken away."

"Really? How interesting! Never learned the secret, did you?"

"Never, but I took precautions, when we got the next boat, that it should be better guarded, so I have had two men remain upon it night and day."

"Are your two men armed, governor?"

"Yes, they are."

"Then they must surrender, or we will be compelled to shoot them. Come down with us, and advise them to surrender quietly, otherwise, from safe cover on the stairway, we can pot them in an open boat."

"I will go down with you," said the governor, "and do what I can."

"Of course they will obey you."

"Yes, they will obey me—if they hear me. I was going to add that only yesterday did I arrange the electric bell down at the landing, with instructions to those men to take a telegram which I had written in case of emergencies, to the mainland, at any moment, night or day, when that bell rang. Your highness, the bell rang more than half an hour ago. I have not been allowed out to see the result."

The placid old man put his hand on the prince's shoulder, as if bestowing a benediction upon him. Drummond, who did not understand the lingo, was amazed to see Jack fling off the governor's grasp, and with what he took to be a crushing oath in Russian, spring to the door, which he threw open. He mounted the stone bench which gave him a view of the sea. A boat with two sails spread, speeding to the southwest, across the strong westerly wind, was two miles or more away.

"Marooned, by God!" cried the prince, swinging round and presenting his pistol at the head of the governor, who stood there like a statue of dejection, and made no sign.

CHAPTER XX.

Arrival of the Turbine Yacht.

Before Jack could fire, as perhaps he had intended to do, Drummond struck down his arm.

"None of that, Jack," he said. "The Russian in you has evidently been scratched, and the Tartar has come uppermost. The governor gave a signal, I suppose?"

"Yes, he did, and those two have got away while I stood babbling here, feeling sympathy for the old villain. That's his return current, eh?"

"He's not to blame," said Drummond. "It's our own fault entirely. The first thing to have done was to secure that boat."

"And everything worked so beautifully," moaned Jack, "up to this point, and one mistake ruins it. We are doomed, Alan."

"It isn't so bad as that, Jack," said the Englishman calmly. "Should those men reach the coast safely, as no doubt they will, it may cost Russia a bit of trouble to dislodge us."

"Why, hang it all," cried Jack, "they don't need to dislodge us. All they've got to do is stand off and starve us out. They are not compelled to fire a gun or land a man."

"They'll have to starve their own men first. It's not likely we're going to go hungry and feed our prisoners."

"Oh, we don't mind a little thing like that, we Russians. They may send help, or they may not. Probably a cruiser will come within hailing distance and try to find out what the trouble is. Then it will lie off and wait till everybody's dead, and after that put in a new governor and another garrison."

"You take too pessimistic a view, Jack. This isn't the season of the year for a cruiser to be off in the Baltic. Winter is coming on. Most of the harbors in Scandinavia will be closed in a matter of days, and there's no shelter hereabouts for a steamship. They'll attack, probably open shell-fire on us for a while, then attempt to land a storming party. That will be fun for us if you've got good rifles and plenty of ammunition."

Jack raised his head.

"Oh, we're well equipped," he said. "If we only have enough to eat."

Springing to his feet, all dejection gone, he said to the governor:

"Now, my friend, we're compelled to put you into a cell. I'm sorry to do this, but there is no other course open. Where is your luggage, and what quantity of provisions have you in stock?"

A gloomy smile suited to the dejection of the old man's countenance.

"You must find that out for yourself," he said.

"Are the soldiers upstairs well supplied with food?"

"I will not answer any of your questions."

"Oh, very well. If you are determined to go hungry, you're welcome. I'm satisfied that there is enough there sufficient for my friend and me, so I'll order my change of quarters and go to bed. The soldiers upstairs are well supplied with food, but I shan't answer any more questions."

"What were you making him?"

"I want to know about the stock of provisions."