

hastened down the corridor. At the end she turned and smiled again, waving her hand.

It was no wonder, I told myself, that this girl believed she could do as she would with men, even with the devil-man that sat in the highest seat, ruling all other men with the sceptre of terror and cruelty.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

As afterwards appeared, his Grace the Tsar at some time or other beheld me in close conversation with Amy Romalyn. Likely enough this happened when we sat and talked in the wide corridor leading from the audience-chamber, but whether there or elsewhere matters little; his keen eyes were wont to see everywhere and everything, and it displeased him that we should be so intimate. For this or other reasons my presence in Moscow angered him, and Sir Jerome was reminded that when he should depart for England his secretary, the "long man," must go also, as his Grace had already hinted.

"Yet you declare that you are determined to stay," said Sir Jerome. "What, then, is to be done?"

"I must fall sick," I told him. "I have already thought of this; I shall take to my bed one day or two days before your depart-

ure, and you shall explain that I am sick to death and cannot be moved."

"I doubt if his Grace will believe me," Sir Jerome replied; "but by all means you shall try. Be not surprised if he comes in person to chase thee from thy bed with his *dubina*."

But though the Cæsar raged and abused me for lying sick abed when Bowes informed him of my plight, he did not come in person to verify the statement; he sent instead his German doctor, one Eberfeldt.

Now, this might have been an awkward matter, but that Eberfeldt proved himself the kindest of men, and resourceful.

I told the good physician the whole truth. The Queen had sent me to see to Amy Romalyn's welfare, yet the Cæsar desired me away. Go I could not, leaving Amy behind, yet the Tsar would not have me remain; therefore it was necessary to invent means—and this was my simple means, to lie abed and pretend sickness.

"Simple indeed," said Eberfeldt, "for you, but what of me? I am an honest man; I cannot give a lying report."

"Then make me ill," I rejoined laughing;

"that should not be difficult for a physician of your attainments."

Eberfeldt reflected. "Good!" he said presently; "I will do as you say. It will not be pleasant, I warn you, for to satisfy the Tsar I must make you ill indeed: he is not one to be put aside with pretence."

"Do not make me sick unto death," I stipulated; "that would be playing the game too well!"

Eberfeldt promised that I should withstand the malady which he would graft upon me. He arrived presently with phials, and bade me swallow a draught which was certainly nauseous enough. "Now farewell," he said, "and do not curse me afterwards for ills which, though severe, are necessary; you will feel like to die, but in a week you shall be convalescent, that I promise you."

During the next few days, if the Cæsar had deigned to come to my bedside in order to make sure that his physician reported truly of my condition, he must have felt well satisfied that Eberfeldt had made no mistake; for truly I felt that death and I were very near neighbours, and one or two of his boyars, sent by the Tsar to see and report, were assured by

my woeful state that I was like to die any moment, and so reported to their master. I did not, indeed, put blame upon the physician in their presence, retaining good sense enough to remember that that might be foolish; but when by myself, I think, there exists not an ill name which I did not apply to poor Eberfeldt, or a black wish or heartfelt curse which I did not lay to his account, for the over-application of his detestable nostrums. I was assured that he had made a mistake in the quality and quantity of the drugs I had been compelled to swallow, and that, after all, I should die; for, indeed, I think a man can be in no wretcheder plight than was I.

Yet in a week I was, as Eberfeldt had promised, convalescent, and within fourteen days I had almost forgotten my pains and sickness.

During this period Sir Jerome Bowes and his servants had departed, and so Amy and I—of all the good British folk who had arrived in Sir Jerome's suite—were left alone in the den of the tiger and at the mercy of his claws and teeth.

Amy had even sent her woman home, for poor Joan had been very miserable in the terem, and pined for England and, may-be, for friends or a friend she had left behind her.

And realising that while I lay mending of my sickness Amy had none to watch over her, I made shift to recover as quickly as Nature allowed. Muirhead visited me constantly in my quarters, and his presence in Moscow and about the Court was a great comfort to me, for he was able to report to me of Amy's welfare. He told me also—and the communication gave me much delight—that Amy had accosted him in the street, seeming anxious to know of my condition. Then Muirhead informed her of the scheme I had devised for remaining in the country, and of how I had got myself thoroughly drenched with poisonous drugs in order to appear sick enough to please his Grace the Cæsar. This narrative softened Amy, it appeared, for she said that it was as noble in a man to sacrifice his life or well-being for the sake of another, whether he did so by offering his body to the sword of an enemy or to the drugs of the apothecary. "Tell him," she said, "that I understand how generously he has acted on my behalf, though his sacrifice was not needed, for I foresee no danger that I could not withstand by myself. Tell him also that the Tsar shall pay for his sickness."

"What meant she by that?" I asked Muir-

head, who coughed and said that, as for him, he had never yet learned to understand Amy, neither her sayings nor her doings, nor the eccentric whims that ordered her actions.

"But this much is clear," he added, "that she is assured of her own power to tame the untameable Tiger of Muscovy, and that this is a mental attitude which is dangerous for her."

It was a matter of moment to me that here was I stranded in this foreign and barbarous land, my occupation gone with Sir Jerome, my resources almost exhausted, the Tsar—from whom alone position and emolument could be hoped for—my ill-wisher. I consulted Muirhead. At present I lay in the quarters engaged for Sir Jerome and his suite, but even my lodging would presently be denied me as soon as I should be well enough to be moved therefrom.

"That is a small matter," said Muirhead, "for you have but to exchange this house for my own, where, be sure, you shall be made exceedingly welcome."

And to Muirhead's house I removed myself very gladly and gratefully, though this hospitable arrangement of his did not solve the difficulty which was my principal trouble at this time, and which was this:—

As secretary to Sir Jerome I had enjoyed the privilege of being about the palace in which Amy lived, and where she might, if necessary, be seen at any time. Now I had no more right to enter the palace than any idler in the streets. I no longer enjoyed any status in the country—indeed, I knew myself to be an undesired guest.

"There, I fear, I cannot at present help you," said Muirhead, "though if opportunity offers be sure I shall not fail to speak a word for you. Do not be sanguine, however, for if the Tsar dislikes you, as you suppose, he will not be anxious to employ you."

"In England I had to thank my inches for a good position at Court," said I ruefully. "Is there no hope that my two yards and a hand's length may cover the multitude of my sins, even in the eyes of the Cæsar?"

Muirhead laughed, and said that he knew not. "I do not even know what these sins are," he declared. "Much would depend upon that."

"The prime sin is that I am Amy's nurse," I replied, "and that he has discovered the fact for himself."

Meanwhile I saw nothing of Amy, though I haunted the great square within the Kremlin,

where I knew she might occasionally be met taking her daily walk. Yet, though I saw her not, I was presently to learn that she had not forgotten me, nor yet my needs of the present, but that at her first interview with his Grace after Sir Jerome's departure she had remembered my necessity, and had actually approached the Tsar with a request for some appointment which would give me occupation and living.

"What have I to do with him?" said Ivan, frowning. "Why should I give preferment to one whose presence here is undesired? Let him follow his master, Sir Bowes."

"Tsar, there are no ships," said Amy; "for awhile, at any rate, he must remain in thy country, and since he remains he must live."

"What is he to thee?" growled the Tsar, and waved Amy away, she having, I learned, actually asked an audience of him on my behalf.

A few days later his Grace sent for Amy. In the chamber wherein the Tsar now received her stood, among the rest, a man unknown to Amy—pale, haggard, bound about the head and shoulders and his lower extremities with blood-stained rags, as though he had returned that very hour from battle.

"See here, Mistress Amy," cried the Tsar,

who laughed nervously; "behold this man; he is wounded, as you see, in many places; his occupation, which he now resigns, has been a dangerous one, though honourable, for he must be a brave man who will undertake it. This one has escaped with his life, as you see; but there have been some that went before him who have been less fortunate—how many have died within ten years, Ostorof?"

"Thirteen," gasped the fellow, who could scarcely speak for pain of his wounds and for weakness.

"So, hear'st thou that? It has occurred to me, Mistress Amy, that this Englishman, this long fellow thy friend, lacking employment, might be glad of Ostorof's honourable position."

Amy, wondering much, yet determined to show neither surprise nor any other emotion, replied simply that if the position were one requiring courage and manhood, it should suit her friend well.

"What, you are not afraid for him?" laughed the Tsar, flushing. "Well, shall we consider the appointment made and accepted?"

"I cannot speak for my friend," said Amy; "if the Tsar has an offer to make, let it be made to whom it concerns, which is not I."

"Ha! may-be he will not be so brave on his own account as thou art for him!" said Ivan. "Ho, there! let this long Englishman be summoned at once; we shall see what he will say. Stay thou also," he added, addressing Amy over his shoulder. The Tsar was not in good humour, even though he had laughed aloud more than once.

## CHAPTER XV.

THUS it happened that as I walked in the square of the Kremlin, before the wooden palace of the Cæsar, hoping, as I hoped daily, to catch a sight of Amy, there came hastening up to me two boyars: one was that young Alexis Nagoy who had been my travelling companion, the other a youth by name Kamarof.

"Why," cried the latter, "this is good luck indeed; one would suppose that you had heard beforehand that your presence would be desired at this hour."

"Or that you had come in hope of seeing some one who would walk here," added Nagoy, with a laugh. Nagoy had seen me once walking in Amy's company, and had then come to I know not what conclusions, for at the time he had frowned darkly.

I turned my back upon Nagoy and addressed myself to Kamarof.

"If any one desires to see me, here I am," I said.